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'Tender and True': Morality and Masculinity

in Nineteenth-Century Women's Fiction

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Karen Jane Turner, BA Hons (University of Surrey), MA, PGCE

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‘Tender and True’: Morality and Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Fiction

Abstract

In 1883 Eliza Lynn Linton described the men in women’s fiction as ‘prigs, ruffians, or curled darlings’, claiming that women writers cannot portray morally good men in fiction without making them seem unrealistic, unattractive, or both. This thesis argues that nineteenth-century women writers not only understood male goodness, but also that they sought to modify and subvert contemporary models of masculinity by positioning good men at the heart of domestic and public narrative. Masculine goodness is traced in texts from Jane Austen to Mary Ward with a view to understanding the ways in which good men are imagined and portrayed in nineteenth-century fiction. Critical reassessment of some canonical texts reveals that good men function as new ideological representations of nineteenth-century masculinity.

By examining non-fictional texts, philosophical, and theoretical works alongside selected works of fiction, I contextualise the socio-historical importance of masculine moral goodness and its development between 1813 and 1889. The work of Adam Smith, Samuel Smiles and selected modern philosophers helps to illuminate some of the issues raised, and the work of contemporary masculinity theorist Victor Seidler also shows that women writers often anticipated modern analyses of masculinities. My interpretation of selected fictional texts leads to the identification and evaluation of the phenomenon that I have called ‘moral masculinity’, which qualitatively differs from existing notions of nineteenth-century cultural maleness. I demonstrate that the manifestation of male goodness changes according to current cultural and social norms: the good man is not necessarily ‘manly’, nor is he always a hero. Rather, moral masculinity is an act of will and character, involving duty, conscience and self-scrutiny; and yet it is subject to deep anxieties and uncertainties as the good man negotiates moral terrains.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Contents

Introduction

'I would take Chaucer, and show you why he wrote a
Legend of Good Women; but no Legend of Good
Men.'[1]

When Jane Eyre grows 'pliant as a reed' under St John Rivers's kindness, she

muses that gentleness is 'far more potent... than force' (Brontë, 1999: 357). Rivers has

previously attempted, without success, to manipulate and coerce Jane into matrimony.

When he suddenly ceases to exert force, he reveals his capacity for an alternative

masculinity that temporarily rejects the need for oppression and instead expresses itself

in a more passive goodness and gentleness. This sudden absence of endeavour

illustrates one of the paradoxes of goodness: though ultimately 'more potent' than force,

goodness is also characteristically invisible and silent. John Ruskin's remark about

Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* affirms the nineteenth-century belief that women are

'naturally' more good than men, and also that male goodness is somehow different from

female. The reason Chaucer does not write about good men, Ruskin suggests, is that

goodness in men is less visible, less definable and socio-politically less important than

in women (Ruskin, 1921: 106ff.). Charlotte Brontë is, however, one of many

nineteenth-century women writers to describe an alternative masculinity through her

depiction of a good man whose strict sense of morality governs his conduct.

This 'other', moral, masculinity forms the subject of this thesis. In order to

contribute to the creation of new knowledge in this field, this study seeks to evaluate the

non-patriarchal status of the good man in women's fiction, and to explore some of the

debates taking place throughout the nineteenth century about the purpose, function and

value of morality in men. The ongoing reconstruction of the male ideal suggests that the

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[1] John Ruskin, 1921. *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), London: J. M. Dent and Sons, p. 106.

notion of what it means in practice to be a good man must be continually redefined against such culturally normative standards that prevail at the time of examination. I argue that not only did women writers show robust understanding of what I have called moral masculinity, but that they frequently anticipate the work of many later morality and gender theorists.

This study adopts numerous methodologies in order to fully engage with the multiple forms of morality and masculinity presented herein. While my primary focus is on the novels I have chosen to discuss, I combine close textual analysis with historical contextualisation of primary documents within a broader socio-cultural framework that draws on the study of virtue ethics and some theories of masculinity. My intervention in this field is thus multi-disciplinary, and I outline below the primary areas under consideration.

Women Writers and Women's Men

In this section I explain and justify my choice to focus on exclusively women novelists. On its first publication in 1979, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* was groundbreaking in its sustained readings of female oppression in women's nineteenth-century fiction. Similarly, in her study of the Victorian cultural imagination, Nina Auerbach identified four archetypes of fictional woman: the angel, the demon, the old maid and the fallen woman, taking it for granted that meanwhile 'Victorian man strove to be good and a god' (Auerbach, 1982: 8). In these studies, Gilbert and Gubar, and Auerbach, focus entirely on women writers as a group, and almost exclusively on the female characters in women's literature. 'Victorian man' is taken by Auerbach to suggest a universally representative and sociologically normative model against which women struggle for individual expression. In feminist readings, the rare good man is one of two extremes: he is either a 'pillar of patriarchy'

(Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 366) or an ineffectual angel, 'full of vaporously right intentions but lacking the power to save' (Auerbach, 1982: 64).

Women's writing has naturally tended to form the focus of feminist criticism, and although critical discussion usually centres on women's heroines, women's men have also been the subject of enquiry. Elaine Showalter disagreed with earlier critics who saw women's heroes as fantasy lovers, suggesting instead that women create idealised men as figural representations of their own projected egos (Showalter, 1991: 136). Women's heroes were most often seen by critics as a combination of realistic portrait and romantic fantasy (Miller, 1986: 142). Rachel Brownstein's view of the honourable hero is that 'virtue is imagined as male without being violent or personally ambitious – without, in other words, having the characteristics usually imagined as masculine' (Brownstein, 1984: 117).

Nearly thirty years later, new developments in gender studies have led to a nascent reappraisal of the male characters in nineteenth-century women's fiction. Not only are women writers as a group still capable of being regarded as a valuable, interrelated and worthy focus for scholarship, but also their male characters are beginning to be recognised as more substantial than merely embodiments of wish-fulfilment or fantasy figures. The most immediate, and convincing, evidence for this is the recent publication of *Women Constructing Men: Female Novelists and their Male Characters 1750-2000* (2010). This collection of essays on women's fiction over a very broad chronological range, and employing a diverse range of critical methods, self-proclaims its engagement with 'this new direction in gender studies' (Frantz and Rennhak, 2010: 4). While none of the contributors directly addresses the issue of nineteenth-century moral masculinity, the publication of this collection demonstrates very clearly that women writers, and their male characters, have begun to form an

engaging new critical field for analysis. It is equally clear that my own study will stand as a valid contribution to this field.

In this thesis I explore the ways in which exalted morality in male characters is managed by women writers. Elaine Showalter's remark that women's men are 'impossibly pious or desexed' (Showalter, 1982: 133) and Eliza Lynn Linton's much earlier claim that the men in women's novels are 'prigs, ruffians or curled darlings' (Linton, 1883: 246) suggest that the good man is unavoidably, as Samuel Richardson feared, 'a tame man' (Carroll, 1964: 161). Blanche Ingram has no patience with 'good' men, preferring the more dangerous individual who is '"nothing without a spice of the devil in him"' (Brontë, 1999: 152). When Gwendolen Harleth declares, '"I believe all men are bad, and I hate them,"' she voices the anger, fear, and frustration of the moment (Eliot, 2002: 154). The tendency, in the past, has been to present the immorality of men as sociologically normative and inevitable, or as infinitely preferable to the priggishness of perfection. My appraisal of masculine morality shows women writers' understanding of the fact that men are equally oppressed by patriarchy, but for different reasons and in different ways.

My own reasons for choosing to focus on women writers are that women, as a discrete group excluded from many of the privileges of being male, are in a singularly interesting position from which to imagine and create male characters. Two of the authors in my study published their work using male, or at least androgynous, pseudonyms. In her study of Victorian women writers, Alexis Easley notes that 'anonymous publication provided women with effective cover for exploring a variety of conventionally "masculine" social issues. It also allowed them to evade essentialised notions of "feminine" voice and identity' (Easley, 2004: 1). I show in my study that women writers are much more than 'impersonators of men' (Miller, 1986: 15). Their creation of male characters who consistently act rightly rather suggests an intuitive

understanding of the ways in which gender can be performative while morality must be intrinsic.

My decision to focus exclusively on women writers' male characters is also practical. While Anthony Trollope and Charles Dickens, for example, are justifiably well-known for their portrayals of good men and morality, the volume of their professional output means that a detailed discussion of their good men would more than fill a single volume. Rather than simply comparing and contrasting the male characters of a single writer, I am more interested in exploring the dialogue between several writers over time, examining the ways in which writers are inspired by each other and by the ways in which their works respond to increasingly complex social and cultural issues. Furthermore, as writers, Dickens, Trollope and Thackeray tend to place emphasis in equal measure on plot and character, with less sustained psychological depth than can be found in the work of many women writers. Finally, I see more potential interest and discovery in examining the ways women might imagine men from their unique position as observers rather than participants in biological male experience. Trollope has been viewed as 'the chronicler of men wielding their power in their vestries, in their ministries and on their estates' (Skilton, 1996: 85), which is a position denied to women, either as writers or as active individuals. While I am not overtly concerned with men's patriarchal power, I am interested in the gentler power of morality, and the ways in which this more subtle power is expressed by women through male characters. My aim is to trace an emerging discourse of moral masculinity in a selection of representative novels that explore, with varying degrees of success, the new subject position of the moral man.

Feminism, Masculinity and Gender Performativity

In this section I situate my discussion of an alternative masculinity within the broader field of modern gender studies. The collapse of second-wave feminism during the early 1990s, when the word 'woman' was deemed to be unstable, led to a new feminist poetics that demonstrated a shift away from the politics of the individual (Gillis et al, 2007: xxiii). The more radical discourses of the mid- to late-1990s allowed for a further expansion of feminist and masculinity theory, and to an acceptance of the possibility of male-engendered feminism along with male and female masculinity as the object of critical attention. When Harry Brod proposed a general theory of men's studies in 1987, he called for a revision of the over-generalisation that equated 'man' with 'generic human', arguing that its corresponding tendency to undervalue masculinity distorted the distinctions between what is specifically male, and what is generically human (Brod, 1987: 40). This attempt to deconstruct what had been previously understood to be either male or human led to the inclusion of a female experience of masculinities through the 'radical discontinuity between sex and culturally constructed genders' (Shail, 2007: 90).

Judith Halberstam's influential work argues that masculinity, with its associated notions of power, legitimacy and privilege, is only legible as masculinity when it is separated from the white, middle-class, male body. Her study explores the ways in which masculinity is constructed through expressions of female masculinity that is, in itself, qualitatively different from traditional notions of the masculine. She argues that female masculinity is not simply an imitation of maleness, but rather stands as an alternative expression of power within traditionally disempowered social, ethnic and political groups. Men and boys have been burdened with 'compulsory masculinity' only because of their biological maleness, while the corresponding possibility of other masculinities has been actively denied to those with female bodies (Halberstam, 1998:

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269, 273). She insists that 'masculinity does not belong to men, has not been produced by men, and does not properly express male heterosexuality' (ibid.: 241). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has also argued that masculinity and femininity are not binary qualities but rather are orthogonal: instead of being at opposite poles of the same axis, they actually exist in different, perpendicular dimensions and are therefore independently variable (Sedgwick, 1995: 16).

Sedgwick and Halberstam thus agree that masculinity is 'not always about men' (Sedgwick, 1995: 12). I show throughout this thesis that a similar concept was beginning to be explored by writers throughout the nineteenth century. An anonymous writer in 1875 observed that 'there is a group of mental characteristics generally accounted feminine, which is, however, occasionally found in a man, and a group accounted masculine, which is occasionally found in a woman'. The writer distinguishes between 'essential', or biological, and 'differential' distinctions of sex, arguing that instability in the latter produces masculine women or effeminate men ('T. G. C.', 1875: 444-5). Similarly, Lydia Becker argued that 'what is called a masculine mind is frequently found united to a feminine body' (Becker, 1868: 491). In this study I explore the ways in which women writers begin to redefine the concept of masculinity through their creation of male characters who exhibit moral, and traditionally feminine, traits. As a group, they simultaneously anticipate and affirm Sedgwick's statement, 'I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them' (Sedgwick, 1995: 13).

The recent work of Judith Butler develops these ideas further, claiming that sex, sexuality, gender, and the body are conceived in pure terms as products of culture and society. Butler rejects the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' as the cultural articulation of biological sex, arguing instead that gender is performative and constitutive of subjectivity. She states, 'what we take to be an internal essence of gender is

manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylisation of the body' (Butler, 1990: xv). When Butler writes, 'the genders I have in mind have been in existence for a long time, but they have not been admitted into the terms that govern reality' (Butler, 2004: 31), she acknowledges the existence of a phenomenon that has not previously been examined. In their portrayals of alternative, moral masculinities, Victorian women writers demonstrate an early understanding of the performative aspects of gender. They do this not simply through their creation and imagining of male character, but more specifically by exploring the ways in which that male character expresses morality and gender through his familial roles as husband and father and also through his professional roles as worker or employer. Thus when John Halifax is said to be 'patient as a woman' (Craik, 2005: 320), Dinah Craik explores what Butler calls 'the mechanism by which notions of the masculine and feminine are produced and naturalised *but also* possibly the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed/ denaturalised' (Butler, 2004: 42; italics original).

Several commentaries on Victorian masculinities have observed the unstable nature of nineteenth-century manhood. Herbert Sussman's 1995 text, *Victorian Masculinities*, cites Victorian artistic maleness as 'an ongoing process, a plot, a narrative over time' (Sussman, 1995: 45), suggesting that attempts to define a nineteenth-century masculinity form a series of ultimately inconclusive dialogues. Muscular Christianity and Christian manliness, most obviously evident in the work of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, have been explored by a range of writers keen to trace an alternative masculinity that has a preoccupation with 'earnestness, selflessness and integrity' (Mangan, 1987: 1).[2]

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[2] See, for example: Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit* (1985); David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning* (1961); John Tosh, *A Man's Place* (1999); Michael Roper and John Tosh, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (1991).

More recently, the alternative nineteenth-century masculinities that lie beneath the more recognisable 'heroic masculinities' identified by Halberstam (1998: 1) have begun to be explored and defined by scholars. In *The Burdens of Intimacy* (1999), Christopher Lane outlines some of the desires and conflicts that torment the male protagonists in nineteenth-century novels. Depictions of intense affect simultaneously draw men together and push them apart (Lane, 1999: xi), leading to a renewed interest in the effect of emotional and body-based knowledge that renders difficult the articulation of 'being a man' (Robinson and Hockey, 2011: 8). Holly Furneaux's recent work on Charles Dickens's portrayal of nurturing masculinities, and in particular her engagement with his concern with healing touch and affect, challenges historic thinking about Victorian ideals of maleness (Furneaux, 2009: 7). Her latest work, *Military Men of Feeling: Masculinity, Emotion and Tactility in Victorian Warfare* (2016), extends these arguments in a more wide-ranging discussion of Victorian masculinity and Victorian militarism in which soldiers are seen as moral exemplars. Similarly, Karen Bourrier's latest work, *The Measure of Manliness: Disability and Masculinity in Victorian Fiction* (2015) explores the concerns of male invalids, passive men and male disability, arguing that narratives of masculine physical weakness represent an alternative response to the Victorian culture of industry and vitality.

My own intervention in this field is specifically concerned with the moral articulation of masculinity across its wide-ranging relational fields. I argue that nineteenth-century women writers developed an intuitive understanding of the changeable and unstable nature of masculinity in public and private spheres, and that they attempted to homogenise this instability by creating morality as the central unifying force that brought together what they saw as disparate facets of masculine expression. In this attempt to unify masculine experience through a foundation of moral knowledge and expression, they collectively and progressively demonstrate that

transitions in masculinity can be 'as much about connection and continuity as separation and difference' (Robinson and Hockey, 2011: 17). Sandra Lee Bartky has said that women become 'docile and compliant' companions of men in the same way as the army turns raw recruits into soldiers (1990: 75). This statement simultaneously suggests that men learn to become 'masculine' in the same way that women learn to become 'feminine'. I show throughout this study that women writers, through their creation of male characters whose main concern is with moral behaviour, not only have full understanding of the relational and performative construct of gender, but are also willing to allow traditionally feminine docility and compliance to become visible features of an alternative masculinity. As I discuss further below, this is a primary consideration in moral and ethical behaviour because doing the right thing, or being the right person, often involves a surrender of egotistical power for the subjective benefit of another. Thus I argue that women writers of the nineteenth century, in depicting 'gentle' men who are at the same time 'good' men can be understood and reclaimed as contributors to the debate on masculine femininity and feminine masculinity. My study adds to and builds on recent similar debates about, for example, Elizabeth Gaskell's industrialists and the potential for 'mothering' in industrialist fathers.[3] Jessica Malay, in a discussion of the male characters in Gaskell's *North and South* (1854) and Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), finds that 'within each novel a variety of masculinities are (sic) performed through which the novelists attempt to define and identify a masculinity suited to emerging social realities' (Malay, 2010: 41). My study extends this debate to assess how far this performative masculinity and morality can both reflect and shape the emerging social realities of the nineteenth century. By taking a broad chronological range as the focus of this study, I am able to read social, historical and moral change as

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[3] See, for example, Thomas Fair's discussion of Gaskell's alternative views of patriarchy, in which guiding and protecting paternal figures also function as caring and supportive fathers or as compliant husbands and lovers (Fair, 2009: 219), and Andrew Walker's discussion of textiles manufacturers' pastoral care for their employees (Walker, 2007: 113).

part of an increasingly complex and problematic developing construction of both

morality and masculinity.

Philosophical Approaches

In this section I outline some of the parameters of goodness, as I understand it

for the purposes of this thesis, and provide justification, where appropriate, for the

philosophical conventions and authorities to which I refer. I have stated above that my

original contribution to this particular area of literary study is multidisciplinary, in that

my aim is to explore portrayals of masculinity and morality. I am concerned in this

study of nineteenth-century fiction equally with the ways in which good men are good,

and with the ways in which good men are men. There has been some investigation of

the relatedness of morality and gender as performance, though not, to date, within the

context of nineteenth-century fiction. Frigga Haug, in her discussion of morals and

gender, maintains that morality itself is universal, but that it is expressed differently in

men and women:

> it is not true that each sex is assigned different values from the outset
> – women are caring, men are brave – but that the same values have
> different meanings for each sex, they imply different practices and
> demand different responses. Morality calls both sexes to order, but
> each sex obeys after its own fashion. Hence morality becomes a
> powerful force separating the sexes. For men it centres on property,
> for women on the body (Haug, 1984: 58).

I argue that masculine morality is not quite so straightforward, and that much of what

makes men moral is in fact situated equally in the body. Furthermore, morality acts in

women's writing as a unifying force that brings not only men and women together, but

also unifies and comments on the performative aspects of gender.

Moral goodness, as a general indicator of excellence in human behaviour,

remains undefined in any systematically unproblematic or rigorous way. The goodness

of an act, or of character generally, is almost infinitely subjective and has been defined

or categorised variously as social obedience (MacIntyre, 1985: 244), as a form of self-control (Wright, 1963: 149-51) and as a socio-cultural phenomenon (Paton, 1927: 307). In 1845, William Whewell defined goodness as synonymous with duty and love embodied in virtue (Whewell, 1845: 47). Thomas Arnold, in urging the boys at Rugby School to do their best to be good, voices contemporary concerns in this sermon:

> But what is good, and what is evil? Have we made out clearly to ourselves the full delineation of each? Is strictness of life good or evil? Is devotedness to our friends good or evil? Is submitting to wrong good or evil? Is bearing affronts good or evil? Is singularity good or evil? (Arnold, 1849: 420).

These are not merely rhetorical questions. Integral to Arnold's address is his insistence that goodness is difficult, and deciding on the morally right course of action is a matter for the individual circumstances and the individual conscience. The answers to his questions are much more complex than a simple 'yes' or 'no'; the correct answer in each case is, 'it depends'. Devotedness to friends, for example, is a good thing only if your friends are also good. Equally, submitting to wrong can be morally good in some circumstances.[4] The insecurity of knowing for certain what constitutes goodness is markedly evident in this sermon, and Arnold makes clear that deciding what is good and actually being good are equally difficult.

Given that I focus throughout this study on male goodness in women's novels over a period of a century or so, I adopt various historical and cultural approaches to goodness in order to illustrate the appropriate range of morality demonstrated in the novels I choose to discuss. I am primarily interested in how male characters are constructed as moral agents, and how goodness as a moral characteristic is manifested. For the purposes of this discussion, I use the words and phrases good (or goodness), morally good, and virtuous as roughly synonymous. I justify my choice of principal moral interlocutors below.

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[4] 'Submitting to wrong' is, to some extent, what Thurstan Benson does in *Ruth*. I discuss this further in Chapter Three.

In my discussion of Jane Austen's men, I refer to Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*,[5] which characterises the spirit of Austen's moralistic views. Smith's focus on propriety, judgement and duty as the foundations of morality is contiguous with Austen's construction of masculine moral conduct. While the ideas of conduct and character were carried forward into nineteenth-century understanding of morality, the notion of compassion, or sympathy, as the primary denominator of goodness is rooted in the eighteenth century and particularly in novels of sentiment and sensibility, some of which I discuss further below. Smith and Austen thus represent a useful homogeneous starting point for the debate generated in this thesis about the foundations and value of goodness in the nineteenth century.

In the latter chapters of this thesis, I refer to Iris Murdoch's work on metaphysics in *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970). Murdoch, as both novelist and philosopher, brings a uniquely literary perspective to the understanding of moral goodness. Murdoch's view is that one becomes moral through an overriding regard for others. The moral person, through affective perception, is directed towards consideration of others rather than self in a process that Murdoch describes as 'seeing the unself' (Murdoch, 1970: 93). To be good is to be, fundamentally, and literally, unself-ish. Attending perceptively to others leads to a diminishing of the importance of self so that a resulting sense of humility forms a vital component of Murdoch's conception of goodness. Murdoch's views are particularly compatible with George Eliot's construction of Daniel Deronda, where the egoistic self is suppressed in a relinquishing of the gratification of personal desire. Deronda's empathic goodness is humble and selfless in accordance with Murdoch's focus on others.

For the middle section of my thesis, where I read mid-century fiction, I refer to the work of Philippa Foot. As a pioneer in the field of virtue ethics, Foot provides a

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[5] Smith's text, first published in 1759, was revised five times during his own lifetime, with the sixth edition appearing in 1790.

more securely theoretical framework for the understanding of goodness, character and moral excellence. Her work also illuminates some of the specific problems associated with the moral dilemma presented through, for example, Thurstan Benson in *Ruth* (1853), which I discuss fully in Chapter Three. I outline briefly below my primary reasons for taking the study of virtue ethics as a theoretical model of moral goodness.

Virtue ethics as a discrete field is more interested in the virtuous character of virtuous individuals than in the actions of such characters (Slote, 1992: xiv). This contrasts with other fields of moral enquiry, such as deontology and utilitarianism, both of which developed influentially throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively, and from which the more agent-centred contemporary enquiry of virtue ethics has ultimately derived.

Deontology holds broadly that morality is governed by duty or laws, and is characterised by Kantian ethics and Christianity, where the correct course of action would be to follow the commandments or rules that have been agreed as morally sanctioned. It is therefore dependent on agent-relative actions, in that it concerns 'the right thing to do' rather than 'the right thing to happen' or 'the right person to be' (Darwall, 2003: 1-2).

Utilitarianism, developed by John Stuart Mill in his 1861 work and deriving in part from the theories of Jeremy Bentham, is the belief that the actions of individuals, laws, policies and institutions are to be evaluated by their utility, or the degree to which their consequences are better than their alternatives. Mill states that 'actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure' (Mill, 1863: 9).

The more modern field of virtue ethics derives its moral theory partly from deontology and utilitarianism, but differs from these earlier moral theories in important

respects. Elizabeth Anscombe's 1958 essay 'Modern Moral Philosophy' was the first to object on moral grounds to Mill's concept of utility, arguing that the production of happiness is too subjective to be of any practical use in determining moral behaviour (Anscombe, 1958: 2-3). She also called for the rejection of the deontological concepts of moral obligation and moral duty because 'they are survivals, or derivatives of survivals, from an earlier conception of ethics which no longer generally survives.' Her objection to prescriptive rules for moral conduct is in response to the introduction of the law conception of ethics introduced by Christianity, which superseded Aristotle's earlier work on virtue and character (ibid.: 1, 5). Her paper led ultimately to the development of the more contemporary work on moral theory that became known as virtue ethics, which grew from a growing consensus that utilitarianism could not adequately recognise the moral significance of personal relationships, emotions and motives (Oakley, 2014: 64).

My own difficulty with utilitarianism as a suitable theory for moral masculinity is likewise its focus on consequential happiness and its relative failure to address issues of emotional engagement. My readings of primary texts show that where men reveal willingness to aspire to the highest possible morality, they are often disappointed by their own failure to attain the standards they envisage. The good man is often made uneasy or unhappy by the idea of his own imperfection but at the same time realises the impossibility of trying to be completely faultless. The usual result is a sense of terminal dissatisfaction, despite the potential joy that altruism might be expected to bring. Adam Philips and Barbara Taylor believe that kindness can be 'the strongest indicator of people's well-being, their pleasure in existence' (Philips, 2009: 114). Kind people, they suggest, are happy people bringing happiness to others, and yet nineteenth-century fiction is full of good men who are relentlessly kind but at the same time palpably frustrated by their own failure to be perfect. I demonstrate throughout this study that

being a morally good man often does not bring happiness and for this reason I choose virtue ethics over utilitarianism as a theoretical framework.

Another reason for the development of virtue ethics as a separate field of moral study is that deontological and utilitarian views of moral behaviour fail to take account of the potentially damaging effects of a moral action's possible or unintended consequences. Virtue ethics remains more grounded in aretaic concepts of goodness and excellence rather than in the deontological notions like 'ought', 'right' and 'wrong' that govern the rules for moral behaviour. With utilitarianism, what counts as excellent or admirable action maintains its moral value in the overall consequences for generic human well-being rather than in its essential goodness of character. The notion that ultimate goodness resides in concern for others rather than self, and in moral agency rather than agent-centred acts, constitutes the core starting-point of virtue ethics.

Virtue ethics takes much of its inspiration from the Aristotelian view of virtues, where virtue is defined as 'a good quality of character, more specifically a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way' (Swanton: 2003, 19). Virtues benefit their possessor in such a way that they make their possessor a good human being, usually by having a good effect on someone other than the agent, and as a result of the agent being a certain kind of person rather than by the agent behaving in a certain kind of way.

Philippa Foot's discussion of virtue as excellence of character is central to my discussion of goodness in the context of this study, which focuses on the depiction of good men and the portrayal of their emotional relationships with others. She states that virtues are essentially corrective, 'each one standing at a point at which there is some temptation to be resisted or deficiency of motivation to be made good (Foot, 1978: 8). In this way, virtue can be seen as a form of inaction, in that it calls for the resistance of an undesirable behaviour. Her insistence that virtue and goodness are bound together

with the individual will, in its broadest sense, builds on and unites the Aristotelian model of morality with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment model, in which reason acts as the noble regulator of the lower aspects of human desire. This union of will, reason and moral character allows for further exploration of masculine expression of morality and its relation to wider socio-cultural issues in nineteenth-century society.

Where the good man faces a moral decision, or moral dilemma, I show that his creator has constructed his character in such a way that the non-utilitarian consequences of a moral act as well as the consequences of intrinsic moral behaviour can be fully explored. In the absence of a clear moral decision, I am interested simply in how the good man's goodness is constructed, and how the value of that goodness is presented through the text. As Iris Murdoch observed, it remains true that 'we know little about good men. There are men in history who are traditionally thought of as having been good (Christ, Socrates, certain saints) but if we try to contemplate these men we find that the information about them is scanty and vague' (Murdoch, 1970: 52). There has, to date, been little consistent or rigorous analysis of the good male characters in women's fiction and thus a significant critical gap is revealed. I explain my focus on character in the section below.

Character

In a study that focuses on male goodness in nineteenth-century fiction, it is inevitable that much of that focus will be on character, since the manifestation of good behaviour is almost exclusively a matter of individual character. Until comparatively recently, there was no coherent field of research for the concept of literary character (Jannidis, 2009: 16; Woloch, 2003: 17). Traditionally, structuralist critics have argued that the notion of character is a myth and have focused instead on the destabilisation of the self or individual as a discrete entity (Culler, 1975: 230). Tensions in the narrative

are resolved by deconstruction of structures in the text itself rather than through a reading of a text's protagonists.

In the realist novel, however, character and action are mutually dependent, and much of the aesthetic pleasure of the reader comes from recognition of the mimetic ways in which characters negotiate conflict and fictional environment. Alex Woloch suggests that the creation of character relationships in fiction offers 'not simply many *interacting* individuals but many *intersecting* character-spaces' through which tensions in theme and narrative are explored (Woloch, 2003: 18; italics original). Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan argues that, contrary to the Aristotelian view of character as little more than agent and thus subordinate to narrative action, character and action are mutually dependent (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 35). Similarly, Steven Cohan and Linda Shires agree that 'analysis of a story cannot focus only on the organisation of events, since events do not happen on their own. Events require some agency of action: characters, which are also structured as units of meaning along syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes' (Cohan and Shires, 1988: 69). While analysis of character is sometimes viewed as too simplistic a way of accessing a text, it is 'equally legitimate to subordinate action to character when the latter is the focus of our study' (ibid.: 36). In my readings of the male protagonists of my chosen texts, I do not simply 'read' character, but pursue a robust enquiry of the construction of morality and interrogate the ways in which that morality is presented in terms of individual, narrative and plot. Characters have agency, and thus cause things to happen (Porter Abbott, 2002: 131). Indeed, one of the primary ways in which character dominates attention in the realist novel is by being eponymous. How else are we to see John Halifax or Daniel Deronda but as the central characters in their own narratives?

Fotis Jannidis argues that 'for most readers, characters are one of the most important aspects of a narrative... the way the text presents a character is highly

influential on the relation between character and reader' (Jannidis, 2009: 15). Alan Palmer's understanding is that novels give portraits of purposeful, engaged social interaction, and that characters are best understood by 'mind' rather than by thought or consciousness, since 'mind' includes that which is omitted from speech (Palmer, 2002: 32). Character, as I discuss it, is socially situated, and demonstrates the dialogic nature of consciousness. Characters' thoughts are read as part of a social and historical context as well as a fictional one. Men in novels are seen in private and public dialogue with self and others and are thus seen as constructions of mind. In discussing the morality of character, I take 'character' to signify fictional personality, illustration of mind and quality of moral standing. John Frow's definition of fictional character as both 'person-shaped figure' and 'analogue of "real" persons' gives legitimate currency to a discussion of character as representative of 'what it means to be a person and to have a physical body, a moral character, a sense of self, and a capacity for action' (Frow, 2014: 24-5).

The lack of critical attention given to women writers' male characters is evident from a brief survey of the analysis of masculinist poetics. *The Changing Fictions of Masculinity* (David Rosen, 1993), *Victorian Masculinities* (Herbert Sussman, 1995), *Muscular Christianity* (Donald Hall, 1994), and *Fictions of Masculinity: Crossing Cultures, Crossing Sexualities* (ed. Peter Murphy, 1994) all exclusively survey male characters in fiction by men. Christopher Lane presents a book that is fundamentally 'about the desires and conflicts tormenting male protagonists in Victorian novels' (Lane, 1999: xi).[6] Notably, the primary attention of all these texts is on character as the means through which masculinities are performed. There is arguably an equal, if not greater, demand for similar analysis of women's male characters, both as figures of

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[6] The only female novelist Lane evaluates in this study is Olive Schreiner.

speech and as figural representations (Frow, 2014: 8). In this capacity, women writers are valuable contributors to the debate on alternative Victorian masculinities.

My focus on character allows for a full discussion of women writers' ability to imagine men in their professional and domestic roles. It also allows for a historicist view of the individual's relationship with others within and beyond the immediate family circle, particularly when taking into account the chronological scope of this study. The individual's responses to the demands of a rapidly changing society over time offer some solutions to the problems raised by the development of increasingly complex cultural norms. Eliza Lynn Linton's claim that 'it is the rarest thing possible to find a flesh-and-blood man in the pages of a woman's novel' (Linton, 1883: 246) is, under empirical scrutiny, revealed to be provocatively inaccurate. Linton's criticism is directed in equal measure towards women writers and their female readers, who care only that men 'shall be tender and true to them' (ibid.: 247). Charlotte Brontë's Shirley Keeldar insists, on the contrary, that 'women read men more truly than men read women' (Brontë, 2006: 333). These statements prepare the ground for a burgeoning area of scholarship, as Frantz and Rennhak have begun to demonstrate. I show, through detailed analyses of the good men in women's fiction, that the virtues of a good male character cross gender boundaries while contributing to valid portraits of nineteenth-century masculinities.

Furthermore, my emphasis on virtue ethics as embodying what it is to be a good person means that there is little alternative but to examine the effects of moral standing through character. I have noted above that virtue ethics is interested in the character of the virtuous individual rather than in their virtuous actions. Emphasising a character's actions would result in a more sustained focus on plot, rather than enabling a fuller assessment of the psychological realism afforded by nineteenth-century women's

writing. Virtue ethics as a field of study presumes the truth of three metaphysically realistic propositions:

> (a) there are human selves, or persons, who exist as continuants, who remain the same essentially through change and yet can grow in capacities
> (b) virtues are such capacities, such that selves may grow in good character qualities towards an end, or *telos*, that is the goal for human maturity; and
> (c) both human selves and virtues are not metaphysically real entities and exist as mind- or language-independent entities (Smith, 2003: 4).

Virtue ethics thus presupposes the kind of 'self' that can grow or develop in character while remaining fundamentally recognisable as the same. It is thus a reasonable way of assessing morality in fiction, which requires the creation of character that is at once 'realistic' and capable of growth.

David Morse claims that 'the virtues which were esteemed in a woman were significantly different from those that dignified a man. A woman was valued for her chastity, but also for her obedience, her patience, her devotion to duty and to her family, her spirit of self-sacrifice' (Morse, 2000: 116). My own readings show that these are also virtues of male characters. Chastity and devotion to family are features of all the male characters in this study, along with a desire to help others. The men in this study remain obedient to social mores and religious teachings, they are patient, and three of them are self-sacrificing in the literal sense of the word.

Contexts

In this section I outline and explain some of the eighteenth-century foundations for a study of nineteenth-century male goodness. Gerard Barker's *Grandison's Heirs* (1985) comprises a detailed evaluation of the literary authority of Samuel Richardson's eponymous hero, and discusses the ways in which *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4)

continued to influence novelists of the later-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.[7]

Barker states that 'Richardson's "good man" soon became the prototype for the gentle, sensitive, but manly hero who abounds in the feminine novel of the latter half of the century' (Barker, 1985: 47). Indeed, the influence of Grandison could well extend further still, as many nineteenth-century novelists were familiar with Richardson's work. George Eliot wrote to her close friend Sara Hennell in 1847, 'Thank you for putting me on reading *Sir Charles Grandison*. I have read five volumes, and am only vexed that I have not the two last on my table at this moment... I had no idea that Richardson was worth so much... The morality is perfect' (Cross, 2010: 167). Although Eliot admired the morality in Grandison, she also understood that nineteenth-century morality had ceased to be as simplistic as that portrayed in eighteenth-century fiction. While there are arguably some core elements of Grandison in Daniel Deronda, for example, notably perhaps in Deronda's general benevolence and in his desire to be an 'English' gentleman, there are also other ideologies influencing his character that suggest cross-cultural, more socially expansive, elements of race, religion and gender.

Grandison has come to represent an impossibly perfect model of moral excellence and virtuous masculinity. 'The world of Sir Charles Grandison,' writes E. J. Clery, 'is a world of angels... [where] virtue flourishes like Japanese knotweed and sinners are converted with industrial efficiency' (Clery, 2004: 155-6). Richardson himself was discomfited by criticism of his hero's apparent absolute goodness, but defends his creation by insisting that Grandison is not the 'faultless character' so censured by his critics: 'he performs no one action which it is not in the power of any man in his situation to perform: and that he checks and restrains himself in no one instance in which it is not the duty of a prudent and good man to restrain himself'

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[7] Barker notes that the influence of Grandison does not end with Austen, as does his own survey, but that it continues well into Victorian fiction. He adds , 'though that is another book, which, it is hoped, someone else will undertake to write' (Barker, 1985: 10). It is hoped that this study may partly aim to fill the place set aside here by Barker.

(Richardson, 1972: 464). Richardson's confident assertion in the appendix to his novel belies his difficulty with Grandison's creation. During the composition of the novel, he wrote to his friend Mrs Dewes in 1752, 'The good *man*, alas! I knew not what the task was which I undertook... there are so many things that may be done, and said, and written by a common man that cannot by a good man, that delicacies arrive on delicacies' (Carroll, 1964: 218). As an indication of the challenges in creating a virtuous hero who will remain engaging as a literary character, this statement is revealing, and perhaps confirms that *Sir Charles Grandison* ultimately raises a question about 'the representation of masculinity as much as one about "goodness"' (Mullan, 1988: 81).

As a product of the eighteenth century, Grandison's fine sensibility is rooted in the tradition of the sentimental novel. The novel of sentiment embodies a belief in the edifying quality of virtue, conveyed through the concept of sensibility. Sentiment, as both 'moral reflection' and as an elevated thought 'influenced by emotion' (Todd, 1986: 7) represented the capacity to identify with the suffering of others. In the eighteenth century novel, sensibility suggested a capacity for heightened and refined emotional response, particularly to portrayals of moral excellence. Sentimental fiction 'thus models "fine feeling," giving its characters opportunities to exhibit and valorize sympathetic and virtuous emotional expression, as well as giving readers a chance to exercise their own sensibilities' (Rowland, 2009: 193).

Female writers before Austen confront the cultural discourse of masculinity by creating novels that centre explicitly on male heroes 'who resist the ideologies of male dominance' (Maurer, 2010: 11). Janet Todd maintains that sensibility was 'of course' associated with women, and that 'the cult of sensibility seemed to have feminised the nation, given women undue prominence, and emasculated men' (Todd, 1986: 133). By nineteenth-century standards, this is probably true, though I suggest that the eighteenth-century foundations of sensibility provided nineteenth-century writers with a unique

opportunity to imagine, present and defend idealised masculine behaviour as a desired model of moral excellence. The fact that virtuous male heroes move through the world in ways that are inaccessible to virtuous female characters allows for women writers to comment on both masculinity and morality.

Richardson himself enlisted the help of his female friends in the composition of *Sir Charles Grandison*, reflecting hope and anxiety in equal measure in his appeals to their observational capacities: 'Can you help me to such a one as is demanded of me?... How can we hope that ladies will not think a good man a tame man?' (Carroll, 1964: 161). His apparent lack of confidence in his own masculine ability to create a credible good man confirms the eighteenth-century view that moral masculinity is primarily of value to women, and that it is women who have the most authority in describing or approving moral behaviour. James Fordyce, in his *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) writes, 'your business chiefly is to read men, in order to make yourselves agreeable and useful' (Fordyce, 1814: 211). This female reading of men, in the writing of fiction, leads to a tendency to regard the eighteenth century 'man of feeling' as essentially feminine in his passive and reactive engagement with the world. The goodness of Sarah Fielding's eponymous David Simple, for example, reveals more about the systemic evils of eighteenth-century society than about his own benevolent masculinity (Maurer, 2010: 12). As a passive hero with a naive willingness to believe utterly in the essential goodness of others, Simple is often an unfortunate victim of circumstance as he moves through the episodic structure of the novel in his quest to find a friend as true as he believes himself to be (Fielding, 1994: 46).

The rather simplistic nature of morality and affect in the sentimental novel is developed by nineteenth-century writers into a more complex picture of society and individual, and reflects a greater moral understanding of self and others. The eighteenth-century novel perhaps demonstrates a more generally didactic approach in its portrayal

of moral behaviour, with comparatively little emphasis on the complexity of social relationships. The growth of the middle classes as a result of the industrial revolution created the need for wider acceptance of social and moral standing, which is reflected in nineteenth-century fiction. Emma, for example, cannot quite bring herself to accept the Coles, whose wealth comes from trade, as her social or moral equals (Austen, 2012: 143). It is sometimes the case that, in the eighteenth-century novel, 'incidents occur solely for the maxims they produce, and there is no interest in the personalities necessary to create such incidents' (Todd, 1986: 94). During the transition between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, some writers explore this conflict between aphoristic moralising and the realistic portrayal of society. For example, William Godwin's 1805 early-Romantic novel *Fleetwood: or, the New Man of Feeling*, explores a world in which the sentimental man becomes morally dishonourable as a result of having too little opportunity to demonstrate goodness. Having enjoyed a natural, Rousseauvian education in rural Wales, Casimir Fleetwood is corrupted by the bad company of his peers at Oxford University and confides to the reader, 'It is surprising how soon I became like to the persons I had so lately wondered at and despised' (Godwin, 1853: 21). Godwin's exploration of alternative morality and masculinity subverts and extends the debate begun by the sentimental novel.

Jane Austen is sometimes viewed as Richardson's natural successor (Doody, 1974: 275; Barker, 1985: 146ff.), and in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), as its title suggests, she combines the traditions of eighteenth-century sentiment with a more progressive early nineteenth-century willingness to challenge social and literary stereotypes. In beginning a process that deconstructs the ideal masculine archetype, Austen provides a convenient starting-point for my discussion in this thesis. Her construction of men who are each 'a fundamentally human mixture of virtues and flaws' (Ailwood, 2010: 67) enables a much broader interaction between male and female

characters and their literary spaces, and a more rigorous enquiry of both goodness and masculinity.

Austen's reference to the traditions of the earlier novel can also be seen in mid-Victorian fiction. Jessica Malay suggests that Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) and Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) borrow plot devices from the novel of sentiment. She notes that both Moore and Thornton must suffer 'physical and mental affliction' in order to emerge transformed from self-involved industrialists into benevolent aristocrats of industry (Malay, 2010: 51). This capacity for men to become emotionally fragile, or damaged, by their contact with modern society reconstructs the concept of sensibility into a more robust interrogation of emotional affect in male characters.

Scope and Content

This study begins with an exploration of selected early works of children's fiction that seeks to show how boys are instructed to become good men. Thomas Day's *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1789), and the stories of Maria Edgeworth, helped to establish moral standards for subsequent works and were widely read by many nineteenth-century novelists during their own childhoods. The strict forms of morality they advocate are shown to be a product of eighteenth-century values, based on propriety, decorum and obedience to authority. The first volume of *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818) refutes the possibility of goodness in its true, moral sense because of its foundations in evangelicalism. In later texts, such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), moral goodness becomes a more fragile phenomenon and suggests a growing insecurity about the meanings of masculinity, manliness and morality. In this first chapter I trace the development of early masculine moral progress, beginning in the private, domestic sphere that functions as 'the nursery of good citizens' (Lloyd, 1984:

78). For boys to become morally independent adults, they must learn to detach from the domestic rule of women and adopt a process of 'becoming male'.

In Chapter Two I examine Edmund Bertram, George Knightley, and Fitzwilliam Darcy in Jane Austen's novels, comparing Austen's construction of early-nineteenth-century morality with concepts in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790). Austen engages with both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary traditions, particularly in her depiction of male characters. The values and qualities with which she endows her male characters can be viewed as progressive re-imaginings of eighteenth-century literary tropes that at the same time remain a secure reflection of later eighteenth-century morality. Austen's work shows familiarity with and support for Smith's description of a moral society. Austen, as the daughter of a clergyman and as a conservative Christian, is generally considered to be a moralistic writer, conveying a strongly developed sense of what is right and wrong within the limits of her upper-middle-class community. Moral conduct in her work tends to be founded on judgement rather than on feeling, and on duty rather than on inclination, whereby 'morally upright conduct is inseparable from respect, compassion and sensitivity, and thus from manners, civility or propriety' (Eagleton, 2005: 110). In this chapter I explore Austen's complementary constructions of masculinity and morality through her pairings of flawed men. Adam Smith's self-reflexive method of moral evaluation is one of duality and alterity: 'When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it, and either approve or condemn it, it is evident that... I divide myself, as it were, into two persons' (Smith, 2009: 135-6). Austen takes this metaphorical mirroring and creates a more literal picture of two men who reflect and amplify each other's moral standards. As representatives of post-Grandisonian masculinities, Wickham and Darcy, for example, are created by Austen to challenge existing conceptions of true morality and the mere appearance of it.

Chapters Three and Four focus on the mid-nineteenth-century novel. I distinguish between them by discussing firstly the more theoretical aspects of moral goodness, and in Chapter Four, the socio-cultural performance of goodness. I consider some of the ways in which masculinity and morality are expanded by mid-century writers from the traditions developed by Austen. I focus on novels by four women writers in these two chapters as a means of fully exploring the primary motivating force behind their construction of morally good protagonists.

I begin, in Chapter Three, with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853). These are both novels with a moral conflict at the centre of their plot and are usually critically evaluated in terms of how their eponymous heroines negotiate the dangerous moral challenges presented in the texts. I offer a new reading of these familiar novels by evaluating the behaviour of each novel's good man, St John Rivers and Thurstan Benson, in their role as moral forces in the novels. Benson, as a professional man with an important moral role in his community, is surrounded by women – Faith, Ruth and Sally – and is influenced particularly by his sister. Similarly, although he nominally resists the influence of the feminine, St John Rivers is also the product of the female domestic environment. The spatial and temporal distance between him and Jane, and between him and the reader, is further complicated by the first-person narration of a female character, so that our access to St John is always through the female voice.

In my textual analysis of these novels, I refer to the masculinity theories of Victor Seidler, examining the ways in which masculinity is suppressed by the silencing of male emotion. Seidler argues that this emotional repression is a product of the Enlightenment emphasis on reason as the foundation of linguistic expression (Seidler, 1989: 142). He insists that the language of reason excludes the language of feeling, and that men have learned since the eighteenth century to devalue and mistrust their

emotions as valid indicators of masculinity. Consequently they lack access to the language that articulates feeling and instead express emotion through covert, 'masculine' modes of expression such as anger and the imposition of authority. Benson and Rivers articulate this insecurity less through anger and more through absence and withdrawal in an attempt to exclude the feminine influence that surrounds them, but with no real alternative space in which to define their masculinity. While both men are concerned with acting morally, and with gaining respect as moral agents, they have troubled relationships with authority and power.

In Chapter Four I compare the eponymous heroes of *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) and *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856). In this chapter I compare two popular, rather than securely canonical, writers, with the intention of integrating their moralistic conservatism into the more central debate about moral masculinity. Charlotte Yonge and Dinah Craik are both concerned with the creation of good male characters, and both are concerned with the construction of morality as private and public phenomena. The self-scrutiny practised by Austen's men is gradually supplemented with a more focused awareness of others in the development of an increasingly complex set of moral standards. Guy Morville and John Halifax are both domestic men, anxious to become good husbands and fathers, but they are also public men, concerned with professional or personal excellence in the wider world. Craik and Yonge both show clear understanding of the struggle between duty and inclination, constructing John and Guy as emerging gentlemen in the Victorian revival of the chivalric tradition. The meaning of the word 'gentleman' underwent substantial redefinition in the period between Austen and the 1850s, and I explore in these novels the ways in which gentlemen are defined as good men. My textual analysis of these novels is supported by the cultural self-realisation of goodness that formed the vision of Samuel Smiles, for whom the word 'character' has specific significance as 'human nature in its highest form' (Smiles, 2009: 7). Smiles's

focus on character and self-definition combines the forces of religion, morality and reason, and his focus on self-help through hard work redefines the principles on which moral masculinity is based. The broadening of possibilities evident through these novels makes for a widening actualisation of moral masculinity in performance. I show in this chapter that the physical and spiritual vigour of John and Guy is qualitatively different from muscular Christianity or Christian manliness, and that their vision of moral masculinity is at the same time more optimistic and expansive than that of St John Rivers and Thurstan Benson.

In Chapter Five I appraise the goodness of George Eliot's final hero, Daniel Deronda. By the mid-1870s, when this novel was published, male goodness shows clear differences from the depictions of decorum and politeness in the early part of the century, and equally, clear difference from the moral heroism of Craik and Yonge. Eliot's own difficulty with religion and Christian morality has been well-documented. Her views on morality and its manifestation in fiction and society remain, however, an under-researched area. While she is often seen as a moralistic writer, her credentials as a moral philosopher have been undervalued. The non-linear structure of the text and the gradual revelation of Deronda's history allow Eliot to explore the effect and power of altruism in the individual and society, and to read the construction of morality as prospective and indeterminate. In this chapter I read *Daniel Deronda* (1876) with reference to Iris Murdoch's work on metaphysics, examining the notions of detachment and attention in the formation of moral character. This is a more complex construction than the simple repression of masculine authority that occurs in Brontë and Gaskell. Murdoch states that attention, as moral vision, is 'not simply the suppression of self' but is in fact a redirection of attention outward, away from self and towards others (Murdoch, 1970: 66).

I end this study with readings of Mary Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888) and Margaret Harkness's *In Darkest London* (1889), examining the role of religious faith and doubt in constructions of moral masculinity. This final chapter explores the changing relationship between Christianity and goodness during the 1880s, demonstrating the possibility of a non-religious morality. Again, I compare less canonical writers in this chapter than elsewhere, in order to reclaim and integrate alternative masculinities within the more central trope of moral masculinity in women's fiction. Robert Elsmere and Captain Lobe are frailer than their antecedents, both men undergoing a crisis of confidence in their faith and in their capacity to save others. Elsmere, in particular, is contrasted with other expressions of masculinity in Ward's novel: the ritualistic fervour of Newsome, the worldliness of Squire Wendover, and the self-torturing anxieties of Langham together present a vivid portrait of masculinities in crisis towards the end of the century.

I end my study at this point because moral masculinity, or perhaps the absence of it, is examined primarily from a masculine perspective by the canonical texts of the fin de siècle. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) all offer more problematic readings of masculinity and morality. The fact that these writers are male makes any comparison with women writers' male characters at best uneven, and at worst of dubious critical value. There are many rigorous interrogations of fin de siècle fiction in, for example, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Stephen Arata, 1996), *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the fin de siècle* (Andrew Smith, 2004) and *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late Victorian London* (Judith Walkowitz, 2011).

Finally, the concluding chapter summarises my findings and evaluates the various ways in which moral masculinity is portrayed in nineteenth-century fiction. I discuss some of the difficulties inherent in a study of goodness, and I present the primary issues in the taxonomy of male goodness in fiction. I also briefly address ways in which nineteenth-century values and ideas about good men continue to influence society today.

Conclusion

In this final section I attempt to locate the place and purpose of this thesis within the wider scholarly fields with which it seeks to engage. I began this introduction with an episode from *Jane Eyre* that illustrates the characteristic silence, inactivity and invisibility of male goodness. John Mullan, in his study of the sentimental novel, points out that Sir Charles Grandison is equally invisible in his own epistolary text. The reader, and the other characters, can reach him only indirectly, through correspondence, and his actions can be reported only in the letters between characters. He remains inaccessible, invisible and silent in his own narrative, existing only as an object of the approbation of others. Mullan states, 'the "Good Man" is the space where feminine desire, aspiration, opinion and trust all meet and agree' (Mullan, 1988: 85). My study suggests that goodness, masculinity and women's writing are not only more socio-historically complex than Mullan's statement might imply, but also that the space in which they all meet grows increasingly wider as the nineteenth-century progresses. The current sustained lack of critical attention given to male characters in women's writing, the lack of analytical discussion of popular women writers alongside more canonical ones, and the lack of acknowledgement of nineteenth-century women writers as social and moral commentators means that this study has the potential to contribute to a number of current debates.

The good man, as a subject for sustained critical literary study, has been neglected for various reasons. The most obvious is that it is too easy to dismiss the good man as a dull man. While the good man is often shown in conflict with his own inner ideals, his willingness to comply with others means that there is often very little plot-centred conflict with which he can fully engage. Like Robert Elsmere, good men are often 'neither dull enough nor great enough' (Ward, 1987: 64) for striking success in the world. Anne Naman voices typical ambivalence when she writes, 'Although perhaps one prefers Deronda's moral nature, as a reader of a novel one prefers to be involved with Grandcourt' (Naman, 1980: 198). Similarly, John Brooke, in Louisa May Alcott's 1871 novel *Little Men*, is a good man. After his death, his life is evaluated by his nephews in a series of negative statements:

> "He wasn't rich, was he?" asked Jack.
> "No."
> "He never did anything to make a stir in the world, did he?"
> "No."
> "He was only good?"
> "That's all;" and Franz found himself wishing that Uncle John had done something to boast of, for it was evident that Jack was disappointed by his replies (Alcott, 2013: 281).

This tendency to regard good men as 'only' good, as never 'doing anything' in the world, suggests that John Brooke's goodness is silent and invisible. It consists mostly in not-doing, in his focus on what Murdoch calls the 'unself'. Goodness is nevertheless defined as a kind of moral currency, where good acts reveal a man's worth and generosity. Bhaer declares, '"Simple, generous goodness is the best capital to found the business of this life upon"' (ibid.). The fact that Jack is 'disappointed' by this account of a very ordinary man, who has nothing to distinguish him as exceptional apart from his universal kindness, is typical of the disenchantment that forms the usual response to the unheroic good man.

Another reason for the critical neglect of good men is their propensity to be regarded as priggish, or 'too good'. Stefan Klein suggests that even today we are 'hopelessly ambivalent' about the selflessness that underlies goodness:

> Generosity has a strange reputation in our society. We praise selfless human beings in public but remain cynical in private. We reserve our admiration for those who seem cool and strong-willed. Empathy, on the other hand, is considered a sign of weakness. The good judgement of those who occasionally put their own interests second is called into question; all too often one hears the word "do-gooder" (Klein, 2014: 12).

In attempting to recover the reputation of the good man, I attempt at the same time to chart a gradually changing alternative masculinity that will add to contemporary debates on nineteenth-century understanding of gender and morality.

Throughout this thesis I discuss the ways in which men are morally good. Some are born good, some achieve goodness through the application of will and self-scrutiny, and some have goodness thrust upon them by a society that prescribes certain standards of conduct. Whether goodness is the result of learning virtue, or whether it is the result of the inactivity that comes from resisting the temptation to vice, moral masculinity is here presented as a significant phenomenon in nineteenth-century women's fiction.

Chapter One

'Be a Good Boy and Read This': Learning to become a Good Man

"What we are at twenty depends upon what we are at fifteen; what we are at fifteen depends upon what we were at ten; where shall we then place the beginning of the series?"[8]

'I know not what greater sin can be committed,' Thomas Arnold warned the boys at Rugby School in 1849, 'than the so talking, and so acting, to a new boy, as to make him ashamed of anything good, or not ashamed of anything evil' (Arnold, 1849: 62). That a boy should be proud to be good, whether at home or away at school, was one of the central aims of Arnold's education practice, whereby a Christian education turned out noble and upright citizens. However, the training of children in the art of cognitive and spiritual rectitude is primarily an issue of immediate concern to adults rather than to children themselves: adults are anxious to produce good children who, at some point in the future, will themselves grow up to become good adults.

The purpose and benefit of goodness in children is therefore rather different from the moral concerns of adult men, and this chapter explores how and why early children's fiction seeks to promote moral awareness in the young. Raising boys to become good men was a major preoccupation of educators and writers of fiction alike; boys were often referred to in stories for the young as 'little men' and were encouraged to develop the same personal qualities that they saw in the respectable adult men around them. The capacity of boys to sustain each other's good intentions, or to corrupt each other irredeemably, formed one of the main subjects of fiction for children and endorsed the need for a good role model. Being good can be particularly challenging when a preference for goodness obliges a boy to break away from or morally reject his former

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[8] Thomas Day, 1887. *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1789), London: T. Nelson and Sons, p. 28.

friends, but, as young Oliver Twist finds, it is often more pleasant to be in bad company than to be alone in the world.

Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son reveal the importance of correct behaviour in the eighteenth century, and in 1741 he writes to the nine-year-old, 'the strictest honour and virtue can alone make you esteemed and valued by mankind' (Chesterfield, 1992: 18). This perhaps says more about how to be successful than it does about how to be good, and the fact that young Stanhope was Chesterfield's illegitimate son did not help his moral cause when the letters were published in 1774. 'You must be respectable,' Chesterfield writes to the young adult, 'if you will be respected' (ibid.: 197). Behaving with impeccable manners, decorum and decency to all men forms the greater substance of his advice in the letters, leading to Johnson's famously derisive remark that they 'teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master' (Boswell, 2008: 188).

By the end of the eighteenth century, long after the death of Chesterfield and his son, boys were instructed to strive for honour and virtue, as well as good conduct, from a very young age. Jane and Ann Taylor, writing in the early nineteenth century, portray good and bad children in their didactic poetry. 'The Industrious Boy' features young William, 'a good little child/Who minded his parents' advice' (Taylor, 1868: 29), while 'The Undutiful Boy' in *Rhymes from the Nursery* learns to strike out on his own and behave badly:

> He would not learn to read his book,
> But wisdom's pleasant way forsook,
> With wicked boys he took delight,
> And learnt to quarrel and to fight (Taylor, 1824: 39).

While the temptation to disobedience is arguably the same for boys and girls, boys present a unique challenge to moral educators. Thomas Hughes, in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), writes that 'boys follow one another in herds like sheep, for good or evil; they hate thinking, and have rarely any settled principles' (Hughes, 2008: 168).

Boys must not only learn good conduct and a sense of honour, but must also summon resistance to the enticing masculine vices of drinking, fighting and gambling. After the age of about seven, when boys were 'breeched' and dressed differently from girls, the conduct of boys likewise became subject to different standards. Davidoff and Hall note that 'Boys were expected to be physically tougher than girls, naturally tolerant of dirt and personal untidiness' (Davidoff and Hall, 1994: 344). Hughes defines 'boyishness' as 'animal life in its fullest measure, good nature and honest impulses, hatred of injustice and meanness, and thoughtlessness enough to sink a three-decker' (Hughes, 2008: 143). The dangerous combination of excessively high spirits, mischievousness and thoughtlessness makes boys particularly difficult to tame, and boys' schools developed reputations and responsibility for turning out 'good future citizens' (ibid.: 63). The social class of the boy is a significant consideration in determining the sort of goodness that he is capable of developing, as is whether he lived in the country or in the city. In order to learn good conduct, Tommy Merton, for instance, must relinquish his upper-class wealthy background and embrace a more middle-class lifestyle with Mr Barlow acting as surrogate parent.

Hugh Cunningham makes the important distinction between children (young human beings) and childhood (a shifting set of cultural ideas). By the late eighteenth century, he suggests, children had become 'symbols or icons, rather than protagonists in their own right, standing for "innocence, emotion and simplicity"' (Cunningham, 2005: 65). The 'symbolic' child is the one for and about whom children's authors were writing from the late 1780s onwards, but the moral content of stories featuring boys appeals to what Hughes calls their natural 'hatred of injustice' and was clearly intended to strengthen the resolve of young male readers. Lynne Vallone notes that fiction at this time was necessarily unrefined, and that naive authors were writing for equally naive readers, since fiction was still relatively innovative and the novel had not yet acquired

many of its established conventions. She argues that the image of the child portrayed in early children's fiction is

> necessarily the projection of the adult reformers' desires and fantasies in response to a perceived lack in the Child and fear *of* the Child: the Child is, in effect, a potential revolutionary, or, conversely, once provided with the appropriate (Evangelical) reformative education and guidance, a well-mannered and content subject (Vallone, 1991: 74).

That is, the unruly child must be encouraged to be 'good' in order to maintain the structure of society and to preserve the status quo of an orderly household. The fear of revolution means that the next generation must be raised in accordance with existing values; the 'natural' child of the Romantics and of Rousseau is seen to have the potential for a wildness that could overturn social order. The need for social rules is particularly important for children, who, in Foot's world view, must learn virtue and moral will from others. Foot argues that any moral system exists primarily as part of an 'armoury of *practical* linguistic devices': that is, morality initially exists as a series of words that describe prudential action with the potential to benefit self and others (Foot, 2002: 142). Hursthouse, on the other hand, argues that children are not capable of true goodness because they do not yet have a sufficiently fixed character from which virtue might arise: 'Children, even young adolescents, however well brought up and nice... are not candidates for the possession of virtue' (Hursthouse, 1999: 145).

I show in this chapter that the early children's story is one of the primary vehicles for developing an increasingly sophisticated moral will that enables a boy to become a good man. My texts are chosen from a wide range of new fiction for children that began to appear from the late 1780s, and have been selected to illustrate specific points of significance in the development of a moral and social standard.[9] I begin with fiction of the late eighteenth century because, as Roy Porter notes, at this time 'moral

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[9] I use the following abbreviations when quoting from works in this chapter: *HSM*: *The History of Sandford and Merton; EL: Early Lessons; PA: The Parent's Assistant; HFF: The History of the Fairchild Family; TBS: Tom Brown's Schooldays.*

rearmament became a clarion call' for many groups in society (Porter, 1991: 306). The zealous Puritanism of the previous century was metamorphosing into a broader, though no less fervent, evangelical spirit, in which the individual was considered to be directly accountable to his or her God. Furthermore, the individual resided in the family, and it was the family, rather than the church, that became the centre of moral instruction for the newest generation. The overall scope of this study covers some eighty years of the nineteenth century, tracing the ways in which the good man is presented to the predominantly female reader. This chapter begins at a slightly earlier point in order to provide a cultural foundation for the chapters that follow, and covers much of the essential childhood reading of those writers whom I will be discussing later. While there is already a great deal of literature on the social and cultural history of children's fiction,[10] and some works discuss its moralistic or didactic tendencies, there is still very little detailed critical analysis of how goodness in children is portrayed.

Thomas Day's *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1789) was the first children's best-seller to feature a well-defined model of good behaviour. Gillian Avery notes that, from about the 1780s, publishers commissioned named authors to replace the nameless 'hacks' who had previously written for the young (Avery, 1965: 7), and these authors often had a clear moral message to deliver. Day sought to demonstrate the

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[10] F. J. Harvey Darton's *Children's Books in England* (1932) remains the acknowledged authority in this field, and his chapter on the theorists of children's fiction (pp. 140-155) offers an excellent and detailed summary of the principal thinkers and writers who were pioneers in the early children's book market. Percy Muir, in *English Children's Books 1600 to 1900* (1954), also offers a full, though somewhat misogynistic, review of early children's fiction, and M. F. Thwaite traces the path from the earliest forms of reading for instruction to the later masterpieces of reading for pleasure, bringing her history to the point at which 'the child, at last, was put at the centre' (Thwaite, 1963: 81). Gillian Avery's study (1965) was written partly as a response to the fact that histories of children's literature generally read as bibliographies, with little detailed discussion of the content of the books. Her work deals exclusively with juvenile fiction, concentrating on the writer's relationship both with the fictional child and with the real reading child. She also traces changing adult ideals for children's behaviour, and changes in the portrayal of the fictional child. *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction* (1981, J. S. Bratton) offers a succinct and comprehensive survey of nineteenth-century fiction for children, and in particular Bratton describes and evaluates the more didactic texts. Among more recent studies are Mary Jackson's *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic* (1989), which places the history of children's literature securely within a cultural context, examining the effects of changing economic, social and political conditions; and Claudia Nelson's *Boys Will be Girls* (1991), which suggests that early nineteenth-century boys were encouraged to develop 'feminine' qualities of good behaviour such as humility, obedience, and tractability.

importance and consequence of moral understanding in an amusing collection of stories for children that eventually grew to its substantial three-volume work by 1789.[11] Its enduring popularity can be ascribed partly to the fact that it was one of very few engaging fictional works specifically written for children at the time, and that it was ubiquitously produced in a variety of editions to suit all budgets.[12] Also significant is the fact that, throughout the nineteenth century, it was frequently bought as a keepsake gift by well-intentioned adults – adults who, themselves, would have been earlier childhood readers of this same work. By 1865, eighty-three years after its first publication, the *Pall Mall Gazette* remarks that the book

> has served at least three generations of parents and guardians, uncles and aunts, godfathers and godmothers, in the capacities of the Christmas box, birthday present, new year's gift, and occasional reward of merit; and probably no book, except the Bible and "Robinson Crusoe", has borne so frequently on its fly-leaf the inscription "from his attached grandmother", or "to my beloved godchild on entering his tenth year" ('Sandford and Merton', 1865: 10).

The pronoun suggests that this was a book primarily for boys, although it was of course also read by girls, despite its almost total lack of young female characters. In households with large families, brothers and sisters would have freely shared books, and there was nothing in *Sandford and Merton* that might render it unsuitable for general readership of all ages.

Edgeworth's daughter Maria, inspired by Day's success as a children's writer, also produced stories for the young. *The Parent's Assistant* [13] (1795) and *Early Lessons*

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[11] Even at this length, the work is incomplete as Day envisioned it. Blackman remarks that Day did not live long enough to complete it to his own satisfaction; he died after falling from an unbroken horse in September 1789, just months from the publication of the third volume of *Sandford and Merton* (Blackman, 1862: 119).

[12] The latest edition of *Sandford and Merton* was published as recently as 2009 by Broadview Press; its reviewer describes it as a 'useful addition to eighteenth-century British texts...worth reading and worth teaching', though primarily as a product of its time rather than as the entertaining story it was originally intended to be (Scheuermann, 2011: 152-154).

[13] Maria Edgeworth was unhappy with the title of this volume, having submitted to her publisher, Joseph Johnson, *The Parent's Friend*. She writes in a letter to her cousin, 'Mr Johnson has degraded it into *The Parent's Assistant*, which I dislike particularly, from the association with an old book of arithmetic called *The Tutor's Assistant*' (Hare, 1894: 45).

(1801) feature lively and engaging children in stories that are a little less heavily didactic than Day's. Her father's preface to *The Parent's Assistant* explains that 'Such examples of virtue are painted as are not above [children's] conception of excellence, or their powers of sympathy and emulation' (Edgeworth, 1897: 3). Edgeworth intends that her stories should feature children who behave naturally, and also maintains that the level of virtue attained by her good children is not beyond the reach or aspiration of most young readers. Reasoning that children will inevitably encounter bad behaviour in the real world around them, she believes that 'they should be early shocked with the representations of what they are to avoid' (Edgeworth, 1897: 4). Showing children how not to behave is as important in her stories as modelling desired behaviours.

Mary Sherwood's *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818-1847) is notable for its evangelical belief that every adult and child is naturally corrupt and must strive to resist the temptations of worldliness in order to become good. The book is notorious to modern readers for the scene in which Mr Fairchild deems it appropriate to show his young children a rotting corpse swinging on a gibbet, and for another in which the children are taken to see the putrefying body of a deceased neighbour. The publication of Rousseau's *Emile* in 1762 had raised questions about the nature of man – naturally good, according to Rousseau – and also about the nature and effect of education and upbringing. Rousseau's book was intended not as a manual for raising children but as a theoretical, philosophical work illustrating the essential goodness of man and the value of nature. Such educational material to be found in *Emile* derives partly from Locke: *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) had presented a case for making learning as enjoyable as possible, and for teaching only the quantity and quality of facts that the young mind could admit. *Emile* is not about creating a *good* boy, since in Rousseau's view, the boy is already good; Rousseau's concern was that a good boy can easily become badly behaved as a result of the company he keeps. Directly opposed to

Rousseau's theory, Sherwood's view is that the young must try to overcome their inherent wickedness in order to become acceptable and upright members of society.

Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857), the fictionalised account of Hughes' boyhood at Rugby School under the leadership of Thomas Arnold, was not the first school story for boys but is one of the few to have remained in print since publication.[14] To modern eyes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is as didactic in tone as its literary predecessors, though its characters are recognisably naturally drawn, and the world of Tom, East and Arthur is still credible. Gillian Avery remarks, 'Here is the English schoolboy as he is popularly supposed to be: tough, gregarious, reckless, a creature of outdoor tastes, intensely loyal to the community to which he belongs' (Avery, 1965: 147). The book also carries a slightly different message in addition to the more simplistic moralising of Day, Edgeworth and Sherwood: born of the growing British Empire's subjugation of the uncivilised other, this book urges boys to be manly and heroic as well as to be good.

Good Companions

One of the primary features of stories about good boys is not only the contrast between good boys and bad, but the fundamental need for a boy to keep good company lest he be led astray and share the unwholesome habits of bad boys. Isaac Watts, whose *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* had first appeared in 1715, urged strict obedience to parents and to the laws of God; his work continued to form prescribed childhood reading for well over a hundred years. Watts points out the dangers of a boy behaving badly, and how he might prove to be a source of contagion for the good boys around him:

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[14] Harriet Martineau's *The Crofton Boys* (1841) and Frederic Farrar's *Eric: or, Little by Little* (1858) have both been out of print for many years.

From one rude boy, that's used to mock,
They learn the wicked jest:
One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest ('Against Evil Company', Watts, 1866: 67-8).

The History of Sandford and Merton, with its pairing of two boys from vastly different backgrounds, emphasises the importance of a good role model: Mr Barlow and Harry Sandford both provide Tommy Merton with examples of good conduct, and the two boys are consistently contrasted throughout the narrative. Where Tommy is stubborn, Harry is tractable; where Tommy is proud, Harry is humble; where Tommy loves the indoor trappings of wealth, Harry loves the simple life in the fresh, clean air of the countryside. Harry is 'never out of humour' (*HSM*: 11) and takes pleasure in obliging others, and his rescue of Tommy from the snake at the beginning of the narrative establishes him as the companionate role model that Tommy needs in order to develop a similarly virtuous character. In this text, Harry and Mr Barlow are closely allied against Tommy, so that Harry is always portrayed as a miniature adult. In keeping with Rousseau's theory of the universal goodness of humanity, however, Tommy's moral development is often simply a matter of the correction of faults rather than the need to learn good character. Mr Barlow never loses sight of 'the fund of natural goodness' (*HSM*: 304) that is present in Tommy, and the moral influence of Harry is finally shown to have been entirely successful in Tommy's parting words to his friend: '"to your example I owe most of the little good that I can boast: you taught me how much better it is to be useful than rich or fine; how much more amiable to be good than to be great"' (*HSM*: 429).

In 'Tarlton', Maria Edgeworth shows the effects of a bad role model rather than a good one. Hardy and Loveit are pupils at Mr Trueman's rural Sunday school. Their names suggest aspects of their characters, reminiscent of those in *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678): Hardy is 'honest, obedient, active and good-natured'; Loveit is 'the best-natured boy in the school' but gullible and easily led in his quest for popularity

(*PA*: 431). Loveit is tormented by his own ineptitude and, though aware of his weakness, appears powerless to change: 'he had not sufficient strength of mind to be good' (*PA*: 436). Tarlton[15] is an insolent bully, keen to take advantage of Loveit's malleability. Cowardly by nature, his maxim is '"Every one for himself in this world!"' (*PA*: 438). He mocks Loveit's friendship with Hardy, whom he calls 'Parson Prig' (*PA*: 433) and incites Loveit to participate in the theft of apples without Hardy's knowledge.

Edgeworth shows how Loveit is made increasingly miserable by sneaking into the orchard with the bad boys, reproaching himself for his weakness and heavily conscious of his own guilt. When the boys narrowly escape the farmer's guard dog, Loveit experiences relief in his assumption that there will be no further nefarious night time excursions. He thus hopes to become good by default, in the absence of temptation, rather than by exercising the necessary strength of will in the face of it. When Tarlton reveals that he intends to poison the dog, Loveit has no choice but to confess to Hardy, who defeats Tarlton's plan. It is the fair-minded Mr Trueman who publicly unmasks Tarlton as a villain; his punishment is summary and immediate expulsion from the school.

In this story, named after its immoral protagonist, Edgeworth seems to show how not to behave while demonstrating some techniques for resisting the wickedness of others. Hardy exists as a device to preserve the life of the dog, and to expose the crime of Tarlton and his followers. His presence in the narrative is generally to highlight the shortcomings and moral feebleness of Loveit, and to model a high-minded independence of spirit that is not swayed by the trappings of popularity. Tarlton is not

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[15] Tarlton's name is less obviously allusive than those of Hardy, Loveit and Mr Trueman, giving him a more ambiguous and perhaps more challenging role in the story. Tarlton may have been named after the actor and clown Richard Tarlton (d. 1588), founder member of the Queen's Men. Richard Tarlton was reputedly combative and misogynistic, his appearance one of 'rough ugliness', and thought to be the source for *Tarlton's Jests* (1611). The Tarlton of this text was a boorish, ill-mannered fellow given to hard drinking and ignominious behaviour. According to the Shoreditch historian John Stow, in 1798 his portrait still adorned the sign to an alehouse in the borough (Thomson, 2004, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*).

punished in the way we might expect at the end of the story because, as Mr Trueman says, '"if I had any hopes of him, I would have punished him; but I have none. Punishment is meant only to make people better"' (*PA*: 449). Tarlton is, unusually, too wicked to benefit from corrective punishment, and it seems that no amount of discipline will turn him into a good boy; instead he is exiled from this closed edenic community, doomed to carry his sins and his lack of moral fibre with him to wherever he wanders next. Tarlton shows no sign of remorse when he is forced to confess, and merely displays an ingratiating servility in an attempt to avoid correction.

Tarlton is one of the few children in Edgeworth's stories who is not innately good; there are no grounds for his irrecoverable lack of morality. The author, it seems, suggests that some people are simply bad and must be avoided, and the mysterious source of his ability to corrupt remains hidden. Darcy, in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), echoes this view when he tells Elizabeth, '"There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome"' (Austen, 1998a: 51). Edgeworth shows that goodness is created as the result of will and conscious choice; her young readers are to recognise that they have the power to decide whether they behave like Hardy, Loveit or Tarlton. This story also serves to delineate differing degrees of 'badness', from Loveit's impoverished sense of self-worth to the blatant cruelty of Tarlton, and the capacity for self-redemption from moral weakness.

The clearest purpose of a role model is to encourage good behaviour rather than to warn against bad. When Tom Brown learns that he is to become the protector of the 'poor little weak boy' (*TBS*: 227), George Arthur,[16] he realises with some disappointment that his plans for illicit beer-brewing and secret excursions beyond the

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[16] George Arthur seems to be named, rather obviously, for St George and King Arthur, legendary heroic figures of British moral tradition. He enters the novel as the unlikely rescuer of Tom from the jaws of potential disrepute, and Tom later admits that his friendship with Arthur has been the making of him: 'I should never have been here now but for him. It was the luckiest chance in the world that sent him to Rugby, and made him my chum' (*TBS*: 364).

school grounds are to be curtailed. However, Arthur's remedial effect on Tom's own behaviour is immediate: 'he felt himself lifted on to a higher social and moral platform at once' (*TBS*: 219); as a result of his responsibility to Arthur, Tom feels 'the value of having an object in his life, something that drew him out of himself' (TBS: 236). Arthur, delicate and unworldly, is the son of a clergyman, and Hughes emphasises that his father has been a good role model to the boy. In contrasting Arthur with the 'robust and combative' Tom (*TBS*: 22), Hughes seems to be aware of the potential charge of priggishness that may be levelled at the weaker boy, and, in a narratorial aside, insists that the reader be acquainted with the nature of his father: 'I must show you what sort of a man it was who had begotten and trained little Arthur, or else you won't believe in him, which I am resolved you shall do' (*TBS*: 241).

Without a boy like Tom to guide him in the rough ways of a boys' school, Arthur would quickly have been defeated. Thus, the relationship between the boys is clearly one of mutual benefit: Arthur is made tougher by Tom's friendship, and Tom is morally elevated through the association. Tom's earliest advice to Arthur is, '"don't you ever talk about home, or your mother and sisters... they'll call you... mamma's darling"' (*TBS*: 223).[17] The influence of women is nominally to be denied and negated in this all-male environment,[18] but Arthur inevitably reminds Tom of his own mother when he kneels to pray at the end of his first day at Rugby. The mother and the feminine are remote; their influence is felt from afar and only as an imagined presence, and mother, conscience and God are closely aligned. Donald Hall argues that Tom 'in effect becomes a surrogate mother' to Arthur, taking on the role of nurturing the weaker boy and masculinising him by taking him fishing and swimming (Hall, 1996: 138). Claudia Nelson, too, argues that 'manliness involves motherliness' (Nelson, 1991: 42) and that

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[17] In *The Crofton Boys* (1841) Firth tells Hugh, 'it is not the way of boys to talk about feelings – about anybody's feelings' (Martineau, 1895: 117).
[18] One of the worst things that can befall a boy at Rugby is to be called 'Molly, or Jenny, or some derogatory feminine nickname' (*TBS*: 146).

Tom's moral growth cannot occur until he has embraced and assimilated the feminine qualities of Arthur. Tom's friends make fun of his keeping Arthur 'under [his] skirts', like a 'dry nurse' and like a 'hen with one chick' (*TBS*: 231-2), and yet it is a heavy 'consciousness of responsibility' (254) that Tom feels, rather than a sense of motherly nurturing. Although Arthur is physically weak, Hughes at no point suggests that Arthur is feminine: even when Arthur is openly weeping over his Greek text, the master still refers to him as 'my little man' (286).

I argue here that Tom is called upon to act not as mother, but rather as surrogate father to the innocent Arthur, instructing him in the ways of the school, teaching him to climb trees and encouraging his athletic development. As a result, Arthur is strengthened mentally and physically by his friendship with Tom, claiming that his increased physical stamina has enabled him to recover from the dangerous fever: '"my constitution [is] quite changed, and I'm fit for anything now... That's all thanks to you, and the games you've made me fond of"' (*TBS*: 315). Tom later becomes the chivalric champion and defender of Arthur's honour in the fight against Slogger Williams, reinforcing his own role as a young morally masculine figure in the novel. As a result of his defence of Arthur, Tom is aware that he is 'daily growing in manfulness and thoughtfulness, as every high-couraged and well-principled boy must' (*TBS*: 255).

Work and Idleness

One of the preoccupations in the depiction of fictional good boys is their capacity for industriousness and employment. Idleness and excessive leisure time are shown to be morally dangerous because it is in hours of inactivity that vice can easily take hold: if a boy is too busy to indulge in drunkenness or gambling, he succeeds in avoiding temptation and remains virtuous. In a letter from school Arthur Clough notes that 'bad characters are ... idle, whereas good characters are industrious; so that when a

fellow wants a companion he is much more likely to pitch on a bad than a good one' (Mulhauser, 1957: 23-4). In *The History of Sandford and Merton*, Tommy, as a young gentleman, is accustomed to having servants bring him whatever he wants. When he refuses to labour in the garden with Harry, he is also refused the cherries provided by Mr Barlow, and thus quickly learns to associate hard work with reward.

The stories and fables interspersing the narrative of Harry and Tommy are inevitably didactic and most contain the moral that hard work, persistence and diligence always pay. The figures in the stories are intended as allegorical representations of Harry and Tommy, and are aimed to show the boys how best to conduct themselves in order to gain respect. It is always the honest poor man who profits over the rich idle man, as in the story of 'The Gentleman and the Basket-Maker': the rich man is proud, insolent and capricious, physically weak from lack of exercise and often ill as a result of his rich diet and idleness; the poor man is honest and industrious as well as physically robust. Day introduces into the tale a magistrate who pronounces judgement on the two men, with the result that the rich man is humbled into mending his ways and using his riches to relieve the sufferings of the poor. The stories are undoubtedly more entertaining than the lengthy passages of instruction and conversation between Mr Barlow and the boys – what Charlotte Yonge called the 'queer unsatisfactory stuff of the theorist author' (Yonge, 1869: 237) – but are hardly less instructional.

Maria Edgeworth's story 'Lazy Lawrence' concerns the 'good-natured... industrious' Jem, and the idle Lawrence, who 'neither worked nor played, but sauntered or lounged about restless and yawning' (*PA*: 27, 30). Jem is enterprising and hard-working, though poor; Lawrence has the misfortune of having a drunken, abusive father as his role model and quickly falls into bad company. He learns to behave like the swearing, argumentative boys he meets in the marketplace and incurs debts when the disreputable stable-boy – 'a very bad boy' (*PA*: 40) – encourages him to gamble. Jem

continues to work hard, for 'Nothing *truly great* can be accomplished without toil and time' (*PA*: 41), while Lawrence, without employment, continues to learn how to be 'a *wicked* boy' (*PA*: 39). When Jem succeeds in earning the necessary two guineas to save the family from poverty, it quickly becomes clear that he is to be the victim of the scheming Lawrence.

Edgeworth interrupts the narrative with a cautionary warning of what is to follow: 'Here let us pause in our story. We are almost afraid to go on. The rest is very shocking. Our little readers will shudder as they read. But it is better that they should know the truth and see what the idle boy came to at last' (*PA*: 44). When Lawrence leads the stable-boy to the flower-pot where Jem has hidden his entire earnings, the writing suggests Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus – Lawrence 'trembled at the thoughts of what he was about to do' (*PA*: 44). The theft is carried out in almost total darkness, with the short sentences and nervousness of the boys – 'I hear a noise' (*PA*: 45) – evoking the scene following Duncan's murder in *Macbeth*. Both allusions serve to intensify the reader's understanding of Jem as a wholly admirable character, and the crime as an unnatural violation of his innate goodness. In an improbable but fortuitous denouement, the crime is discovered and Lawrence and the stable-boy are punished. It is Lawrence's father who takes the blame for his son's offence: '"It's all my fault," cried he; "brought him up in *idleness*"' (*PA*: 52). While Lawrence has to learn to become wicked (because, in Rousseauian theory, he too is naturally good) it follows that he can also learn to mend his ways once he has experienced the consequences of his ill-advised behaviour. The ultimate responsibility for his conduct and character lies, Edgeworth suggests, with his parents and his friends as much as with his own will.

In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Arthur reveals his fear of dying before having had the chance to work: '"There is no work in the grave; in the night no man can work. But I can work. I can do great things. I *will* do great things"' (*TBS*: 317). In this text, the

capacity for work is not only proof of goodness, but a reason for living. Tom also

aspires to work for a living, '"to be doing some real good."' The master to whom he has

been speaking reminds him that working and doing good are not always the same thing:

> "You talk of 'working to get your living' and 'doing some real
> good in the world' in the same breath. Now, you may be getting
> a very good living in a profession, and yet doing no good at all
> in the world, but quite the contrary, at the same time. Keep the
> latter before you as your one object" (*TBS*: 363).

Occupation and moral substance must be carefully matched in order to attain

moral integrity through work. In the interests of goodness and industry, Arthur

persuades Tom to give up his cribs. He argues that academic success should be due to

his own efforts, and points out the difference between actual goodness and the

appearance of it: '"Now, do you want to please [the Doctor] by what he thinks you do,

or by what you really do?"' (*TBS*: 313). When Tom carries his new resolution to East

and Gower, East claims, with comic irony, that Tom's new rule is '"cutting at the root

of all school morality"' since it prevents good Samaritans from helping others by

exercising '"Christian benevolence"' in sharing the correct answers (*TBS*: 327). East is

compared with 'a prophet's donkey', reluctantly trudging into the paths of righteousness

almost against his will before finally agreeing that Arthur is '"the most wonderful little

fellow I ever came across"' (*TBS*: 332). Arthur is portrayed as the very epitome of

moral goodness, and Tom and East have gained and grown through having been

associated with him.

<u>Moral Educators</u>

Despite the good influence of a virtuous role model of their own age, boys do not become good without help from adults and they must learn the rules of moral conduct before being encouraged to apply them using their own judgement. Morality must be more than obedience, as Roger Straughan states: 'Moral behaviour cannot be simply that which conforms to the dictates of some authority, because being moral cannot be equated with doing what one is told' (Straughan, 1982: 18). In *The History of Sandford and Merton*, Mr Barlow voices Day's own opinion, that '"he that undertakes the education of a child, undertakes the most important duty in society"' (*HSM*: 27). Day intended the book itself to be a vehicle for moral instruction, and John Blackman, an early biographer and friend of Day, recalls being given a copy of the book as a young boy:

> I had been toiling in the sunshine of a warm spring day, and, on returning through the fields from the quiet scene of my labour, I was met by an intelligent lady, who placed in my hands a small illustrated volume, saying, in her kindliest manner, "Be a good boy and read this book." It was the *History of Sandford and Merton*.... This lady's injunction... was carefully obeyed; the book was read and re-read with increasing interest, and the impressions it then made upon my young mind have not even yet been effaced by the sweep of thirty years (Blackman, 1862: 9-10).

The young Blackman might have been exactly the boy Day had in mind when creating Harry Sandford: the kind of boy who cheerfully worked long hours outside; who was happy to read whatever was put into his hands by an adult in whom he had placed his trust; the kind of boy who was both physically robust and capable of toil, and yet also willing to learn and to be quietly thoughtful and reflective. Harry is 'the most honest, obliging creature in the world' with a 'good-natured countenance, which made everybody love him; was never out of humour, and took the greatest pleasure in obliging everybody' (*HSM*: 11-12).

When Mr and Mrs Merton first discuss the possibility of having their spoiled and illiterate son educated by Mr Barlow, their desire is for him to be raised as 'a man of fashion' and at the same time for him to have a finely developed sense of 'morals and religion' (*HSM*: 19). Mr Barlow points out that, as a clergyman representing the Christian religion, he cannot teach both values: Tommy can either be a man of fashion, or he can be good (*HSM*: 20).

Mr and Mrs Merton are portrayed as ineffectual parents, though Mr Merton, on seeing Harry and Tommy together, has more insight than his wife as he points out, '"I am not sure that for this time the advantage is on the side of our son"' (*HSM*: 16). He is able to recognise that the son of a poor farmer has better manners than Tommy, more humility, and that '"this little man is a great philosopher"' (*HSM*: 15). When he realises that Harry has left the house after suffering a blow from Tommy, he recognises that his own son has '"acted the basest and vilest part that can disgrace a human being; and who, if what I suspect is true, can be only a dishonour to his parents"' (*HSM*: 300). The 'archetypally silly Mrs Merton' (Myers, 1986: 42) is consistently more concerned with Tommy's happiness and his social standing than with his morals, and plays little part in either his education or his pastoral care. Where her husband sees innate goodness in Harry, she sees '"a certain grossness and indelicacy in his ideas"' (*HSM*: 17). More emotionally distant than Mrs Merton, it is the boy's father who upholds the dispassionate ideal of what his son should be. Tommy has acted in a way '"inconsistent with goodness"', demonstrating '"a defect of goodness and generosity"' (*HSM*: 302-3), and it is Mr Merton who feels the disappointment most keenly.

A 'good' son reflects well upon the parents who have propagated in him the qualities he possesses, and the desire to produce a son who is a mirror image of himself is one that Rousseau, along with Lord Chesterfield, had recognised as natural. While Rousseau addresses the early pages of *Emile* to the 'tender, anxious mother' (Rousseau,

1993: 5), it is the father and tutor who raise the boy and elevate his natural goodness to 'the height of virtue' to achieve his greatest possible potential (ibid.: 19). Lord Chesterfield tells his son, 'your merit must and will be the only measure of my kindness' (Chesterfield, 1992: 41): as in the case of Mr Merton, the extent of his fatherly pride and generosity will be determined by the quality of his son's conduct. Poor domestic example often results in moral weakness as an adult: Henry Crawford, in Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), has been 'ruined by early independence and bad domestic example' (Austen, 1998b: 316).

In many of Maria Edgeworth's stories, the primary providers of moral education are parents. Frank, the protagonist of a story in *Early Lessons* (1801), is the same age as Tommy Merton, and lives an idyllically rural existence with his family, spending most of his time with his mother. His father is presented as a rather more remote and authoritarian figure whom Frank must impress as well as obey. When Frank sees his father use sealing wax on a letter, he is keen to try the process himself, despite warnings that he might not yet have sufficient concentration or coordination to avoid an accident. Predictably burning his finger with the hot wax, he protests, '"I wish I had minded what you said to me – But I will not cry – I will bear it well"' (*EL*: 85). Frank's second attempt is successful, and his mother explains pertinently and with characteristic exactness, '"You have been rewarded for your patience by having succeeded in making this seal; and you were punished for your carelessness, by having burned your forefinger"' (*EL*: 87). Reward and punishment, usually described very explicitly as in this example, are the essential results of various behaviours in Edgeworth's stories for children, with the unintentionally misleading implication that goodness, or obedience, always pays. For Edgeworth, correct moral standards are the same for all persons, whether child or adult: in order to be good, boys need only learn the universal rules that define and sanction agreeable behaviour, whether this concerns thoughtlessness,

appropriation of the property of others or carelessness. In rewarding Frank's 'good' behaviour – his tractability, his industriousness, and his willingness to learn – it is easy to see what Maria Edgeworth understands by good conduct.

While she broadly agrees with the necessity for different levels of education according to different social status, she believes that moral goodness is a matter of broad social conformity, and that everyone should be taught 'justice, truth and humanity' (*PA*: 2). However, whereas Harry Sandford is a decent lower class boy who influences Tommy Merton entirely for the better, Maria Edgeworth's lower class boys are often dangerously seductive in their ability to corrupt their social superiors: it is the stable-boy who corrupts Lawrence, and the menial kitchen-boy Tom who procures poisoned meat for Tarlton.

Edgeworth's stories are also unusual in that they sometimes feature boys acting without their parents' knowledge or sanction. Mary Jackson notes that 'the new good child seldom made important, real decisions without parental approval. Bad children struck out on their own on some project, erroneously assuming themselves to be capable of judging what was proper and of having the right to act independently' (Jackson, 1989: 131). In 'Lazy Lawrence,' Jem proves that he is capable of acting independently, setting out to earn sufficient money to rescue himself and his mother from poverty. Lawrence also acts independently but, having had little moral training from his parents, is lured into wrongdoing.

In 'Tarlton', the apples on the tree serve as a very tangible reminder of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.[19] The way Tarlton persuades Loveit to do his bidding is as smooth and convincing as the serpent: '"do, man, pluck up a little spirit, and be one of us"', and Loveit knows himself to be weak when he joins them: '"*Aye now, that's wrong!*" whispered Loveit's conscience' (*PA*:

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[19] 'For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3:5).

435). Both boys know the difference between good and evil, but only one of them cares. In this tale, Edgeworth's efforts are directed not only against a boy's crime, but also against his moral weakness, showing what might become of a boy who knows his own mind but lacks the mettle to be what he knows he ought to be: 'It is certain that weakness of mind is despised both by the good and the bad.' (*PA*: 435). Like *Sandford and Merton*, Edgeworth's stories are not heavily Christian or evangelical in tone; instead she allows her characters to rely on their own strength and to recognise their own deficiencies. She does, however, place her stories firmly within a Christian framework, in which there is a creator who takes an individual, benign interest in his children.

In the early nineteenth century, the Puritanism of former times had grown into a crusading evangelicalism which had gained increasing influence among members of all social classes. Particularly welcome amid the political and social chaos that followed the French Revolution, the Evangelical movement offered stability in its teaching of simple doctrines. Day and Edgeworth had subscribed to the liberal creed in which man was generally held to be a reasonable creature who did the right thing because, after careful consideration, he felt and believed it to be right. The problem with this tolerant approach to morality was that it allowed for individual error, leading to the opportunity to manipulate a situation to one's own advantage: what is, or is not, 'right' is subjective, and moreover, the application of this principle requires a degree of individual intelligence and self-awareness that might be lacking in the uneducated poor. Evangelical writers who followed made it clear that only the Bible, as a comprehensive manual for life, had sufficient authority to decree what was good, making it easier for a wider proportion of the population to do the right thing. Davidoff and Hall note that 'Individual faith was the key to moral regeneration' (Davidoff and Hall, 1994: 83), whereby acceptance of doctrine enabled the promotion and reinforcement of Christian

moral standards within the family.

Lynne Vallone sees the first volume of Sherwood's *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818) as being primarily a manual for girls (Vallone, 1991: 86)[20] and it is fair to say that a greater part of the text is devoted to the behaviour and correction of the girls rather than that of their brother, Henry. That said, there is little to differentiate the standards of behaviour required for boys and girls in this book, since both must defer to their parents: "'I stand in the place of God to you, whilst you are a child; and as long as I do not ask you to do anything wrong, you must obey me'" (*HFF*: 266). The girls' sins tend to centre on issues of envy, vanity and possessions, and because there are two of them they often squabble with each other, whereas Henry is a little more independent and self-contained. Unusually, he does not have a companion to influence his good behaviour, but is often shown trying to make sense of situations on his own. There are differences, too, between the three volumes of the book: the entire *History* was not completed until 1847, with Volumes Two and Three – 'a strange medley of what is *outré* and common' ('The History of the Fairchild Family,' 1842: 477) – co-authored by Sherwood's daughter and differing significantly in tone from the earlier volume.[21]

At the beginning of the book, young Henry Fairchild is the same age as Tommy Merton and Frank, but is a generation removed from these earlier fictional children. Despite the fact that his parents keep a village school, the children are educated at home in a strict, regimental routine involving prayers, chores, lessons and needlework, and exercise. The children are plainly dressed and encouraged to be humble in their outlook (*HFF*: 70-72). Every opportunity is taken by the children's parents to point out the inherent utter sinfulness of the human condition, and that their only hope of salvation is

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[20] She describes Henry's sins as those of 'disobedience and pride', whereas the girls are generally 'guilty of wilfulness' (Vallone, 1991: 86).

[21] The later co-authored volumes are written more engagingly than the first, with improved characterisation. Mr Fairchild, in particular, becomes slightly less strident in the way he manifests his religious views. By the end of the second volume, he has inherited his brother's estate and has become wealthy, it seems, as his just reward for so skilfully steering his family's moral ship.

to allow God to give them a new heart: '"there is no good in us whatever: so that we cannot, without God's help, think even one good thought"' (*HFF*: 18). In the original version of Volume One, each chapter, or story, ends with a prayer and a hymn, which Sherwood intended the child reader to learn and recite. Mr Fairchild's first prayer, designed to be spoken aloud by the child reader, demonstrates how piety, prayer and vigilance were to provide the most reliable standards of goodness for boys:

> Oh! How proud I am! and how highly do I sometimes think of
> myself! and how I do despise my neighbours! and yet I have a heart
> full of all manner of evil, and a body full of corruption! O my
> Saviour... send thy Holy Spirit to make me know all my sins. Set
> them all before me in order, that I may know I am a poor miserable
> wretch by nature, and that I may feel more and more that I can
> never save myself by any good thing that I can do (*HFF*: 19).

Parental influence is securely allied with God in this new children's fiction, and is given supreme authority: when Lucy observes that all three children have been behaving consistently well for some time, Mrs Fairchild berates her for boasting: '"If you have not done any very naughty things lately, it is not because there is any goodness or wisdom in you, but because your papa and I have been always with you, carefully watching and guiding you from morning till night"' (*HFF*: 72). The child cannot be good of his own accord: if he is bad, it is his own fault; if he is good, it is because he has been guided by God via his parents. Elsewhere, Mrs Fairchild describes the actions of a person of good principles: he is '"one who does not do well for fear of the people he lives with, but from the fear of God. A child who has good principles will behave just the same when his mamma is out of the room, as when she is looking at him – at least he will wish to do so"' (*HFF*: 33). Nearly forty years later, this principle still holds true for Tom Brown, who is advised by his father to '"never listen to or say anything you wouldn't have your mother and sister hear, and you'll never feel ashamed to come home, or we to see you"' (*TBS*: 72). The power of the panoptic gaze suggests

that goodness comes from negative fear of the detection of wrongdoing rather than from a positive sense of righteousness.

When Henry steals and eats an apple from the forbidden tree, then tries to conceal his crime, his father vows that Henry will not be forgiven, and Henry is incarcerated in a room at the top of the house for over twelve hours without food or water. Eventually, after dark, it is his mother who releases him, but his father who provides the justification for the punishment. Henry is again the victim of his father's wrath when he refuses to learn his Latin lesson. Mr Fairchild orders everyone in the house neither to look at Henry nor speak to him until he becomes more compliant and agrees to finish the work. Henry passes the day in silence and solitude and endures a terrifying midnight storm alone in his room. The next morning, he meets Charles Trueman, 'one of the most pious little boys in all that country', and bitterly complains of his treatment: '"You cannot think how miserable I am! Nobody looks at me, nobody speaks to me!"' (*HFF*: 275).

His punishment on both occasions has involved his being exiled from his family as an outcast. He becomes invisible, annihilated. Whereas exclusion seems unimportant to Tarlton, Henry is made utterly miserable by the same form of punishment. A good boy enjoys the security and safety of his family's affection, whereas a bad boy ceases to exist, surrendering his right to life and individuality as if he were already dead. Mrs Fairchild outlines two reasons for chastisement: '"one is to check the breakings out of wickedness in the person himself; and the other is, to frighten other people from doing the same"' (*HFF* Vol 2: 9).

In a similar incident, young David Copperfield is also imprisoned in his room by the grotesquely cruel Mr Murdstone. His punishment continues for five days after he has accidentally bitten Murdstone's hand, and during this time David endures the same feeling of misery as Henry Fairchild. Dickens points out, however, that it is not merely

exclusion that gives pain, but the accompanying sense of disconnection and disorientation: David is unable to see what time it is, for instance, and he notices the absence of the sound of his own voice (Dickens, 1990: 56-7). Sherwood's evangelistic narrative emphasises obedience as the primary denominator of good behaviour, whereas Dickens, in first person narration, shows the psychological effects of social annihilation and that prolonged punishment is a cruel and ineffective tool, particularly for sensitive, thoughtful boys.

Some years before the publication of the final volume of *The History of the Fairchild Family*, Dr Thomas Arnold was delivering Christian sermons to the boys of Rugby School. As headmaster of Rugby, Arnold aimed to know each pupil personally, forming for them an individual programme of spiritual achievement whereby every boy would recognise his own potential as a Christian and thus as a future good man. He realised that the pious talk and constant lecturing of figures like Mr Fairchild was more likely to nurture 'a natural revulsion' towards religious belief and behaviour, and that boys ought to be led 'gradually' so that true and individual religious faith could come 'spontaneously from the heart' (Wymer, 1953: 65-6). Arnold's style was to inspire good behaviour merely by being present, and to lead by example. However, he acknowledged the general ineffectiveness of the school system's power to influence the behaviour and attitude of many boys simultaneously: 'it is at the best a passive thing, presenting a good aspect when the individuals who belong to it happen to be good, but being in itself without any power to make them good or keep them so.' (Arnold, 1849: 462-3). The school may not make a bad boy good, but it will almost certainly make a good boy better. Likewise, Hughes holds that the object of all schools 'is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys, but to make them good English boys, good future citizens' (*TBS*: 63).

Goodness

Despite its rather heavy-handed moralising, *The History of Sandford and Merton* is not a religious book as the general reader would recognise it. Mr Barlow is a clergyman who takes his vocation seriously, and the boys regularly attend church on Sundays, but there is little overt reference to Biblical teaching when addressing the subject of morality.[22] Most instruction is given through example, with Mr Barlow embodying various broad Biblical tenets; but his most trusted principle is that of goodness for its own sake: "'Therefore,'" he says, "'every sensible man will behave well to everything around him: he will behave well because it is his duty to do it, because every benevolent person feels the greatest pleasure in doing good'" (*HSM*: 113). Mr Barlow's ideal is that goodness is its own reward, and should not be merely the result of blind obedience to religious doctrine.

Tommy is surprised by an unfamiliar sense of satisfaction when he buys clothes for a poor boy and his family (*HSM*: 66), and again when he is publicly thanked and blessed as a 'guardian angel' in the presence of his parents (*HSM*: 150) at the end of what was originally the first volume. True to Mr Barlow's theory, Tommy does feel pleasure as a result of doing good. However, this does not mean that he *is* good, although he does, by degrees, improve his behaviour and his attitude during the course of the book. By the end he confesses, "'Indeed, sir, I begin to think that I am not so much better than others, as I used to do'" (*HSM*: 243). Only when he realises how 'un-good' he is can he hope to ascend to any sense of real moral elevation; when he experiences a sense of the 'unself', as Murdoch describes it, he also sees his own latent capacity for good. Mr Barlow confides to Mr Merton, "'I am convinced that human nature is infinitely more weak than wicked; and that the greater part of all bad conduct

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[22] The *Pall Mall Gazette* goes so far as to say that *Sandford and Merton* is 'a little manual of subdued paganism and communism,' and that such virtue as there is within its pages is 'undiluted by any admixture of Christianity, or, indeed, of any form of belief' ('Sandford and Merton', 1865: 10).

springs rather from want of firmness, than from any settled propensity to evil"' (*HSM*: 303).

Modern objections to this text tend to centre on the unlikely and unreasonable goodness of Harry Sandford, though as a boy Charles Dickens was equally horrified by Mr Barlow. The 'irrepressible, instructive monomaniac' fostered in the young Dickens a comic reluctance on two counts of asking questions of adults: one of 'developing into a Harry', and the other a dread of 'being Barlowed' (Dickens, 1958: 338-344). Harry is relentlessly a good boy; he is 'a little monster of virtue' ('Sandford and Merton', 1865: 10), 'a prig of prigs' (Dickens, 1958: 340).

In a similar spirit, O. E. M. Harden complains that Maria Edgeworth's Frank is 'perfect from the beginning, a tiresome prig, a miniature Sir Charles Grandison, and his experiences are nothing more than variations on the theme of goodness' (Harden, 1971: 38). She adds that his father is 'a lifeless caricature' and that the story sacrifices plot and character in order to illustrate 'opposing extremes in child behaviour' (ibid.: 37). Bearing in mind that all writing for children at this time was didactic at the expense of plot and character development, the portrayal of Frank and his tireless curiosity about the world around him is perfectly natural; his tirelessly virtuous character, however, rather less so.

It is easy to see that moral goodness in these early examples treads rather clumsily and without finesse; good boys are good to an unrealistic and discouraging degree, and represent adult fantasy rather than a reasonable portrait of childhood. Like Sir Charles Grandison, Harry Sandford and Frank become monsters of perfection rather than figures to emulate, and it is not until later in the century that boys are shown grappling independently with ethical and moral issues. For example, when Tom and his friends are accused by a farmer of stealing a guinea-fowl, the older boys Holmes and Diggs come to their defence. Hughes illustrates the problems associated with an attempt

at moral reasoning by an immature mind when Holmes retorts to the farmer, "'You ought to be ashamed of yourself for leaving all that poultry about, with no one to watch it, so near the School. You deserve to have it all stolen'" (*TBS*: 278). Partly schoolboy logic, and partly an ironic attempt to confound the reasoning of the farmer and thus make good their escape, the ethics of the situation are comically disguised. While Holmes knows perfectly well that there is no difference between stealing chickens and apples, he grumbles about the mysteries of moral codes: "'There's nothing so mischievous as these school distinctions, which jumble up right and wrong, and justify things in us for which poor boys would be sent to prison'" (*TBS*: 279).

The poet Arthur Hugh Clough was one of many boys who were determined to 'grow in goodness' at Rugby School, despite the widespread temptations to vice, and in 1834 he wrote to his younger brother George, 'Do take care, my dear dear Georgy, not to be frightened out of good and do not be afraid of taking God's side against his rebellious servants' (Mulhauser, 1957: 11). He is slightly more candid in a letter to his sister, in which he alludes to some of the more challenging aspects of life in an all-male environment:

> there is a deal of evil springing up in the School, and it is to be feared that the tares will choke much of the wheat. There is a great deal of good in the top of the School, but then it is what may be called disagreeable good, having much evil mixed with it, especially in little matters. So that from these persons, good is disliked. I am trying to show them that good is not necessarily disagreeable, that a Christian may be and is likely to be a gentleman, and that he is surely much more than a gentleman. It is a weary thing to look around and see all the evil, all the sin and all the wickedness of those with whom one must daily associate and whom one must strive at least in all indifferent things to please and conciliate; and truly my dear Annie if there was only one man to work in the good cause, one might well despair, but we know it is not so, and so we must hope even against hope (Mulhauser, 1957: 19-20).

The oblique reference to 'evil' and, particularly, the 'disagreeable good' is intriguing. Good here is something that is disliked by many, perhaps in the vein of Mr Trueman's

school usher who '"never liked saints"' (*PA*: 444). In this alien environment, where mothers are not present to offer corrective guidance, evils such as cheating and drunkenness provide attractive opportunities for boys to establish a hierarchy of popularity. Thomas Hughes paints a clear picture of how life might have been for boys away from home for the first time, giving 'the evil with the good' (*TBS*: 186): boys are roasted over fires, tossed in blankets, petted and bullied, flogged and humiliated, and expected to endure all for fear of being thought weak. Many boys were, in this way, 'frightened out of good' as Clough fears his brother will be; others might have displayed 'disagreeable goodness' by pretending to be something they were not. Hughes gives two examples of ways in which school morals might be compromised: one is 'encouraging tale-bearing', which is responsible for sapping 'all the foundations of school morality;' and the second is favouring the bigger boys, thus allowing them to become 'most abominable tyrants' (*TBS*: 63). For a boy away from home for the first time, there is much to learn about when telling the truth is justifiable and when it becomes 'tale-bearing,' and for most boys, absolute goodness can be as abhorrent as absolute evil.

Children's books underwent enormous development between the late eighteenth century and the late nineteenth. From the naive earnestness of Thomas Day to the beginnings of the strident spirit of imperialism embodied by Hughes, the good boy of the 1850s was a very different creature from the good child his grandfather might once have been. Gertrude Slater, writing in 1897, complained bitterly that, as a child, 'Goodness was always being thrust upon me against my wish', when in fact it was 'the naughty boys and girls' whom she most admired in her childhood reading. She continues:

> The directly didactic child's story is ineffectual just because it is
> occupied entirely with children's doings. It is human nature for a
> child to resent having another child pointed out to him as a model,
> whether in real life or in a book; and though he measures himself

not by the opinion of other children, it is by their collective opinion, not the special standard of the "good boy" – who, indeed, has fallen into well-deserved disgrace with novelists (Slater, 1897: 22).

As a girl, she resents having a perfect child pointed out to her as much as any boy would object to the same thing. Claudia Nelson writes that by the late 1880s 'the ideal child had become the "normal" child, enterprising, adventurous and even innocently destructive' (Nelson, 1991: 29). In 1893, L. B. Lang asked why *The Fairchild Family* and its 'intolerable children' continued to be so popular. It scarcely occurs to Mrs Fairchild, he adds, that 'she is teaching her children to be self-righteous, and giving them a sense of moral superiority which is more fatal to real goodness than any amount of thoughtless scrapes could be' (Lang, 1893: 580). By the end of the century, 'real goodness' had separated itself from righteousness, piety and religious dogma and had become something quite different from the moral ideals that had been thrust upon Tommy Merton, Lazy Lawrence and Loveit, and the Christian ideals that had so oppressed the Fairchild children. Despite the fact that *The Fairchild Family* continued to be published and handed out as a Sunday School prize until well into the twentieth century, later editions were revised and diluted. In my own three-volume edition, which is dated 1876, the prayers and hymns of the original first volume have been excised; editions of 1902 and later underwent still more revisions and omissions, whereby the original chapter heading 'Man Before the Fall' becomes 'The Birthday Walk' (Cutt, 1974: 80).[23]

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[23] In addition to the revised and abridged versions that succeeded the original text, however, the original 1818 edition was republished in the late 1890s, demonstrating that, in some quarters at least, Evangelicalism remained alive and well.

<u>Conclusion</u>

From the late nineteenth century, goodness in books for children began increasingly to be satirised. In 1872, *Sandford and Merton* was finally turned into an object of derision when F. C. Burnand produced *The New History of Sandford and Merton.* In Burnand's version, Harry is no prig: he cheerfully and consistently blames Tommy for his own transgressions and allows him to take the punishments and beatings that are meted out by Mr Barlow with alarming frequency, saying "'Oh, sir, I should be the happiest creature in the world, if you would only flog Master Tommy instead of me'" (Burnand, 1872: 166). He has no concern whatsoever for the poor, and Tommy complains, "'everything I do is entirely owing to Harry Sandford's fault, in whose company I am likely to become a worse boy than ever before'" (64). When Mr Barlow gets abominably drunk at the Mertons' party and has to spend the next three days in bed, the boys utterly – and deliberately – confuse the functions of curative ointments and restorative drinks before drugging their master with opiates and then trying to rouse him with cold water poured from a watering can (127-134). The intermittent stories and fables are even more gratuitous than in the original, bearing only the slightest possible relevance to the narrative, and are frequently wholly unconnected with anything at all. This parody shows not only that the priorities in children's fiction had changed, but also exactly what an 1870s public believed was wrong with, and outdated about, the original text.

A few decades after Burnand's literary caricature, Edith Nesbit gently satirises goodness in *The Wouldbegoods* (1901). The Bastable children are sent into the country in order to learn to be good, and at first they embrace the challenge, forming a 'New Society for being Good in', the aims of which are 'nobleness and goodness, and great and unselfish deeds... and to perform prodigies of real goodness' (Nesbit, 2013: 151). The children realise, however, that theoretical goodness is very far from simple: Oswald

points out that whether or not the Society is a good thing depends very much on '"what you mean by good"'. It is agreed that '"there is to be no more jaw than necessary about being good"' and that the name of the Society must be both honest and not '"priggish"'. He complains, '"being good is so much like being a muff, generally. Anyhow I'm not going to smooth the pillows of the sick, or read to the aged poor, or any rot out of *Ministering Children*"' (152-4). The name on which they agree, the 'Society of the Wouldbegoods,' reflects the children's intention to *try* to be good while recognising that they may not always succeed.

The problems with goodness are set out very clearly: the boys in particular are keen to avoid accusations of priggishness, and they are reluctant to talk about goodness any more than necessary. Oswald and Dicky agree to the principles of the Society primarily because '"it pleases the girls"'; Dicky muses, without much conviction, '"there must be *some* interesting things that are not wrong"' (153). The first rule of the Society, 'to be as good as possible' (152), is sufficiently vague to allow for the subsequent misadventures that result from trying to be good. While the children know that being good is a duty, they lack the experience and judgement consistently to apply its principles, and in the absence of a clear definition of good, failure seems inevitable. Earlier children's fiction featuring good boys is uninspiring to these late Victorian children: the boys in books who '"chop kindling wood and save their pennies to buy tea and tracts"' have become '"little beasts"' (154). However, there is a genuine desire to be good: Denny practises a mild form of mortification of the flesh, by putting peas in his shoes in order to experience the true goodness of a pilgrim, protesting, '"I do want to be good. And if pilgrimming is to do you good, you ought to do it properly. I shouldn't mind being hurt in my feet if it would make me good for ever and ever"' (296).

This earnest individual desire for goodness is a feature of later children's fiction: the protagonists of *The History of Sandford and Merton*, *The Parent's Assistant*, and

The History of the Fairchild Family are exhorted to be good by the adults around them.
Tom Brown, East and Arthur, and the Bastable children, show that they want to be
thought of as good, and that they have some understanding of goodness as a duty. In
Can We Teach Children to be Good? Roger Straughan develops a comprehensive set of
parameters for determining the teaching of good behaviour to children, and helps to
illuminate the value of some of the moral lessons given to the boys in this chapter:

> First, young children need to be taught what a rule is, because rules
> and principles are the medium through which moral language is
> expressed. Secondly, they will have to be given *examples* of simple
> rules to follow, before they can begin to formulate any for
> themselves. Thirdly, there are a number of such 'basic rules'
> (concerning non-injury, for instance), which only the most perverse
> of philosophers, or the most permissive of parents, would want to
> deny should be taught to young children. Fourthly, some form of
> unsophisticated but reasoned *justification* can and should be given
> for those rules wherever practicable, even if it takes young children
> some time to start to appreciate this. And fifthly and finally,
> children should be taught as early as possible that rules are not
> proven facts but moral judgements, and as such can be rationally
> supported, discussed, challenged and perhaps revised; so any moral
> content that is taught in the form of specific rules must be
> presented, as it were, *provisionally*, for moral education must aim
> ultimately at getting children not simply to obey certain rules, but
> to seek the *justification* for them and subject them to rational
> criticism (Straughan, 1982: 85; italics original).

Tommy Merton, Frank and the Fairchild children are all taught what rules are,
and are given examples of simple rules with basic explanations of their justification.
Frank's mother identifies herself as one of Straughan's permissive parents, allowing her
small son to burn himself on hot wax in order to teach him the rule, and Mr and Mrs
Fairchild provide the reasoned justification in the form of religious doctrine. Only by
the mid-nineteenth century is there any real evidence of Straughan's fifth tenet, when
Tom realises that moral judgements can and should be challenged, and that he must
seek the appropriate justification for his actions. For Henry Fairchild, the consequence
of wrongdoing is exclusion, but for the boys in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* it is goodness
itself that has become a solitary act and one of potential isolation: Arthur's kneeling to

pray, Tom's resolution to crib no more, and East's confirmation all have the capacity to mark their protagonist temporarily as an outcast, alone on the side of good. In each case, the boys are not simply obeying a rule, but seeking personal, valid reasons to be good through humility and selflessness. The Bastables may not like talking about goodness, but they share the same desire to please others through benevolent acts. Straughan concludes, 'Teaching children to be moral, then, must be a matter of teaching them to *want* to be moral' (Straughan, 1982: 91). In moving beyond simple obedience, children develop the ability to reason as well as an ability to empathise; but it is not until adulthood that personal autonomy enables the full exercise of will and stabilises its role in moral action. In the following chapters I examine the ways in which morality in men is exhibited, and trace the development of moral masculinity from its foundations in reason and will to a more complex, organic combination of resolution, affective regard for others and individual application of principle.

Chapter Two

‘Kind Authority’: Jane Austen’s Good Men

Man naturally desires, not only to be loved, but to be
lovely; or to be that thing which is the natural and
proper object of love... He desires not only praise,
but praise-worthiness.[1]

‘The comic part of the Character I might be equal to, but not the Good, the

Enthusiastic, the Literary. Such a Man’s Conversation must at times be on subjects of

Science & Philosophy of which I know nothing’ (Le Faye, 1996: 306). Jane Austen is

writing to her friend James Stanier Clarke, chaplain and librarian to the Prince of Wales,

just before the publication of *Emma* in December 1815, and doing her best politely to

sidestep one of his frequent plot suggestions. Clarke had read and admired *Mansfield*

Park (1814) and wanted more good clergymen, particularly one like James Beattie’s

‘Minstrel’: modest, innocent, patient, serene and inflexible in his faith.[2] Austen’s

reluctance to create such a character demonstrates her rejection of the prescriptive

masculine morality that had been popular in eighteenth century fiction and that was so

important to Clarke. However, hers is nevertheless an unquestionably moral universe

where goodness counts for a great deal; although her men – and her women too, for that

matter – are often far from perfect, and many are seriously flawed, she portrays a world

in which basic morality is a vital character asset.

Sir Charles Grandison had been the primary fictional model for the good men

who appeared in the fiction of the later eighteenth century, and Austen had admired

Richardson’s novel enough to draft and periodically revise a play script of it between

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[1] Adam Smith, 2009. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), London: Penguin Books, p. 136.
[2] James Beattie (1735-1803), Scottish poet and moralist, is best known for his two-volume poem *The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius* (1771-2).

1791 and 1800,[3] intended for private performance within her circle of family and friends. Margaret Doody suggests that Austen is Richardson's natural successor:

> In Jane Austen's novels we are aware of the charms of a world in which the code of conduct is clearly defined, and in which goodness is seen as possible within the framework of society as it exists, by adhering to the code of right conduct and developing the perceptions of head and heart together (Doody, 1974: 275).

This concept of morality coming from 'head and heart together' is one that I discuss further below. Jocelyn Harris believes that Austen was strongly influenced by the style of Richardson's last novel, and she makes a convincing case for the similar scenes and plot devices in *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) that occur throughout Austen's work.[4] It seems that Austen intuitively saw what Gerard Barker was later to observe: that, as an exemplary hero, Grandison 'represented a virtual dead end for fiction because the flawless character was irreconcilable with the realistic demands of the novel' (Barker, 1985: 49).

This chapter explores the ways in which Austen creates moral masculinity by mutual or symbiotic relationship. The novels I discuss – *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815)[5] – were published consecutively and within the space of two years, each featuring one virtuous male character complementing and opposing another less virtuous one who behaves in an immoral or disingenuous way. Rather than simply contrasting two different kinds of men who compete for the hand of the heroine, I demonstrate that Austen gives them a much more cohesive and collaborative purpose. She constructs her male characters in such a way that they illuminate the virtues and vices of each other: the immoral behaviour of one man acts as a catalyst, setting off a chain of events that allows the morally better man an opportunity

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[3] The first ten pages of the manuscript have been scanned at the website austenonly.com and can be viewed at http://issuu.com/chawtonhouselibrary/docs/grandison.

[4] For a full discussion of some of the similarities between the work of Richardson and Jane Austen, see *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* by Jocelyn Harris, (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[5] I use the following abbreviations throughout this chapter: *E: Emma; MP: Mansfield Park; S & S: Sense and Sensibility; P & P: Pride and Prejudice; NA: Northanger Abbey; P: Persuasion*.

to prove himself to be good either by realising an important truth or by acting in a selfless way for the benefit of others. Mona Scheuermann observes, 'There are very few villains in her books' (Scheuermann, 2009: 3), and she suggests that this is because Austen intended to portray a strictly moral society that conformed to established cultural codes of the time. It is equally likely that Austen creates so few villains because, notwithstanding the burlesque of *Northanger Abbey*, she consciously rejects the values of the Gothic tradition that has a predatory tyrant lurking around every corner and instead presents the safe common sense conservatism of upper middle class England. As Virginia Woolf notes in her essay on Jane Austen, 'Think away the surface animation, the likeness to life, and there remains, to provide a deeper pleasure, an exquisite discrimination of human values' (Woolf, 1984: 139).

My reasons for not discussing in detail *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Northanger Abbey* (1818)[6] and *Persuasion* (1818) are primarily textual and generic. Austen's first novel contains arguably one of her most wicked men, Willoughby, matched against the eminently dependable Colonel Brandon. These are almost stock characters, and the play between them less subtle than in the other novels. As a romantic hero, Willoughby appears to be gallant and desirable while remaining resolutely incapable of commitment; his evasion of Marianne's desire for an engagement is founded in his practical need to marry for money, and, like Wickham, it seems that he cannot afford the moral scruples of wealthier characters. Colonel Brandon, older and wiser, offers safety and security without the romantic excitement that Willoughby embodies. Edward Ferrars stands alone in the novel, wavering between desire and duty and eventually able to find a way to combine the two. The connection between goodness and happiness in the novel is also less ambiguous than in the others: Willoughby's selfishness is

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[6] *Northanger Abbey* was not published until December 1817, but it was written much earlier, in 1798-9, and was sold to a publisher in 1803. It was not published but was sold back to Jane Austen's brother in 1816, later to be revised for final publication and dated 1818. It is generally regarded as one of her early novels in spite of its artificially late publication date.

portrayed as an insurmountable fault; his apology is deemed insincere since it originates in regret that his behaviour 'has not made him happy' (*S & S*: 327). Colonel Brandon's character as 'an excellent man...does not rest on *one* act of kindness' (314-5); he is severally good, and, being more mature, his character and principles are more reliably fixed. In this context, his goodness assures his happiness just as Willoughby's badness assures his dissatisfaction.

Northanger Abbey opposes the good-humoured clergyman Henry Tilney with the swearing, uncouth John Thorpe in a burlesque narrative that, while innovative, is also extreme in its attitude to morality. This novel is unusual in that Austen never portrays Thorpe as anything other than vulgar. Whereas her other 'villains' generally have some redeeming qualities, such as charm or urbanity, Thorpe is always boorish and ill-mannered, and the contrast between him and Tilney is extreme.

Finally, *Persuasion* is unusual in that Austen presents not two men but one: Captain Wentworth is compared and contrasted with the young man he used to be, the earnest youth whom Anne Elliot was once persuaded to reject. His penniless younger self is 'brilliant,... headstrong', 'full of life and ardour' (*P*: 27); he is witty, warm and confident, all qualities which, for Lady Russell, add up to 'an aggravation of the evil' (27). Some eight years later, his mature self, rich, successful and assured, has overcome the offences of the past. He understands his weaknesses and his strengths: 'Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant' (191), and it is ultimately his constancy which defines his goodness. Time itself has taken the role of the villain: the capacity to remain faithful to memory and experience enables the past to be overcome and for happiness and goodness to be simultaneously achieved. William Walter Elliot takes a minor role as Captain Wentworth's 'other' and in the beginning shows typical traits of the Austen 'villain': he is charming and amiable; he is 'rational, discreet, polished' (130). However, underlying these surface veneers are serious faults:

'Mr Elliot was too generally agreeable. Various were the tempers in her father's house, he pleased them all. He endured too well – stood too well with everybody' (131). Like Willoughby and Thorpe, and Anne's father, Elliot is finally revealed as 'a disingenuous, artificial, worldly man' (168). These three novels – Austen's first and last, plus a Gothic satire – differ in tone, intention and effect from the three novels I discuss here.

In the comprehensive scholarship on issues of style, structure and language in Austen, most critical attention continues to focus on the heroines at the centre of each novel; very little discussion concerns the morality specifically of Austen's male characters. Some critics, such as Jane Nardin (1973), Robert Liddell (1963) and Mary Evans (1987), have explored issues of basic morality in Austen's work; for Norman Page, 'it is the *moral* life which is of supreme importance' to Austen (Page, 1972: 87; italics in original) in her male and female characters alike. Other critics, such as Yasmine Gooneratne (1970), concentrate on important issues of setting and structure in the novels in terms of their social context, and examine ideas of right and wrong prevalent among readers at the time Jane Austen was writing.

More recently, however, some detailed critical attention has been paid to the philosophical and religious context in the novels, and to ways in which Austen's characters demonstrate adherence to a moral code. Sarah Emsley's *Jane Austen's Philosophy of the Virtues* (2005) demonstrates that Austen was far more than the conservative moralist that some critics have called her and claims that Austen was quite different from other writers of fiction in the early nineteenth century:

> Instead of adopting the conservative attitude of her time, which was that women's virtue depended almost solely on their chastity, and instead of looking forward to the increasingly secular society of the future, in which virtue would no longer be consistently held up as the ideal for men or women, in her novels Jane Austen calls on a stronger philosophical tradition of *a plurality of virtues*, and represents the range of the virtues as something that both men and women can learn and practice (Emsley, 2005: 3, my italics).

Emsley studies Austen's heroines and reads the novels as conduct guides for women. She applies the ethical theories of Aristotle and the traditional Christian theories of St Thomas Aquinas to Austen's work, revealing the moral values of her heroines, and demonstrating that Austen insists on a realistic and attainable range of good qualities for them, from patience to prudence, and from temperance to courage.

David Morse's study of British culture in the eighteenth century illuminates aspects of philosophical and moral thought in fiction. Again primarily discussing Austen's heroines, he suggests that while virtue is connected with innocence and good conduct, it 'comes to be associated above all with the ability to maintain an undaunted and unshakeable spirit in the face of discouragement and adversity' (Morse, 2000: 161). In general terms, this may be true, but in Austen's work the display of personal qualities is much less predictable or prescriptive. Lydia Bennet maintains her usual undaunted and unshakeable spirit – 'untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy and fearless' (*P & P*: 278) – despite the adversity that has caused her family such anguish, and yet in no way can she be described as virtuous. Consistency of character and fearlessness, in this case, are not synonymous with virtue. Mary Bennet's lament for her sister's ruin, that 'loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable' (255), derives from a passage in Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778), which in turn echoes the sentiments of various conduct books that were popular at the time.[7] Innocence, or chastity, is primarily a generic quality demonstrated by heroines in novels of this time, but steadfastness, courage and quiet determination can denote characters of either sex in Austen's work.

Mona Scheuermann's *Reading Jane Austen* (2009) aims to place Austen's moral beliefs firmly into their social, cultural and historical context. Scheuermann connects Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of Men in the Higher and Middle Classes of Society in Great Britain* (1795) and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern*

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[7] See Margaret Doody's note to Volume Two, Letter Eight of *Evelina*, Penguin Classics, 1984 edition, and Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773).

System of Education (1799) with Austen's novels in order to show Austen's faith in a moral universe, insisting that her values are inextricably those of her time and that 'her perspective carries the authority of her whole society' (Scheuermann, 2009: 2).

I argue in this chapter that Austen's understanding of moral goodness corresponds broadly with the ideas of Adam Smith, whose final, sixth, edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* was published in 1790. Smith's work outlines a late eighteenth century understanding of what goodness is in theory and in practice, and as a standard work of moral theory, it continued to be influential well into the early nineteenth century. Austen denied that her novels were written 'to support any theory or inculcate any particular moral, except... the superiority of high over low principles, and of greatness over littleness of mind' (Austen-Leigh, 1883: 144). Her work does, however, reflect Smith's views on moral conduct, particularly with regard to her male characters, and I suggest that male goodness in her work is more important than has previously been supposed. Andrew Wright claims that men 'play a definitely secondary role' in the novels (Wright, 1953: 91); nearly sixty years later, this view metamorphoses into one in which the men still have a secondary role, but now as the heroine's teacher: the novels 'are narratives of a girl who starts out badly but who, through the ministrations of some warm-hearted moral pedagogue, returns to the correct path and conveniently falls in love with her teacher' (Fessenbecker, 2011: 748). Austen's male characters play a much greater part in the novels than these views might imply, and the relationship of the male characters with each other is often more revealing than the relationships between male and female characters in terms of developing and demonstrating moral behaviour.

Adam Smith defines two standards of goodness: 'The one is the idea of exact propriety and perfection, so far as we are each capable of comprehending that idea. The other is that degree of approximation to this idea which is commonly attained in the world' (Smith, 2009: 291). His qualification of the appreciation of perfect goodness – the phrase 'so far as we are each capable of comprehending that idea' – is one that will echo throughout the whole of this thesis. The idea that goodness, like God, is ultimately ineffable and sublime, surpassing the limits of our understanding, forms one of its central hypotheses, and provides an explanation for the primary difficulty in identifying and describing the good man. Smith believes that 'the wise and virtuous man' consistently directs his efforts to the first of the two standards, and that he is moved to aim for this ideal as a result of his observations upon the character of himself and others.

Virtue, for Smith, is 'excellence, something uncommonly great and beautiful, which rises far above what is vulgar and ordinary' (32). The second standard, that which is 'commonly attained,' is practised by those who have 'little sense of their own weaknesses and imperfections; they have little modesty: are often... great admirers of themselves' (294). This second class of men, despite being not so virtuous as the first, are, Smith argues, hard to resist: 'their excessive self-admiration dazzles the multitude' (294) with charm and amiability. Smith's portrait of two classes of men prefigures Austen's pairings of men, where Edmund Bertram's outwardly high principles are contrasted with Henry Crawford's general agreeableness; Darcy's standoffishness is contrasted with Wickham's apparent openness and friendly manner; and Knightley's serious maturity with Frank Churchill's boyish misjudgements. Austen's more innovative approach, however, is to withhold the information that directs the reader to judge which of these pairs equates to Smith's 'wise and virtuous man' until a relatively

late point in the narrative. This allows her to further explore what makes a good man truly admirable, and what gives him the mere appearance of goodness.

The goodness displayed by Jane Austen's male characters is generally different from that of her contemporaries. In Mary Brunton's *Self-Control*, published in the same year as *Sense and Sensibility*, Laura declares that her favourite fictional character is the eponymous hero of Jane Porter's *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803). Laura's father compares Thaddeus to the Apollo Belvedere: 'so like a man that one cannot absolutely call it divine, yet so perfect, that it is difficult to believe it human' (Brunton, 1986: 67). This part-divine, part-human hybrid constitutes the typical fictional good man of the late eighteenth century novel and the stereotypically good hero is what Robert Stuart, in Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), describes humorously as 'the first and best of men':

> His proper province is to keep the wheels of a Novel at work, by misconstruing the motives of his mistress, aspersing her purity, and on every decent occasion, picking a quarrel with her. He must hunt her from castle to convent, and from convent to cottage. He must watch under her window, in all weathers, without ever taking cold, and he must save her life once at least. Then when he has rescued her from the impending peril, he must bend on one knee, sigh through the amorous gamut, and ask her to marry. If she knows her business, she will refuse him; upon which, he must act the most heart-rending antics, grow pathetically fretful, writhe with grace, and groan in melody (Barrett, 1927: 114).

While Austen was 'very much amused' by *The Heroine* (Le Faye, 1996: 255), she rejects the typical hero who hunts, watches and rescues his heroine. She instead presents not one man but a pair of men, who between them display a range of qualities that are on the one hand base and instinctive and on the other noble and generous; the manifestation of goodness is not confined to those whom we recognise as her 'good' characters.

Smith cites four primary qualities as being most useful to others, and which should be cultivated by those aspiring to goodness: humanity, justice, generosity and

public spirit, or benevolence. He defines humanity as 'fellow-feeling,' what today we might call compassion or empathy, and describes it as a woman's virtue; generosity and public spirit, founded on the same principles as justice, he describes as a man's virtue (221-2). I discuss sympathy in more detail later in this chapter. While we find Emma visiting the poor, we also see evidence of empathy in Austen's male characters: Knightley fears that Emma has been hurt by Frank Churchill, and Edmund Bertram observes Fanny's distress following her rejection of Crawford. Whereas these are public qualities, affecting others, Smith also cites personal merits such as prudence and self command: qualities that were in the next century to be taken up by enthusiastic self-improvers like Samuel Smiles.

Prudence, for Smith, is an important virtue, suggesting 'wise and judicious conduct' (254). He refers to something he calls 'superior prudence', or prudence combined with 'valour, with extensive and strong benevolence, with a sacred regard to the rules of justice, and all these supported by a proper degree of self-command.' For Smith, this represents 'the best head joined to the best heart. It is the most perfect wisdom combined with the most perfect virtue' (255). The prudent man, asserts Smith, is serious and earnest in his attempt to understand others; he is always sincere; and most importantly, 'he is not a bustler in business where he has no concern; is not a meddler in other people's affairs' (254). Emma, with her propensity for match-making, thus demonstrates great imprudence, and Knightley's sustained attempts to persuade her not to interfere show him to be a model of prudent restraint. Edmund's insistence on involving himself with the theatrical production at Mansfield Park, an endeavour that he has initially judged to be the concern of others and which he has proclaimed 'highly injudicious [and] imprudent' (*MP*: 89), reveals a notable moral fault. Whereas Knightley represents 'the best head joined to the best heart', Edmund allows his heart to overrule his head on this occasion. He convinces himself that he is doing the party a

moral service by joining them as an actor, that he is 'restraining the publicity of the business, limiting the exhibition, concentrating our folly' (108), and tries to secure Fanny's approval in place of his own. By directly addressing this situation, Austen confirms that prudent goodness is always subjective and in reality can never be as pure in practice as Smith suggests it is in theory. Moreover, a man's capacity for prudence depends on other circumstances. When Elizabeth comments on Wickham's apparent attachment to Miss King, she asks, '"What is the difference in matrimonial affairs, between the mercenary and the prudent motive? Where does discretion end and avarice begin?"' She suggests that Wickham, like Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*, cannot afford to be good, adding, perhaps with some irony, that '"a man in distressed circumstances has not time for all those elegant decorums which other people may observe"' (*P & P*: 137). Whereas the cause of Wickham's distress is primarily economic, Edmund's is more ethical, involving a conflict between his reason and his emotions, of which he is, moreover, entirely conscious.

Self-command, ruled by a sense of propriety, is cited by Smith as a principle of restraint that prevents the rushing headlong to instant gratification of the passions; not only is self-command in itself 'a great virtue', but 'from it all the other virtues seem to derive their principal lustre' (Smith, 2009: 309, 284). Appropriate control over the feelings, he suggests, is the only proper conduct for 'the man of real constancy and firmness' (168). Austen suggests Darcy's virtue, long before the reader has the opportunity to see it in action, by remarking that he 'seldom appeared really animated' (*P & P*: 161): his reserve and inscrutability are actually demonstrations of the rigorous self-command of the virtuous man. When Edmund Bertram disapproves of Mary Crawford's candid and indecorous speech about her uncle, the narrator observes that he 'heard it all and said nothing.' He later confides to Fanny that he does not censure Mary's opinions, but that the impropriety lies in making them public (*MP*: 46). The fact

that he controls his speech where Mary Crawford cannot acts as a signpost to Austen's reader, reinforcing the idea that Edmund has succeeded in achieving a goodness that Mary has failed to realise.

Liveliness, as a personal characteristic, is usually representative of moral danger in Austen, and comes from the inability to gain control over self and emotion. In particular, the kind of insensitive, ill-judged liveliness of Mary Crawford is clearly more of a threat to moral well-being than, for example, Elizabeth Bennet's good-natured, friendly liveliness. The house in Twickenham, where Crawford has access to Maria Rushworth, is inhabited by 'a family of lively, agreeable manners, and probably of morals and discretion to suit' (*MP*: 305); liveliness in morals and discretion is particularly dangerous to characters who already lack the self-discipline to be virtuous. Tom Bertram has 'more liveliness and gallantry' than Edmund; it is implied that he has developed these qualities during his frequent visits to London. Cities are generally not to be trusted for moral standards because their greater population and range of entertainments offer greater opportunity for misbehaviour. Edmund's comment that '"we do not look in great cities for our best morality"' appears to be well-founded (*MP*: 35; 66). Raymond Williams points out that the Crawfords may have lived in London and picked up some unfortunate city habits, but their roots, and therefore their knowledge of traditional codes of behaviour, are in rural landed property in Norfolk (Williams, 1985: 114): there is therefore little excuse for their conduct apart from their inherent selfishness. Many of Austen's livelier characters arrive in the novels from somewhere else, as outsiders, bringing with them their inferior morality, and they are either ultimately to be reformed, like Frank Churchill, or banished, like Henry Crawford, according to whether they are willing to be changed. The enthusiastic candour of Crawford, Frank Churchill and Wickham alerts the attentive reader to something lacking in their moral integrity: the frequent or spontaneous expression of

high emotion denotes a man who has not quite mastered the art of self-command. Lydia's 'high animal spirits' (*P & P*: 39), a more vulgar rendering of Elizabeth's or Emma's optimistic outlook, likewise denote something morally dangerous, as does Mary Crawford's free-speaking manner and her ill-advised pun on Rears and Vices (*MP*: 44).

The ability to suppress strong feeling is often considered a virtue in Austen. When Edmund arrives in Portsmouth to escort Fanny and Susan to Mansfield Park, he is 'evidently suffering under violent emotions, which he was determined to suppress' (*MP*: 302). Frank Churchill reveals his inferior degree of self-control during the Box Hill outing. Emma remarks that he seems more 'under command' than on the previous day, which he misunderstands as a suggestion that he should be under her command. She hurriedly clarifies her meaning: '"I meant self-command. You had, somehow or other, broken bounds yesterday, and run away from your own management; but today you are got back again."' He confesses, '"I can have no self-command without a motive"' (*MP*: 254). In breaking bounds and running away from self-discipline, Churchill shows a wildness and untameability that is not commensurate with Austen's closely constructed social universe; his behaviour is inappropriate for a man of his class and instead reveals a closer parity with the behaviour of a boy who is reluctant to comply with social rules. Emma, accustomed to the proper behaviour of Knightley, expects him to behave with the same degree of self-control and is surprised to have seen him so transparent; he, on the other hand, reveals his unfamiliarity with this personal virtue by not quite understanding her commentary. He needs a reason to demonstrate this virtue, whereas Knightley does not. Edmund is 'determined' to suppress his feelings, because to reveal them would betray the want of propriety and self-control that belongs to more morally impoverished characters.

Consistency is the outward manifestation of deliberate self-command; the good man decides what to suppress and maintains that outward appearance of perfect composure. When Elizabeth Bennet declares, '"every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed on the appearance of either merit or sense"' (*P & P*: 121), Austen seems to suggest that most people lack the necessary self-command to behave uniformly at all times. Her virtuous men are seen to be consistent most of the time, while her less morally robust characters appear to be changeable and their conduct easily swayed by circumstances. Fanny and Edmund alike are both surprised by his apparent change of heart over the theatrical performance at Mansfield Park. Fanny is seen puzzling to herself, 'Could it be possible? Edmund so inconsistent' (*MP*: 110); Edmund himself confesses uneasily, '"No man can like being driven into the *appearance* of such inconsistency"' and admits that his sudden decision to join in will seem an '"absurdity"' (*MP*: 108). Edmund has been 'uniformly kind' to Fanny on her first arrival at Mansfield Park, and resolutely silent during Mary Crawford's verbal indiscretions, and this apparent trampling of his own principles is genuinely surprising.

While Edmund appears to be ashamed of his inconsistency, Crawford positively celebrates the same characteristic. His love of acting reveals a serious moral flaw, apparent in his avowal, '"I feel as if I could be any thing or every thing, as if I could rant and storm, or sigh, or cut capers in any tragedy or comedy"' (*MP*: 15; 87). This chameleon-like ability to be all things to all men – the same fault that is levelled at William Walter Elliot in *Persuasion* – suggests an inconstancy and an unreliability that makes a man impossible to trust. Indeed, this is the very reason Fanny cannot trust Crawford:

> Mr Crawford was no longer the Mr Crawford who, as the clandestine, insidious, treacherous admirer of Maria Bertram, had been her abhorrence, whom she hated to see or speak to, in whom she could believe no good quality to exist... He was now the Mr

> Crawford who was addressing herself with ardent, disinterested
> love; whose feelings were apparently become all that was
> honourable and upright... Here was a change! (*MP*: 222)

Sir Thomas also reveals himself to be morally at fault when he seriously considers

Crawford as a potential husband for his niece. He 'was most cordially anxious for the

perfection of Mr Crawford's character. He wished him to be a model of constancy; and

fancied the best means of effecting it would be by not trying him too long' (*MP*: 234).

The ironic tone of the narrator clearly highlights the problem of appearing to be

consistent: nothing, it seems, is so transient as the mere show of constancy, which soon

wears off once its object has been deemed unattainable.

However, through the conduct of Edmund and Crawford, Austen shows the

problematic nature of the good man's existence. Edmund, humourless and priggish, has

been cited as one of her least attractive good men: Andrew Wright suggests that, of all

Austen's heroes, he is 'the one least likely to capture our sympathy or affection'

(Wright, 1953: 133); Kingsley Amis famously referred to him as 'morally detestable'

(Amis, 1957: 142). Good men are not always likeable, and likeable men are not

necessarily good. Smith states that amiability – or the capacity to be liked and approved

by others – originates in humanity, and that preoccupation with the self often results in

disapproval from others (Smith, 2009: 30-1). This belief provides another constant

throughout this study: from Adam Smith onwards, there is a fine line between caring

enough about self and others, and caring too much about one or the other. Often, as is

the case with Edmund, there must be a sacrifice of principles if outward conduct is to

please others, and sometimes a sacrifice of conduct if the good man is to comply with

his own rules. By focusing on his own principles, Edmund initially alienates the group

by refusing to act, but as a result of his uncharacteristic inconsistency becomes slightly

less priggish and more attractive to the rest of the party; his descent from 'that moral

elevation which he had maintained before' becomes a 'victory' for Tom and Maria Bertram (*MP*: 110).

Where Edmund descends because of a moral decision, Austen allows Crawford to be lifted up by his first show of humanity: what begins as an entirely selfish plan for his own amusement, born of 'idleness and folly' (*MP*: 158), becomes something that is to have quite a marked, though temporary, effect on his behaviour: for a time he seems close to becoming good. As Crawford grows closer to Fanny and her brother, he discovers a sense of genuine admiration for William's courage and stoicism: 'he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was!' (*MP*: 162). In fact, William is the true 'good man' of this novel; whereas Crawford is selfish and hedonistic and Edmund wants to be seen as good while at the same time maintaining the freedom to indulge his desires, William is consistently thoughtful and worthy of respect, and he has attained this happy position through his own effort and application to his profession. He has worked hard; in 1814, industriousness is still as important as it had been to the didactic writers of the late eighteenth century.

When Crawford procures William's promotion, he does so partly in order to make Fanny happy, but also to manipulate and obligate her into tolerating his attentions. Although Fanny can only refuse his marriage proposal, Crawford does undergo a change as a result of the process of wooing her; he appears genuinely to surprise and impress himself by his conduct:

> He had gone [to Norfolk], had done even more good than he had foreseen, had been more useful to more than his first plan had comprehended, and was now able to congratulate himself upon it, and to feel that in performing a duty, he had secured agreeable recollections for his own mind (*MP*: 275).

Fanny herself is 'willing to allow that he might have more good qualities than she had been wont to suppose' (275). Smith states that 'The man who acts according to the rules

of perfect prudence, of strict justice, and of proper benevolence, may be said to be perfectly virtuous', adding that these qualities will always enable a man to do his duty (Smith, 2009: 280). Here Austen shows Crawford apparently behaving according to the rules of prudence, justice and 'proper' benevolence, performing an act of duty that brings pleasure and profit to others. He experiences the self-approbation of the good man as a result of his uncharacteristic selflessness.

The effect, of course, is only temporary; but in her portrayal of Edmund and Crawford Austen seems to suggest that pure, lasting goodness is an impossibility, and that each needs something that the other already possesses. This is clear in Edmund's remark to Fanny: 'Between us, I think we should have won you. My theoretical and his practical knowledge together, could not have failed' (*MP*: 236). Ultimately it is Crawford's shocking elopement with Maria, and Edmund's horror at Mary's reaction to her brother's conduct, that brings about Edmund's eventual enlightenment. Whereas he could forgive Mary's earlier disparaging remarks about the clergy, he cannot overlook her referring to Crawford's conduct as mere 'folly': his primary objection is that 'it was the detection, not the offence, which she reprobated' (*MP*: 309). Austen might have been thinking of Mary Wollstonecraft's words in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790): 'an honest man with a confined understanding is frequently the slave of his habits and the dupe of his feelings, whilst the man with a clearer head and a colder heart makes the passions of others bend to his interest' (Todd and Butler, 1989: 8). Edmund is the honest man in this situation, but his 'confined understanding' has rendered him a slave to the charms of others, while Crawford's 'clear head' has temporarily been influenced by feelings that have surprised him.

Knightley believes that 'there is one thing which a man can always do, if he chuses, and that is his duty; not by manoevring and finessing, but by vigour and resolution' (*E*: 103). Darcy, in bringing about a partial restoration of Lydia's reputation,

likewise considers it 'his duty to step forward, and endeavour to remedy an evil, which had been brought on by himself' (*P & P*: 284). The attitude of Austen's men towards duty reveals something of their true moral nature, and the fact that duty is presented as an act of will, or resolution, reinforces the idea that goodness can only come from sustained effort and consistency. Smith's views on duty, however, are somewhat ambivalent. He cites an example in which a man may have received great benefits from another, but may not necessarily feel enormous gratitude towards him. If he has been 'virtuously educated', Smith maintains, the man will realise how 'amiable' the appearance of gratitude seems; 'though his heart is not warmed with any grateful affection, *he will strive to act as if it was*' (Smith, 2009: 187; my italics). The motive for his earnest desire to affect a sense of gratitude, despite not feeling it, originates in 'a reverence for the established rule of duty' (ibid.). Smith suggests that the actual emotion is less important than a man's outward conduct, which should conform to an established code. Knightley's censure of Frank Churchill's conduct comes from a belief he shares with Adam Smith, that 'respect for right conduct is felt by everybody' (*E*: 104). Knightley argues that Churchill could easily stand up to his uncle and aunt:

> "A sensible man would find no difficulty in it. He would feel himself in the right; and the declaration – made, of course, as a man of sense would make it, in a proper manner – would do him more good, raise him higher, fix his interest stronger with the people he depended on, than all that a line of shifts and expedients can ever do. Respect would be added to affection. They would feel that they could trust him" (*E*: 104).

By arguing that Churchill would 'feel' himself to be right, Knightley goes beyond Smith in insisting that right conduct comes from thought *and* feeling; duty is not just a matter of doing the right thing, but can be further validated by feeling the right emotion. Knightley's role in the novel is partly to act as moral guide to Emma, but also to watch and comment on other characters; Austen ensures that he is consistently correct in his appraisal of the conduct and true character of Frank Churchill. Whereas Edmund and

Crawford are similar ages, Knightley is Frank's senior by almost a generation, and his superior wisdom comes from his age and experience over that of the younger man.

Self-Scrutiny

While he is often an observer of others, Knightley is less prone to self scrutiny, a quality that Smith advises for the wise and virtuous man eager to correct his own faults. Smith suggests that examination of our own conduct generally occurs in two cases: when we are about to act, and after we have acted. However, self-scrutiny before an act is problematic because the emotions generally obstruct clear judgement: 'When we are about to act, the eagerness of passion will seldom allow us to consider what we are doing, with the candour of an indifferent person' (Smith, 2009: 181). Fanny refuses to advise Crawford, telling him, '"We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be"' (*MP*: 280). She is frustrated by Edmund's vacillation over Mary Crawford and his refusal to see what, to her, is plain: 'he is blinded, and nothing will open his eyes, nothing can, after having had truths before him so long in vain' (*MP*: 288). In this case, Edmund refuses to see what is externally in front of him, and simultaneously refuses to look introspectively within himself to see what is right. Austen has previously shown that he is capable of self-scrutiny: he has analysed his own conduct earlier in the novel when he angers himself by his neglect of Fanny: 'Vexed as Edmund was with his mother and aunt, he was still more angry with himself. His own forgetfulness of her was worse than any thing which they had done' (*MP*: 54). His reluctance to be more rigorously critical of himself and his feelings for Mary Crawford is therefore shown to be an act of deliberate negligence and self-delusion.

Perhaps the greatest insight Austen gives into Edmund's inner workings is in the letter he writes to Fanny towards the end of the novel about his intentions towards Mary

Crawford. A legacy of eighteenth century fiction, the epistolary tradition enables the development of plot while at the same time allowing a degree of insight into the writer's feelings. Austen uses letters sparingly for this purpose, and the letters of her male characters in particular enable her to explore their otherwise generally impenetrable thoughts. It is a hastily written letter that enables Captain Wentworth at last to reveal his constancy to Anne Elliot; Darcy, Frank Churchill and Edmund are also all shown expressing their thoughts in letters and simultaneously examining their own thoughts, feelings and conduct.

Edmund's letter to Fanny, while tending towards self-examination, is full of anxieties and uncertainties that indicate his evasion of the truth. He writes, 'I believe I shall write to her;' 'I have very nearly determined on explaining myself by letter;' 'I think a letter will be decidedly the best method of explanation;' 'I must think this matter over a little.' He envies Crawford's sense of self-determination and decisiveness: 'He thoroughly knows his own mind and acts up to his resolutions – an inestimable quality' (*MP*: 286-7). Whereas Crawford *knows*, Edmund can only *think* and *believe*; his inability to commit to any single course of action betrays his lack of experience, confidence and integrity.

Frank Churchill confesses in his letter to Emma, 'I behaved shamefully' (*E*: 303): having placed himself at some geographical and emotional distance, he is able to reflect on his conduct and arrive at the certain knowledge that his behaviour has been wrong. His admission of guilt makes him a better man in the eyes of Knightley, who is 'very ready to believe that his character will improve, and acquire from [Jane's] the steadiness and delicacy of principle that it wants' (*E*: 308).

Darcy also accounts for his own conduct in his long letter to Elizabeth, following his ill-expressed marriage proposal; he insists that his character 'requires' such an explanation. In accounting for his role in the separation of Bingley and Jane, he

reveals that he has watched them both closely and believes on 'impartial conviction' that there is no serious attachment. He is careful to point out that 'my investigations and decisions are not usually influenced by my hopes or fears' (*P & P*: 174-6). In this respect he clearly differs from Edmund Bertram, whose hopes and fears blind him to the point at which he can make no decision at all. Darcy also needs time and space, however, in order to collect his impressions effectively, revealing, 'I was not then master enough of myself to know what could or ought to be revealed' (*P & P*: 180). While he has thus revealed an earlier lack of self-command, he recovers his virtue by way of sustained self-scrutiny that allows for resolution of his conduct.

Closely allied to self-scrutiny in good men, for Smith, is the sense of approbation or approval for admirable conduct. The general rules of morality, he states, 'are ultimately founded upon experience of what, in particular instances, our moral faculties, our natural sense of merit and propriety, approve or disapprove of' (Smith, 2009: 183). That is, moral approbation comes as a response to events and circumstances; it is not created by them. In effect, we learn correct moral behaviour by experience and through admiration of excellence. It is only a short step from approval of others' conduct to self-approbation when our own conduct matches that of others:

> The love and admiration which we naturally conceive for those
> whose character and conduct we approve necessarily dispose us to
> desire to become ourselves the objects of the like agreeable
> sentiments and to be as amiable and as admirable as those whom
> we love and admire the most. Emulation, the anxious desire that we
> ourselves should excel, is originally founded in our admiration of
> the excellence of others (Smith, 2009: 137).

This idea is developed by Thomas Carlyle later in the century into hero-worship, and by Samuel Smiles into the art of self-improvement.

However, in Austen, male characters rarely practise self-approbation. Most of the commentary on what kind of man they might be comes, in fact, from her female characters. Emma's disapproval of Frank and his secret engagement is clear when she

thinks him 'So unlike what a man should be! – None of that upright integrity, that strict adherence to truth and principle, that disdain of trick and littleness, which a man should display in every transaction of his life' (*E*: 274). Knightley also roundly criticises the young man but refrains from praising himself at Churchill's expense. Emma has secretly assumed 'all the high opinion of himself' that she supposes Knightley to maintain would make him generous in his approbation of others (106), but in fact Knightley betrays very little direct self-approval throughout the novel. Most of the evidence for his goodness comes from other characters and their warm praise of his kindness, benevolence and integrity. Darcy, too, is warmly praised by others: his housekeeper reveals him to be 'the best landlord, and the best master... Not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves' (*P & P*: 219). Mr and Mrs Gardiner are enchanted with Darcy at their first meeting: 'there was no fault to find... he was a liberal man, and did much good among the poor' (233). Darcy's presence as an admirable man is clearly felt by others.

Edmund looks not to himself for self-approbation, but to Fanny. Dawn Potter notes that since her arrival at Mansfield Park he has been 'molding Fanny into a feminine image of himself' (Potter, 2008: 617). As one of Fessenbecker's 'warm-hearted moral pedagogues', Edmund seeks confirmation of his moral standards in this other self rather than turning his judgement inwards. When he decides to join the theatrical cast, he appeals to her, '"Give me your approbation, then, Fanny. I am not comfortable without it... If you are against me, I ought to distrust myself"' (*MP*: 109). The difference, Smith suggests, between 'a man of principle and honour' and 'a worthless fellow' is that 'the one adheres, on all occasions, steadily and resolutely to his maxims, and preserves through the whole of his life one even tenour of conduct. The other acts variously and accidentally, as humour, inclination or interest chance to be uppermost' (Smith, 2009: 188). Edmund, of course, is not a worthless fellow, but

neither in this case is he a man of principle and honour; while not habitually led by his inclination or interest as are, for example, Crawford and Wickham, he manipulates the moral dimensions of this situation to suit his own ends. Because he cannot justify his conduct himself, he must instead manoevre others into approving it.

Self and Others

The correlation between self and others is important in the making of a good man at this time, and one of the primary features of Smith's wise and virtuous man is his capacity for sympathy, which he also refers to as pity, humanity or compassion. In her forthcoming work, *Coining Empathy: Psychology, Aesthetics, Ethics, 1870-1920*, Carolyn Burdett traces the development of nineteenth century sympathy into empathy, its twentieth century equivalent. She suggests that Smith's definition of sympathy enables it to function as a feeling and as a thought; in Smith's view it can be innate and acquired, and it can be both response and supplement to a primary emotion.[8] So natural a virtue is it that Smith cites sympathy as an almost universal virtue: 'the greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society is not altogether without it,' he states (Smith, 2009: 13). He argues that sympathy requires very little effort, and needs 'no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense of propriety' (222); humanity is a 'gentle virtue' while self-command is more 'austere' (177).

Austen makes it clear that Knightley is valued for his kindness towards others, and for his ability to anticipate their fears; this is most obvious in his attentive soothing of the various qualms of Mr Woodhouse. Learning that he has spontaneously offered the use of his carriage to Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates, Emma responds, "'I know no man more likely than Mr Knightley to do the sort of thing – to do any thing really good-natured, useful, considerate or benevolent. He is not a gallant man, but he is a very

[8] Lecture, 'Victorian Sympathy and the Birth of Empathy', University of Hull, 4/3/15

humane one"' (*E*: 155). 'Humane' here is the adjectival form of Smith's noun 'humanity' and Knightley's conduct throughout the novel exemplifies it. His annual gift of apples to Miss Bates exhausts his own supply, and he is appalled by Emma's unwarranted cruelty to Miss Bates at the Box Hill outing. His offering to dance with Harriet to restore her composure after rejection by Elton shows his ability to notice others' distress and to respond with compassion. Being all things to all men, or trying to please everybody, is usually presented as a fault in Austen's male characters, but there is something quite different about Knightley's conduct. Emma's assertion, '"General benevolence, but not general friendship, made a man what he ought to be"' (*E*:220), illustrates the difference between Knightley and, for example, Frank Churchill or Henry Crawford. Whereas Churchill and Crawford are anxious to be liked, Knightley tends simply to be kind to others without thinking of the affection that might be returned to him. His attention to his own happiness is not addressed until over halfway through the third volume, when Churchill's thoughtlessness provides him with the opportunity to propose to Emma. Uncharacteristically, his proposal is 'the work of the moment' (297); by Knightley's standards, slightly reckless, and prompted by his at last attending to his feelings rather than his reason. He does struggle to find the right words for his address, though, and this problem with verbal expression of feelings in good men is one that I explore further in Chapter Three.

While Austen's good men are frequently seen displaying kindness or humanity towards others, the virtue of benevolence is not as simplistic as it might seem. Patricia Comitini's view of benevolence in the nineteenth century is that it is not a natural attribute but is socially constructed as 'a moral medium through which virtue, privilege and power are recognised and displayed,' and that it is primarily a mechanism for 'disciplining the middle classes as well as cultivating a new relationship to the poor' (Comitini, 2005: 6-7). She sees benevolence as a potentially manipulative quality that

allows the rich and powerful to preserve their influence and authority over those of a lower social class. Miss Bates's poverty, Knightley warns Emma, should secure her compassion (*E*: 259); his charitable gifts to Miss Bates display his humanity but also reaffirm his superior social and economic status. Darcy's apparent rescue of Lydia at the same time functions as revenge against Wickham for his earlier injustices against Darcy's father and sister.

Austen is not unaware of the political and economic power in benevolence, however. She makes it clear that Edmund, Darcy and Knightley each possess power and authority, and that they make a conscious choice to use that power for good. Darcy's housekeeper professes that there is 'nothing that he would not do' for Georgiana; the narrator's comments emphasise the integrity and truth of Mrs Reynolds' words:

> What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent
> servant? As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how
> many people's happiness were in his guardianship! How much of
> pleasure or pain it was in his power to bestow! How much of good
> or evil must be done by him! (*P & P*: 220).

Edmund's conduct with Fanny is the 'kind authority of a privileged guardian' (*MP*: 241), and Knightley confesses that he has 'blamed' and 'lectured' Emma; he is 'one of the few people who could see faults' in her (*E*: 296; 9); he does not flatter but is consistently honest and transparent. Austen complies with Smith's views on the most important faculties of a virtuous man: 'Our rank and credit among our equals, too, depend very much upon what, perhaps, a virtuous man would wish them to depend entirely, our character and conduct, or upon the confidence, esteem and good will which these naturally excite in the people we live with' (Smith, 2009: 251).

Austen attributes much of a good man's propensity for goodness to his education and upbringing. Smith notes that 'a very young child has no self-command' (Smith, 2009: 167) but is taught to regulate its behaviour in accordance with parental guidance and social norms. In an allusion to some of the moral tales of the previous

century, much of the blame for the general lack of morality at Mansfield Park is attributed to Sir Thomas Bertram, who has failed in his duties as an attentive father. The narrator suggests that the moral education of his children has been neglected in favour of his developing their elegance and accomplishments: 'He had meant them to be good, but his cares had been directed to the understanding and manners, not the disposition'; although they are distinguished, there has been 'no moral effect on the mind' (*MP*: 314).

Alasdair MacIntyre notes that by the end of the eighteenth century, the words 'moral' and 'virtuous' had become synonymous, whereas previously they had denoted subtly different qualities (MacIntyre, 1985: 233). The entire novel addresses this issue, demonstrating the potentially disastrous consequences that ensue when manners are more important than morals or virtue: manners without morals cannot result in virtuous behaviour. David Lodge remarks that *Mansfield Park* 'stands apart from the other novels by testing character and conduct in a way calculated to confound at every point our instinctive moral preferences and expectations' (Lodge, 1966: 94).

Where Crawford is lively and engaging, Edmund is taciturn and priggish; Sir Thomas Bertram is ineffective as the moral head of the family, and his eldest son has little sense of responsibility. With the correct moral foundations, Maria would not have entertained Henry's attentions, and Edmund would not have been blinded by the vivacity of Mary Crawford. Tom would have been sober and moderate in his habits, leaving Edmund free to take the original living which has had to be sold to pay for Tom's dissolute behaviour, and Julia would not have eloped with the 'by no means desirable' Mr Yates (*MP*: 86). The lack of proper moral education has resulted in the manifestation of few pure virtues, and, indeed, in moral chaos. Like the Bertrams, Henry Crawford has also been 'ruined by early independence and bad domestic example' (*MP*: 316). His injudicious decision to go to Everingham instead of

Portsmouth is accounted for by his undisciplined childhood: 'Curiosity and vanity were both engaged, and the temptation of immediate pleasure was too strong for a mind unused to make any sacrifice of right' (317). Frank Churchill is also the subject of a poor moral education during his youth; Knightley concedes that 'it is a great deal more natural than one could wish, that a young man, brought up by those who are proud, luxurious and selfish, should be proud, luxurious and selfish too' (*E*: 103).

Towards the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy reflects on his childhood:

> "I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was right, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit... I was spoilt by my parents, who ... almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own. Such I was, from eight to eight-and-twenty" (*P & P*: 328).

He claims to have been spoilt, to have had insufficient example in correcting his temper, and to have looked down on others as somehow less worthy than himself, almost exactly as Tommy Merton had done. Austen would undoubtedly have been familiar with Day's work, and she seems here to be inviting the reader to notice the similarity. Darcy attributes the improvement in his character not to an emotionally remote and authoritarian Mr Barlow, but to Elizabeth herself, who has '"taught [him] a lesson"' and '"properly humbled"' him (328).

However, his self-portrait is intriguingly unreliable: his housekeeper has already described him as '"the sweetest-tempered, most generous boy in the world"' (219); he has always been capable of immense generosity towards his sister, he is 'affable to the poor' like his father before him (219), and he spontaneously offers the use of his fishing pond to Mr Gardiner. In fact he has not been changed by Elizabeth; all evidence points to the fact that he has always been what Smith would call virtuous, but Elizabeth does not have the opportunity to realise the extent of his goodness until the immoral

behaviour of others prompts Darcy to act. It is she who must change, by learning to see beyond his pride in order to appreciate his moral integrity.

Smith does not necessarily see pride as the worst of faults, arguing that 'pride is frequently attended with many respectable virtues; with truth, with integrity, with a high sense of honour, with cordial and steady friendships, with the most inflexible firmness and resolution' (Smith, 2009: 303). Wickham seems to echo this belief when he confides to Elizabeth, '"almost all [Darcy's] actions may be traced to pride; – and pride has often been his best friend. It has connected him nearer with virtue than any other feeling"' (*P & P*: 72). For Smith, pride is a matter of misjudgement rather than lack of virtue: the proud man demands no more than what he believes is due to him as the superior of others; if he is not respected as he thinks himself to deserve, he 'seems to wish, not so much to excite your esteem for *himself*, as to mortify *that* for *yourself*' (Smith, 2009: 300; italics original). Wickham allows that Darcy's pride has led him to be '"liberal and generous – to give his money freely, to display hospitality, to assist his tenants, and relieve the poor. Family pride, and *filial* pride... also *brotherly* pride"' (*P & P*: 72) enable Darcy to behave in a way that is, unlike that of Sir Thomas Bertram's children, both admirable and ethical. The novel requires the reader to equate Darcy's snobbishness with his pride, although in fact they originate in two different sources: his pride, as Wickham and Smith suggest, is a personal quality that is capable of motivating his generosity, whereas his hauteur – his social awkwardness among strangers – has its origin in social rather than personal prejudice. The late eighteenth century had seen many ordinary people suddenly able to make large amounts of money from manufacturing and trade, and consequently to rise through the social strata to a point where they could imitate the living standards of the legitimately genteel. Emma displays a snobbery similar to Darcy's when she looks down on the Coles as being 'of low

origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel' (*E*: 143). It is merely Elizabeth's origins and connections that alarm Darcy and prompt him to separate Jane and Bingley.

For Smith, the proud man's honesty is a virtue, and his belief in his own superiority ensures that he is sincere. Darcy declares that '"disguise of every sort is my abhorrence"' (*P & P*: 171) and '"nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility"' (42). Wickham, having 'disguised' himself as Darcy's victim, deceives everyone around him with his assumed humility and charm. Having lived close and parallel lives in their youth, the two men demonstrate the disparity that is possible when different temperaments and characters are raised in similar environments. Like Sandford and Merton, their class origins are ultimately responsible for this dissimilarity, and, as David Morse comments, 'virtue is a loaded term in the struggle between the classes' at this time (Morse, 2000: 116). Wickham, as the son of the late Mr Darcy's steward, is socially inferior to Darcy; but whereas Harry Sandford is also socially inferior to Tommy Merton, Austen reverses the established sense of class morality. Day makes it clear that his lower class character is more naturally virtuous than his upper class one; Austen suggests rather that respectable heritage is the proper place for natural virtue to develop. Darcy may be proud, but his pride enables him to be good; Wickham is deceitful, and his natural deceit and envy make it easier for him to behave badly. Knightley, while not proud in the same way as Darcy, is also consistently honest, assuring Emma, '"you know what I am. You hear nothing but truth from me"' (*E*: 296). For Knightley, honesty is integral to honour and virtue, and is a duty rather than a pleasure. He tells Emma, '"This is not pleasant to me; but I must, I will – I will tell you truths while I can, satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel"' (*E*: 259).

Smith contrasts the earnest seriousness of pride, honour and truth with the more frivolous and unreliable quality of vanity, which he calls 'a sprightly and a gay, and

very often a good-natured passion.' The vain man is not sincere, and though he wants approval from others, he does not seek to belittle them: 'Even the falsehoods of the vain man are all innocent falsehoods, meant to raise himself, not to lower other people' (Smith, 2009: 302). Indeed, for Smith, this is the quintessential difference between pride and vanity: whereas the proud man seeks to make others feel inferior, the vain man seeks to make himself seem better than others. Austen equates vanity with moral weakness in her male characters: Crawford's love of acting ensures that he has the power to entertain others and therefore secure their admiration; Wickham's charm conceals a tendency to indulge more selfish desires. When Frank Churchill uses vanity as an excuse for travelling to London – ostensibly for a haircut, but secretly to purchase the pianoforte for Jane Fairfax – he attracts the disapproval of others. In this case, his is only the appearance of vanity, as it conceals his better motive; Emma's response is that '"certainly silly things do cease to be silly if they are done by sensible people in an impudent way. Wickedness is always wickedness, but folly is not always folly"' (*E*: 147). Smith writes that vanity has many amiable qualities: 'humanity... politeness... a desire to oblige in all little matters, and sometimes with a real generosity in great ones' (Smith, 2009: 303). Wickedness, folly, humanity and generosity are universal in Austen, and help to demonstrate the morality of her characters; in focusing on these personal attributes, she mirrors some of Smith's views and shows the impossibility of either pure goodness or pure evil.

While he admits that pride and vanity generally attract condemnation, Smith argues that it is wrong to completely disapprove of these vices: in fact, we should approve them because they are often accompanied by better virtues. He argues that 'it is better to be a little too proud, than, in any respect, too humble'; likewise it is better to be too vain than to have too little self-estimation (Smith, 2009: 308). Frank Churchill appears to have too little pride or vanity, and is merely immature; despite the disparity

in their ages, Austen encourages the reader to compare him with Knightley throughout the novel. Knightley criticises Churchill for his lack of resolve, remarking that '"your amiable young man is a very weak young man"' (*E*: 104); his handwriting is deemed '"too small – wants strength. It is like a woman's writing"' (205). Gilbert and Gubar write that Austen's young men are sometimes reflections of her female characters, that they

> are eminently agreeable because they are self-changers, self-shapers. In many respects they are attractive to the heroines because somehow they act as doubles: younger men who must learn to please, narcissists, they experience traditionally "feminine" powerlessness and they are therefore especially interested in becoming the creators of themselves (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 167).

This is perhaps true of Mr Elton, of whom John Knightley claims '"With men he can be rational and unaffected, but when he has ladies to please every feature works"' (*E*: 80). Austen's other charming men – Wickham, Crawford and Churchill – are likewise eager to please, and are particularly engaging in female company. Emma remarks on the difference between Robert Martin and Mr Weston, attributing the difference in their manner and conduct to the difference in their ages: '"The older a person grows, Harriet, the more important it is that their manners should not be bad – the more glaring and disgusting any loudness or coarseness, or awkwardness becomes. What is passable in youth, is detestable in later age"' (*E*: 25).

Conclusion

Young men in Austen tend to fall into two distinct groups: the inconsiderate, selfish narcissists to whom Gilbert and Gubar draw attention; and the more thoughtful, industrious young men who seem morally more mature than their years. In this latter category might be placed William Price and Robert Martin; both are earnest, hard-working young men who wish to make something of themselves. They are the literal

'self-shapers' to whom Gilbert and Gubar refer, and are keen to rise in the world without taking advantage of others. Robert Martin is one of Austen's best examples of a good man, despite being the least visible: he never appears in the novel in person but exists as an exemplary figure who functions as a picture of what lower class goodness can be. Knightley professes, "'I never hear better sense than from Robert Martin. He always speaks to the purpose; open, straightforward and very well-judging... He is an excellent young man'" (*E*: 43-4). Martin's letter to Harriet 'would not have disgraced a gentleman' and expresses 'good sense, warm attachment, liberality, propriety, even delicacy of feeling' (37). His 'good sense and good principles' (325) remain constant throughout the novel, and his 'true gentility' (48) marks his ethical superiority over the wealthier but less tasteful Coles.

While Martin represents constant and virtuous humility, the men in Austen's former category are not entirely without hope of improvement. Austen suggests that some of her selfish young men will succeed in becoming good as they gain experience and wisdom: Edmund and Tom Bertram, and Frank Churchill, clearly have the potential to outgrow their youthful misjudgements;[9] Wickham, received briefly at Longbourn after his marriage, is brought to order but is unlikely to succeed in making Lydia happy; Crawford is simply ejected from the novel with the same summary dismissal that Maria Edgeworth afforded Tarlton.

The relationship between Austen's men is often more revealing than the relationships between men and women. Knightley consistently disapproves of Frank Churchill, and is the first to deduce the nature of the relationship between him and Jane Fairfax; Edmund Bertram, while unable to approve of anything Crawford does, admires some of his qualities. Elizabeth comments on the valuable characteristics of both Darcy

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[9] Notwithstanding his capacity for moral improvement, it seems that Frank Churchill is to suffer the early loss of his wife: Austen revealed to members of her family that Jane Fairfax 'only lived for another nine or ten years after her marriage' (Le Faye, 2004: 241).

and Wickham: "'There is but such a quantity of merit between them; just enough to make one good sort of man; and of late it has been shifting about pretty much'" (*P & P*: 199). This is exactly the problem: the goodness she refers to has been 'shifting about' so that she cannot always tell which of them is truly good and which merely appears so. This changeable, elusive aspect of goodness is one that will form a significant constant throughout this study: the good man is notoriously hard to pin down and examine, partly because of Smith's remarks about our limited capacity to understand goodness, but also because the parameters of goodness are so protean. Austen's good men betray a number of minor vices, and her bad men sometimes behave more honourably than might be expected. Although Willoughby has selfish motives and treats Marianne cruelly, he does appear to be genuinely affected by the results of his actions. Similarly, Frank Churchill seems sincerely ashamed of his cruelty to Jane throughout their secret engagement. Sometimes a good man is bad by accident, as Elizabeth believes of Bingley: "'without scheming to do wrong, or to make others unhappy, there may be error, and there may be misery. Thoughtlessness, want of attention to other people's feelings, and want of resolution, will do the business'" (*P & P*: 122). Wickham's immorality acts as a catalyst for Darcy's outward manifestation of an inner goodness that has always been present; Henry Crawford's behaviour enables Edmund at last to see the faults in Mary's character; Frank Churchill's prior commitment allows Knightley to realise and act on his own feelings for Emma.

Smith makes a point of differentiating between what he calls widespread 'latent virtue' and the active virtue of the admirably good man. 'Man was made for action,' he writes; 'he must not be satisfied with indolent benevolence' (Smith, 2009: 127). Indolent benevolence is a similar virtue to that of justice, which Smith calls 'but a negative virtue,' since the application of justice only hinders a man from doing wrong. He writes, 'We may fulfil all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing' (99).

This is an idea that was to remain valid nearly seventy years later: John Stuart Mill

stated in 1867 that 'Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good

men should look on and do nothing' (Mill, 1867: 36). Similarly, John Ruskin was later

to discuss the more active qualities of men in his 1865 lecture *Of Kings' Treasuries*.[10]

Austen's good men are essentially reactive: they act most when provoked. For Smith,

the good man must *do* something in order to uphold his claim to goodness:

> The man who has performed no single action of importance, but
> whose whole conversation and deportment express the justest, the
> noblest, and most generous sentiments, can be entitled to demand
> no very high reward, even though his inutility should be owing to
> nothing but the want of an opportunity to serve...We can still ask
> him, What have you done? What actual service can you produce, to
> entitle you to so great a recompense? We esteem you, and love you,
> but we owe you nothing (Smith, 2009: 127).

In an echo of this reasoning, Knightley interrogates Emma on her pride in bringing

together Miss Taylor and Mr Weston: '"Why do you talk of success? Where is your

merit? – What are you proud of? – you made a lucky guess; and that is all that can be

said"' (*E*: 11). Whereas Emma can take no personal credit for a happy accident, Austen

makes it clear that Darcy has been given an opportunity to act, and has taken it gladly:

'he had liberality, and he had the means of exercising it.' Darcy, in the cause of

'compassion and honour,' has been able 'to get the better of himself' (*P & P*: 289). By

contrast, the conduct of the young Bertrams – Tom's drinking and his near-fatal

accident, Maria's elopement with Crawford and Julia's with Yates – leaves Edmund by

default as the moral figure on whom his father can finally rely. His moral credit comes

from not-doing, from non-action. Whereas Edmund's is latent virtue, Darcy's is, by the

end of the novel, active.

Austen's world is one in which virtue is not unrealistic perfection, but is a

matter of reason, habit and resolution, of 'kind authority': goodness results from the

subjection of the will and from finding personal happiness in doing good to others

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[10] See pages 15 and 126 of this thesis.

without seeking reward. It is neither overtly emotional nor demonstrative, but relies on individuals consciously to apply the principles of right conduct to their own behaviour. Her good men are quiet men, somewhat aloof and inscrutable; they tend to say rather little, but everything they do say is significant. Smith asserts that 'Virtue is the great support, and vice the great disturber of human society;' likewise, 'vice is always capricious: virtue only is regular and orderly' (Smith, 2009: 371; 265). Austen shows the disruptive nature of vice and its capacity to overturn the peaceful lives of the upper-middle class English gentry. The 'regular and orderly' moral landscape of Austen's novels is one of the features that Charlotte Brontë famously disliked about Austen, and in the next chapter I explore the ways in which good men are portrayed in *Jane Eyre* (1847) and in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853). These novels were written within three years of 1850, and it will become clear that Smith's idea of 'exact propriety and perfection' had by that time become unrealistic: St John Rivers and Thurstan Benson are both shown to be good men, but their desire to do good is often in conflict with their personal and professional roles.

Chapter Three

Acting Rightly: St John Rivers and Thurstan Benson

"Let us try simply to do right actions, without
thinking of the feeling they are to call out in
others."[1]

The focus in this chapter and the next is on the ways in which an emerging

moral masculinity is presented in mid-nineteenth-century fiction. Adam Smith's view of

moral goodness is one that places importance on reason and resolution; Austen shows

that goodness involves the application of will in response to duty within the setting of a

regular, orderly society. In the years following the publication of Austen's last novel,

England experienced unprecedented levels of social, political and cultural change as a

result of a rural agrarian economy being gradually replaced by a more industrial,

mercantile creation of national wealth. As society became less regular and more unruly

due to an expanding population and the creation of industrial cities, novels began to

reflect this changing socio-political landscape by depicting larger communities than

those found in Austen.

In this part of my thesis, I explore the two sides of the alternative masculinity

that was beginning to emerge from mid-nineteenth-century England. Eighteenth century

Grandisonian sensibility was metamorphosing, after Austen, into a more fluid and

organic collection of broad social rules and moral values. By about 1850, morality and

Anglicanism were beginning to coalesce into what became known as muscular

Christianity, characterised by the work of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, and in

which commitment to Biblical piety and manly physical health was to represent a

specific form of Christian moral manliness. Moral masculinity, although probably

originating from the same source, differs from muscular Christianity in that it lacks the

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[1] Elizabeth Gaskell, 1997. *Ruth* (1853), London: Penguin Books, p. 107. I use the following abbreviations in this chapter: *R*: *Ruth* (1853); *N & S*: *North and South* (1854); *W & D*: *Wives and Daughters* (1864); *JE*: *Jane Eyre* (1847); *V*: *Villette* (1853).

emphasis on physical prowess that characterised the movement, and lacks also the High Church values that direct its moral vision. Moral masculinity, as I show through this thesis, is qualitatively different in that its morality is more broadly based on generic ethical principles than on scriptural teaching, notwithstanding its basic acceptance of Christian values. Furthermore, the emphasis in moral masculinity is less on physical prowess and more on cognitive and compassionate ways of relating to others; its moral element relies on a combination of reason and altruism, and its masculine expression does not denigrate the feminine.[2]

This chapter, in which I read Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853), addresses some of the difficulties in realising masculine goodness; the next, in which I read Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) and Dinah Mulock Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856), explores the more positive side of male goodness. While Guy Morville and John Halifax, in Chapter Four, do not always find it easy to match practical goodness with their theoretical standards, they find more optimistic pleasure in their morality and in their masculinity than St John Rivers and Thurstan Benson. In this chapter, men trying to act rightly are beleaguered by doubt and uncertainty as they try to negotiate moral conflict, whereas in the next acting rightly is a more natural consequence of trying to live a good life. Whereas, for Rivers and Benson, moral masculinity is characterised by repression, suppression and anxiety, for Halifax and Morville it is expressed in a more expansive, gentlemanly chivalry in a world that is seen as inherently good. It is perhaps not insignificant that Benson and Rivers are poor, whereas John Halifax becomes rich, and Guy Morville inherits ancestral wealth and status. While the economic status of Benson and Rivers inevitably limits their activity as public figures, and a good man can arguably do more

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[2] For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Donald E Hall (ed), 1994, *Muscular Christianity*.

'good' when he has wealth, it remains a truism that moral conduct is free and available to all men from all class backgrounds, given the basic educational foundation.

This division of moral masculinity into two parallel paths at mid-century is a temporary one, and by the publication of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, in 1876, it has coagulated into a more solid, demonstrable form that incorporates both moderate anxiety and moderate optimism. In the 1850s, generic Christianity is still important to moral masculinity, and particularly so in the novels I discuss in this chapter. Rivers and Benson are both clergymen, carrying out routine acts of charity and altruism in accordance with their profession, their personal moral codes deriving from the Bible and from Christian teaching; both are intentionally constructed by their authors as 'good' men. However, they have little opportunity for the optimism or heroism of John Halifax or Guy Morville, and are instead frequently subdued by the weight of moral concern or conflict. Rivers is emotionally distant and preoccupied with his own ambitions and desires, and Benson is persuaded to follow a morally ambiguous course of action that causes more problems than it solves.

Furthermore, Rivers and Benson are shown experiencing a sense of disconnection between their morality, or goodness, and their masculinity: each encounters a sense of conflict between his vocation as a man of God and his purpose in the world as a man among men. I explore this latter issue with reference to Victor Seidler's work on masculinity. Seidler refers predominantly to twentieth century men, but the foundations of his work lie in the eighteenth century; he highlights the punitive effects of a historically-emergent masculinity that, since the Enlightenment, has been raised and taught to depend on reason alone. He suggests that, for the past two hundred years, men have been threatened by feelings and emotions, and that their exclusion from the 'self-indulgence' of emotional expression is responsible for much of their dissatisfaction (Seidler, 1989: xiv-xv). Brontë and Gaskell, both well-acquainted with

men through their family and social circles, are keen and incisive observers of masculine behaviour. Their insight into male reluctance to engage with the language of personal emotion in many ways anticipates Seidler's observations, and both writers are confident portrayers of masculine anxiety in a way that Austen generally is not.

Gerard Barker's study of eighteenth century fiction compares or contrasts its heroes with those of Sir Charles Grandison, but does not demonstrate any logical temporal progression of goodness in male characters. He suggests that every historical period creates its own ideal in terms of what is considered to be good behaviour, referring to 'that stereotype of goodness which each age casts for itself, obliging the reader to realign his suppositions and prejudices' (Barker, 1985: 17). In the early nineteenth century, Austen's interest in Grandison as an exemplar seems primarily theoretical: her own male characters are demonstrably more comprehensively drawn than those in earlier fiction and are more realistically flawed. By the mid-nineteenth century the 'broad coarse novels of the Fielding and Smollett kind' are undesirable as a means of allowing 'evil' to steal into the homes of good people ('The Lady Novelists of Great Britain', 1853: 19). The focus on social problems in the early Victorian novel represents an attempt to understand the cultural issues arising from demographic changes in nineteenth-century England. Mary Lenard argues that the cultural discourse of social reform is inevitably reflected in fiction, and indeed that fiction performs the necessary moral function of showing not only how to "read", but also how to respond to social problems (Lenard, 1999: 45). Although Lewes, in his discussion of whether art should have a moral, had affirmed that fiction itself proves nothing, the fiction of this time does nevertheless more openly discuss the sin and redemption of its characters and demonstrate the relationship between benevolent or altruistic goodness and those in moral distress.

Whereas Austen acknowledges the existence of considerable moral problems, such as adultery and seduction, these events tend to form the basis of sub-plots that happen 'off-stage'; they are reported upon and reacted against by other characters who ensure that the reader is protected from direct confrontation with immorality. In addition, the sudden reporting of these events is rendered more shocking than if the reader had been allowed to follow the decline into sinfulness more explicitly through direct action and dialogue. One of Knightley's roles in *Emma* is to correct Emma's behaviour and the attitudes that provoke it, but there is no requirement for him to correct her moral tenor, nor is there any need for him to 'rescue' her from moral danger. By the late 1840s, these morally charged situations are not only brought forward to centre stage, forming part of the main plot of the early Victorian novel, but are increasingly acceptable to readers as subjects for fiction. The author of 'The Lady Novelists of Great Britain' is not surprised that some readers might object to the subject matter of *Ruth*, but criticises those readers' views as 'somewhat narrow and oppressive' ('The Lady Novelists of Great Britain', 1853: 22).

Women's Men, Clergymen, and Acting Rightly

Elaine Showalter argues that women's male characters are often projections based on what women perceive to be the ideal man, or, perhaps the kind of man they would like to be, given similar opportunities. She adds that clergymen attain a special status in women's novels as 'an intermediate sex, not so virile, hairy and aggressive as the ordinary man, and thus much more accessible to the soft female imagination' (Showalter, 1982: 136-143). The 'softness' that she claims for female writers' men has traditionally resulted in the men in women's writing being seen as feminine, but this thesis argues that non-aggressive male characters can still be convincingly male. The clergyman is professionally obliged to be good in a way that the lay man is not, and the

clergyman's status as preserver and protector of souls forbids any aggressive display of overt sexuality, thus rendering him generally unthreatening in the company of single women. Indeed, he sometimes becomes the target of fictional single women for that very reason: Mr Collins, Mr Elton and Edmund Bertram in Jane Austen's novels attract single women in search of a 'safe' husband.

Showalter's proposal that clergymen are less 'masculine' than other men is problematic because it implies a corresponding tendency to regard them as feminine. Benson's gentleness and capacity for nurturing, for instance, might strike some readers as 'unmanly'. William Whewell, writing in 1845, suggests that aspects of goodness should be seen as common to both sexes: he defines the impulses of morality as 'Mildness, Kindness, Liberality, Fairness, Truthfulness, Humanity, Temperance, Chastity, Obedience' (Whewell, 1845: 137). Whewell's 'Idea of Morality' indicates, via these points, 'the place to which the lines of Duty all tend' (ibid.); dutiful morality is 'a thing in which all men sympathise, and which binds together man and man by the tie of their common humanity' (ibid.: 69). Despite the cultural attribution to the feminine of words like 'mildness' and 'chastity', Whewell sees these traits as the basis of a moral code for all people rather than as a set of gender-coded qualities. The 'mild beauty' in Benson's face, and the 'sensibility about the mouth' (*R*: 61-2), under Whewell's definition, indicate a non-gender-specific face of compassion, equally imaginable as Madonna or Jesus.

Some critics find evidence of feminine sensibility in Benson's physical appearance; Terence Wright and Patsy Stoneman, for instance, see Benson as less than male. The early injury to his spine has rendered him incapable of an active life and has made him 'sensitively inturned in what is seen as a rather feminine way' (Wright, 1995: 77; see also Stoneman, 1987: 70). The word 'inturned' suggests thought rather than action, and a tendency to passive reflection rather than active engagement; his 'feminine

morbidness of conscience' (*R*: 310) indicates a propensity for fretfulness or indecision rather than for strident confidence. Benson is undoubtedly sensitive, compassionate and rather naive; Sally comments, for example, that he is '"no wiser than a babby in some things"' (*R*: 122). His disability is the reason for his physical lack of stamina, which in turn affects his ability to pay sustained attention to issues that are mentally taxing. He is, at the same time, though, securely male, quietly running the political and economic matters of the household from his study and commanding local respect as a clergyman. Benson himself is aware that his physical presence is not that of other men, yet refuses to let this be an excuse for weakness: Faith's suggestion that he '"blame [his] body rather than [his] conscience"' for his tiredness is rejected as '"a very dangerous doctrine"' (*R*: 166).

A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* points out that women are well-placed to write about men, since they are often intimately acquainted with brothers, friends and husbands; female authors, it is suggested, 'are allowed to see much of that inner life. They see what is merely small and conventional, but also what is lofty and simple' ('The Lady Novelists of Great Britain', 1853: 19). George Lewes writes of *Ruth*'s 'delicate theme' that Elizabeth Gaskell 'approaches it like a woman' (Lewes, 1853a: 476); he sees similar evidence that Charlotte Brontë's delineation of St John Rivers is 'another example of the woman's pencil' (Lewes, 1847: 692). Brontë and Gaskell do, nevertheless, demonstrate secure understanding of the relationship between moral action, and of an emergent nineteenth-century masculinity.

Valentine Cunningham argues that 'Victorian writing is full of Good Samaritans' (Cunningham, 1990: 110), making the distinction between 'goods' (material wealth) and 'goodness' (moral worth). He draws attention to the difference between benefactors simply sharing material goods with those who are less fortunate, and those providing help or correction for the morally impoverished. The Bible story of

the Good Samaritan describes the rescue of the victim of violent robbery by a stranger. The Samaritan derives no personal gain from his action, and he does not seek to claim or own the object of his good deed. His act seems one of intuitive altruism and is designed to illustrate the maxim 'love thy neighbour as thyself'.

Benson and Rivers might also be described as good Samaritans, in that each rescues the heroine in their respective novels and provides relief from physical suffering. However, there is a fundamental difference in that the Samaritan acts uncharacteristically: the weight of the parable rests on the improbability of his stopping to assist, particularly when a priest and a Levite have already declined to do so. Victorian clergymen are much more likely, in the popular imagination, to perform this kind of restorative intervention. Although Benson and Rivers demonstrate recognisable altruism in their acts of rescue, the narrative function of these acts is to allow for the recovery of the heroine's social status so that she can continue on her journey of personal growth and self-discovery. The sharing of 'goods', then, represents a more simplistic demonstration of morality than these characters' other, more abstract, aspects of goodness.

The routine acts of goodness executed in the course of a clergyman's professional duty are usually domestic, involving feeding or ministering to those in physical as well as spiritual need. Sally tells Ruth that Benson is '"always picking up some one or other as nobody else would touch with a pair of tongs"' (*R*: 124) and that he makes a point of having enough food available for old or weak people on Sundays (*R*: 130). Rivers also performs regular acts of charity, as I discuss in more detail below. As the daughters and wives of clergymen, Brontë and Gaskell demonstrate their familiarity with these practical, domestic concerns of the profession while at the same time acknowledging that this alone is not enough to denote a morally good man. Both

novels show a concern with what is morally right as well as what is scripturally prescribed.

For Thomas Carlyle, the priest is both hero and prophet, uniting the population with the 'Unseen Holy' and acting as a mediatory bridge between this world and the next. The priest is 'a believer in the divine truth of things; a *seer*, seeing through the shows of things; a worshipper, in one way or the other, of the divine truth of things' (Carlyle, 1928: 348). Benson acts as a bridge between Ruth's status as a fallen woman at the beginning of the novel and her ultimate redemption and sacrifice at the end of it, and in performing this role he demonstrates his ability to 'see through the show of things'. His failure, however, to maintain Carlyle's vital divine truth, suggests a widening gap between religion and morality where acting rightly cannot always be governed infallibly by the teachings of Christianity. Some of the imperfections in religious doctrine are illustrated by Gaskell's physical portrait of Benson: he is 'long past middle life,' 'deformed', with 'the stature of a dwarf' (*R*: 58). Cunningham sees in Benson's physical deformity a reflection of his status as a dissenter, his disability denoting an unorthodox Anglicanism (Cunningham, 1975: 17).[3] His dissent also, however, allows for a more liberal interpretation of the Bible and its teaching; Benson's willingness to search within his own conscience for what is right reveals a spirit that transcends his physical disability and Scriptural limitations.

Goodness and Moral Conflict

Modern philosophy tends not to distinguish between the terms 'moral dilemma' and 'moral conflict'; Foot, for instance, denies that there is any linguistic or material difference between conflict and dilemma in the field of virtue ethics. Other

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[3] Cunningham also notes that dissent was more prevalent in the industrial north of England and in the provincial areas of Scotland and Wales than in the commercial and affluent south. He writes, 'Mrs Gaskell's sympathies are with outsiders and minorities, victims of religious prejudice... She sides with the man who dissents, conscientiously, from religious orthodoxy' (Cunningham, 1975: 138-9).

philosophers, however, find it helpful to define the terms in the following way: a dilemma is a situation in which an agent must choose only one course of action, and the available choices clash in terms of outcome or intention; choosing either option causes some degree of mental or emotional unease. The conflict is denoted by the clash of ideas, and the dilemma by the choice between those ideas. Whereas a moral dilemma always includes a sense of conflict, a moral conflict does not necessarily indicate a moral dilemma (Statman, 1995: 5-7). Foot prefers to think in terms of the conflict between principles in making moral decisions rather than in terms of the inner struggle that might be experienced as a result of having to choose (Foot, 2002: 38). In choosing only one of two (or more) possible actions, moral failure is unavoidable: whatever he does, the agent either does something wrong, or he fails to do something right.

This conflict between principles is evident when the Bensons realise that Ruth is pregnant. Benson's act of charity in taking care of her leads indirectly to the problem that is central to the rest of the narrative: he must decide whether to maintain Carlyle's 'divine truth' or to protect Ruth by disguising her circumstances and allowing others to think of her as a widow rather than as a fallen woman. In response to Faith's idea of passing Ruth off as a widow, Benson can do one of two things: he can either do as Faith suggests and conceal Ruth's true circumstances, or he can do nothing and allow the truth eventually to emerge as her condition becomes plain. In this dilemma, he is, as Foot suggests, condemned to failure. Foot contrasts the morally distinct 'what we do' or 'what we allow to happen' with the much less certain 'what we aim at' or 'what we foresee' (Foot, 2002: 88). Consulting his conscience is described in the narrative as 'reducing his own ideas to form', indicating the inturned sensitivity that Wright has registered, and Benson has little trouble separating Ruth's unintentional sin with its consequences: he focuses on the future in allowing that Ruth's duty is to become responsible for the coming child rather than indefinitely to repent her unintentional past

error. Whereas Faith sees Ruth's pregnancy as 'the badge of her shame' and visible evidence of her sinful life, Benson argues, '"The sin appears to me to be quite distinct from its consequences"' (*R*: 100). Since they already knew about Ruth's former life, he reasons that her pregnancy makes no difference. The narrator, however, is unequivocal about the fact that the falsehood is wrong:

> It was the decision – the pivot, on which the fate of years moved;
> and he turned it the wrong way. But it was not for his own sake. For
> himself, he was brave enough to tell the truth; for the little helpless
> baby, about to enter a cruel, biting world, he was tempted to evade
> the difficulty' (*R*: 102).

Benson's personal courage or integrity is not in question; the moral issue centres on his evasion of the truth for the sake of others. Benson is willing to sacrifice his principle, the rightness of truth, for what he sees as the greater good of Ruth's reputation and that of her child. He reasons that the end might justify the means, and is persuaded to agree that Faith's proposal is admissible.

One lie inevitably leads to another, and when Benson hears Faith embellishing the 'fictitious' history of Ruth to Mrs Bradshaw, he is less convinced of the rightness of their agreed action. While Faith confesses to a sense of freedom through not being '"fettered"' by truth, Benson reveals the degree of distress that he experiences: '"You don't know how this apparent necessity for falsehood pains me, Faith, or you would not invent all these details, which are so many additional lies"' (*R*: 126). When the plan is formed for Ruth to act as governess to Bradshaw's daughters, Benson's impulse to tell the truth is again suppressed; at this point he tries to predict the probable outcome of the fabrication: '"My indecision about right and wrong – my perplexity as to how far we are to calculate consequences – grows upon me, I fear"' (*R*: 166). Here he confronts what Foot calls the 'double effect' of moral decisions:

> The doctrine of the double effect is based on a distinction between
> what a man foresees as a result of his voluntary action and what, in
> the strict sense, he intends... The words "double effect" refer to the

115

> two effects that an action may produce: the one aimed at, and the
> one foreseen but in no way desired (Foot, 1967: 5-6).

The outcome of his choice to conceal the truth and evade difficulty is a situation that he may have foreseen but does not desire. Foot refutes the notion that some moral dilemmas must inevitably involve guilt; if an agent has no doubts about the rightness of an action, she argues, then there is never any cause for regret. Where doubt does exist, however, the possibility of regret is greater. The difficulty in assigning 'wrongness' to a choice lies in the way the word is received in popular understanding: 'What gets in the way is the fact that "wrong" as understood in moral contexts applies to actions that count against a person's goodness: the goodness spoken of in the serious, non-ironical, designation of an individual as one of the great and the good' (Foot, 2002: 189).

In agreeing to protect Ruth's reputation, Benson is aware that he indirectly attempts to preserve his own: the lie is outwardly for the benefit of Ruth and her child, but life will also be less problematic for the Bensons if the world believes Ruth to be a widow. Lewes calls this partiality to saving himself 'the one flaw in an otherwise perfect act of Christian charity' (Lewes, 1853a: 480). He adds that 'however dark and difficult our course may seem, the straight path of truth is the only one to lead us through it into the light' (ibid.: 484). For William Roberts, 'Truth is immutable, determinate and single; error is fluctuating, variable and multifold' (Roberts, 1829: 1). In this case, the lie must inevitably count against Benson's goodness, despite the fact that it is told with the best of intentions. Benson is unable to countenance the belief that God would condone the punishment of a child and protests, '"do not accuse me of questionable morality, when I am trying more than ever I did in my life to act as my blessed Lord would have done"' (*R*: 100-1). Because there is no clear answer to the dilemma of Ruth's situation, Benson cannot ever be certain that he has acted rightly. He

116

suspects himself of having '"gone on falsely"' and takes responsibility: '"It has been my doing, my mistake, my sin. I ought to have known better"' (293).

In a subsequent example of unethical behaviour, Gaskell echoes Arnold's question about whether 'submitting to wrong' is good or evil and the incident causes Benson to judge his own decision (Arnold, 1849: 420).[4] When Hickson manipulates others to ensure that Mr Donne is elected to Parliament, he too claims that the end should justify the means, and that lofty principles should be put aside: he advises, '"we must put all the squeamish scruples which might befit Utopia, or some such place, on one side, and treat men as they are"'. Farquhar supports Hicks, asking Benson, '"Are there not occasions when it is absolutely necessary to wade through evil to good?"' (*R*: 211). Benson's response, that '"We are not to do evil that good may come"' (210), suggests a degree of regret for his former action.

Gaskell presents the election campaign for Donne as a parallel moral problem to that of Benson's decision to be persuaded by Faith that Ruth should pass for a widow. Hicks and Farquhar are attempting political manipulation and conspiracy, where electoral fraud is not only immoral but also illegal; theirs is more clearly a situation of right and wrong. Benson's agreement to Faith's manipulation of the truth is less clearly definable; as he says, '"We are both right; I, in the way in which the child ought to be considered; you, dear good Faith, for thinking of taking [Ruth] home with us"' (106). Benson has felt an obligation to do one of two things, both of which are 'right' but only one of which can be done. The incommensurability of the two available options confirms the impossibility of certain moral confidence, and shows that virtue as an infallible principle is unreliable in the making of moral decisions: 'the fact that benevolence is a virtue, and a virtue which dictates attachment to the good of others, does not give morality a universal end or goal' (Foot, 2002: 99). This irreconcilable

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[4] See page 16 of this thesis.

117

problem is characteristic of an emerging masculinity that seeks public expression of moral rectitude by the bringing together of reason and emotional expression. The search for agreement between benevolence and morality leads to deep anxiety about public and private self, as I discuss below.

Morality and the Divided Self

St John Rivers does not encounter the same moral dilemma as Thurstan Benson, but he too is compromised by conflicting principles: his professional ideals are incompatible with his personal desires, and the identification of his morality with his work as a missionary can reaffirm a sense of detachment from, rather than connection with, others. Although he is clearly positioned in the narrative as 'a good man', his goodness is mostly limited to public, anonymous good for the wider community rather than for the few people close to him.

In his capacity as a country parson, Rivers performs a great many routine acts that help to improve the daily lives of others: he has opened schools for the children of the poor, and he spends much of his time visiting the sick. He is routinely described in the narrative as 'good' for this reason, and yet the novel does not give the reader access to this hidden part of his daily life. Brontë sends him beyond the narrative, rendering his goodness invisible to the reader through his frequent absences, and placing the products of his tireless adherence to moral duty just beyond our reach. Jane remarks that he is 'comparatively seldom at home', and that 'a large proportion of his time' is devoted to visiting those in need (*JE*: 299). During the Christmas celebrations Rivers 'escapes' to his scattered population, 'visiting the sick and poor in its different districts' (336); he uses work as a way of justifying emotional absence on this occasion. His commitment to his pastoral duties seems to be unlimited: 'rain or fair, he would... go out on his mission of love or duty – I scarcely knew in which light he regarded it' (299). The

problem seems to be that he does not know himself whether he acts from love or duty, and both Jane and reader must try to piece together the nature of the man of whom we see comparatively little. Even when he is not absent, his 'ice of reserve' (301) intensifies the impression that he is unknowable; although 'blameless in his life and habits' (299), it is difficult to grasp a sense of the moral intensity that guides his personal and professional life.

Seidler notes that men often seek in their profession the sense of security that is missing from their personal lives, and cites work as 'the very source of masculine identity... we are so identified with our work and activities, that without them we are lost' (Seidler, 1989: 152). Rivers and Benson experience this issue in a particular and prescriptive way: entering the church involves accepting a vocational willingness to sacrifice the personal to the divine; it is literally a willingness to 'take orders', to be servant rather than master. Edmund Bertram displays little earnest enthusiasm for the religious life, and is no more outwardly devout than, for instance, Fanny Price. In the early nineteenth century, the church as profession simply provided a living with a modest income, particularly for second sons, whereas by the middle of the century it had come to involve the acceptance of a certain lifestyle as well; thus Edmund Bertram's professional and private personas might be less dichotomous than those of later clergymen.

Rivers, however, has a more troubled relationship with his profession, in that he knows himself to be temperamentally unsuited to the life of a minister; his God-given nature is '"contravened"', his faculties '"paralysed"' by his occupation, and the surrounding landscape – '"buried in morass, pent in with mountain"' – adds to his sense of constriction and imprisonment (*JE*: 303). Jane describes him as being 'of the material from which nature hews her heroes... her lawgivers, her statesmen, her conquerors' (335); he does not belong in the domestic environment that Benson finds so comforting,

but is rather '"wearied to death"' by the uniform duties of the country parish (308). His determination to become a missionary attempts to reconcile the warring elements of his character and his work, his '"propensities and principles"' (304), in an occupation that combines piety with danger.

Notwithstanding his dissatisfaction with his profession, Rivers still uses it, as Seidler suggests, for the repository of all that he is, as well as all that he does. Rivers describes the capacity of occupation to outwardly define, and thereby to conceal, a man's true nature: '"I am simply, in my original state – stripped of that blood-bleached robe with which Christianity covers human deformity – a cold, hard, ambitious man"' (319). The 'corrupt man within' is fundamentally different from the 'pure Christian', flesh giving way to marble (*JE*: 350). Whereas Benson paradoxically reveals his goodness by his contradiction of Christian doctrine, by lying in order to do good, Rivers is governed by a more formal adherence to Scripture. Although he recognises his desires, his attempt to suppress them only emphasises the fact that he is living disingenuously.

When he rejects Rosamond Oliver's undisguised advances, he reveals the inner struggle between duty and desire, and the consciousness of two discrete parts of his psyche: '"While something in me is acutely sensible to her charms, something else is as deeply impressed with her defects"'. Although he loves her '"wildly"', at the same time he recognises her inability to make him a good wife (*JE*: 318). In a later echo of the same phrase, Jane also realises that 'he would hardly make her a good husband', and that being his wife would be 'a trying thing' (334). One notable feature of their separate analyses is in their use of the word 'good': they both use the word not in its moral sense, but in its more liberal, non-philosophical sense as 'fit for purpose'. Foot's definition of the difference between 'good' and 'morally good' relies partly on the absence of feeling:

> No one thinks that calling a knife a good knife, a farmer a good farmer, a speech a good speech... necessarily expresses or even involves an attitude or feeling towards it. And even a description such as "good for my purposes" has to be judged, objectively, by reference to the purposes that I have (Foot, 2002: 163).

She clarifies this further by explaining that 'human beings not only go for what *is* good but for what they *see as good*. So it is not surprising if practical rationality requires the understanding of reasons for acting' (ibid.: 169; italics original). Rivers has a clear idea of his purpose, in detached, rational terms; he reminds Jane that it is not '"the insignificant private individual – the mere man, with the man's selfish senses – I wish to mate; it is the missionary"' (*JE*: 346). In desiring the satisfaction of his own purpose, which he judges entirely objectively, and in separating himself from the missionary, he not only suppresses his desire but seems to succeed in obliterating it altogether.

Rebecca Mitchell notes that Rivers's behaviour towards Rosamond serves as an example for Jane, in that his rejection of Rosamond is a model for Jane's rejection of Rivers (Mitchell, 2011: 309). This is true, but I would argue that the trope goes further than that: in showing his own schism between man and missionary, he also temporarily transfers this sense of divided self to Jane. In trying to please Rivers as she helps him with his study, Jane confesses to a feeling that she 'must disown half [her] nature, stifle half [her] faculties' (*JE*: 339). Marriage to Rivers would be but half a marriage, with all of the technicalities but none of the feeling, and Jane confides to the reader, 'If I join St John, I abandon half myself' (344). The moment at which she fully comprehends his reason for insisting on their marriage is the point at which the 'veil' falls from his hardness and despotism (346) and she can simultaneously understand and forgive him. She suddenly understands why Rivers is so opposed to the idea of her going to India as his nominal sibling: as his 'sister' she would be free to marry someone else, and it is intolerable to him that '"a sister might any day be taken from me"' (346). He is demanding not just marriage, but mental, physical and spiritual possession. While the

thought horrifies Jane, Rivers can see nothing morally wrong with his proposal; in fact, he regards falsely claiming that Jane is his sister as more morally wrong than a marriage of convenience, a union that serves his purposes as part of his dedication to the church. While his behaviour towards Rosamond and Jane is unattractive, he maintains a grim belief in his own moral rectitude; he believes that he is acting rightly because his motivation comes from what he believes to be a good thing for an effective missionary.

It is easy to regard Rivers as purely the '"cold, hard, ambitious man"' that he proclaims himself to be, but he is nevertheless consistently and zealously good, according to his own understanding of the word as commensurate with duty and Christian teaching; his many acts of charity and kindness in his parish make him a respected public figure within his small but wide community. He reveals a genuine capacity for affection in a rare discussion of Diana and Mary: '"I have always loved my own sisters; and I know on what my affection for them is grounded – respect for their worth and admiration of their talents"' (*JE*: 330-1). The main force accounting for his apparent ruthlessness, however, is religion: he tells Jane that religion has pruned and trained his nature, but that it has been unable to erase it altogether (320). When he chooses religion as a profession, he subjugates the man to the missionary and represses desire in favour of duty; he creates irremediable tension between reason and feeling, between his personal and professional selves. Seidler writes, 'though men often have a strong sense of identity within the public realm, this is often at the cost of a more personal sense of self' (Seidler, 1989: 107).

This dual sense of public and private self has also been seen previously in Austen's Henry Crawford[5] and is visible in Gaskell's portrait of Farquhar, whose 'two characters' show evidence of different attributes:

> the old one, which [Jemima] had formerly believed to be true, that
> he was a man acting up to a high standard of lofty principle, and

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[5] See pages 82-83 of this thesis.

acting up without a struggle...[and] the new one, which her father
had excited in her suspicious mind, that Mr Farquhar was cold and
calculating in all that he did (*R*: 189).

The two Farquhars 'clash together' as Jemima tries to make sense of which is true;

ultimately, the one she likes best is the one that 'inflexibly and rigidly adhered to his

idea of right and wrong' (ibid.). Moral consistency is shown to be the best and most

honourable path, despite its inflexibility. In Farquhar's case, however, the division of

self is due not to an inner conflict between desire and repression, but is more

economically motivated by the desire for power and influence within a less morally

inspired masculine community. Bradshaw and Donne are not morally robust role

models, and Farquhar follows their example in the desire for status rather than

unequivocal moral goodness. Public and private self are further estranged when men

struggle to express their desires in an attempt to maintain a sense of control over their

conduct.

Speech, Silence and Masculinity

Benson and Rivers both find it difficult to express their feelings verbally,

particularly at times of high emotion. For Rivers, this is a more permanent trait; he

'locks every feeling and pang within – expresses, confesses, imparts nothing' (*JE*: 316).

Benson recognises that '"people have such different ways of showing feeling: some by

silence, some by words"' (*R*: 107). Seidler theorises that this reluctant silence has

become a normative feature of masculinity since the Enlightenment, with its focus on

reason as the foundation of expression. He argues that the language of reason excludes

the language of emotion and feeling, and that men often lack access to the means of

articulating emotion:

When we learn to use language as boys, we very quickly learn how
to conceal ourselves through language. We learn to "master"
language so that we can control the world around us. We use

language as an instrument that will help show us as independent,
strong, self-sufficient and masculine (Seidler, 1989: 142).

In Rivers's first encounter with Jane, his manner is authoritative, restrictive and impersonal: he talks of 'examining' the matter, and of 'restraining' her from eating immoderately; he 'demand[s] an account' of how she has become homeless. His language betrays no emotion, and his speech presents an impassive demonstration of authority through his use of language, as Seidler describes, 'as an instrument'. Jane later uses the same phrase herself to describe Rivers's tendency to speak without revealing anything of his feelings; he uses his tongue as 'a speaking instrument, nothing more' (*JE*: 350). The moral act of taking in an exhausted stranger is both reasoned and reasonable, and represents an act of Christian duty while not requiring any conscious analysis of emotion. His speech in this scene is not only outwardly authoritative but also tends towards the dramatic and theatrical: his charitable act becomes something of a performance that heightens the reader's sense of his remoteness.

Meanwhile, his sisters are full of solicitous concern for their visitor: they comment on Jane's paleness, and on her frailty; they soothe and comfort her with words and gestures (*JE*: 287). While Rivers speaks and thinks, his sisters feel: they experience pity and compassion, articulating their emotions with some eloquence in a scene in which Brontë allocates traditional moral roles. Carol Gilligan outlines some of the different manifestations of male and female morality: 'women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Women's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker and helpmate' (Gilligan, 1982: 17).

Benson also relies on his sister for balance and for help with relating to others in distress. In this case it is initially he who urges kindness and sympathy and Faith who is cool and impatient. When Benson criticises her initial lack of compassion, she is 'humbled before his pure, childlike nature, and felt where she was inferior' (*R*: 95).

Benson's narration of Ruth's history does not appear in the novel as dialogue but takes the form of reported speech: 'He told her the story as well as he could; and, as he felt it deeply, he told it with heart's eloquence; and as he ended and looked at her, there were tears in the eyes of both' (*R*: 96). Although Benson clearly feels very profoundly, the reader is not permitted to witness him using the direct language of emotion. This is partly a narrative technique to avoid repetition, but also serves to conceal Benson's engagement with the language of feeling. The women with whom he is most familiar – Sally and Faith – are mature, forthright and abrasive; Ruth, young and naive, represents a new challenge to his verbal communication skills. He adds that he knows far from all of the truth: '"I cannot tell you all; Mrs Hughes can"' (*R*: 96). Full understanding of feeling, in this case, belongs to women; men can be sure only of facts. Like Rivers's sisters, Faith intuitively embraces her role as carer once she has appreciated the gravity of Ruth's illness.

Benson and Rivers share a strong sense of moral duty to provide care and shelter for a helpless invalid, but they are unable to articulate the emotional foundations of this sense of duty. Benson is, at times, lost for words, while Rivers relies on his ability to create dramatic tension through his silence; both demonstrate a lack of trust in the validity of their own true emotional response, which remains largely hidden. Seidler argues that men tend to disregard their emotions because they have been taught to value only reason: 'At some level, men have emotions and feelings of their own, but they are so used to discounting and devaluing them as sources of knowledge that they block their expression.' Because the expression of emotion is accepted as a sign of weakness, he argues, men become 'wary' of expressing their feelings and thus compromising their sense of masculine identity (Seidler, 1994: 41).

This estrangement of reason and feeling can be seen in the ways in which Benson and Rivers communicate with Ruth and Jane. They confidently perform small

domestic actions – arranging for the invalid to be taken in, to be kept warm, for medical attention to be sought as necessary – that will enhance the physical comfort and aid physical recovery, but they are less adept at the vocal equivalents of these good deeds. John Ruskin believed that men and women are fundamentally different, and that 'the man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender' (Ruskin, 1921: 110-111). These men demonstrate that they are far better at doing than feeling, though both are consistently portrayed as deep thinkers.

Rivers confides that until quite recently he has been 'intensely miserable' as a parson, and the only way in which he can reconcile the passive life of a minister with the active life he craves as a man is to become a missionary, a vocation requiring '"the best qualifications of soldier, statesman, and orator"'. Once he has made the decision, he is released from the sense of restriction that has oppressed him, and '"the fetters dissolved"' (*JE*: 308). In the meantime, he is forced to live in a temporary stasis, waiting until he can put into action the arduous life that he has imagined for himself. Benson, on the other hand, 'more given to thought than to action' (*R*: 310) is not physically strong enough for Rivers's sense of active ambition. His loss of consciousness while trying to rescue Ruth from potential suicide (*R*: 83) shows the loss of power as literal and physical; his true authority resides in his intellect and in his religious faith.

He and Rivers insist on withdrawal, separation, space and silence in which to resolve their inner conflicts. Following Benson's confrontation with Bradshaw over Ruth's story, he can do nothing but withdraw to his study: 'How long he was there – silent and alone – reviewing his life – confessing his sins – he did not know' (*R*: 289). The fractured syntax of this part of the narrative emphasises his disconnection not only from the world beyond his door but also from himself and illustrates the disjointed relationship between intellect, emotion and faith. After the shocking discovery that

Bradshaw's son has forged Benson's signature in order to defraud him of shares, 'He himself felt as if he wanted to sit down in his quiet study and think over the revelations and events of the last twenty-four hours'. In order to make sense of Farquhar's plan to rescue Richard, he needs 'solitude and consideration'; he 'half envied the younger man's ... power of acting promptly' (*R*: 337). Rivers endures stillness and silence while he waits for his more active life abroad. Soon after her arrival at Moor House, Jane observes him 'sitting as still as one of the dusty pictures on the walls... *his lips mutely sealed*' (*JE*: 294; my italics). While he can give freely of his time and energy in practical tasks, he allows little access to his inner feelings.

In his *Portraiture of a Christian Gentleman*, William Roberts claims that the good man 'must separate himself by a decided line from the loose practices and careless demeanour of worldly men'. 'In a peculiar sense,' he writes, 'the Christian gentleman must be absent from the world' (Roberts, 1829: 98). Rivers is literally absent from the domestic sphere in his role as a clergyman, but he and Benson also undergo emotional and intellectual separation from the world that is constructed around them. They are often figuratively 'absent' in a way that the female characters are not; both are often seen experiencing a kind of stasis, suspended in time.

Seidler writes of the male tendency to 'think in terms of a battle against time' and to 'fight against the restrictions that it seeks to impose' (Seidler, 1994: 42). Benson seems to have little regard for time and its limitations; indeed, Bradshaw claims that Benson's watch has never been set to the right time, always 'too fast or too slow' (*R*: 324). Rivers's sense of time is somewhat otherworldly, and he constantly pursues the promise of reward in the life that comes after death: time, for him, is something to be endured until he is received in heaven. However, it also offers the means to exert power and authority, to control the emotional boundaries of others: he specifies a length of time in which Jane must decide whether to accept his proposal of marriage, allowing her

two months to enjoy the freedom that comes with her inheritance (*JE*: 333). He imposes temporal limits on Jane's emotional freedom, appropriating her time as his own. He also turns time on himself, restricting his own enjoyment by means of temporal limitation: when Jane begins to tell him of Rosamond's esteem for him, he allows her to '"go on for another quarter of an hour"', setting his watch upon the table (*JE*: 318).

The self-scrutiny described by Adam Smith and demonstrated by earlier models of masculinity has by the mid-nineteenth century become a rigorous form of self-control and repression. Seidler describes experiencing desires and feelings as 'threats to the self-control people had to sustain as moral beings. It was only as rational beings that we could claim to be moral beings' (Seidler, 1989: 46). In striving to act rightly, Seidler believes that men inevitably become 'estranged' from themselves and from their own emotions (ibid.: 20). Rivers sustains this masculine repression of emotion and anticipates modern theorists like Seidler when he states, '"Reason, and not feeling, is my guide"' (*JE*: 320). He declares his admiration for the impassive qualities of endurance, perseverance, industry, talent; these are the means by which he seeks to achieve his ambitions (ibid.). He is often shown to be afraid of the power of emotion: when he claims, '"no fervour infects me"', he reveals his view of love as analogous with poison, bringing the contagion of disease (318, 327). When Rosamond Oliver teases him, 'His chest heaved once, as if his large heart, *weary of despotic constriction*, had expanded, *despite the will*, and made a vigorous bound for the attainment of liberty. *But he curbed it*' (*JE*: 311, my italics). When he understands that Rosamond is to be married, his reserve is again 'frozen over' (*JE*: 337).

Benson also shuts out his emotions because, like Rivers, he fears being overwhelmed by them. The strength of his emotion often unnerves him: 'He was faint with the strong power of his own conviction' (*R*: 102). As it is for Rivers, the emotional cost of suppressing his feelings is high:

> There were times when his feelings, which were always earnest, and sometimes morbid, burst forth, and defied control and overwhelmed him; when a force was upon him compelling him to speak. But he, in general, strove to preserve his composure, from a fear of the compelling pain of such times, and the consequent exhaustion (*R*: 115).

Suppressing his emotion involves painful and tiring effort, and yet still he does it because, as a morally good man, he has not learned any other way of being. Striving *not* to speak characterises Benson and Rivers in these novels, rendering their inner nature largely inaccessible.

Seidler writes that men use language 'as a place in which to hide themselves' (Seidler, 1997: 137). Rivers and Benson both use sermons as a means of tacitly communicating with Jane and with Ruth; they conceal themselves behind their religious faith, using the language of the Bible to express that for which they cannot summon the words. Benson aims to comfort Ruth with his public Sunday sermon; he 'feels' that tenderness is required towards her, but only in the Bible can he find the language appropriate to convey it (*R*: 129). Rivers, by contrast, uses the Bible as a manipulative tool: when his own words have failed to convince Jane to marry him, he turns to the Book of Revelation for justification of his desires, and for its persuasive power of rhetoric (*JE*: 355). Rivers loses himself in his occupation and is unable to be anything other than '"the servant of an infallible Master"' (*JE*: 342). This gives him a troubled relationship with power: he carries the strength of his profession as a conduit for the word of God, but because of this he has little authority as a man. When he is not speaking the language of Scripture, his words are 'low and hollow as an echo' (311). Seidler describes a hierarchy of moral experience, in which the masculine voice has established particular relationships to power and authority; this masculine voice is rendered as authoritative because of its universality and impartiality. 'As men,' he writes, 'we have learned to speak for others' (Seidler, 1994: 37). When Rivers speaks

for himself, his authority is diminished; when he speaks for God, his authority is unchallenged.

Benson also experiences difficulty with authority and expression. He, too, is a product of his profession in that he speaks most eloquently when in the pulpit; the Bible becomes a script which he performs capably and with skill. As a man speaking for himself, he is often at a loss for such articulate expression. His desire to comfort Ruth when he first sees her in distress is frustrated by an inability to express his feelings effectively: "'My dear young lady,'" he says, "'I have much to say to you; and God has taken my strength away from me now when I most need it'"; "'God help me," said he mournfully, "my words do not touch her'" (*R*: 85). Here his dependence on his religious faith and his occupation rob him of the power to speak for himself; he has little personal authority in the world of human sin and hopelessness. When he persuades Ruth to stay in the name of her mother, he speaks like a magician rather than a minister, 'in the tone of one who has found the hidden spell by which to rule spirits' (*R*: 85).

Repeatedly, he tries to speak and fails: 'His voice died away to silence;' 'His lips were moving in earnest, unspoken prayer;' 'he spoke, but his voice refused to utter aloud' (86). He is also rendered speechless by the news of Ruth's pregnancy (99) and by Faith's plan to give Ruth their late mother's name, for which 'he was sorry, but he said nothing' (109). He needs time to collect his thoughts into a form that can be translated into speech that can be understood by Faith: "'I want to make my feelings very clear to you, but I don't know where to begin, or how to express myself'" (99).

Seidler writes that the continual denial of feelings and emotions as sources of knowledge leads eventually to a kind of blindness in men (Seidler, 1994: 44), and the inability to articulate emotions is closely related to the inability to see clearly in these novels. Gaskell and Brontë seem to have an intuitive understanding of this typical facet of male behaviour, allowing their good men to observe various aspects of the behaviour

of others. Rivers's 'ever-watchful' eyes are turned upon Jane almost from the minute she arrives. He scrutinises her, using his eyes 'rather as instruments to search other people's thoughts than as agents to reveal his own' (*JE*: 295). His gaze throughout the novel, an unsettling combination of 'keenness and reserve', is 'considerably more calculated to embarrass rather than to encourage' (JE: 295). Lacking access to the language and visibility of feeling, he seems 'trapped... as observer rather than participant' of his own experience (Seidler, 1989: 132).

In *Ruth*, the issue of seeing and not-seeing is closely related to morality, for women as well as for men. The landlady of the hotel to which Bellingham takes Ruth immediately notices that Ruth shows little authority and has no maid, and concludes that Ruth and Bellingham are not married. 'Indeed,' she says to herself, 'and young men will be young men; and as long as their fathers and mothers shut their eyes, it's none of my business to go about asking questions' (*R*: 56). Whereas she talks of consciously choosing *not* to 'look too closely' into the ways of young men (67), Benson chooses to look carefully and also sees differently. He senses Ruth's position as Bellingham's mistress through silent observation, and later, when he and Faith are trying to reconcile public and private aspects of Ruth's condition, he confesses, "'Faith, I don't see this affair quite as you do'" (99). Later, in a triple confession of wrongdoing that echoes Peter's denial of Jesus, he realises that his vision has been at fault all along; "'I grope where formerly I saw'" (297).

Conclusion

Acting rightly is one of the concerns shared by Austen's men and by men in the fiction I discuss in this chapter and the next, though the full moral implications of acting rightly are further developed by later writers. Whereas Austen's plot development depends upon the reaction of good men to the actions of immoral men, Brontë and

Gaskell depict good men reacting to immoral situations: there is a more worldly moral and physical landscape in these early Victorian novels than in what Brontë saw in Austen's 'carefully-fenced, highly cultivated garden with neat borders and delicate flowers' (Barker, 1997: 180). As Raymond Williams notes, Austen is more concerned with personal conduct than with personal relationships. In her work we see 'a testing and discovery of the standards which govern human behaviour in certain real situations' (Williams, 1985: 113). Moral issues are more centrally placed in these mid-nineteenth-century novels than in Austen, more overtly and conspicuously situated in the plot. Although Austen's early nineteenth century good men are decorous, thoughtful and kind to others, their right action can sometimes seem to lack moral depth because the moral ambiguity to which they are reacting usually happens off-stage. As readers, we have limited insight into their motives, and it is not always clear that their goodness encompasses a prevailing sense of self-awareness or conscious benevolence. Austen's novels are primarily narrated from the point of view of the heroine, who does not have access to the male characters' 'inner lives': they, and the reader, must wait for the men to say or do something that reveals their thoughts or intentions.

In terminating his relationship with Mary Crawford, Edmund Bertram acts rightly because, ultimately, he knows it to be right. Admittedly, this is a long time coming in the novel, and it takes Mary Crawford's dismissal of adultery – to Edmund, a serious moral crime – as 'folly' (*MP*: 309) to convince him that he has no choice but to act. In fact, it is not the adultery that Mary Crawford describes as folly, but its detection: the crime of the absconding lovers is that they are foolish enough to allow themselves to be identified. Benson too talks of 'folly' at the end of *Ruth*, when rejecting Donne's offer of financial support for Leonard: he describes acts such as Donne's desertion of Ruth as '"youthful follies"', but peremptorily terminates the conversation with, '"There is another name for them with God"' (*R* : 371). Despite his preparations for ordination,

Edmund is most surprising in his complete silence on the subject of sin and the church: he speaks of the supernatural – '"the charm is broken"' (*MP*: 309) – whereas Benson speaks of Christian tenets. The men somewhat ineptly arrive at an equally 'good' conclusion in their appraisal of immoral conduct and right action, but their means and methods are rather different.

In *Emma*, Knightley does the right thing because he has a profound sense of fellow-feeling – what Adam Smith calls 'pity' – for others. Austen is less concerned with the direct portrayal of self-scrutiny in her male characters, though she freely articulates the thoughts of her female characters; Gaskell and Brontë are more willing to allow the reader access to the thoughts and internal discourses of their male characters as well. Austen also creates more distance between character and reader: the reader of *Mansfield Park* has decided that Mary Crawford is not going to make a suitable vicar's wife long before Edmund realises it. Edmund's long monologue towards the end of the novel, in which he describes to Fanny his last conversation with Mary, merely reveals what the reader has already surmised. Gaskell and Brontë bring the reader closer to the centre of the moral dilemma presented – somewhat paradoxically – by allowing Benson and Rivers to speak less.

Foot argues that 'we must be careful not to tie moral judgement too closely to action' (Foot, 2001: 18), since any moral decision does not allow for ignorance or weakness of will: the agent of a moral judgement may not fully comprehend the whole situation, and the outcome of his action may therefore be linked to faulty understanding rather than to faulty morality. Iris Murdoch, on the other hand, is careful to separate right action from goodness: although right action and humility are natural products of attending to the good, she insists that right action 'should provide the starting-point of reflection and not its conclusion'. Right action, she states, 'is a proper criterion of virtue' (Murdoch, 1970: 70), and acting rightly is simply the starting point for goodness,

not its defining criterion. Thus the Good Samaritan acts virtuously (by acting rightly to provide relief for the suffering of another) *and* morally (by demonstrating altruism in caring for another). Benson acts rightly, by caring for Ruth, and demonstrates virtue in so doing; but he is shown to be morally at fault when he is persuaded to lie in order to conceal Ruth's true circumstances. Rivers behaves with similar virtue, in agreeing to care for Jane, but is also morally at fault by subsequently attending to his own needs rather than to hers.

Both novels demonstrate particularly strong disapproval of the marriage of convenience. Outward respectability does not conceal its ultimate ethical wrongness, and Jemima's internal dialogue in response to Farquhar's conduct carries strong echoes of Jane's objections to Rivers: 'you talk in that high strain about principles because it sounds well, and is respectable – and even these things are better than your cold way of looking out for a wife, just as you would do for a carpet, to add to your own comforts, and settle you respectably' (*R*: 185). In regarding their prospective spouses '"but as a useful tool"' (*JE*: 354), Rivers and Farquhar fail to reconcile respectable conduct with moral consideration for others. For Benson, outward respectability is created artificially by means of a fabricated marriage and widowhood that result in Ruth becoming 'Mrs Denbigh'. The exemplary conduct and respectability demanded by Lord Chesterfield of his son is shown, by the mid-nineteenth century, to be capable of hiding varying degrees of moral ambiguity.

Goodness is, for Rivers, essentially a public, visible act; one that can be measured and quantified, and judged according to the degree of personal sacrifice or inconvenience he has suffered. There is also evidence of an egotistical need for admiration, and for public recognition of his commitment to his chosen occupation. Benson, by contrast, urges Faith to '"try simply to do right actions, without thinking of the feelings they are to call out in others"' (*R*: 107). The ethical code that underpins

Gaskell's writing is given most clearly in a narratorial comment: 'true and simple virtue always has its proportionate reward in the respect and reverence of every one whose esteem is worth having... provided only it be pure, simple and unconscious of its own existence' (*R*: 87). True goodness should be artless and selfless, while something done consciously for effect, or to adversely affect another person, cannot be truly virtuous. Jemima accuses her internal Farquhar, with whom she has an imaginary conversation, 'you are good because it adds to your business credit' (*R*: 212). Similarly, Bradshaw is outwardly pious, his public respectability hiding his propensity for autocratic misogyny. Rivers and Benson both draw reverence or esteem from Jane and Ruth by simply trying to act rightly, even though neither of them experiences 'that mental serenity, that inward content, which should be the reward of every sincere Christian and practical philanthropist' (*JE*: 299).

In this respect, they illustrate some of the problems of goodness: on one hand, it is clearly a good thing to be good, in that vulnerable others benefit from material benevolence and philanthropy. On the other hand, however, being good is presented as an onerous burden that cannot bring peace or happiness. Rivers and Benson are serious in temperament and behaviour, and frequently seem preoccupied with the weight of moral matters. They joke, smile and laugh rarely, if at all – Rivers laughs just once, when he reveals the amount of Jane's inheritance (*JE*: 326). There is little evidence of Rivers feeling that which he expects Jane to feel after a long day's teaching: '"Does not the consciousness of having done some real good in your day and generation give pleasure?"' (*JE*: 332). If Rivers is conscious of having done good himself, he seems far from showing delight in it. He concedes to a sense of duty, and therefore satisfaction; but real, genuine enjoyment eludes him. *Ruth* does not concern itself with mere human happiness either; Ruth herself exclaims, '"Oh! What is happiness or misery that we should talk about them now?... God did not put me here to consider either of these

things'" (*R*: 245). Terence Wright reads this as a novel about 'conscience and moral outrage' (Wright, 1995: 83); it aims to demonstrate to Victorian readers the potentially fatal consequences of hasty moral judgement rather than the personal happiness of its protagonists.

Right action, morality and goodness, then, become much more interdependent and relative in the mid-century novel than in Austen, showing that goodness itself is a fragile, unstable attribute that can be shattered in a moment by the power of knowledge or understanding. Whereas Elizabeth Bennet can complain that Darcy and Wickham's goodness has been 'shifting about' (*P & P*: 199), Jemima finds that goodness not only shifts about, but that it is impossible to identify at all: 'Who was true? Who was not? Who was good and pure? Who was not?' The absence of true, reliable goodness that can positively and unequivocally be identified as such shakes 'the very foundations' of Jemima's ability to trust herself or others (*R*: 268).

Jemima's inability to find categorical evidence of goodness is explained by Seidler's view that 'masculinity is *an essentially negative identity* learned through defining itself against emotionality and connectedness' (Seidler, 1989: 7; my italics). Towards the end of *Jane Eyre*, Rochester questions Jane's description of her cousin as a good man. To him, a good man is '"A person whose goodness consists rather in his guiltlessness of vice, than in his prowess in virtue"' (*JE*: 375): a good man is good because he does not allow himself to be bad, and his goodness is defined in negative terms as the space left by the absence of evil. For Gaskell and Brontë, in these novels the good man is not at ease with expressing what he feels, even though he may acknowledge that he feels emotions profoundly. He finds it more comfortable to know and to think rather than to feel; he is not connected on a deep level with others, and is often destined to remain single and childless, an emotionally remote and repressed figure.

Despite their outward eligibility, Benson and Rivers are effectively unavailable for marriage due to their spiritual and emotional investment in their professions. In Benson's case, it seems that his physical deformity, together with his age, is proposed as sufficient reason for him to remain single; the novel never suggests that he might marry Ruth. However, the morally regenerative effect of marriage, particularly for men who might benefit from moral improvement, is explored in both novels. When Bellingham offers to marry Ruth, he admits, '"I am no saint... Granted. But people who are no saints have made very good husbands before now. Come, don't let any morbid overstrained conscientiousness interfere with substantial happiness"' (*R*: 249). According to Bellingham, a good man and a good husband are not only two quite different things, but can provide different levels of happiness.

Rochester, too, proves that a man can be a good husband without having been outwardly virtuous. Like some of the bad boys in Chapter One, he describes himself as '"a wild boy indulged from childhood upwards"' (*JE*: 185). When Jane scrutinises his physiognomy and finds 'an abrupt deficiency where the suave sign of benevolence should have risen,' Rochester admits, '"I am not a general philanthropist, but I bear a conscience"' (112). Significantly, Rivers uses almost the same phrase when assuring Jane that he will agree to help her: '"I know not whether I am a true philanthropist"' (295). The primary difference between the two men is the extent to which they are prepared to acknowledge and express their own passions. Whereas Rivers is determined to repress and suppress, Rochester is willing to experience and express, despite social convention. To a woman of spirit and intelligence, Rochester is determined to be '"ever tender and true"' (222). The conscience to which he freely owns eventually drives him to seek a more morally secure foundation for the remainder of his life: '"I will break obstacles to happiness, to goodness – yes, goodness; I wish to be a better man than I have been, than I am"' (122). Where Rivers is 'inexorable as death' (311), Rochester is

fallible and vulnerable; he sees his own imperfections and forgives himself for them: "'Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man... take my word for it, I am not a villain... but... a trite commonplace sinner'" (116). Similarly, in *Villette* (1853), Dr John, a man with a 'deservedly high', 'benevolent' character (*V*: 462), marries Paulina. In this novel, 'solitude is sadness' (*V*: 520), and, together, Dr John and his wife become greater than the sum of their parts. As a married man, 'his faults decayed, his virtues ripened; he rose in intellectual refinement, he won in moral profit' (*V*: 532); like Rochester, he is a better 'good man' for having married than he would have been had he remained single.[6]

Rivers and Benson have troubled relationships with authority and power, and both are unnerved by female sexuality and independence while at the same time striving to do the right thing according to the word of God. Each seems to be tangled in his own web of different frustrations, one forever looking outward at the great and vast, the other forever gazing inward at the small and domestic. One of the greatest faults ascribed to Rivers is his inability to see the smaller, more immediate picture: "'He is a good and a great man,'" Jane says of him; "'but he forgets, pitilessly, the feelings and claims of little people, in pursuing his own large views'" (*JE*: 354). Rivers's life is one of obedience to rules, and compliance with doctrine; reason, rather than feeling, guides him, and he lives 'only to aspire' (334). However good he is, it will never be enough to satisfy his own exacting standards, and his constant striving to be better leads, ultimately, to his death. Where Rivers concentrates on the great and expansive, Benson sees only the 'little people' in his narrow social sphere and, even then, is unable to save them. He is made miserable by his 'stinging conscience' and the 'aching remembrance

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[6] Similarly, Gaskell apparently intended Roger Hamley, 'a prince amongst men' (*W & D*: 377), to marry Molly Gibson in *Wives and Daughters* (1866) but died before the scene could be written. Like *Ruth*, this is a novel in which the male characters often fail to acknowledge and own their feelings, seeking exterior or artificial boundaries to keep their emotions under control. Referring to his understanding with Cynthia, Roger declares, "'I am bound, but you are free. I like to feel bound, it makes me happy and at peace'" (*W & D*: 374).

of the evil he had done that good might come' (*R*: 212). The potential for goodness to create misery, it seems, is great in these novels.

The next chapter offers a more optimistic view of moral masculinity in the 1850s: the schism between duty and pleasure, reason and emotion, and repression and expression of desires is at least partly reconciled in Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) and Dinah Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856). In these novels, goodness is presented as a more positive, life-affirming attribute than it seems in *Jane Eyre* and *Ruth*. While Guy Morville and John Halifax do not always find it easy to be good, they do at least seem to take some pleasure from the attempt.

<u>Chapter Four</u>

<u>'Awful Perfection': *John Halifax, Gentleman* and *The Heir of Redclyffe*</u>

"If I could make a perfect hero, I would at once;
only Charles would tell me that all the perfect
heroes in books are bores." [1]

The previous chapter explored, with brief reference to virtue ethics and masculinity theory, some of the conceptual foundations of goodness in the mid-nineteenth-century novel, and evaluated some of the concerns experienced by men who are anxious to be good. I propose in this chapter to examine some of the more cultural aspects of moral masculinity, in which a revived interest in chivalry reinforces the changing notions of gentlemanliness. In order to demonstrate a parallel developing Victorian moral masculinity, the discussion in this chapter focuses on novels that are roughly contemporary with those of the previous chapter. Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) and Dinah Mulock Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856) both concern an eponymous male protagonist, suggesting a more primary role for the good man, and situating moral masculinity at the very centre of the narrative.

The continued growth of a national capitalist economy offered men the opportunity to rise through the social strata by combining a staunch sense of 'character' with the principles of self-help. Conduct manuals had been available for many centuries in England, but it was in the mid-nineteenth century that the concept of self-improvement became something seriously to be studied and attempted. The work of Samuel Smiles brought this aspiration to life for many who wanted to improve their fortunes and social standing, and this chapter refers to his focus on the potential for good men to become great men. As a result of his own application and diligence, Smiles was able to rise from the son of a papermaker to become a medical apprentice,

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[1] Charlotte Yonge,1997. *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 362.

eventually going on to have his own practice. He also worked as general editor of the *Leeds Times*, and during the 1840s was writing in various journals and periodicals as well as lecturing on social and cultural issues. *Self-Help* appeared in 1859, and, despite having been rejected by Routledge four years earlier, was immediately a best-seller. Mixing concise biographies of the good and the great with inspirational, pithy aphorisms, Smiles illustrated how hardships could be overcome and success pursued by any man, however humble his beginnings.

At the same time, the word 'gentleman' began to acquire an additional sense of moral worth and integrity in addition to its original denotation of social status: good men aspired to be gentlemen, thus combining a rigorous moral outlook with a securely masculine deportment. The application of some of the principles of self-help enables John Halifax to rise from homeless street urchin to respected philanthropist, and equally enables the nobly-born Guy Morville to work diligently on improving his temperament and character. Both novels pre-date Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859) by a few years, which demonstrates that the practice was at least known, if not yet formulated into a coherent shape.

Despite this central focus on men of outstanding goodness, however, there was still some antagonism towards the 'woman's man', whom Showalter claims is 'impossibly pious and desexed' (Showalter, 1982: 133). In 1883, Eliza Lynn Linton retrospectively complained about the men in women's novels, referring to them as 'prigs, ruffians or curled darlings; each of whom a man longs to kick. They are goody men,' she continues, 'of such exalted morality that Sir Galahad himself might take a lesson from them' (Linton, 1883: 246). Henry James calls the hero of *John Halifax, Gentleman* 'a sort of Charles Grandison of the democracy, faultless in manner and morals'; he suggests that Dinah Craik's hero is seen 'through a curtain of rose-coloured gauze' and that there is an 'awful perfection' in the delineation of his character (James,

1968: 167-9). The difference between 'goody men' and manly, heroic men, is highlighted by Blanche Ingram in *Jane Eyre* (1847); '"young men of today"', she complains, are

> "poor puny things not fit to stir a step beyond papa's park-gates; nor to go even so far without mama's permission and guardianship! Creatures so absorbed in care about their pretty faces and their white hands, and their small feet... but as to the gentlemen, let them be solicitous to possess only strength and valour: let their motto be – Hunt, shoot, and fight; the rest is not worth a fillip" (*JE*: 153).[2]

She does not refer to good men and bad, but rather to passive and active. The admirable man – that is, the traditional gentleman – is most solicitous about strength and valour; his dominant form of action is hunting, shooting or fighting. These actions are predatory and look outward towards an external prey that must be captured, defeated or destroyed; the gaze of the vain men about whom Blanche complains is reflexive and harmless. Heroism and acts of valour are discussed later in this chapter.

The 'exalted morality' of male characters in fiction is thus often viewed as an unacceptable aberration that generates repugnance rather than admiration. Like Gertrude Slater, who resented having goodness thrust upon her by a child character in a book,[3] it seems that the 'awful perfection' of fictional good men has the same effect on adult readers. Charlotte Yonge, in an article in *The Monthly Packet*, admits that 'women's good heroes are apt to be called prigs', adding that 'a woman cannot do a man truthfully from within' (Yonge, 1892: 192). A reviewer in an 1858 issue of the *Dublin University Magazine* points out that women are the chief readers of novels, and that readers 'want men's thoughts, and hopes, and sorrows, too, regarded from the women's tender, sensitive, indoors, unreal, pleasant point of view.' He continues,

> [Women] do not mix in our police-courts, gambling-houses, camps, cabins, and such places, where man's life, in the more eventful

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[2] I use the following abbreviations in this chapter: *JHG: John Halifax, Gentleman; THOR: The Heir of Redclyffe*; *JE*: *Jane Eyre*; *E*: *Emma*; *N&S*: *North and South*.

[3] See Chapter One, page 63.

aspects, is passed. They travel only along the beaten way; they share in few adventures; they do not rough it; they do not suffer enough; they live in hothouses, glazed and scented; they judge of how man treats man, by how man treats woman; they think they know how man feels, and they only know how woman feels ('Novels for Infancy,' 1858: 727).

The writer has a clear conviction that men's lives are exciting, adventurous, and full of potential suffering, whereas women's are safe, shaded, and protected; they are cosseted like exotic flowers, and their portrayal of men can be nothing other than 'unreal'. It is true that with no access to gentlemen's clubs, for example, women had very little idea of how men behaved among themselves in these places. While Austen chose not to portray many scenes in which men converse together without women present, Yonge and Craik make a more confident attempt to represent pairs and small groups of men. The domestic setting of the novels I discuss here narrows the field of likely conversation and exchange,[4] but by revealing the process towards the marriage and fatherhood of the central protagonists, Craik and Yonge begin to show some of the relational aspects of moral masculinity. Both writers see marriage and fatherhood as the duties of a good man in what might be an emulation of the 'illustrious example' of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, 'the first husband in the realm' (*JHG*: 279).

Having been raised in the German Romantic tradition, Prince Albert might take much of the credit for a renewed interest in the knight of the traditional romance that so inspired the nineteenth-century artistic imagination. Mark Girouard's study of the chivalric code as a template for gentlemanly conduct traces ways in which the images of chivalry were 'absorbed into the pattern of everyday life' in 1850s Britain (Girouard, 1981: 146). Yonge and Craik both acknowledge the influence of the chivalric tradition on their young heroes, each of whom is compared with a medieval knight. Lady Caroline refers to John Halifax as '*un herós de romans*' (*JHG*: 233); Redclyffe itself is

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[4] George Eliot is also a confident portrayer of men's conversation, beyond the home as well as within it.

described as being 'like a scene in a romance' (*THOR*: 10). Phineas remarks that John, when on horseback, looks 'like a young knight of the Middle Ages' and conjectures that his father might have inherited 'some of the old Norman blood' (*JHG*: 175). While John strives always for 'honesty, justice and morality' (296), he refutes any association with the knight's way of life, generally preferring instead either Biblical or Classical Greek allusion.

Guy is deeply moved by La Motte Fouqué's romance *Sintram and his Companions* (1812), an allegorical tale in which a Christian knight battles Death and Sin in order to redeem and purify his ancestral line. Guy sees Amy as his Verena,[5] whereas John prefers to see Ursula as Proserpina in an Arcadian utopia (*THOR*: 68; *JHG*: 143). Guy is compared with Sir Galahad throughout *The Heir of Redclyffe*; he chooses the knight as his literary role model and later poses as Galahad for Shene, the portrait painter. He defends Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* against Philip's dismissive commentary and aims to live according to Galahad's values, particularly in his restrained pursuit of Amy: 'Guy was a very chivalrous lover; the polish and courtesy that sat so well on his frank, truthful manners, were even more remarkable in his courtship' (*THOR*: 345). The fact that Guy embraces the values of the medieval knight where John does not reflects the difference in their social status: Guy, having inherited his estate, is securely upper class, whereas John Halifax inherits only the knowledge that his father was a gentleman. The knight's intricately prescribed pattern of behaviour is historically aristocratic; the unpolished plain-speaking approach preferred by John Halifax is more typical of the lower and middle classes. The references to chivalry in both novels suggest that a deep sense of honour is going to form a major part of the morally masculine character. While Thurstan Benson and St John Rivers find themselves restricted by their professions and social status, the protagonists in this

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[5] In Fouqué's text, Verena is Sintram's mother.

chapter show that not all good men are introspective, and that not all expression is repressed.

<u>Men, Gentlemen and Morality</u>

By the 1840s, the term 'gentleman' was beginning to apply to any decent middle class man, regardless of his birth, wealth, or status, and came to denote a set of personal qualities including courage, steadfastness and good manners. Like Whewell's 'Idea of Morality', the image of the gentleman was an important facet of moral masculinity, as the title began to imply an adherence to a moral code of behaviour that transcended material circumstances. Whereas Austen's Regency gentlemen are wealthy landowners, in later society a man's principles become more important than his wealth or status. The preoccupation with the topic in various periodicals of the early- to mid-nineteenth century allows the pattern of this shifting meaning to be traced quite clearly.

In 1829, Catherine Hutton suggests that the word 'gentleman' had become 'an indefinite term' that required a qualifying adjective in order to properly define it: thus, 'a fine gentleman is a man of taste'; 'a good gentleman is known only by the poor'; 'a poor gentleman is an object of contempt'. The great difficulty, she finds, 'is to define a complete gentleman'. The primary qualification for the title is that the gentleman must be 'a man of ancestry'; a man of lower birth, she writes, 'may be a man of sense, of genius; he may rise to riches and honours; he may be esteemed and respected; he may be any thing but a gentleman. That he cannot be; for the old leaven will still hang about him, and betray itself in his words and his manners' (Hutton, 1829: 157-8). Before 1830, noble birth is still believed to be essential for a good man to be known as a good gentleman.

Just ten years later, in 'What is a Gentleman?' Sir Thomas Charles Morgan reconsiders some of the various definitions then current. 'Everyone,' he writes, 'is

satisfied that he is a perfect gentleman'. He refutes the Grandisonian '"faultless

monster"', arguing that if that were a criterion, 'a gentleman must be set down as a

priggish formalist and a bore'. He likewise admits that working for a living need not

exclude a man from being a gentleman, since England is now a commercial country full

of 'dignified tradesmen' (Morgan, 1839: 449).

Slightly later still, the 1853 legal case, Wag v. Kelson, was reported during

which the defendant addressed the plaintiff, 'Do not speak to me; I am a gentleman, and

you are a tradesman'. Mr Justice Talfourd responded,

> "Gentleman is a term which does not apply to any station, but to
> the mind and the feelings in every station. The man of rank who
> deports himself with dignity and candour; the tradesman who
> discharges the duties of life with honour and integrity, are alike
> entitled to it; nay, the humblest artisan, who fulfils the
> obligations cast upon him with virtue and with honour, is more
> entitled to the name of gentleman than the man who could
> indulge in offensive and ribald remarks, however high his
> station" ('What is a Gentleman?' 1853: 148).

In the space of a generation, the definition of gentleman has become the subject of

intrigued and spirited debate involving not only economic considerations but also moral

ones.

Justice Talfourd's views, however, are perhaps unusually liberal. In Gaskell's

North and South (1855), Margaret Hale can still complain about the '"shoppy people"'

whose rapidly growing wealth cannot replace the taste and decency that come with

inherited class standards, much as Emma had complained about the 'low origin' of the

Coles (*N&S*: 20; *E*: 143). John Thornton speaks out against 'the cant of the day' in

arguing vociferously for the word 'man' in favour of 'gentleman':

> "I take it that "gentleman" is a term that only describes a person in
> his relation to others; but when we speak of him as "a man," we
> consider him not merely with regard to his fellow-men, but in
> relation to himself, – to life – to time – to eternity... I am rather
> weary of this word "gentlemanly," which seems to me to be often
> inappropriately used, and often, too, with such exaggerated
> distortion of meaning, while the full simplicity of the noun "man,"
> and the adjective "manly" are unacknowledged" (*N&S*: 163).

Philip Mason argues that the word 'gentleman' was used, in theory, in two senses: 'It might be a social label, indicating some degree of distinction above the lowest rung of society... But there was a second meaning... always suggesting certain standards of behaviour' (Mason, 1993: 16). In practice, however, as John Thornton's objections suggest, the ubiquity of the word 'gentleman' tends to restrict its meaning rather than to expand it. Thornton's insistence on 'manliness' underlines the moral rather than the social, describing the more important relationship between a man and his conscience than that with the rest of the world.

By 1859, Samuel Smiles was able to define 'the true gentleman' in similar terms, as one whose qualities 'depend not upon fashion or manners, but upon moral worth – not on personal possessions, but on personal qualities.' He adds that '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, a true gentleman' (Smiles, 2002: 326, 328).[6] In *Great Expectations* (1861), Dickens emphasises the difference between the natural morality of Joe Gargery and the assumed cultural conduct of the gentleman that Pip must learn to become. Despite the fact that Joe is loyal, tender and compassionate, his illiteracy and unpolished manner mean that, in Catherine Hutton's words, the 'old leaven' continues to hang about him and the novel for that reason cannot call him a gentleman, despite his superior morality. Pip must instead bless the 'gentle Christian man' who nurses him through illness (Dickens, 1999: 117, 344).

John Halifax has taught himself to read and is therefore better able to converse with those higher in the social scale. He personifies the changing understanding of what a gentleman really is when he tells Abel Fletcher, '"I – John Halifax – am just the same,

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[6] It should be added, however, that Smiles was from a humble background himself, and thus may have had a personal agenda in setting out the ways in which a gentleman might be defined.

whether in the tanyard or Dr Jessop's drawing-room. The one position cannot degrade, nor the other elevate me"' (*JHG*: 198). The fact that Craik makes John Halifax's father a gentleman has troubled some critics, who perhaps want to see a tradesman become a gentleman purely on the strength of his own determination, regardless of his birth. Girouard remarks that Craik 'cheats' by giving John Halifax a gentleman father, complaining that 'she has to have it both ways' (Girouard, 1981: 150). Given that the novel is set in the past – John Halifax is born in 1780 – in the interests of verisimilitude, she complies with both sets of gentleman definitions: one that was current in the late eighteenth century, when the novel is set, and one that was current in the mid-nineteenth, when it was published. This tends to give the book something of an unworldly quality: that a tradesman can become a gentleman in the early nineteenth century seems radical and progressive, but that a gentleman-tradesman must have noble birth in order to qualify as a gentleman in the 1850s seems more limiting.

Craik comments on the dubious moral standards of born gentlemen in her portrait of Richard Brithwood, a point to which Phineas self-consciously draws attention when he addresses the reader: 'I, Phineas Fletcher, have lived to see so great a change in manners and morals, that intemperance, instead of being the usual characteristic of a "gentleman," has become a rare failing – a universally contemned disgrace' (*JHG*: 294). Brithwood 'lounges'; he is 'coarse', 'bloated' and 'savage'; he swears and lashes out; Phineas sees that John is 'what Richard Brithwood, with all his broad acres could never be – a gentleman' (206-9). Vermilye, described by Lady Caroline as 'an honourable gentleman' (287) turns out to be nothing of the sort but is instead faithless, self-serving and provoking enough to entice John's son to violence against him. Similarly, Lord Ravenel, born to the comforts of a noble life, learns to become more like John and less like his father, whose liabilities, like his extravagances, are 'enormous' (458). As plain Mr William Ravenel, he becomes 'the best, noblest

fellow' (483). Increasingly, the born gentleman comes to be seen as a creature of excess, like Arthur Huntingdon, his behaviour knowing no decent boundaries, and a surfeit of money and privilege often leading to excessive selfishness and profligacy. By renouncing his title, Ravenel embraces a different kind of richness associated more with the nurturing of personal qualities rather than that associated with class privileges.

Nevertheless, Craik shows that becoming a true gentleman is an essential part of developing personal goodness, and insists on John's preoccupation with both inheriting goodness and passing it on to future generations. Smiles sees the self-made man as having one foot in the past and the other firmly planted in the future. He writes, 'A life well spent, a character uprightly sustained, is no slight legacy to leave to one's children'; just as a man's forefathers have influenced him, so is a man 'contributing to form the condition and character of the future' (Smiles, 2002: 299-301). Uniting past and future in the name of goodness is clearly visible in both John Halifax and Guy Morville, though whereas for John the past is seen as a blessing from which great things might grow, for Guy the past is a curse to be vanquished if future goodness is to be restored to his ancestral line. Manhood comes to John Halifax as 'a rightful inheritance' (*JHG*: 78); it is 'reasonable and natural' that a caring, sensitive boy such as John 'should come of gentle rather than of boorish blood' (36).

Apart from the very fact of his gentle birth, however, John is a blank canvas on which he himself is the creator of the history that he is later to hand down to his own sons. In 'founding a family' at Beechwood Hall (366) he ensures that future generations of Halifaxes enjoy the lifestyle of the hereditary gentleman, provided that they also bear a sense of responsibility for the sound moral conduct of the self-educated Christian. He claims a family seat not for the personal glory but for the long-term opportunity for philanthropy, beginning with his own sons; he wishes 'not only to lift himself, but his sons after him – lift them high enough to help the ever-advancing tide of human

improvement, among their own people first, and thence extending outward in the world whithersoever their talents or circumstances might take them' (366). Goodness is not simply a personal quality, but one to be passed from generation to generation that it may be spread outwards and across all levels of society.

Guy Morville, on the other hand, inherits a ready-made gentleman's estate, complete with feudal loyalty in the nearby village of Redclyffe where he is 'king, state, supreme authority' (*THOR*: 285). However, his battle with the past, like Sintram's with Death and Sin, involves acknowledging, confronting and overcoming the effects of his forefathers' behaviour. He speaks of his personal history in terms of 'crime and bloodshed', 'weight and darkness', from which early death is but the happiest of releases (71); his spirits sometimes sink under the gloom of his 'heirloom of misery' and he feels himself to be 'a doomed man' (283). In resolving to make himself good, Guy seeks to lay the spirit of his ancestry to rest and personally to atone for the sins of his fathers. Whereas John Halifax's sense of ancestral goodness looks forwards and outwards, Guy's looks backwards and inwards. In this sense, he seems in many ways a sacrificial, redemptive figure atoning for past sins and is never allowed to take up residence at Redclyffe as its rightful heir. He dies purified and exonerated, but this is of no practical help to future generations: Philip, ultimately the 'Heir' of the novel's title, must continue to labour under the weight of the family curse.

Whereas Guy is born with recognised status, John Halifax must add to his nominal standing through a combination of education, work and good deeds that generate public respect. Samuel Smiles came to regard himself as living proof that it was possible for anyone, from whatever background, to become something truly great. He firmly believed that the lives of the good and the great could subliminally generate enthusiasm in others, writing, 'Example is one of the most potent of instructors; though it teaches without a tongue' (Smiles, 2002: 297).

Smiles himself had been influenced by a similar work, first published in 1830. George Lillie Craik's *The Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties*[7] promotes learning and education as the best possible means for moral improvement; a book, Craik writes, is 'the poor man's luxury'. Knowledge is not only power, but 'it is also, indirectly, virtue... It can hardly be acquired, without the exertion of several moral qualities of high value.' Once acquired, knowledge then has the power 'to withdraw the mind from unprofitable and corrupting pleasures' (Craik, 1847: 7-8). Smiles learned from this text that education has the power not only to make a man better, but also to prevent him from slipping backwards into immoral or profligate ways. Craik and Smiles are concerned primarily with personal and moral improvement, which is not necessarily the same as social class mobility. In her work on Victorian biography, Juliette Atkinson points out that Smiles did not necessarily agree with true social mobility, but rather held that 'self-help would create a nobler and more moral working class' (Atkinson, 2010: 69). Smiles's own experience, however, would suggest that self-improvement almost inevitably leads to social advancement and a more materially comfortable life.

Smiles was a firm believer in the power of example. 'Biographies of great, but especially of good men,' he writes in *Self-Help*, 'are nevertheless most instructive and useful, as helps, guides, and incentives to others.' He goes on to claim that the very best men's lives 'are almost equivalent to gospels – teaching high living, high thinking, and energetic action for their own and the world's good' (Smiles, 2002: 21). This view reflects something of the spirit of *John Halifax, Gentleman* and *The Heir of Redclyffe*, both of which introduce the good man as a gentleman, a model citizen and neighbour, as a figure to admire and to emulate. The obvious difference, of course, is that Smiles is writing non-fiction, whereas Craik and Yonge are able deliberately to shape and manipulate the lives of the good men they portray. Nevertheless, in terms of

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[7] The author of this work is the uncle of the identically-named husband of Dinah Mulock Craik; his influence is perhaps as clear in the work of Dinah Craik as it is in that of Smiles.

inspirational life models, there is little material difference between the 'real life'

biographies that Smiles relates and those of the fictional heroes of this chapter.

Character and Self-Control

Smiles defines character as 'human nature in its highest form' and claims that

character, rather than genius, most secures respect (Smiles, 2009: 7). Character is

formed by the exertion of will to create good conduct and diligent attention to duty, and

it also emphasises the value of a clear conscience:

> Character exhibits itself in conduct, guided and inspired by
> principle, integrity, and practical wisdom. In its highest form, it is
> the individual will acting energetically under the influence of
> religion, morality, and reason. It chooses its way considerately, and
> pursues it steadfastly; esteeming duty above reputation, and the
> approval of conscience more than the world's praise (Smiles, 2009:
> 14).

Character, with its emphasis on will, reason and wisdom, shares its principles with virtue

ethics, where right action comes from a sense of duty and principle – from being rather

than doing. John Halifax's determination to raise himself above the limits imposed by

society is demonstrated by his self-education and his staunch commitment to moral

principles. Craik is unequivocal about John's own motivation to better himself; he lifts

himself above the status of tanner's lad not for the glory or wealth, but for 'the infinite

opportunities of doing good' (*JHG*: 261). With two successful businesses, and as master

of nearly a hundred employees, he does not boast of his success but rather is delighted

by the prospect of improving their lives: "'Think of what good we may do!'" (291).

John Halifax reflects Smiles's belief that character is developed by a diligent and

conscientious focus on work. Writing from and for an upper-middle class background,

Yonge is less concerned with a man's working life, the outward expression of who he is,

than with his inner life, his personal and spiritual foundations. As Catherine Wells-Cole

writes, 'Yonge is not constructing a hero to fit the Victorian work ethic... [Guy's]

function in the narrative instead is to reach spiritual perfection in the [inevitable] self-sacrificing death' (Wells-Cole, 2000: 75). Guy does not work for a living, but rather works in a different way, on improving those aspects of his character that he finds troubling. Idleness, in particular, horrifies him. He suppresses his 'high animal spirits' (*THOR*: 53)[8] in order to apply himself to a more disciplined way of living, and enlists the help of the Edmonstones to become more self-disciplined: '"I want something unpleasant to keep me in order. Something famously horrid"' (53). He, too, practises aspects of self-help in order to forge the character of the man he aspires to be.

Guy's preoccupation with his own faults evokes Adam Smith's thoughts on self-scrutiny, and his focus on his own imperfections means that he often fails to recognise his own goodness. He is keenly aware of his educational inferiority and embarks on an intense programme of study, which he tackles with a combination of his customary enthusiasm and energy and his extremist sense of self-punishment for failure to meet his own exacting standards. Giving up his various leisure pursuits because they distract him from his work, he finally offends the family by missing a ball for the sake of his study. Mrs Edmonstone must drily remind him that, while self-improvement is a good thing, '"self-discipline may be carried too far, Guy"' (*THOR*: 128).

Although Guy tends towards the extreme in his quest for self-improvement, the striving for heightened morality is essential. In *Self-Help*, Smiles warns of the dangers of life without sufficient challenge: 'An easy and luxurious existence does not train men to effort or encounter with difficulty; nor does it awaken that consciousness of power which is so necessary for energetic and effective action in life' (Smiles, 2002: 31). Work – in the form of employment or self-help – offers a way of developing honour, integrity and perseverance in the face of difficulty, all of which in turn help to develop 'character', the gentleman's most valuable personal asset. Although Guy does not work

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[8] 'High animal spirits' is the same phrase used by Austen to describe Lydia Bennet; Guy Morville avoids the suggestion of moral danger because he also has a 'serious, ascetic temper' (*THOR*: 53).

for a living, he and John both strive for the same end: personal goodness is vitally important to Guy, for whom the struggle to do right sometimes interferes with his naturally effusive sense of pleasure.

Both novels feature clearly a man endeavouring to maintain his sense of personal goodness as well as trying to enjoy some of the benefits of its attainment. In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways in which Benson is troubled by the impossibility of knowing for certain what is right; similarly, St John Rivers derives little personal happiness from his austere, fervent desire to do good in the world. For these men, goodness often involves a conflict between duty and conscience, and the abstract rightness of an act is at odds with its concrete manifestation.

Craik and Yonge offer more insight into what motivates a man to be good, but, like Brontë and Gaskell, they also illustrate some of the good man's difficulties with goodness. Because of their sometimes troubled conception of what it means to be a good man, John Halifax and Guy Morville are not the 'goody men' or the awfully perfect figures that Linton and James describe. Rather, they are three-dimensional characters who personify the challenges and rewards of being true gentlemen, but in addition demonstrate more self-awareness and self-regulation than Rivers or Benson. Both men, for example, wrestle with their own personal demons: Guy must try to control his temper, and John must balance his need to act rightly with the avoidance of causing pain to others. Both men have a strong sense of self-discipline and determination; it is John who says, "'I have a life of hard work before me, and can't afford to get used to too much pleasure'" (*JHG*: 140) but the words apply equally to Guy.

From childhood John is serious and attentive, always considerate of Phineas and his physical weakness. While he sometimes wishes for pleasure, his first thought is usually for duty. In a rare outburst of high spirits, he exclaims, "'Shouldn't I like to

break away! dash out into the world, take to all sorts of wild freaks, do all sorts of grand things,"' musing, "'So many wrong things are pleasant"' (*JHG*: 82). When he entices Phineas to accompany him to the theatre and is late home as a result of falling victim to a pickpocket, he is forbidden to associate with Phineas for another two years. Phineas himself, even with the benefit of the hindsight with which he narrates, cannot say, 'in a strict and moral sense,' whether any crime of judgement has been committed. Abel Fletcher's objection is that the act is not wrong so much as weak; he says, "'I accuse him of no dishonesty, no crime, but of weakly yielding, and selfishly causing another to yield, to the temptation of the world"' (99). Fletcher's censorious remark is notably similar to Smiles's words of caution on yielding to the temptations of pleasure in favour of duty: 'self-control is only courage under another form... self-control is at the root of all the virtues. Let a man give the reins to his impulses and passions, and from that moment he yields up his moral freedom' (Smiles, 2009: 110).

When he defends the success of his new steam engine, later in the novel, John expresses pride and self-satisfaction in his victory over Luxmore. Phineas comments, 'It would not have been human nature, if a spice of harmless malice – even triumph – had not sparkled in John's eye' (342), but, while the malice is harmless, the narrative must nevertheless punish him for his sin of pride.

Wrongdoing, in these cases, consists merely of gratifying a desire of the ego: to be entertained by a play, in the first instance, and to prove oneself right in the second. These are passive sins rather than active ones, wrong action coming primarily from failing to exercise the self-control that resists temptation. Mrs Edmonstone might have been speaking to John Halifax rather than to Guy Morville when she comments on the regulation of impulse: "'It is pleasure involving no duty that should be given up, if we find it liable to lead us astray"' (*THOR*: 54). These novels reinforce the moral view that

the only valid, 'safe' pleasures are those that arise out of duty; any other kind is liable to be edged with moral danger.

John confides to Phineas that '"everybody keeps a private Apollyon"' (*JHG*: 82), his own devil that must be conquered if goodness is to triumph over evil. The observation more pertinently applies to Guy Morville, whose private Apollyon is the renowned Morville temper, which he struggles to control. Catherine Wells-Cole suggests that Guy's anger is used by Yonge 'to probe the fragility of an early nineteenth-century masculine identity still in the process of being forged to accommodate new social realities' (Wells-Cole, 2000: 71). The way he handles his anger is commensurate equally with modern masculinity theories and with very ancient ones. Michael Stocker shows how Aristotle believed that anger might be defined as 'a desire accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself' (Stocker, 1996: 175). Seidler suggests that 'men often learn to act out of anger... as a way of protecting themselves from softer and more threatening emotions like fear, sadness and vulnerability.' He argues that it is easier to express anger and irritation, particularly with those who are most familiar, 'as a way of holding less acceptable emotions in check' (Seidler, 1997: 45-6).

These definitions of masculine anger are clearly seen in Guy's actions at various points in the novel. Guy's anger tends to come from two sources: from himself, in his dissatisfaction with his own moral progress, and from Philip, who delights in provoking him. When Philip suggests that Guy's education has been 'a mere farce', Guy does not articulate his anger but at the same time does not succeed in controlling it. When he apologises soon afterwards, he responds to Mrs Edmonstone's question about his bleeding lip with, '"It is a trick of mine to bite my lip when I am vexed. It seems to help to keep down words."' Mrs Edmonstone soothes him with his partial victory – the

keeping down of words – but Guy knows that '"the feeling is the *thing*... I showed it plainly enough without speaking"' (*THOR*: 48). The true emotion beneath Guy's anger is a combination of shame and embarrassment about his poor education; he covers this feeling of inadequacy, which would otherwise make him vulnerable, with a characteristically masculine anger. He cannot trust himself to speak about the emotions he experiences so instead manifests the pain that Aristotle believes to underpin all anger by literally biting his lip and drawing blood, his anger injuring himself rather than others.

Guy's rivalry with Philip is founded on both men's feelings of inferiority: Guy sees that Philip has enjoyed a better education and is more intelligent, and Philip believes that Guy is more personable and charming. They both find it difficult to articulate feelings that would reveal their vulnerability, and instead they engage in mental and verbal jousting; but in true Christian spirit, Guy refuses to hit back, just as John Halifax refuses to return Brithwood's ungentlemanly blow. Philip is fighting a battle in which his opponent is unwilling to participate on equal terms. Only when given sufficient mental and physical space can Guy finally articulate the 'wild, furious tumult of rage and indignation against the maligner of his innocence;' he mutters to himself 'with teeth clenched,' 'absorbed in the plan of vengeance,' relishing the thought of the 'punishment' that Philip deserves. Guy's Apollyon, however, is quickly overcome by 'his true and better self'; 'the good angel so close to him for the twenty years of his life, had been driven aloof but for a moment' (*THOR*: 224-5). Whereas St John Rivers represses his feelings, Guy exchanges his unprofitable emotions for the more Christian ones of charity and forgiveness.

Philip cannot succeed in manipulating Guy; Charles astutely observes that Philip tries but fails to make the family '"the puppets of his malevolence,"' and with Guy Philip has 'no mastery, and could no more bend that spirit than a bar of steel' (351,

255). While Guy himself is reasonably malleable, his rigid sense of goodness is not: because of its unbending, steel-like quality, Guy is always willing to forgive Philip where others cannot. While he agrees that Philip has been harsh and unjust, he still defends his motive, arguing that Philip 'thought himself right' (353).

During the course of the novel, Philip is gradually chastened and humbled by Guy's goodness, and by the end of it, Philip has assumed his rightful but reluctant ownership of the ancestral home. Goodness ultimately makes Philip a miserable prisoner, and his keenest desires have become heavy burdens: 'this unhappy load of wealth had descended on him, he was bound to make it as beneficial as he could to others, and not seeking for rest or luxury, to stand in the gap where every good man and true was needed' (547). Philip must stand in the place where a good man ought to be; while he literally takes Guy's position as heir of Redclyffe, he cannot become the figure Guy would have been, nor does he feel able to attain Guy's level of personal goodness. Yonge revealed in a letter that it had been her intention to make Philip 'one of those perfect heroes whom nobody likes' (Coleridge, 1903: 175). In fact Philip is very far from perfect, and in his case, forgiveness increases his sense of shame and guilt rather than his goodness.

Heroism, Altruism and Morality

Moral masculinity is more optimistic in the novels of this chapter than those discussed in Chapter Three: whereas Benson and Rivers remain relatively joyless under the weight of their moral responsibilities, John and Guy generally find more fulfilment and happiness in their good lives. The seriousness of the moral message is equally rigorous in all four novels, however, and the underlying Christian message equally instructive, providing a solid foundation on which to build moral goodness. W R Sorley agrees that religion is not a substitute for morality, but argues that it 'deepens a man's

insight into what is good, and renders it support'. The Christian deity acts as a role model for good men: 'Where there is faith in a God who is also goodness, the virtues of personal and social life will remain, only more securely based: active goodness will be intensified and the aspiration after an ideal perfection confirmed' (Sorley,1920: 135-6).

Benson and Rivers have a professional, religious duty to act as social and cultural moral guardians, and Rivers confirms the degree of his own extreme aspiration; but John also has a duty of moral and social care to his employees once he has established his business, and Guy has a strong sense of moral duty to his ancestral heritage. The higher degree of optimism can perhaps more properly be accounted for in the intensified 'active goodness' in Yonge's and Craik's novels: John and Guy are strong and vigorous, and hopeful in their expansive, socially altruistic outlook. Benson and Rivers are 'sensitively inturned' (Wright, 1995: 77); though equally focused on a God who personifies goodness, John and Guy tend to be more outward-looking.

John and Guy, as a result of their combination of physical and spiritual vigour, are representative members of Thomas Carlyle's 'nation of heroes': 'There needs not a great soul to make a hero,' Carlyle told his audience; 'there needs a god-created soul which will be true to its origin; that will be a great soul!' (Carlyle: 1928: 375). Religious devotion tends to result in a degree of ruthlessness in St John Rivers, but the true pious spirit of Guy and John focuses on the holier origins of goodness in order to best direct its application. In Craik and Yonge, religion and romanticism, through a focus on chivalry and gentlemanliness, create a particular kind of hero. Georgina Battiscombe suggests that Yonge 'turned romanticism into a church-going creed,' making Guy 'at one and the same time very good, very respectable, and very romantic' (Battiscombe, 1943: 73). Going to church allows Guy to experience Christian forgiveness: 'he could feel more kindly towards Philip there' (*THOR*: 246). John carries with him the Greek Testament that belonged to his father, a literal and metaphysical link to his earthly

parentage and also to the spiritual parentage that he believes comes from God. Whereas muscular Christianity is 'thoroughly grounded in male experience and the male body' (Hall, 1994: 9-10), John and Guy maintain a more cerebral, spiritual relationship with their conscience and their own sense of goodness. They often reject the physical in order to concentrate on character: Guy, for instance, gives up boating and riding in favour of more intellectual pursuits, relinquishing corporeal fitness in favour of a more sedentary mental accomplishment.

This emerging alternative heroism, based on piety, character and self-improvement, allows John Halifax, as 'the hero of the people' (*JHG*: 196), to rely on his natural understanding of human nature in problem-solving, rather than on physical prowess. During the bread riots he talks the men into patience, literally stamping out the incendiary flame of their anger; when he is robbed by hungry workers towards the end of the novel, he is compassionate because he understands their motivations (118, 393). His rescue of Brithwood and March from the swelling River Severn is understated; he simply instructs the men to throw him their rope so that he can haul them in. Refusing money and gratitude, the best part of his day is when Phineas teaches him how to write his own name; it is the pen which has done 'good service', not the rope (70-72).

When Guy becomes 'the hero of the shipwreck', rescuing the sailors who fall victim to a violent storm near Redclyffe, he enables others to act courageously, thus expanding their capacity for moral masculinity. It would be easy to read this scene as a simple act of manly heroism, but Yonge clearly pictures Guy acting from a sense of moral aspiration rather than from the need to prove physical strength. When he first sees the ship in trouble, the verbs that describe his movement suggest strife rather than the excitement that characterises the physical feats of muscular Christianity: He 'ran' across the court, 'struggled' up the slope, 'hastened' to the cliff, and 'scrambling, leaping, swinging himself' reaches the relative safety of the beach. His first thought is 'Help! –

instant help!'; his second is to establish the amount of time available before high tide renders aid impossible. Whereas a hero in the muscular Christian tradition might have attempted a rescue immediately and alone, Guy pauses to reason and then calls on others to help him: 'by example' he demonstrates the necessary actions, and the men cooperate 'vigorously'. Yonge emphasises that the young men who assist him are 'brave men, who had wanted nothing but a leader', and Guy behaves throughout with calm authority 'like the captain of a man-of-war'. James Robinson points out the primary difference between his son Ben and Guy Morville, commenting that Ben would have 'done it for the lark, and to dare the rest; but Sir Guy does it with thought, and because it is right' (*THOR*: 302-6).

In a similar incident in *Bleak House* (1853), the gentle surgeon Allan Woodcourt is also the hero of a shipwreck, saving many lives, taking the lead, 'calm and brave' and never complaining; at the end of it all, the survivors 'fell down at his feet, when they got to the land, and blessed him'. Reading the report after the event, Esther feels that she too could have 'kneeled down then, so far away, and blessed him, in [her] rapture that he should be so truly good and brave' (Dickens, 1977: 442). A good act that is gallant and heroic inspires admiration in others as well as general gratitude that such men exist; the act of rescue appears brave and selfless, particularly when the rescuer is a dashing stranger and unknown to the victims. In these circumstances the rescuer seems to appear out of nowhere like an angel from heaven and can be granted almost divine status as he wields the power to save life.

Guy's attitude during his other heroic rescue in the novel, that of Amy when she is perilously close to falling from a precipice, is quite different: he stands still, his voice is low, his face pale; he can barely speak, except to utter '"Thank heaven, it is over!"' (*THOR*: 393). While Guy claims to have 'enjoyed' the adventure of the shipwreck, his relief is equally evident on that occasion: he is 'very glad when it was over' (309, 313).

Whereas muscular Christianity found strength and violence 'physically exhilarating, intellectually justified, and morally acceptable' (Rosen, 1994: 18), Guy and John feel only the intellectual and moral acceptability of intervention; neither of them takes pleasure in the violence of such occasions.

The altruistic part of heroism lies in its selfless attention to others. Foot refers to one of the paradoxes of virtue, where

> On the one hand great virtue is needed where it is particularly hard
> to act virtuously; yet on the other it could be argued that difficulty
> in acting virtuously shows that the agent is imperfect in virtue:
> according to Aristotle, to take pleasure in virtuous action is the
> mark of true virtue (Foot, 1978: 10).

She points out that many people believe the reverse to be more likely: 'it is for moral effort that moral praise is to be bestowed, and that in proportion as a man finds it easy to be virtuous so much the less is he to be admired for his good actions' (ibid.: 11). It is perhaps this issue that makes the 'perfect' heroes in women's fiction so problematic: Guy and John do show private dissatisfaction with imperfections in their characters, and their determination to be good results in sustained effort to improve. Some readers might prefer a more obvious struggle or conflict whose resolution results in moral rectitude; where the hero is perfectly moral to begin with, it would often appear that the conflict does not exist.

Guy, however, does face a challenging personal dilemma, concerning his uncle, who has incurred some debts as a result of gambling, and Miss Wellwood, whose charitable concerns he hopes to assist. He initially believes that he can help only one of them, and either option involves a slight sense of ignominy: 'It was sorely against his inclination that, instead of helping a charity, his savings should go to pay gaming debts, and his five-miles' walk was spent in self-debate on the right and wrong of the matter' (*THOR*: 217). His duty is to help his uncle, whereas his inclination is to help a charity; the latter will benefit more than one person, and he worries that the former will count as

'encouraging vice' (217). Here he clearly contends with deciding what is right, but Yonge creates a third way that allows him to help both parties. In allowing Guy to give thirty pounds of his own money to help his uncle, and to ask Mr Edmonstone for a loan of £1000, with which he intends secretly to help the charity, the narrative can further substantiate his goodness. The request for a loan allows the novel's other characters to falsely accuse Guy of moral and financial intemperance, at the end of which he is to be proved blameless.

When Ursula's father is ill, John at first offers Tod the use of his horse so that Tod can ride to fetch the doctor. John then decides to go himself, reasoning that it would be merely 'a common charity.' His reasons are sound and entirely logical: he knows the way in the dark and will cover the distance more quickly and efficiently; the mare will perform better with a rider she knows; he knows better than anyone else how to handle his favourite horse (*JHG*: 151). It seems natural that, as a good man, he would expect to be actively involved in helping to summon assistance. There is another, unconscious, effect of his desire for active service: given his feelings for Ursula, he inevitably feels pleasure as a result of her gratitude. Acts of benevolence often carry this subsidiary satisfaction for the benefactor, the consequence foreseen but not necessarily intended: the recipient of goodness can often feel grateful or obligated, regardless of the initial intention of the benefactor.

As in the case of Benson's moral decision, altruism can be seen as a double-edged sword of goodness, where selfless external good has an unseen, sometimes unconscious, internal benefit. In *Duty*, Smiles writes, 'Good actions give strength to ourselves, and inspire good actions in others' (Smiles, 1897: 45). Giving Tod the means to perform a good act, by lending him his horse, would arguably have been a more selfless example of goodness for John to have performed; he would have enabled Tod to be good as Smiles prescribes. However, Smiles also writes, 'Sympathy is one of the

great secrets of life. It overcomes evil, and strengthens good. It disarms resistance, melts the hardest heart, and develops the better part of human nature. It is one of the great truths on which Christianity is based' (259). It is partly sympathy for Ursula and her father that makes John want to do more than simply lend his horse; his moral motivation is complex in this scene, being a combination of sympathy, kindness and desire. The capacity for tenderness and compassion is most clear in the domestic roles of John and Guy; relational goodness in their immediate familial circles is indicative of their more general moral bearing, where public and private faces mirror and reinforce each other.

<u>Familial Sympathy</u>

Elizabeth Jenkins suggests that in *The Heir of Redclyffe* Charlotte Yonge 'made goodness exciting'; she translates 'the struggles and adventure of chivalric romance into a moral sphere and a domestic decor' (Jenkins, 1965: 6). The domestic setting reinforces the prevalent mid-nineteenth-century ideal that the home was an important centre of morality; Roberts calls the home 'the nucleus of national morality' (Roberts, 1829: 63). For John Halifax and his family, home is a utopia, their garden an Eden (*JHG*: 259, 239). John is completely comfortable in his domestic setting; he returns from work 'sickened to the soul by the hard battle he had to fight daily, hourly with the outside world' (258); working life can be hostile and full of difficulties, and home is a sanctuary in which he wins some respite from the strife beyond. As the leader of his own household, he is 'not only parent and head, but companion, guide and familiar friend' (364). Home and work are mutually compatible, the one providing refreshment of spirit after trial, and the other providing the means of doing good in the world.

Consistent conduct at home and at work was also popularly seen as evidence of a man's goodness. In 1830, William Cobbett wrote,

> To say of a man that he is fond of his family is, of itself, to say that, in private life at least, he is a good and trustworthy man; aye, and in

> public life too, pretty much; and it is naturally concluded that he
> who has been flagrantly wanting in feeling for his own flesh and
> blood will not be very sensitive towards the rest of mankind
> (Cobbett, 1980: 234).

The private face of a good man is likely to indicate his propensity for public goodness, according to Cobbett, though this union of domestic and professional personas is not altogether reconciled at mid-century. In *Shirley* (1849), Robert Moore tells Caroline Helstone, '"I find in myself, Lina, two natures; one for the world and business, and one for the home and leisure"' (Brontë, 2006: 242). Moore articulates the sense of conflict that moral masculinity experiences in trying to bridge the gap between domestic happiness and worldly strife, between being a good husband and father and being a successful man of the world.

John Tosh has written about the Victorian middle-class 'ideal' of home, which, as it is for John Halifax, became a refuge from work where domestic happiness and peace offered respite from worldly cares. In particular Tosh explores the companionate marriage, in which men sought wives with whom they could share their anxieties; he notes that 'what today we treat as an emotional need was then seen as a *moral* need,' and that this moral need became peculiarly intense during the Victorian period' (Tosh, 1999: 54, italics original). John and Guy both marry women whose companionship enables them to be better men.

Ursula has already encountered John during their childhood, when she offers him physical sustenance in the form of bread. The memory of this simple act of charity has stayed with him, and forms a character-building determination for moral strength: '"I never forgot that little girl. Many a time, when I was inclined to do wrong, she kept me right"' (*JHG*: 189).[9] Later, when he forms the intention to marry her, he foresees that Ursula will be '"a helpmeet, to walk with me in my daily life, to comfort me, strengthen me, make me pure and good"'. He adds, '"I could be a good man if I had her

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[9] See note 9 on page 14 of this thesis for the relationship between men and the idealised morality of girls.

for my wife"' (213). After John's death, at the very end of the novel, Ursula tells her

children, '"He was so good... Better than that, he made me good"' (497). As a wife,

Ursula exchanges the physical sustenance of childhood for moral comfort, and John

further develops her own goodness by his conduct as husband and father. By their own

admission, husband and wife make each other 'good' without being explicit about

exactly *how* they make each other good, nor what, to them, constitutes goodness. In this

case, good might be broadly interpreted as suggesting domestic happiness, mutual

support and emotional safety, as well as an elevated sense of morality for a man's

public and private personas. Smiles remarks, 'Even weak men display real public virtue,

because they had by their side a woman of noble character, who sustained them in their

career, and exercised a fortifying influence on their views of public duty' (Smiles, 2009:

215).

Similarly, Guy thinks it his duty to be good enough to deserve Amy. Feeling that

she is 'too far above him', his aspiration to marry her is a kind of trial: if he fails to be

'good enough' he finds it difficult to imagine that anyone else could make her happy

(*THOR*: 247). Once he and Amy are married, Philip no longer has the power to fret and

irritate him; rather, Guy and Amy become one united composite that can in turn irritate

and tease Philip (401). The companionate marriage encourages separate and combined

goodness that gives each partner moral responsibility as well as moral comfort. This in

turn equates to a happy and harmonious domestic environment in which to raise morally

sentient children, thus perpetuating goodness and allowing for its proliferation over

succeeding generations.

Fatherhood also provides the means for a man to demonstrate his goodness

through his ability to care and to nurture. Yonge leaves her readers in no doubt that Guy

Morville would have been an exemplary parent; he relates naturally to the innocence of

children, who 'never failed to be attracted, whether by the winning beauty of his smile,

or the sweetness of his voice in which he spoke to anything small or weak' (*THOR*, 218). He does not live to see the daughter who seals the fate of Philip; he does, however, enter into a kind of substitute parental relationship with his cousin, despite being younger. Throughout most of the novel Philip rebels against the moral authority of Guy, and yet Guy, like a parent, continues to care and worry about him.

Craik offers an atypical portrait of good fatherhood in what is primarily a fictional biography, where the plot is often secondary to the recounting of John's actions as a good man. Despite the absence of a historical or fictional 'ideal typology of fatherhood' (Sanders, 2009: 27), the novel can consistently claim for him, in practical terms, the status of good father. He is described as 'what all fathers should be – the truest representative here on earth of that father in heaven, who is at once justice, wisdom and perfect love' (*JHG*: 280).[10]

When his children fall ill with smallpox, John nurses them himself: 'after being out all day, night after night he would sit up watching by and nursing each little fretful sufferer, patient as a woman, and pleasant as a child-playmate' (320). It would be tempting to read the phrases 'patient as a woman... pleasant as a child' as evidence that John becomes feminised or infantilised by his domestic environment. Historical accounts, however, reinforce the role of father as carer and nurturer: Davidoff and Hall note that most men in the nineteenth century 'revelled' in their role as fathers and were particularly concerned whenever their children were ill. 'Some fathers,' they write, 'were actively involved with nursing, including sitting up at nights with the patient' (Davidoff and Hall, 1994: 330).

Craik is concerned with goodness itself in this text, rather than with male and female roles. She writes in *A Woman's Thoughts about Women*,

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[10] See Chapter One, p 56: Mr Fairchild also stands in place of God, but emphasises obedience rather than the 'perfect love' that characterises John Halifax's place at the head of the family.

each sex is composed of individuals, differing in character almost as much from one another as from the opposite sex. For do we not continually find womanish men and masculine women? And some of the finest types of character we have known among both sexes, are they not often those who combine the qualities of both? *Therefore, there must be somewhere a standard of abstract right, including manhood and womanhood, and yet superior to either* (Craik, 1993: 73; my italics).

Womanish men and masculine women in this case have little to do with cultural expectations according to gender and more to do with the basic compassion of humanity. Craik's conception of 'a standard of abstract right' attempts to transcend gender assumptions, making it possible for a man to be simultaneously gentle, manly and good.

In the early 1850s, John Henry Newman defined the gentleman as 'tender', 'gentle', 'merciful', and 'patient, forbearing'. The true gentleman tolerates the beliefs of others with compassion and understanding, showing 'effeminacy of feeling' (Newman, 1982: 159-60). When Phineas describes himself as 'feeble and womanish,' he means that he cannot be as physically active as most men, like Thurstan Benson in *Ruth*. Obliged by his disability to be passive and dependent, he can do little more than observe his friend, noticing that John displays many qualities that might be attributed to either sex. He describes the quality of tenderness, 'that rare thing' with which John treats him: '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' (*JHG*: 79, 53). Tenderness is here a specifically masculine quality that is less often found in women, and John's relationship with Phineas is emotionally intimate with some moments that might strike the modern reader as improbable. Phineas spends a great deal of time observing his friend and notes that John's mouth is 'flexible', 'sensitive', and 'infinitely sweet' (69).

John Tosh argues that the Victorians' idea of masculinity was 'something which developed over an extended period'; he also notes that intense friendships between

young men were common (Tosh, 1999: 103-109). The *Athenaeum* remarks that some aspects of the friendship between John and Phineas are ill-observed and suggests that the portrait 'requires more knowledge' in order for Craik to have handled it more accurately ('New Novels', 1856: 520). Craik seems to use the friendship between Phineas and John to illustrate John's character and also to challenge some ideas about what is 'masculine' and what is simply 'good'. Their relationship is mutually beneficial; Phineas argues, 'He gave me strength, mentally and physically. He was life and health to me,' but also, 'my weakness gave him strength' (*JHG*: 124, 183). Taking care of Phineas gives John some practical experience that will be useful when he becomes a husband and a father. Both boys, and Guy Morville too, have had a somewhat solitary, introspective childhood and both are able to develop a more secure sense of identity as a result of their close relationships with other men. Moreover, the beneficial friendship between boys is discussed in Chapter One, where a good role model is an important asset that prevents a young man's falling into bad company.

Guy Morville's relationship with Charles is similar in many ways. Charles and Phineas are both physically weak, both invalids who need care from others; Charles offers a friendship that is passive and non-threatening. Guy is as attentive to Charles as John is to Phineas, and Charles discovers a way of living vicariously, reassuring Guy, '"I like nothing better than to hear of your ridings, and shootings, and boatings. It is a sort of life"'. He adds that '"You will be somebody"' (*THOR*: 91), showing that his natural tendency has in the past been towards self-pity and languor; he sees little point in stretching his boundaries, but is gradually encouraged by Guy to become the best he can be. Shortly before Guy's wedding, Charles tells him, '"You have made a new man of me"' (376).

When Philip is dangerously ill, Guy nurses him in the way that a father would care for his own child: 'Still Guy persevered indefatigably, sitting up with him every

night, and showing himself an invaluable nurse, with his tender hands, his modulated voice, quick eye and quiet activity. His whole soul was engrossed; he never appeared to think of himself, or to be sensible of fatigue' (414). The fact that, in the end, Philip succeeds Guy as his true heir suggests that this has been all along a relationship not of cousins but of surrogate parent and child.

Holly Furneaux suggests in her work on Dickens that this preoccupation with the more demonstrably caring aspect between male characters in fiction reflects a broader Victorian concern with other forms of masculinity still under development (Furneaux, 2009: 177). She notes that Dickens portrays nurturing masculinity in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), but whereas Yonge allows Guy Morville to die, Dickens allows Mark Tapley to survive, Tapley's effect on Martin being one of 'moral regeneration' (ibid.: 228). In her recent study of Yonge's male characters, Susan Walton notes that boys learned to be men initially from the female relatives who surrounded them during their early childhood at home. Yonge's stories, she suggests, are 'rehearsal rooms for productions of patriotic English men' (Walton, 2010: 4), where men practise the skills learned from female relatives in expressions of masculine, familial tenderness. John Halifax and Guy Morville thus represent tentative explorations of an alternative kind of masculinity that is equally capable of courage and compassion.

Perhaps as a result of their goodness, both men are given the ultimate confirmation of their capacity for sacrifice and redemption in their respective deaths. Pat Jalland points out that the fabled good death 'required a rare combination of good luck, convenient illness, and pious character', adding that it was achieved more often in Evangelical tracts than in family life (Jalland, 1996: 38). Ruth contracts her fatal illness from Bellingham and, because of her sacrifice, is able to die penitent and forgiven. Similarly, Guy Morville contracts his illness as a result of nursing Philip, apparently sacrificing his own health for that of his cousin. Having been unconscious and feverish

for many days, he attains supreme peace and clarity of mind before dying beatifically as a Christ-like sacrificial figure (*THOR*: 467-8). While he is alive, his battle to overcome his temper draws an inevitable parallel with Christ's temptation in the wilderness; after his death, he assumes a more holy and angelic status in the novel. His funeral, with its snowy mountains, clouds and mist and Amy's white dress, has 'the emblematic whiteness of a child's funeral' (*THOR*: 475), emphasising his innocence and purity. John Halifax also contracts the 'convenient illness' that Jalland describes, showing signs of what appears to be a form of angina towards the end of the novel. John is by this point in his fifties and therefore not tragically young, and his 'good death', though sudden, is less shocking than Guy's. Immediately before his death, John pronounces himself perfectly satisfied with his life, professing, "'I have had a happy life, thank God; ay, and what few men can say, it has been the very sort of happiness I myself would have chosen'" (*JHG*: 494).

In a letter of 1850, Yonge had written that she intended Guy's tragic death and Philip's remorse to stand as 'a very good instance of what it is to be too good for this world, and what to be just good enough for it' (Coleridge, 1903: 172). Being 'too good for this world' confers on John and Guy a sense of immortality; survived by their respective next of kin, their lives, good deeds and sense of morality are carried forward into the next generation. The spirits of both men survive their physical death in their respective novels: Yonge's novel continues for another hundred pages or so without its hero, with the spirit of Guy present throughout. From beyond the grave 'Guy had a fast hold on their hearts' (*THOR*: 475); the rooms and passages continue to be 'haunted by Guy's hushed step and voice' (483). His death brings Charles and Philip together in a way that would scarcely have been possible had he lived, and Philip strives more than ever to be good because of him. John's sons will inevitably continue their father's good work, and their own inherited goodness will continue to influence future generations.

Iris Murdoch writes of the connection between death, chance and transience, and of the relationship between death and goodness: 'The acceptance of death is an acceptance of our own nothingness, which is an automatic spur to our concern with what is not ourselves'. Death equates to seeing the unself, or seeing the self as nothing, and reinforces the essential humility of the good man. She argues, 'a genuine sense of mortality enables us to see virtue as the only thing of worth' (Murdoch, 1970: 104, 99). In dying, John and Guy teach others to live, and their goodness extends beyond the boundaries of their own separate lives; by dying and becoming nothing, they reinforce the value of virtue. St John Rivers benefits many by his missionary work, and his death is effectively that of a sacrifice in the cause of goodness; his goodness, however, dies with him as he is not succeeded by an heir. Guy Morville and John Halifax continue to influence others beyond their earthly existence, handing on the torch of goodness to successive generations.

Conclusion

Karen Bourrier writes that 'domestic hero-worship' characterises Charlotte Yonge's novels, where heroism is embodied in 'tenderness and piety' (Bourrier, 2009: 122-3). Where Rivers is pious and Benson is tender, Guy Morville and John Halifax successfully merge both qualities into a more rounded portrait of moral masculinity. One of the problems with the domestic hero is, as Hutton claimed in 1858, that 'the didactic or other purpose is wholly embedded in the tale' (Hutton, 1858: 469). Henry James lamented, 'There is something almost awful in the thought of a writer undertaking to give a detailed picture of the actions of a perfectly virtuous being' (James, 1968: 167). He suggests that women are writing primarily to instruct, and that

in creating an impossibly perfect hero they sacrifice the realism that readers of the novel had come to expect. Craik would agree that good fiction is, essentially, didactic. In her second novel, *Olive* (1850), she writes,

> Yet what is a novel, or, rather, what is it that a novel ought to be?
> The attempt of one earnest mind to show unto many what humanity
> is – ay, and more, what humanity might become; to depict what is
> true in essence through imaginary forms; to teach, to counsel, and
> warn, by means of the silent transcript of human life... Authors,
> who feel the solemnity of their calling, cannot suppress the truth
> that is within them (Craik, 1996: 224).

By showing 'what humanity might become', she does not portray the improbably faultless, but rather, like Smiles, offers an aspirational pattern appealing not to 'models of perfection but seekers after improvement' (Wells-Cole, 2000: 71). Charles Kingsley admired Craik's novel for its ability to inspire good conduct, recommending it as 'a beautiful book... which ought to do any young man good to read it, and then try to be, like John Halifax, a gentleman' (Kingsley, 1880: 251).

John Halifax and Guy Morville both repeatedly refute and deny their own goodness; Guy protests against perfect fictional heroes when he disapproves of Sir Charles Grandison, asking '"How could anyone have any sympathy with such a piece of self-satisfaction?"' (*THOR*: 30). Both men struggle with imperfections and inconsistencies in their characters; both wrestle with their personal demons, overcoming weakness and temptation in the name of Christian love and charity. John and Guy do not face the same kinds of moral dilemma as Benson, and they do not share the emotional coldness of Rivers, but all four novels are equally serious in their treatment of moral issues. John sees work as the primary means of doing good in the world; Guy tries to atone for the sins of his forebears by the development of character and the exercise of justice. Both men practise the rigorous self-help that was later outlined by Smiles.

Rivers is described as being hewn from the same material as nature's heroes (*JE*: 335) but is clearly out of place in the domestic setting and must self-exile in order to carry out his ambitions. The moral safety of the companionate marriage is sharply contrasted with Rivers's desire for the marriage of convenience. Neither Rivers nor Benson is the respective hero of the novel in which they appear, so it is perhaps unreasonable to compare their narrative purpose directly with that of John or Guy; in terms of character alone, however, there are some clear differences. Where Benson and Rivers are poor, John and Guy are rich and successful; their movement through the novels is progressive, each moving upwards and outwards through a gentle masculinity that expresses itself through a philanthropic and humanitarian spirit. Their qualities of goodness – tenderness, compassion, fairness, moral courage, honesty and integrity – are not the exclusive property of female characters. John and Guy both consistently strive to overcome the occasional temptation to gratify personal desire, instead aiming to improve the lives of others; thus they achieve a sense of connection with others as well as a sense of masculine identity that does not glorify aggression.

Foot paraphrases Aristotle when she writes that 'virtues are about what is difficult for men' (Foot, 1978: 8). Her appraisal of the reasons for success and failure applies particularly to the four mid-nineteenth-century novels discussed here: 'sometimes one man succeeds where another fails not because there is some specific difference in their previous conduct, but rather *because his heart lies in a different place*; and the disposition of the heart is part of virtue' (ibid.: 4; my italics). While aspiration, self-scrutiny and self-control are all important in creating awareness of the need for good action, ultimately it is the heart that leads a man in his good conduct. This is markedly similar to Adam Smith's vision of 'the best head joined to the best heart... the most perfect wisdom combined with the most perfect virtue' (Smith, 2009: 255),[11]

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[11] See Chapter Two, p. 78.

and is developed further in the next chapter. George Eliot's 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda* expands the small domestic circles of the mid-nineteenth-century novel in a more interrogative exploration of masculine identity and goodness.

Chapter Five

'A Man Waiting to Happen': George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

*We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the
world as an udder to feed our supreme selves.*[1]

The last two chapters discussed the actions of male characters in four mid-nineteenth-century novels: in *Jane Eyre* and *Ruth*, morality derives principally from right action and will; in *John Halifax, Gentleman* and *The Heir of Redclyffe*, right action and will combine with socio-cultural factors such as self-help and the revival of interest in chivalry. The subjective nature of the word 'good', taken in its moral sense, makes evaluating good actions notoriously problematic:

> One man may say that a thing is good because of some fact about it,
> and another may refuse to take that fact as any evidence at all, for
> nothing is laid down in the meaning of "good" which connects it
> with one piece of "evidence" rather than another (Foot, 1978: 111).

Thus the 'evidence' of a man's goodness cannot be completely reliable as admissible proof that he is a good man. It is impossible for Thurstan Benson, for instance, to know for certain that lying can ever be morally right. Philip's recovery from the illness that kills Guy Morville can be attributed to constitution and medical care as well as to Guy's nursing. Iris Murdoch's statement that 'moral choice is often a mysterious matter' (Murdoch, 1970: 53) reinforces the transcendent nature of goodness, and the inadequacy of logical thought alone in comprehending its full capability. In this chapter I explore George Eliot's intellectual fascination with humanist morality taking into account Murdoch's view of the world as 'aimless, chancy, and huge' (ibid.: 100).

When the first volume of Eliot's final novel, *Daniel Deronda*, appeared in February 1876, her publisher, John Blackwood, was entranced from the beginning. He thought it 'one of the most remarkable Books that ever was produced by man or woman'

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[1] George Eliot,1996b. *Middlemarch* (1872), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 198.

and tells Eliot, 'You tell the tale of Deronda's goodness... so straightly and so simply that no feeling of doubt or improbability arises' (Haight, 1956 [VI]: 195, 145). While Blackwood was one of many to read it as a novel about a good man, successive critics have addressed various problems with the novel: Henry James was one of the first of many to read it as a divided text that seemed to separate itself into a Jewish part and a domestic narrative, and other critics have disagreed with Blackwood in finding Deronda himself to be highly improbable.

The novel is equally, however, about Gwendolen Harleth and Mirah Lapidoth, and there is a natural tendency for readers to engage more directly with the object of a good man's attention than they do with the good man himself. Thus, critical attention is focused much more on Jane Eyre and Ruth than on St John Rivers and Thurstan Benson, on Dorothea and Gwendolen rather than on Ladislaw and Deronda, for example.

While the assumption tends to be that women's novels are primarily about women, they are also inevitably about men, and they are usually about morality. The good man in women's fiction is often unattractively passive compared with less moral characters; his narrative function tends towards acting as a catalyst, enabling moral growth in others as a result of his own outwardly directed goodness. The fictional villain is generally more active than the good man: as a rule he is decisive where the good man wavers, and reckless where the good man is careful. As Anne Naman observes, 'Although perhaps one prefers Deronda's moral nature, as a reader of a novel one prefers to be involved with Grandcourt' (Naman, 1980: 198). Blanche Ingram likewise is attracted to the kind of man who 'is nothing without a spice of the devil in him' (*JE*: 152).

Good men in novels must tread a fine line between being so perfect that the reader rejects him as a prig, and sufficiently flawed that his goodness can eventually triumph. Eliot shows her own understanding of this issue when she has Fred Vincy

assure Mary Garth, '"Women don't love men for their goodness"' (*M*: 130).[2] This provocative remark is part of a spirited badinage between the characters and thus appears here slightly out of context; but it is an intriguing line nevertheless as it conceals rather more than it tells. It does not explain what, in Fred's view, women *do* love men for, nor does it suggest what women *do* feel for men's goodness. Moreover, the meaning of the sentence depends entirely on its intonation and where the stress is placed. '*Women* don't love men for their goodness' implies that men do; 'Women don't *love* men for their goodness' implies that they feel something else for men's goodness; 'Women don't love *men* for their goodness' implies that it is more a woman's place to be good; and 'Women don't love men for their *goodness'* implies that there are more important qualities in men.

Eliot's troubled relationship with religion and Christian morality has been well-documented. Her personal views on morality and its manifestation in fiction and society, however, are still an under-researched area; while she is often seen as a moralistic writer, her credentials as a moral philosopher still tend to be overlooked. As early as 1879, W. H. Mallock referred to Eliot as a 'prophetess of humanity' (Carroll, 1971: 458), though Eliot herself protested, 'I have always exercised a severe watch against anything that could be called preaching' (Haight, 1956 [V]: 459). Bernard Paris's substantial study *Experiments in Life* (1965), in which Eliot's quest for values is examined, remains the authoritative work in this area; the more recent *Modernising George Eliot* (K. M. Newton, 2011) begins to illustrate the extent of Eliot's cultural commentary and discusses, among other things, Eliot's claims to moral philosophy. Newton also considers Eliot's work in modernist, feminist and post-colonialist contexts and is therefore not as sustained as Paris in its approach to her status as a moral writer. Newton's article 'George Eliot and the Ethical' suggests that Eliot should be viewed as

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[2] I use the following abbreviations for Eliot's fiction in this chapter: *SCL: Scenes of Clerical Life; MF: The Mill on the Floss; AB: Adam Bede; M: Middlemarch; DD: Daniel Deronda.*

an ethical writer rather than 'the stern moralist' that many generations of critics have often assumed her to be. The problem, he writes, with using the word 'morality' when discussing Eliot is that it is easy to see her as having a moral agenda, 'judging characters and actions in relation to a preconceived notion of what is morally right and what is morally wrong' (Newton, 2013: 298). He goes on to demonstrate that the moral predicaments she often presents in her fiction are actually ethical problems in which her characters must consciously decide on the right course of action, taking into account the projected effects of their actions on others.

Although rare for a philosopher to be at the same time a novelist, it is not unprecedented: Iris Murdoch, herself clearly influenced by Eliot, is known as both a writer of fiction and as the respected author of non-fiction works on morality and metaphysics. Suzy Anger has maintained that Eliot is a novelist rather than a philosopher; although various philosophical questions inform her writing, she does not always conform to a particular system: 'She draws from various traditions, and comes up with a position that is neither systematic nor particularly consistent' (Anger, 2001: 81). While Eliot is not overtly didactic in her fiction, her novels embody a deep intellectual engagement with and perceptive understanding of the effects of morality on human society.

Susan Hill demonstrates the significance of Eliot's work as a translator prior to her career as a writer of fiction, and argues that the act of translation 'helped George Eliot create a methodological framework within which to articulate the moral worldview of her novels' (Hill, 1997: 635-6). In particular, Eliot's translation of Feuerbach's provocative *The Essence of Christianity* in 1854 enabled her to appreciate the difference between the literal transcription of individual words and the more complex transliteration of equivalent meaning: 'translation is considered to be a complex interpretive act in which the translator is not only transforming words but mediating

cultural values as well' (Hill, 1997: 637). Hill argues that this combination of faithful lexical accuracy and creative cultural interpretation are crucial aspects in transforming a text from one language to another. Moreover, she argues that these are authorial techniques that Eliot carries into her fiction; her constructions of the moral worlds that are negotiated by her characters are also cultural translations of what she encounters in contemporary human society. Eliot's reference to 'men of maxims' in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) makes it clear that morality does not merely reside in words alone, but must also include patience, discrimination, impartiality and insight (*MF*: 628).

Eliot found in Feuerbach a system of belief that was very like her own. Feuerbach's primary objection to religious doctrine is that it is fundamentally illogical: if God is entirely good and man entirely corrupt and wicked, then how can man, in his unarguable imperfection, perceive the good and holy to be completely good and holy? His logical solution is that 'Either goodness does not exist at all for man, or, if it does exist, therein is revealed to the individual man the holiness and goodness of human nature' (Feuerbach, 1957: 28). True goodness, he finds, is to be sought not in the abstract concept of God, but in humanity itself. 'Religion,' he writes, 'is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself' (33). Religion causes unequivocal dissociation from what is eminently good and causes man to lose sight of his own moral integrity because man makes God his external object, thus denying himself the possibility of internal, integral goodness. Furthermore, it can be positively dangerous for the reason that virtually anything can be justified in the name of religion, however morally unsound or inconsistent it might seem (274). Paris suggests that Eliot's belief in society rather than God is what defines her essential understanding of a moral order, and that she attempts to combine science with religion in bringing together realism and morality (Paris, 1965: 4-5).

Eliot's humanism was reflected in her novels as a desire to paint things as they are, as a 'translation' of real life into fiction and where the power to forgive comes ultimately not from God but from mankind itself. In *Adam Bede* (1859), she confronts the reader with the truth that

> These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are: you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions; and it is these people – amongst whom your life is passed – that it is needful you should tolerate, pity, and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people, whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire – for whom you should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience (*AB*: 176).

These are the people who are 'chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your outspoken, brave justice' (ibid.: 176). In Eliot's fiction, goodness is, as Mallock pointed out, 'Godless in its literal sense, and divested of all vindictive meaning... her writings... are without God, not against Him' (Carroll, 1971: 454). 'Ugly, stupid, inconsistent people' are just as capable of goodness as beautiful, intelligent, reliable people, and Eliot shows in her fiction that the reverse is equally true: anyone is capable of moral ambiguity, regardless of how cultured or refined they might appear.

In her final novel Eliot creates a handsome, refined hero who, despite Fred Vincy's misgivings, *is* loved for his goodness by other characters in the book, and who, throughout the novel, personifies understated goodness. Deronda has been described as a 'waxwork hero' (Goldberg, 1980: 3) and 'unnaturally idealised' (McCarron, 1980: 71), somewhat evocative of Sir Charles Grandison; Ulrich Knoepflmacher finds that the novel as a whole is 'exhortatory and rigidly moralistic' (Knoepflmacher, 1965: 116). In her biography of George Eliot, Kathryn Hughes describes Daniel Deronda as 'a man waiting to happen'; she identifies him as 'enigmatic' and 'vague', denying him the charm of Ladislaw or Lydgate (Hughes, 1999: 451-2). This sense of mystery and stasis, of waiting to become something, is concordant with Eliot's own vision of what latent

goodness is: 'Goodness is a large, often prospective word; like harvest, which at one stage when we talk of it lies all underground with an indeterminate future: is the germ prospering in the darkness?' (*DD*: 68). Goodness does not necessarily announce itself as a heroic, chivalrous dynamism but waits quietly in the dark, silently and slowly becoming. There is something not quite guaranteed about it; Eliot's adjective 'prospective' suggests that goodness must be actively sought, and the implied association with prospecting for gold suggests something of immense value.

Hidden History and the Unself

The Evangelical writers of the early nineteenth century believed that man was utterly corrupt and incapable of independent, autonomous moral redemption. By the 1870s, Eliot's view that man was not so much born in corruption as in 'moral stupidity' seemed much more reasonable, allowing for goodness as a genuine possibility and available to any who might seek it. Every man, she argues, has the potential to be good, just as every seed has the potential to grow into a plant. Her analogy with harvest is one of farming and cultivation, of management rather than natural growth. Whether the seed germinates will depend on the quality of the soil, the environmental climate and the attention of the farmer; thus, nurture rather than nature will determine the success of the crop. Attentive parenting is often, therefore, a significant factor in producing a good child. While Mirah's father is known to be a scoundrel, Mrs Meyrick assumes that her mother must have been good and asks rhetorically, '"Where did the child get her goodness from? Wheaten flour has to be accounted for"' (*DD*: 223). Goodness does not magically appear from nowhere but must be traced to a source that has the potential to bear fruit. Eliot believes that it is important to know one's own history in order to be good; Kathryn Hughes remarks, 'In the terms of Eliot's moral world... a man who does not know where he comes from is unable to lead a morally integrated life' (Hughes,

1999: 451). Moral consistency comes from understanding one's roots, which in turn allows for forging the boundaries of self and identity and the ability to be secure in the difference between self and others.

Many of the good men of this study are insecure in their parental or hereditary relationships. Darcy and Knightley, although secure in their own identity, no longer have parents living; Edmund Bertram's father is irascible and volatile while his mother is physically and morally feeble. St John Rivers' parents are both dead, as are Thurstan Benson's; John Halifax is an orphan who knows only that his late father was a gentleman; Guy Morville's parents are tragically dead and his surrogate parent, a grandfather, dies at the beginning of the novel. Daniel Deronda is similarly insecure about his origins. It is widely assumed in the novel that he is the illegitimate son of his guardian, Sir Hugo Mallinger; indeed, other characters in the novel seem to know more of his mother than he does: Mrs Davilow has gleaned – quite correctly, as is later revealed – through some gossip that Deronda's mother was 'some foreigner of high rank' (*DD*: 333). Sir Hugo has raised his ward in privileged, traditional circumstances and is himself a morally upright figure, within certain parameters and taking some assumptions about the traditional gentleman into account.

Whereas Sir Hugo intends to raise his ward as 'an English gentleman', Deronda intuits that he is something other than English and merely wants to be 'a gentleman' (172). Given that the novel is set in the mid-1860s (when Deronda is in his mid-twenties and his guardian is forty-five), Sir Hugo is a product of post-Regency, late Georgian values. He is liberal, chivalrous, and progressive in his political beliefs, but he respects propriety rather than truth and for this reason ensures Deronda's ignorance about his parentage. The society in which Deronda grows up is one in which any suggestion of misconduct is concealed for the sake of decorum: the illegitimate sons of the priests in Deronda's history book must be disguised under the word nephew; immorality is

covered up under a veneer of respectability. About his own history Deronda is, as a boy, ambivalent: only if there is nothing shameful about it does he want to know the truth.

Deronda's lack of knowledge about his origins, and his consequent humility, are important factors in the creation of his moral awareness. His goodness comes partly from his initial sense of himself as nothingness, and he shares the status of Murdoch's historical good men, about whom information is 'scanty and vague' (Murdoch, 1970: 52). Goodness, for Murdoch, is not so much about the suppression of self, but rather it is connected with the attempt to see the unself: 'The humble man, because he sees himself as nothing, can see others as they are. He sees the pointlessness of virtue and its unique value and the endless extent of its demand' (ibid.: 103-4). St John Rivers fails to 'see the unself' because he retains too tenacious an attachment to his own ambitious desires and needs. Guy Morville succeeds in 'seeing the unself' when he sacrifices his health, and ultimately his life, in the service of Philip.

Deronda is described by Grandcourt as '"Nothing of any consequence"' (329). Mrs Davilow says he is '"under some disadvantage... He does not inherit the property, and he is not of any consequence in the world"' (334). They independently use the same phrase to describe Deronda and his worldly status to manipulate Gwendolen's opinion of him and to suggest that he is not worthy of her attention. The disadvantage Mrs Davilow suggests is an allusion to his assumed illegitimacy, which Gwendolen can recognise as a mere accident: 'with only a little difference in events he might have been as important as Grandcourt, nay... might have held the very estates which Grandcourt was to have' (335). Deronda himself understands that 'pedigree and land belong to a fine match' but at the same time asserts, '"I am not sure that I want to be an ancestor"' (163). While it is true that he is troubled by his ignorance of his own origins, he is reasonably content to be of no consequence as long as he can be of service to others. He values truth and goodness over material wealth and is unperturbed by his own lack of status; his

commitment to the virtuous unself is such that his own identity suffers. When Deronda is taken to Mordecai's Philosophy Club, he introduces himself, '"I am unknown, but not in any sense great"' (522). Only when he eventually meets his mother does he realise that he has constantly been searching for his origins in order to identify himself, and has been seeking reflections of himself in others.

Perhaps because of his ignorance about his origins, Deronda has a tendency to be seen as all things to all men; the boundaries of his own identity are fluid and protean, and it is often difficult to get a sense of who he really is. To his hapless friend Hans Meyrick he is a steady, grounding influence; to Mordecai he is an otherworldly soul-mate; to Gwendolen he is priest and confessor; to Mirah he is saviour and protector. Barbara Hardy describes Deronda as 'a static and symbolic construction rather than a dramatic character' (Hardy, 1959: 109); his function as a moral barometer in the novel is always very clear. As early as 1876, when the novel was first published, a reviewer complained that Deronda is missing a sense of vitality; 'some want of spontaneity and natural freedom of affection in his relation to the other surroundings of his life' is apparent. His uncertainty about his origins has given him 'a dreary moral isolation' ('Daniel Deronda,' 1876: 488-9).

However, Eliot's epigraph to the first chapter, 'Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning,' makes it clear that beginnings are, at best, arbitrary and illusory demarcations of time – little more than 'make-believe.' Beginnings are abstract concepts rather than tangible ones, and from the very start of the novel she introduces Deronda's own non-existent starting point; preoccupied with his past, he is unable to imagine his future. Whereas most young men with an 'entailed disadvantage' might become embittered by their material misfortune, Deronda sees his own 'frustrated claim' as just one of many others, and 'the inexorable sorrow takes the form of fellowship and makes the imagination tender... it had given a bias to his conscience, a sympathy with

certain ills' which marks him as different from many other young men of his age and circumstances (*DD*: 175). He wants simultaneously to be an Englishman and '"to understand other points of view"' (183), and it is perhaps his ability to empathise, to feel sympathy and pity for other characters in the novel that most obviously demonstrates the extent and quality of his goodness. St John Rivers is apparently unable to empathise to any great extent, and this can make his acts of goodness seem superficially lacking in integrity.

The structure of the novel also reflects Deronda's hidden history. Beginning *in medias res*, the events as they appear in the novel are not chronological in terms of the plot; the gaps are filled in only later and the reader must wait to understand the significance of the relationships that Eliot establishes in the opening chapters. In chronological time, Deronda rescues Mirah before he ever sets eyes on Gwendolen, and he has by that point become emotionally attached to Mirah. He is already, at the beginning of the novel, unavailable to Gwendolen and unable to respond to her tacit interest in him. The reader realises this retrospectively and thus experiences the same kind of stasis and mystery as Deronda himself when he first encounters Mirah: 'he must wait to know more' (206). Bernard Paris comments on the effect of this withholding of narrative information:

> The novel as a whole can be viewed as an elaboration of the web of
> relations which forms the context of the incidents and states of
> mind depicted in the first two chapters. The significance of these
> chapters is gradually unfolded as they are encompassed with a past
> and a future which give them meaning (Paris, 1965: 39).

It is the connection of past and future and the construction of meaning that make Deronda's goodness somehow more far-reaching than that of John Halifax or Guy Morville, Thurstan Benson or St John Rivers: while he performs similar acts of rescue and sacrifice, the effects of his actions remain closely connected with his own past and future.

Bernard Paris describes Deronda as Eliot's 'disinherited intellectual,' a 'superior moral being' who synthesises his inner and outer experience of life into 'an ardent sympathy for fellow sufferers' (Paris, 1965: 204-5). Many of the good men in this study have experienced this sympathy and have rescued others, acting as heroic or angelic figures and saving or preserving life. Murdoch's insistence on goodness coming from the ability to see the unself renders an act of goodness transcendental because it lacks awareness of desire or attachment. Altruism, for Eliot and her contemporaries, combines selflessness with a humanist sense of social duty.

Eliot's belief in the possibility of altruism was based on her own knowledge of Auguste Comte's work and that of G. H. Lewes. Comte writes that 'each man finds in his family circle real *guardian angels*, at once the ministers and representatives of Humanity' (Comte, 1858: 120; italics original); he believes, like Feuerbach, that goodness in its best and truest form comes not from God but from other people, and primarily from those who are closest to us. Altruism is the means by which happiness and duty coincide, and the practice of 'living for others' represents his ideal for a better society. The difficulty, for most people, is in subduing the naturally selfish impulse that is encouraged by nineteenth-century industrial capitalist society:

> There is no doubt but that the fine definition of virtue given by a moralist of the eighteenth century, as *an effort over oneself in favour of others*, will always remain applicable. We are so imperfect by nature that we shall always need a real *effort* to subordinate our personal to our social tendencies. The conditions under which we live are a constant stimulus to our selfishness (Comte, 1858: 311, italics original).

Lewes agrees that while altruism itself is a desirable outcome for society in general, the problem of inherent selfishness represents a significant difficulty for its achievement:

> A just equilibrium of [Egoism and Altruism] is not possible. Personality usually predominates, even in man; this preponderance

is in fact essential to the development of each individual existence, and arises from the instinct of self-preservation; but is modified by the opposite sentiment, in proportion as each learns to live for others. Hence results the great social problem: the subjection, as far as possible, of Personality to Sociality, by referring everything to Humanity as a whole. The social state tends towards this result, developing the weaker, and restraining the more energetic instinct. This permanent conflict between Personality and Society is therefore to be regarded as the natural basis of a true general theory of Emotional life (Lewes, 1853b: 217-8).

Lewes argues that egoism is both natural and necessary for individuals, yet it is also a social duty to develop a sense of sympathy for and awareness of the needs of others, despite the inevitable conflict between altruism and egoism. His fundamental belief is that men must fight their selfish impulses and learn to be good.

By contrast, Darwinism suggested that not only was there no moral order or purpose in the world, but that there was arguably little reason to be good. Indeed, it could even be argued that Darwin changed the meaning of the word 'good' in his treatise on natural selection: 'It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good' (Darwin, 1864: 80). Here 'good' and 'bad' carry no moral weight at all and merely indicate fitness for purpose in a natural order. Moreover, the scrutinising force of judgement is now no longer God but natural selection itself. Darwin's world, in which one species takes advantage of and profits by another, is one in which each species 'acts solely by and for the good of each' (ibid.: 179). K. M. Newton explores Eliot's interest in contemporary thinking on Darwin through her more egotistical characters, many of whom, like Lapidoth, exploit others purely for their own ends: 'in being prepared to employ any means to exploit circumstances and to make any adaptation to their environment which suits their own purposes, they ignore the fact that such a form of life is unnatural for human beings as social animals' (Newton, 2011: 21). Egoism must, according to Eliot, involve the rejection of human identity and therefore exclusion from human society. Thus she is

189

capable of embracing a godless universe in which evolution is the result of natural selection but in which moral integrity is nevertheless also essential for humanity to realise its true potential.

In 1885, the problem of altruism was highlighted by Josiah Royce, who sees the possibility of selfish gain through supposedly spontaneous support of others. His belief is that 'pity and sympathy are confused and deceitful feelings, wholly unfit to give moral insight';[3] of altruism itself, he points out the potential for obligation and the return of favours: 'To make thyself happy, do certain things called duties to thy neighbour. That we call altruism. Thou shalt have thy reward. For what is more useful to a man than a man? If therefore thou dost well to him, thou shalt make him in many ways of great service to thee' (Royce, 1885: 62, 65). He does, however, allow that the initial motivation can serve as an indicator of the degree of goodness: if a man chances to find something the world needs, then he is not altruistic but merely fortunate. If, however, a man

> makes the good of others his sole end, and with this as end takes
> care of his own health, or amasses wealth, but all merely for the
> sake of being able to benefit others, then is such a man not egoistic,
> even while working for himself, but altruistic throughout. For such
> a man by hypothesis aims, not at his own personal good, but solely
> at the good of others (Royce, 1885: 69).

Deronda suspects himself of 'loving too well the losing causes of the world'; 'To make a little difference for the better was what he was not contented to live without' (*DD*: 364, 365). Lawrence Blum links the sense of obligation to others with the manifestation of morality: 'To be moral is to respect others as having equal value to oneself... Morality has primarily to do with obligation, with actions we are morally bound to perform' (Blum, 1980: 3).

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[3] This statement might usefully be contrasted with Adam Smith's views on pity and sympathy, which connect fellow-feeling with the joys and sorrows of others, in order fully to appreciate the changing standards in defining morality and ethical behaviour; see pages 91-93.

Deronda's apparent initial act of rescue in the novel is for Gwendolen, when he returns the necklace she has sold in order to pay for her travel home. Gwendolen's first impression of him has been that he is unpleasantly supercilious, and she feels that he is 'measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior... that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order' (10). His gaze has the effect of the 'evil eye' and reputedly disrupts her winning streak. Eliot's language here combines religious mysticism ('looking down', 'a region outside and above'), science ('examining her as a specimen'), Darwinism ('a lower order') and witchcraft ('an evil eye'), suggesting Gwendolen's perception of Deronda as something unfathomable, indeterminate and slightly threatening; she cannot quite see what he is. She resents his having taken 'an unpardonable liberty' and 'daring' to put her in 'a thoroughly hateful position' by following her and secretly repurchasing the necklace she has been obliged to sell; she feels that he has entangled her in 'helpless humiliation' (20).

This is a much more problematic act of rescue than, for instance, Thurstan Benson's rescue of Ruth. Neither Ruth nor Gwendolen asks to be rescued, though both find themselves in challenging personal circumstances, and while Ruth expresses relief and gratitude, Gwendolen finds herself angry and resentful. Whereas Ruth is anxious to reciprocate Benson's rescue of her, Gwendolen offers no such willingness to give anything in return. In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach outlines the nature of moral perfection and explains why it is often an uncomfortable experience to be suddenly the recipient of unsolicited generosity:

> The concept of the morally perfect being is no merely theoretical,
> inert conception, but a practical one, calling me to action, to
> imitation, throwing me into strife, into discussion with myself; for
> while it proclaims to me what I ought to be, it also tells me to my
> face, without any flattery, what I am not (Feuerbach, 1957: 46).

In drawing attention to Gwendolen's loss, Deronda also draws attention to and emphasises her recklessness and imprudence, her moral deficiencies. It is clear throughout the novel that Deronda causes Gwendolen to recognise and confront something morally distasteful in herself; he brings her mercilessly face to face with her own selfishness simply through an act of charitable goodness. In exploring the feelings of the recipient of goodness, Eliot emphasises the complexity of altruism: goodness is not only given but received, and its reception has the potential to create deep moral challenge.

Deronda's second rescue is that of fellow Cambridge student, Hans Meyrick, and is also indirectly related to imprudent spending. When Meyrick contracts a severe eye infection, Deronda readily offers to help him study for his forthcoming classics examination at the expense of his own study of mathematics. He refuses to admit that he cares about the risk to his own study, and while he fails his own examination, 'he had the satisfaction of seeing Meyrick win'. Like Gwendolen, his friend experiences mixed emotions: 'Meyrick's joy and gratitude were disturbed by much uneasiness', and he feels guilt and shame as a result of Deronda's sacrifice. He jokes, '"I shall write a tragedy of a fellow who signed himself over to be good, and was uncomfortable ever after"' (*DD*: 182-3). Later, he laughs at Deronda for 'having something of the knight errant in his disposition' (325). He too is uncomfortable about having received Deronda's help at the expense of his friend's own success, but whereas Gwendolen expresses undisguised anger, Meyrick covers his irritation with humour. He does this again in a later scene when Deronda wants to prevent him using Mirah as a model for Berenice, performing mock-hysterics and comically over-acting tragic outrage. His use of humour to diffuse moral challenge disarms Deronda but does not defeat him, and Deronda maintains the upper hand in their relationship throughout.

His third rescue is that of Mirah – though in fact it is his first, since this action takes place before his encounter with Gwendolen in the casino at Leubronn. Immediately before he first sees Mirah, Deronda is 'questioning whether it were worth while to take part in the battle of the world' and is 'occupied chiefly with uncertainties about his own course' (185, 188). He considers his sense of connection with what is beyond himself, and is anxious to know how he fits in with what he sees around him. His feeling of deep sympathy for Mirah is immediate, and his ardent determination to help her is ferociously sudden; the third sentence he speaks to her is, '"I will die before I let any harm come to you"' (190). His words are surprising for their concentration of feeling, and the declaration of such intense, intimate sentiments to a complete stranger is somewhat unexpected.

Deronda, unaware of his true origins, does not have a complete sense of himself as entirely separate from those around him; thus, he sees Gwendolen, Hans and Mirah as extensions of his own humanity and exists simultaneously within and outside of himself. In fact, these characters are reflections of what he is, and the sense of connection he has with these individuals is quite objective. Mirah, as a Jewess, connects Deronda with his absent mother ('perhaps my mother was like this one', 191); Meyrick's family provides the means to take care of Mirah, and Meyrick is already in Deronda's debt; and Gwendolen's jewels belonged to her father, whom she has never known. In returning her necklace, Deronda restores the connection between Gwendolen and her father, reflecting his desire to know more about himself and his own unknown father. Furthermore, he must negotiate a transaction with the Jewish dealer who has purchased the necklace from Gwendolen, thus immediately connecting inheritance, value and Jewishness.[4]

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[4] The giving and receiving of jewellery is often invested with moral – and sometimes immoral – significance, and particularly so when Eliot contrasts the inherited necklace with the 'poisoned' diamonds from Lydia. There is a similar case in *Middlemarch*, when Dorothea and Celia review the jewellery inherited from their mother: Dorothea attempts to reconcile her repressed desire for ornamentation with her strict sense of Christian propriety in remarking that the gemstones '"look like fragments of heaven"' (*M*: 13).

<u>Detachment and 'Attention'</u>

Eliot's portrayal of Deronda as a true altruist is innovative because she makes him almost the opposite of what Lewes claims is normal for humanity. Deronda's sense of egotism is poorly developed, and therefore there seems to be little sense of conflict between what he desires and what he does. The narrator reveals that 'persons attracted him... in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, rescuing them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence' (*DD*: 324). He would 'rather be the calf than the butcher' and is always inclined to 'take care of the fellow least able to take care of himself' (178, 179). When Gwendolen asks him how he would feel if someone injured him deliberately, Deronda responds, '"Why then, after all, I prefer my place to theirs"' (412). While it might seem that he is content to put himself in the position of passive victim, this is very far from the case. By identifying himself with calf rather than butcher, with injured rather than injurer, he merely places himself on the side of the innocent and emphasises his desire to do good without discrimination.

However, he is himself at pains to point out that being concerned with others does not necessarily mean that he never thinks of his own needs: '"Even if it were true that I thought so much of others, it would not follow that I had no wants for myself. When Bouddha let the tigress eat him he might have been very hungry himself"' (466). He is mildly annoyed by the assumption of others that he has no desires of his own, and is particularly irritated by Meyrick's assumption that Deronda will neither be affected by nor attempt to contest his pursuit of Mirah; Meyrick expects as little competition from his friend as from 'the angel Gabriel'. The assumption throughout the novel tends to be that Deronda is almost holy in his entirely selfless outlook. This cannot be the case, of course, in a character drawn by a realist such as Eliot: in juxtaposing Meyrick's egoism with Deronda's altruism, Eliot points out that Deronda's desires are merely secondary to

194

his desire to be of assistance and not non-existent. It is not the case that his egoism

dominates his altruistic tendency, but rather it is the other way round.

The dominance of altruistic tendency in Deronda is not, however, a result of his

suppressing or repressing emotion, as it might be for male protagonists of earlier fiction.

Deronda demonstrates what Iris Murdoch refers to as 'attention' as a way of focusing on

others rather than self. Murdoch describes attention as a special kind of vision:

> It is not simply that suppression of self is required before accurate
> vision can be attained... The direction of attention is, contrary to
> nature, outward, away from self which reduces all to a false unity,
> towards the great surprising variety of the world, and the ability so
> to direct attention is love' (Murdoch, 1970: 66).

Whereas in Lewes's vision of natural humanity, personality takes the dominant

position and must be taught to give way to altruism, in Deronda's character altruism

must make way for egoism: 'He had expected that Hans would give him trouble: what

he had not expected was that the trouble would have a strong element of personal

feeling' (464). Deronda is surprised and disappointed by the egoism evident in his

reaction to the realisation that his friend is prepared to declare himself a suitor for Mirah,

and he becomes aware that he has hitherto assigned to his friend a role that is specific in

its limitations: Meyrick seems to be 'going beyond his part of rescued prodigal, and

rousing a feeling quite distinct from compassionate affection' (464). Deronda is troubled

that his sense of altruism has suffered this intrusion by his ego.

Deirdre David refers to Deronda as 'a strangely passive hero' (David, 1981:

136). In the inital stages of his rescues of women, Deronda is inert: Gwendolen and

Mirah are both engaged in an activity while he merely watches from a distance. He does

not actively seek his mother but waits until she decides to summon him. In his

relationship with Meyrick he passively mirrors Meyrick's emotions: he is 'embarrassed

by Hans's embarrassment'; 'heated by Hans's show of temper' (*DD*: 783, 784).

Mordecai determines the direction of their conversations while Deronda is content to

listen and follow (495). Although Deronda is unconcerned about his material wealth, he is nevertheless anxious to 'be' or 'do' something; he wants to make himself 'an organic part of social life, instead of roaming in it like a yearning disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation' (365). His sense of purposelessness and lack of activity make him an outsider and maintain his sense of social passivity as observer rather than participant.

Waiting and watching – exercising 'attention' – seem to be his predominant tendencies; in all his acts of rescue the sense of vision is a significant element. Unable to see himself with any clarity, he turns his gaze towards others in the novel, unconsciously searching for something that will help him shape and define himself. Murdoch reasons that a man cannot be merely an impersonal rational thinker with a personal will. Rather, she states, 'he is a unified being who sees, and who desires in accordance with what he sees, and who has some continual slight control over the direction and focus of his vision (Murdoch, 1970: 40). Deronda chooses what to see, and chooses what to feel as a result of what he sees. He almost literally becomes Meyrick's eyes in order to ensure his academic success; the very first line of the novel concerns a visual appraisal ('Was she beautiful or not beautiful?') followed by Deronda's assessment of the quality of Gwendolen's gaze ('Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams?') He watches Mirah with 'motionless attention' despite feeling somewhat voyeuristic and intrusive: 'He had no right to linger and watch her' (189, 188).

When Gwendolen first encounters Deronda at Diplow, the intense, direct quality of his gaze encourages her to speak rather more openly and honestly than might have been expected at a first meeting. He has 'a large-eyed gravity, innocent of any intention. His eyes had a peculiarity which has drawn many men into trouble; they were of a dark, mild intensity, which seemed to express a special interest in every one on whom he fixed them' (332). While a lesser man might have been tempted into 'trouble' by the objects

of his visual interest, Deronda is 'innocent' and seeks to be of service to others without any thought of personal gain or gratification. This tendency towards dispassionate, intense observation of others leads to the development of a flexible sympathy that enables Deronda to empathise without judgement: 'His imagination had so wrought itself to the habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others, that a strong partisanship... had become an insincerity for him' (364).

Despite the effects of his goodness on others, and his obvious interest in their lives and happiness, Deronda appears curiously detached, often entering and leaving a room alone, and rarely displaying strong emotion. Eliot's narrative style, too, is famously detached, enabling characters to be read both from within the text and from outside it. Deirdre David notes that 'Just as Eliot stands outside her own narrative, questioning, answering, meditating and moralising... so Deronda stands outside his own life... and outside his own culture' (David, 1981: 145). Before his rescue of Mirah, Deronda is preoccupied with his own sense of detached individuality: 'He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape' (*DD*: 189). It is the sight of Mirah in distress that rouses him back to himself and forces him to act. While he feels a great deal of pity and sympathy for her, he displays little emotion and throughout the novel is reluctant to express the feelings he experiences. Once he has assimilated the experience of meeting his mother, he can better recognise himself and his own feelings in a uniting of self and heritage:

> There was a release of all the energy which had long been spent in
> self-checking and suppression because of doubtful conditions... It
> was as if he had found an added soul in finding his ancestry – his
> judgement no longer wandering in the mazes of impartial sympathy,
> but choosing, with that noble partiality which is man's best
> strength, the closer fellowship that makes sympathy practical (745).

Whereas his previous tendency has been to suppress the articulation of emotion, he now wants to return to Mordecai and 'pour forth instead of restraining his feeling' (745). In knowing his own heritage, he experiences a sense of integration and wholeness that has previously been unavailable to him. He also experiences a sense of decisiveness that has hitherto been uncharacteristic, as his Jewishness qualifies him as a suitable husband for Mirah. There is thus a natural element of egoism in his delight at having found himself.

From this point onward, Deronda is more free to experience, recognise and display emotion. He weeps with Gwendolen; when Meyrick reveals that Mirah loves Deronda, he feels 'a delight he was unused to' (785). While it is not true that he must know himself in order to be good, it is true that he must know himself in order to be content; this contentment enables him to deliver goodness from a solid, immutable base and to recognise the difference between himself and others. As Sir Hugo has told him earlier in the novel, '"You must know where to find yourself"' (183).

Self and Others

The tendency of others in the novel to regard Deronda as something above ordinary mortals is characteristic of Eliot's belief in the power of humanity as a force for good and as a unifying force that enables individuals to connect with each other. The Meyrick girls positively worship him: Kate reputedly burns incense before his portrait every day, and Mab carries his signature in a silk bag to ward off the cramp; Amy recites her multiplication tables in his name (*DD*: 224-5). Mab refers to him as Prince Camaralzaman, the good and noble character from a story in *The Arabian Nights*; Grandcourt accuses Gwendolen of taking Deronda 'for a saint' (588).

Deronda, naturally, refutes the idea that he is in any sense qualified to act as the focus of religious devotion. He protests, '"I seldom find I do any good by my preaching"' (338) and feels out of his depth when he realises how much Gwendolen

depends upon him: 'He was not a priest. He dreaded the weight of this woman's soul' (689). Nevertheless, Eliot's language – 'confession'; 'wicked'; 'guilty'; 'evil temptation'; 'forsaken'; 'conscience'; 'remorse' – in portraying the relationship between Gwendolen and Deronda is exactly that of confessor and priest. Deronda can offer no sense of absolution, and he is made miserable by the intensity of Gwendolen's unhappiness, yet he still allows her to treat him as the object of her spiritual devotion: '"Tell me all you feel it a relief to tell"'. He does not want to hear her confession from any sense of personal or emotional interest, but insists, '"What I most desire at this moment is what will most help you"' (689-697). While the scene is delivered in the language of religion, Deronda embodies the religion of humanism: his morality comes from within himself rather than because of the dictates of an external rule. As Eliot writes in her essay on Young, 'Love does not say, "I ought to love" – it loves. Pity does not say, "It is right to be pitiful" – it pities' (Eliot, 1990: 206). Deronda's own religious belief is secondary to his quest for his origins; his exploration of Judaism with Mordecai is about blood, belonging and heritage rather than the sanctity of religious faith or doctrine.

Despite the absence of religious worship, Paris notes the importance in Eliot's novels of characters' need for 'a personal relationship with someone who is stirred by religious or social passion' (Paris, 1965: 223); he notes a degree of similarity in the relationships between Janet Dempster and Mr Tryan in 'Janet's Repentance' (1857) and that between Deronda and Gwendolen. Tryan and Deronda are alike in some respects: both act as moral advisers, and both seek to provide comfort to others, particularly to those whom they cannot save. Tryan cannot rescue Janet from her circumstances but can only help her accept them; Deronda has a similar function for Gwendolen. Both seek to demonstrate the importance of living for others, and both advocate the suppression of egoism in favour of helping the community. Deronda's advice to Gwendolen is, '"Look

on other lives besides your own... Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires... something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot''' (*DD*: 446).

The function of the relationship might be similar, but the quality of the relationship is quite different. Tryan's comfort initially comes directly from the Bible and from evangelical doctrine; he advocates surrender to God as the most likely means for Janet to achieve spiritual peace. His language is of defiance and submission; salvation depends on Janet's acceptance of Christ: '"He asks you to cling to Him, to lean on Him... As long as we live in rebellion against God, desiring to have our own will, seeking happiness in the things of this world, it is as if we shut ourselves up in a crowded stifling room"'. Janet responds that she might be capable of happiness '"if I felt that God cared for me, and would give me strength to lead a pure life"' (*SCL*: 302-3). Tryan believes that peace comes from surrendering responsibility and care; the strength that is required for goodness must come directly from a personal relationship with God rather than with humanity. Janet later teaches him that peace is to be found in caring for others.

The nature of Deronda's advice to Gwendolen is quite different and relies on positivist humanism rather than evangelical faith. Gwendolen, unlike Janet, does not need to feel that God cares for her, but rather she needs to feel that she is of importance to Deronda himself. Just as she cannot quite work out what Deronda is, so too she cannot quite fathom what she feels for him: 'she had a confused state of emotion about Deronda – was it wounded pride and resentment, or a certain awe and exceptional trust?' (*DD*: 276). Awe and trust are the emotions that Janet is encouraged to feel for God; Gwendolen's insistence on making Deronda her trusted confessor elevates his status from human to divine. She learns to depend on his judgement and increasingly throughout the novel relies on his advice on issues of conscience and ethics. For

Gwendolen, moral power and authority reside not in God but in Deronda himself; he is 'not her admirer but her superior; in some mysterious way he was becoming her conscience' (415). She invests in him the power to decide whether she shall be good or not; he has made her different as a result of his belief in her (563).

Deronda is physically present in a way that is obviously impossible for Tryan's God. While Janet must rely on her imagined concept of God for emotional and spiritual sustenance, Gwendolen can see, hear and touch her redeemer. Eliot thus confounds the customary Victorian view that women are the moral barometers by which men's virtue is measured and improved. John Tosh has found that women were normally regarded as the domestic custodians of morality; he cites the home as the place where men could safely be emotionally vulnerable and where the duty of a wife or sister was to provide moral comfort (Tosh, 1999: 54-5). As in the discussion between Fred Vincy and Mary Garth, goodness as either the exclusive preserve of male or female, or as the reason for one to admire the other is inadmissible. Deronda and Gwendolen also debate the nature of goodness in men and women: Deronda claims that men '"need that you should be better than we are"'; Gwendolen challenges his view, '"But suppose *we* need that men should be better than we are"'. In an attempt at compromise Deronda agrees, '"we each of us think it would be better for the other to be good"' (337). If goodness represents a selfless responsibility to others, then it seems that men and women each desire the other to make the greater sacrifice. In *Daniel Deronda* it is the women who are most vulnerable and Deronda himself who expresses tenderness and pity, providing moral support and comfort for Gwendolen and Mirah. Gwendolen's moral standards are raised as a result of her emotional and spiritual relationship with Deronda; she insists, '"If you had not been good, I should have been more wicked than I am"' (701); Mirah maintains that, in the shape of Deronda, '"goodness came to me living"' (211).

Whereas Tryan is confident that he can help Janet by renewing her relationship with God, Deronda has no such assurance about Gwendolen and soon realises 'I can't do anything to help her – nobody can' (*DD*: 413). He is simultaneously God and not-God; he has no power other than the ability to persuade Gwendolen that she can help herself by becoming less selfish. Indeed, the first time Gwendolen asks for his advice, he is hopelessly naive; his immediate thought is that she should 'confess everything' to Grandcourt. He does not say this, however, as his primary difficulty is in providing help through the medium of language. Words, for him, 'seemed to have no more rescue in them than if he had been beholding a vessel in peril of a wreck... He felt himself holding a crowd of words imprisoned within his lips, as if the letting them escape would be a violation of awe before the mysteries of our human lot' (610). Even when he is not speaking, 'the silence seemed to Gwendolen full of the tenderness that she heard in his voice' (767). Rivers and Benson find it difficult to express their feelings in words, and Deronda finds his greatest difficulty in using words as a means to help others. Repression, expression and manliness are recurrent themes in Eliot's fiction; *Middlemarch*, for example, describes many relationships that become problematic because of the characters' inability or reluctance to express their true feelings. In *Daniel Deronda*, both Grandcourt and Deronda know more than they reveal, and Eliot shows how the concealment of knowledge can be used for different purposes: Grandcourt ensures that he knows his wife's thoughts in order to remain dominant in their relationship; Deronda pieces together the same information but uses it for good in his empathy for Gwendolen.

The difference between Tryan's relationship with Janet and Deronda's with Gwendolen can also be partly accounted for by the nature of questions asked of the moral guide. Janet's request for help is vague and indirect: '"I thought you could tell me something that would help me"' and '"Can you give me any comfort – any hope?"'

(*SCL*: 298-9). Gwendolen is much more forthright in her demand for support, asking

repeatedly, '"What should you do if you were like me?"' '"You must tell me then what

to think and what to do"'; '"Tell me again. What should you do – what should you feel

if you were in my place?"' (*DD*: 445, 446, 449). Her insistence is for concrete,

demonstrable moral instruction, and her faith in Deronda's ability to provide it through

the medium of language is absolute.

Mordecai too displays a similar degree of trust in Deronda and is one of the few

characters in the novel who inspires awe in Deronda himself. Deronda's relationship

with 'the enigmatic Jew' (396) is in some ways similar to that between Deronda and

Gwendolen, comprising mentor and follower, God and worshipper. The visual gaze is

again important, with Mordecai and Deronda from the beginning exchanging

'fascinated, half-furtive glances' (397); Deronda is as intrigued by Mordecai as

Gwendolen is by him; their relationship quickly gains 'as intense a consciousness as if

they had been two undeclared lovers' (495). Whereas Deronda has moral authority over

Gwendolen, Mordecai exercises the same powers over him.

Though the relationship is different, the roles remain similar: Deronda is content

to listen passively while Mordecai talks, just as he is content to listen to Gwendolen.

Mordecai has been searching for an alternative version of himself, 'some young ear into

which he could pour his mind as a testament'. He tells Deronda, '"You will be my life,"'

and he believes that in Deronda he has found 'an active replenishment of himself' (472,

500, 512). Although Mordecai talks of '"the marriage of our souls"' (751), he is more

like a surrogate father to Deronda, despite his being of a similar age; he becomes the

vital link with the spiritual parentage to which Deronda is heir. When he is secure in his

understanding of his Jewish origins, Deronda becomes more earnest in his quest for a

purpose to his own life. His decision to travel to the east presents itself as 'a duty;' his

ambition to restore political equity to his people is intended to inspire the desire for

similar movement in others (803). In finally trusting the autonomy of his own goodness, Deronda represents Feuerbach's highest goal: 'Admit that your personal God is nothing else than your own personal nature, that while you believe in and construct your supra- and extra-natural God, you believe in and construct nothing else than the supra- and extra-naturalism of your own self' (Feuerbach, 1957: 108). Knowing himself enables Deronda to trust himself, allowing him to be decisive in his determination to act rather than to simply react.

Equally self-contained and autonomous in the novel, however, is Grandcourt, and Eliot describes his similarity with Deronda as well as his differences. Both men are intelligent observers of others; both are discreet guardians of sensitive information; both have an uncertain inheritance; both understand Gwendolen better than she imagines. While Gwendolen's thought of Deronda is, 'I wish he could know everything about me without my telling him' (430), Grandcourt's emphatic insistence to her is, '"What I care to know, I shall know without your telling me"' (447). They know the same facts, though via different means. Whereas Grandcourt uses Lush as his eyes and ears, Deronda prefers to trust his own senses: 'the surer means of getting information [was] not to ask questions, but to elbow his way to the foreground and be an unobstructed witness' (685).

Their primary difference, of course, is in their ability to care for and empathise with others. The complete submission of Gwendolen to his will is one of the few things that matter to Grandcourt; he is incapable of caring for others in the way that Deronda does. The other significant way in which they differ is that Grandcourt has a surprisingly acute ability to understand his own motivation *and* that of others: he is sufficiently worldly to anticipate the wants and feelings of others, and sufficiently introspective and egoistic to understand his own. The problem is not that Grandcourt is ignorant of his own lack of goodness, nor even that he consciously chooses not to be good; the issue of

goodness simply fails to concern him. Robert McCarron suggests that Grandcourt is Eliot's exploration of what happens when evil exists in a Godless, humanist system of ethics: 'Eliot's secular Religion of Humanity responded by maintaining that the sympathetic imagination is the proper basis for man's moral sense and that, although evil exists in the human world, it is the result of moral immaturity or egoistic self-blindness rather than a willing decision to embrace perversity' (McCarron, 1980: 86). Neil McCaw suggests that Grandcourt represents 'the pervading moral bankruptcy of English society' (McCaw, 2000: 150). In a Godless society there can be no such concept as sin, since sin itself only has meaning to a Christian as something that is done in contravention of God's laws, but there can be such a thing as evil. Eliot's portrait of Grandcourt , according to McCarron, is 'her most uncompromising depiction of deliberate evil' (McCarron, 1980: 71); his egoistic flaws emphasise Deronda's altruistic ideals.

Conclusion

The degree of Deronda's altruism and his poor understanding of moral weakness in others can seem improbable. When Meyrick turns briefly to opium in an attempt to escape from his disappointing failings as a lover and as an artist, he confesses to Deronda, '"I was tired of being virtuous without reward"'. Deronda's response is, '"Nothing else? No *real* vexation?"' (*DD*: 782; my italics). For Deronda, virtue without reward is not only natural, but is to be desired and expected; Meyrick's complaint is unjustified, and Deronda seems relieved that it is nothing more serious. Eliot knew that most of her readers would have encountered similar circumstances that cause Meyrick to seek distraction from this very real sense of ennui, where the world begins to look seedy, 'a sort of cabbage-garden with all the cabbages cut' (782). Meyrick's annoyance that Deronda will succeed where he has failed is likewise a recognisable source of

frustration. In her portrayal of the relationship between Deronda and Meyrick, Eliot explores Feuerbach's thoughts on the mutual benefits of association: 'friendship rests on a desire for self-completion. One friend obtains through the other what he does not himself possess. The virtues of the one atone for the failings of the other' (Feuerbach, 1957: 156).

However, Eliot does not render Deronda perfect in his friendship with Meyrick. Since meeting Mirah he has been conscious of a sense of rivalry between himself and Meyrick and has felt 'the irritation of perceiving that he is supposed to be entirely off [sic] the same plane of desire and temptation as those who confess to him.' He knows the folly in the assumption, 'our guides, we pretend, must be sinless' (*DD*: 463). When he realises that Meyrick means to pursue Mirah, Deronda is outwardly polite, 'but his words were from the lip only. As to his real feeling he was silenced' (463). Where he is in opposition with another, he prefers to remain silent rather than to confront, even when his silence might be taken for tacit approval. There is a sense of deliberate emotional withdrawal in Deronda's choice of silence in favour of words that is almost as manipulative as Grandcourt's power-laden silences.

Whether Deronda succeeds as the convincing representative of either individual or humanity at its best has been a subject of debate since the novel's publication. Henry James's fictional character Pulcheria famously found Deronda himself 'a dreadful prig' and the novel itself 'protracted, pretentious, pedantic' (Leavis, 1960: 251,256). Barbara Hardy complains that Deronda, while the convincing possessor of generous impulse, 'is not changed and chastised in the process of the narrative' (Hardy, 1959: 109). In 1879 W. H. Mallock argued that Eliot cannot be both novelist and philosopher, and in her portraits of morally upright characters 'We have not what the artist discovers as existing, but what the theorist dreams of as that which ought to exist'. He describes her higher characters, those which are pure examples of right action, as merely principles (Carroll,

1971: 459). Ulrich Knoepflmacher agrees that Deronda is 'a magnificent failure', 'semi-allegorical'; in his view, 'Deronda cannot succeed as the awaited "Deliverer" and spokesman for a "Suffering Race." He is a queer mixture, half-clergyman and half-dandy' (Knoepflmacher, 1965: 119, 127, 148).

Mario Praz suggests that Deronda is Eliot's 'ideal projection of herself' (Praz, 1956: 328). Goldberg agrees that he represents her ideal man in 'his wide sympathies and understanding, the health and integrity of his self, his manly beauty, his social assurance and freedom, his perfect manners, his splendid whiskers, and so forth' – but he also argues that Deronda has no particular purpose or direction, other than simply and somewhat indiscriminately to be good, and suggests that 'his wax-work quality as a character perhaps owes as much to [Eliot's] moral beliefs as to anything else' (Goldberg, 1980: 15). Deronda himself disdains perfection in humanity and sees more to admire in the imperfect than in the exemplary: '"I suppose we faulty creatures can never feel so much for the irreproachable as for those who are bruised in the struggle with their own faults"' (*DD*: 439).

In her fiction, Eliot seems to be concerned more with portraying humanity than humans, and seems more interested in society than in individuals; in Eliot's world view, a man can be known and understood only when he is seen within the context of his community and culture. Her narrative technique and depth of empathic understanding are such that readers access the thoughts of object and subject equally, and are thus enabled to respond appropriately to the moral act portrayed. Lisabeth During suggests that readers of *Daniel Deronda* might be tempted to ask if it is a novel masquerading as a philosophical treatise. She reads it as a novel about the ethical possibilities of culture: '*Daniel Deronda* stages a debate between competing conceptions of moral psychology, between competing ideas about how moral characters and emotions are formed, and why' (During, 1998: 79).

Eliot's fiction corresponds with Feuerbach's views on the individual, society and

perfection:

> In the moral as well as the physical and intellectual elements, men
> compensate for each other, so that, *taken as a whole, they are as*
> *they should be, they present the perfect man*. Hence intercourse
> ameliorates and elevates; involuntarily and without disguise, man is
> different in intercourse from what he is when he is alone'
> (Feuerbach, 1957: 155-6; my italics).

The following chapter develops from Feuerbach's remarks on the individual and the

social, and traces the development of the good man's relation to, and his effect on, wider

communities. Whereas Daniel Deronda affects his immediate sphere of friends and

associates, the fiction of the 1880s sees the good man exercising his moral vision across

a wider sphere. Deronda, like the other good men in this study, needs others around him

in order to demonstrate the scope and effects of goodness on others; and equally, he

needs others around him in order effectively to define himself. Robert Elsmere and

Captain Lobe, while reasonably secure in their sense of themselves as individuals, must

also reconcile the outer and inner effects of goodness.

<div align="center">Chapter Six</div>

<div align="center">'The New Morality': *Robert Elsmere* and *In Darkest London*</div>

> *"I am a hot-headed, impatient kind of creature at the best of times...*
> *But why are the old ways, the old evil neglect and apathy, so long,*
> *so terribly long in dying? This social progress of ours we are so*
> *proud of is a clumsy limping jade at best!"*[1]

On 6th March 1881, the Right Reverend John Wordsworth delivered the first of the annual Bampton Lectures at the University of Oxford. His subject was 'The present unsettlement in religion', and his primary focus was to connect the 'moral causes of unbelief' with various sins which he listed as prejudice, indolence, coldness, recklessness, pride and avarice. Listening attentively in the deep shadows under the gallery was the wife of one of Wordsworth's colleagues. As she listened, she recalled those respected thinkers whom she understood Wordsworth to be criticising,[2] and, indignant on their behalf, began to consider ways in which the religious problem of the 1880s could be made to reach a wider audience. She intuitively disagreed with Wordsworth's statement that unbelief either equalled or engendered sin, and she was keen to express her own more considered view that unbelief and morality were two different things. The most obvious, and striking, means she could think of was via a work of fiction that showed

> a picture of actual life and conduct; through something as "simple, sensuous, passionate" as one could make it. Who and what were the persons of whom the preacher gave this grotesque account? What was their history? How had their thoughts and doubts come to be? What was the effect of them on conduct? (Ward, 1918: 168).

The woman was Mrs Mary Ward, and the novel conceived that day was *Robert Elsmere* (1888).

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[1] Mary Ward, 1987. *Robert Elsmere* (1888), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 203.
[2] Cited by name are Arthur Stanley, Benjamin Jowett, Thomas Hill Green, Lewis Nettleship, Henry Sidgwick and Matthew Arnold (Ward, 1918: 167-9).

Described on its publication by William Ewart Gladstone as 'remarkable in many respects,' the novel was, by late nineteenth-century standards, a long and arduous read. Gladstone admired it particularly for its 'generous appreciation of what is morally good'. He described its aim as primarily 'to expel the preternatural element from Christianity, to destroy its dogmatic structure, yet to keep intact the moral and spiritual results' (Gladstone, 1888: 767, 773). Mary Ward's portrait of the clergyman who loses his faith but not his moral sense demonstrates her disagreement with Wordsworth, and illustrates the late nineteenth-century argument that morality, belief and sin are not necessarily mutually dependent.

Theology, morality and evolutionary theory were anxiously debated during the twelve years between *Daniel Deronda* and *Robert Elsmere.* Though less intense than the more generalised 'moral panics' of the popular imagination that were to flare intermittently during the mid-1890s, the uncertainty raised by doubting the purpose and effect of goodness in a godless world was nevertheless palpably unsettling. In 1888, Emile de Laveleye wrote with prophetic accuracy, 'Two questions will profoundly disturb the closing years of this century – the social question and the religious question.' The latter issue was, as far as de Laveleye saw it, 'the struggle between what is called the scientific spirit and religion.' Christianity had never before been subjected to a more severe ordeal than the public debates demanding to know what place theology had in a rapidly developing scientific and secular climate (de Laveleye, 1888: 1). The desire to understand, to simplify and to contain the troublesome issue of religion was not without its attendant difficulties: Goldwin Smith feared that 'the break-up of religious belief is attended, as experience seems to show, with danger to popular morality' (Smith, 1882: 336).

The subject of the theological debates of the 1880s was, however, not new: James Churchill's *An Essay on Unbelief* (1811) warns of the causes and dangers of

rejecting religion. Addressed chiefly to those who profess to believe the Gospels without living according to their principles, the text's argument is supported throughout by Biblical quotation. Churchill lists some of the causes of unbelief as self-righteousness, worldliness and love of sin itself – issues that were still of interest some eighty years later, and issues that Wordsworth himself took up as signs and causes of unbelief. Churchill particularly distrusts the idolisation of rational thought; 'Reason,' he warns, 'improperly used, is a deadly foe to revelation' (Churchill, 1811: 63). He argues that belief and reason are incompatible and mutually destructive, and the best remedy for unbelief is watchfulness, self-censorship and prayer. By the end of the 1880s, Darwinism and German philosophy had irrevocably obscured Churchill's simplistic methods of restoring belief to the faithless; not the least of his assumptions is that God and Satan are unquestionably real and are taken as absolutes. Once this fundamental framework began to be dismantled and the very foundation of his argument was revealed to be subjective, many alternative views were not only permissible but seen as increasingly valid.

James Cranbrook, believed by Francis Reginald Statham to be the model for Robert Elsmere, had written his own reworking of religious belief by 1868. Having gained something of a reputation for holding liberal and unorthodox views, he left his post as a Liverpool clergyman to risk the alternative epithet of heretic. He set out his revised views in his *Credibilia: or, Discourses on Questions of Christian Faith* (1868), in which he addressed many of the central concerns that were still alight some twenty years later. Textual inaccuracies in the Bible, proved by German scholars, and the geological discoveries that disproved the Creation story left 'the plain, honest, intelligent man' beleaguered by 'objections, doubts and difficulties' (Cranbrook, 1868: 13).

Still later in the century, the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Annie Besant further expanded ideas about atheistic morality. Besant, in a reversal of Churchill's argument, insists that conscious thought is a vital aspect of modern morality. Atheism, she argues, is not *no-God*, but is instead *without-God*: 'It bids all men think, without dread of damnation; it bids all men speak, without dread of human punishment; it proclaims that all men owe to society *the duty of thought*, and the duty of uttering thought' (Besant, 1882a: 9; my italics). Nietzsche's intricate arguments about God, religion and the origins of morality interrogated the very purpose of goodness itself; the essence of every moral code, he states, is that it is 'one long coercion'. Moral codes, whether or not they are rooted in religious belief, are 'behavioural guides in relation to the degree of precariousness that the individual feels about himself; recipes to counter his passions, his good and bad tendencies' (Nietzsche, 1998: 76, 84). Citing morality, or religion, as an agent of social control was also not, in itself, new, but the breadth and depth of contemporary discussion, and the willingness to embrace new ways of thinking in the light of scientific discoveries, made *Robert Elsmere* representative of the current zeitgeist.

This chapter explores the changing relationship between Christianity and goodness during the 1880s, and suggests that women's fiction was beginning to reveal a gradual separation between morality and religion while still maintaining a convincing portrait of a good man. I focus in this chapter on Mary Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, and on Margaret Harkness's *In Darkest London* (1889).[3] Harkness's career as a journalist gave her the opportunity to observe life in the poorest areas of London, and her novel chronicles the experiences of Captain Lobe, a young Salvation Army officer, as he attempts to do good among the most socially and economically deprived. His naivety and unworldliness often cause him to feel overwhelmed by the extent of the social

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[3] I use the following abbreviations throughout this chapter: *RE*: *Robert Elsmere*; *IDL*: *In Darkest London*

problems around him, and yet his religious fervour remains largely unquestioned whereas Elsmere's does not. The two novels set out from a similar position. In his study of *Robert Elsmere*, William Peterson suggests that the novel is 'at once an historical document and a private confession... [it] is the story of both an individual and an age' (Peterson, 1976: 15-16). R. A. Biderman suggests that *In Darkest London* 'is best read as a social documentary and a text in the history of ideas' (*IDL*: 9). Indeed, both novels are products of the changing nature of fiction itself: Harkness, in a narratorial comment, remarks that, in the current age of personalities, 'Novels have ceased to revolve round a plot, or to be philosophic treatises. The mental history of a man, the emotional nature of a woman, absorb the novelist' (*IDL*: 93).

Religion and Morality

Before beginning work on her novel, Mary Ward immediately responded to Wordsworth's lecture with the short pamphlet, 'Sin and Unbelief,' which attracted instant, though short-lived, attention.[4] Ward disputes Wordsworth's absolute and narrow view that 'unbelief is sin' through an exploratory portrait of two men to whom she refers only as 'A' and 'C'. She contrasts the tendency of 'A' to read, think, and reason with the blind, accepting faith of 'C'. While 'C' resists change, 'A' embraces it, recovering and reconstructing the basis of his theological belief anew while forfeiting none of his original moral sense. 'A' clearly contains the beginnings of Robert Elsmere; 'C', with his timidity and reluctance to challenge orthodoxy, suggests a character more like Captain Lobe. Ward was keen to show 'how a man of sensitive and noble character, born for religion, comes to throw off the orthodoxies of his day and moment, and to go

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[4] The pamphlet was unexpectedly withdrawn from sale only a few hours after its release. When Dr Foulkes, a well-known clergyman, attempted to purchase a copy, he noticed that the pamphlet carried no printer's name. He pointed out the illegality of this and the pamphlet was immediately removed from circulation.

out into the wilderness where all is experiment, and spiritual life begins again' (Ward, 1918: 230).

Ward is careful to introduce the young Elsmere as a desirable, admirable hero for the discerning modern reader of the late 1880s. He is tall, with an athletic frame; he is well born, 'a favourite of fortune', from an old Sussex family; he is accomplished and well-travelled. Mrs Leyburn wholeheartedly approves of him as a potential suitor for her daughter, declaring, '"he's sensible, and nice and well-mannered"' (*RE*: 126). He is destined for the church, but Ward makes it clear that he is to be no ordinary clergyman: he is ambitious, setting his sights from the beginning on being 'something more stirring' than the parson of a country parish (*RE*: 38). Most notable perhaps is the lively manner evident in his face: 'Eagerness, indeed, seemed to be the note of the whole man, of the quick eyes and mouth, the flexible hands and energetic movements' (*RE*: 38). Although he has been weakened by long illness when he first appears in the novel, his mental acuity and enthusiasm for life are clearly drawn. His flexible hands suggest an equally flexible mind and a keen curiosity that will not be satisfied by mere faith alone. When he confides to his mother, '"I don't feel as if I should ever take orders"' (*RE*: 52), it is easy to imagine the other, more liberal sense in which the sentence might be understood.

Peterson notes that Elsmere appears at the Leyburns' home in Long Whindale as a modern intruder: whereas Catherine and her family belong to an evangelical past, Elsmere belongs very securely in the present (Peterson, 1976: 140). He brings with him a certain amount of danger, and the slight fear that inevitably accompanies the unknown future. Elsmere is contrasted with the other good man of the novel, the late Mr Leyburn. Catherine's father, though long dead, is evoked as a constant presence throughout the narrative as she strives to live in the spirit of his example. Mr Leyburn's goodness has clearly been rooted in the Bible and in scriptural teaching; his moral code and his

religious belief are one and the same, both coloured with a sense of self-imposed deprivation. Catherine reveals that he had tried to live according to his ideals, and inevitably suffered the disappointment of failure: "'I never knew anybody so good who thought himself of so little account. He always believed that he had missed everything, wasted everything, and that anybody else would have made infinitely more out of his life. He was always blaming, scourging himself'" (*RE*: 98).

Robert's response is tellingly remote, lacking the first-hand validation of shared experience: "'I have come across it once or twice, that fierce self-judgement of the good'" (*RE*: 99). Catherine's father seems to have grown from the early nineteenth-century evangelical tradition, perhaps something in the spirit of a Mr Fairchild, and is the product of a much earlier time. Indeed, Ward suggests that the particular type of goodness possessed by Catherine's father should be replaced by something rather more reasonable and modern. When Elsmere is invited to tea with a visiting aunt of the Leyburn sisters, he is equally amused and alarmed by the aunt's laudatory account of her eldest son, a newly-ordained Wesleyan minister. Her son has told her, "'it's like trackin' for game is huntin' for souls'". The aunt's account of her son's intrusive and aggressive attempts to convert hapless sinners ends with the triumphant "'There's your true minister'" (*RE*: 87).

In her lecture, *The True Basis of Morality* (1882), Annie Besant criticises exactly this type of moral fervour, pointing out that because the Bible is itself a collection of writings from various times, with each of those times having a different moral culture, Scripture is unavoidably inconsistent in its teaching of morality. She deplores the practice of self-renunciation for no good reason other than that the individual's religion demands it:

> The new morality will indeed lessen individual suffering by removing some foolish and conventional restrictions which now exist – restrictions which sacrifice individual happiness without thereby insuring some greater good. There is, at present, a large

amount of individual suffering caused by the accepted and arbitrary system of morality, which is productive of no wider happiness; and, being unnecessary, is therefore unjust (Besant, 1882b: 14).

Goodness no longer existed simply in the sacrifices of a good man in the name of religion, because religion itself had become subject to the kind of objective scrutiny that would have been unimaginable only a few years earlier. Ward's novel asks whether a modern man given to independent, critical thought can be good to the same degree but in a different way from that in which a God-fearing man of Mr Leyburn's generation had been good, and explores the ways in which 'the new morality' affects the behaviour of the good man.

Whereas Elsmere is, from the start, 'a man of ardour and conviction' (*RE*: 63), Captain Lobe is 'slightly made, and delicate'; his voice is 'strangely gentle and sympathetic.' He is described as nervous, 'hyper-sensitive', and with his short, boyish stature he looks much younger than he actually is. When he and the doctor visit the workhouse, Lobe is 'stifled' by the atmosphere of hardship there; because the workhouse has its own regimented forms of religious worship, he can do no Salvationist work on the premises but must only passively observe. He is enervated, and his mental, emotional and physical energy is often sapped by the hopelessness of the poverty around him: 'The life he led took the strength out of him; for he felt every word that he said, and the sympathy which he showed to his fellow-men was a fire fed by self-sacrifice' (*IDL*: 17, 145, 152).

Lobe might seem weak or effeminate to twenty-first century readers, but in both novels there is distinct evidence of the changing moral roles of men and women. Whereas Daniel Deronda looks inward and outward equally, simultaneously practising introspective self-scrutiny and demonstrating an assiduous concern for the needs of others, Lobe's general sensitivity is more exclusively outward-looking. The marital relationship between Elsmere and Catherine suggests that the companionate marriage of

John and Ursula Halifax, and Guy and Amy Morville, has developed beyond the simplistic mid-nineteenth-century model of wife as moral compass. The narrator of *In Darkest London* remarks, 'Men have (so they say) a surplus of muscle, and women a surplus supply of nervous energy' (*IDL*: 90). This is not entirely true of either novel: Elsmere often has excess nervous energy while Catherine remains serenely calm in her religious conviction, and Jane Hardy is mentally and physically more robust than Lobe. She comments on the aggressiveness of the slum women, compared with whom 'the men are lambs' (*IDL*: 40). Lobe could easily have shared Elsmere's avowal, in a reversal of the thoughts of Milton's Satan: 'better be oppressed than oppressor any day!' (*RE*: 201).

Elsmere does resist the feminine power of his wife when it threatens to overwhelm his own sense of masculinity. While he recognises that Catherine's will is 'firmer and more tenacious' than his own, when she suggests that self-sacrifice should come before happiness, 'the man in him rose up against the woman's unlooked-for, unwelcome strength' (*RE*: 117-8). Jane Hardy tells Lobe towards the end of the novel, 'You're too good to be a man; in fact, I think you're a woman' (*IDL*: 195). In these novels, male goodness moves beyond the essential masculine towards a realm that women have been able to access all along. Jane Hardy declares that women are 'more moral' than men, mainly because women do not tend towards the same 'self-indulgence' as men (though she fails to point out that women have had less socio-cultural opportunity for that same self-indulgence). Superior moral status had been ascribed to women throughout most of the nineteenth century; now, however, Jane Hardy sees the potential for women to become 'the superior sex' *because* of it, and that better morality should also merit greater social and political power (*IDL*: 187). However, both novels make it clear that moral integrity can belong to both men and

women, though not necessarily carrying any kind of social or cultural weight. Being 'good' does not necessarily add anything to social or cultural status.

Elsmere and Lobe are not merely feminine men: they are both manly, doing the work of men among other men. Elsmere in particular, like Deronda, is chameleon-like depending upon in whose company he finds himself: 'In the drawing-room with his wife and sister-in-law he had been as much of a boy as ever; here [in his study with Langham] he was a man, very much in earnest' (*RE*: 168). Of course he is no ordinary man: he is a clergyman, and therefore not generally regarded as equally 'masculine' as secular men. The narrator of *In Darkest London* suggests that the clergyman is sometimes exalted unrealistically because of his outward appearance: 'A young clergyman is to [girls] something above the ordinary run of men; they invest him with a garb of holiness because he happens to wear a white surplice' (*IDL*: 124). Whether they are seen as something less than other men, as Froude had claimed in 1849,[5] or somewhere above them, clergymen struggle against their status as the 'intermediate sex' that Elaine Showalter has claimed for them (Showalter, 1982: 143). Caught in a kind of no-man's land of gender identity, good men who happen to be at the same time clergymen lose power through their identification with what has been thought of as the feminine. As I discussed in the last chapter, Tryan approaches something like heroic status for a clergyman, though in a much understated manner, in his rescue and recovery of Janet. Elsmere asks Langham, '"Can the English country clergyman do much with his life and his energies?"' (*RE*: 168). The clergyman as a good man is thus doubly handicapped: on the one hand, he is expected to be better than others, but at the same time he has insufficient social, economic and political power effectively to carry out the best of his good intentions.

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[5] Froude writes of professional men – lawyers, doctors, clergymen – that 'they are not simply men, but men of a particular sort, and, unfortunately, something not more but less than men – men who have sacrificed their own selves to become the paid instruments of a system' (Froude, 1849: 3).

While Lobe is not a clergyman, the nature of his daily work is very similar: 'A visit to the docks before breakfast, a police-court in the afternoon, a murder in the evening: in this way Captain Lobe's days were spent... In this respect he resembled a parish priest' (*IDL*: 152). His role, as far as the Salvation Army is concerned, is to go among the poor and bring spiritual sustenance as well as to discourage sinful behaviour. Lobe can see very plainly that what the people need is food and work, and of course he is unable to supply these; the never-ending 'hopeless mass of sin and suffering' he witnesses on a daily basis, and the physical exhaustion of his occupation, eventually make him ill. Thus he does a man's work, going out into the urban community and engaging with public and civil organisations, but his constitution and psyche are unable to tolerate the strenuousness of his work.

Alternative Masculinities

This thesis has suggested thus far that moral men are often seen as undistinguished and unremarkable apart from their commitment to doing good; they tend to live quietly and unobtrusively while nevertheless influencing the lives of those in their immediate sphere. While some, such as Daniel Deronda and Guy Morville, can be physically striking in their manly appearance and bearing, moral masculinity tends to get on with the business of being a man without being overtly 'masculine.' There is little of the innate aggression or politically powerful ability of the action hero; these are men who seem content to live alongside women in a peaceful domestic setting while carrying on the work of a man in the marketplace, community or clerical office. Elsmere too is a typically good man: 'He was neither dull enough nor great enough for a striking Oxford success. How was he to prevent himself from attempting impossibilities and achieving a final mediocrity?' (*RE*: 64). Neither dull nor great, Elsmere and Lobe are both caught somewhere in the middle of being a man, and it is no wonder that Jane

Hardy finds it easier to see Lobe as a woman. During the final days of his illness, Elsmere recognises himself as an invalid, 'a man no longer' (*RE*: 567).

Being a good man in the later years of the nineteenth century is a precarious, fragile sphere of existence. The capacity to care too much for others is presented as a kind of aberration, a movement away from the natural state of masculinity. The doctor tells Lobe, "'If a man is in a normal condition, he thinks of nothing but himself; the troubles of others slip from his memory like water off a duck's back. But if he is below par for some reason or other, the disease of caring about the sorrows of the world creeps in on him'" (*IDL*: 65). He suggests that there must be something wrong, or faulty, with a man if he demonstrates too much concern for the problems of others. His linguistic frame of reference is characteristically medical, but the illness to which he refers concerns both the individual and society.[6]

In both novels, the desire of the protagonist to save others is as strong as in earlier works, but whereas the rescues performed by John Halifax, Guy Morville and Daniel Deronda are heroic or effective, the good man as rescuer now finds himself much less empowered. Lobe feels the frustration of being unable to help others to a sufficient degree, telling his unnamed lady companion, "'I seem to feel myself in my people, and I know that, do what I may, I cannot save them all... I sometimes feel I could leap into the burning pit if only I could save my people from it'" (*IDL*: 118). Elsmere also attempts a rescue while on holiday in France, but is unable to save the baigneur who has himself jumped into the sea to rescue a swimmer in distress. For two hours, Elsmere tries to restore life to the body he has managed to drag from the sea, but he is too late, and, moreover, he is subsequently ill for three days afterwards himself.

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[6] The nineteenth-century fictional doctor's function as diagnoser of moral and social ills would make for a rewarding area of further study. Doctors, grounded in the world of newly-developing science, are often worldly and insightful, and have essential experience in handling bodies and minds.

The act of real, bodily rescue seems, for good men of the later nineteenth century, an impossibly physical feat.

Saving, being saved, and the act of sacrifice are themes in both novels, echoing the earlier essays in salvation attempted by Rivers and Benson. Rivers agrees to save Jane from homelessness and despair; Benson attempts to save Ruth's reputation by taking her in to his household and lying about her circumstances. These rescues concern practical and social remedy rather than the more mystical, spiritual salvation evident in later novels. The renunciation of worldly life and 'sinful' leisure activities such as drinking and gambling is one of the cornerstones of the Salvationist movement, and the mysterious phenomenon of getting 'saved' is one that Harkness does not elucidate in her novel. She describes the effect, though not the process, in the conversion of a former stockbroker who dreams that his local clergyman has all along been a hypocrite, reciting the word of God but lacking in earnestness. The man resolves to find a church that requires him to *do* something as well as *be* something: '"I profess to believe the Gospel of Christ, yet I make no sacrifice"' (*IDL*: 35). Pamela Walker notes that, by giving up pugilism, betting and drinking in order to enable conversion, 'Salvationist men placed themselves *outside* the institutions and activities that displayed and defined working-class manliness' (Walker, 1991: 92; my italics).

Existing outside of a conventional masculinity, Elsmere and Lobe must seek an alternative way of being good and being manly. Both are concerned with finding the 'right' way to be a man, and both struggle with identifying their own sense of masculinity. For Elsmere, 'the *one* thing that matters [is] the struggle to be a man in the world, and not a beast – to make one's heart clean and soft, and not hard and vile' (*RE*: 340; italics original). Not being 'a beast' often means having enough self-respect and self-discipline to behave in a way that is not immoral. The men whom Lobe encounters by the docks say to him, '"It's just no good, Salvation. I can't get no work, so I may as

well make a beast of myself, and forget God made a man of me in the beginning'" (*IDL*: 130). Lobe deplores the preferred amusements of the slum-dwellers as 'bestial,' and their grasping after happiness as 'mere brute instincts' (146). Like Elsmere, his tendency is towards the 'clean and soft' of the new moral man: 'He could not harden his heart and toughen his skin; his flesh remained tender like that of little children... Captain Lobe would remain young all his life' (147).

In spite of this masculine softness, both men define their peaceable work with the language of war and violence. The ritualist clergyman Newcome tells Elsmere, '"We are but soldiers under orders"' and speaks of the 'battle' for souls; he has no capacity for the tolerance and liberalism favoured by Elsmere (*RE*: 164). When Elsmere has been in the East End for some six weeks, he finds himself somewhat adrift in the sea of unbelief. Having renounced his living, he tries to continue his work among the poor in London but is overwhelmed by the sense of isolation and failing morale: 'Hitherto he had always swum with the stream, cheered by the support of all the great and prevailing English traditions. Here, he and his few friends were fighting a solitary fight apart from the organised system of English religion and English philanthropy' (*RE*: 453). Lobe also spends much of his working day in isolation and similarly views himself as a civilian soldier, but he is at least a uniformed member of a recognisable organisation. It is revealed during the narrative that he has come to the Salvation Army via evangelicalism and Methodism, and that he has chosen the Salvationists because of their ability to mobilise forces where they were most needed. Lobe

> had no great affection for the Salvation Army. But he did not know any other organisation that worked so hard, that fought so manfully against the world, the flesh and the devil... More than once he had felt inclined to hand in his resignation, and work single-handed in Whitechapel. But who was he? What could he do by himself? Was not this wish the lust of the spirit? (*IDL*: 162).

His mother has told him, '"Remember, my son, you can do nothing by yourself; you are but a blessed instrument"' (162).

The Salvation Army, with its military style uniforms, ranks and hierarchy, and its short-term postings, sometimes overseas, was clearly intended to appeal to the kind of man who wanted to join up and fight without actually killing anyone. It offered a sense of community and solidarity for compassionate, godly manliness, in which the individual could join an alternative military task force whose focus was the rescue of souls and the defence of Christianity. Its rigid organisational framework made it more effective than the other force for good of *In Darkest London*. 'Enthusiasts' is Harkness's term for the kind of men likely to become Socialists; they are 'men without power, but with a great deal of good feeling' (*IDL*: 115). Although their principles are just, there is too little organisation, leading to an inability to work together for any common aim. In this novel, the failure of Christianity has led directly to the need for Socialism; if the commandment 'Love thy Neighbour' had been followed, Jane Hardy argues, then the present social conditions of the East End would never have arisen (116). Socialism is equally ineffective here because it lacks the structure and focus that the Salvation Army has managed to achieve; the lone individual has insufficient social or political power to make any real difference. The ideals of the earlier Christian Socialist movement, led by F. D. Maurice and John Ludlow, have separated into disparate bodies of thought; the Salvation Army represents the possibility of combining the Christian message with the alleviation of poverty.

Elsmere, not a member of an organised force, also recognises the humility of his individual vulnerability, and the ineffectiveness of standing alone against the world: '"Do not imagine," he said to himself, as though with a fierce dread of possible self-delusion, "that it is in you to play any great commanding part... But let me do what is given me to do!"' (*RE*: 398). The theatre of war has become a place of spectacle – in fact, a literal theatre – rather than one of action, in which Elsmere shuns a leading role; and yet the desire for action, to *do* something, remains his priority. Lobe is surrounded

by various factions – Roman Catholics, infidels, High Church and Low Church – trying, and failing, to make any real difference; they are 'all trying to do good in their own fashion... I wonder why,' he asks himself, 'one sees so little result from so much effort!' (*IDL*: 59). The doctor laments that the tide of poverty, dirt and disease is too strong, and his best efforts are merely palliative; he can solve no real problems, and yet he cannot allow himself to do nothing: '"I do no good, but I cannot go away,"' he tells Lobe (66). The solitary good man cannot do much without the help and support of others, particularly in this very intense urban environment that is seventy years removed from the upper-middle class rural world of Jane Austen's characters, and some twenty or thirty years from Gaskell's small town communities. Changes in demographic, social and cultural conditions have made the 1880s good man very different from Mr Knightley and his annual gift of apples to Miss Bates.

Knowledge and Conscience

Goodness becomes, for these later characters, less a matter of feeling and more a matter of knowledge and learning: after Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871), faith alone is no longer robust enough to provide a securely moral foundation. Darwin's second work on evolutionary theory had discussed morality in some detail, but did so in terms of individual conscience rather than religion. The 'grand idea' of a God who loved righteousness and hated sin was, Darwin stated, unknown in prehistoric times (Darwin, 1898: 223), and therefore must be a more recent man-made invention.

In previous chapters I have shown how the good man's reliance on his sense of duty and conscience has enabled him to do what he believes to be the right thing. By the 1880s, individual morality and conscience could no longer be relied upon to form the basis for correct behaviour: individuals were fallible, and the presence of a corrective God was no longer assured. Besant's view of morality is similar to Nietzsche's, in that

she defines morality as 'nothing more than obedience to certain arbitrary and conventional rules'; she calls for a more rational, methodical way of measuring what constitutes morality (Besant, 1882b: 3). George Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, in one of a series of articles of 1881, suggests that morality is more complex than merely 'a sense of obligation'. He adds, 'When we speak, therefore, of a Moral Sense or of Conscience, we do not speak of it as a separate entity any more than when we speak of Reason or of Imagination' (Argyll, 1881: 190-1). Morality, conscience, obligation and duty are not always founded on reliable sources, and, according to Argyll, cannot even be relied upon as discrete realities. When these defining aspects of a good man are removed or questioned, his whole sense of identity is threatened. Like Daniel Deronda, Lobe and Elsmere must know themselves in order to be consistently good. When Elsmere's belief founders, bringing with it the loss of his profession as he understands it, he fears that his entire moral stability is under threat:

> Is it the law of things? "Once loosen a man's *religio*, once fling away the old binding elements, the old traditional restraints which have made him what he is, and moral deterioration is certain." How often he has heard it said! How often he has endorsed it! Is it true? His heart grows cold within him. What good man can ever contemplate with patience the loss, not of friends or happiness, but of his best self? (*RE*: 338).

Lobe does not undergo the same kind of self-scrutiny that Elsmere must endure, and *In Darkest London* does not attempt the rigorous characterisation that is evident in Ward's novel. However, Lobe remains morally consistent throughout the novel, hating sin but loving sinners (*IDL*: 18). Arguably, his morality is more radical than Elsmere's, since its foundations are as much built on secular compassion for humanity as on spiritual belief in God. Elsmere eventually arrives at a similar position by the end of Ward's novel, where his work in the East End has become more practical than spiritual.

The certainty of 'moral deterioration' in the absence of religious belief was widely debated, with atheists and free thinkers insisting that goodness existed

independently of God, while the more conservative believers argued that religion was the vital framework on which morality depended. Goldwin Smith was to remark, a year after Argyll's article, that asking whether science could define or determine morality is an entirely different thing from saying that morality cannot exist without religion. He dismisses as morally repugnant those 'freethinkers' who propose to keep religion purely as an empty instrument of social control – 'the means of restraining the vulgar and protecting the refined enjoyments of the cultivated' (Smith, 1882: 335). This proposal for religion to become merely a social facade to enable social or professional progress while at the same time keeping the lower classes in order is something Harkness's doctor recognises: he confides to Lobe, '"The worst of trying to get on in my profession is that men are obliged to be, or appear to be, religious, in order to become rich and fashionable... Social climbing, or getting on, always ends in moral degradation"' (*IDL*: 141). Squire Wendover is also familiar with this phenomenon but sees nothing wrong with it: '"Good God, what nonsense! As if anyone inquired what an English parson believed nowadays, so long as he performs all the usual antics decently!"' (*RE*: 327).

Elsmere and Lobe cannot justify this discrepancy between inward belief and outward behaviour. Elsmere refuses to remain in his living when he realises that he cannot entirely trust his own failing convictions; the only thing he can be certain of is that '"nothing would induce me to preach another Easter Day sermon to a congregation that have both a moral and a legal right to demand from me an implicit belief in the material miracle!"' (*RE*: 344). When Mme de Netteville attempts to seduce him, Elsmere experiences 'moral tumult'; he finds it impossible that anyone could think him capable of such duplicity: 'What, preach to others, and stumble himself into such mire as this? Talk loudly of love and faith, and make it possible all the time that a fellow human creature should think you capable at a pinch of the worst treason against both?' (*RE*: 509). Hypocrisy, surely, is the result of an inferior conscience; Elsmere and Lobe,

226

as good men must, strive for honesty and a transparent connection between their inner belief in what is right and their outward behaviour. The doctor's comment to Lobe towards the end of *In Darkest London* reveals perhaps the highest praise the novel can bestow: '"Well,"' he says, '"of all the Christians I ever met, you are the only one that has not turned out to be a hypocrite"' (*IDL*: 199).

However, the individual conscience is, like other aspects of morality, revealed to be somewhat arbitrary, and therefore unreliable as an absolute determiner of right and wrong, or good and evil. Besant shows the inadequacy of relying on the conscience alone to determine what is right:

> Conscience does not enable a man to discern between good and evil: the decision as to the morality or immorality of an action is made by the reason, whether that reason be enlightened or unenlightened. All that conscience does is to urge the man to follow that which the reason declares to be right... Conscience is not a safe guide – in fact, it is no guide at all; it is not the eye which chooses the path, but the foot which blindly carries us wherever the brain directs (Besant, 1882b: 8-9).

Conscience cannot truly see what is incontrovertibly right because 'right' is subjective, and depends on the strength and integrity of reason to determine and define it. The role of reason, of considered and intelligent thought, grew to be indispensable to morality for believers and atheists alike.

Captain Lobe's simple faith is based on the Bible and its teachings; he is proud of the fact that '[he] had not studied any book but the Bible' (*IDL*: 141). He has escaped the dangers of books and learning, which have become not an aid to morality but a threat to its very existence. Indeed, it is a book – Squire Wendover's *The Idols of the Market Place* – that sets in motion the destruction of Elsmere's faith. Written as a response to contemporary European theological argument, the book sets out to 'assail' each stronghold of English religion, and has already caused a moral outrage among a 'startled and protesting' public. As Elsmere reads, he experiences the 'desolate intolerable moment' that signals the beginning of his loss of faith and of identity: 'Over

the young idealist soul there swept a dry destroying whirlwind of thought' (*RE*: 274-5).

The danger of thought is that it has the power to tear down mere belief. Ward had

defined 'unbelief' as 'a particular way of judging a series of documents and events, a

particular view of the nature of historical evidence... [it is] a matter of literary and

critical judgement' (Ward, 1889: 167).

Elsmere's greatest problem, as a good man, is his capacity to question and

analyse; it is his propensity for independent thought that distinguishes him from other

clergymen in the novel. Ward makes it the most notable quality that underpins his

various roles as a man – 'the man of action, the husband, the philanthropist' – and

emphasises the triumph of thought over feeling: 'In reality, great as was the moral

energy of this period of Elsmere's life, the dominant distinguishing note of it was not

moral but intellectual'. Thought engenders 'fresh forces, fresh hunger, fresh horizons'

(*RE*: 269); it makes faith seem inadequate and unfounded. It also makes faith seem

fragile and ephemeral, easily destroyed. During the first part of the novel, Elsmere

moves from pure faith to pure thought before he can eventually reconcile the two:

> With Elsmere, as with all men of religious temperament, belief in
> Christianity and faith in God had not at the outset been a matter of
> reasoning at all, but of sympathy, feeling, association, daily
> experience. Then the intellect had broken in, and destroyed or
> transformed the belief in Christianity (*RE*: 393).

Intellect 'breaks in' like a burglar, stealing the peace of earlier faith; it works on faith

like the theories of evolution that brought inevitable revision of what had previously

been viewed as unshakable. With the clear vision of objective thought, Elsmere can see

that the chronicles and scriptures of the past cannot be real in the sense that he had once

thought them. The *Life* of a sainted bishop is revealed to be 'a tissue of marvels': 'The

young bishop had practised every virtue known to the time, and wrought every

conceivable miracle, and the miracles were better told than usual, with more ingenuity,

more imagination' (*RE*: 271). The metafictional goodness of the bishop is revealed to be

unrealistic and unbelievable to the modern analytical mind; practising 'every virtue' is no longer a virtue in itself but has become almost a proof of artifice.

The ritualist clergyman Newcome, like Captain Lobe, shuns the kind of knowledge that might seek to undermine his own faith, and warns Elsmere against certain '"dangerous tendencies...against the worship of intellect and science"'. He reveals himself to be living in a mystical past when he chastises Elsmere: '"Scholarship! Learning! You allow them a value in themselves, apart from the Christian's test. It is the modern canker, the modern curse!"' (*RE*: 165). Elsmere himself, for a time, is uneasy about this very thing, asking Catherine, '"Do you think I am making knowledge too much of a god just now? ... I have been full of qualms myself. The squire excites one so, makes one feel as though intellect – accumulation – were the whole of life. But I struggle against it"' (303).

Lobe is not cursed with the same kind of mental acuity that needs to seek answers, rather like Ward's hypothetical 'C' in 'Sin and Unbelief'. Harkness writes that 'nothing could shake his faith, for that was made of adamant, and all he had to do was preach the Gospel; he was not called upon to follow people into the labyrinths of their mental difficulties' (*IDL*: 142). Lobe himself professes, '"I thank God every day that I am not clever. An intellect is a snare of the devil, it seems to me; a misery here, and a stumbling-block in the way of the hereafter"' (*IDL*: 118). Catherine Elsmere is also glad that she is not 'clever', because she is consequently unable to understand that 'the Gospels are like other books, full of mistakes' (*RE*: 353) and her faith thus remains unchallenged. Elsmere, on the other hand, must pursue the question to the very limits of his own understanding. It is true that, as Lobe believes, in these fictions the effects of intellectual striving can cause misery: Elsmere develops an 'entirely new' tendency towards depression and irritability, and whereas he endures 'black agony', Catherine remains serene in her 'soft religious peace' (*RE*: 317, 275).

There is also something insatiable and uncontrollable about the quest for knowledge and understanding. The problem with a good man thinking independently is that he must remain faithful to the process he has set in motion; he must pursue to the end what he thinks and believes to be right, regardless of whether society condones the conclusions he reaches. This is the issue raised by Francis Reginald Statham in his 1896 article 'The Real Robert Elsmere'. Statham sees, in Elsmere's earnestness and conscientiousness, similarities with Cranbrook's enquiring spirit: 'Earnestness and sincerity had carried James Cranbrook to a certain point, but they did not leave him there... The old questioning spirit that was visible in the pages of his *Credibilia* still possessed him... *The critical spirit, once set free and thoroughly aroused, would not rest satisfied*' (Statham, 1896: 258; my italics).

The pursuit of knowledge is dangerous because, once started, it is unstoppable and irrevocable; it could lead anywhere, potentially destroying personal relationships along the way. It is not enough to disbelieve (or 'unbelieve') the old ways, but the new ways – whatever they might reveal themselves to be – may turn out to be shocking and extreme to a point that might arouse hostility in others. Elsmere's pursuit of knowledge and understanding inevitably alienates his wife, who does not attempt to question her own beliefs. He experiences a sense of painful spiritual separation not only from himself but also from Catherine, who initially remains unaware of the extent of Elsmere's personal suffering. The fact that Elsmere and his wife find themselves in different corners during this crisis suggests that the mid-century companionate marriage has been replaced by something more organic and autonomous: Catherine cannot single-handedly maintain the even moral keel of their relationship, nor can she prevent the disruptive consequences of independent thought. Ward has made this clear from the beginning of their relationship, when Elsmere and Catherine sometimes find themselves unable to communicate: '[Elsmere] was merely talking the natural Christian language of

this generation; whereas she, the child of a mystic – solitary, intense, and deeply reflective from her earliest youth – was still thinking and speaking in the language of her father's generation' (*RE*: 85). Catherine's unquestioning faith belongs to the past, and cannot withstand the rigorous questioning spirit of the later nineteenth century.

Transition and Resolution

Resolution, for Robert Elsmere, lies in reconstructing his religious foundations while at the same time remaining true to his idea of himself as an honest man. The only viable option he can contemplate initially is the renunciation of his living. '"There are some things which a man only does because he must"', he tells Wendover (*RE*: 371); his resignation is preferable to the potential hypocrisy of continuing to recite the words of scripture while not fully believing them, and his duty as a good man is to remain true to his own sense of what is right. He launches his new religious movement, the Brotherhood of Christ, as an organised concern, handing out membership badges to those who have expressed a desire to join him. His devotion is to 'an idea' rather than to unquestioning faith (553), and the movement is based on a rational appreciation of Christ as an inspirational, though mortal, historical figure. Elsmere runs classes and delivers lectures, becoming a storyteller rather than a preacher; his focus is on literary and historical analysis rather than on belief, and he uses the power of story to rouse 'moral sympathy and the awakening of the imaginative power pure and simple' (454). Catherine, naturally, objects to his approach, complaining, '"Your historical Christ, Robert, will never win souls. If he was God, every word you speak will insult him. If he was man, he was not a good man!"' (461). Her implication is that if Christ was merely mortal, the good works he claimed to have performed in God's name were blasphemous and hypocritical. Flaxman writes in a letter, '"We are in the full stream of religion-making... Elsmere reads [from *The Life of Christ*] and expounds it, in the first place, as a

lecturer might expound a passage of Tacitus, historically and critically"' (553).

Conversely, he is more convincingly a source of spiritual inspiration as a lecturer than

he ever was as a clergyman. Gladstone remarks, 'It is impossible indeed to conceive a

more religious life than the later life of Robert Elsmere, in his sense of the word

religion... It is, however, a new form of religion' (Gladstone, 1888: 777).

Much earlier in the novel, when Elsmere has first encountered Wendover's

library, he suggests that 'dirt and drains' should form the foundation of a sound religion;

Langham drily corrects him, '"Dirt, drains, and Darwin"' (*RE*: 169), creating a secular

trinity that anticipates Elsmere's work in the East End. The 'new form of religion' that

develops for Elsmere ultimately comes from his basic faith in humanity: 'Nothing was

so easy to him as to believe in other people's goodness, or cleverness, or superhuman

achievements' (492); it is human goodness itself that forms the basis of his new creed.

Similarly, Lobe, despite his sense of hopelessness among the slum-dwellers, realises

that 'love alone makes life worth living' (*IDL*: 182). He sees the possibility for 'moral

geniuses,' people who devote themselves tirelessly to unselfishness; Hester is one of

these, and 'those who believe in spirits would say that a good genius animated her

moral faculty' (123). Belief in humanity rather than in God is not, by 1888, something

new, but the striving for balance between what is secular and what is holy – and what,

therefore, is good – takes on a new moral significance. Statham recognises the general

struggle of faith with doubt, poverty and science, and sees it as an ongoing quest for the

true nature of goodness: 'The effort of the race has been, and is, an effort towards a

realisation of "the nobler life of man" – an effort constantly going on amid the gloom of

doubts, of half-failures, of inadequate conceptions, of mental and moral cruelties and

oppressions' (Statham, 1896: 260).

The transition from unbelief to new belief involves a brief period of

vulnerability; Goldwin Smith writes, 'the crustacean may be sure to get another shell,

but he will be soft in the meantime' (Smith, 1882: 337). While Elsmere can see the inevitability of this 'transition England', he is nevertheless troubled by his uncertainty about what the individual's role might be in establishing it. The best conclusion he can arrive at is that 'plain sincerity of act and speech - a correspondence as perfect as could be reached between the inner faith and the outer deed' must be the aim of each man. Between the loss of his faith in Christ as the son of God and his reconstruction of belief through The Brotherhood of Christ, Elsmere finds that he must believe in something if he is to avoid moral chaos: 'Only the habit of faith held, the close instinctive clinging to a Power beyond sense – a Goodness, a Will, not man's' (*RE*: 398, 337). During the hiatus of 'softness' Elsmere believes only in goodness itself, wherever it might originate.

When he begins to assemble the elements of his new faith, he addresses the London workmen in the third person, revealing the emotional distance between his old self and his emerging identity: '"The man who is addressing you tonight believes in *God*; and in *Conscience*, which is God's witness to the soul; and in *Experience*, which is at once the record and instrument of man's education in God's hands"'. He has moved from 'dirt, drains and Darwin' to a new holy trinity of God, Conscience and Experience, to believe in 'an Eternal Goodness' where experience reflects the physical, intellectual and moral history of the world (*RE*: 475). Lobe's transitional hiatus is spent in physical retreat in Kent with the hop-pickers, where he is able to recover some of his mental and emotional energy. The spiritual tension between what he would like to accomplish in the East End, and what little he is actually able to do, has caused mental and physical exhaustion, but he emerges from his restorative sojourn in the country ready to embark on his new venture, a temporary posting to Australia. At the same time he realises that he must marry Ruth, 'bequeathed' to him by the dying Hester, if he is to maintain his moral and emotional equilibrium.

The capacity to be a good husband is one of the defining characteristics of good men in nineteenth-century women's fiction. While I disagree that women writers create only 'women's men', it is clear that they nevertheless generally create men who will become 'safe' husbands: Lobe and Elsmere, like the other good men I have discussed in this thesis, are – or will become – reliable protectors and companions. Elsmere berates himself for losing an opportunity to propose marriage to Catherine, and his self-talk is full of manly verbs: 'Oh, why had he been so timid? Why had he not boldly caught her to himself and ... trampled on her scruples, marched through her doubts, convinced – reasoned her into blessed submission?' (*RE*: 122). The reason he fails to do any of these things is, of course, that he is a good man: he knows his own feelings but is content to wait until Catherine knows hers; he understands that there is nothing to be gained by applying force.

Langham's relationship with Rose is doomed to fail because of his incapacity to believe in his own latent goodness. Though handsome and intelligent, 'it was as though the man were suffering from paralysis of some moral muscle or other' (*RE*: 54). He wrestles with himself over whether or not he can marry Rose, reflecting the dual identity that had been apparent between Jekyll and Hyde, and in Dorian Gray: 'Opposite to him, as it seemed, there sat a spectral reproduction of himself, his true self, with whom he had a long and ghastly argument'. Unable to reconcile his 'true self' with his desires, 'the bloodless conqueror' emerges triumphant against every weapon Langham possesses: 'remorse and terror, love and pity, a last impulse of hope, a last stirring of manhood, had been alike powerless to save' (433-4). Langham miserably fails the test that Lobe and Elsmere have passed; having been beaten in his youth by 'the practical absurdity of trying to realise any of the mind's inward dreams' (55), he has never revised his sense of identity or reality and consequently forfeits the usual rewards of the

good man. In Langham, the supremacy of intellect is such that any intrusion of feeling has the power to 'destroy his mental balance' (442).

Conclusion

    Robert Elsmere and *In Darkest London* are, in many ways, novels of extremes: the zeal of evangelical faith versus the measured, rational revision of belief in the former, and the realism of extreme poverty in the East End versus the idealism of faith in the latter, make for a wide and expansive middle ground that the good man must negotiate. Newcome ferociously tells Elsmere, '"Trample on yourself! ... Fling away the freedom which is your ruin. There is no freedom for man. Either a slave to Christ or a slave to his own lusts – there is no other choice"' (*RE*: 322). He too suggests the same duality explored in the slightly earlier *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), in which the first reported act of Hyde is that he 'trampled calmly' over the body of a young girl (Stevenson, 2003: 9). Jekyll and Hyde, too, remain in thrall to their own separate codes of being; as Newcome claims, neither is free. Hyde is slave to his own terrible lusts; Jekyll must 'conceal [his] pleasures' (ibid.: 48) and submit to the outwardly respectable guise that proclaims him to be a gentleman.

    Elsmere's failure to 'trample' on Catherine's scruples and Newcome's exhortation that he should trample on his own suggest a need for stifling the individual will in favour of submission to another. This was the very issue facing English thought at the time of *Robert Elsmere*'s publication: religion involves submission to an unknown, unknowable authority; atheism brings with it the threat of moral disintegration. De Laveleye's fear that morality would disappear along with religion is supported by his view on the inadequacy of science as a moral guide: 'Science, when reduced to material observation, can only know what is, not what *ought* to be. If there does not exist, beyond the tangible reality, an ideal of right and justice, how can I

possibly conform to it?' (de Laveleye, 1888: 9). Besant argues the opposite view, that 'Christian morality has had its turn; and the present state of society, its crying shames, its cruel sufferings, tell us that authoritative morality has failed' (Besant, 1882b: 16).

Some forty years later, Rose Macaulay could look back on the religious crises of the 1880s with a gently satirical spirit. In her 1923 novel *Told by an Idiot*, Aubrey Garden's broad-mindedness amounts to 'a disease,' and he changes his faith at least sixteen times through the course of the novel. His wife remarks on the pointlessness of the finer tenets of belief, arguing, '"I don't quite know what I do believe. But I have long ago come to the conclusion that it matters very little. You, you see, have seemed equally happy for a time, equally unhappy after a time, in all the creeds or no-creeds. And equally good, my dear"' (Macaulay, 1983: 53). Garden's belief, non-belief, happiness and goodness have been unravelled by the hindsight of the 1920s and one quality has very little bearing on another. The problems debated so fervently in the 1880s inevitably resulted in reassessment by twentieth century thought, but nevertheless the very real issues for late nineteenth-century thinkers were complex and circumambulatory: Christianity requires total submission to the laws of God and the Church; Darwinism argues for the survival of the fittest; Socialism argues for the protection of the weakest. Somewhere in between all these ideologies lies a moderate ground that is perhaps the ideal refuge of the reliable, safe decency that is the nineteenth-century good man.

<u>Conclusion</u>

<u>A Good Man: Towards a Definition of Moral Masculinity</u>

It is well that there is no one without a fault; for he
would not have a friend in the world. He would
seem to belong to a different species.[1]

    The aim of this thesis has been to conceptualise a discrete pattern of male goodness in women's fiction of the nineteenth century, and to explore the idea that thinkers and novelists actively tried to understand goodness by showing a willingness to enter into a debate with it. By adopting a firmly text-based approach, I have been able to sustain close readings that correlate with contemporary non-fictional sources and with modern philosophical and cultural treatises. Collectively, these texts help to form an image of the good man in nineteenth-century fiction, and the emerging picture represents something of a challenge to established Victorian ideals of manliness and heroism. While good men sometimes carry out manly or heroic acts, they are more often private individuals trying to do their best in a limited sphere. As the nineteenth-century world expands around them, the scope of their action seems to shrink proportionately, giving the unfortunate impression that good men become small men, insignificant and unremarkable. Whereas Mr Knightley, for example, is a securely authoritative figure within the confines of his own world, Captain Lobe and Robert Elsmere are overwhelmed by the sheer scale and number of the social problems that surround them and are powerless to effect substantial improvement.

    Goodness is central to human society, but philosophers, sociologists and cultural critics, in attempting to define it, are defeated by the fact that goodness is ultimately indefinable. Novelists see the theory of goodness and try to create concrete examples of

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[1] William Hazlitt, 1948. 'Characteristics' in *The Essays of William Hazlitt, Selected and Edited by Frank Carr*, London: Walter Scott Ltd., p. 215.

it in their fiction, which tends to create a separate, more literary, problem: good men, as a result of their capacity to embrace duty rather than pleasure and their willingness to resist temptation, can often strike readers as priggish, or 'offensively virtuous' (Vance, 1985: 24). The changing moral standards and priorities throughout this period intensify the impossibility of arriving at one clear definition of what constitutes a good man.

Literary characters are nevertheless powerful role models for readers throughout the nineteenth century: Charles Kingsley claimed to have been uplifted and improved by *John Halifax, Gentleman*; Samuel Smiles writes that the lives of good men, whether fictional or biographical, 'influence our hearts, inspire us with hope, and set before us great examples' (Smiles, 2009: 184). The fact that the nineteenth century needed these examples suggests that the lives of the exemplary few were influential in shaping social and cultural moral standards. The 'worship' of literary character, Auerbach writes, reached its zenith in the nineteenth century, because that was the point at which the art of fiction attained its primacy (Auerbach, 1982: 229). Smiles trusts the power of books to construct public and private codes of behaviour, and he also believes in the immortality of good men: 'The great and good do not die, even in this world. Embalmed in books their spirits walk abroad. The book is a living voice. It is an intellect to which one still listens. Hence we ever remain under the influence of great men of old' (Smiles, 2009: 183). Despite the difficulty of articulating in what exactly goodness consists, this thesis has identified some common themes, which are outlined below.

A Widening Sphere

The development of the novel as an art form during the nineteenth century allows for a more sinuous demonstration of male goodness as the century progresses. Increasingly intricate plot structures introduce more ethical dilemmas in which a character must negotiate the most admirable moral path through the narrative. Early

children's fiction suggests the development of a life map that shows how a boy becomes a good man, from basic obedience to adult authority in *The History of Sandford and Merton* towards the more complex independence of thought and conscience in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Jane Austen's closed communities of upper middle class gentry show that good men are essentially reactive: they tend to do little until provoked, either by an alarming situation or by the actions of a morally reprehensible character. By introducing a moral problem into the central plot of the novel, Brontë and Gaskell, for example, can also show the means by which the correct moral outcome can be achieved. John Halifax and Guy Morville regard goodness as an inheritable trait that can be passed on to future generations; their moral dilemmas are less acute than Benson's and their demonstration of goodness consequently more generalised. John Halifax, in particular, makes a conscious effort to demonstrate goodness beyond his immediate domestic sphere, ensuring that his employees are protected from exploitation. Daniel Deronda's goodness is initially directed more or less equally, towards Meyrick and Mordecai, and Mirah and Gwendolen, in an attempt to provide relief for them as individuals. When he later appreciates his own heritage as a Jew, his goodness is turned further outward to a much wider social and cultural community. Robert Elsmere's quest for the meaning of true faith takes him from Catherine's rural Westmoreland home to the urban poverty of the East End of London, and Captain Lobe's activities are directed solely towards trying to relieve the lives of the extreme poor.

Notions of manhood and manliness, like goodness, are subject to shifting, fluid boundaries that represent process rather than object: masculinity, like femininity, is a relational construct that defines and redefines itself historically and culturally. There is a visible pattern throughout this study that gradually associates ideas of goodness with the concept of gentlemanly conduct, where 'becoming a gentleman' is, for John Halifax, an aspirational process that will allow him to be identified automatically as a good man.

Like Pip in *Great Expectations* (1860-1), Halifax aims to become a gentleman because of the higher social and moral status that the title confers: the word 'gentleman' validates his moral standards, signifying his cultural as well as his economic worth. It also offers him a connection with his own ancestral past and his forefathers, thus linking goodness with past and future. As the possibilities for social advancement grew, an increasing number of men could call themselves gentlemen and adopt the associated moral status. Deronda also aspires to gentlemanliness for its tacit endorsement of morality, confessing to his guardian, 'I should like to be a gentleman' (Eliot, 2002: 172). Still later, the word briefly acquires a kind of ironic subversion, as Stephen Arata notes in his study of *fin de siècle* fiction: the noun most used to describe Hyde in Stevenson's 1886 novel is not 'monster' or 'villain,' but 'gentleman' (Arata, 1996: 38).[2]

Along with the idea of gentlemanly conduct as a marker of moral masculinity is the developing sense of self-construction in the good man. Smiles insists that character is made rather than born; it is not an innate personal attribute but is something to be deliberately sought and consciously created. The acquisition of character requires strenuous effort against the temptations and difficulties in life by means of 'constant self-watchfulness, self-discipline, and self-control' (Smiles, 2009: 13). In Austen the good man acts as a moral barometer by which other characters are measured, though none of Austen's good men is entirely without fault.[3] Guy Morville makes deliberate and concentrated efforts to control his temper in order to enhance his capacity for tolerance and compassion. It is this enduring regard for others, perhaps, that properly shapes goodness; the process of self-construction and self-censorship is ultimately undertaken for the benefit of those whom the good man encounters.

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[2] Of course, Dracula and Dorian Gray are also 'gentlemen'.
[3] Knightley is jealous of Frank Churchill; Edmund Bertram lacks resolve and moral courage; Darcy is temporarily swayed by his own pride.

<u>Frailty and Sacrifice</u>

Sorley describes the highest conception of a moral life as 'one in which complete unity of character and purpose has been achieved by the harmonious subjection of all impulses... to the idea of the Good. This is the idea of the temperate man, and, in its completeness, it is also the ideal of the perfectly virtuous man' (Sorley, 1920: 40). The truly good man must subjugate desire and resist temptation, remaining watchful lest his self-restraint should fail him. Always acting rightly, even though arriving at what is right can be difficult, can make a man seem not just temperate, but also rather dull. Iris Murdoch has said that candidates for goodness are likely to be 'obscure, or... full of frailty' (Murdoch, 1970: 53). In giving such careful consideration to what is good or right, good men can seem hesitant or fearful.

This may be where the main problems of goodness lie: good men, though honest, upright and earnest, are often not as interesting, exciting or engaging as their more morally dubious counterparts, but at the same time they must be remarkable for their commitment to moral goodness. A good man must be an exemplary role model, admirable for his diligence and integrity, and esteemed for his determination to act for the benefit of others. He may even be valued for what he does *not* do, since some virtues are best illuminated most clearly by the suppression of their opposing vice. Simply suppressing the complementary fault, by not being immodest, indelicate, or surly, allows a behaviour to become automatically more socially admirable. Chastity, for example, signifies the self-denial of a physical appetite and is not in itself necessarily a virtue: it is the suppression of its dangerous opposite that makes it become one. Moral masculinity is therefore allied partly with not-doing – that is, not doing 'bad' things – and partly with impossible paradoxes such as being conspicuously humble, or gently heroic.

Gentle heroism forms one of the roles of the good man, and his rescue of others from physical or moral danger illuminates a quiet, domestic courage. Rather than a

gradual widening of the sphere of assistance and physical prowess through the century, there is a more intense crescendo that reaches its peak with the manly goodness of John Halifax and Guy Morville. Darcy's rescue of Lydia is primarily expedient, in that it averts a major moral catastrophe for the Bennet family; in addition, it is Darcy alone who possesses the necessary economic power to effect this off-stage manoeuvring. Benson's rescue of Ruth is intended to allow for her social recovery; while he has the spiritual and emotional means to save her, he lacks the physical power to do so. John Halifax and Guy Morville engage in a variety of successful rescues that result in physical or moral salvation, and they carry out these acts with vigour and courage, but also with self-effacement and dignity. By the mid-1870s, however, the nature of rescue by the good man has become a much less physical event: Deronda restores Gwendolen's necklace and allows Meyrick to succeed in his studies. His prevention of Mirah's intended suicide involves patient coaxing and persuasion, and he uses the power of words rather than expansive, heroic gestures in order to gain her trust. Elsmere lacks the physical prowess to save the drowning baigneur, failing in the attempt, and Lobe is likewise unsuccessful in preventing the effects of poverty and distress that surround him.

Good men tend to engage in acts of heroism from a sense of moral duty rather than from a sense of pleasure in physical exertion or glory. Smiles regards duty as providing 'the truest source of enjoyment' in a man's life (Smiles, 1880: 9); for Sorley, duty is 'the law of the moral life' (Sorley, 1911: 11). Duty generally involves restriction, the rejection of one course of pleasurable action in favour of one that is less pleasurable but more morally correct. While duty can be regarded as the foundation of moral character, it is often not the bringer of happiness; the good man's choice is often duty *or* pleasure, but seldom both.

Rescue often leads to, or results in, self-sacrifice. Gilbert and Gubar argue that a woman's education in docility, submissiveness and self-sacrifice is likely to lead to an

inevitable sickening and loss of physical vigour, that 'to be trained in renunciation is almost necessarily to be trained to ill health,' self-denial eventually overpowering the normal human urge to survive (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 54). However, this self-sacrifice and martyrdom – what might be understood as death in the name of goodness – are equally present in good men. Rivers sacrifices himself to his arduously spiritual work overseas, dying alone and far from home with much of his work still incomplete. Guy Morville becomes a martyr to goodness and dies tragically but piously; John Halifax dies silently and peacefully in his fifties towards the end of a good and full life; Robert Elsmere dies young after having begun his work founding the Brotherhood of Christ. Lobe survives the East End but is temporarily exiled to the other side of the world; Deronda is likewise sent beyond the novel to take up good work overseas. Taking on the world and trying to do some real good often results in death or exile, rendering the good man's personal goodness ultimately ineffective but allowing his legacy and spirit to survive him. In this way he becomes something more than mortal. The emblematic figures of the age – notably Thomas Arnold and Prince Albert – both died well before they attained old age, and their deaths tend to be seen as more tragic and more edifying for that reason. Arguably they are also remembered as good men for the same reason, their relative youth increasing their charisma and immortalising their good deeds up to that point.

There is still a tendency to regard sensitive, caring men as feminine, and this is perhaps even more the case where male characters originate in the female imagination. Many of the novels I discuss are centred on a female protagonist, though their titles do not necessarily reflect this.[4] Criticism of women's writing tends to focus primarily on the heroines in novels; there is still relatively little critical analysis of the male characters

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[4] Of the ten novels I discuss in detail from Chapter Two onwards, their titles can be categorised in four ways: three carry a woman's name; four carry a man's name or title; two carry the name of a place; one carries an opposing pair of personal attributes.

in novels by women. While Thurstan Benson, for example, is given a pivotal moral dilemma on which the rest of the narrative depends, *Ruth* is not his story, and he remains an ancillary character. Similarly, St John Rivers plays a relatively minor role in *Jane Eyre*, and his morality functions in contrast with that of Rochester. Gilbert and Gubar note that for every angel woman in a nineteenth-century novel, there is a corresponding devil woman (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 26), but this is equally true of men: for every good man in a nineteenth-century novel, there is at least one immoral or morally ambiguous man.

Stylistically, all the novels in this study are romances, or love stories, focusing on the courtship of at least one man and woman. Catherine Belsey defines the love story as one of triumph, for heroine and for female reader alike: 'the heroine finds her identity confirmed, her self-control rewarded or her values realised, as she recognises the hero's passion and at the same time responds to his attention and care' (Belsey, 1994: 22). Belsey's analysis follows the customary gynocentric critical pattern, but I would suggest that the nouns heroine and hero could be exchanged in this sentence without significant loss of meaning. These novels are as much about the confirmation of the moral male's identity, self-control and values as they are about the heroine's; the moral male finds as much attention and care in his wife, particularly at mid-century, as she does in him. John Halifax and Guy Morville are almost perfect examples of the outcomes that Belsey claims for the heroine alone, and, where many critics would argue that this constitutes evidence of feminised men, I argue that it is a different, more sensitive form of maleness that values self-validation and emotional security.

<u>Problems and Paradoxes</u>

Male goodness seems to negotiate a difficult path that must distinguish between duty and pleasure, sacrifice and personal fulfilment, and between physical courage and tenderness. In the case of St John Rivers, this schism results in a palpable difference between 'the insignificant private individual' and 'the missionary' (*JE*: 346); in *Ruth*, between 'the old [Mr Farquhar]... and the new one' (*R*: 189); in *Mansfield Park*, between the 'clandestine, insidious, treacherous' Henry Crawford and the 'honourable and upright' behaviour to which he briefly subscribes (*MP*: 222). The conduct of John Halifax, Guy Morville, and Daniel Deronda is more consistent in terms of private and public standards, though they are all seen wrestling with choices between duty and pleasure.

Rachel Brownstein has said that nineteenth-century heroines often seem to want something 'more complicated' than a good man (Brownstein, 1982: 117).[5] In fact there are few qualities more complicated than goodness. It evades definition, it transcends linguistic parameters, and its constantly shifting boundaries offer little possibility of grasping and categorising it in a systematic way. It is further complicated by its position in fiction, where the constructional nature of the text confirms the very transience of the world the reader has encountered. Furthermore, the novels I discuss in this study are all women's imaginings of good men, compounding the difficulties even more.

Gilbert and Gubar, discussing the powerlessness and oppression of women, state that 'almost all nineteenth-century women were in some sense imprisoned in men's houses' (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 83). While men are not physically restricted in the same way as women, they are nevertheless bound by their own moral codes: they are not free to pursue pleasures of their own choosing but must consistently adhere to a self-

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[5] It might be added that the unravelling of the anxieties latent in this good-enough/too-good dichotomy will continue to form a major part of contemporary and future masculinity studies.

imposed sense of duty, conscience and rigorous self-scrutiny. Good men seem to imprison themselves in their own fortified moral characters, resisting happiness and pleasure for themselves while actively seeking these same rewards for others. Striving for the right balance between goodness and perfection is often the cause of dissatisfaction at best, and outright unhappiness at worst. The good men in this study are often anxious or troubled; however good they are, they are never secure in their own goodness and strive always to be better, despite knowing that human perfection cannot exist. Eaton Stannard Barrett's irreverent narratorial comment that 'only fools, children and savages are happy' (Barrett, 1927: 30) confirms the responsibilities of moral masculinity to place duty before their personal pleasure, which continues to be true throughout the nineteenth century.

Beyond Moral Masculinity

In her introductory essay to Iris Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good* (2000), Catherine Bates identifies the essential 'unspeakable' quality of goodness and describes the way goodness is treated by moral philosophers and moral novelists. Moral philosophers, she suggests, are enjoined to speak the truth, 'bound not to utter falsehood or nonsense and so can only, when it comes to the unsayable, lapse into silence'. The moral novelist comes no closer to speaking of goodness than anyone else, because there are still no adequate words to describe it: she can only write about 'the nice and the bad' (Murdoch, 2000: xiv-xv). Arguably, nineteenth-century novelists are subject to the same restrictions, and likewise cannot describe male goodness in such explicit terms. Though they do show what good men do, and they show the effects of good men upon others in the novels, they still fail to find the words for what a good man *is*. This issue is compounded by the fact that notions of what is good in society are subject to periodic change. E S Dallas writes of this problem in 1866:

> A ban goes forth now against the delights of knowledge; now
> against marriage; now wine is accursed; now poetry, as the wine of
> devils, shares that curse. We are restless beings who are never long
> happy ourselves, and will not let the world be happy in its own way.
> Blissful, we are at war with bliss (Dallas, 1866: 159).

Bliss, strife, and goodness are thus inextricably connected, and the shifting relationship between them causes changing socio-historical standards that intensify the impossibility of defining goodness.

There is evidence that the nineteenth-century masculine values that I have discussed throughout this study continue to influence men today. The *Good Men Project* was founded in 2009 in New York by Tom Matlack and James Houghton. Aiming to discuss the changing role of men in the twenty-first century, the website publishes articles on such diverse subjects as parenting, gender issues, intimate relationships and the stereotyping of men and women in the media. Matlack was moved to create the site when he experienced a moment that he now realises most men encounter at some point in their lives; he writes, "I thought I knew what it meant to be a man. I thought I knew what it meant to be good. And I realise that I don't know either."' He set up the website intending to 'start an international conversation about what it means to be a good man in the 21st century'.[6]

Since 2001, Celia Lashlie[7] has worked for similar ends, with the New Zealand Good Man Project designed to enable teenage boys to become good men. The project 'aimed to discover what it meant to be a good man'[8] and was conceived and supported by state-run schools across New Zealand. The project began during a meeting with head teachers, in which the phrase 'good man' was used. When Lashlie asked the teachers

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[6] Matlack, T., *The Good Men Project:* http://www.goodmenproject.com/about, accessed 14/2/15.
[7] *He'll be OK: Helping Adolescent Boys Become Good Men*, by Celia Lashlie, was published in 2008 by HarperCollins.
[8] 'Growing Boys into Good Men' (22 October 2005) in *The New Zealand Herald*: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10351472, accessed 16/2/15.

how they would define a good man, 'there was a long silence'.[9] Lashlie spoke to 180 classes of adolescent boys and compiled a list of attributes for good men, the top three of which were 'trust, loyalty and humour'. Lashlie comments that "Good men tend not to be very visible while there are appalling men all over TV every day... Today's 'good men' have got to stand up and lead the next generation into manhood".[10]

In British popular culture this focus on masculine goodness is also a distinct phenomenon. A recent episode of *Dr Who* sees the Doctor preoccupied with his own morality, asking his assistant, "Am I a good man?" He has encountered an apparent impossibility in the form of a good dalek, whose morality has malfunctioned as a result of seeing beauty. Having restored the dalek to its usual evil ways, Journey complains, "We had a good dalek and we made it bad again." The Doctor responds, "No, we had a broken dalek and we mended it." In restoring the inherently bad to its 'normal' badness, the writer intensifies the debate about who or what has the capacity to be good, where goodness comes from, and who has the right to describe themselves as good.[11]

The fact that these issues are still being publicly discussed beyond academe suggests that moral masculinity remains the focus of intense interest and is of some importance in wider society and culture. The silence and invisibility that surround moral masculinity throughout the nineteenth-century are still noticeable today and, moreover, remain a source of curious fascination for campaigners such as Matlack and Lashlie. It is also clear that some of the issues raised by good men in novels of the nineteenth century have not been categorically resolved. We are still asking the same questions that were being asked by writers well over a century ago, and we are hypothesising similar answers.

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[9] 'How to turn a teen into a good man' (25 June 2008) in *The Guardian*: http://www.theguardian.com/society/2008/jun/25/youngpeople.youthjustice, accessed 16/2/15.
[10] Ibid.
[11] BBC Broadcast: *Doctor Who*, 'Into the Dalek', 30/8/14, 7.30-8.15pm.

The 'non-representable and indefinable' nature of good (Murdoch, 1970: 74) has fascinated writers for centuries; striving to be better, but without being too much better, highlights the fragile precariousness of living a morally good life. This study has initiated an insight into what it means to be a good man in the nineteenth century. The imagining of fictional characters, from Sir Charles Grandison and his nineteenth-century heirs to contemporary popular heroes like Doctor Who, allows for the exploration of what a truly, immanently good man might look like, if it were possible for such a thing to exist. Iris Murdoch writes in *The Sovereignty of Good*: 'virtue is an attempt to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is. It is an empirical fact about human nature that this attempt cannot be entirely successful' (Murdoch, 1970: 93).

This study has uncovered various layers of moral masculinity: from the gentlemen in Jane Austen's novels, who behave with impeccable decorum in averting the consequences of moral impropriety, to the grave morality founded in religious belief that is typical of clergymen; from the self-made man of the mid-nineteenth century to the tragic sacrifice and moral redemption of the chivalrous hero; from George Eliot's altruistic judge and confessor to the delicate nervousness and tentative seeking after goodness of the late nineteenth-century protagonist. Many facets of goodness are visible here, shining like beacons illuminating the paths of righteousness, inspiring others to be good men.

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