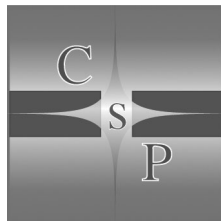


Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns

Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns:
Essays on Fiction and Culture

Edited by

Penny Gay, Judith Johnston, and Catherine Waters



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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To Margaret Harris, great Victorianist,
in gratitude and celebration

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PREFACE

This collection has been brought together in honour of Margaret Harris, Challis Professor of English at the University of Sydney (2006-7), and the holder of a personal chair in Victorian Literature and Biography. The essays collected here reflect the richness of her research. Her published contributions to Victorian studies alone include two important scholarly editions of primary material by George Eliot and George Meredith; editions of novels by George Eliot, George Meredith, and Arnold Bennett; and essays in major reference works such as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*, among others. Her published articles reveal her own scholarly turns and returns, at one time focusing on the journals of George Eliot, at another investigating stage and screen adaptations of the work of Eliot, Gaskell, and other Victorian novelists. Current projects include a major study of the lives and afterlives of the pseudonym “George Eliot” and editing *George Eliot in Context* for Cambridge University Press. Not included here, but an important scholarly contribution, is her extensive publishing in Australian literature, including key women writers of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

Margaret Harris taught in the English Department at the University of Sydney from 1969 to 2007. Several of her former students, now distinguished academics themselves, have contributed to this book. Along with them, her Australian and international colleagues offer a collection of essays that represents the diversity of Victorian studies as they have developed over the period covered by Professor Harris's career. While seeing literature as central, these scholars bring to bear on it the new perspectives created by a deeper awareness of the cultural context—in particular, dynamic social and technological change—and by the rich, continuing impetus towards the recycling and re-shaping of Victorian literature in modern culture.

Penny Gay
May 2008

Editions by Margaret Harris

The Journals of George Eliot, ed. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge University Press, 1998). Repr. 1999; paperback (rev. edn.) 2000.

Victorian Journalism: Exotic and Domestic, ed. Barbara Garlick and Margaret Harris (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998).

The Notebooks of George Meredith, ed. Gillian Beer and Margaret Harris, Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Romantic Reassessment 73:2 (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1983).

A Checklist of the Three-Decker Collection in the University of Sydney Library (Sydney: Department of English and the Library of the University of Sydney, 1980).

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (London, Everyman Paperbacks, 1997). xxxiv + 814 pp.

Arnold Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, ed. Margaret Harris (World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1995). xxviii + 227 pp.

Arnold Bennett, *The Old Wives' Tale*, ed. Margaret Harris (World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1995). xxix + 644 pp.

George Meredith, *The Egoist*, ed. Margaret Harris (World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1992). xxxi + 578 pp.

George Meredith, *Beauchamp's Career*, ed. Margaret Harris (World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1988). xxxix + 594 pp.

George Meredith, *One of our Conquerors*, ed. Margaret Harris (Victorian Texts III, University of Queensland Press, 1975). lii + 514 pp.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The editors warmly thank Fergus Armstrong for his assistance with the preparation of this book for publication.

INTRODUCTION

VICTORIAN TURNS, NEOVICTORIAN RETURNS

JUDITH JOHNSTON AND CATHERINE WATERS

In the opening chapter of *Great Expectations*, Pip vividly recalls the childhood terror of an involuntary somersault that he is forced to perform by the desperate convict he encounters on the marshes:

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside-down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself—for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the steeple under my feet—when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling, while he ate the bread ravenously.¹

Compelled to see his small world so suddenly inverted, Pip is ironically unaware just how formative this fearful experience of being turned upside-down will prove to be for him. Both traumatic and comic at once, the episode is the first in a series of surprising turnabouts that the novel charts, the most significant of which will be Magwitch's return from the antipodes, his pockets filled with the profits made from his colonial adventures in Australia. As Robert Hughes has written of the convicts transported to this place which he identifies as the "geographical unconscious" of empire, "[t]hey could succeed, but they could hardly, in the real sense, return."² Enacting, amongst other things, the return of the repressed plot of imperialism in Dickens's novel, Magwitch is a destabilising figure who helps to make visible some of the moral and social tensions explored in this darkly comic mid-Victorian version of the founding legend. These returns, both literal and symbolic, evoke another: as Pip recoils from the discovery of his unsuspected benefactor later in the novel, he complains that the "imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me."³ As a strange reworking of *Frankenstein*, *Great Expectations* demonstrates the form of return involved in writing

back. Every age of course adapts, rewrites, transforms earlier works, and Dickens's novel has had its own numerous afterlives on the stage and screen, and in the various postcolonial appropriations discussed by Jennifer Gribble later in this volume. The genealogies so formed are complex and fascinating. William Christie notes a curious but nonetheless significant coincidence in his study of stage and screen versions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: from portraying the Monster in Kenneth Branagh's 1994 film with a lurking "potential for violence" derived from the character parts he had distinguished himself in elsewhere, Robert De Niro would go on to play the role of Magwitch—the figure who incarnates both the Monster and his maker in Dickens's novel—in Alfonso Cuarón's remake of *Great Expectations* (1998). Rosemarie Bodenheimer detects Magwitch, aka Provis, in the Australian uncle who leaves Robyn Penrose, the heroine of Lodge's *Nice Work*, an inheritance. Such returns to the past necessarily "turn" it in new directions—whether in imaginative updatings, as Peter Carey rewrites Magwitch's story in *Jack Maggs* (1997); or in scholarship, as contemporary critics recontextualise a novel like *Great Expectations* in new ways in an effort to better understand Victorian culture.

The somersault that foreshadows the vicissitudes of Pip's narrative suggests the turns in cultural perspective, and the preoccupation with historical change and reversal, that fascinated the Victorians and continue to compel our attention. If we were to choose just one example of this cultural preoccupation, and there are many, Jay Clayton's exploration of Dickens and postmodernism (*Charles Dickens in Cyberspace*, 2003), in particular the chapter title in which he asks if Pip is postmodern, is one of the most dynamic.⁴ While the chapter provides an eclectic catalogue of Dickens's various presences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is the conclusions drawn that capture the attention. Firstly, that Dickens's own contemporaries welcomed *Great Expectations* as demonstrating the author's return to his earlier popular comic style, but secondly that postmodernism itself turns to literary allusiveness and historical anachronism to shape multiple perspectives in which, to use Clayton's terms, "allusion, parody, irony, and hyperbole" (164) create questions about the meaning of history but also demonstrate "that contemporary culture *does* know how to think historically" (165). Clayton's approach helps to explicate a relatively new term, "NeoVictorianism," a term which usefully categorises a vast range and variety of modern publications, from David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988) to later productions investing in the Victorian Age, either comically—Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* is a good example—or more generally in other genres such as detective

fiction—D. J. Taylor’s *Kept: A Victorian Mystery* (2006) for instance—or more straightforward historically-nuanced fiction such as Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs* (1997).⁵ Similar turns and returns centred on Victorian culture form the focus for the essays gathered in this book. In the essay that closes our volume, Joseph Wiesenfarth sees the two endings of John Fowles’s NeoVictorian novel, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, reprising the two endings that continue to cause controversy in critical discussions of *Great Expectations*.

The Victorian Age saw rapid social, political and cultural change in which innovative forms of transport and communication developed and modernised. In the long nineteenth century so began one of British culture’s great journeys. The Victorians themselves were conscious of these dramatic changes and engaged with them both in literature and art. In 1873 R. J. King in the *Edinburgh Review* celebrates, as a thing of the past, the last edition in 1840 of “Paterson’s Road Book” because roads have been superseded by rail and the journey is now so much cheaper and easier, and available to working class and aristocrat alike. By 1840, writes King, “the great lines of railway had nearly been completed. A change had come over travelling and travellers as well abroad as in this country.”⁶ The coming of the railway instituted modern journeying, travel and tourism, and an accompanying expansion of knowledge, a crossing and criss-crossing not only of geographic (and cultural and political) borders, but also those of gender and class. Daniel Brown’s essay in this collection reveals a post-Romantic Thomas De Quincey buoyed by the new age of communication in which swift railways generate the rapid spread of new words and ideas, a mid-century optimism in fascinating contrast to Virginia Woolf’s depiction in *Orlando* of a stultifyingly occluded nineteenth century.

George Eliot is more cautious than either De Quincey or King in her references to the advent of the railway, in her two retrospective novels, *Felix Holt* (1866) and *Middlemarch* (1871-2), both set around the date of the First Reform Bill, 1832, that key marker for the beginning of the Victorian age. In the former novel, in a nostalgic turn, she expresses in the “Author’s Introduction” a preference for the stage coach, complaining that the “tube-journey can never lend much to picture and narrative; it is as barren as an exclamatory O!”⁷ The latter work, however, through her exemplary mouthpiece, Caleb Garth, acknowledges the inevitability of modernity and change: “you can’t hinder the railroad: it will be made whether you like it or not.”⁸ In an elegant essay focused on *Felix Holt*, Evan Horowitz has argued that for Eliot “the 1830s represent that moment when history escaped human control and politics emerged as the engine of

restitution.”⁹ He formulates this argument metaphorically using the advent of the railway and its tragic incidents (the death of the politician Huskisson). Eliot’s returns to the past are always subtle manifestations of her Victorian present, but also move the reader ineluctably into the prospective future, enacting returns, and then a doubling back. At the end of 1877, despite feeling that her power to write was lessening, she could still note of that possible future “the number and wide variety of subjects that attract me, and the enlarging vista that each brings with it.”¹⁰ Gillian Beer, in her essay in this volume on yet another retrospective Eliot novel, and the one closest to autobiography, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), locates in music just such an “enlarging vista” which, she argues, diverts meaning into new channels. Elizabeth Webby posits colonial Australian readers as another, possibly unexpected, conduit for Eliot’s writings.

The railway helped to generate the other great communication industry of the Victorian Age: publishing. Smaller, cheaper books designed specifically for rail travel began to appear, as did that noted British institution, the railway bookstall. Perhaps the excitement of modernity emerges most pronouncedly in publishing, in writings where the exploratory thrust of the time, so neatly signalled by the journey (as in armchair travel), is evident. As the British empire evolved so did a burgeoning self-consciousness regarding what it might mean to be British in a modern world, both in fiction and in the periodical press. This essay collection attempts to capture the variety of ways in which the Victorians explored their new and very modern world in print, and how they responded to it, with a particular focus on fiction as a form in which engagement with the various ideologies of the day—gender, race, class, to name but a few—might best be managed. The expansion exponentially of the press accompanied the spread of education and the rapidly expanding numbers of readers. Publishing, in all its facets, was a mercantile project, which meant that literature was marketed in ways that it never had been before. The British Library provides graphs which reveal the way in which the numbers of the cheaper 3s. 6d. book had, by the end of the century, far outstripped the more expensive book (over 10s.) in publishing terms. In fiction alone the Library estimates the publication of approximately 60,000 titles and notes some 7,000 authors.¹¹ Moreover, magazines, newspapers, and periodicals were available on a scale never hitherto dreamt of. Publishing, in a related outcome, also became a source of profession and income for middle-class women in particular. The emergence of women as professional writers in the Victorian period is reflected in the renowned figures on whom some of our essayists focus: George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë.

The forces generated in the nineteenth century continued to impact on both British and related colonial lives and culture long after the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. The phenomenon of Victorian afterlives is most obviously located in present-day fiction, from Tom Wolfe claiming that his exploration of New York in *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1988) was inspired by the fictions of Dickens and Thackeray and their portrayals of London, to Maryse Condé's brilliant re-writing of *Wuthering Heights* in *Windward Heights* (1995; English translation 1998), to Lloyd Jones's appropriation of *Great Expectations* in *Mister Pip* (2006). Notably these three writers all hail from the "New World." So do many of the contributors to this volume, with Australia, New Zealand and the United States all represented, along with noted scholars from the United Kingdom. This continual re-engagement with the Victorians in fiction, in film, in biography, in pastiche, suggests that the period's social, cultural and political modernity continues to have a profound impact on subsequent generations. Victorian survival is remarkable given the attempts by the immediate post-Victorian generation, the modernists, to bury the age which had probably provoked their best and most radical work. In Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* the nineteenth century is described as under a great cloud where damp penetrates every facet of life and mind:

Thus the British Empire came into existence; and thus—for there is no stopping damp; it gets into the inkpot as it gets into the woodwork—sentences swelled, adjectives multiplied, lyrics became epics, and little trifles that had been essays a column long were now encyclopaedias in ten or twenty volumes.¹²

Indeed George Gissing's late Victorian travel book, *By the Ionian Sea*, addressed in Roslyn Jolly's essay, is already showing signs of the kinds of disillusionment, especially regarding the popular Victorian ideology of progress which Woolf's later work so evocatively dismisses. However, like *Dracula* the age would not stay interred; and late twentieth- and twentieth-first century writers are evidently still in symbiotic relationship with its compelling allure.

Encompassing both new work on Victorian writers and subjects as well as their later readings, rewritings, and adaptations, the two-part arrangement of this collection gives point to our title, implying change and movement and journeying that involves pleasure, diversity and exploration, but also

returns to various stages along the way. Understanding the significance of the Victorian period for contemporary practices and values involves continuing scholarly reinterpretation of its cultural forms alongside attention to their afterlives in later fiction, poetry, film and journalism.

Part One: *Victorian Turns* engages with the culture as it is predominantly located in some of the nineteenth century's most renowned fiction, but interweaves this with a consideration of non-fictional discourses to illustrate some of the ways in which the cultural questions that preoccupied the Victorians cut across disciplinary lines. Reflecting the diversity of debate in the period, it ranges across key topics of the day, including the "woman question," sexuality, class relations, language, science, work, celebrity, and travel. It emphasises the turns in cultural perspective produced by new questions regarding the boundaries established by periodisation and new demonstrations of the ways in which historical contextualisation and close textual analysis may be most fruitfully conjoined in our effort to understand how the Victorians imagined themselves.

Identified in a 2006 roundtable in the *Journal of Victorian Culture* as currently "one of the central issues that affects all specialists in nineteenth-century studies,"¹³ periodisation has become an especially hot topic of debate in the wake of the 1999 publication of Richard Price's *British Society 1680-1880*, which disputes the long-held view of the Victorian age as a period distinguished by change momentous enough to mark the origins of modernity. Ranging from Mary Wollstonecraft through to George Gissing, the essays in Part One of our collection trace cultural patterns across the boundaries conventionally held to demarcate the Romantic, Victorian and Modern, thereby sharpening our awareness of the limits, as well as the interpretative and organisational necessity, of such period designations. R.S. White opens with a challenge to assumptions of a sharp break between "Romantic" and "Victorian" periods, showing how differences in the respective careers of Keats and George Eliot's Lydgate as "disappointed doctors" nevertheless reveal important continuities, as they share a common influence in the contested medical paradigms of the early nineteenth century. Jocelyn Harris questions the exclusion of Jane Austen from the "high-status club of Romanticism" effected by Charlotte Brontë's notorious comment that "the Passions are perfectly unknown to her," and in so doing uncovers something of Austen's hitherto unrecognised indebtedness to Wollstonecraft. And Roslyn Jolly disputes the "neat timeline" which might see Gissing, in his disillusionment with a newly progressive Naples, turning away from the earlier vision of Italy offered by Dickens towards the later modernist discontent of D.H.

Lawrence, arguing that this linear narrative fails to account for the curiously postmodern apprehension of tourist sensibility to be found in *By the Ionian Sea*.

As well as testing temporal boundaries, a number of the essays in Part One investigate the national and linguistic borders between Britain and France traversed in Victorian fiction and journalism. While Peter Edwards analyses Mary Braddon's indebtedness to French realism in *The Doctor's Wife*, Joanne Shattock examines the impact of European intellectual life on Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot as illustrated in their reviews of Victor Cousin's *Madame de Sablé: études sur les femmes illustres et la société du dix-septième siècle*, which had first appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Joanne Wilkes studies a neglected area of Margaret Oliphant's periodical writing in looking at her treatment of French literature, primarily her reading of Victor Hugo and Honoré de Balzac, and Simon Petch's analysis of *A Tale of Two Cities* shows how historical contrasts between English and French cultures of work were inflected by gender, class and language. Similarly, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, discussed by Katherine Newey, is set in a fictionalised Brussels, where English and French cultures clash (melo)dramatically. Such turns and returns across national borders reveal the enthusiasm with which Victorian writers engaged with questions of identity in part through the articulation of cross-cultural differences between Britain and France.

While national borders figured prominently in the way in which the Victorians demarcated their world, other salient boundaries are identified in the focus on intersecting discourses offered by a number of the essays in Part One. R. S. White begins by exploring the interrelations between science and literature in nineteenth-century culture. The gap between C.P. Snow's "two cultures" can be seen to have its origins much earlier, in a moment prior to disciplinary specialisation: in arguments pitting conservative, constitutional healing practice against experimental medicine that are evident not only in Keats's abandonment of his medical studies, but in the unease associated with the professionalisation of medicine shown by later Victorian novelists like George Eliot. Daniel Brown also examines the relationship between literature and science in analysing Thomas De Quincey's use of analogies from Newtonian physics to theorise language and style in his journalism. Simon Petch sets the intense attachment between Lucie Manette and Miss Pross in the context of *A Tale of Two Cities*' intersecting "economies of love and law." This mistress-servant relationship anticipates the pattern of romantic friendships between upper-class women and their female dependents in later Victorian popular fiction illustrated by Robert Dingley; and like most

of the examples adduced by Dingley, it turns out to be part of an erotic triangle. Petch argues that this pattern has been masked by the celebrated doublings in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and he compellingly demonstrates its discursive significance not only in the bonds of rivalry and love that characterise the triangles linking Lucie, Miss Pross and Carton, or Lucie, Darnay and Carton, but also in the triadic structure of the legal trust. Dingley's essay highlights the way in which discourses of sexual orientation, first formulated by the late nineteenth-century sexologists, have occluded the significance of other forms of difference in critical discussion of the representation of loving relationships between women in the Victorian novel. Like Petch's account of the social complexities underlying the Lucie-Pross relationship, his caution against the privileging of sexual preference as the dominant defining characteristic of these relationships uncovers a disguised politics at work at the heart of the Victorian family depicted in these fictions. Katherine Newey also addresses family politics through the lens of melodrama, sensation's forerunner. By examining the importance of theatricalised ways of seeing in *Villette* in relation to the "she-dramas" of the 1830s and 40s, she reveals the destabilising possibilities of the melodramatic form.

In Part Two: NeoVictorian Returns, the rich afterlife of Victorianism is revealed in a variety of its literary, filmic, theatrical and historical contexts. We begin outside the formal date span of the Victorian age, 1837-1901, as in Part One, to recognise just how permeable such formal dates are and to signal that the "long" nineteenth century must be taken into account if readers are to understand the ongoing impact of Victorian excursiveness and vitality. As Barbara Garlick argues of this vitality, the "nineteenth century is no longer within living memory, but its artefacts and cultural treasures are still eminently accessible and will continue to provide us with material for critical and artistic exploitation well into this twenty-first century."

Film has proved a popular medium for Victorian afterlives from the 1930s on. In contrast to Dickens and Jane Austen, where the focus is as much on the author as the text, the considerable *Frankenstein* industry focuses on that name alone, which has become a by-word for monstrosity and the failure of science, and Mary Shelley's name is all but forgotten. As we have shown, Dickens returned to the idea of Frankenstein's monster (interestingly inverting it) to signify Pip's abhorrence for the convict creature who had made him in *Great Expectations*. Earlier still Elizabeth Gaskell in *Mary Barton* (1848) invokes "Frankenstein, that monster of many human qualities" (and incidentally produces the almost inevitable inadvertent conflation of

creator and creature) to render in an odd turnabout the flawed John Barton as an uneducated Chartist and Communist sympathetic to her readers.¹⁴ William Christie's essay explores the ramifications of the varying return journeys to the Frankenstein site, focusing ultimately upon what the imaginative primacy of the Monster throughout its many subsequent re-imaginings may tell us about Mary Shelley's novel. There are over 75 film renditions of Shelley's tale, often reflecting the social and cultural moment in which they are made: *I was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957); *Frankenstein Punk* (1986); *Frankenstein Unbound* (1990), the latter based on Brian Aldiss's novel of the same name. In a typical weft of NeoVictorian intertextuality, this film's title plays on Shelley's sub-title and recalls Percy Shelley's poetic drama *Prometheus Unbound* (1820).¹⁵

While twentieth- and twenty-first-century film has played an ever-increasing role in returning modern audiences to the Victorian Age, fictions which pastiche that past are both prolific and popular. Ever and again modern and postmodern directors, screen-writers, authors turn back to the plots of the Victorians, denounced by Woolf in *Orlando* as a "vocal, clamorous, prominent" mass (221). But their work first exposed the commercial and cultural nexus that is so neatly demonstrated by Rosemarie Bodenheimer in her essay on monetary versus cultural capital. Beginning with Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855)—another industrial novel located in Manchester like *Mary Barton*—Bodenheimer uncovers returns to Gaskell's plot by E. M. Forster in *Howards End* (1910) and much later in the century by David Lodge in *Nice Work* (1988), finely demonstrating the precise neo-historicism with which Lodge revises his predecessors to mount a critique of Margaret Thatcher's Britain.

Other essayists make similar return journeys in Part Two but choose different destinations: landscape, love, the very nature of fiction itself. John Rignall diverts critique of Walter Scott's "exploitation of landscape" as James Reed would have it,¹⁶ to consider that same landscape as an historical palimpsest in the writing of Graham Swift, which may be much closer to Scott's own treatment of the relationship between landscape and history than has previously been considered. Barbara Garlick addresses the historicising of the personal in George Meredith's marriage breakdown poem-cum-novel *Modern Love* (1862), when Anthony Thwaite inverts both the fiction and the idea of romantic love by giving the silenced accused wife a poetic counter-voice to both deflect the venom of and reinterpret Meredith's potent images. Both essayists are, of course, also questioning the nature of fiction. Joseph Wiesenfarth argues that John Fowles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) takes a very direct road back to Victorian fiction by invoking Thomas Hardy (among other

Victorians, including Darwin) in his novel. Fittingly, for a writer whose major fictions emerged from the fin de siècle, Hardy's novels, especially *Jude the Obscure*, present, so Wiesenfarth argues, the end of romance, that mainstay of fiction, and the absence of a new order in which science and religion can be compatible. Fowles's novel is not merely a "flashy imitation" of his Victorian predecessors, even though the hero "participates in a version of the great expectations story that fills Victorian fiction with wills, codicils, and disappointments," but an attempt to give new life to the species *novel* so that it survives as a fit form in Fowles's contemporary world.

As Barbara Garlick argues of the shift away from twentieth-century views of our relation to the nineteenth-century past, "Now, in this new century, that interaction may be viewed more comfortably as a dialogue, rather than a confrontation." Accordingly, this collection produces an informative dialogism demonstrating the continuing impact of the Victorian age on today's literature and culture. In bringing together essays that address both Victorian writings and their afterlives, this volume differs from other recent collections devoted to Victorian afterlives alone.¹⁷ NeoVictorianism demonstrates an ongoing and productive engagement with an age which established the social and cultural directions of the Western world. As we have indicated, the Victorian Age continues to impact on thinking: politically, philosophically, socially and culturally. Other essay collections posit the Age as an artefact, isolated by time and distance; *Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns* reveals a surviving and insistent cultural paradigm. This collection demonstrates how writers in the nineteenth century too took their own turnings in dealing with the ideologies of the day, and made their own return journeys to the ideas and creations that had preceded them.

Notes

1. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. Edgar Rosenberg (1860-61; New York: Norton, 1999), 10.
2. Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 586.
3. Dickens 253-4.
4. Jay Clayton, *Charles Dickens in Cyberspace. The Afterlife of the Nineteenth Century in Postmodern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 146. Subsequent page references are given parenthetically within the text.
5. The term "Neo," when used in conjunction with a political movement, implies a desire to return to the political beliefs of that movement's past (for example, Neo-Fascism) and a desire for the reinstatement of earlier, and often conservative,

values as opposed to more radical change. Margaret Thatcher's Neo-Victorianism—her call for a return to “Victorian values”—might be interpreted in this way. However, used in conjunction with a genre, the implication is rather a new, modified, or more modern style, as in Neo-Gothic for instance.

6. R. J. King, “Travellers and Handbooks,” *Edinburgh Review* 138(1873) 495-6; 483-510.

7. George Eliot, *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 75.

8. George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-2; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994) 559.

9. Evan Horowitz, “George Eliot: The Conservative,” *Victorian Studies* 49.1(2006): 9; 7-32.

10. George Eliot, *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 148.

11. Simon Eliot, *Aspects of the Victorian Book*, “Introduction: British Publishing 1800-1900” and “Novel,” <http://www.bl.uk/collections/early/victorian> (accessed 29 May 2007).

12. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando. A Biography* (1928; London: HarperCollins, 1977), 176. Subsequent page reference is given parenthetically within the text.

13. Rohan McWilliam, “Introduction,” *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 11 (2006), 146.

14. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton. A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848; Oxford: Oxford Classics, 1987), 199.

15. Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099612> (accessed 30 May 2007).

16. James Reed, *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality* (London: Athlone, 1980), 1.

17. For example, John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff (eds.), *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* (2000), Christine L. Krueger (ed.), *Functions of Victorian Culture at the Present Time* (2002) and Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff (eds.), *The Victorians Since 1901* (2004).

PART ONE:
VICTORIAN TURNS

CHAPTER ONE

TWO DISAPPOINTED DOCTORS: KEATS AND GEORGE ELIOT'S LYDGATE

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This essay is intended to challenge gently our assumptions of a sharp break between “Romantic” and “Victorian” periods, and also to suggest a wider social perspective from which to analyse literature, by considering the influence of contemporary medical debates.¹ From the 1990s onwards there has been a virtual haemorrhage of scholarly works on different aspects of literature and medicine in the nineteenth century.² Janis McLarren Caldwell’s recent *Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: From Mary Shelley to George Eliot* suggests that during the early years of the century “several influential literary and medical writers were allied in one project, that of negotiating between two distinctly different ways of knowing—between, that is, personal experience and scientific knowledge of the natural world.”³ Such writers “tacked back and forth between physical evidence and inner, imaginative understanding” in a process of “dialectical hermeneutic” that created “tensions between the patient’s narrative and the evidence of the body,” in short between the apparently antithetical Romantic and clinical ways of viewing human beings. Stated at this level of abstraction, the proposition seems almost self-evident as a comment on the perennial debate between scientific method and the poetic imagination, but when we examine specific instances we discover more individual dilemmas confronting writers in a period when both literature and medicine were undergoing profound paradigm shifts.

There may be something perverse in choosing to look closely at two failed or disappointed doctors, and even more idiosyncratic in comparing one “real-life” person, John Keats, and one completely fictional, George Eliot’s Tertius Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, but the circumstances of their respective career-choices are mutually illuminating in the context of debates in the first half of the nineteenth century. Keats abandoned

medicine for poetry in 1816-17, while Lydgate's fictional world is set in 1829, so they could be seen as part of the same generation in terms of the profession's history (even though *Middlemarch* was written much later, in 1871-2). While there is no suggestion that Eliot had Keats in mind, she does present Lydgate as a kind of mirror image, a man who initially is romantically defined, but who chooses to become a doctor. Both Keats and Lydgate began their respective careers in medicine with idealistic hopes of doing the world some good and both were disappointed in their aspirations, for reasons that were different but lie equally in their responses to a debate within medicine at the time, between conservative, constitutional healing practice, and experimental medicine carried out in new, public hospitals. Both Keats and Eliot's Lydgate found themselves in the middle of this dispute, though facing different directions.

Although the changing medical paradigm in the nineteenth century was led from schools in Edinburgh and London, it was a European-wide phenomenon. It was, for example, evident in France in the nineteenth century, where physicians were involved in mystifying their profession by taking on an increasing hegemony depending on technical reliance involving microscopes, anatomical examinations and surgical intervention.⁴ As a gruesome image of this movement, the operation by Charles Bovary, who is presented by Flaubert as "a partisan of progress" and one who is particularly attracted to the theories of Dr Duval, is performed with ghastly consequences on the club foot of the boy at the inn, in the way that the poor were experimented on in public hospitals. The whole episode (*Madame Bovary*, ch. 11) is presented in mystificatory anatomical terminology of "strepophody" in a way that shows Flaubert clearly marking the "progressive" end of the profession as out of touch with human feelings and a true healing ethic. In some ways Bovary is the literary heir of the much more satirically presented Doctor Slop in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* almost a century before, ominously bearing his new-fangled "squirt" to the delivery of a child and causing lifelong damage to the baby's nose (as euphemism for penis) with his forceps. The creators of Bovary and Slop may encourage us to reject or laugh at their fictions, but we must pause and note that in fact these characters' reliance on technologised and interventionist medicine was indeed considered "progress" to the extent that it led to the twentieth century's dominant paradigm of surgery and to the hegemony of the public hospital and canonisation of surgeons as high priests. At the other end of the spectrum, considered professionally to be reactionary and benighted but more valued by humane writers, were the doctors whose practice depended on medicines, personal knowledge of the individual patient, and constitutional

advice. Harriet Martineau's *Life in the Sick-Room*⁵ emphasises the role of doctor in offering primarily "sympathy to the invalid" and paying as much attention to spiritual and psychological aspects of chronic suffering as to physical pathology. Similarly, English fiction's first hero as physician, Tom Thurnall in Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*,⁶ is an old-fashioned and benign figure. While literature viewed such doctors as reassuring, competent, and individually personable, the nineteenth-century medical profession dismissed them as anachronistic quacks whose time had been abruptly terminated by surgeons in the closed shops of experimental hospitals. This is the dichotomy which John Keats and Tertius Lydgate, in their different ways, found themselves faced with. Both Keats and George Eliot were profoundly ambiguous about the whole area of contemporary medical advances, although their respective approaches were also very different.

Keats

John Keats is not widely known for lines such as these:

The Lower Jaw is frequently dislocated from receiving a slight Blow while the Mouth is open—it is thus indicated—the Condyles of the Jaw are thrown under the Zygomatic Arches sometimes the coronoid process projects beyond the Arch . . .

He wrote them as a student, taking notes in his *Anatomical and Physiological Text Book*,⁷ when he attended lectures given by Astley (later Sir Astley) Cooper, the most famous surgeon and medical lecturer in Europe, at Guy's Hospital in 1815-16. Perhaps Keats's attention wandered in this lecture, since there are little drawings of flowers in the inner margin of this page, suggesting his preference for his Botany lectures at the Chelsea Physic Garden over Anatomy. His internship in the public hospital came after five years' apprenticeship to Mr T. Hammond, local doctor in Edmonton, and this gave Keats a full qualification to become what we would call a general practitioner. Lockhart's sneering dismissal, "It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr John, back to 'plasters, pills, and ointment boxes, &c,'" was a libel not only on Keats's professional qualification but also on the credentials of "The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London," which in 1815 was licensed to administer tightly regulated examinations for the medical profession. The evidence is that Keats was a diligent medical student, and in fact so talented that he was one of the rare few chosen to be a dresser to Mr Lucas, a surgeon at Guy's, a position