

# Writing against Theodicy

## Evil, Secular Ethics, and Victorian Realism

With particular reference to J. A. Froude, A. H. Clough, and George Eliot



Nele Pollatschek  
Somerville College  
University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*

Trinity 2018

**ABSTRACT:**

This thesis contributes to the ongoing work of rethinking the relationship between secularization and literature by exploring the ways in which three mutually influential authors – James Anthony Froude, Arthur Hugh Clough, and George Eliot – struggled with theodicy. The term theodicy describes a response to the problem of evil in which God’s justice is maintained despite the apparent existence of evil. Because theodicy discourse tends to present suffering as reconcilable with divine goodness, it is frequently considered unethical. Avoiding theodicy is therefore desirable, particularly for those invested in secular ethics. That realism fosters secularity has often been claimed – by Martha Nussbaum, George Levine, Bruce Robbins, for example – and this thesis asks whether, as has also been suggested, realist literature urges readers away from theodicy. Previous studies of theodicy in literature have focused on religious authors; this study takes the opposite approach, looking at authors commonly associated with secularization to highlight the difficulties of staying true to a secular project and the pull towards religious patterns of signification which even realist literature exhorts. Before turning to Victorian writers, the thesis sets up a historical and philosophical context of theodicy discourse from Leibniz and Pope to Voltaire, Goethe, and Coleridge, differentiating between three types of evil (moral, metaphysical, physical) and two types of theodicy (Augustinian, Irenaean). The Victorian authors on which the thesis focuses were chosen because of their role in narratives of secularization and because they are each preoccupied with a different kind of evil, thus their writing exemplifies different kinds of struggle with theodicy. The thesis concludes that while literature, particularly where it claims to represent reality, gravitates towards theodicy, authors and critics can yet foster resistance to those patterns. Rather than trusting formal realism to urge readers away from theodicy, those who want literature and its criticism to champion secular ethics would be well advised to pay renewed attention to those aspects of literature which pull towards religious significance, and the strategies used to resist them.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis was first conceived of while I was working on my master's dissertation, funded by the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD). The thesis itself was funded by the Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich Studienwerk (ELES). I am indebted to ELES for its continuous support, especially to Eva Lezzi, Dmitrij Belkin, and Jo Frank, as well as Christoph Schulte for his encouragement and philosophical inspiration.

I am profoundly grateful for the supervision of Seamus Perry, who made my arguments smarter without ever making me feel stupid. If ever there was a teaching style to aspire to, this is it.

I would like to thank the people who work(ed) at the English faculty at Oxford for their infectious kindness. In alphabetical order and inevitably incompletely, my thanks go to Ros Ballaster, Giles Bergel, Stefano Evangelista, Stephen Gill, Freya Johnston, Rhodri Lewis, Sophie Ratcliffe, and Helen Small for countless acts of support and academic advice.

I am indebted to Sherry Föhr for introducing me to the finer points of English prose writing – and wrestling with many an early draft. Callum Seddon and Jacob Lloyd helped with proof-reading. Frank Vorpahl took me on a writing retreat when I needed it most. Joel Pollatschek found many a source and kept me company at the library. Jörn Stegmeier kept me sane. I am not entirely convinced I could have done it without him.

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
SECULARIZATION THEORY AND THE STUDY OF LITERATURE	3
RECENT CHALLENGES TO THE SECULARIZATION THESIS	5
CHALLENGES TO THE SECULARIZATION THESIS IN ENGLISH STUDIES	7
SECULAR ETHICS AGAINST THEODICY	13
ETHICAL CRITICISM AND THE VALUE OF LITERATURE	16
THE SECULARITY OF REALISM	18
METHODOLOGY	21
STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	29
<b>THE CENTURY OF THEODICY</b>	<b>35</b>
CARLYLE’S KNOT	35
WHEN IS THEODICY?	42
LEIBNIZ’S PHILOSOPHY	48
POPE’S POETRY	57
DISASTER	61
VOLTAIRE’S TORCH	64
ROMANTIC REALIGNMENTS	74
<b>A FIERY TRIAL: JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE AND MORAL EVIL</b>	<b>87</b>
WE ALL WRITE LEGENDS: FROUDE’S NEWMANITE GENRES	97
STRUGGLING TO RESOLVE: THE EXAMPLES OF GOETHE AND TIECK	104
AN OBTUSE ANGLE: <i>THE SHADOWS OF THE CLOUDS</i>	108
THE OTHER ROPE: <i>THE LIEUTENANT’S DAUGHTER</i>	119
THROUGH ACTION ALWAYS: <i>THE NEMESIS OF FAITH</i>	128
AN EVEN KEEL	142
<b>A SENSE OF THE INCOMPLETE: ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH’S POETRY OF METAPHYSICAL EVIL</b>	<b>144</b>
A STRANGE HAPPY SENSE OF COMPLETENESS: <i>THE BOTHIE OF TOBER-NA-VUOLICH</i>	152
THE DEITY TO SEEK: <i>THE AMBARVALIA</i>	160
<i>ADAM AND EVE</i> AND METAPHYSICAL EVIL	168
A SENSE OF THE INCOMPLETE	184
<b>THE USEFULNESS OF SUFFERING: GEORGE ELIOT AND PHYSICAL EVIL</b>	<b>191</b>
ROSAMOND’S REWARD	192
IMMORAL FICTIONS AND WHOLESOME TRUTHS: ELIOT’S CRITICISM	200
EVIL’S EVIL, AND SORROW’S SORROW: <i>ADAM BEDE</i> ’S WORK AGAINST THEODICY	209
RECONCILING CRITICISM WITH TENDERNESS: READING GWENDOLEN’S SUFFERING	224
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>WORKS CITED</b>	<b>243</b>

## Introduction

*The great fact which puzzles the mind is the vast amount of evil.*

Leslie Stephen  
*An Agnostic's Apology*

This study contributes to the ongoing work in rethinking the relationship between secularization and Victorian literature. The focus lies on the ways in which three mutually influential Victorian authors – James Anthony Froude, Arthur Hugh Clough, and George Eliot – struggled with the problem of evil and the justification of God. My research lies at the intersection of three fields of inquiry: secularization theory, secular ethics, and ethical criticism. This study shares with ethical criticism the underlying assumption that even when not written with a demagogic or pedagogical aim, literature is always ethically charged. Similarly, I sympathize with the claims of those invested in secular ethics that Christianity has moral deficits in some of its assumptions, specifically those pertaining to the problem of evil, and that secularization should therefore be welcomed.<sup>1</sup> Secularization theory has long assumed that emerging modernity in general, and the nineteenth century in particular, corresponds with a decline of religion. In the field of English studies, this manifests in the assumption that a decline of religion was instrumental in the birth of the profession in the nineteenth century and that literature played a crucial role in that decline. Together these assumptions form the bedrock of a type of secular ethical criticism which locates the value of literature, and especially realist narratives, in its ability to foster secular ethics, put forward, for example, by Martha Nussbaum, Richard Rorty, George Levine, James Wood, and Bruce Robbins.

---

<sup>1</sup> The words ethical and moral will be treated interchangeably, in accordance with the common usage (cf. Bernstein, 'Evil and the Temptation of Theodicy' 253; cf. 'Ethics, n.'). A contemporary, potential (but debated) distinction between the two is drawn up by the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* but not relevant in the context of this study (cf. Blackburn).

The assumptions of secularization theory have recently come under scrutiny. In Victorian studies, the project of re-evaluating secularization theory – undertaken by Timothy Larsen, F. E. Gray, Charles LaPorte, Kirstie Blair and Norman Vance – has consisted mostly of attempts to either broaden the canon to include more religious authors, or in “uncovering” Christianity in authors traditionally conceived of as secularizers. While I focus on authors long associated with the traditional secularization narrative, my aim is not to uncover hidden religiosity; rather, these authors serve to connect the re-evaluation of Victorian secularization with larger arguments about the relationship between literature and secularity, challenging attempts to locate the ethical value of literature in its secularity. I argue that rather than fostering secular ethics, literature tends to entrench religious patterns and that even authors conventionally associated with secularization struggle – and often fail – to resist the gravitational pull of these religious narratives on their writing.

### Secularization Theory and the Study of Literature

The underlying assumption of secularization theory – usually termed “the secularization thesis” – in the social sciences and beyond was, for most of the twentieth century, that emerging modernity entails progress towards secularity and rationality.<sup>2</sup> The nineteenth century especially, with its professionalization of the sciences, has taken on a central role in such narratives. As M. H. Abrams asserted in *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971), it was

---

<sup>2</sup> The *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* defines: “The secularization thesis maintains that secularization is an inevitable feature of the rise of industrial society and the modernization of culture” (Marshall and Scott). Given the extent to which the study of secularization was dominated by the secularization thesis, it is not surprising that “secularization theory” is often treated as near synonymous with the “secularization thesis”. In other words, rather than “secularization theory” being simply the study of processes in which societies become less religious and the secularization thesis being merely one possible hypothesis, secularization theory is often treated as the theoretical fleshing out of the secularization thesis. For example, when sociologists speak of the critics of secularization theory, they often simply mean those who do not hold the secularization thesis to be true (Swatos and Christiano 209–12; Dobbelaere, ‘Some Trends in European Sociology of Religion’ 110).

a “historical commonplace that the course of Western thought since the Renaissance has been one of progressive secularization” (*Natural Supernaturalism* 13) – a progression that, for Abrams, peaked in Romantic literature. Owen Chadwick’s seminal work on *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (1975) shifts the claim to the latter half of the century, contending that the forty years following the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) was “an age admitted by every historical observer to be central to any consideration of the theme” of secularization (Chadwick 18).

The nineteenth century has gained such a prominent role in secularization theory in part owing to the number of nineteenth-century thinkers and scientists who saw their age as dominated by the decline of religion. The concept’s historical roots lie in the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Karl Marx (1818-1893), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), and Max Weber (1864-1920). Looking back, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Weber influentially declared that “the fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world’” (‘Science as a Vocation’ 155). For Weber, the birth of science as a vocation (“Wissenschaft als Beruf”) is both a cause and a symptom of this disenchantment. It is useful to remember that Weber sees all academic professionals, including those working on literary culture, as involved in this distinctly modern project of secularization, since German “Wissenschaft” includes the natural and social sciences (German “Naturwissenschaften”, “Sozialwissenschaften”) just as much as the humanities (German “Geisteswissenschaften”, literally, sciences of the spirit).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Considering the context in which Weber held the lectures later printed as “Wissenschaft als Beruf” it might more suitably have been translated as “academia as a vocation”. The lecture, held on 7 November 1917, was part of a lecture series titled “Geistige Arbeit als Beruf”, (intellectual work as profession) hosted by the “Freistudenten” (free students), a student group who aimed to resist what they saw as the increasing commodification of academia and to ensure that universities remained centres of humanist education rather than professional training grounds (Mommsen and Schluchter 49–53).

The study of English literature has often claimed an even stronger symbiosis with secularization; as Terry Eagleton suggested, two decades before publicly finding Christianity, “the failure of religion” has long posed one of the best single explanations for “the growth of English studies in the later nineteenth century” (*Literary Theory and Introduction* 20). Matthew Arnold is the key figure in such accounts – Michael Kaufmann fittingly terms them “the Arnoldian replacement theory” (M. W. Kaufmann 616) – in which literature and its study takes on the cultural, moral, and social functions formerly fulfilled by what Arnold described as the long withdrawing “Sea of Faith” (*The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* ‘Dover Beach’ line 37). In these accounts the secularity of English studies seems to take on two potentially opposing functions: on the one hand English studies appears inherently anti-religious because it takes part, like all academic professions, in the ongoing project of intellectualization and rationalization. At the same time literature and their study become quasi-religious in regard to its purported cultural function. That is: the “secularity” of English studies can seem to simultaneously lie in the contribution to the disenchantment and to the enchantment of the world.<sup>4</sup> English studies becomes tasked with showing that life is meaningless and with giving meaning to life.<sup>5</sup>

### Recent Challenges to the Secularization Thesis

The secularization narrative on which these lines of explication and validation rest has recently become the object of increasing critical pressure. Where sociologists of religion, such as Peter Berger (following Weber), were once convinced that by the twenty-first

---

<sup>4</sup> The essay collection *The Joy of Secularism* (2011), edited by George Levine, puts its finger in the wound. Despite the different disciplines of the authors, it is the contrast between the two literary critics – Levine himself and Bruce Robbins – that seems most divisive. Both leave little doubt, here and elsewhere, that they desire literature and its study to be a secular affair. But where Levine makes it quite clear that his aim is to oppose the Weberian “disenchantment” narrative and to find and champion enchantment in the realities of this world, Bruce Robbins answers Levine’s call with a decisive “Enchantment? No, thank you!” (Levine, ‘Introduction’ 2–4; cf. Levine, *Darwin Loves You: Natural Selection and the Re-Enchantment of the World* 2–5; Robbins, ‘Enchantment? No, Thank You!’ 74–75).

<sup>5</sup> For Weber, and Levine appears to agree, “disenchantment” always also means a loss of purpose or meaning (German “Sinn”) (Weber, ‘Wissenschaft als Beruf’ 92).

century religion would all but have died out, such certainties have, in recent decades, come to seem less than certain.<sup>6</sup> Anthropologist Talal Asad's influential *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003) marks the shift, opening with the claim that "a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable" (1). David Martin, among the first in the field of sociology to chip away at the secularization thesis, has long argued "that instead of regarding secularization as a once-for-all unilateral process, one might rather think in terms of successive Christianizations followed or accompanied by recoils" (D. Martin 3–4). Matthew Arnold's metaphor of the sea of faith, once thought faulty because low tide is followed by high tide, while secularization was sure to be a one-way process of spreading modernity, has come to seem more apt than Arnold might have realized.

As the single "triumphalist history of the secular," as Asad calls it (1), was superseded by more complex models, the underlying secular-religious binary has also become the object of critical scrutiny.<sup>7</sup> In this process "secularization" has undergone many redefinitions, moving away from Chadwick's now simplistic-seeming "growing tendency in mankind to do without religion" (17). Jose Casanova, for example, differentiates among three meanings of secularization: first, "*the decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies*" (the traditional sociological understanding), secondly, "*the privatization of religion*" (Charles Taylor champions this version of secularization (Taylor 1–4), sometimes referred to as post-secularism or pluralism), thirdly "*differentiation of the*

---

<sup>6</sup> A *New York Times* article of 1968 paraphrases a talk in which Berger suggested that "[b]y the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture" ('A Bleak Outlook Is Seen for Religion' 3). Berger is one of many sociologists who once held the secularization thesis to be true, most influentially in his *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), and in recent years came to consider the central proposition of the theory, "that modernity necessarily brings about a decline of religion", as "empirically falsified" (Berger, 'Further Thoughts on Religion and Modernity' 313; cf. Berger, 'The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview' 2–3).

<sup>7</sup> Asad himself writes that "in certain respects 'the secular' obviously overlaps with 'the religious'" and that "the 'religious' and the 'secular' are not essentially fixed categories" (Asad 25).

*secular spheres* (state, economy, science), usually understood as ‘emancipation’ from religious institutions and norms” (Casanova 7). These rival definitions, though potentially interrelated, have vastly different implications. For one thing, the conditions of falsification or validation of the secularization thesis depend hugely upon what “secularization” actually means. Dropping rates of church attendance, for example, indicate secularization in the second sense (privatization) but have no necessary bearing on the first sense (decline of beliefs). Conversely, when secularization means privatization and pluralism of religion, one can quickly arrive at the conclusion, expressed by one sociologist invested in salvaging the secularization thesis, that “religiousness of individuals is not a valid indicator in evaluating the process of secularization” (Dobbelaere, ‘Towards an Integrated Perspective’ 239). Recognizing the difficulty of falsifying an oscillating theory, sociologist Rodney Stark criticized what he saw in 1999 as a recently developed tendency “to shift definitions as needed in order [to] escape inconvenient facts” (251). But while redefinitions might salvage the secularization thesis, they do so by sacrificing many of the alleged boons of secularization. Those who champion secularization for its rationality and disenchantment, like Bruce Robbins, or its exclusive enchantment with material reality, like George Levine, should be wary of any understanding of the secular that does not take individual beliefs and practices into account.

### Challenges to the Secularization Thesis in English Studies

Until recently, the re-evaluation of the secularization thesis has received little critical attention within the study of English (or Victorian) literature. In a 2007 article Michael Kaufmann urged a rethinking of secularization within English studies, suggesting that little work had been done to acknowledge the demise of the triumphalist narrative of secularization because “[i]f literary studies were to come to terms with such a claim, it would need to re-examine one of the major assumptions of its professional history” (M.

W. Kaufmann 608). Tracey Fessenden, whose *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (2007) undertakes such a rethinking in the American context, similarly assumes that “of all the binaries to which [...] suspicion directs our disciplined scrutiny, the secular/religion binary is last to yield to critical pressure because it lies closest to the heart of professional identity” (633).

For Victorianists, the case is even more complex, since the linking of the secularization thesis and the growth of English studies lends value to the study of Victorian culture while also putting pressure on Victorianists’ critical engagements. Charles LaPorte recently summed up the issue in what he calls “three widely agreed-upon truths about the traditional secularization narrative in relation to Victorian studies”:

(A) it provided a critical justification for the foundation of English as a field, (B) it gave Victorian skepticism an especially prominent position in the evolution of modern culture, and (C), conversely, it flattened many distinctive religious features of Victorian literature and culture. (LaPorte, ‘Victorian Literature, Religion, and Secularization’ 268–7)

For the study of Victorian literature and culture, the secularization narrative has proved both legitimizing and limiting. It has served as one way of explaining why reading the Victorians matters but at the same time it has “flattened” these readings, deflating the religious life of the period and its literature into harmony with the secularization thesis. For that reason, the ongoing collapse of the thesis through sociological and historical re-evaluation provides both a challenge and an opportunity to revisit long-held assumptions and reinvigorate the way we read the religious aspects of Victorian literature.

In the last decade, a small group of scholars has begun to counteract this “flattening” of religious features, focusing, much like the re-evaluation of secularization theory in other disciplines, on questions of historical accuracy (who we read) and theoretical refinement (how we read them). The historical issues often revolve around canon formation, as authors whose work can be read to support a “crisis of faith” narrative – Matthew Arnold,

Robert Browning, George Eliot, or Alfred Lord Tennyson – have been read and taught more frequently than those who seem more comfortable in their faith. This creates what might be called a hermeneutic feed-back loop. In other words, because scholars consider the nineteenth century characterized by secularization, they teach and study authors that exemplify secularization and exclude those who do not. This in turn supports the belief that secularization characterizes the nineteenth century, legitimizing the choice of “secular” authors and prompting further study of similar authors and the continued (often unconscious) exclusion of religious authors. Timothy Larsen is among the Victorianists who have recently sought to rectify this situation. In *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England* (2006), Larsen declared the Victorian crisis of faith narrative “vastly overblown” (Larsen 2), offering corrective readings of heretofore more marginal authors, many of them converts or reconverts, such as William Hone, Frederic Rowland Young, and J. B. Bebbington.<sup>8</sup>

An unexpected contribution to the religious challenge to the Victorian canon comes from feminist critics, who argue that the secular bias excludes female authors, because they were often more conservatively religious than their male peers. As Joanna Dean contends in *Religious Experience and the New Woman: The Life of Lily Dougall* (2007): “[t]he religious crisis in literature [...] has been a masculine one, closely tied to the religious maturation and vocational difficulties of young college men” (Dean 47).<sup>9</sup> F. E. Gray’s *Christian and Lyric Tradition in Victorian Women’s Poetry* (2010), for example, challenges this exclusion which has, as Gray suggests, “skewed our understanding of the significance of religious devotion in the century’s creative work” (Gray 3).<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> One notable precursor of this work is G.B. Tennyson’s *Victorian Devotional Poetry* (*Victorian Devotional Poetry* 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Hugh McLeod similarly notes that: “when the nineteenth century offered an unprecedented degree of religious freedom, it was men who most often used this freedom to leave the church or drop all religious belief” (McLeod 128).

<sup>10</sup> Conversely, Gray argues that “[t]o ignore or ‘read past’ the overwhelmingly Christian tenor of most Victorian women’s poetry is to marginalize or violate its chief perspective; to abstain from

Closely aligned with these attempts to broaden the canon to include more religious authors are efforts to “uncover” previously overlooked Christianity in authors commonly associated with the secularization narrative. These uncoverings challenge established readings of Tennyson, the Brownings, Matthew Arnold, Clough, or George Eliot as moments in an inevitable progress (or decline) towards secularity and thereby the secularization thesis which rests on the alleged secularity of these texts. Charles LaPorte’s *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* (2011), for example, begins, like Larsen, with a historical note, pointing out “that the moribund condition of nineteenth-century British Christianity now seems far less evident than it has seemed to us during most of the intervening period” (LaPorte, ‘Victorian Literature, Religion, and Secularization’ 2). However, he aims not to broaden the canon; instead his work excavates the evolution of biblical themes and their adaptation to both scientific findings and biblical criticism within the poetry of canonical authors – the Brownings, Tennyson, Clough, Eliot – that have in the past served, in LaPorte’s words, as “window dressing for the usual secularization narrative” (LaPorte, *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* 3). Kirstie Blair’s *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry* (2012) combines both these moves, challenging first the canon, then its interpretation. She begins by steering the focus towards Victorian religious poets whose work has received little critical attention, before engaging in new formalist readings of more canonical and less religiously untroubled poets such as Tennyson and the Brownings. Blair’s work is the most theoretically ambitious, refining and complicating the simple assumption with which she begins her work that “when Victorian poetry speaks of faith, it tends to do so in steady and regular rhythms; when it speaks of doubt, it is correspondingly more likely to deploy irregular, unsteady, unbalanced rhythms” (Blair 1). Blair thus challenges the historical accuracy of

---

engaging critically with Christian-themed poetry is to surrender the most salient literary position from which women could speak” (Gray 26).

the triumphalist narrative of secularization in the nineteenth century and assumptions about the relationship between faith and form, or formlessness and doubt, as well as a simplistic understanding of the secular-religious-binary.

If Blair makes the subtlest of these interventions, Norman Vance's *Bible and Novel: Narrative Authority and the Death of God* (2013) marks the most extreme example. Vance follows a similar project to that LaPorte, with an even stronger opposition to the secularization thesis. Vance makes the theoretical underpinnings of his work particularly clear, arguing that

what is really at issue and merits attention in the so-called 'secularization debate' may be the nature and quality of religious experience and its effects in social thought and action, as opposed to statistically verifiable evidence of participation in traditional institutional religion. Institutions are not everything, and declining church attendance, it has been observed, need not necessarily be incompatible with a continuing sense of religious identity in the nation. The closing of churches and the death of God as traditionally conceived might signal change rather than decay, religious paradigm shift rather than collapse. For the purposes of the present study, this possibility needs to be explored in relation to the Victorian fictions in which conventional religion apparently dwindled or died but where, as it will be argued, it was actually reconfigured and continued by other means.

(Vance 14)

By seeing secularization not as one-way process towards the non-religious but rather as a series of changes in what it means to be religious, Vance embraces recent sociological challenges to the secularization thesis, especially David Martin's redefinition of secularization as a series of "Christianizations". Vance's bold theoretical stance fits well with the fact that unlike LaPorte or Blair, for example, he focuses on realist narratives, rather than poetry, and therefore on the kind of literature traditionally associated with secularization. Rather than urging a broadening of the canon to include religious authors, Vance draws attention to what he sees as biblical themes, such as messianism and the sublime, within canonical novelists of the secularization narrative – George Eliot,

Thomas Hardy, Mary Ward – to argue that these novelists are “radically Christian rather than post-Christian” (Vance ix).

Though the historical antecedents on which recent work on Victorian religion and literature builds could not be more different, it can at times seem a mirror image of the great studies of faith and doubt of the twentieth century. Where once Hillis Miller uncovered anxieties about the *Disappearance of God* (1963) within the works of the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins, Vance now uncovers the secret Christianity of such darlings of secularization as George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. Just as the pervasiveness of scepticism and doubt might once have been “overblown”, the pendulum now seems to be swinging in the opposite direction. In an otherwise positive review of Vance’s book, Courtney Salvey cautioned:

that these novelists reimagined, reread and rewrote the Bible seems hardly surprising when authors have always been engaged in rewriting received narratives, literary and otherwise.

But does rereading the Bible make one non-secular? Why cannot rewritings of the Bible serve secular ends? Can borrowing Biblical narratives and themes be made too much of? (Salvey 951)

The final question implies affirmation: too much can indeed be made of Biblical narratives. And this – so the reviewer, and I tend to agree – is what happened here. But the “too much” challenges and corrects, raising questions about the right measure with which to interpret biblical narratives, if we want to neither flatten nor inflate the religious.

Critics have long taken the assumptions of Salvey’s penultimate question for granted: of course, biblical themes and theological language can be used in the service of secular ends. But this long-held assumption too demands renewed attention within the broader questioning of the secularization thesis. Gillian Beer’s seminal *Darwin’s Plots* (1983), for example, assumes that ostensibly religious language can be used secularly, explaining the theological implications of Darwin’s key terms (design, contrivance, selection) as an inheritance from natural theology, with Darwin “telling a new story, against the grain of

the language available to tell it in” (Beer 3, 84). M. H. Abrams makes a similar claim about the Romantics, ascribing to them wholesale “the secularization of inherited theological ideas and ways of thinking” (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 12). In the case of Darwin, whose mounting agnosticism is well-documented, this secular reading of religious language seems mostly justified. But Abrams’ adoption of a similar notion enables the very “flattening” of religious features, and thus the simplistic narrative of secularization, which have recently come under scrutiny. Once scholars read every use of religious language or thought patterns as a harbinger of secularization, the triumphalist narrative of secularization becomes little more than a truism. While religious language might be used “against the grain”, it is important to remember that the grain remains; that “design”, even where it is used secularly, retains the potential of “intelligent design”, and that if religious language and themes can serve secular ends, the reverse is also true.<sup>11</sup>

Religious patterns, as these examples show, demand critical attention beyond a blanket ascription (and reclamation) to either side of the divide, especially when they occur in texts thought of as secularizing. This is even more important when the secularity of Victorian literature is not merely a historical fact to be debated but an ethical concern, which carries the potential of lending value to the study of literature. Where we champion literature for fostering secularity and offering an alternative to Christian moral authority, what is at stake in the secularization debate is not merely historical accuracy but the kind of ethical work that literature does, or does not, do.

### Secular Ethics against Theodicy

The perception that Christian morality needs an alternative – that it appears ethically deficient – rests, to no small degree, on its need to align even the most gruesome human suffering with the plan of a good God. “The problem of evil”, writes James Wood, “was

---

<sup>11</sup> When *Darwin’s Plots* first came out, reviewers also suggested that Beer was making too much of Darwinian themes in Eliot and Hardy (Ashton, ‘Darwin’s Plots’ 442–44; Hampson 261).

the hot crux that obsessed me, that tormented me when I was a child, and which broke open my religious adherence” (*The Broken Estate* 307). If suffering is “the rock of atheism”, as Georg Büchner phrased it in *Danton’s Death* (1835), it is in circumnavigating this rock that Christian ethics can seem to run aground.<sup>12</sup> Especially in the face of extreme suffering, the ethical case against theodicy – a response to the problem of evil in which God’s justice is maintained – can become so forceful that it overcomes otherwise prohibitive ideological boundaries; it unites atheist liberals such as Robbins and Wood with Marxist-Catholics such as Terry Eagleton. For example, in the aftermath of evangelical claims that the 2010 Haiti earthquake, which took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, was deserved punishment for the Haitian resistance to French colonialism and a godly “blessing in disguise”, Wood described theodicy simply as an “appalling discourse” (‘Between God and a Hard Place’ 11). Similarly, the free-will theodicy of the Oxford theologian, and perhaps foremost contemporary theodicist, Richard Swinburne, Wood considers “monstrously immoral” (Wood, *The Broken Estate* 308).

So does Eagleton, writing disdainfully:

In the end, the case for evil as necessary disruption [...] comes down to the claim that having your entrails extracted, burned, and then stuffed into your mouth makes a man of you. [...] God, writes Richard Swinburne, is justified in allowing ‘Hiroshima, Belsen, the Lisbon Earthquake or the Black Death,’ so that human beings can live in a real world rather than a toy one. It is hard to believe that anyone but an Oxford don could pen such a sentiment. (Eagleton, *On Evil* 134)

For Eagleton, Swinburne’s theodicy betrays such a callous lack of awareness of the realities of suffering that it can only arise within the most protected of ivory towers. To have knowledge of the suffering of others and some kind of moral substance means realizing that certain evils must never be justified. Human history holds suffering so

---

<sup>12</sup> The phrase is spoken by the character Thomas Paine, who asks “Why do I suffer? That is the rock of atheism. The least twinge of pain, should it convulse a single atom, splits creation from top to bottom” (Büchner 44).

terrible, goes that argument against theodicy, that it can be seen in the absolute only – obscure and dark, it “shares the nature of infinity” (Wordsworth, *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* 346 Act 3). To relativize such suffering by claiming its compatibility with divine justice is to become complicit.<sup>13</sup> “For an ethical sensibility”, asserts philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, “the justification of the neighbour’s pain is certainly the source of all immorality” (163). Our moral responsibility to the other, especially to the dead who can no longer give witness to the injustice they have suffered, demands not to diminish our sense of suffering.<sup>14</sup> When suffering reaches a certain intensity – be it the result of earthquakes or extermination camps – any claim of divine justice reveals itself as not merely illogical but ethically obscene.<sup>15</sup> At this point, resistance to theodicy becomes a moral imperative.

Given its ethical implications, resisting theodicy also has the potential to be a site of value generation open to literature and those who produce, teach, and study it. In an article reacting to James Wood’s 2010 Haiti op-ed, wishfully titled “Is Literature a Secular Concept?”, Bruce Robbins put it succinctly: “[i]f literature, to which we devote our critical and pedagogical attention, can help urge society down the necessary road away from theodicy, that would be one way of describing its public value” (Robbins, ‘Is Literature a Secular Concept?’ 294). Especially at times and in places where fire-and-

---

<sup>13</sup> For similar reasons, Karl Barth insists that evil must be understood in the *privatio bonum* tradition as absolute nothingness, for when we explain it within a religious context, we “accept it, [...] validate and exculpate it, and thus, if we are consistent, finally justify it” (Barth 299).

<sup>14</sup> Wood too finds the discourse of theodicy at its worst when it seeks to find compatibility between a divine plan and the suffering of others, concluding: “The only people who would seem to have the right to invoke God at the moment are the Haitians themselves” (Wood, ‘Between God and a Hard Place’). What insults him most about Swinburne’s theodicy is the implication that victims are in some way indebted to their oppressors because, so Swinburne, “[b]eing allowed to suffer to make possible a great good is a privilege, even if the privilege is forced upon you” (Swinburne 89; quoted in Wood, *The Broken Estate* 308).

<sup>15</sup> Both Eagleton and Robbins use the phrase moral or ethical “obscenity”, indicative of the kind of visceral reaction theodicy can elicit (Robbins, ‘Is Literature a Secular Concept?’ 294; Eagleton, *On Evil* 134). Similarly Richard J. Bernstein writes that “[a]fter Auschwitz [...] it is obscene to continue to speak of evil and suffering as something to be justified by, or reconciled with, a benevolent cosmological scheme” (Bernstein, *Radical Evil* 229). The history of this reaction is discussed in greater detail in the chapter “The Century of Theodicy”.

brimstone theodicies exert a strong pull on public debate and political process – where natural catastrophes are chalked up, for example, to God’s anger over post-colonialism, marriage equality or reproductive rights – such a claim makes eminent sense. Here the theological is the political and “democracy needs us” to avoid theodicy.<sup>16</sup>

### Ethical Criticism and the Value of Literature

This approach to the value of literature and its criticism seems promising considering the current state of the discipline of literary criticism and what has been labelled its “ethical turn” or “ethical return” (cf. Korthals Altes). The terms allude to several developments, with a complex history, the basic lines of which can be traced as follows: Until the end of the nineteenth century the criticism of literature was in no small part a moral, and in the West mostly Christian, consideration. This was challenged briefly by calls for an exclusive interest in aesthetics (*l’art pour l’art*), later by a critical focus on literary structures (structuralism, formalism, narratology) which largely replaced ethical questions with formal ones. After the horrors of two world wars, this development away from ethical questions in literary studies was underpinned by a pervasive cross-disciplinary anxiety about universal ethical norms and the Enlightenment teleology of necessary moral progress. So too, various deconstructive and emancipatory projects (feminism, Marxism, post-colonial studies) began to suspect normative ethics of being an instrument of oppressive power. Aiming to separate moral philosophy from its enlightenment heritage, especially Kantian deontology, some moral philosophers turned to the traditionally literary interest in narrative (Martha Nussbaum, Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur). The “narrative turn” in moral philosophy cross-fertilized an ethical turn in narratology, in works such as Wayne

---

<sup>16</sup> I borrow the phrase from Helen Small’s *The Value of the Humanities* (2013) where she uses it to describe one type of argument for the value of the humanities currently widespread in British and American universities (*The Value of the Humanities* 125).

Booth's *The Company We Keep* (1988), James Phelan's *Living to Tell about It* (2005), Adam Newton's *Narrative Ethics* (1995), and Jil Larson's *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel, 1880–1914* (2001). While the study of narrative has undergone the most prolific ethical turn, there are similar developments across the field. In deconstruction, notable examples include Hillis Miller's *The Ethics of Reading* (1987), or Simon Critchley's *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992). Similarly, what makes “new formalism” new might be its explicitly ethical orientation, as, for example, in Derek Attridge's *The Singularity of Literature* (2004), or Leona Toker's *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction* (2010).<sup>17</sup>

Ethical criticism, as delineated above, is particularly promising for the project of describing the value of literature through its ability to urge society away from theodicy, because it tends to ascribe certain qualities to literature, specifically resistance to received thinking and a concern for the other. Attridge, for example, sees the singularity of literature in its resistance to definitions and any kind of instrumentalism (Attridge 7). Toker describes literature as an “oppositional practice” that repels “the logical determinacy of a cultural development” (20). The task then seems simple: if the singularity of literature is that it resists, then it resists theodicy. Even more widespread than this claim of literature's “resistance” is the notion that the morality of literature rests in the fact that it fosters responsibility to the other. This is true of criticism in the tradition of Emmanuel Levinas, whose moral framework depends on an irredeemable debt to the other. Booth and Phelan similarly put alterity in the centre of their ethical considerations. So does George Levine, for whom “literature demands an exercise of the aesthetic and ethical imagination that gives us [...] [t]he experience of entering mentally into the strange terrain of otherness” (*Realism, Ethics and Secularism* 1). Attridge agrees,

---

<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that not all the work that has, in recent years, been described as “new formalist” has this ethical concern. I give a more detailed account of “New Formalism” in the chapter on Clough.

suggesting that the value of literature's singular resistance is precisely that literature remains an other. Unlike non-literary texts, whose (to Attridge) unresisting knowledge becomes integrated into our own self, the literary affords us repeated engagements with alterity in every reading (Attridge 27). If the obscenity of theodicy lies in its disregard for the suffering of others, then literature, which confronts us with alterity and demands of us responsibility for the other, contains the antidote.

Within the framework offered by the extensive work of ethical criticism, the argument for literature as a bulwark against theodicy almost seems to make itself. There is only one problem: it is wrong. Even worse, the more one tries to make the argument, the more it seems that far from urging society away from theodicy, literary texts constantly affirm, produce, and propagate theodicy. This poses a problem both for ethical criticism and for any attempt to locate the value of literature (and its criticism) in its secular qualities. If we reject Robbins's hope that literature "urges society away from theodicy" and instead suspect that literature propagates theodicy discourse, then we must also answer his titular question "Is Literature a Secular Concept?" with a resounding – and troubling – no.<sup>18</sup>

### The Secularity of Realism

The term "literature" needs some clarification, despite the fact, or perhaps exactly because of the fact, that Attridge is right to suggest that it resists definition. The first clarification of what is meant here by "literature" is a negative definition: although many works of criticism are exquisitely literary, criticism is not identical with its object and any judgement we make about literature is not necessarily a judgement about its criticism. I make this clarification because Robbins at times obfuscates it, seemingly equating the

---

<sup>18</sup> Robbins himself acknowledges the argument's partial collapse, noting that the answer to the titular question is only "yes, if it is understood that no version of secularism can be entirely free from every theological vestige carried forward by the language we use" (Robbins, 'Is Literature a Secular Concept?' 315). Once again, secularity is poised precariously atop an inheritance that is half acknowledged, half repressed.

value of literature with the value of the critical profession ('Is Literature a Secular Concept?' 294). Rejecting this implicit equation suggests that it is entirely possible to say that literature performs theodicy while literary criticism yet urges society away from theodicy by forcing distance on the object of its critical engagement. Whether we would want to locate the value of criticism in such extreme hermeneutics of suspicion, in which the value of our work is precisely that we murder to dissect, is a separate matter.<sup>19</sup>

My claim is not that the most committed writer could never produce a literary text that fully resists theodicy<sup>20</sup> but that literature is not in any way inherently resistant to theodicy, and that the majority of literary texts that we encounter urge towards, and not away from, theodicy. For that reason, unlike Attridge, but much like Wayne Booth, I must add to what is meant here by literature both a narrative and some kind of mimetic quality, though that narrative can be the minimal order of lyrical poetry (e.g. man sees daffodils or woman sings). The reason I make these two additions is not that it is impossible to produce literary texts devoid of narrative or mimesis but because the concern here is with ethical effects. Thus, my aim is not to encompass all possible kinds of literature but to describe prototypicality.<sup>21</sup> The prototype I am offering is narrative only in so far as it suggests a story about some characters, though by no means necessarily through a distinct level of narration. It is mimetic because authors produce reality effects, and because readers tend to engage in what David Brewer calls "imaginative expansion" (2), constantly supplying additional detail from their own reality, making texts more "truthful" in the act of reading.

---

<sup>19</sup> Lennard Davis' *Resisting Novels* (1987) is the clearest example of such an endeavour.

<sup>20</sup> Though, as will become apparent in the chapter on Clough, the argument could be made within a Kantian understanding of theodicy and literature.

<sup>21</sup> F.R. Leavis favoured a similar approach, claiming that it "is not possible to draw a firm line around the field of study of English literature, though where its centre is should be plain" (*The Critic as Anti-Philosopher* 187). While Leavis does not say so, the centre for him might very well be the kinds of realist narratives that he champions in *The Great Tradition*.

If this description of literature seems to coalesce around realism, this is not coincidental, for it is on realist narratives (though not necessarily realist novels) that arguments about the secular ethics fostered by literature tend to focus. That is, if literature really did urge society away from theodicy, we would expect evidence of this in realist narratives, rather than, say, fairy tales or devotional poetry. Histories of realism have long been underwritten by narratives of secularization. In *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), Ian Watt seminally claimed that the “measure of secularisation was an indispensable condition for the rise of the new genre” because formal realism “tends to exclude whatever is not vouched for by the senses: the jury does not normally allow divine intervention as an explanation of human action” (84). In this tradition Levine, who has always considered the realistic imagination to be deeply secular, titles a book simply *Realism, Ethics and Secularism* (2008). Similarly, James Wood begins his *Broken Estate* with a paean on realism and “the real”, and censures – unjustly I think – Toni Morrison’s use of magic as a “moral problem” (*The Broken Estate* xi, 236). Martha Nussbaum also tends to rest her ethical arguments on a guarantor of realism such as Henry James (cf. *Love’s Knowledge* 142–65) or, when she reads a more ambiguously realistic novel, such as Dickens’s *Hard Times*, she amplifies the realism, notably downplaying religious elements (cf. Kidder 424) or anything “not vouched for by the senses”. Even when Nussbaum reads non-realist authors, it often seems to be as a foil on which to extol by implication the higher ethical virtues of realism and criticize occurrences of the supernatural, arguing of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, for example, that “[t]he image of Heaven as a [...] place of beatitude in the sense of an end to mourning, cannot ultimately be reconciled with the idea of ongoing compassion for human life” (*Upheavals of Thought* 590). The value of realism for these secular critics and thinkers is that it does not allow the otherworldly as a site of action, doing what, in Nussbaum’s theologically charged idiom, all ethics should do, placing “[a]scent [...] within the context of our humanity” (*Upheavals of Thought* 543).

## Methodology

Those that are particularly preoccupied with theodicy, though they come from many creeds or none, tend to share certain intellectual similarities. In a way, the problem of evil arises only where separate modes of looking at the world are brought together. It exists neither for the purely empirical thinker, happy to take phenomena as they are, nor for the wholly abstract theologian, who cares not for the earthly mirage. Only where theology or philosophy and the experience of reality are supposed to correspond, does the problem of evil arise. It is therefore only those roaming minds, such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz or Voltaire, who, unsatisfied with being tied to a single system, must accumulate, test, and combine all manner of thought that are struck with the problem of evil, the desire to solve it, or the insufficiency of existing solutions. Theodicy is the discipline of polymaths. Up to a point, I follow the polymaths. This thesis is therefore synergistic, drawing on various fields of inquiry and several methodologies. The broader and more complex the field of inquiry, the more need is there for clarity, so the thesis keeps sight of two structuring principles: person and chronology. That is, I focus on a sequence of individual writers, representative of three different ways of engaging with the problem of evil, and I follow their writing chronologically – one text after the other – though such chronology does not imply completeness or teleology.

By looking at texts that are, in the broadest sense, realist narratives – texts that tell stories which focus on humanity and do not include the otherworldly – I am taking a page, methodologically speaking, from critical rationalism; that is, I am inviting falsification, not support. Rather than looking at texts in which one would expect theodicy to occur, I have chosen texts in which one would expect theodicy not to occur, either because they are written in a genre not usually associated with theodicy or because they are written by authors long associated with secularization.

My choice rests in part on the desire to avoid setting up the straw-man argument of which pithy generalizations about literature “urging society” or being a “secular concept” invite. I do not think that many really doubt that some literary texts, some genres, or some authors encourage theodicy some of the time. A few authors and genres have long been associated with theodicy. Scholars of the German fairy tale, for example, describe the genre as adapting folk stories into the mould of Christian teleology. Walter Pape sums up a common argument:

Undoubtedly, the happy ending in German Märchen served as a kind of popular theodicy. The Grimms were evidently aware of this, for whenever they came across a fairy tale with an unhappy ending, they changed it to a happy one. (Pape 189)

For that reason, another study on theodicy in fairy tales or the works of certain authors – Pope, Milton, Dostoyevsky, or Melville – would have little theoretical impact beyond the focus of the authors and genres in question. These works exist.<sup>22</sup> Despite their existence literature is still believed to foster secular ethics and in doing so urging society away from theodicy. Even though we might debate the success of the attempt, there is nothing surprising in the fact that a work that announces the aim to justify or vindicate the ways of God to man, or that edits material to suit the same desire, does indeed entail theodicy; nor does it necessarily undermine the deep-rooted belief that most literature, with the exception of these few works, tends towards the secular and away from theodicy. For this reason, I am focusing on reactions to the problem of evil in works of authors that have no avowed interest in “doing” theodicy.

---

<sup>22</sup> They exist most exhaustively in regards to Milton, in Dennis Danielson’s monograph *Milton’s Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (1982) and a litter of journal and anthology articles (Danielson, ‘Imago Dei, “Filial Freedom,” and Miltonic Theodicy’; Danielson, ‘The Fall of Man and Milton’s Theodicy’; Danielson, ‘Milton and the Problem of Evil’; Fisher; Geary; Grabes; Hardin; Hillier; John; MacCallum; Savoie; Stocker; Tanner). A broad overview of theodicy in literature from the seventeenth to the twentieth century can be found in the edited volume “*But vindicate the ways of God to man*”: *Literature and theodicy* (2004), which includes contributions on theodicy in Milton, Pope, Melville, Charles Kingsley, and Graham Greene, among others. Jonathan Cook’s *Inscrutable Malice: Theodicy, Eschatology, and the Biblical Sources of Moby-Dick* (2012) offers the most in-depth study of Melville’s engagement with the problem of evil.

I am conscious of the fact that this focus on the moments when theodicy asserts itself, often despite an author's declared desires, risks entangling itself in intentional fallacies and a hermeneutics of suspicion which sees an author endlessly tricked by the work she is producing. To avoid such a reading, I adopt Isobel Armstrong's understanding of the text as a struggle between contending forces, advocated in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, Politics* (1993):

The distinction between what is meant and what happens assumes that the text has a manifest and a latent content, a conscious and unconscious desire. The difficulty about this is that everything that is observed is all there in the text anyway, and it is a strangely arbitrary decision which makes some elements of the text manifest and some latent, some conscious and some unconscious, since all elements of the text are actually manifest. A process of selection has gone on, in which the critic has decided to select an intentional and an unintentional project. To simplify a text's projects and then to invoke the complexities of the text itself to undermine the simple project is an odd procedure. A text is not quite like a patient in analysis and actually anticipates these strategies of deconstruction by enabling them to take place.

The problem of deciding what is 'really' a poet's interests [sic] politically or what is 'really' intentional as against unconscious can be circumvented by a more generous understanding of the text as a struggle. A text is endless struggle and contention, struggle with a changing project, struggle with the play of ambiguity and contradiction. This is a way of reading which gives equal weight to a text's stated project and the polysemic and possibly wayward meanings it generates. (Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry* 9–10)

Rather than reading a text as an interaction between conscious thoughts, intentionally expressed, and unconscious desires, which the critic must uncover against the text's will, Armstrong suggests viewing the text as a single entity, shaped by contending forces. Critics of Armstrong's approach might note the metonymic transfer that underlies her treatment of the text as struggle, or her opposition of reading the text as a patient in analysis. That is, what she is really opposing is not that texts are treated as patients but that authors are, with the text serving as evidence, as a dream might to a Freudian. By shifting the focus from producer to product, one might object, Armstrong is introducing a host of logical inaccuracies (texts, unlike authors, are incapable of anticipating,

enabling, or desiring). So too, viewing the text as “struggle” necessitates but obfuscates agency: who is struggling against whom or what?

Though these objections are valid, the benefit of Armstrong’s approach outweighs the cost because it side-steps the problem that texts are the product of intentions but that these intentions are often impossible to reconstruct, especially as belonging to a single unified subject. What texts often manifest are the intentions of authors, their shortcomings, editorial interventions (actual and anticipated), material demands, financial necessities, censorship and societal mores, production errors, bad days, the desires of readers (real or imagined) including those of husbands, wives, and friends, generic conventions, intertextual influences, and so on and on.<sup>23</sup> Even though some of these forces can (and should) be subject to critical uncovering, it would be naive to think that all or even most could be. Nor is it always relevant to do so.

When what is at stake is the ethical effect of a text, real intentions or actions, and who they belong to, might not be all that important. While it is, for example, historically accurate to note that the Brothers Grimm originally declared a desire to represent folk stories exactly as they found them in their sources (*sans* happy ending), and that it was only in subsequent editions that Wilhelm Grimm adapted the often erratically gruesome tales to the needs of his audience as he understood them, it is questionable whether that fact makes any difference to the ethical effect of the stories on countless generations of readers.<sup>24</sup> The struggle between the Grimms themselves, and their various motives, is

---

<sup>23</sup> This is one of Wimsatt and Beardsley’s objections: “One must ask how a critic expects to get an answer to the question about intention. How is he to find out what the poet tried to do? If the poet succeeded in doing it, then the poem itself shows what he was trying to do. And if the poet did not succeed, then the poem is not adequate evidence” (Wimsatt and Beardsley 4). That is, the work of literature is always evidence only of what the poet did, not what she wanted to do.

<sup>24</sup> Maria Tatar and Jack Zipes describe the financial and literary needs that motivated the Grimms’ editorial practices well. But they also exemplify the difficulty of diagnosing intention even with ample extra-textual evidence. While Zipes puts the emphasis on the Grimms’ noble efforts to stay true to their editorial ideas, Tatar sees the Grimms as succumbing to financial pressures (Tatar 1–14; Zipes xxvii–xxx).

relevant only where it is either evident in the text or in the paratext that informs how readers construct the norms and values of the text. How readers imagine authorial intention on the basis of the text – Booth’s “implied author” (cf. 169–201) – matters, as far as ethical effects are concerned, in a way that the actual intentions of those involved in the making of the text do not. By viewing the text as struggle, Armstrong shifts the focus away from the agencies involved in making the text and towards the contending forces in the text.

One such textual struggle central to the ethical impact of literature – and its relation to theodicy – is the one between what we might call the real and the ideal, or *mimesis* and *poesis*. Here my reading is informed, not uncritically, by Felicia Bonaparte’s *The Poetics of Poesis* (2015).<sup>25</sup> Bonaparte sets up her work in opposition to what she sees as the universal assumption “that ‘realism’ was and was meant to be the norm of the nineteenth-century novel” (*The Poetics of Poesis* 3). Bonaparte’s first book, *The Triptych and the Cross* (1979), traced religious symbols in the works of George Eliot, anticipating the recent re-evaluation of secularization by more than two decades. Nevertheless she still

---

<sup>25</sup> Not uncritically primarily because of methodological concerns, beginning with the fact that despite the incredibly wide scope of her work, the book lacks clear documentation of sources in footnotes or endnotes, making it often impossible to take her claims on anything but trust. Similarly her arguments are often based on quantitative evidence, without her establishing any kind of quantitative methodological framework. Of *Middlemarch* she writes, for example, that it uses the word money “two hundred and sixty-eight times, every few pages more or less” and of *Vilette* that “it is no surprise that ‘strange’ as a word appears in this novel, not counting synonyms, one hundred and fifty-seven times, pretty nearly every three pages” (Bonaparte, *The Poetics of Poesis* 69, 46). The implication is, of course, that these numbers are high and therefore show Eliot and Charlotte Brontë to be especially preoccupied with money and strangeness. But since Bonaparte makes no comparison with other texts (or a reference corpus) it is entirely possible that Eliot and Brontë underuse “money” and “strange” in comparison to other novelists of the period – there is no reason to believe that 268 times is not exactly the amount of times that we should expect “money” to occur in a text of the length of *Middlemarch*. Nor does Bonaparte present a theoretical explanation for equating frequency with relevance, trusting perhaps on the intuition that “often” means “important” – an intuition that needs to be treated with care as far as natural language is concerned, unless we want to maintain that “the”, which is the most frequent is also the most important word in this introduction or Bonaparte’s book. These points would not be worth mentioning if it were not for the fact that Bonaparte largely seeks her evidence not in theoretical or hermeneutic considerations but mostly in the brute force of numbers and scope. For that reason, the merit of her work lies in the questions she raises, and the sheer wealth of material that she considers, rather than in any conclusiveness.

clearly adheres to the conventional view of the nineteenth century as an age of secularization, beginning her recent work with a chapter titled simply “the crisis of religion”. She also adds to this conventional Victorian crisis what she calls a “crisis of empiricism”, in which empiricism collapses in the vacuum that God has left behind. Bonaparte’s basic (if eccentric) claim is that empiricism never was quite at home in England and that while French realists were influenced by empiricism and materialism and the challenge of representing reality, Victorian England was a “Germanic” and therefore idealist age so that “[t]he real was never more than half the fiction in this century” (Bonaparte, *The Poetics of Poesis* 7). Here it is especially the Romanticism of Schlegel and Herder, transposed for an English audience by Coleridge and Carlyle, that Bonaparte deems influential. Rather than seeking to represent material reality, Bonaparte claims, Victorian authors, like their Romantic predecessors, sought to use literature as a expression of the ideal. For Bonaparte, it were not Darwin’s but Schlegel’s plots that the Victorians were writing.

Bonaparte is only the last – though in many ways the most extreme – in a long line of critics defending Victorian authors against the structuralist and deconstructionist charge of naively assuming that literature can truly represent reality. George Levine, for example, suggested in his *Realistic Imagination* (1981), a work tinged with the deconstructivism of the time, that “realism, the modernist’s scapegoat, the apparent superstition that literature can represent life, is [...] an elaborate and saving articulation of a modern consciousness of the fictionality of fiction” (Levine, *The Realistic Imagination* 140). Similarly, Abrams opposes what he sees as the commonplace but mistaken realism-romance dichotomy in which romance represents what ought to be and realism what really is (‘Realism and Naturalism’ 260). Instead he approaches “realism” via the effect on readers, suggesting that realism is simply literature that for various reasons appears realistic to the reader, regardless of whether it actually represents reality

in any measurable, quantifiable way (Abrams, 'Realism and Naturalism' 260). Rejecting the modernist nay-sayers, Abrams contends that

Skepticism about the possibility of fictional realism is not an empirical doctrine which is based on the widespread experience of readers of literature, but a metaphysical doctrine that denies the existence of any objective reality that is independent of altering human conventions and cultural formations. (Abrams, 'Realism and Naturalism' 261)

Realism, for Abrams, is marked not by the real but by "as if it were real". If readers only feel that what they read is "real", then "realism" it is.

The flipside to this "as if it were real" is suggested by Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Here Frye maintains that:

the poet never imitates "life" in the sense that life becomes anything more than the content of his work. In every mode he imposes the same kind of mythical form on his content, but makes different adaptations of it [...] The failure to understand this produces a fallacy to which we may give the general term "existential projection". (Frye 63)

For Frye, the "existential projection" is that fallacy in which the poet accepts the mode of his writing as an accurate depiction of reality – as if it were real – so that the writer of tragedies will come to find in tragedy "the profoundest of all philosophies" just as the writer of comedies will see the greatest truth in the "beneficence of providence" (Frye 63–64). Frye does not expand upon this but there is no reason to assume that his "existential projection" does not befall readers as much as writers, so that what is told as if it were real comes to seem real, extending the ways in which reality can be signified, and changing not only the ways of reading fiction but also those of reading the world.

This transformation of the ways readers see the world is precisely what some Victorian authors were banking on. Bonaparte claims this of Bulwer-Lytton, who in *Caxtoniana: A Series of Essays on Life, Literature, and Manners* (1863) declares that the novels of the period exhibit a "double plot" in which the "popular interest in character and incident" really serves a "symbolical signification" (Lytton 140; quoted in Bonaparte, *The Poetics*

of *Poesis* 7). The Victorian novelist, critic, and Egyptologist Amelia Edwards goes even further than Bulwer-Lytton, writing in an article on “The Art of Novelist”:

In this busy world of ours, it unfortunately does not always happen that the good man prospers and the bad man reaps his deserts. Virtue is not uniformly triumphant. The rightful heir does not always come to his own again; and the truest of lovers are not absolutely sure of listening to the music of their own wedding bells at the end of the story. That all the wrongs of life work for justice, even though the operation of that divine law be hidden from us, is what no sane thinker can doubt; but the fact remains that we do see the wrong and suffering, and we do not always see the retribution or the reward.

Now the world of fiction, whether it be the fiction of the novelist or the fiction of the dramatist, is a world governed by the law of poetical justice; and herein lies the secret of its eternal fascination. It satisfies our inborn sense of right; it transports us into a purer atmosphere; it vindicates the ways of God to Man. (Edwards 225)

Though she does not use the term, Edwards hints at the ambiguity of “realism”. On the one hand, Edwards sees typical novelistic plot elements such as the final apportioning of inheritances – which occurs everywhere from *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* to *Felix Holt, the Radical* – or the eventual marriage of the protagonists as unrealistic, since they do not occur in reality with anything near the frequency with which they take place in fiction. Novelists, by perpetually using these tropes and excluding other outcomes, are being untrue to the “busy world of ours” (Edwards 225). On the other hand, Edwards believes these novelistic conventions actually reveal a “hidden” reality of desired retribution and reward, which is so true and evident that it becomes, with a hint of hyperbole, a marker of sanity. For Edwards, “poetical justice” is nothing more than the visualization of divine justice, revealing to human understanding the reality of a hidden divinity.

Though Edwards is unusual in the explicitness in which she advocates fiction as a means of vindicating God to Man, by the end of the century, the belief that this is what fiction tends to do was ubiquitous – and often criticized or ridiculed. Oscar Wilde put it ironically when, in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), he had Miss Prism remark: “The good

ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means” (501). Henry James famously lamented the ubiquity of readers who deemed a novel good only if it placed virtuous characters in prominent positions and thus included a happy ending: “a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks” (James, *Theory of Fiction* 32). Trollope, in *Barchester Towers* (1857), emphasizes the chasm between the real and the ideal by having the Signora Neroni assert to her lover Mr. Slope that “[t]here is no happiness in love, except at the end of an English novel” (Trollope 274). Rejecting the Signora’s suggestion to seek happiness only in the “something tangible” of material possession, Slope instead declares that it is only in heaven that men can hope for happiness (Trollope 274). By showing happiness, so Trollope’s irony suggests, the English novel simultaneously tells a lie and reaffirms the truths of heaven. Regardless of whether the writer relishes the fact, like Edwards, or treats it with suspicion, many literary conventions point towards heavenly justice; this is the inheritance with which any text striving to resist theodicy or urging towards secularity must struggle.

### Structure of the Thesis

Inheritances rarely originate in the generation that has to wrestle with them, so too the problem of evil and its attempted solutions are not nineteenth-century natives. “Now ‘theodicy’”, James Moore puts it succinctly, “was not among the Victorians’ favourite terms” (155). Many Victorians, like Edwards, asserted the benevolence of God but felt that theodicy did not merit detailed attention, avoiding the neologism and its distasteful intimation of continental Enlightenment philosophy. The neglect that the knottier theoretical side of the issue experienced during the nineteenth century does not necessarily indicate that the problem ceased to be interesting. Rather it indicates an awareness that the preceding century – frequently referred to as the “century of theodicy” (Geyer; Real 85; Späth 261) – was consumed by the issue. Who, after all, wants to admit

to fussing with one's parents or grandparents fixations? While many Victorians thus contended with solutions, arguments, and counterarguments similar, or even identical, to those advocated by Enlightenment thinkers, they often did so without the pesky nomenclature or any kind of acknowledgement (or, perhaps, awareness) of these similarities.

In order to better identify and understand the patterns with which Victorian writers grappled, the first chapter of the thesis explores the specificities of the inheritance and the changes which theodicy discourse underwent throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Part of the work this chapter does is that of definition, exploring, for example, differences between “the problem of evil” and “theodicy”, or whether the term “theodicy” should be applied to utterances that precede its Enlightenment coinage. Focusing on works by Leibniz, Pope, Voltaire, Goethe, Coleridge, and Wordsworth (among others), my argument follows two important lines: first, I argue that the eighteenth-century saw not merely the rationalization of older responses to the problem of evil but also the birth of the emotional disgust which became, in the nineteenth century, the rock of atheism and later the stock response to the horrors of the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> Secondly I contend that the transition from rationalization to emotional responses is accompanied by a shift from philosophical to poetic engagement and that these two shifts reaffirm one another. In other words, as the justification of God moves from the court of

---

<sup>26</sup> This argument, made in historical detail, with which it is made is in part corrective. Studies of post-enlightenment theodicy tend to rest on arguments about the singular nature of the problem of evil after the world wars and on what must be described as a patchy knowledge of the history of the discourse. The most succinct example of this trend is Zachary Braiterman's *(God) After Auschwitz* (1998). Braiterman coins the term “antitheodicy” to describe what he sees as the singularly post-holocaust refusal to make theodicies despite continued belief in a deity. While Braiterman rightly identifies the resistance to theodicies (they seem obscene in the face of certain kinds of suffering), he is incorrect to place the birth of this reaction in the twentieth century, given the fact that it can frequently be seen in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The historical myopia of Braiterman's approach is betrayed by his claim that “Leibniz, who coined the term *theodicy*, wrote his defense of God after an earthquake devastated Lisbon in 1755” (Braiterman 19). Braiterman would have done well to recall that Leibniz died in 1716 – six years after he published his *Essais de Théodicée* – and almost four decades before the Lisbon earthquake.

reason to that of emotion, literature becomes a more suitable medium than philosophy; and as theodicy moves from philosophic to poetic modes of discourse, emotional adequacy becomes more and more important.

With the historical and theoretical frameworks established, I move on to the main analysis in chapters two, three, and four, focusing on the struggle with theodicy patterns in the works of three Victorian authors. One of these patterns – Leibniz’s tripartite understanding of evil – forms the organizing principle of the remaining three chapters. Observing the ambiguity of the term evil, Leibniz writes simply:

Evil might be taken metaphysically, physically and morally. *Metaphysical evil* consists in mere imperfection, *physical evil* in suffering, and *moral evil* in sin. (Leibniz 136)

Both sin and suffering are well-established aspects of evil. For St. Augustine, for example, “whatever is called evil is either sin or the punishment of sin” (Augustine 146). The perception that suffering is evil suggests itself even without Christian explication, and sometimes in opposition to the Augustinian-Thomistic legacy. Where the reality of sin in the Augustinian sense is questioned, suffering yet remains. Thus, Levinas speaks for modern humanity when he contends that “[a]ll evil refers to suffering” (158). Metaphysical evil, on the other hand, is a little more arcane, though it in many ways takes precedence; Leibniz clarifies that “the creature is limited in its essence; whence ensues that it cannot know all, and that it can deceive itself and commit other errors” (135). While these three kinds of evil can exist in mutual entanglement – with metaphysical evil purportedly causing moral evil, or sin causing suffering – they can also demand vastly different kinds of responses.

While I have in part chosen to focus on Froude, Clough, and Eliot because of their role in narratives of secularization and their mutual influence, their greatest value for this study lies in the fact that they differ in the kind of evil that is their primary concern. The

remaining three chapters are therefore ordered not merely by author but also by evil – moral, metaphysical, and physical.

The second chapter then traces James Anthony Froude’s obsession with moral evil in his early criticism, his first book of fiction *Shadows of the Clouds*, and the novel, *The Nemesis of Faith*. While Froude is aware of metaphysical evil, he often seems to revel joyously in the limits of human knowledge and is troubled by these limits only when they touch on the problem posed by moral evil. Though Froude is the strongest example of the Victorian opposition to theodicy – often matching the kind of outrage later expressed by Eagleton or Robbins and quoted above – he is also most committed to upholding the notion of moral evil as a guarantor of the distinction between right and wrong action. Froude’s special type of realism shows in “action” what his speculative writing opposes: that sin is real and inevitably punished.

In the third chapter, I explore Arthur Hugh Clough’s indecisiveness and the struggle with completion as an expression of his consuming preoccupation with metaphysical evil and the problem posed by humanity’s limits. The poet Clough is the odd one out in this study. Despite the fact that Joseph Phelan, in the introduction to his edition suggests “that all Clough’s poetry aspires to the condition of narrative” (J. P. Phelan, ‘Introduction’ 4), and that Philip Davis describes his work as characterized by “a strange new realism” (470), including Clough in a study that focuses on realist narratives demands some explanation. Part of that explanation is that metaphysical evil is also the odd one out, being in many ways the newest (it is only popularized by Leibniz at the beginning of the eighteenth century) and the most complex of the three types of evil. Though many formulations of the problem of evil consider only physical and moral evil, once metaphysical evil is admitted, it overshadows all other considerations, since human limitation and the capacity for error (even in religious and ethical matters) must be addressed before trustworthy responses to moral or physical evil can be formulated. Clough is unusually aware of the

problem posed by metaphysical evil and the shadow it casts. His poetry, especially the incomplete poetry, functions as a singularly suitable medium for struggling with metaphysical evil. I will focus on Clough's long, narrative poetry, especially *Adam and Eve*, to show the ramifications of his unusual infusion of realism – telling the story as if it were real and lacking supernatural elements – in shifting the impetus of the story from moral to metaphysical evil. Though he does not make declarations against theodicy as Froude did, of the three authors discussed here, Clough is the most rigorous in resisting it. Unlike Froude, Clough thoroughly refuses to pretend to a solution or to suppress the problem of metaphysical evil, even if that entails sacrificing the notion of moral evil or any tangible concept of God. Taken seriously, metaphysical evil entraps poetry in a performative contradiction. I read Clough's tendency to abandon his poems unpublished or unfinished as an indicator of that contradiction, suggesting that any editorial attempt to produce individual, meaningful, contained poems from the mass of Clough's poetic remains brings Clough's work closer to the theodicy that his unfinished poetry struggles to resist.

The fourth and final chapter focuses on George Eliot's engagement with physical evil, with particular reference to *Adam Bede* and *Daniel Deronda*. Eliot was, of course, fully aware of the problem posed by metaphysical evil, but it is human suffering and the failure to do all we can to alleviate it that emerges as the great moral concern of her novels. Eliot's work often clearly expresses the anti-Augustinian desire to understand suffering as independent of wrong-doing, a struggle that is most heated when the novels appear at their most punitive. Though all three writers are realist in that they “exclude whatever is not vouched for by the senses” (I. P. Watt 84) – when Froude introduces a Genie he makes sure the narrator is feverish, while Clough manages to write his long narrative poem *Adam and Eve* without a single supernatural occurrence – Eliot is, of course, the prototypical realist novelist. It is in her engagement with physical evil that the theodicy problem of

literature, and especially realist narrative fiction, becomes most apparent. Eliot's novels again and again reveal the difficulty that the novelist, who controls the fate of her characters and its narratorial interpretation, has to resist the impression that all suffering is either deserved punishment or a harbinger of moral improvement, and thus not really evil at all but merely a necessary element in a higher authorial plan. But before delving into these literary and philosophical issues in the works of Froude, Clough, and Eliot, the next chapter will turn briefly to Thomas Carlyle, who acts as a link between eighteenth-century continental philosophical discourse and the Victorian literary imagination.

## *The Century of Theodicy*

*But if the Gordian knot of the problem of theodicy remains uncut as ever, how can we escape Pascal's conclusion that the coils of this knot lead us back to the "abyss" of faith?*

Ernst Cassirer  
*The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*

### Carlyle's Knot

In discussions of Victorian faith and doubt few works claim as pivotal a role as Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1836). Carlyle more than anyone, with the exception of Coleridge, perhaps, popularized philosophical and critical German thought in Britain. He translated many a German doubter, most influentially Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and used that inspiration in the creation of *Sartor's* German professor of philosophy Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. Following the publication of *Sartor*, many of the writers usually associated with the Victorian secularization narrative declared Carlyle to be a singularly formative influence on them and their generation. This is true of Froude, Carlyle's contentious biographer, as well as Clough who famously lamented to Emerson that: "Carlyle has led us all into the desert, and he has left us there" (Barish 120).<sup>27</sup> George Eliot, too, was convinced of Carlyle's influence, declaring the reading of *Sartor* "an epoch in the history" of countless minds ('Thomas Carlyle' 1035; in *Essays* 214). Following Eliot's verdict, twentieth-century critics have found in the religious, spiritual and emotional upheaval of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh the blueprint for many a Victorian "crisis of faith" narrative.<sup>28</sup> Thus, much attention has been given to the second of three books of

---

<sup>27</sup> See also page 167.

<sup>28</sup> Walter Reed sees in *Sartor* "a pattern which is important in other works of English literature of the nineteenth century as well" (Reed 411). G.B. Tennyson asserts that "[f]or many a Victorian the book became a bible" and sees in it "the classic pattern of Victorian doubt, denial, and affirmation" (Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus* 3, 292). Tennyson is unique for his time in insisting on "affirmation". In a review of the book, George Levine notes that Tennyson claims that "the tendency of the twentieth century to find the Everlasting No more convincing than the Everlasting Yea is more a commentary on the twentieth century than on Carlyle" (Levine, "'Sartor' Called 'Resartus'" 484; Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus* 294). Levine himself, of

*Sartor*, in which the fictional editor presents Teufelsdröckh's biographical fragments, and especially on the conversion chapters titled "the everlasting no", "the centre of indifference", and "the everlasting yea".

One particularly odd excursus in the "everlasting yea" chapter has, however, not been given much attention, despite the fact that Teufelsdröckh and his editor claim that it entails the obvious solution to Teufelsdröckh's spiritual crisis:

The Professor says, he here first got eye on the Knot that had been strangling him, and straightaway could unfasten it, and was free. 'A vain interminable controversy,' writes he, 'touching what is at present called Origin of Evil, or some such thing, arises in every soul, since the beginning of the world; and in every soul, that would pass from idle Suffering into actual Endeavouring, must first be put an end to. The most, in our time, have to go content with a simple, incomplete enough Suppression of this controversy; to a few some Solution of it is indispensable. In every new era, too, such solution comes out in different terms; and ever the Solution of the last era has become obsolete, and is found unserviceable. (Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 195)

It is the "Origin of Evil, or some such thing" that has been "strangling" Teufelsdröckh all this time. The "vain interminable controversy" haunts every generation afresh, leaving only two options – at least for Teufelsdröckh who sees the world in binaries ("no"s and "yea"s) – Suppression or Solution. For most, suppression must suffice but for Teufelsdröckh, so editor and Teufelsdröckh agree, the Solution is so patently obvious that there is no difference between recognizing the knot and unfastening it.

If the solution is obvious to Teufelsdröckh, the revelation that it was the "Origin of Evil" that had been ailing the professor all along yet comes as a surprise here. Professor Teufelsdröckh, as German philosopher and heir of the eighteenth century, would have been the right kind of character to debate the issue, its history, its theological implications,

---

course, is not wholly convinced by Tennyson's intervention on behalf of *Sartor* as a text of faith, rather than doubt.

and its unprecedented significance for Enlightenment philosophy. But there is none of that. Instead Teufelsdröckh seems removed from this specific debate, until the very moment in which he is enmeshed in it. Only then does he – or his fictional editor arranging the fragments – feel the need to introduce a figure not previously mentioned in the book:

Cease, my much-respected Herr von Voltaire [...] Sufficiently hast thou demonstrated this proposition, considerable or otherwise: That the Mythus of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth. Alas, were thy six-and-thirty quartos, and the six-and-thirty thousand other quartos and folios, and flying sheets or reams, printed before and since on the same subject, all needed to convince us of so little! But what next? Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythus [...] What! thou hast no faculty in that kind? Only a torch for burning, no hammer for building? Take our thanks, then, and – thyself away.  
(Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 199)

In Voltaire, Teufelsdröckh is introducing the key figure, at least in terms of the sheer number of readers and heated discussions, of the “vain interminable controversy” in the eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Teufelsdröckh’s sentiments reproduce those Carlyle expressed in his essay on Voltaire. There, too, he took the “image-breaker” (Carlyle, *Voltaire and Novalis* 21) to task for torching what others built without supplying anything in its stead; a circumstance emphasized by the fact that Teufelsdröckh never names those that Voltaire was writing against – Gottfried Leibniz or Alexander Pope – as if the destruction were so thorough that one cannot even remember what stood before it. To the reader, the sudden address to Voltaire opens up a pointed conversation with the eighteenth-century *philosophe* but Teufelsdröckh is really ending the conversation, framing it between “cease” and “take [...] thyself away”, suggesting that Voltaire was there all along, and it is just at the moment Teufelsdröckh feels the “Knot” that he notices his looming

---

<sup>29</sup> Carlyle’s use of the number thirty-six alludes to the *Memoirs Secrets*, an anonymous account of French literary life, often attributed to Louis Petit de Bachaumont, which reached 36 volumes. The *Memoirs Secrets* prominently featured Voltaire, and Carlyle refers to them as “six-and-thirty volumes of scurrilous eavesdropping, long since printed under the title of *Mémoires de Bachaumont*” in his essay on Voltaire (Carlyle, *Voltaire and Novalis* 11). In that essay, Carlyle also declares Voltaire the most important thinker of the eighteenth century and the second most influential, after Luther, in all of European intellectual history (Carlyle, *Voltaire and Novalis* 9).

interlocutor. Only at the height of his spiritual crisis does Teufelsdröckh recognize the problem and the philosophical discourse surrounding it, and, by recognizing it – so the reader is asked to believe – solve it; as if it were a philosophical Rumpelstiltskin that need only be addressed by its proper name to be thwarted.

The name Teufelsdröckh ends up using, “Origin of Evil”, is itself an odd choice of vocabulary for the character. The German philosopher should really use a different term, given the fact that by the end of the eighteenth century most German thinkers referred to the issue by the word Gottfried Leibniz coined at the close of the 17<sup>th</sup> century: Theodicy (German *Theodizee*, French *théodicée*, from Greek *theos* “God” and *dikē* “justice”). Perhaps, Carlyle is making a concession to his British readers, to whom “Origin of Evil”, a common English translation from Latin theological texts (*Origo Mali*), would have been the more familiar name.<sup>30</sup> Coleridge, whom Carlyle consulted before writing *Sartor*, used the term despite his affinity for Leibniz.<sup>31</sup> A century earlier, Bishop William King had used the Latin term as a title for his “De Origine Mali” (1702), translated as an *Essay on the Origin of Evil* (1731), a work which was briefly well received but soon eclipsed by Leibniz’s more influential essay.<sup>32</sup> In the long title, now usually shortened, Leibniz too used the term to explain his neologism: *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme et l’origine du mal* (1710).<sup>33</sup> In the following century, German and French philosophical discourse largely adopted Leibniz’s concise term “theodicy” to describe the issue but the British isles preferred “Origin of Evil” – and later “Problem of Evil” – despite the fact that “theodicy” comes close to a verbatim translation of what

---

<sup>30</sup> Jerry Dibble explores the importance of the British reader for the structure of *Sartor* (294).

<sup>31</sup> James Treadwell describes Carlyle’s visit to Coleridge and the influence it had on *Sartor* (68).

<sup>32</sup> King’s work is rarely read today. Mark Larrimore’s “The Problem of Evil: A Reader”, which includes 66 different sources from Plato to Nel Noddings, does not mention King. Leibniz himself reviewed King’s work very positively, objecting almost exclusively to King’s notion of free will as something absolutely independent rather than a chain of causes (Leibniz 406).

<sup>33</sup> From here on the work will be referred to as *Theodicy*.

might be the most influential description of the project in English literary culture: to justify the ways of God to man.

God's need for justification had, of course, not come up with Milton but could be traced back to antiquity, as David Hume had reminded educated readers in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779). In an oft-quoted passage, Philo, the sceptic, traces the "vain, interminable controversy" if not quite to the "beginning of the world", then at least to Epicurus (341 – 270 BC):

Epicurus's old questions are yet unanswered.  
Is he [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent.  
Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil? (Hume 122–23) <sup>34</sup>

If God were both truly good and omnipotent, so the claim goes, then he would not cause evil to exist. If, on the other hand, evil exists, then God must be deficient either in His goodness or His power. The trilemma is most readily mitigated by curtailing one of the elements. Early Christianity, which increasingly moved away from the sometimes jealous, sometimes vengeful God of its Jewish ancestors and towards the idea of an infinitely loving Christ was especially susceptible to the problem. Some solved the issue by stipulating a force inimical to God, which is solely responsible for evil. But this move saves God's benevolence at the cost of his omnipotence. As the Christian Church developed, it was this dualist solution – in the shape of the gnostic heresy or Manicheanism – that church fathers like Irenaeus and Augustine needed to disprove in order to defend their loving yet omnipotent God. But if a Christian solution should undermine neither His benevolence nor His omnipotence, the only possible response to the trilemma had to lie in the third element. And so generations of Christian theologians

---

<sup>34</sup> It has long been customary to attribute the first formulation of the problem to Epicurus (341 – 270 BC), though no contemporaneous source exists. The first written source of Epicurus's alleged formulation comes from the Christian apologist Lactantius (250 – 320 AD) in *The Wrath of God*.

found that evil was nothing more than an illusion, a shadow of God's light, a privation of His goodness (*privatio bonum*), or His turning away from our world (*Deus Absconditus*). A man named Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, God-born devil's dirt, torn between "everlasting yea" and "everlasting no", might be expected to find his solution in the dualist heresy – and he is certainly drawn to all kinds of dualist thinking. But as Teufelsdröckh laments, he "cannot so much as believe in a Devil" (Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 171). Instead, like generations of Christians before him, Teufelsdröckh finds his solution in negating the existence of evil. It is only because men think they deserve goodness that they suffer from evil concludes the professor. Once man understands that he is infinitely undeserving, nothing is evil, for everything is better than one deserves. Thus, advises Teufelsdröckh,

Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged (as is most likely), thou wilt feel it happiness to be only shot: fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair-halter, it will be a luxury to die in hemp. (*Sartor Resartus* 195–96)

Callously eccentric as Teufelsdröckh's formulation might be it is not particularly original. The idea that suffering is humanity's just desert is well-established in Augustine's reading of the story of Adam and Eve – John Hick calls it the Augustinian theodicy – and repeated by Thomas Aquinas or, indeed, Milton. Teufelsdröckh might inform his readers that every generation finds "the Solution of the last era has become obsolete" (*Sartor Resartus* 195), but what he presents as his novel solution smacks of the theology of yesteryear with all the niceties removed, raising, for a moment, the question whether Teufelsdröckh's hangman theodicy is faithfully embracing Augustinianism or pointing at its obscenity.<sup>35</sup> This ambivalence is heightened by the fact that Teufelsdröckh's solution does not seem capable of causing the reported results; for Teufelsdröckh assures his readers that after his "Origin of Evil" revelation he, for the first time, could look upon mankind "with an

---

<sup>35</sup> Critics have previously diagnosed an Augustinian influence in *Sartor*. Tennyson, for example, sees Augustine in Teufelsdröckh's need for a total spiritual crisis before his conversion (Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus* 296). Lore Metzger also names Augustine as an important source but does not say in what way (Metzger 320).

infinite Love, an infinite Pity” (*Sartor Resartus* 195–96). How the idea that even the most miserable creatures on earth receive only what they deserve, indeed deserve worse, should lead to “infinite Pity” neither Teufelsdröckh nor his editor reveals.

Were Teufelsdröckh really a professor, a philosopher, or a German, his theodicy would hardly pass muster – just so, his creator could not impress the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who declared Carlyle “an English atheist seeking to be honoured for not being so” (Nietzsche 14). But as a character in a work of narrative fiction Teufelsdröckh need not meet the rigorous standards of a philosophical treatise maintained in Königsberg or the Prussian Academy. If Teufelsdröckh’s “Solution” convinces, it is not by logical argument but by the evidence of his own fictional biography, by his poetic, prophetic style, and by the ruse of the fictional editor who, not questioning Teufelsdröckh here, lends another level of authority to his claimed solution. The passage ends, through another editorial intervention designed to give “the wearied reader relief”, with Teufelsdröckh at his most Carlylean, in a paean on “Duty” concluding “Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God’s name!” (*Sartor Resartus* 202). The editorial interventions which unite these elements only emphasize the fact that the different parts of his Solution – the deservedness of all suffering, the need for infinite pity, and the call to productive duty – will not quite fit. The Solution in “new terms” that Teufelsdröckh claims to have fashioned for the “new era” resembles most closely an “incomplete enough Suppression”, with the issue bursting to the forefront in the moment of crisis only to be swiftly subdued once again.

The result of such suppression – and one of the patterns that Victorian writers encountered in *Sartor Resartus* – is that theodicy discourse is often hidden, remaining largely invisible. Nevertheless, it is there, the “Knot” that “strangles” Teufelsdröckh without his knowledge, or Voltaire who looms unnamed in the background waiting to resume the interminable controversy. In order to see the hidden figures, and to understand how the

different elements and arguments fit together – disparate as Carlyle and many after him often make them seem – it is necessary to grasp the discourse in context, before it went into hiding. To that end, Carlyle presents two different time frames: for Teufelsdröckh, the controversy is both ancient (“since the beginning of the world”), and so intimately linked to the eighteenth century that it immediately conjures up Voltaire, whom Carlyle considers the foremost representative of the last century (*Voltaire and Novalis* 9). This temporal ambiguity anticipates twentieth-century approaches to theodicy which vacillate between seeing the controversy as “interminable” and ancient, to declaring it quintessentially modern. Thus before looking at what exactly the rope is and how it came to lay around Teufelsdröckh’s metaphorical neck – and those of the men and women that followed him – the first question that needs settling is not “what” but “when is theodicy?”.

### When is theodicy?

The notion that theodicy discourse goes back to “the beginning of the world” or at least human culture and that it can be found in most societies has long been espoused by sociologists of religion. As is so often the case, the crucial figure is Max Weber. Though it has received less attention, theodicy inhabits as important a role in Weber’s thought as secularization, because it is its mirror image: the mechanism of the enchantment of the world that must precede its disenchantment. Weber’s most thorough explanation of the role of theodicy comes in the volume on Confucianism in his *The Economic Ethics of the World Religions* (*Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen*). The exposition of theodicy here signifies two important features of Weber’s thought: one, theodicy is geographically universal and not tied to any specific region or religion. Two, it is primarily a response to a psychological need stemming in an economic fact. For Weber, theodicy correlates with the birth of economic man – as secularization does with science – because it answers to a need which must occur in every society in which goods are unevenly distributed: the need on the part of the possessors of goods and power to have their possession justified,

especially in the face of the less fortunate. In other words, it is not enough for the King to sit on the throne, he must be convinced of the legitimacy of his sitting there. Weber calls this original response to an economic and psychological need, which brings about the development of spiritual professionals and thus organized religion, theodicy of good fortune (*Theodizee des Glücks*) (Weber, *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligion: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* 89–90). There is also a second kind of theodicy responding to the needs of the unfortunate; Weber calls it a “theodicy of suffering” (*Theodizee des Leidens*) (Weber, *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligion: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* 93). Any promise that those that are unfortunate at present will be rewarded in the future – that the meek shall inherit the earth – falls in this latter category. Together, the theodicies of good and bad fortune justify the lots of haves and have-nots, and God is merely the means necessary for that justification. For Weber, the problem of evil – which is here simply the uneven distribution of fortune – prompts not the death of divinity but the conditions of its birth, making theodicy as old as, or older even than, the Gods themselves.

At the other end of the spectrum, the German conservative philosopher Odo Marquard argues that “theodicy is specifically modern” (11). Unlike Weber, Marquard understands theodicy not as a response to a need but as a thought pattern. What makes theodicy so quintessentially modern, for Marquard, is that it is the earliest and clearest expression of the pattern he calls “tribunalization” (9). By putting God on trial, Marquardt argues, Leibniz pioneered what would become the deciding intellectual strategy of modernity. Thus, Marquard understands the intellectual history of the eighteenth century as a triptych of tribunalization – theodicy as the tribunalization of God, the French Revolution as the tribunalization of man, and philosophical idealism as the tribunalization of ideas.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle would have agreed, calling the eighteenth century a time in which “things human and things divine [were] cited without misgivings before the same boastful tribunal of so-called Reason, which means here a merely argumentative Logic” (Carlyle, *Voltaire and Novalis* 24).

Writing in 1991, Marquard also sees in Leibniz's theodicy the beginning of the kind of hermeneutics of suspicion with its "curriculum of accusation and justification" which Marquard ardently opposes (10). The demand to justify institutions, language choices, gender roles, the canon, theoretical concepts etc. is "a theodicy motive in modern society" (Marquard 10); by extension the need to define theodicy is itself a theodicy motive, as is the attempt to define literature, or any inquiry into the value of the humanities.

Despite their differences, Weber's and Marquard's thoughts on theodicy have many similarities. For one Weber and Marquard are, as Weber said of himself, unreligious in the way that others are unmusical (Weber, *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligion: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* 110) – and so are their notions of theodicy. For both Weber and Marquard, God is a means to an end – either justifying oneself or putting others on trial. Another similarity is that both Weber and Marquard end up turning theodicy into Casaubon's Key to all Mythologies, or in Marquard's case all modernity. One cannot avoid thinking that the flipside of this hermeneutic wealth is that both men have a certain laxity with historical data. Weber continuously expounds on the motivations of the foundation not merely of Christianity or Judaism but the very first animistic religions, arguing about times and places for which he does not supply evidence, most likely because it does not exist. Similarly, Marquard argues that theodicy became possible in the eighteenth century, because it was the first time that human beings were far enough removed from the experience of evil to philosophize about it. "Experience of life", writes Marquard, "seems to me to show that when one is up against suffering, under its immediate pressure, the problem is never theodicy" (Marquard 11). While I am loath to contradict the life experience of a sexagenarian, I do not share this impression and neither did Rousseau, among others, as will become evident. More importantly, the claim that before the end of the seventeenth century there was never a person so free from the pressure of suffering that they were capable of reflecting upon it demands a prohibitive

amount of evidence, and Marquard makes no attempt to supply it.<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, both Weber's and Marquard's notions of theodicy are more intellectually stimulating than verifiable.

Beyond the inspiration, what Weber and Marquard show seems common sense: when theodicy is viewed in terms of the psychological and basic economic needs it allays, it concerns most of humanity; when it is viewed as a philosophical or theological solution to a problem it becomes specific to time and place. The what and when of theodicy depends largely on the kinds of questions being asked, and thus often on disciplinary differences. So, for Peter Berger, writing in the Weberian tradition, the following statement is evidently true:

The illiterate peasant who comments upon the death of a child by referring to the will of God is engaging in theodicy as much as the learned theologian who writes a treatise to demonstrate that the suffering of the innocent does not negate the conception of a God both all-good and all-powerful. (Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* 53)

But while the sociologist of religion might in a certain context (here that of secularization theory) happily equate the peasant's lament with the theological treatise, it is yet true that philosophically or theologically speaking the two are quite different and that the former is historically or geographically unspecific, while the latter tends to betray historical, geographical, and doctrinal provenance. This difference between a broad and narrow sense is sometimes marked through different kinds of terminology, so that utterances such as the peasant's lament are grouped under "problem of evil" while only modern "treatises" are termed "theodicy".<sup>38</sup> Regrettably, this attempt at terminological clarification adds to the confusion because it is rarely carried out consistently, and because it equates problem and solution – if anything, theodicy is a response to the

---

<sup>37</sup> Marquard acknowledges the usual precursors to Leibniz's theodicy but sees them as "blunted [...] by an intact religion" (Marquard 11).

<sup>38</sup> Larrimore's *The Problem of Evil: A Reader* for example has a section with responses to the problem of evil titled "Before Theodicy" (75), apparently finding the term "theodicy" applicable only to writers of the seventeenth century and after.

problem of evil, not a modern version of the problem. At the same time, it remains unclear why writing on the topic as rigorous as that of Augustine or Aquinas should not be described as theodicy, while eighteenth century treatises, many of which regurgitate these theologians, should. A better way of approaching the issue is therefore to agree with Berger that theodicy covers a wealth of different kind of phenomena with the added caveat that these phenomena might yet prove very different and that the differences demand attention.

In this vein, the Christian theologian John Hick's seminal *Evil and the God of Love* (1966) defines theodicy broadly as "the accepted name for the whole subject comprising the problem of evil and its attempted resolution" (6) but then focuses exclusively on the specificities of the Christian tradition with its increasing emphasis on the "God of Love". Hick's contention is that while there are myriads of possible resolutions of the problem of evil, the Christian tradition brought forth only two rival responses: the Augustinian and the Irenaean theodicy. The basic difference between these two can be seen in the way that they read the story of Adam and Eve. For Augustine, God made the first parents perfect to their position in a chain of being.<sup>39</sup> Because they wanted to have what God had not created them to have – knowledge of good and evil – they ate the fruit and thus they fell, and their children and children's children through them. In the Augustinian theodicy, all evil is thus either sin itself or divine punishment for our sin.

For St. Irenaeus (130-202), the shoe is on the other foot; Eve's forbidden snack prompted no fall but was part of an ascent. Newly created man was infantile, not yet capable of receiving the perfection which uncreated God, being perfect, was capable of holding and

---

<sup>39</sup> The standard work on the issue is still Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* (1936). As Lovejoy shows, Augustine, together with the author whose work is attributed to Dionysius, is largely responsible for the Christian development from Plotinian ideas of the Great chain as an answer to the question why God did not make all things equal (67). The Augustinian answer, so Lovejoy, is that if all things were equal, the lowest things would not exist; "The assumption implicit here", Lovejoy concludes, "is manifestly that literally all – that is, all possible – things *ought* to be" (67).

bestowing, just like a new-born could not eat food even if its parent was the world's greatest chef (cf. Irenaeus 42). In Irenaeus' vision, the world outside of Eden is then not one of punishment; rather God is sending mankind to Kindergarten. Evil exists not because God gets satisfaction from seeing us suffer but because it is the way for us to improve – mankind is struggling through a “vale of soul-making” (Hick 168). The problem that Hick – a life-long Christian who underwent multiple denominational conversions and died a Quaker – sees in mainstream Christianity is that it resoundingly went the Augustinian route when it should have remained with Irenaeus.

Because Hick presents his work as corrective – the last section offers “A Theodicy for Today” fashioned on those Irenaeian foundations the rest of the book established – he too is forced into certain inaccuracies. As Mark Scott compellingly argues, for example, Hick's “Irenaeian theodicy”, should better be attributed to Origen because Origen's writing has more of the characteristics that Hick describes (M. S. M. Scott, ‘Suffering and Soul-Making’ 314). Specifically, Origen's writing is characterized by a “theology of ascent (*theologia ascendens*)” in which all of mankind, not just an elect few, is treading stepping stones to God (M. S. M. Scott, *Journey Back to God* 102). With Hick's Christian audience in mind, one can hazard a guess why he might have preferred Irenaeus, the saint, to Origen, the heretic. Despite this addendum, the story that Hick tells remains largely convincing as one in which St. Augustine's punishment theodicy of the fall came to triumph over less-punitive rival versions. Whether one traces it back to Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, or any other of the handful of potential candidates, the crucial point Hick makes is that before Augustinian theology came to dominate Christianity for many centuries, it had a rival; at the beginning there was a theodicy of ascent.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> One can, as with most Patristic theology, go back even further, tracing the idea of an ascent on stepping stones to God both to Jewish sources, specifically Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28:10-19), and to Platonism. The *Symposium* is the most relevant source for the Socratic version of ascent – though here it is love, specifically the love of perfection and not suffering that causes the soul's ascent (Plato, *The Dialogues I* 543). With regard to Platonic notions of evil and justice the

Where I disagree with Hick is in the number of centuries. In order to claim the urgency of his “theodicy for today” (Hick 242), as a much-needed intervention based on venerable but largely forgotten knowledge, he must first establish a relatively undisrupted Augustinian lineage stretching all the way to the present, in his case the 1960s. To do so Hick flattens out relatively recent developments in theodicy. Thus, in Hick’s reading, eighteenth-century Optimism – the theodicies of King, Leibniz, or Pope – loses its dynamics and specificities because to Hick it must belong to the “Augustinian type of theodicy, and [...] firmly within the tradition” (Hick 146).<sup>41</sup> This is not to suggest that Hick is not an astute reader, quite the contrary; he does, for example, discover a semblance of his Irenaean theodicy in the work of the German Romantic Friedrich Schleiermacher (Hick 211). But, for Hick, Schleiermacher remains a lone wolf, connected neither with Irenaeus nor the preceding centuries’ theodicy discourse, and the story of Irenaean theodicy is one of “unfulfilled beginnings in the first four centuries, and then an independent new start in the nineteenth century” (Hick 219). There is a better story to be told about the development of eighteenth-century theodicy discourse and the struggle with and between rival theodicies.

### Leibniz’s Philosophy

Leibniz, contrary to Hick’s assurance, was not an Augustinian. He was significantly more flexible than that: an interfaith diplomat at a time when dogma caused wars. Charitably, one might call his *Theodicy* of the “best of all possible worlds” syncretic – not merely Augustinian, or Irenaean, but all of the above and more. Bertrand Russell finds less charitable words, when he describes what he sees as Leibniz betraying his true Spinozan

---

*Republic* is the most important text. For Plato’s cosmogeny and Platonic sources of Christian dualism, see the *Timaeus* (Plato, *The Dialogues* 3 715–35).

<sup>41</sup> According to Uwe Steiner, the most probable source of the eighteenth-century neologism “Optimism” can be found in reactions to Leibniz’s *Theodicy* in the Jesuit newspaper *Memoires de Trévoux* (1737) (Steiner 306–07). It was soon used to describe all similar theodicies, especially that of Pope, and largely popularized satirically by Voltaire.

philosophy in order to avoid the “impieties of the Jewish Atheist” (Russell 5, 172, 185). Russell detects four successive philosophical influences in Leibniz’s work: Scholasticism, Materialism, Cartesianism, and Spinozism (Russell 5). Russell’s list of largely “unchristian” sources might reflect his own biases but even here the voice of Augustine echoes, since much of scholasticism was deeply Augustinian – so much so that Augustinian theodicy is sometimes referred to as the “Augustinian-Thomistic theodicy” reflecting the importance of the schoolman Thomas Aquinas for the spread and development of the Augustinian theodicy (Korsmeyer 47). But Leibniz was more than the sum of these influences. He was, by most accounts, a polymath genius. Within a few years of having taught himself mathematics he discovered calculus at the same time as Isaac Newton, who consequently thought of Leibniz not as a genius but as a thief (cf. Christianson 148). Whatever the truth of the discovery of calculus, Leibniz was undoubtedly a brilliant conversationalist, a favourite of nobility and intelligentsia alike, an inveterate letter writer, and a fast learner. One thing he learned in the company of his patrons – many of whom were former Protestants who had converted to Catholicism – was the benefit of dogmatic flexibility.<sup>42</sup> Born a Protestant, and self-educated a Cartesian and Spinozan, Leibniz lived, intellectually at least, in Catholic France. If he wanted to be taken seriously by the intellectual and worldly powers of his time – and if his many letters to the great men and women of Europe are any indication, he wanted nothing more – he had to make room for their frequently Catholic beliefs. Leibniz, the diplomat, was on a life-long mission to bridge the schism between the different Christian religions, including the kinds of philosophy that appeared only nominally Christian. For Leibniz, the way of re-establishing one common religion was to show that all Christians shared the same beliefs and what they did not share was, if not wrong, at least misunderstood. Thankfully,

---

<sup>42</sup> Among the convert patrons were the Baron von Boineburg, Johann Philipp von Schönborn, Johann Friedrich von Braunschweig Lüneburg, Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels (Nadler 52–90).

his philosophical and mathematical training had supplied him with the right tool for the job: reason.

In writing a theodicy, as Leibniz did in the early years of the eighteenth century, reason (specifically logical, syllogistic or mathematical reasoning) was by no means an obviously, given the venerable Christian tradition of rejecting all “philosophy and vain deceit” (*King James Version*, Col. 2:8). Lactantius, when he first wrote down Epicurus’ (alleged) formulation of the problem of evil, had warned against being “so arrogant as to glory in the comprehension of the truth by our own ability” (61). Instead Christians should follow God’s revealed truth and find His justice there. Later theologians would concur. Augustine warned Christians to avoid mathematical reasoning because “mathematicians have made a covenant with the devil to darken the spirit” (quoted in Kline 4). Martin Luther, as Leibniz was well aware, condemned all “those who desire to submit revealed truths to the tribunal of our reason” (Leibniz 82). In his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697-1702), Pierre Bayle finally forced the issue, arguing again and again that revelation trumps reason. Without the former, reason was a “blind and erroneous Guide” and philosophy was like a medicine that having eaten away corrupted flesh would then “corrode even the quick and sound Flesh, rot the Bones, and penetrate to the very Marrow” (Bayle, *Dictionary* 1 97).

The problem of evil in particular confounded reason, as Bayle pointed out in a footnote on Manicheans, because reason would always raise confusing questions. Why would God create mankind in such a way that it had even so much as an inclination to evil? Did all-knowing God not foresee the fall? Why did God not prevent the fall, knowing that by allowing it He would force himself to do what opposes His goodness – “make his children miserable by exercising upon them the role of a severe judge” (Bayle, *Dictionary* 4 95)? This, Bayle argued, is the path along which reason will lead towards all kinds of heresies. Therefore, one must curtail reason and turn to Scripture, which answers all questions:

Let anyone tell us with a pompous shew of arguments, that it was not possible that moral evil should introduce itself into the world by the work of principle infinitely good and holy; we shall answer that this was nevertheless done, and consequently that it is very possible. (Bayle, *Dictionary* 4 96)

Scripture and its exegesis by sainted theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas tells us the reality of sin and the sole culpability of mankind – no further questions. Bayle’s argument cannot convince a philosopher but then, why should that matter, given that only scripture should convince anyone of anything? So good was “ambidextrous Bayle”, as Voltaire nicknamed him (*Political Writings* 36), in showing that God’s justice confounded reason that he is often seen as of the sceptics’ party and probably knowing it, too.<sup>43</sup> But Leibniz (at least publicly) took him at face value. His *Theodicy* is the concerted effort to show that far from undermining God’s justice, reason alone can make us truly appreciate it.

Leibniz’s theodicy can be contained in a simple piece of logical reasoning: if God is omnipotent and benevolent he will always do the best that is possible (Leibniz 270). God is omnipotent and benevolent.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the world he actually created, the world that we experience, must be the best that is possible. It is important to note that by “world” Leibniz means not merely this planet but rather the “whole succession and the whole agglomeration of all existent things” (128). Leibniz imagines God going through all possible agglomerations and picking the best one. If God had noticed that another possible world would be better, then he would have created that one. Since we can neither fully imagine all the possible worlds that God considered before creating this one, nor

---

<sup>43</sup> Froude echoes Voltaire’s judgement of Bayle, claiming that reading Bayle’s essay on Spinoza forces him into the “disagreeable dilemma of culpable ignorance, or more culpable bad intention” (‘Life of Spinoza’ 402). K. C. Sandberg has made an interesting argument against the conventional view of Bayle the sceptic and for Bayle’s sincerity (Sandberg 74).

<sup>44</sup> This for Leibniz is almost axiomatically true, though he does present several proofs of God’s existence throughout his writing (for an analysis of Leibniz’s cosmological argument see Lærke 58–84; for his ontological argument see Loewer 105–09). God’s goodness results directly from Leibniz’s Platonist equation of goodness with reality, so that God being the most real must also be the best. Being the best, God is bound to do the best but this does not equate to metaphysical necessity. Rather, God is metaphysically free but morally bound to the best (cf. Pactwa 310).

adequately examine the entire world – not even our own planet – Leibniz asserts that the reader “must judge with me *ab effectu*, since God has chosen this world as it is” (129). In other words, because we see that this world exists it simply cannot be anything but the best, given that the all-powerful and all-good God will always choose the best. Leibniz’s conclusion says not only very little about actual qualities of existing things – the best possibility is not necessarily very good, although one can assume that Leibniz conceives of God’s best possibility as fairly excellent – it also says very little about this particular earth at this particular moment in time, home of humanity and its many sufferings.

What Leibniz’s theodicy lacks in descriptive power, it makes up for in theological flexibility. Leibniz’s syllogism is an astoundingly accommodating vessel that can hold all manner of theologies. Within this frame, anything goes – or at least anything that does not affront the powers that be, such as the Origenian theodicy that eventually all mankind, not just an elect few are saved, which Leibniz briefly acknowledges only to reject it (Leibniz 132). That is not to say there is nothing Origenian in Leibniz’s *Theodicy*, since Origen is usually seen as the fountain-head of that alternate Christian theological tradition in which reason and faith are symbiotic rather than opposing forces (cf. Wolfson 102–06), a fact Leibniz does not, however, advertise. Excluding obvious heresies, Leibniz spends a great part of his work showing how all kinds of dogmas and theologies can be integrated into the “best of all possible worlds”. He frequently takes Augustinian-Thomistic ideas concerning punishment and damnation to explain earthly suffering (150–62) but he also includes a touch of what Hick associates with Irenaeus – with a brevity that corresponds to Irenaeus’s lesser theological currency at the time and might easily be missed – suggesting that God included misery in the world because it “contributes to a greater perfection in him who suffers it” (Leibniz 137). Leibniz can include these, and many more, mutually contradictory theodicies into his work because they ultimately do not matter. They are included not because the argument needs them; they merely illustrate

that there are so many ways to fill in what, deduced through syllogism from first principles, we know logically to be correct. Why did God create beings who would be inclined to sin? Why did God not prevent the first parents from eating the apple?<sup>45</sup> Why is there suffering? For the same reason that God does anything, explains Leibniz, because it was, it must have been, in some way necessary for the best of all possible worlds.

Despite the advantageous flexibility of Leibniz's reasoning, the idea that ostensibly bad things happen because they are necessary for the mechanistic unfolding of the best of all possible worlds has some very troubling consequences, especially for a diplomat of interfaith relations. One of the most forceful attacks the Catholic Church levied on Protestantism (and the Jansenist minority within Catholicism) was that they negated individual responsibility and equalized the saint and the murderer as marionettes in God's irresistible plan. The Catholic mainstream felt that morally they had the upper hand: if God created Adam and Eve so that they would have no choice but to sin, and then punished them for sinning, that would be neither fatherly nor just. To justify the Augustinian-Thomistic theodicy, embraced by all sides and therefore included by Leibniz, mankind must have been free to choose correctly. But Leibniz's theodicy heightens the conundrum inherent in much Protestant thought. For, if God went through all possible worlds and chose this one as the best, then he knowingly rejected the worlds in which humanity chose correctly, and in doing so He preordained sin. As Leibniz makes perfectly clear: "the world could have been without sin and without sufferings; but I deny that then it would have been better" (128). Sin proves itself as a part of God's plan and a necessary link in the mechanistic unfolding of the best of all possible worlds simply by virtue of having been committed. A society which conceives of laws and morality as

---

<sup>45</sup> As is common, I refer to Eve's fruit as an apple, despite the fact that the Bible does not state what kind of fruit Eve eats. There are several explanations for the Christian addition of the apple, the most interesting lies in the similarities between the Latin words for evil (*malum*) and apple (*malus*) – so that Eve in biting the apple takes a bite of evil (Wray 18–20).

founded upon a duty towards God must feel threatened by and hostile towards such reasoning. One of Leibniz's most vocal detractors, the theologian Jean-Pierre Crousaz jumped on the issue, claiming that if murderers got wind of Leibniz's system, they would defend themselves with the claim that the murder was preordained and that refraining from it would have destroyed the whole mechanistic order of the best of all possible worlds (Crousaz 27).

Throughout the *Theodicy* Leibniz tries to distance himself from this "lazy reason[ing]" or – as he shrewdly calls it, separating it from his Christian philosophy – *fatum Mahometanum*: "fate after the Turkish fashion" (54). Muslims, Leibniz believes, are so convinced that the manner and time of their death is preordained and their fate fixed "that they do not shun danger or even abandon places infected with the plague" (54). Leibniz attempts to escape from this apparently inevitable consequence of his theodicy by picking apart the relationship between divine foreknowledge and necessity. "[H]e who causes evil by necessity is not culpable", Leibniz concedes (420). Therefore, any system in which everything after the moment of creation happens by absolute necessity is one in which there can be no human culpability and thus no sin, no fall, and no Augustinian theodicy. This is how Leibniz understands Spinoza – as truly advocating the impossibility of sin – and it is here that he desires to part with him. Leibniz argues that while it is true that one is part of the causal chain God chose at the moment of creation, that does not make one's actions necessary in the mathematical sense. Mathematical, essential or absolute necessity – Leibniz uses these terms synonymously – exists when the opposite of a statement is a contradiction: the opposite of the statement "the square has four sides" is a contradiction because a square is by definition quadrilateral. Now, there is no mathematical contradiction in saying "Eve did not eat the apple" – Eve is not by definition the "apple eater". Therefore, there is no mathematical necessity in Eve's action. Instead her action – our action – is inclined by a myriad of external and internal forces. Leibniz

calls this “hypothetical necessity” or “necessity of consequence, because it presupposes the will and the other requisites” (381). Therefore, “[t]hese voluntary actions” – the word “voluntary” is clearly designed to drive the point home – “will not happen whatever one may do and whether one will them or not; but they will happen because one will do, and because one will will to do, that which leads to them” (Leibniz 381). In other words, Eve eats the apple not because the opposite would be a contradiction but because she wants to – a fact God foreknew and even planned upon but yet did not make absolutely necessary. And it is because she follows her base desires, rather than staying true to her better judgement that she deserves punishment – as do we who sin after her knowing we should not.

The problem with this kind of argument is, of course, that it leads to a regression which ends with the first cause (God’s actualization of the world we have), still relegating all responsibility to the Deity. A devil’s advocate – and this particular devil will find many advocates from James Anthony Froude to Arthur Schopenhauer – might suggest that it is irrelevant whether Eve eats the apple because God created her so that she would eat the apple, or whether he created her so that she would want to eat the apple and she consequently ate it. The route of regress does not change the fact that Eve’s behaviour was caused by a source other than her own free will and that she could and should not have done differently. In fact, the advocate might argue, rather than proving free will, Leibniz’s “necessity of consequence” enslaves the will further. Not only is one determined in one’s action, one is determined in every wish, high ambition, altruistic motivation and animal desire. But Leibniz is certain: “the necessity which destroys morality, and renders punishment unjust [...] is found in the things that will be whatever one may do and whatever one may will to do” (381). The “necessity of consequence” is precisely not of that order and thus, rather than exculpating humanity, it establishes the importance of duty. As Leibniz declares, “providence [is] a thing that occurs only when

one has done one's duty" (55). What that duty is and how we might know it, Leibniz explains with the one faculty he explains everything with: reason – "[f]or in doing one's duty, in obeying reason, one carries out the orders of Supreme Reason" (51–52).

If this reasoning, for Leibniz at least, "untie[s] the Gordian knot of contingency and freedom" (419), it also gives rise to a new problem, even to a new kind of evil. Ever since the days of Augustine, Christian theologians had conceived of evil as being two different things: moral evil – sin – and physical evil, pain and suffering. Physical evil only came into the world as a result of moral evil, which in itself was an error rendered possible by free will and preventable by following God's command. Rather than following her own misguided desires, Eve should have listened to God alone. In the capacity for such error, Leibniz sees a third type of evil, which he calls "metaphysical evil" and defines as "*an original imperfection in the creature before sin, because the creature is essentially limited*" (135). With this definition, many church fathers would have agreed. That the creature, being created, is essentially limited is a thought as familiar to Irenaeus and Lactantius as it was to Augustine. But none of them finds an evil in this necessary limitation. Quite the contrary, for Lactantius, it is the foundation on which he rejects philosophical reasoning and embraces scripture, "because the mind of man, walled in by the darksome dwelling-place of his body, is removed far from an accurate view of truth" (Lactantius 61). As long as revelation is the one thing needful, the metaphysical limitation is a fact but not an evil. Only when reason is the tool destined to explain divine justice and establish human duty is the fact that the creature "cannot know all, and can deceive itself and commit other faults" an evil (Leibniz 135). Leibniz does not appear to be aware of the magnitude of the problem this evil can cause to his theodicy, relegating it to only a few short comments, nevertheless, it might just be the most worrisome evil of all.

### Pope's Poetry

If Leibniz was largely responsible both for bringing theodicy to unprecedented popularity in the salons of Europe, and for moving the trial of God's justice from scriptural exegesis to the court of human reason, he was not alone in these endeavours. Perhaps it is evidence of how well Leibniz had his finger on the pulse that the man who to many a European intellectual would become near synonymous with Leibniz's "system" was a poet who had most likely never even read Leibniz. Following the publication of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733-34), which famously aimed to "vindicate the ways of God to man", many agreed on its evident Leibnizianism. Almost immediately upon getting his hands on the French translation, Jean-Pierre Crousaz launched an elaborate attack on Pope's essay, as well as the Leibnizian philosophy it allegedly represented, in his *Examen de l'Essai de M. Pope sur l'Homme* (1737) (Crousaz 29; cf. Solomon 14). Pope soon felt called upon to respond to the frequent insinuations, assuring his editor William Warburton that he had "never in [his] life read a Line of Leibnitz [sic]" (*Correspondence of Alexander Pope* 164; cf. Evans 79; cf. C. A. Moore 101). Warburton had taken up the gauntlet on behalf of his friend, publicly defending the "wrongfully accused" Pope against Crousaz's implication that Pope followed Leibniz's "impious Whimsy" (Warburton 1, 17). The accusations continued, culminating, half a century later, in Dr Johnson's *Life of Pope* (1781), which derided Pope's "Leibnitian reasoning", concluding in what might be the most backhanded compliment in the history of literary criticism: "[n]ever were penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment so happily disguised" (Johnson 104-05).

Admittedly, though there are notable differences between the two theodicies – most importantly in the fact that Leibniz sees the principle of the best in a chain of causes, whereas Pope saw it in a chain of being – one can easily see why Pope's *Essay on Man* was suspected of being a reaction or even partial versification of Leibniz's *Theodicy*. Like

Leibniz, Pope too put reason front and centre in his vindication of God, if more ambiguously so, allowing more consideration for the threat of “erring reason” (*An Essay on Man* 37 I, l. 293). But of course, by the time that Pope was writing his *Essay*, the enlightenment was gaining momentum and the defenders of reason, among them Leibniz, had if not quite carried the day, at least established a stronger position. More problematically for Warburton’s defence against the charge of Leibnizianism, Pope’s most well-known assurance reproduces implicitly the argument by which an all-good God would only do the best, or right, thing, and therefore “Whatever is, is right” (*An Essay on Man* 37 I, l. 294; *An Essay on Man* 143 IV, l. 394). The implication and similarity are exacerbated in what reads like a heroic couplet adaptation of Leibniz’s *Theodicy*:

Of Systems possible, if ’tis confest,  
That Wisdom infinite must form the best (*An Essay on Man* 14 I, l. 43-4)

But the glaring similarity might simply be the result of Leibniz’s syncretic method – and of Pope’s. For almost everything Leibniz says can be found elsewhere. William King’s *De Origine Mali*, for example, contained the following thought:

Now it is to be believ’d that the present System of the World was the very best that could be [the Latin reads: *quod fieri potuit*], with regard to the Mind of God in framing it. [...] It might have been better perhaps in some Particulars, but not without some new, and probably greater inconveniencies, which must have spoiled the Beauty either of the whole, or of some chief Part. (King 121)

King’s argument that God could not have improved upon particulars without tainting the whole, because God created “the very best”, sounds like text-book Leibniz. However, it was published eight years before the *Theodicy*. What these similarities show is that Leibniz was not the only one to have that particular thought, but he was the first one to make it the cornerstone – rather than just a side-note – in a theodicy based on reason. One side-effect of Leibniz’s syncretism and popularity is that thoughts that were “in the air” have become “Leibnizian”. Pope could have drawn on many sources to arrive at similar

results, namely individual couplets or sections that appear to promote Leibniz's "system". Thus critics on both sides of the channel agreed that Pope's essay was derivative, disagreeing only about whose mouthpiece Pope actually was (Rogers 177; Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary* 119; Johnson 104). Apart from Leibniz, contenders included the Viscount of Bolingbroke, to whom the poem was dedicated, the Earl of Shaftesbury, and, shockingly, Spinoza, to mention only near contemporaries.<sup>46</sup>

What the comparison of systems that followed Pope's publication of the *Essay* reveals more than any particular source is the consensus to read the poem as philosophy, largely ignoring its aesthetic merits or literary quality. This tendency peaked in the philosophical disputation held by the *Königlich-Preussische Sozietät der Wissenschaften* in 1755. Almost forty years after Leibniz's death, the Society, which had been founded at Leibniz's suggestion in 1700, consisted of both firm Leibnizians and a strong anti-Leibnizian camp – first among them the society's director, Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis. The disputation, held every four years with the intention of raising public interest in metaphysics, had become a battle ground for these two opposing camps. In 1747, the society discussed Leibniz's *Monadology*; it soon became clear that publicly discussing Leibniz's contentious ideas was not in the society's best interests. Discussing Pope's "philosophical system" was the next best thing. The task set for the 1755 disputation – "On demande l'examen du Système de Pope, contenu dans la proposition: Tout est bien" – was little more than a veiled attempt to throw down the gauntlet once again (Harnack 306; cf. Steiner 322). In an attempt to rescue Leibniz from guilt by association, Johann Christoph Gottsched authored a pamphlet<sup>47</sup> highlighting

---

<sup>46</sup> Defending Pope from the parallel accusation that he was in fact the Viscount of Bolingbroke's mouthpiece, Maynard Mack similarly suggests that "everything Pope incorporated in the poem was available to him from other sources: his reading; the talk of the town; above all, the traditional patterns of theodicy and ethics on which Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, King, and Leibniz alike drew" (Mack xxxi).

<sup>47</sup> *De optimismi mascula diserte nuper Alexandro Popio Anglo, tacite autem G. G. Leibnizio perperam licet inusta* (1753) (quoted in Hellwig 272).

philosophical and theological differences between Pope and Leibniz – as Warburton had done in England on behalf of Pope. When the academic skirmish ended, the anti-Leibnizians emerged victorious; the winning essay, A. F. Reinhard's *Vergleichung der Lehrgebäudes des Herrn Pope von der Vollkommenheit der Welt, mit dem System des Herrn von Leibnitz* (1755), argued that the two systems were largely identical and identically implausible (Schönfeld 289).

Amused by the extent of the academic infighting and, more importantly, appalled by the underlying assumption that Pope's *Essay* could and should be read as philosophy, the poet Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and his friend, the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, entered the arena with the ironic pamphlet *Pope ein Metaphysiker!* (1755). Rather than engaging with the challenge set by the society of sciences, the two rejected the underlying premise that poetry should supply a philosophical system. Any attempt to compare Leibniz and Pope was misguided because poetry was not philosophy. Mendelssohn and Lessing saw three differences between these forms of writing that made a philosophical enquiry into Pope's "system" misplaced: first, they argued, poetry and philosophy use language radically differently. The philosopher aims to use language as precisely as possible, in order to form a "System" of conclusive reasoning (Lessing, *Werke* 634–36). The poet, on the other hand, they argued, anticipating William Empson by almost two centuries, thrives on ambiguity and an excess of meaning to create a "completely sensual speech" [*vollkommen sinnliche Rede*] (Lessing, *Werke* 636). It was not surprising, then, that Pope's "system" was found to be self-contradictory and ambiguous – as poetry it had no interest in philosophical precision. Secondly, they argued that the poet and the philosopher arrange thoughts differently. The philosopher moves in ordered deduction, from the obvious to the occluded, while the poet cares not in the least for order or deduction but jumps where fancy takes him (Lessing, *Werke* 637). Thirdly, while the philosopher must stick to one single system, which he builds so that each part is congruent

with every other, the poet borrows from wherever he sees fit (Lessing, *Werke* 637). In other words, while both Pope and Leibniz borrowed, only Leibniz was under an obligation to make the whole cohere because only Leibniz, the philosopher, is engaged in logical reasoning. And if Crousaz and others found contradictions in Pope's *Essay* that was only to be expected – poetry was never supposed to be non-contradictory. In defending Pope's *Essay*, Lessing's and Mendelssohn's *Pope ein Metaphysiker!* also proclaimed how unsuitable poetry was to a theodicy discourse that had declared reason to be its guiding principle. If God was to be tried in the court of human reason, then poetry had better steer clear of the proceedings.

### Disaster

In 1755, with the disputation of the Prussian academy concluding, and Leibniz's *Theodicy* and Pope's *Essay on Man* debated across Europe, a spark would have sufficed to ignite the intellectual powder keg. The earthquake which devastated Lisbon on 1 November 1755 killing tens of thousands of people was more than a spark. Literally, since the many candles lighted to celebrate All Saints Day soon turned the churches in which the faithful had gathered into fiery death traps and the inferno would continue to ravage the city for weeks. But more importantly, metaphorically, as posterity increasingly saw in the Lisbon Earthquake the one event that burned Optimism to a crisp.<sup>48</sup> As George Lewes informed his Victorian contemporaries more than a century after the quake, Goethe had been forever changed by the event, perhaps a special mark of his genius, since “[o]ther boys besides Goethe heard the Lisbon earthquake eagerly discussed; but they had not their religious doubts shaken by it, as his was here awakened in his sixth year” (Lewes, *The Life of Goethe* 22). There is a pleasing tangibility in the idea that Froude, Clough, and to some degree Eliot, among other Victorians, were infected by Carlyle's depiction of a

---

<sup>48</sup> According to Saine, “the Lisbon earthquake shattered the rosier glasses of the time” (Saine 103). Robert Verchick calls it “a gamechanger” for theodicy (Verchick 1).

spiritual crisis, which in turn was inspired by Goethe, who himself lost his faith only as a consequence of the Lisbon earthquake – as if secularization were an aftershock, a seismic event that could be measured on a Richter scale. However, the evidence will not bear out such a reading.

Lewes's account stays close to Goethe's autobiographical *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811), written half a century after the initial event. Here Goethe described his shock that Lisbon:

[...] without warning, is hit by the most horrible disaster [...] sixty-thousand people, a moment before calm and comfortable, fall together [...] The Boy, who was compelled to put up with frequent repetitions of the whole matter, was not a little upset. God, the Creator and Preserver of Heaven and Earth [...] having given both the just and the unjust a prey to the same destruction, had not proved Himself, by any means, fatherly. (Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* 41–43 [my translation])

According to Goethe's own testament, it was knowledge of the Lisbon earthquake that first made his prepubescent self question divine providence. But his description of “the Boy's” reaction – the third person lends a veneer of objectivity to the memory – is difficult to believe. For one thing, it seems unlikely that a six-year old, even Goethe, would be precocious enough to be thrown into religious anguish by an earthquake that took place more than 1300 miles away. More importantly, there is a contradicting account of young Goethe's reaction.

Shortly before her death, Elisabeth Goethe shared recollections of her son's childhood with Bettina Brentano, who recorded them for posterity. Despite the fact that Goethe and Brentano were no longer on speaking terms at the time Goethe was writing the autobiographical *Dichtung und Wahrheit* – Brentano had called Goethe's wife an “insane black pudding” (Schmidt 618 [my translation]) – Goethe often drew heavily on the maternal recollections that Brentano had provided. In the case of the Lisbon earthquake, however, Goethe made no mention of Brentano's account, despite the fact, or perhaps because of the fact, that it differed strongly from his own claims (cf. R. H. Brown 475–

80). According to Goethe's mother, her son was not at all shocked by the earthquake but rather bemused by the complications that the local priest saw in it, explaining to his father that "In the end everything is much simpler than the preacher thinks; God surely knows that the immortal soul cannot be harmed by an evil fate" (Arnim 254 [my translation]). Regardless of whether Goethe's account of religious turmoil is truth or poetry, it is indicative of the kind of epochal event that Lisbon had become by the beginning of the nineteenth century. By then, it seemed that to have been anything but shocked by news of the catastrophe – and shocked to your religious foundations – must have been impossible for a sensitive nature, even that of a six-year old.

In the direct aftermath, however, many did not find the earthquake threatening to notions of divine justice, though it was clearly meaningful – it was as if God himself had taken the stand. The question was only: what was He saying?<sup>49</sup> For the Jansenist Catholics it seemed obvious that if God sent an earthquake to the Jesuit stronghold it must be to punish the crimes of the Inquisition. Naturally, the Inquisitors did not agree, reading the earthquake as God's way of telling them that they had been too lax, and soon staging an auto-da-fé (cf. Neiman 244). So widespread were the attempts to read the earthquake as the voice of God – to read, with Augustine, physical evil as punishment for moral evil – that an as yet unknown philosopher felt called upon to publish three essays in the Königsberg weekly showing that earthquakes could not happen in Prussia, since the natural conditions were not right for such events. In this manner young Immanuel Kant suggested, more than three decades before rejecting philosophical theodicy, that earthquakes were natural events rather than tools of divine retribution (cf. Kant, *Kants Gesammelte Schriften: Vorkritische Schriften I: 1747-1756* 431–34).

---

<sup>49</sup> The wealth of representations of Lisbon is presented in *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions* (cf. Braun and Radner; Braun; Gisler; Loveland; Quenet; Seth; Vieira)

Kant's attempted intervention notwithstanding, discussions about the right interpretations of the earthquake snowballed, proving, theologically speaking, more destructive than the original earthquake. If Goethe's account of his first reaction to the earthquake is difficult to believe, it is easy to believe his claims about the discursive aftermath: "in vain the young mind tried to fight these impressions, which was made even less possible, since the philosophers and writers themselves were unable to reach a consensus" (*Dichtung und Wahrheit* 43 [my translation]). In Goethe's autobiographical account, the earthquake and the debate that followed are collapsed into one.<sup>50</sup> But writing takes time, and so does reading. And it is easy to imagine the growing polymath reading up on the debates between "the philosophers and writers" and becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his initial response.<sup>51</sup> As Goethe's notes suggest (Goethe, *Goethes Werke* 349), these "philosophers and writers", whose inability to find a consensus about the meaning of Lisbon and the justice of God shattered young Goethe's certainty, were primarily two *philosophes*: for the defence Jean-Jacques Rousseau and for the prosecution, Voltaire.

### Voltaire's Torch

At the time of the earthquake, Voltaire had been mulling over philosophical Optimism and its champions for over two decades, mixing ebullient praise with occasional criticism. In the *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733), written just before the publication of the *Essay on Man*, Voltaire finds not a superlative too grand for the description of Pope, "the most elegant, the most correct poet; and at the same time the most harmonious" (Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* 215). When Voltaire read the *Essay on*

---

<sup>50</sup> Robert Brown has suggested that young Goethe was indeed upset in the aftermath of the earthquake but not because the knowledge of suffering endangered his belief in divine justice, rather the discussions of the earthquake among the grown-ups in his surroundings upset the social order and calm of his family home (R. H. Brown 488).

<sup>51</sup> Lewes also accounts for the different versions of the story by attributing them to different times but he reverses the order: first, young Goethe is shocked to the bone, then, after careful deliberation, he considers the more hopeful interpretation recorded by Brentano (Lewes, *The Life of Goethe* 22).

*Man*, probably the same year, he was so impressed that he paid Pope the ultimate form of flattery, soon writing his own *Discours en vers sur l'homme* (1738), which contained, in the sixth *discours* a defence of both Pope and “le grand Leibnitz” (*Poèmes et Discours En Vers* 49). But despite his admiration, Voltaire was not uncritical, recommending the *Essay on Man* in 1736 as a beautiful poem with many wrong ideas about goodness (“un beau poème, en anglais, quoique mêlé d'idées bien fausses sur le *bonheur*”) (Voltaire, *Correspondance* 2 30). Similarly, three of Voltaire’s earliest attempts at fiction – *Memnon ou la sagesse humaine* (1747), *Zadig* (1748), and *Le Monde comme il va* (1748; English title: *Babouc; or, the world as it goes*) – revolve around the problem of evil, and culminate with a divine apparition, an angel or spirit, revealing an optimistic theodicy to the hero.<sup>52</sup> But even here there is no wholehearted assent. *Babouc*, for example, ends with the angel Ithurriel declaring to his human interlocutor, the eponymous Babouc, that “if all is not well, all is passable” (Voltaire, *Babouc* 38). Though the Optimist conclusion might here be only lukewarm, there is still much in *Babouc* that shows the relationship of spirit between Voltaire, Pope, and Leibniz. Had he still been alive, Leibniz would surely have approved of the claim that a group of young judges, “[j]udged rightly because they followed the Light of Reason, and the Arguments of the others were wrong, because they had consulted only Books” (Voltaire, *Babouc* 30). Thus, despite the occasional ambivalence, in 1754, one year before the earthquake, Voltaire still declared the *Essay on Man* “le premier des poèmes didactiques, des poèmes philosophiques” (Voltaire, *Correspondance* 6 249).

---

<sup>52</sup> *Memnon* is sometimes listed as a first edition of *Zadig* – the Bodleian online catalogue, for example, attaches the general note to *Zadig* “First published in 1747 under title: *Memnon, histoire orientale*” (*‘Zadig, Ou, La Destinée : Histoire Orientale’*). While there are significant similarities between the works – both are set in an oriental milieu and both concern a hero undergoing large misfortunes including the loss of an eye – the dissimilarities are large enough to warrant identifying these two as separate texts, as is the more usual approach (cf. Hellwig 147; cf. Frick 298; cf. Cronk 75).

When news of the Lisbon earthquake reached Voltaire in November 1755, he once again began to reevaluate his favourite *idée fixe*. Shortly after the earthquake he asked “Si Pope avait été à Lisbonne, aurait-il osé dire: *Tout est bien?*” – If Pope had been in Lisbon, would he have dared to say: All is well? (Voltaire, *Correspondance* 6 512). An interesting question, especially since Voltaire himself was nowhere near Lisbon at the time of the catastrophe. But though the quake did not reach him in his Genevan retreat, newspapers did, and so did theological tracts blaming the earthquake on this or that moral failing of its inhabitants. And so Lisbon, for Voltaire, was a Lisbon of the mind, the imagined suffering of others, which demands a reaction precisely because one is not suffering oneself. In many ways, the *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne ou examen de cet axiome Tout est bien* (1756), which he began writing almost immediately, and his *Candide ou l’optimisme* (1759) are literary enactments of that initial idea, of putting Pope, Leibniz, and his own partial Optimism into Lisbon. The second of these works, *Candide*, takes the form of the *conte philosophique*, the philosophical tale, which Voltaire had already employed to ruminate on Optimism in *Memnon*, *Zadig*, and *Babouc* but the first takes the form of a poem; in other words, the form of Pope’s *Essay on Man* which Lessing and Mendelssohn had found so unsuitable for the exploration of Optimism.

The Lisbon poem differs significantly from Voltaire’s previous literary engagements with the problem of evil. For one, unlike the *contes*, it does not employ characters to illustrate philosophical principles, instead the poetic voice decries the contemporary theodicies – Augustinian as well as Optimist – without the veneer of character or plot. With named characters, Voltaire abandons humour, his usual satirical playfulness, and his previous ambivalence. Instead he declares point blank:

O Malheureux mortels! ô Terre déplorable!  
 O de tous les mortels assemblage effroyable!  
 D’inutiles douleurs, éternel entretien!  
 Philosophes trompés, qui criez: *Tout est bien*;  
 Accourez: contemplez ces ruines affreuses,

Ces débris, ces lambeaux, ces cendres malheureuses,  
 Ces femmes, ces enfants l'un sur l'autre entassés,  
 Sous ces marbres rompus ces membres dispersés  
 (Voltaire, *Poemes sur le desastre de Lisbonne* 8)

Woeful mankind, born to a woeful earth!  
 Feeble humanity, whole hosts from birth  
 Eternally, purposelessly distressed!  
 Those savants erred who claim, 'All's for the best.'  
 Approach and view this carnage, broken stone,  
 Rags, rubble, chips of shattered wood and bone,  
 Women and children pinioned under beams,  
 Crushed under stones, piled under severed limbs  
 (Voltaire, *Poem upon the Lisbon Disaster* 13)<sup>53</sup>

With a few highly evocative words, the poem recreates the destruction of Lisbon, urging philosophers to revise their philosophy in the imagined presence of mutilated, suffering humanity. The only vestige of irony lies in Voltaire's use of heroic couplets – the very structure that “the most harmonious” Pope used to emulate the finely balanced order of the cosmos (Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* 215). But here the rhyme unites what could not be further apart: eternal pains and universal goodness – “éternel entretien” with “tout est bien”. And the metrical suggestion of harmony is shattered as Voltaire's attack on the system of Optimism tumbles into a heap of images – a heaving mess of wood, bone, limbs, and stone – no ordered chain but visceral parataxis.

The poetic, as Lessing and Mendelssohn pointed out, might not serve the would-be systematic philosopher well, but “completely sensual speech” does wonders for the poet who smashes logical clockwork with his brutal imagery. The same tactic makes very short shrift of the Augustinian theodicy:

Direz-vous, en voyant cet amas de victimes,  
 Dieu s'est vengé, leur mort est le prix de leurs crimes?  
 Quel crime, quelle faute ont commis ces enfants  
 Sur le sein maternelles écrasés & sanglants?

---

<sup>53</sup> There are very few good translations of Voltaire's poem. Tobias Smollet's translation, still the standard, is very liberal and lacks the emotive force of the original. For this reason, I am using Anthony Hecht's translation of the poem, which is more poetic, and, I think, better, but not always entirely true to the original, either.

(Voltaire, *Poemes sur le desastre de Lisbonne* 8)

Seeing these stacks of victims, will you state,  
 “Vengeance is God’s; they have deserved their fate”?  
 What crimes where done, what evils manifest,  
 By babes who died while feeding at the breast?  
 (Voltaire, *Poem upon the Lisbon Disaster* 13)

Again, the poem urges to “see” the victims and, gazing on the dead infants, explain how guilt and crime could possibly serve to explain this particular instance of suffering. Here the case is even easier, given the fact that natural catastrophes, indiscriminate as they are, push to its limits the idea that all suffering results from moral evil. For the Augustinian theodicy, natural catastrophes raise the ethically thorny issue of having to explain that babies deserve to be punished while everywhere else corrupt adults flourish – a counterargument that Voltaire wraps into a headline set of images: “Lisbonne est abimée, & l’on danse à Paris” (Voltaire, *Poemes sur le desastre de Lisbonne* 9).<sup>54</sup>

Despite the power of that line, Voltaire seems less invested in rejecting the theodicy of deserved punishment than in dismissing that of the best of all worlds. Or, at least, he dedicates a much larger quantity of verse to bringing Pope to Lisbon than to doing the same for Augustine. And that is despite the fact that the Augustinian theodicy not only integrates into Optimism – as Leibniz amply shows – but is also the theodicy of the French Catholic orthodoxy. If part of this lesser commitment is owing to Voltaire’s sense of self-preservation in the face of censorship, it also signifies that less is needed here. Leibniz’s reasoning has made the Augustinian theodicy superfluous – while integrating it fully – and, though the regressive orthodoxy might declare the earthquake punishment for one sin or another, for enlightened thinkers these arguments have lost their relevance, as well as their appropriateness in the face of natural catastrophe. Given Voltaire’s own

---

<sup>54</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky in *The Karamazov Brothers* echoes Voltaire’s poem: Ivan Fyodorovich denies his brother’s Christian faith, specifically because of the “suffering of children” and like that of the speaker of the poem, Ivan’s rejection consists of a succession of gruesome narratives and images, rather than arguments (Dostoyevsky 298–309).

commitment to the light of reason and interest in the people who reason, it is Leibniz's "reasonable" theodicy that here needs to be attacked most vigorously.

And yet, Voltaire does not launch a systematic attack on the practice of theodicy: instead, he juxtaposes human suffering, represented by the Lisbon earthquake, with Leibnizian philosophy to make the reader feel the insufficiency of the Optimist system. There is no attempt to expose logical errors in the structure of Leibniz's argument, and Voltaire rarely suggests that they exist (it would take a Kant or a Russell to do that). Instead poetry serves to reveal how obscenely inhumane such logic is – an intuitive truth that, according to Voltaire, Pope and Leibniz must feel, even if they cannot logically deduct it:

Vous criez, *Tout est bien*, d'une voix lamentable.  
L'univers vous dément, & votre propre cœur  
Cent fois de vôtre esprit a réfuté l'erreur.  
(Voltaire, *Poemes sur le desastre de Lisbonne* 12)

you declare,  
'All's for the best,' in accents of despair;  
The universe refutes you, and your pulse  
Inwardly knows the argument is false.  
(Voltaire, *Poem upon the Lisbon Disaster* 23)<sup>55</sup>

In the face of human suffering the heart (*cœur*) reveals the errors of the mind (*esprit*) even to the Optimist philosopher, who clings to his philosophy in inwardly despairing denial.

The clear, emotive power of the poem marks the fever pitch of Voltaire's anti-Optimism, and was followed three years later by the satirical *Candide or Optimism*.<sup>56</sup> Lisbon and the Lisbon poem – a big success that quickly spawned twenty editions and many translations (Cronk 75–76) – had ploughed the European soil, which was ready to receive the longer, less declarative, in many ways more conciliatory, and definitely more humorous satire.

---

<sup>55</sup> I am grateful to Raphaëlle Le Pen for suggesting a more verbatim non-verse translation of the line quoted above: "You claim 'all is right' in a pathetic voice but the universe refutes you and your own heart shows you one hundred times the mistake of your mind".

<sup>56</sup> Gianni Iotti suggests that in all of Voltaire's literary works "the reasoning process takes a narrative (and emotional) turn" (Iotti 109). The "emotional" aspect of Voltaire's writing is especially forceful in the Lisbon poem and *Candide*.

*Candide* quickly became a literary triumph, selling 20,000 copies in the first month after its near simultaneous publication in Paris, Geneva, Amsterdam, London and probably Liège (Pearson vii). The success of *Candide* never fully abated, giving rise to many adaptations, and leading to the curious fact that many first encounters with Leibnizian theodicy come by way of Voltaire's take-down. For that reason, the story of the young hero Candide and his Optimist teacher Pangloss who, after Candide is expelled from his uncle's castle for seducing Cunegonde, experience a series of catastrophic events while spouting Optimist philosophy, remains familiar to many.

But then, the story of *Candide* would have been familiar even at the time of publication, at least to Voltaire's most dedicated readers, given the fact that it so closely resembles that of two of his earlier *contes philosophique*: *Zadig* and *Memnon*. All three *contes* see an initially fortunate young hero lose his happy circumstances and experience a series of increasingly awful turns of fate (in that way all three resemble not only each other but also the book of Job). All three use the Optimist idiom to respond to the experience of suffering. And all three stories end with their protagonist's fortunes largely restored – here too they echo the Book of Job. But there are, of course, also some differences: for one, *Candide's* background is Germanic, where *Memnon* and *Zadig* are redolent with Orientalism. More importantly, the kinds of suffering that Candide and Pangloss witness and experience are altogether more horrid. Where *Memnon* and *Zadig* at their lowest low merely lose one eye each, Candide lives through countless terrors, including the Lisbon earthquake, enslavement, mutilation. Pangloss's fate is even harsher including his own hanging and vivisection, which he survives, still clinging to his belief in the “best of all possible worlds” (Voltaire, *Candide and Other Stories* 15).

The greatest difference between *Zadig* and *Memnon* on the one hand, and *Candide* on the other, however, is that *Zadig* and *Memnon* have their fate and the meaning of the world explained to them by a messenger from God himself – the angel Jesrad appears to *Zadig*,

the celestial being Ithuriel to Memnon – while in *Candide* theodicy is presented by poor, old and all-too-human Pangloss. What makes Pangloss so ridiculous is not that he hopes God has a plan but that he is convinced that he knows what God’s plan is despite the fact that his knowledge is as limited as that of every other human. *Candide* is a retelling of a familiar story – the story of Zadig, or Memnon, or truly the story of Job – for a world in which God does not reveal himself. In the limited subject position of humanity, in a world in which angels do not explain what is going on, the only adequate response to suffering is pity without pretending to understand.

It is almost a commonplace, especially among philosophers and those positively inclined towards Leibniz’s theodicy, that Voltaire’s post-Lisbon engagement with Optimism was missing the point of the philosophy he was critiquing. The historian of philosophy Wolfgang Hübener, for example, has claimed that anyone who has so much as a surface understanding of Leibniz must see that Voltaire’s criticism of theodicy “consistently misses the *status controversiae*” (“den *status controversiae* durchgängig verfehlt”) – a claim that others have repeated and affirmed (Hübener 225 [my translation]; cf. Steiner 335–36; cf. Poma 169). They are right in so far as Voltaire here does not engage with Leibniz’s philosophy *qua* philosophy. Voltaire’s failure to enter the controversy at the level of logical argument, however, is not a shortcoming but the result of his particular position. If Voltaire had believed that Leibniz’s system were wrong, he should have constructed an opposing system. But to Voltaire after Lisbon, systems of explanation as such are wrong when it comes to the problem of evil: opposition to Leibnizian deductive theodicy cannot be based on systematic, logical reasoning.<sup>57</sup> It can only be based on

---

<sup>57</sup> My differentiation between pre- and post-Lisbon Voltaire is supported by similar observations concerning his *Éléments*: “by the final version, after the Lisbon earthquake, there is no longer the same firmness of principle nor the same faith in scientific method as a means of discovering truth with certainty. If initially Voltaire’s sense of the importance of observation and the philosophical value of doubt had gone hand in hand with his adoption of a scientific method based on empiricism, in his later years the scientific method is lost, leaving only the reliance on observation, and, above all, doubt” (Cronk and Beeson 55).

experience, intuition and feeling. It emerges not from the precision of philosophy but from the emotive and image-laden language of literature.

It is a mark of Voltaire's great success in urging the argument from the logical to the emotional – aided by the rising interest in sentimentality – that Voltaire's most famous critic, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, engages with him on that level. In a letter written on 18 August 1756, Rousseau writes in reply to the Lisbon Poem:

You reproach Pope and Leibnitz with insulting mankind under their misfortunes, by maintaining that every thing is good; and expatiate so amply on the picture of our miseries, that you aggravate the sense of them. [...] the very contrary happened to what you seem to have proposed. That optimism, which appears to you so cruel, consoles me under the very miseries which you describe as insupportable. (Rousseau, *The Works of J. J. Rousseau* 316)

Rousseau's main argument is that theodicy consoles him and Voltaire does not. Rather than arguing that Voltaire is logically wrong, Rousseau claims that he is emotionally inept, since "Mr Pope's poem alleviates my evils, and induces me to patience; yours embitters my sorrows, excites my complaints, and, depriving me of everything but a doubtful hope, reduces me to despair" (Rousseau, *The Works of J. J. Rousseau* 316–17). Ultimately, Rousseau prefers Leibniz, and says he prefers Leibniz because of his emotional effect irrespective of logical correctness.

Given the personal nature of consolation, the argument about which, if either, of the two *philosophes* may be right is moot. Whether it is better to scream at the horrors of human suffering, as one might curse when one hurts oneself to alleviate pain, or whether one finds it more consoling to convince oneself that really, there is no pain or only a necessary pain, may be finally a matter of individual psychology. What is evident is that by 1756, the terms on which God was to be justified in the face of suffering had become the crucial question. Voltaire shifted the argument from a battle between revelation and reason to one between reason and emotion – God was no longer to be tried in a court of reason alone but also to be held up to the heart and an intuitively emotional understanding of

morality. Voltaire did not so much miss the *status controversiae* as transform it completely.

For the next centuries – in many ways up to this very moment – the question of whether theodicy is emotionally necessary, consoling and compatible with morality has coexisted with and often taken precedence over the question of whether it is logically feasible. When Terry Eagleton, or James Wood and Bruce Robbins describe theodicy as ethically or morally obscene, rather than logically implausible or in discordance with scripture, they reveal themselves as Voltaire’s heirs. So too the shift from logic to emotion is still evident, for example, in the criterion that Irvin Greenberg suggests to evaluate theodicy after Auschwitz: “Let us offer, then, as a working principle the following: No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children” (506). Burning children have no impact on the logic of theodicy – logically they could be a necessary part of the mechanistic unfolding of the “best of all possible worlds”; they do, however, serve to make the heart revolt against that logic. Similarly gruesome, Alexander Donat suggests an “infallible” test for all theodicies:

In trying to understand these explanations [of God’s justice], I examined them with the test I thought conclusive: How do they look from the top of the smokestack [of the crematorium]? This test is extreme and harsh but infallible, incorruptible, and lucid. (Donat 276)

Here too it is the emotive power of a verbalized image – Donat puts the theodacist on top of the crematorium as Voltaire put him in burning Lisbon – rather than a logical argument, that serves as witness for the prosecution against God’s justice. Theodicy after the *Shoah*, Greenberg and Donat suggest, must be tested on the basis of our emotional reactions in the face of (imaginatively recreated) human suffering. If this emotional tribunal of God became obligatory in Auschwitz, it was first rendered urgent in Lisbon and its star prosecutor was the poet Voltaire.

## Romantic Realignments

In 1797, at the end of the century which began with Leibniz's propagating his best of all world's theodicy, a twenty-four year old Samuel Taylor Coleridge declared to his friend Robert Southey: "I am as much a Pangloss as ever" (*Collected Letters* 1 334). By identifying with the butt of Voltaire's satire, Coleridge affirmed his Optimism, as much as his opposition to Voltaire and his "Ignorance, Wickedness, & Folly" (*Collected Letters* 2 702). In that opposition he was not alone – André Maurois goes so far as to claim that "all romantics are anti-Voltairean" (8). If Maurois suggests a false homogeneity, he is yet correct in awarding Voltaire pride of place. It is evident in Coleridge's identification with Pangloss, or the simple historical fact that Coleridge read Voltaire as a teen and long before reading Leibniz's *Theodicy*, as it is in book two of Wordsworth's *Excursion*.<sup>58</sup> Here, the Wanderer, searching for the Solitary but presuming him dead, stumbles first upon a mouldering copy of: "a Novel of Voltaire, / His famous Optimist. "Unhappy Man!" / Exclaimed my Friend (*The Excursion* 2 lines 465-468). In the Wanderer's hands, the book which shall not be named becomes a powerful signifier of the Solitary's misery, as if happiness must go hand in hand with a complete rejection of "this dull product of a scoffer's pen" (*The Excursion* 2.510).

The attack on Voltaire could no longer anger Voltaire himself, who, unlike the Solitary, had been dead for the last quarter of a century, but it famously caused a stir in Wordsworth's own circle. William Hazlitt found in Wordsworth's rejection of "the laughing sage" an "inquisitorial spirit" more befitting a "grave, discreet, orthodox, young divine" than a poet (Hazlitt 351). Wanting to discuss his as yet unfinished "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem", which shows on the right an adoring Wordsworth and Newton next to a

---

<sup>58</sup> Coleridge went through a Voltaire phase in the late 1780s (Willey, 'Coleridge and Religion' 223). He most likely did not read the *Theodicy* until 1801 (Coleridge, *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose* 34; footnote 4).

depiction of a scoffing atheist Voltaire, the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon hosted a dinner party in which the topic of Wordsworth's disparagement of Voltaire came up again. The "immortal dinner" – so called by Haydon, because of the illustrious guests including Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, and Keats but, on Wordsworth's request, no Hazlitt – culminated with a tiddly Lamb taking the defence and toasting "Voltaire, the Messiah of the French nation, & a very fit one" (Haydon 173; cf. O'Keeffe 183; cf. Hughes-Hallett 95–145; cf. Plumly 5–50). Keats remained silent at this first encounter with Wordsworth but, as Haydon reports, upon a return to his studio Keats "placed his hand on his heart, & bowing his head, 'there is the being I will bow to,' said he – he stood before [the picture of] Voltaire" (Haydon 317).

If these judgements are indicative of the different temperaments, politics, and religious persuasions of those who made them, they also reflect the prolixity – later lamented by Carlyle – and sheer mutability of Voltaire. A "Wit as various – gay, grave, sage, or wild – / Historian – Bard – Philosopher – combined" might have enraptured Lord Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* but it is also liable to misleading reductions (*The Complete Poetical Works* 3.105 lines 988-989). And it seems likely that what Wordsworth is reacting to is Voltaire the young philosopher of reason rather than Voltaire the older, emotional bard, in which case, he is attaching his critique to the wrong work. This reading is suggested by Alison Hickey, for example, who sees in Wordsworth's critique of *Candide* an attack on "system" – that is reason uninformed by emotion (Hickey 24; cf. Roberts 698). Coleridge, too, tends to explain his dissatisfaction with Voltaire as coming from the heart, rather than the head. In a letter to his brother written in 1794, the year he first avowed his Panglossianism, he explains his lapsed enthusiasm for Voltaire:

Fond of the dazzle of Wit, fond of subtlety of Argument, I could not read without some degree of pleasure the levities of Voltaire, or the reasonings of Helvetius—but tremblingly alive to the feelings of humanity, and su[s]ceptible of the charms of Truth my Heart forced

me to admire the beauty of Holiness in the Gospel. (Coleridge, *Collected Letters I* 78)

If he does not quite attribute reason, merely Wit, to Voltaire, Coleridge yet explains his opposition by reference to the Heart and the “feelings of humanity”. Four decades later he would reiterate the opposition between Voltaire and heart: he claimed, “only [...] in the enjoyment of the supposed new light given me by Voltaire [...] have I ever even with my lips (with my heart I never did) abandon the name of Christ” (Coleridge, *On Religion and Psychology* 56).

To recall that it is precisely the heart and the feelings of and for humanity that for Voltaire speak against the Enlightenment theodocists’ reasoning is not to say that Coleridge is misguided in his rejection of Voltaire; the fact remains that Coleridge at that time was a self-avowed Optimist and Voltaire was most certainly not. However, despite Coleridge’s protestations to be “utterly untainted with French Metaphysics, French Politics, French Ethics, & French Theology” (*Collected Letters I* 395) his Optimism flows precisely in that narrow dried up river bed left by Voltaire. In other words, when Coleridge calls himself a “Pangloss” or an “Optimist” – a term that if it was not invented by Voltaire yet owes its popularity to him – he is not merely avowing his allegiance to the tradition of Shaftesbury, Pope, Leibniz, and more recently Hartley, and Priestley but also the extent to which his assent to that tradition is shaped by Voltaire. He cannot embrace Optimism, without operating on Voltaire’s terms and, to a certain extent, within his critique.<sup>59</sup> As far as the problem of evil is concerned, a “Pangloss” is precisely, paradoxically, what Coleridge is: a Voltairean theodocist.

I am in part thinking here along the lines established by Seamus Perry in *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* and encapsulated in his use of the term “muddle”. “A good muddle”,

---

<sup>59</sup> A problem we inherit, partially, because the words “Optimism” or “Optimist”, pejorative as they originally were, and misleading as they still are given their meaning outside of specialist discourse, are still preferable to any of the alternatives (i.e. Enlightenment Theodocist).

writes Perry, “of the kind a novel” – or a poem – “might dramatise, has an informal but determining structure, an internal arrangement of conflicting callings or visions of reality, and rises above the indignity of a sheerly incoherent conceptual mess” (Perry 11). Coleridge, as Perry argues, is particularly susceptible of, and productive within, such muddles. This is in part due to the fact that Coleridge, as Perry shows, was accumulative rather than, as is perhaps more usual in thinkers interested in “system”, reductive in his reading so that “philosophical positions ostensibly passed through are not, in practice, discarded” (12). Perry is not the only one to ascribe this quality to Coleridge; Thomas McFarland, for instance, finds Coleridge syncretic to a degree which he only sees in one other thinker: Coleridge’s “intellectual soul-mate Leibniz” (McFarland 144). If McFarland’s association of the two men seems hyperbolic, it is yet one that Coleridge would have been happy with. Upon seeing a bust of Leibniz on his German journey in 1799, Coleridge wrote to his wife: “It is the face of a God!—& Leibnitz *was* almost more than a man in the wonderful capaciousness of his Judgement & Imagination!” (*Collected Letters 1* 472). It is this “wonderful capaciousness”, nowhere more evident than in Leibniz’s *Theodicy*, that Coleridge shares, and that aided as it is – here Coleridge resembles post-Lisbon Voltaire rather than Leibniz – by a nature that “both thinks and feels” (*Collected Letters 6* 696) in which “philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from [...] feelings” (*Collected Letters 1* 279) makes Coleridge so susceptible to a good muddle. By the end of the eighteenth century – with two opposing positions firmly established by Leibniz and later Optimists on the one hand, and Voltaire on the other – theodicy poses a particularly good muddle to a feeling thinker: How to simultaneously hold that “whatever is, is right” and yet maintain that suffering is wrong?

For Coleridge, the Unitarian Optimism which, inspired by his acquaintance with William Frend, he adopted in 1794, sets up the first part of the muddle: the non-existence of evil. Pondering the “Question of Evil – woe to the man, to whom it is an uninteresting

Question”, Coleridge declared: “This, I fully believe, *settles* the Question. The assertion that there is in the essence of the divine nature a necessity of omniform harmonious action [...]” (Notebooks 45-46; Germany, London, the Lakes 1798-1804). The belief in omniform harmony, a mainstay of the Unitarian materialism of Hartley and Priestley, sees God as fully immanent in the world and working by necessity proper, rather than Leibniz’s “hypothetical necessity”. One consequence of this full-blown necessitarianism – McFarland calls it “bargain-basement Spinozism” (McFarland 169) – is that it negates human culpability and therefore moral evil. As Coleridge told Thelwall in May 1796 “*Guilt* is out of the Question – I am a Necessitarian and of course deny the possibility of it” (*Collected Letters I* 213).<sup>60</sup> Thus, Unitarian necessitarianism makes the Augustinian theodicy of the fall impossible as well as superfluous; necessity and Optimism are here intimately linked. As Coleridge told Southey in 1794: “I would ardently, that you were a Necessitarian, and (believing in an all-loving Omnipotence) an Optimist” (*Collected Letters I* 145–46). It is this sense of the omnipresent benevolent necessity that permeates Coleridge’s early poetry. In “Religious Musings”, to an “embarrassing” degree (at least to McFarland (173)), when the speaker declares that:

There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind,  
Omnific. His most holy name is Love.  
(Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works I* 105–06)<sup>61</sup>

But the same immanent deity extends through “Frost at Midnight”, teaching “Himself in all, and all things in himself” (62). So, too, Coleridge’s most successful and perhaps most hermeneutically challenging poem, *The Rime of the Ancyent Mariner*, still makes enough use of the language of immanent harmony that its “standard reading” is, as Perry has

---

<sup>60</sup> Despite the fact that David Hartley acknowledged “a near relation” between his own work and that of Leibniz (Hartley 110), their systems differ in some key respects. First, Hartley’s system is Unitarian, whereas the trinity was one of those elements of mainstream Christianity whose rationality Leibniz defends against Bayle (Leibniz 87–89; cf. Antognazza). Secondly, Hartley, an arch-Newtonian, does not share Leibniz’s vision of a pre-established harmony and instead embraces materialism proper. Hartley’s God, unlike Leibniz’s supramundane clock-maker, is entirely immanent in the world.

<sup>61</sup> All quotations from Coleridge’s poetry to this edition by line number in the text.

pointed out “some kind of One Life allegory” (282). And, of course, the “One Life” does not stay with Coleridge but reverberates through the 1805 *Prelude*, where the poet “saw one life, and felt that it was joy” (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 2.410) and infuses the Optimist resolution of the 1814 text of book one of *The Excursion* (Wordsworth, *The Excursion* 1.980-995). To some degree all these poems share the underpinnings on which Coleridge declared in his *Lectures on Revealed Religion* (1795) that: “[r]easoning strictly and with logical Accuracy I should deny the existence of any Evil” (*Lectures* 1795 105)

And yet, even in his most doctrinaire Unitarian poetry, Coleridge does not actually appear to deny the existence of any Evil, quite the contrary. Rather, Coleridge’s deeply Unitarian poem ‘Religious Musings’, for example, is saturated with images of terror and suffering. Reality is “terrible seeming” and although “Who the Creator love, created Might Dread not: within their tents no Terrors walk” that small group remains elusive (64-65). The reader is told of their superior vision but what he is shown is suffering, in biblical bombast but also emotionally gripping and dripping with bitter irony, as in the image of the aged women “who weekly catch / The morsel tost by law-forc’d Charity, / And die so slowly, that none call it murder!” (287-8). Images like these evoke not a religious calm, rather they seem destined to make the blood boil. Indeed, the poem runs deep with blood: “a sea of blood” (124), idols “stained with brother’s blood” (136), “soul-hardened barterers of human blood” (180), “deeds of blood” (281), she “whose wine was blood” (331), “statesmen blood-stained” (373); it is all blood and “more blood” (302).

There are good explanations for some of the language of terrible suffering in “Religious Musings”: the recent down-ward spiral of the *terreur* of the French Revolution, the Millennialism which Coleridge derives philosophically from Priestley, artistically from Milton, and which draws heavily on what is arguably the most gory book of the new

testament, Revelation.<sup>62</sup> But if these explain some of the language and imagery they hardly explain all of it, a problem that L. D. Berkoben diagnosed and partially attributed to Coleridge's "uncongenial literary form" (Berkoben 48). Of course, a heroic couplet, with a neat iambic pentameter and tight rhyme has often been considered better suited to the representation of a harmonious cosmos in which "whatever is, is right" – and in his 1795 Lectures Coleridge's Optimism occasionally found expression in Pope's lines (*Lectures 1795* 151). But the form Coleridge uses here is blank verse; a poem that does not stick to a pre-established structure but instead varies in stanzaic length. Even the strongest ordering principle, the metre, is often messy, riddled, not only with the usual inversions that make a line less abstract, adding emphasis to the inverted stress, but also with loud clangs of spondaic substitution, as in the line "His bones loud crashing" (276). Similarly, the frequent qualifiers and compound-qualifiers invite a series of stresses and pauses, as in "Fear, the wild-visag'd, pale, eye-starting wretch" (69). Despite the claims of the ending, "Religious Musings" is not a poem that "warbles as it flows" (419), it is a poem that "groan[s] as it bleed[s]" (242) – and that refuses to sacrifice to the knowledge of the "omnipresent Love" (415) the sense of the omnipresence of suffering.

To say that "Religious Musings" is alive to the ubiquity of goodness and to the horror of suffering is not to claim its incoherence, or (in this instance) a failure on Coleridge's part. It is not even to suggest, with Berkoben that "Religious Musings" betrays Coleridge's "misgivings about the benignity of the universe" (Berkoben 48). For there is, to return to Perry's concept of the muddle, an "internal arrangement" to these "conflicting callings" (cf. Perry 11). Suffering is not the antithesis of goodness; it is its vehicle: God has made "Teachers of Good thro' Evil" (195). But evil is here not, as in Leibniz's *Theodicy* a

---

<sup>62</sup> Peter Kitson goes so far as to call "'Religious Musings' a Unitarian version of *Paradise Lost*" (64), seeing the biggest overlap between Milton and the Unitarians in their Millennialism. Clarke Garrett explores the weirdness of the Millennialism, and the reliance on prophecy and revelation, of the otherwise scientific and rational Priestley (Garrett 51).

meaningless cog in the best possible machine but itself the centre of heuristic and meliorating potential. It is not that goodness reveals itself when we have learned to ignore suffering – because in the best of all worlds it can safely be ignored – but that goodness is only achieved when we react to suffering. The French Revolution, to whose ideal of brotherhood “Religious Musings” is naturally sympathetic, comes about because men are “stung to rage by Pity” (242) for those that “toil and groan and bleed” (244). To disregard the bleeding masses, to ignore suffering is to betray goodness. It is specifically “Pity”, the human ability to empathize and sympathize, that will be the harbinger of that future state in which the omnipresence of God is not only known by some but felt by all. The “terrible seeming” (78) is the motor for the change towards that state in which all is well: “TERROR [is] Mercy’s startling prelude” (34). By focusing its readers’ attention onto human suffering rather than away from it, the poem does more than explain God’s justice; it actively contributes to the ongoing progress of its unfolding.

Looking back to his Unitarian days, four decades after he began writing “Religious Musings” and long after his return to the established Church, the Trinity, and the Augustinian-Thomistic conviction of his own sinfulness, Coleridge explained his past beliefs thus:

Always believing in the government of God, I was a fervent optimist.  
But, as I could not but see that the present state of things was not the  
best, I was necessarily led to look forward to a future state.  
(Coleridge, ‘Table Talk’ 517)

Voltaire would have approved, at least of the second sentence. When Candide rejects Optimism he defines it as “a mania for insisting that all is well when things are going badly” (Voltaire, *Candide and Other Stories* 48) and when Voltaire transported the followers of Optimism to Lisbon it was to make them admit precisely that “the present state of things was not the best”. For Voltaire the problem with “the best of all worlds” was exactly that it suggested that the world was good as it is and could not be improved,

for that is what Leibniz and Pope had suggested with all its conservative implications. But looking forward to a future state, rather than celebrating the present, Voltaire had no quarrel with, he even encouraged it in the Lisbon poem:

*Un jour tout sera bien, voilà notre espérance,  
Tout est bien aujourd'hui, voilà l'illusion.  
(Voltaire, Poemes sur le desastre de Lisbonne 16)*

“Some day things will be well,” there lies our trust.  
“All is well today,” is but the Seconal  
Of the deluded; (Voltaire, *Poem upon the Lisbon Disaster* 31)

The difference is that for Voltaire the future state remains, as Rousseau complains, “a doubtful hope” (Rousseau, *The Works of J. J. Rousseau* 316–17), barred by suffering and with no knowledge of how to get from here to universal goodness. For Coleridge, suffering itself becomes the instructor, through which all may “gazing, trembling, patiently ascend” (50) to the “supreme beauty uncreate” (21).

In other words, the narrow margins left for Optimism after Voltaire’s critique Coleridge fills in with a semblance of what Hick calls the Irenaean, Scott the Origenian theodicy – the idea, in Irenaeus’ words of “man making progress day by day, and ascending towards the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One” (Irenaeus 44). There are indeed many lines of plausible contiguity between the Irenaean-Origenian theodicy, Unitarianism, Voltaire, and Coleridge. Evidence ranges from the anecdotal – Hazlitt, for example, wanted to hear Priestley because he thought of him as ‘the Voltaire of the Unitarians’ (Wu 53)<sup>63</sup> – to the painstakingly pedantic: In his multi-volume debate with Bishop Samuel Horsley about the Unitarianism of the primitive church, Joseph Priestley returned again and again to minute accounts of Irenaeus’s and Origen’s writing and a glowing defence of Origen’s character.<sup>64</sup> Coleridge is even more enamoured with Origen

---

<sup>63</sup> Conversely, R. E. Florida suggests that Voltaire himself was the Voltaire of the Unitarians, tracing Voltaire’s lifelong interest in Socinianism (i.e. Unitarianism) and arguing that Voltaire uses Socinian theology as a bulwark against Catholicism (Florida 247–59).

<sup>64</sup> The more than 3000 pages on Priestley’s side alone defy summary. However, as far as Origen is concerned a summary of the opposing positions might be drawn thus: For Priestley, Origen was

than Priestley, repeatedly praising “the very best of the old Fathers” (*Literary Remains* 275), whom he thinks of as “almost the only very great scholar and genius combined amongst the early Fathers” (‘Table Talk’ 502).<sup>65</sup> But the point is not that these (and many more) lines exist and can be traced.<sup>66</sup> It is not that Coleridge speaks of ascent because he read Origen or read Origen because he had read Priestley or read Priestley because he had read Voltaire but rather that the conditions in which Coleridge seeks and finds his Optimism are such that ascent through suffering presents a highly promising response, wherever one may find it. Because this type of theodicy explains physical evil not as punishment, relevant only as evidence of guilt, nor as a negligible cog in an impossibly complex perfect whole, but as individualized instructions for an ascent to God, suffering moves from the margins of concern to its centre. In order to understand the lesson, you need to pay attention.

This is no perfect solution. One conundrum lies in the difference between suffering self and suffering other; or the related difference between the ascending self and the ascending community. Seeking instruction in one’s own suffering incurs a solipsistic myopia, where the suffering of others is relegated to obscurity once again. M. H. Abrams diagnoses this as the “Wordsworthian theodicy of private life” of “a painful process of self-formation, crisis, and self-recognition, which culminates in a stage of self-coherence, self-awareness,

---

an honest and honorable man who, while a Trinitarian himself, saw in the Unitarianism of some of his contemporaries the expression of honest and honorable motives. For Horsley, Origen was a liar and if there were Unitarians in the early church, Origen described their motives as dishonest and expressing only a feigned piety (Priestley 14–23, 104–05; cf. Schofield 231, 261).

<sup>65</sup> Priestley’s and Coleridge’s interest coincides with a growing fascination for the early Church Fathers – and thereby the roots of a Christianity claimed to have abandoned some of its key values. Interest in the early church rises both among dissenters and within factions of the established Church, especially the Tractarians, leading in the nineteenth century to the publication of the *Library of the Fathers* (1838-1881) and the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* (1867-1873), which included works of both Irenaeus and Origen.

<sup>66</sup> Though it is interesting to note that Pierre Bayle, whom Leibniz dislikes and Voltaire applauds, speaks of Origen as “one of the most copious writers, and one of the finest genius’s [sic] that flourished in the primitive Church” and that Bayle compares the Socinian idea of the regenerate soul’s eventual annihilation with Origen’s idea of universal salvation of all souls (Bayle, *Dictionary* 4 412–16).

and assured power that is its own reward” (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* 95–96). With all its Augustinianism, *Sartor Resartus* yet often tends towards this navel-gazing kind of ascent theodicy – though fashioned after the “bargain-basement Spinozism” of Herder, Goethe, and the *Bildungsroman* tradition, at least as much as that of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Teufelsdröckh’s assurance that after his “Origin of Evil” epiphany he looks upon all of mankind “with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity” is evidence of self-transformation rather than engagement with any particular suffering other (*Sartor Resartus* 195–96). If this self-centredness can seem uncaring, the counterpart has its own ethical pitfalls. Seeking melioration through engagement with the suffering of others risks a voyeuristic sentimentalism in which tragedy is met with a perverse kind of pleasure – Voltaire’s wish to take the Optimists to Lisbon begets disaster tourism. This, too, understandably given such poems as *The Ruined Cottage* or *Michael*, Wordsworth has been accused of – most extensively in James H. Averill’s *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering*; Wordsworth himself, as Averill suggests, increasingly became aware of the ethical problems that arise from the “literary uses of other people’s misery” (9, 235–83). But if this response has its limitations that is to be expected – what muddle has a perfect solution? In Carlyle’s words “ever the Solution of the last era has become obsolete, and is found unserviceable” (*Sartor Resartus* 195) but not because an objectively better solution may be found, merely because the problem keeps renewing itself.

It did not take Coleridge an era to find this particular solution unserviceable and he soon abandoned it for an equally muddled Augustinianism, leaving the imperfect solution of the ascent to Wordsworth, their contemporaries, and their intellectual descendants. Wordsworth, whatever misgivings he might have had, yet appears to have found this response serviceable enough well into the nineteenth century. In the dedication of the 1836 edition of “The White Doe of Rylstone”, he amends lines from his own unpublished

work *The Borderers*, affirming that “Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark” but adding that through it mankind may “rise with sure ascent / Even to the fountain-head of peace divine” (*The White Doe of Rylstone* lines 5, 11-13).

Its most fervent Romantic advocate this type of theodicy finds in the poet who bowed before Voltaire. Less than two years after the “immortal dinner” and around the time of his only meeting with a very garrulous Coleridge, Keats explained to his siblings that “the world [is] a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children” (291). He explicated the analogy:

Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! (Keats 291)

Given how closely Keats’s explication resembles what Hick calls the Irenaean theodicy, it is not surprising that Hick would take a liking to the name Keats uses for this theodicy, and thus repeatedly refers to the “vale of Soul-making” (Keats 290; Hick 163, 237, 253, 256). In fact, Hick uses “soul-making” more than 40 times, a number which might not be significant, were it not for the fact that, having claimed to see in Schleiermacher “an independent new start” (Hick 219), he should not be using it at all. Keats himself is only mentioned once in a footnote on page 259 acknowledging the provenance of the phrase but little else and that is despite the fact that it is Keats’s “soul-making” more than Irenaeus that would become most associated with Hick’s work. As the Regius Professor of Divinity, the Reverend Canon Marilyn McCord Adams, put it in her Foreword to the revised edition: “*Evil and the God of Love* is justly famous for its hallmark distinction between ‘Augustinian’ and ‘soul-making’ approaches to theodicy” (Adams xv).<sup>67</sup> One possible reason for Hick’s ambivalence towards Keats might lie in the fact that Keats declares in the same letter that his notion of the “vale of soul-making” offers a “grandeur

---

<sup>67</sup> The same happens in the title of Scott’s article “Suffering and Soul-Making: Rethinking John Hick’s Theodicy”.

system of salvation than the chrystain [sic] religion” (Keats 290–91). In other words, while Keats’s soul-making revolves around the idea of a purposefully creating God, and while it has all the hallmarks of a theodicy – not, what Abrams calls a secular theodicy, for it cannot work without a benevolent creator – it makes do without any recourse to Christ.

This is by no means to suggest that Hick’s “Irenaeian” theodicy is inherently Unchristian (or pre- or post-Christian) but rather to emphasize the malleability of these patterns. It is not so much, as Teufelsdröckh has it, that “[i]n every new era [...] such solution comes out in different terms” (Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 195) but rather that the new era rediscovers old terms and recycles them, often through radical transformation. The Augustinianism of Carlyle is not quite the Augustinianism of Augustine, and the soul-making Irenaeianism of Hick is neither that of Keats nor truly that of Irenaeus, though it is surely shaped and conditioned through both, as it is through Voltaire’s critique. Thus, the old terms work as parts of an arsenal, or to return to the clothes philosopher with which this chapter began, like a tailor’s patterns that can be endlessly adapted to fit the needs of the moment. By the time that Carlyle published his work, one year before Victoria took the throne, the pattern collection of theodicy had undergone alterations from Leibniz and Pope as much as the opposition of Voltaire and Goethe. This collection of patterns could be used in conservative or radical fashion, in philosophical or literary form, with an appeal to reason or feeling, and for audiences ranging from vaguely Deist to deeply Christian; it included fall and punishment, as it had done for more than a millennium, as well as the recently (re-)discovered soul-making ascent.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> For the sake of clarity and out of respect for Hick’s achievement in recognizing these two traditions, I will use the term “Irenaeian theodicy” in the following chapters to refer to this type.

*A Fiery Trial:*

*James Anthony Froude and Moral Evil*

*The two forms of good and evil appear in every poem; they meet us at every turn, in every thing man produces, as the one eternal riddle in an endless multiplicity of forms, which he is forever struggling to resolve.*

Wilhelm Tieck

*Tales from the Phantasia* [Froude's translation]

*Wie kann man sich selbst kennen lernen? Durch Betrachten niemals, wohl aber durch Handeln. Versuche, deine Pflicht zu tun, und du weißt gleich, was an dir ist.*

*How can one come to know oneself? By contemplation never but only by action. Try to do your duty, and you will know at once what you are.*

J. W. Goethe

*Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre* [my translation]

*Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that 'Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action.'*

Thomas Carlyle  
*Sartor Resartus*

On 23 March 1849 Caroline Bray wrote a letter to her sister concerning their mutual friend:

Last night at dusk M.A. came running in high glee with a most charming note from Froude, naïvely and prettily requesting her to reveal herself. He says he recognized her hand in the review in the *Coventry Herald*, and if she thinks him a fallen star she might help him rise, but he ‘believes he has only been dipped in the Styx and is not much the worse for the bath.’ Poor girl, I am so pleased she should have this little episode in her dull life. (quoted in Cross 145–46)

The “poor girl” and recipient of James Anthony Froude’s “charming” generosity was Mary Anne Evans. Froude had sent her his newly published *Nemesis of Faith* (1849), having read and admired her translation of Friedrich Strauss’s *The Life of Jesus* (1846). As a result, she had written anonymously, as was common, one of the few positive reviews of Froude’s novel, published on 16 March 1849 in Charles Bray’s *Coventry Herald and Examiner*. Froude’s “fallen star” refers to this review, which Evans concludes, adoringly: “[w]e are sure that its writer is a bright, particular star, though he sometimes leaves us in doubt whether he be not a fallen ‘son of the morning’” (*Selected Critical Writings* 15). By asking her to help him rise, Froude was not only indulging in a bit of flirtation with a blushing admirer but also, however jocosely, acknowledging that she had recognized what was, for him, the key issue: the fear of the Fall, the hope of the ascent, and the problem of moral evil that connects the two. The coquettish tone of Froude’s missive does not indicate that these issues are not of the utmost importance to Froude but rather that he is, at the point of writing, confident of having overcome them. Thus Froude, whose degree in *Literae Humaniores* (Classics) had trained him always to connect the biblical with the classical, avowed a belief that the writing of *Nemesis* was not a fall but rather a controlled descend into the Underworld. Having bathed, like Achilles, in the waters of the Styx, he considered himself almost invincible.

This chapter explores the role that the problem of moral evil plays in Froude’s early fictions as well as the way in which the writing of fiction shapes his engagement with

moral evil, helping him to solve in “action” a problem which he could not solve through speculation. I argue that Froude fashions his authorial persona and his genre-defying conception of fictitious writing so that they become both means of testing or reaching a conclusion regarding the complex issues surrounding moral evil and instruments to propagate that conclusion. As has been shown in the previous chapter, the problem of moral evil, being linked to human culpability, connects with questions of determination and free will. The majority view – espoused by Leibniz as much as Froude – is that if human action were entirely predetermined there would be no culpability and therefore no moral evil. In other words, and as the example of Coleridge suggested in the previous chapter, determinism and belief in sin are often held to be mutually exclusive. Similarly, the previous chapter established the centrality of moral evil for the Augustinian theodicy, since a belief in sinfulness is necessary to explain the reality of suffering as punishment judiciously inflicted by a good God. These issues are central to Froude’s fictions. *The Shadows of the Clouds* (1847) is a literary exploration of determinism, culpability and the potential for moral melioration. *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849) re-examines many of these issues, adding a focus on what, with Hick, I call the Augustinian theodicy, though Froude, acknowledging Augustine’s role in punishment theodicy, traces it back into pre-Christian writing. In many ways, *Nemesis* uses literary means to bring the problem of moral evil to a conclusion. Though he would soon come to regret the publication, Froude would always consider the writing of *Nemesis* his bath in the Styx so that, in the Carlylean idiom that he would later embrace, he could finally “pass from idle Suffering into actual Endeavouring” (Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* 195).

Froude’s brooding on moral evil began at a young age, furthered by the unhappy conditions of his childhood. This, at least, is the impression that Froude gives in his many

unflinching recollections of it.<sup>69</sup> The youngest of eight children of Robert Hurrell Froude, archdeacon of Totness, Froude spent his infancy with his mother in sick-bed, suffering from what was presented as the consequences of Froude's delivery. Before Froude turned three, his mother had died, leaving him in the care of his emotionally distant father and his mesmerizing but often sadistic brother, Hurrell. Convinced his brother "wanted manliness", Hurrell would whip Froude to his heart's content, or plunge him, head first, in muddy ponds or legs first in ice-cold water (cf. Dunn 18). During these years, Froude became a voracious reader, absorbing as a child Grimms' *Fairytales* and the *Arabian Nights*, and filling his head with genii and ghouls as much as narratives of reward and punishment. At Buckfastleigh and later Westminster, the intellectually precocious but physically weak boy became the object of bullying and abuse. Years later, Froude would argue from experience that public schools were hotbeds of sin in which boys "take their degree in vice; and they are heroes to one another according to the stage to which they have descended" ('Morals of the Public Schools' 710). Irrespective of whether Froude was indeed, as has been suggested, sexually abused (Brady 47–49), there is little doubt that his school years left an impression on his writing and his engagement with moral evil, especially since he was often beaten at home for the torn clothes and stolen money that were the result of being beaten at school. Undeserved paternal punishment would remain a constant theme in his writing, always to be held analogous with the punishment humanity receives from its divine Father.

The idea of punishment soon took a larger, theological hold, when Hurrell befriended and collaborated with John Henry Newman. When Froude himself went up to Oxford in 1836, shortly after Hurrell's death of tuberculosis, he too fell under Newman's influence, but never with the same singlemindedness as his brother, partly due to Froude's questioning

---

<sup>69</sup> These recollections, Froude's autobiographical fragments, were published by Waldo Hillary Dunn in his biography of Froude and later lost. Unless otherwise indicated, references to Dunn refer to Froude's own words.

character, and partly due to the times. For the 1830s and 40s were a period in which, as George Levine puts it, John Henry Newman and Thomas Carlyle were “wrestling for the soul of England” (*Boundaries of Fiction* 192) and though Carlyle did not know it yet, for no soul more forcibly than that of Froude.

If Newman and Carlyle were among the strongest influences on Froude and his writing, they were far from being the only voices struggling in the mind of so insatiable a reader. Coleridge’s early poems left their mark, though Froude eschewed the later prose writing, which “took [him] into clouds when [he] wanted sunlight” (Dunn 74). Froude found Wordsworth more uniformly pleasing, commending especially those poems which “in thought and sentiment express the elemental morality” (Dunn 74). As part of his degree, Froude read the old buttress against unbelief, Joseph Butler’s *Analogy of Religion* (1736) as well as Plato and the Greek tragedians. He enjoyed Rousseau, and from his pedagogical novel *Émile ou De l’éducation* (1762), which opens on the stark declaration that “All things are good as their Creator made them, but every thing degenerates in the hands of man” (*Emilius and Sophia* 1), Froude may have acquired his tendency to read the pedagogical on the foil of the theological. When Froude came to read Carlyle, it was especially *The French Revolution* (1837) which drew him as he struggled against the Tractarian influence, though both sides – Carlylians and Newmanites – agreed in reading history as pregnant with moral significance. As Froude wrote later: “In the French Revolution, in which my brother [Hurrell] had seen Antichrist, Carlyle saw the visible revenge of God upon human wickedness” (Dunn 73).

But if Carlyle helped Froude resist the siren call of Newman, it was not so much by his own writing – for Froude saw both as believing in “the same principle though somewhat different” (Dunn 102) – but by introducing him to the Germans. Schiller left an impression, as did Jean Paul whose *Herbst-Blumine* (1815) Froude quotes at length in *Shadows*. Not quite a German but so central to German Romanticism that engagement

with one must lead to the other, Spinoza impressed Froude deeply; his influence is evident in all Froude's early fictions. Froude also read Herder and Schleiermacher, rejecting their attempts to recast Spinoza's stark determinism as Christian pantheism as he did Novalis's depiction of Spinoza as "*Gott trunkner Mann*—a God intoxicated man" ('Spinoza' 342–43). The Bavarian fantasist Ludwig Tieck became a particular favourite, and Froude wrote a gushing preface to the translation of his *Tales from the 'Phantastus'* (1845). The first epigraph to this chapter, which Froude quotes in this preface, is indicative of the kind of authorial self-fashioning that Tieck helps Froude accomplish, envisioning, at least in Froude's reading, poetry as forever struggling to resolve the "eternal riddle in an endless multiplicity of forms" of good and evil (Froude, 'Preface' vii–viii).

No influence, German or otherwise, would prove more pivotal for Froude's fictions of moral evil than that of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe came with a glowing reference from Carlyle who had translated *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796, translation 1824) and *Wilhelm Meister's Travels* (1821, translation 1827). Froude himself later followed Carlyle's lead, translating the *Elective Affinities* (1809, translation 1854). As a writer, Froude took from Goethe both experimental form and scandalous content. Most evidently in the *Nemesis*, where the plot, such as it is, manifestly reproduces the *Elective Affinities* within an English setting shaped by the Oxford Movement. As a matter of form, the influence of Goethe is strongest in the complex narrative strategies, experiments with unreliability, and fictional "editors" that characterize Froude's early fiction.<sup>70</sup> Both *Shadows* and *Nemesis*, for example, reproduce the kind of epistolary form

---

<sup>70</sup> Part of my argument rests on the complexity of these narrative situations and their interaction with philosophical and theological concepts. In describing Froude's narratives, my aim is to achieve descriptive accuracy without unnecessary or obscure verbiage. Gérard Genette's intricate narratological terminology, with later amendments, is still the most fine-grained and accurate and where a high level of differentiation is necessary I have used that. But where a differentiation between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narration, for example, adds little, I have used the simpler, if less specific, "third person narration". My aim in the whole is to be clear rather than partisan.

and frame narrative of the “editor” sifting through posthumous materials that Goethe had popularized in *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774). But for Froude, who made no secret of the Goethean influence, the most important contribution of the Weimar sage was neither narrative content nor form but rather a single determining idea: “How conquer doubt? asked Goethe. By argument never, by action always” (Dunn 74). As the second epigraph to this chapter shows, Goethe’s original claim was a little more modest. Goethe described “action” not as a means of overcoming metaphysical questions but rather of understanding one’s own character. It was Carlyle who, as the last epigraph illustrates, turned Goethe’s means of self-discovery into the doubter’s panacea. Froude made “by action always” the motto of his life, attributing it sometimes to Goethe, sometimes to Carlyle but embracing always the thought that “life was for action not for speculation” (Dunn 94). Goethe’s two watchwords “character” and “action” became the twin guiding stars of Froude’s early fiction, connecting, as they do, the realm of morality with that of literature.

The 1840s, in which Froude was to find both his resolution to the problem of moral evil and his feet as a writer, were indeed a decade rife with “action”. Ireland, which Froude visited repeatedly and where he wrote his *Nemesis* was suffering greatly from the Famine. Much as he did with his own experiences of an unhappy childhood, Froude read the suffering of the Catholic peasantry through a theological lens, claiming later that “the attractive personality of Newman would have recovered its absolute ascendancy with me had I not been held back by my Irish experience” (Dunn 72). In Oxford, where he had been elected to a Fellowship at Exeter in 1842, under the necessity of taking holy orders, matters were equally tempestuous. The religious upheaval surrounding the Tracts reached its climax in 1845, when Newman finally converted to Rome. Rome itself was in turmoil as the Italians struggled for independence. In 1848, Italy was not the only country haunted by the spectre of revolution. While Froude’s close friend Arthur Hugh

Clough, together with the much-admired Ralph Waldo Emerson, went straight into the belly of the beast, touring the revolutionary continent, Froude, ever the man of action, withdrew to Ireland to write his *Nemesis*. “What a beast one is”, he lamented bitterly to Charles Kingsley “to be fretting and bothering with one’s little pitiful individuality when young Europe is waking in its cradle and strangling serpents like a Heracles” (Dunn 116). In *Why do We Care about Literary Characters?* (2010) Blakey Vermeule contends that “fictional characters [...] are the greatest practical-reasoning schemes ever invented. We use them to sort out basic moral problems [...] we use them in place of statistics as tools to muddle through” (xii). It was with such an aim in mind, I suggest, that Froude turned in those tumultuous years – and with the muddled problem of moral evil pressing on his mind – to fiction. Vermeule’s cognitive argument focuses on the benefits that literary characters offer their audiences in their everyday dealing with other humans. Specifically, the interaction of fictional characters teaches us about the vicissitudes of a social interaction for which our “eternally premodern brains” are ill-equipped, bringing with it the evolutionary advantage of learning whom to trust and, crucially, whom to avoid (xii). What I suggest Froude does with fiction is narrower and more specific. As practical-reasoning schemes *for social interaction* Froude’s writing is mostly useless, lacking, as it does, the kind of cast necessary for such an operation and focusing instead on the development of single characters. Instead it is with the aim of turning knotty philosophical and theological questions into practical reasoning and thus finding in “action” – albeit the simulated action of fictionality – answers to questions that could not, and from Froude’s Goethe- and Carlyle-inspired perspective should not, be found through speculation. In other words, the act of writing fictional characters and fictional action offers the practical reasoning scheme by which Froude himself “muddles through” the problem of moral evil, as well as a means of propagating the new-found solution and thereby entering, finally, the field of action.

By reading Froude as both moralist and artist, this chapter goes against the grain of the way in which Froude's fictions have traditionally been presented, namely as inartistically autobiographic expressions of a confessional urge. Carlyle, the pot calling the kettle black, was among the first to lament a "wretched mortal's vomiting up all his interior crudities, dubiations, and spiritual agonising belly-aches" (Carlyle and Carlyle 13). Charles Kingsley agreed, suggesting that Froude had suffered from "spiritual [...] diarrhoea" and might be better having passed it, but since he did so in public must bear the "consequences of so offending the public noses" (quoted in Ashton, *Thomas & Jane Carlyle* 291). One particularly offended nose belonged to the Reverend William Sewell, Senior Tutor at Froude's own College, Exeter, who famously burned a student's copy of *Nemesis* in hall. This was not the first time that Froude's literary work had received censure from an authority figure – his own father had, according to Froude's daughter, Margaret, bought and destroyed all the copies of *Shadows* he could find (cf. Dunn 104–05). But while nobody had cared for Robert Froude's parental embarrassment, according to the owner of the ill-fated book "[i]n a few hours this 'burning of the book' was known all over Oxford" (Blomfield). The burning and outrage still mark Froude's greatest claim to fame<sup>71</sup> but it is a superficial kind of celebrity that made Froude become the kind of figure one knows of rather than an author one reads.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, neither Sewell nor Froude's father appears to have read the books they destroyed and even those more positively inclined towards Froude as a historian occasionally confess not to have read the works of

---

<sup>71</sup> Rosemary Ashton is one of many to make the strong claim that Froude's *Nemesis* was the last book to be publicly burned in England (Ashton, 'Introduction' 7). The *Daily News* of 28 April 1892 declares that "[f]ew or no books except Mr. Froude's [...] have been burned in England since 1775". The article lists other authors whose books suffered the same fate, among them Rousseau, Voltaire and Milton, concluding judiciously that book-burning is "merely silly, unless you can burn the whole impression, and kill or imprison the author" ('Burned Books.').

<sup>72</sup> For that reason, I assume, in what follows, that there is only a passing familiarity with Froude's texts, especially *Shadows*, and will go into more detail than I would with more canonical texts.

fiction they reject (cf. Dunn 104–05; Cooper 17). Well into the twentieth century the verdict on Froude’s fictions was clear: they were simply “not literature” (Whitfield 7).

This view was to some degree challenged by Waldo Hillary Dunn’s 1961 biography – still the standard work – which opens with Dunn’s justified claim that “[f]ew men have been so [...] wrongly judged” (2). Despite Dunn’s intervention, the standard view, based largely on superficial readings and factual errors, two of which will be addressed in this chapter, survives.<sup>73</sup> The most notable challenge was put forward only in this decade by the historian Ciaran Brady whose *James Anthony Froude: An intellectual biography of a Victorian prophet* (2013) does much to establish, for the first time, Froude’s work as a “hugely ambitious attempt to translate moral argument into aesthetic experience” (Brady 130). Because Brady is working against such a well-established narrative, he pushes very strongly against the personal aspect of Froude’s writing, discrediting even Froude’s own assertions of the intellectual and emotional benefit he received from writing. The implication being, and here Brady echoes the standard view, that writing can either serve the author’s personal needs – what, following Carlyle’s and Kingsley’s scatological imagery, might be called his “spiritual hygiene” – or be a piece of literary art reflecting ethical and artistic concerns and engagement with a tradition. I suggest instead that Froude’s fiction is one by virtue of being the other: that it is because Froude carefully crafts a literary persona and fashions a very particular literary project out of a tradition that his writing can have the kinds of effects on him that he and others report. It is with

---

<sup>73</sup> Dunn describes the problem, still as current today as it was at the time of Dunn’s writing, with the one difference that less in total is written about Froude today: “It appears that comparatively few, even those who have written confidently and condescendingly about it, have gone to Froude’s text. One writer after another has blindly repeated statements made by previous writers. In this fashion much false information has become current and so firmly fixed in mind that it is difficult to establish the truth” (Dunn 78). The hope remains that if individual interventions, including that of Dunn, have so far proved unsuccessful in dispersing some of the inaccuracies, something might be done by repetition.

Froude's early efforts to construct both his literary and his religious position that I begin my discussion of Froude's fictions of moral evil.

### We all write Legends: Froude's Newmanite Genres

In the spring of 1843 Froude embarked upon a project and a collaboration which would see him develop many of the hallmarks of his later literary persona. Though it was his second published work, *The Legend of St. Neot* marked Froude's first sustained contemplation of literary production and the ethics of his work as author.<sup>74</sup> The writing of *Neot*, which Froude undertook as part of John Henry Newman's multivolume hagiographical project *Lives of the English Saints* (1844), much like Froude's relationship with Newman, has often been misconstrued due to some of those enduring errors previously mentioned. The conventional but inaccurate characterization of the relationship between Froude and Newman has been roughly that although Froude, like many Oxford men at the time, initially felt attracted to Newman's charisma, he was always, or became during their collaboration, utterly opposed to him on principle. Froude used *Neot*, in this account, as an opportunity to undermine a faith that he disliked both doctrinally and personally as the creed of his sadistic brother, Hurrell. Evidence for this interpretation of Froude's relationship with Newman, and Froude's clandestine opposition to his hagiography, is mostly supplied in the form of the erroneous but oft-repeated claim that in ending his tale of St. Neot Froude "famously added: 'this is all, and perhaps more than all that is known of the life of the blessed St. Neot'" (Cornwell 79). In 1905, Herbert Paul attributed this ending to *Neot* (34) and Lytton Strachey quoted Paul, adding that though Froude had largely done what Newman had asked, Froude yet

---

<sup>74</sup> Froude had previously seen his winning Chancellor's Prize essay in English published. The topic for 1842 had been set as "The Influence of the Science of Political Economy on the Moral and Social Welfare of a Nation" but apart from providing early evidence of Froude's interest in moral questions, the essay contains only a largely conventional defence of religious authority against rationalism and utilitarianism and shows very few marks of Froude's later literary persona.

thought it proper to add the following sentence by way of conclusion:  
 “This is all, and indeed rather more than all, that is known to men of  
 the blessed St. Neot; but not more than is known to the Angels in  
 heaven. (Strachey 33)

Unlike a good Anglo-Catholic, the heterodox Froude, so this oft-repeated quotation suggests, was not convinced of the factual veracity of the saints’ lives and felt the need to make his doubts known, thus attacking Newman, his project, and his party. In reality, and despite the claims of Herbert Paul, Lytton Strachey, Kingsbury Badger, and Newman’s 2010 biographer John Cornwell, among others, Froude wrote no such thing (Strachey 33; Cornwell 79; Badger 43; Paul 34).

Instead, while there is no evidence for these lines in Froude’s writing, it was Newman himself who concluded his Legend of St. Bettelin:

And this is all that is known, and more than all—yet nothing to what  
 the angels know—of the life of a servant of God, who sinned and  
 repented, and did penance and washed out his sins, and became a Saint,  
 and reigns with Christ in heaven. (‘St. Bettelin’ 72).

In other words, not only did Froude never use this phrase to attack Newman, Newman found this a perfectly appropriate ending to St Bettelin’s life. That a quotation from Newman could so easily be mistaken for one from Froude may fortuitously illustrate how much Froude’s writing actually resembles rather than resists that of Newman, especially when it comes to the issue of factual veracity and the relationship between the author and the truth.

Newman’s influence on Froude’s theory of the authorial obligation to truthfulness was perhaps inevitable, given how central the issue is for Newman and how odd his treatment of it is, perched as it is between ancient Christian theology and Romantic literary vision. This oddity has occasionally been interpreted simply as untruthfulness, most famously by Charles Kingsley whose attacks on Newman’s honesty became the occasion for Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864). What is perhaps more startling, and more responsible for Kingsley’s charge of dishonesty than any violation of factual veracity, is

Newman's consistent deflection of its importance. Newman's writing often suggests, drastically so in the *Lives of the English Saints*, that truthfulness is neither as attainable nor as important a standard as men like Charles Kingsley would have it. Creaturely limitation – what for Leibniz amounts to metaphysical evil and for young Coleridge to the notion that “Life is a vision shadowy of Truth” (“Religious Musings”, 396) – for Newman is a fact of existence that demands a particular response:

The Christian lives in the past and in the future, and in the unseen; in a word, he lives in no small measure in the unknown. And it is one of his duties, and a part of his work, to make the unknown known (Newman, ‘Gundleus’ 1)

These words, with which Newman opens the volume on hermit saints – a Wordsworthian topic if ever there was one – are indicative of the motivation with which Newman began the project and instructed its writers, among them Froude. The aim was to make the unknown known, what in Carlyle's equally Romantic thought is the desire to reveal the supernatural in the natural, and thus invest Britain with the same kind of saintly splendour that is so at home in Catholic Italy.

Newman was convinced that such an endeavour could not depend on the factual veracity of the historical account, not merely because part of his Romantic inheritance was a general suspicion of external reality, but also because, during his hagiographical research, Newman encountered the bare-bones of a cognitive theory which spoke against the potential for accurate hagiography. Thus Newman begins his legend of Bettelin quoting the misgiving of the seventeenth-century Jesuit hagiographer Jean Bolland: “‘what is extraordinary,’ says Bollandus, ‘usually strikes the mind and is impressed on the memory in an especial way’” (Newman, ‘St. Bettelin’ 59). For Newman, Bolland hits the nail on the head, for in the accounts of saints' lives everything apart from the miracles, the extraordinary, is forgotten and never recorded, and even the miracles themselves are “often so exaggerated or deformed [...] that by some persons they are considered as

nothing short of old women's tales" (Newman, 'St. Bettelin' 59). Rather than prompting Newman to abandon hagiography, however, this account of human cognition and the paucity of the evidence are themselves reasons for writing. For most people, Newman declared, live good Christian lives with only a "small portion of true knowledge", mostly turning what little they have into

something which is like the very truth though it be not it, and which stands for the truth when it is but like it. Its evidence is a legend; its facts are a symbol; its history a representation; its drift is a moral [sic]. ('Gundleus' 3-4)

What mattered to the Christian author writing a hagiography was then not whether an account was factually accurate or not – even if it were it would not stay so for long, being distorted by countless minds – but whether it served as legend, symbol, representation, and ultimately, moral.

One image that Newman uses to describe the value of even untruthful accounts of saints' lives proved especially important for Froude, prompting his lifelong preoccupation with doublings and distortions. In the opening of Newman's "Legend of St. Bettelin", which concludes with the famous lines often wrongly attributed to Froude, Newman claims:

Bright luminaries in the heavens, which guide the traveller across the desert, are found, when viewed through a glass, to be double stars, not single, though each seems to be one. [...] They are confused, yet they are used by the wayfaring man, who is not hurt by his mistake. (Newman, 'St. Bettelin' 57)

Newman's image likely draws on William Herschel's eighteenth-century discovery that numerous stars, including the North Star, which had served navigators for centuries, were not single star but multiple star systems (cf. Howe 279). Newman cared little for navigation or astronomy; he was establishing an analogy: for "[t]his applies of course in no small degree to the miraculous incidents which occur in the history of the Saints" ('St. Bettelin' 59). For Newman, "[b]right luminaries in the heavens", both stars and saints,

might not be as they appear to us, and yet, no matter how distorted the image, they might still be useful to guide a traveller across the spiritual desert.

When Froude came to write his *Neot*, he found Newman's "general position [...] entirely reasonable" (Dunn 76), fashioning his authorial persona not by disagreement but by selection and amplification, often taking what in Newman is a mere hint to the furthest extreme. This is true of the Romantic influence which infuses Newman's writings and becomes in *Neot* a barrage of quotations from *The Excursion*, "Tintern Abbey", and "Ode: Intimations of Immortality". So, too, what in Newman's writing is a half-sentence from Bolland on the difficulty of forming an accurate representation of the Saint's lives, in *Neot* becomes a lengthy account of human cognition and its complete inaptitude for being factually accurate in any respect whatsoever. "[F]acts", Froude postulates in the opening of his *Neot*, "refuse to remain bare and isolated in our memory; they will arrange themselves under some law or other; they must illustrate something to us—some character—some principle—or else we forget them" ('Neot' 75). In forming a memory, Froude asserts, humans constantly rearrange the actual order of events into a conceptually satisfying one. For that reason, Froude claims prophetically, humans will always attribute quotations not to the person who actually said or wrote them but to the one considered most likely to have said them. Factual inaccuracy is then not evidence of a flaw in writerly practice but rather an inescapable aspect of human cognition. If accounts of the saints' lives are inaccurate or even wholly invented that serves to show nothing but that their writers were human, because, as Froude proclaims "We all write Legends" (Froude, 'Neot' 75).

Blurring the lines between the realm of fiction and genres traditionally thought of as non-fictional – history and biography – the term "legend" declares openly what, within Froude's understanding of human cognition, all representational writing does anyway. For if selectiveness, conceptual re-ordering and the inability to retain "facts" unless they

are made to confirm preconceptions are the hallmarks of human cognition then they affect all genres alike – even those that declare their scientific objectivity. Froude thus opposes what Hayden White's *Metahistory* influentially declared to be the standard view of historiography in the nineteenth century, namely that "History" is a "distinctive mode of thought" with a distinct quasi-scientific methodology that records rather than interprets (White 1). Anticipating by a century the kind of "linguistic turn" that mainstream historiography would make only in the second half of the twentieth century, Froude declares boldly that "[e]ven ordinary history, except mere annals, is all more or less fictitious" ('Neot' 74).

The exception of "annals" that Froude makes indicates that he does not so much question the existence or recordability of "objective reality" per se; this perhaps separates him from postmodern, post-structuralist philosophers of history. But the focal point of his thinking is that as soon as any kind of intellectual mitigation happens, as soon as writing leaves the realm of mere number crunching, "fictitiousness" begins. Facts are not merely recorded as they occurred, but always "as they appeared to the writer" ('Neot' 74), who is no neutral observer, for he writes facts "as they happen to illustrate his views or support his prejudices" ('Neot' 74). There is then no positive difference between the historian and the novelist for both produce writing that is full of what, with Brigid Lowe, one might call "'Significance', with a capital 'S' [...] [the] generalizing meaning that lies behind the superficial details of fiction" (Lowe 62). Accordingly, the theoretical underpinnings of his authorial persona, which Froude fashions during his collaboration with Newman and shortly before embarking on his short career as a writer of fictional prose in the conventional sense, are the same as those he will uphold throughout his long career as a writer of so-called non-fiction. Twenty years later, as an established historian halfway through his hugely successful *History of England*, Froude begins a Lecture at the Royal Institution, provocatively titled "The Science of History" by comparing History to "a

child's box of letters, with which we can spell any word we please" ('History' 1). All the historians have to do, according to Froude, is to "only pick out such letters as we want, arrange them as we like, and say nothing about those which do not suit our purpose" ('History' 1). History, biography, novel-writing alike then demand an ethics of writing that looks not for factual veracity as its standard but for something else entirely. The question to be asked of factual (and therefore more or less fictitious) accounts is then not "is it factually true?" but "is it moral?"; not "is it unprejudiced?" but "does it have the right kind of prejudices?".

But then, given creaturely limitations and the trickery of cognition, how can the writer know what the right kinds of prejudices are? For Newman, the case is clear: the answer could be given only by the church, and as he realized during and shortly after his work on *Lives of the English Saints*, only by the Roman Catholic Church. Newman would give the most succinct expression of his conclusion – an evidence-based leap of faith after which all answers are to be received from the Church – in *The Grammar of Assent* (1870). Much of Newman's evidence in the *Grammar* relies on the idea of a progressive unfolding of history towards modern Catholicism – on that crucial "Developmental Doctrine" that first allowed Newman to join the Roman Catholic fold, explaining, as it did, how it was possible that the Church of Rome could have more doctrines and more creeds than are stated in the New Testament. In his fateful *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), the last work Newman wrote before his conversion, he explains the growth of Christianity through the image of the mustard seed of St. Mark 4:30, which sprouts branches that were not part of the original seed and yet are the natural growth of the tree (*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* 112). In later editions, Newman added that "modern Catholicism is nothing else but simply the legitimate growth and complement, that is, the natural and necessary development, of the doctrine of the early church" (Newman, *The Development of Christian Doctrine* 123).

But as Newman had as yet not reached his Roman conclusion, Froude was still ambivalent, if a little suspicious of the tendency to invoke “development”, given the fact that Newman and Carlyle could reach very different aims while going “on the same principle of development” (Dunn 102). Thus, while Froude stuck to Newman’s brief in so far as he declared that the aim of the writer was “not so much to relate facts, as to produce a religious impression on the mind of the hearer”, he was uncertain as far as the details of the “religious impression” were concerned (‘Neot’ 74). Years later, Froude would claim that it was with the aim of finding the correct “religious impressions” that he accepted his first commission as writer:

In spite of my miscellaneous reading, in spite of Hume and Carlyle, I was as yet far from having formed any negative conclusions, and was prepared to be convinced that after all Newman’s view might be right as a whole. (Dunn 76)

In other words, part of Froude’s motivation for joining Newman’s project, at least as he constructed it looking back after the fact, was to instil a religious impression not in the “hearer” but in the “writer” – Froude himself – and thus to find in writing what Newman was trying to find in Rome: conclusions.

### Struggling to Resolve: The Examples of Goethe and Tieck

In 1845, having come to a negative conclusion as far as Newman’s theological position was concerned, but with no positive conclusion to put in its stead, Froude turned once more to writing, this time in the critical vein, and increasingly with the apparent aim of finding his own persona as a writer of fiction. Together with Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice among others, Froude became involved in the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*. The continued breadth of Froude’s thinking can be gleaned by the fact that he supplied the *Review* with articles not only on Newman’s *Development Essay* – written after Newman’s conversion and both mourning and exculpatory in tone – but also on John Anster’s translation of Goethe’s *Faust*, as well as reviews of works by Carlyle and

Spinoza. Froude's review of Anster's translation of *Faust* is largely introductory, but interesting in two respects: it shows Froude's growing confidence as a translator of German in his own right, capable of evaluating another translator's work, and it indicates the extent to which Froude's growing interest in writing is linked to his preoccupation with moral evil. Specifically, Froude opens his review by quoting Anster's pained conclusion that what Goethe might have wished to say with his *Faust* was:

that sin is but the error of our wandering in permitted darkness; that evil, known as evil, will cease to be; that increase of light is in fact all that man wants to release him from error and perplexity, for if I understand my author rightly, it cannot properly be called sin. If this be Goethe's creed, I have little hesitation in describing it as 'vain wisdom all and false philosophy'. (Anster qtd. in Froude, 'Faust' 2)<sup>75</sup>

Froude's reaction to Anster's conjecture demonstrates his emerging convictions as a reader and as a writer. On the one hand he asks mockingly why Anster would even bother to translate a work that he suspects to contain nothing but "devilish falsehood" ('Faust' 2), implying that reading – whether it is self-contained or with the aim of criticism and translation – should serve moral purposes. But while he mocks Anster, Froude largely refrains from taking a stance as far as this reading of Goethe and the underlying belief in the illusory nature of moral evil are concerned. Instead he declares that Goethe's works are "but the history of his mind, [...] struggling with the obscurest and deepest questions of human nature" ('Faust' 3). Regardless of the conclusions that Goethe reached, Froude finds, one must admire his use of literature as a vehicle for struggling with as complex an issue as moral evil.

If Froude's reading of Goethe seems to anticipate his own experiments in fiction, this is even more true of another critical venture he undertook in 1845, working with Julius Hare on an edition of *Tales from the 'Phantasia'* by the German Romantic fantasist Ludwig Tieck. Tieck had long been known in Britain as a middling writer of fantastic tales. His

---

<sup>75</sup> The attribution of reviews of Goethe and Newman to Froude is based on his autobiographical fragment (Dunn 101–03).

reputation was attributable in part to Carlyle's commentary in the anthology *German Romance* (1827), in which Carlyle maintained that the success of Tieck's tales was "not asserted by his warmest admirers" but that he was at least better than his rivals (*German Romance* 266). Contradicting Carlyle, Froude did what Tieck's "warmest admirers" had not, placing the fantasist on the same level even as the great Goethe himself, and suggesting that it was precisely because Tieck was so great an artist that his works made "people feel uncomfortable, without exactly knowing why" (Froude, 'Preface' i). But if Froude now took the role of passionate connoisseur and defender, he did so by reworking many of the same peculiarities that were already evident in his collaboration with Newman, namely a kind of selective amplification in which Froude reaches through fervent agreement a position that seems to have little in common with the model it purports to build on. Thus Froude recommends Tieck's Gothic fairy tales, which abound in magical creatures, fantastic metamorphoses, knights, witches, insanity and murder, for their realism, concluding that "instead of saints with power of working miracles, or the ideal hero of the age of chivalry, – we have the very men and women which we ourselves are" ('Preface' v).

It is tempting to dismiss Froude's assertion of the "terrible reality" ('Preface' iv) of Tieck's characters as a belated criticism of the Newmanite, Romanizing, focus on saints, especially since it seems to ignore Tieck's own penchant for knights and miracles. Yet, part of Froude's insistence on the "realism" of Tieck is not so much a contradiction but an extension of Froude's genre-bending thought under Newman's influence: if history is fictitious, then fairy tales become realistic. As Froude's repeated insistences that "his men are real men, not fantastic; and that is all we have a right to require" signals, what Froude means with "reality" is a moral category. In other words, Tieck's characters, even when they are fantastic as far as their biographies are concerned are yet morally middling rather than "ideal", saintly or chivalrous. What Froude picks up on in Tieck, to the almost

complete exclusion of the fantastic elements that in Carlyle's earlier reading make up the bulk of Tieck's work, is that Tieck "is concerned wholly with the nature of man as he finds him, and with the working of the moral laws, the natural tendencies of virtue and vice" ('Preface' ii). Because Tieck, in Froude's reading, is interested in moral laws, vice and virtue, he must concern himself with characters that are "real" in the moral sense even if they are fantastic in every other respect.

This focus on morally "real" characters is not the only respect in which what Froude sees in Tieck is precisely what will soon become evident in his own writing, and it is difficult to evaluate Froude's criticism of Tieck because it seems to be supplying an artistic manifesto when it purports to give a critical evaluation. "The true poet of any time", writes Froude, for example, as if he were describing Tieck, is he who:

can make that time transparent – who can let his readers in behind the curtain of their own souls and that of the society in which they live, and shew them what they are all doing, hoping, fearing – clear up their cloudy perceptions, and say for them what they would say themselves if they could. ('Preface' v)

It is difficult to see how this description applies to Tieck, who seems, at least on the surface, rather uninterested in the quotidian life of the society in which he resides. It is much easier to see how this description might apply to Froude, of whose work Arthur Hugh Clough would say – not as a compliment – that it contains "what I imagine pervades the young world in general" (*Correspondence I* 248–49) and whom Mary Ward (née Arnold) commended for representing the "spiritual experience" of the century (Ward, 'Marius the Epicurean' 134).

This sense of the emerging writer asserting himself through the work of the critic is particularly insistent when Froude praises Tieck's writing – as he had done Goethe's before – as evidence and vehicle of a mind asking dark questions on behalf of his contemporaries:

He dared stand boldly up before the world and ask it what it was. And the still more awful question he asked of his own heart: What am I? What is my business here? It is a fiery trial; and woe to him who fails! Better he had never been born! ('Preface' iii)

It is no coincidence that Froude's tone – slipping from what in fiction one would call psychonarration into what purports to be interior monologue – becomes here more literary than critical. Adopting free indirect discourse, Froude merges his voice as quasi-narrator with that of what is now almost the fictional character, Tieck. The questions might still be attributed to Tieck but there is no telling whether it is Tieck or Froude who declares life a “fiery trial”. Under the guise of criticism, Froude is working out the inchoate ideals and ethical objectives of his own writing of fiction: to reveal to his readers what is hidden inside them – their “cloudy perceptions”, the collective longings and anxieties of a generation – to undergo the “fiery trial” in writing so that his contemporaries would not have to risk it in life.

#### An Obtuse Angle: *The Shadows of the Clouds*

Having worked out the principles of his fiction in speculation, Froude desired to put them to action. With that aim at the end of 1845, Froude sequestered himself from “the storms of nature and the moral world” in a small cottage near Torquay, Devon (Dunn 103). He took the cottage for a year, having little desire to return to the hustle and bustle or the religious controversies and “cloudy perceptions” of Oxford. Even correspondence he limited, since it posed the risk of re-contaminating him with the very controversies of which to cure himself he had gone to Devon. Inquiries into his opinions on religious or philosophical matters bothered him particularly because, as he declared, he was “teaching [him]self to forget to ‘think abstract’ or form ‘abstract opinions’ of any kind” (Dunn 103).

The product of this un-speculating hermitage was *The Shadows of the Clouds*, which was published under the pseudonym “Zeta” in the spring of 1847.<sup>76</sup>

Though *Shadows* had some early admirers – a short but favourable review appeared in the *Athenaeum* (‘Our Library Table’ 643–44), George Eliot gushed about it in private (Cross 146), and Lewis Carroll had it bound in leather but not before cutting out the “objectionable parts” (L. Carroll 50) – the work has received little critical attention and is the victim of one of those irrepressible errors previously mentioned. The error is quite simply the oft-repeated claim that *Shadows* is a novel, when in reality the book consists of two separate narratives.<sup>77</sup> The first, titled *The Spirit’s Trial* is 198 pages long. Those who treat *Shadows* as a single novel take *The Spirit’s Trial* to make up its entirety; the second narrative is a novella of about half that length titled *The Lieutenant’s Daughter*. The book, which never went into a second edition, is relatively rare – indicative, perhaps, of Robert Froude’s success in suppressing it – and it seems likely that some of those who have written about *Shadows* were never able to consult it themselves, needing to build instead on previous accounts. This is particularly regrettable, when the result is a destructive verdict that might have been avoided were it not for this misunderstanding. Basil Willey, for example, who gives every indication of being unaware of the second narrative suggests that *Shadows* might have “been better unpublished” since it lacks what “a true work of art can be and often is – in itself a resolution of disharmony” (Willey, *More Nineteenth Century Studies* 119). While Willey is correct in pointing out that *The Spirit’s Trials* (what he refers to as *Shadows of the Clouds*) offers no resolution of disharmony, his disregard of the second part of the book makes him overlook the fact that

---

<sup>76</sup> A. O. J. Cockshut suggests that Hurrell had described worldly and worthless people as “Zeds” and that Froude might have used the pseudonym “Zeta” to declare that “these are the subversive and worldly reflections of one whom my brother would have considered a useless outcast” (101).

<sup>77</sup> This has previously been pointed out by Dunn, who admonished that the work was “somewhat imperfectly understood”, and was often “referred to as a novel, and often as if it were a single story” (Dunn 104). In the following fifty years, and despite Dunn’s protestations, *Shadows* has still often been referred to as a novel (D. Cook 58; Colby 169).

*Shadows* – the combination of *The Spirit's Trials* and *The Lieutenant's Daughter* – is precisely an exploration of disharmony, of two mutually exclusive views of the cosmos, of determination and sin.

That a “resolution of disharmony” is in fact what Froude had in mind in combining the two narratives is indicated by an editorial intervention at the very end of *Trials*. After the core narrative of *Trials* is concluded, the fictional editor introduces a fragment from an unsent letter, in which the protagonist attempts to justify his actions to someone who had “remonstrated with him for writing *in* the ‘Lives of the Saints’”:

You know I affect to be a philosopher who does not believe that truth ever shows herself completely in either of the rival armies that claim so loudly to be her champions. She seems to me to lie like the tongue of the balance, only kept in the centre by the equipoise of contending forces, or rather, if I may use a better illustration, like a boat in a canal, drawn forward by a rope from both sides, which appear as if they would negative each other, and yet produce only a uniform straightforward motion. I throw myself on this side or on that as I please, without fear of injuring her. [...] All you have to care for is, that you make an acute angle, not an obtuse one, with the line of its course. (*Shadows* 182–83)

This passage is almost entirely unrelated to the main narrative in which the protagonist's work on the *Lives of the English Saints* plays only a minor role, and yet it gives the key to the reading of the whole book. Not only because it provides a clue to what now presents itself as a *roman à clef*, inviting the reader to speculate on the identity of “Zeta” as somebody who collaborated with Newman without being entirely convinced – an invitation that many followed and Froude's identity was soon uncovered – but also hermeneutically, because it suggests one way of understanding the relationship between text and truth, which does not “reveal herself” completely. The claim rehashes many of the ideas about truth and cognition that Froude first explored during his collaboration with Newman; the image of the two ropes pulling one truth echoes and distorts Newman's image of the two celestial bodies guiding the traveller as if they were one star. The tone is different here: playful, light-hearted, joyfully self-fashioning (“affect to be a

philosopher”) a persona, which lets metaphysics be metaphysics, and instead of fretting tumbles about a hardy but ineffable “truth”. Despite the insistence that one need not fear injuring truth, though, there is something precarious about a truth that is only maintained through contending forces. Thus, while the “philosopher” – or the author – might throw himself about, pulling this rope or that, he must yet take care of the right angle, for otherwise the boat might be pulled apart, and instead of a resolution of disharmony produce only a splitting discordance. Rather than offering truth claims, this passage suggests, the two narratives are merely the two ropes pulling, with the author throwing himself on either side, and the reader left to surmise the truth in the middle.

In what directions Froude wishes the two narratives to pull is adumbrated by two epigraphs with which *Shadows* opens. The epigraphs, the first in Latin, the second in German, have rarely been commented upon and their relationship to the individual narratives and the collection as a whole has so far gone unnoticed.<sup>78</sup> The first one comes from Spinoza’s discussion of human determination in the appendix to the first part of the *Ethics*:

Homines se liberos esse opinantur quando quidem suarum volitionum  
suique appetitûs sunt conscii e de causis a quibus disponuntur ad  
appetendum et volendum quia earum sunt ignari ne per somnium  
cogitant.

men suppose themselves to be free because they are conscious of their  
volitions and appetites, and do not even dream of the causes by which  
they are disposed to desire and will, because of these they are ignorant  
(Spinoza 34 [George Eliot’s translation])

This quotation is one of the passages in the *Ethics* that exemplify Spinoza’s determinism, suggesting, as it does, that when humankind believes itself free that “freedom” is merely an illusion arising from the fact that we are aware of our ability to do whatever we desire while we remain ignorant to the things that have themselves caused our desires. In other

---

<sup>78</sup>Two dissertations note the existence of these epigraphs but without explicating their significance (Walsh 45; Nygard 107).

words, because the chain leading back to the first and only cause, God, is so long and convoluted we can delude ourselves into a sense of freedom. This epigraph, together with his unawareness of the second narrative, might have prompted Willey's classification of the first narrative of *Shadows* as "applying Spinozism, however superficially, to the problems of parenthood and upbringing" (*More Nineteenth Century Studies* 119). As will become apparent, the Spinozism in this epigraph is actually embodied, and not superficially but internally as a structuring principle,<sup>79</sup> in the second narrative, while the first one is pulling somewhere else entirely.

Where the first narrative, *The Spirit's Trials*, pulls is hinted at not only by the title which echoes the Tieck-inspired idea that life is a "fiery trial" – just as *Shadows of the Clouds* echoes the poetic calling for a clearing of "cloudy perceptions" – but also by the second epigraph:

Wer mit dem Leben spielt  
 Kömmt nie zurecht,  
 Wer nicht sich [selbst] befiehlt  
 Bleibt immer ein Knecht.<sup>80</sup>

Who plays with life,  
 Will never succeed,  
 Who does not govern himself  
 Will always be a slave. [my translation]

Goethe is not an obvious choice to contradict Spinoza, since he is, translated and aided by Carlyle, one of the primary channels through which Spinoza gained popularity in

---

<sup>79</sup> In order to analyse the interaction between narrative structure, free will, and determinism, I adopt some of the elaborate contemporary philosophical terminology, as it is used, for example, in Joseph Campbell's recent *Free Will*. Specifically, I use "Compatibilism" to describe the view that determinism is compatible with free will and "semicompatibilism" to describe the view that "some freedoms – e.g. the ability to do otherwise – are incompatible with determinism but that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism" (Campbell 86). "Hard determinism" holds that determinism and free will are incompatible (Campbell 21).

<sup>80</sup> Though, based on his translation of the *Elective Affinities*, it seems likely that Froude's command of German was good, he has a tendency to introduce errors when he copies German. For example, in the third line he elides an adverb which completes the reflexive pronoun, and which is necessary both in terms of meaning and scansion. I have restored it, in parenthesis, in accordance with the version printed in the *Hamburger Ausgabe* of Goethe's complete works (Goethe, *Gedichte und Epen I* 313).

Britain. However, the Goethe that inspires Froude here – the lines first appeared in the *Ausgabe letzter Hand* (1827) – is much older than and far removed from the believer in benevolent determinism who helped launch the *Bildungsroman* with his *Wilhelm Meister*. By the time he wrote the material included here, Goethe had long become dissatisfied with the Romantic Spinozism espoused by Herder and in these lines he declares that life is a serious business with which one must not trifle, and in which one is capable and obligated to command oneself.<sup>81</sup> While, given the complexity of Spinoza’s much-debated<sup>82</sup> view on freedom, the sentiment Goethe expresses might not necessarily be anti-Spinozan, it is a-Spinozan – it shows Goethe’s late interest in practical folk-wisdom rather than abstract metaphysics. In fact, it’s not even particularly Goethean. While the words are Goethe’s, the sentiment would be equally at home in the practical Protestantism of Froude’s early childhood in which “Religion meant essentially ‘doing your duty’” (Dunn 20) or, indeed, in the Anglo-Catholicism of Newman, where a saint is one “who sinned and repented, and did penance” (Newman, ‘St. Bettelin’ 72) and sainthood is thus inseparable from moral agency.<sup>83</sup> Together these two epigraphs indicate the two ropes pulling *Shadows*: the first insisting on absolute determinism devoid even of freedom to will and desire; the second insisting on the moral duty of self-determination.

All of this is, admittedly, and ironically (given Froude’s declared aim to teach himself to forego abstraction) rather abstract. The stories which embody these contending ideas are themselves much less abstract, being, especially in comparison to *Nemesis*, full of plot and action. But while this emphasis on “action” is exactly in keeping with Froude’s artistic vision, it has often occluded the fact that Froude actually *has* an artistic vision, prompting the pervasive reading that *Shadows* is purely confessional. *Trials*, especially,

---

<sup>81</sup> Sandkaulen gives a thorough account of Goethe’s rejection of Herder’s saccharine (“überzuckert”) reading of Spinozan determinism in later life, particularly in the *Elective Affinities* (Sandkaulen 185–92).

<sup>82</sup> Youpa gives an overview of the debate (61–64). Cf. footnote 93.

<sup>83</sup> Gerard Hughes gives an account of Newman’s rejection of determinism (Hughes 189–90).

does an excellent job of hiding the extent of its deliberation, construction, and theory under a thick veneer of seeming “autobiography”. The autobiographic verisimilitude is so strong that Dunn uses large sections of *Trials* to augment his biography, employing it as evidence on a par with Froude’s autobiographical fragments. Since Dunn was in contact with Froude’s daughter Margaret, and had access to material afterwards lost, I defer to his judgement that the first eight or nine chapters of *Trials* correspond directly to Froude’s life.<sup>84</sup> In these chapters Edward Fowler, Froude’s fictional alter ego according to Dunn, falls in love with Emma Hardinge, who, says Dunn, corresponds to Harriet Bush, to whom Froude was briefly engaged in 1839. Of the engagement to Bush, Froude writes in his biographical fragment that “it was ended prudently and properly perhaps by the father through a want of confidence of my own character” (Dunn 51). In *Trials*, there is nothing “perhaps” about the matter: here it is Mr. Hardinge who breaks off the engagement after having received a letter from Canon Fowler, Edward’s mercurial father, enraged after accidentally opening a letter revealing his son’s old and relatively modest student debts. The introduction to the narrative of what appear to be fictional stock elements – surprising delays, the accidental inception of a letter leading to disaster – suggests that even though Dunn is right that the basic events and characters, including the excessively punitive Canon Fowler, correspond to life, Froude is fictionalizing heavily even in the “autobiographical” section, building on the sentimental tradition to fill in causalities that remain cloudy in life.<sup>85</sup>

Apart from a correlation of both time and place – the narrative resumes in 1846 with Edward in Torquay, Devon – the biographic semblance largely ceases after the eighth

---

<sup>84</sup> Indicative of a rushed printing job, there are two chapters numbered eight.

<sup>85</sup> As Brady points out, there is no indication that Archdeacon Froude knew or ever corresponded with Harriet Bush’s father; nor does the family history of madness, which Froude ascribes to the Hardinges correspond to such a history in the Bushes (Brady 61–62). Froude’s recurrent allusions to madness likely stems from his earlier reading, especially of Tieck’s characters, who overwhelmingly go insane.

chapter. Dunn writes that “[b]eginning with the ninth chapter, the narrative deviates from actual fact as necessity of the fiction form dictates” (Dunn 105). This goes to Froude’s motivation in writing the story. For if Dunn were right that Froude wrote “a thinly veiled account” of his love for Harriet Bush as a “purgation of his emotions” (Dunn 104), then the non-autobiographic last 80 pages, in which Fowler dies of tuberculosis after saving a boy from drowning, are superfluous to that need and must therefore be prompted by external, formal requirements that have little real interest for Froude’s account of his own life, or for Dunn. Here Dunn’s sensibilities as a biographer are perhaps overruling those of the literary critic, for it is difficult to see what formal strictures should urge Froude to abandon in the middle of his text the mode that has carried him thus far, or why a narrative begun as fictionalized biography or autobiographical fiction should not end in the same way. Instead, I think, it is precisely the non-autobiographical section, making up the second half of the narrative, that motivates the story. The more autobiographical beginning, on the other hand, seems largely a means to an end only fully realized in the conclusion. That end is character.

In other words, Froude uses the events and people of his past in order to create characters which fulfil the requirements for moral fictions he had developed in his work on Tieck: they are, quite literally, “the very men and women which we ourselves are” (‘Preface’ v). Froude takes great pain to establish every character as morally middling, neither entirely good nor bad but deeply human and flawed: Canon Fowler is so upstanding that he becomes excessively strict, Mr. Hardinge is so noble that he becomes unjust in the absoluteness of his judgements, not even Emma Hardinge remains immaculate. Her flaw is the seemingly benign willingness to sacrifice herself to her father’s preferences and marry her least favourite suitor, but had she followed through the result would have been a “violation of the laws of God” (*Shadows* 102).

If this description makes it seem as if Froude were attempting to retroactively allocate blame for the end of an unhappy affair, quite the opposite is the case. The character most flawed is Fowler himself, and flawed both through nature and nurture. The narrator takes great pains to explain “[t]he defect in Edward’s nature” which “was that he was constitutionally a coward” (*Shadows* 38). The keyword here is “constitutionally”, for as the narrator is quick to point out “[i]t was not his own fault. Nature had ordered him so, just as she orders others constitutionally brave” (*Shadows* 38). Added to Fowler’s constitutional cowardice is his father’s belief in punishment and mistrust as a suitable principle of education. Edward Fowler’s “nature required treatment the most delicate, it received the very roughest” (*Shadows* 27). The result is that by the time he arrives at Oxford, Fowler is on a bad road, amassing the very debts that will lead to the end of his engagement, and generally giving in to every temptation – though the temptations remain quite chaste and the result is weakness of character and a failure to face his mistakes rather than any positive vice.

The “unattractively weak nature” of most of Froude’s central characters has previously been noted (Brady 130). Brady suggests that, modelling his technique on Goethe’s experiments with autobiographical fiction, Froude creates the impression of autobiography to contrast the unhappy fate of his weak characters with his own transcendent act (Brady 126–28). Through the act of authorship, the author, though of similarly weak constitution and unfavourable upbringing, overcomes the challenge that he and his characters face. This reading is certainly, as Froude’s essay on *Faust* shows, how Froude read Goethe, and *Trials* is quite obviously inspired by Goethe, and *Werther* in particular, in some of its stylistic and formal aspects, particularly the switch to the letter form in chapter IX. It therefore makes sense to read Fowler’s eventual death from tuberculosis as a translation of Werther’s love-sick suicide into Froude’s family pathology. With its many merits, this reading overlooks, however, that Fowler’s death is

not a final defeat resulting from the weakness of his nature, which the author has overcome by writing. Rather, Fowler's death is a triumph. Fowler succeeds in his "fiery trial" and the import of that success rests on the weakness of his nature – had he been stronger or better, his victory would be less meaningful – it is only because he is weaker than both author and readership that his example can guide them in their own trials.

Fowler's final success is as absolute as it is surprising. The first indication of it comes during his love-making, when Fowler decides to mend his ways for Emma Hardinge. After the accidental discovery of his old ways causes the end of the engagement, the narrator informs us that it would be only natural for him to now "despair of goodness; distrust Providence" (*Shadows* 64) and return to the errors he had so recently decided to overcome. Instead of falling further, though, he begins to rise, to build himself up. The change comes as suddenly and inexplicably as his previous behaviour was prepared for and obvious. Free indirect discourse can hide a myriad of plot holes, but the narrator's attempts to channel the moment of conversion only make the motivational gap more glaring:

with a violent effort he now nerved himself to survey his position. He could not fall lower, – could he rise? To ask the question is to make a beginning. (*Shadows* 72)

This one "violent effort" changes everything, for the desire for change is in itself salvational. Edward adopts what the narrator calls a "'vow' plan" in which he "set himself earnestly to work to find out his defects, and one by one to conquer them" (*Shadows* 75). Large parts of this process are hidden in the time gap between chapter eight and nine, and one might suspect that they are hidden because Froude had as yet no idea how to fill them in. When we meet Fowler again, he is already suffering from consumption. His last hopes for health are dashed when he jumps into the water to save a boy who, such is the sentimental logic of the conclusion, turns out to be Emma Allen (née Hardinge)'s son. This selfless act prompts the final decline of his health but also the conclusion of his

ascent. Obsessed with Emma as he previously was, he now “appeared to feel no regret at leaving earth, or any one upon earth” (*Shadows* 148).

This turning towards the heavenly kingdom and away from all earthly things is only the first of many Newmanite echoes, for a focus on himself and God as “the only two beings, luminously such, *in rerum naturâ*” is one of the determining features of Newman’s spiritual personality (*Apologia* 177). On learning, on the evening of Holy Saturday, that his death is imminent, Fowler observes: “My last sacrament—I hoped it should have been Easter morning! No, better now, better now.... That should be for the saints, not for one like me” (*Shadows* 163–64). Fowler’s humility invites contrast as well as comparison – Holy Saturday is both temporally and symbolically close enough to Easter morning, just as Fowler’s humble assurance of difference is creeping ever closer towards sainthood. On his deathbed, we are told, Fowler spoke only once, whispering “Yes I repent. To repent is to leave living to oneself, and to try to live to God” (*Shadows* 165). Fowler’s last act on earth is a quaintly Old Testament blessing of Emma and her husband: “May you see your children’s children, and peace upon your house!” (*Shadows* 166). Finally Fowler dies: “‘Yes, it is accepted,’ he said, ‘it is accepted – my work is done.’” (*Shadows* 166–67). He is now no-longer merely echoing Israelite Patriarchs; with his final words of triumph, he has become an imitation of Christ dying on the Cross. It is, in fact, Easter morning and in the moment of his death the Easter bells welcome Christ resurrected.

Subtle this is not, but then, Froude is not aiming at subtlety. He’s brazenly throwing himself at one side, pulling the rope as tautly as it will go. The rope, as narrative signalling insists, goes all the way back to Newman and his saints, and in the last moments of Fowler’s life, *The Spirit’s Trials* comes unabashedly close to being all, or more than all that is known, yet nothing to what God knows “of the life of a servant of God, who sinned and repented, and did penance and washed out his sins, and became a Saint” (‘St. Bettelin’ 72). But if *Trials* turns out to be an English saint’s life, it is an uncommon hagiography.

It lacks what, as a precocious Anglican child and even more so as a mature Anglo-Catholic on his way to Rome, Newman found so central to his Christianity and his understanding of sainthood: miracles. Unlike Newman's St Gundelus or his St Bettelin but much like Froude's St Neot, Fowler neither raises the waters nor cures the blind. He performs no physical miracle but a moral miracle. For Fowler overcomes the limits so clearly set for him both by his nature and by the circumstances. Viewed through the lens of Froude's literary imagination, Fowler achieves the transition from Tieck-like moral mediocrity to Newmanite sainthood and all by an act of Goethean self-command. He is not chosen for saintliness: he gets there by his own will. Unlike a true hagiography, where sainthood is always in view, there is no foregone conclusion about Fowler's trial. It is not until the end that the reader realizes that Fowler triumphs in the seemingly impossible task of overcoming his own determination, making him not so much subject of adoration but entirely attainable imitation. Even you can reach sainthood, *Trials* urges, all it takes is a little determination.

The Other Rope: *The Lieutenant's Daughter*

Having thrown himself so vigorously on one side in *Trials*, Froude writes *The Lieutenant's Daughter* pulling equally forcefully in the other direction, counteracting the story of ascent and determination with one of descent and determinism. Though it has not been recognized as such, *Daughter* is by far the most accomplished of Froude's literary experiments as far as the joining of philosophical content and artistic form is concerned. Where in *Trials* the "experiments", such as the fictional editor and switch to the epistolary, often appear mere reproductions of other writer's techniques – mostly Goethe's and Carlyle's – with little inherent necessity for the story, in *Daughter*, Froude appears, for the first time, to be finding his own radically experimental solutions to specific philosophical and narrative problems. That this has so far gone almost entirely unnoticed can in part be explained by it having gone mostly unread. It is also owing to

the fact that Froude employs these narrative experiments in the telling of a core narrative that was distasteful to large parts of its original audience, and has proven tediously familiar to subsequent critics: as the fallen woman plot popularized by Samuel Richardson, and later Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy or George Eliot. Here, it is Catherine Grey, daughter of the late lieutenant Grey, who falls in love with Henry Carpenter and follows him to London with the promise of marriage. Realizing the financial implications of marrying a poor orphan girl, Carpenter instead tricks her into a brothel, where she is drugged and raped. Catherine poisons herself on top of her father's grave convinced of her own guilt.

A similar story, "Luisa Varden", most likely authored by Froude, was published in the 1846 issue of the *Oxford and Cambridge Review* which also contained Froude's reviews of Goethe and Newman.<sup>86</sup> "Louisa Varden" tells the story of a prostitute dying of consumption after having been seduced by an Oxford man, who goes on to join the clergy, with Varden declaring that "there is no forgiveness for us women [...]. Men make the world's laws; and they make them for themselves, and not for us" ('Louisa Varden' 357). If this censure of the injustice of Victorian gender norms and the morality of the clergy was radical for Oxford, the story is yet largely conventional in its fallen woman plot (on the fallen woman plot see Godfrey 149–50; Logan 44–46; G. Watt 1–11). *Daughter* has a similar ethical point to make, but the fallen woman plot is only a small part of its ideological work. What makes it so ideologically unconventional is that Catherine Grey does not just illustrate the plight of the "fallen woman", nor even the plight of Victorian womanhood. Instead she represents the Christian in a Spinozan cosmos. In her, the "fallen woman" symbolizes humanity tormented by the illusion of guilt, and the unawareness of its predetermination.

---

<sup>86</sup> The attribution was first made in 1859 and Froude seems not to have discouraged it ('Out of the Depths' 94).

The problem with portraying determinism in novelistic prose writing is that the novel routinely masks its predetermination by inviting readers to read as if the characters were in the act of making meaningful, free choices and the ending was not already determined. Where more rigid genres, such as hagiography and tragedy, emphasize at least certain aspects of their determination – namely, that the protagonist will become a saint in the former, suffer greatly in the latter – the generic openness of the novel implies that the fates of characters are still undetermined. Georg Lukács speaks of the “transcendental homelessness” (*The Theory of the Novel* 41) of the novel, suggesting that “the novel, in contrast to other genres whose existence resides within the finished form, appears as something in process of becoming” (*The Theory of the Novel* 72–73).<sup>87</sup> This is only an appearance, however. Despite the oft repeated claim (Chatman 33; Ryan 265; Gibson 138; C. B. Gill 155), going back to Lessing’s *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), there is no essential material difference between painting and written literature that makes the former spatial and the other temporal.<sup>88</sup> The difference relies on the way that humans process these art forms; on the creaturely limitations of cognition that make it impossible to process all written sentences at the same time. It also relies on the reader abiding by conventions: beginning at “the beginning” and moving towards “the end”. In other words, when the reader holds a book, they already hold all the time that it claims to contain. In that way, a book resembles a painting and differs from an oral story or a theatre performance. If anything, a performance of *Hamlet* is actually less fixed than a reading of a novel, since performance is dynamic in a way that the written word is not. Actors, unlike novelistic characters, can go off script. The linearity of reading and the generic openness of the novel, however, suggests that the reader is watching growth rather

---

<sup>87</sup> Lukács suggests that drama marks a mid-point in the “dialectics of freedom and necessity” with the novel and the epic at either extreme (Lukács, ‘From The Historical Novel’ 244). Walter Kaufmann gives a detailed account of the philosophical meaning of necessity for tragedy (W. A. Kaufmann 303–06).

<sup>88</sup> Lessing clarifies that when he talks about poetry he includes “the other Arts which have the characteristic of progressive imitation” (Lessing, *Laocoon* 4).

than participating in the piecemeal exploration of stasis, inviting, to use David Brewer's term, "imaginative expansion" (Brewer 2). Thus, written narration asks the reader to do emotional work similar to that with which one encounters unfolding life – to suspend the knowledge that foreboding, suspense, hope and fear are misplaced. Novelistic characters are predetermined constructions that ask to be imagined as free agents bound by the rules of cause and effect, of actions and consequences, rather than merely the commanding will of its producers. Consequently, readers are so adept and so used to cooperating in that illusion that it is technically challenging to give a prose narrative the semblance of "determinism", even if it is in fact determined by the very facts of its materiality.<sup>89</sup>

Froude finds two surprisingly innovative solutions – backwards narration and an alternate ending – to this problem, which he embeds and explains through an equally eccentric frame narrative. With the frame narrative, a fever dream presented by genii, Froude intensifies his interest in unreliable narration and autobiographical play. The first person narrator of the frame narrative – who becomes the third person (heterodiegetic) narrator in the core narrative – remains unnamed but a comparison with the autobiographical fragments in Dunn's biography shows almost complete overlap with Froude's own memories (Dunn 43–44, 89, 104). While struck down with fever in Ireland, the narrator of the frame narrative – reproducing Froude's account of a similar experience – has a vision of genii belonging to the "intermediate sphere" (Dunn 89). The frame creates

---

<sup>89</sup> This difficulty is illustrated by an example from Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5*. Vonnegut explores hard determinism by inventing an alien race that is non-temporal – for which everything that was and will be always is – called the Tralfamadorians. On Tralfamadore there is no concept of free will but there are Tralfamadorian novels written in Tralfamadorian signs: "Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. [...] There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvellous moments seen all at one time" (Vonnegut 88). To a human these Tralfamadorian novels look markedly different from human novels; like "brief clumps of symbols separated by stars" (Vonnegut 88). That Vonnegut would feel the need to change the materiality of the novel in order to make it Tralfamadorian indicates how good human readers, including Vonnegut, are at overlooking the non-temporal and determinist nature of the novel. If a being such as the Tralfamadorians existed there is no reason why their novels should not look exactly like ours, though they would be read all at once. It is merely the way we read that makes the novel human, i.e. temporal and linear.

another “real” character, who, as the stories progresses will ventriloquize the values and judgements of the intended audience. It also creates a potentially unreliable narration, thereby giving the reader a realist setting in which to embed what one might, with Brian Richardson, call an “unnatural narrative”. That is, a narrative which “ignores or subverts the temporality essential to natural narratives” (‘Time Is Out of Joint’ 307) and which “contains significant antimimetic events, characters, settings, or frames” (B. Richardson, *Unnatural Narrative* 3).<sup>90</sup> In other words, Froude uses the “real” autobiographic account of a fever vision to suspend inquiries into the truth value of the narration, so that he might focus on its Significance. Once the “unnatural” situation has been realistically framed, the two narratives diverge. Froude’s account of his own vision concludes with his asking to see the spirits’ superior and being shown a being which “resembled a gigantic lobster” (Dunn 89). The narrator of *Daughter* does not remark that the divine Prince is a crustacean, he does, however, ask the genie for a favour: to make time flow backwards. The rest of the narrative, including the core narrative of Catherine Grey, the narrator sees and reports backwards, so that the reader first encounters Catherine in the moment of her guilt-ridden suicide.

There is something anachronistic about Froude’s use of backwards narration that cannot be explained through Froude’s reading and the tradition on which he draws but only as a unique solution to a problem arising from the relationship between philosophical content and novelistic form. Backwards narration is frequently described as a distinctly modern or even post-modern phenomenon. Seymour Chatman, for example, begins a recent article declaring that “[i]n the late twentieth century, a new sort of narrative began to appear which systematically and continually goes backwards” (33). The effect that is most readily ascribed to this kind of narration is what the Russian Formalists called

---

<sup>90</sup> For an overview of the emerging field of unnatural narratology see Alber et al. (113–30).

“defamiliarization”,<sup>91</sup> and the standard example is Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* (1991), in which the backward narration forces the reader to encounter the Holocaust “as if for the first time, even though we know that this is all much-covered territory” (Amis quoted in DeCurtis).

Froude embeds his backwards narration with a conservatively Victorian scientific sensibility – a clock-like notion of the universe in which a reversal of the motions of the heavenly bodies would also reverse time (cf. *Shadows* 193)– and yet its effects closely resemble those of the narratives it anticipates by more than a century. The narrator’s first response on seeing time flow backwards, for example, is a strong sense of defamiliarization:

But what struck me most, was the very comical idea they all had, that they were quite at liberty to do or not do, that they were perfectly free agents with uncontrolled volition, when they were not only going along a course so rigidly determined, uncoiling and uncoiling everything, so exactly as it had been; but it was their own footstep they were treading back along, and they could not see it. (*Shadows* 204)

What the backwards narration here defamiliarizes is not a historical event, but the perception of freedom, revealing the comedy inherent in the Spinozan idea, mentioned above as the first epigraph of *Shadows*, of a mankind that “supposes itself free” because it is blind to how “rigidly determined” it is. This is also a defamiliarization of the act of reading itself, and of reading characters as if they were free. By showing characters as merely “retracing” their steps, Froude addresses the technical problem of exploring determination in novelistic writing, writing against the readerly impulse to read characters as free agents.

---

<sup>91</sup> The concept of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) was introduced by Viktor Shklovsky in “Art, as Device” (1919). According to a recent translator, English translations for this and related concepts include “defamiliarization”, “estrangement”, “enstrangement”, and “making strange” (Berlina and Shklovsky 152–53). I am using “defamiliarization”, much like Chatman, to describe the literary technique of making familiar things strange so that they command a level of attention reserved for the unfamiliar (Chatman 50).

Revealing determination through backwards narration has a profoundly ethical dimension, eroding, as it does, suspense, and focusing the reader instead on character, causation, and justice (cf. Chatman 42; cf. J. Phelan, 'Teaching Narrative' 225; cf. J. Phelan, 'Ethics and Aesthetics'). The genie is particularly interesting in this respect, as he comes to represent, within the text, the authorial function of structuring the text, creating specific scenes for the narrator's consumption and narration, and instructing his interpretation with a clearly ethical objective. In this way, the genie focuses in on the story of Catherine Grey, simultaneously switching towards a cognitively less demanding kind of backwards depiction, because, so the narrator surmises, "he wished it to make an impression" (*Shadows* 206).<sup>92</sup> Correspondingly, the narrator transforms into an intermediary reader, who attempts to interpret by his own moral standards the events which the genie shows him. Watching Catherine's death first, then her ignominy, then her courtship, the narrator follows backwards in time to find the moment when she deserved her fate, horrified to realize, when Catherine encounters Carpenter that "[s]he cannot choose but believe him, as he sweeps her on to perdition" (*Shadows* 267). Still the narrator longs to uncover a deeper level of justice and deserved punishment; asking desperately: "what is the wretched girl's own early history, what miserable sin has she, or what have her fathers committed, that she was plunged so into this inevitable destruction?" (*Shadows* 268). Unable to accept that her fate might be undeserved, the narrator hunts for primal causes and an original sin. The genie will not have it, homing in on the moral Significance of the spectacle:

---

<sup>92</sup> The initial reversal is told in what Chatman calls "continued antonymising reversal" – antonymising "(from Gk. anti- "opposite" or "against" + nomos "rule", "law")" because it inverts not only the order of events but also their nature, so that swallowing becomes spitting (Chatman 33; cf. A. Richardson 49–50), or in Froude's particularly evocative image the "patriarch gathered up his children into his loins again" (Froude, *Shadows* 203). As the spirit focuses the narrator on the story of Catherine, he switches to what Chatman calls "episodically reversed narrative", in which the order of episodes is inverted, but not their inherent chronology or nature, so that drinking poison kills and does not animate Catherine, but the episode of her death is told before that of her rape and that before she arrives in the brothel. Being significantly less defamiliarizing, this "episodic reversal" is also less cognitively demanding and thus easier to interpret.

Think it over now and link on the beginning to the end; and see if you can tell when sin came in, and she began to deserve what fell upon her. Is not rather the idea of ‘deserving’ but a dream? and does not one thing follow another as it cannot choose but follow. (*Shadows* 281)

Properly examined, so the genie and the structure of the narrative suggest, sin is an illusion – for Catherine a fatal one – always demanding an additional moment of regress or refinement of vision. It is only because the narrator, like all humans, has limited insight into causal chains that he seeks to excuse present realities via past offences. The genie’s superior insight reveals that Catherine’s guilt vanishes in the moment it is related to its antecedent and that search as he might, the narrator will never find a first offence, merely more causes. As the genie concludes, “[w]hen circumstances compel, there is no guilt” (*Shadows* 268). Properly examined, circumstances always compel.

In the conclusion, *Daughter*, much like *Trials* before, sacrifices subtlety for obviousness; if the narrator, and by extension the reader, still does not understand the moral implications of determinism the genie has one final trick, and Froude one more anachronistic seeming narrative technique: an alternate ending. Once more the genie takes the narrator to the churchyard in which he saw Catherine kill herself. This time, the sun is shining and Catherine is not a prostitute but a mother and “little wife” (*Shadows* 283). The narrator’s observation of Catherine’s bourgeois bliss ends on her father’s tombstone. It is identical to the one the narrator encountered during Catherine’s suicide, apart from one detail: the date of death is five years later. Lacking all the Gothic accoutrements of the first ending (that is the text’s beginning), the second ending is not devoid of its own horror:

Oh God! and that was all; five links hung on upon the chain, and the shadow of the father’s life had held aloof the blistering footsteps of sorrow and of sin, and the child’s path lay along a garden of roses, into a life of virtue, and an end of peace. (*Shadows* 286)

This is more than an alternate ending; it adumbrates an alternate sequence of events rippling through time from a single moment – the moment of the lieutenant’s death. What

Froude does here is not simply provide another outcome for the same story much as Dickens famously replaced the ending of *Great Expectations* or, closer in content but not technique, readers unsatisfied with the death of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* produced alternative outcomes (Sabor 131). Rather, the narrative here resembles contemporary literary sub-genres such as "forking-paths narratives" or "alternate histories" in which, as one recent study puts it, "[t]he fictional world of an alternate history diverges at a specified point from the normalized narrative of the real past" (Singles 7). In other words, the genie, or rather Froude, is not giving an alternate ending to satisfy the readerly desire for just outcomes and happy endings, at least not only, but rather he is giving an alternate timeline to signify a cosmos in which contingent-seeming incidents, and not moral choices, determine outcomes. If Catherine died a desolate prostitute, so the implication goes, it was not because she sinned but because, in a universe determined by the necessity of near infinite causes, there is no isolatable set of contingences, and even a minor detail can have devastating consequences.

As *Daughter* concludes, the narrator is left with two different versions of the story – one tragic, one happily bourgeois. These stories, different as the outcomes may be, have the advantage that they inhabit the same cosmos. Whether Catherine dies or lives, it is not due to her actions but always the result of external causes inescapably connected. The reader of *Shadows*, unlike the narrator of *Daughters*, is left not merely with two narratives, but within them, two mutually excluding concepts of the universe: the story of the undeserved, rigidly determined fall and the story of saint-like self-determination. The quasi-sainthood of *The Spirit's Trial* urges that an ordinary character can overcome circumstances even when they appear to be all-powerful. But where there is potential for sainthood, circumstances do not compel; sin is a reality. If, on the other hand, circumstances are, as *Daughter* urges, inescapable, then there is neither sin, nor sainthood. As *Daughter* and with it *Shadows* ends, the narrator turns to the genie: "And

which is true?', I asked" (*Shadows* 287). "Come with me to the light, and I will show you", the genie promises the narrator – and the reader (*Shadows* 287). When the narrator follows his request and staggers to the window, his vision ends with a view of the Atlantic. Instead of the promised answer we are left with the sunlight breaking on a tumultuous sea, and nowhere a boat in sight.

### Through Action Always: *The Nemesis of Faith*

Froude began working on his next literary project, the manuscript which would become *Nemesis of Faith*, almost immediately after the publication of *Shadows*. By January 1848, he was already redrafting (cf. Dunn 110), and in the summer of 1848, with Europe in turmoil, he sequestered himself once again, this time in Killarney, Ireland. By now his desire to avoid the normal ruts of speculation was so strong that, as he wrote to a friend commending his own bravery, he had taken "not a single book" (Dunn 125).

When Froude began on the *Nemesis*, he still believed that his first book had succeeded in achieving his literary aim, declaring happily in a letter on 1 January 1848: "[t]he *Shadows* are working as I meant they should work" (Dunn 110). This contentment did not last, and Froude soon became dissatisfied, especially with the second story. By the end of January, he wrote with growing ambivalence: "there are many, many things in [*Daughter*] which would have been better far away. Still I think ill of the morality of the man who finds it immoral. [...] I do not defend the story, however, as a whole, and I wish I had not written it" (Dunn 110–11). The brothel scenes were likely part of the issue, but as the aside on the morality of those that find *Daughter* immoral suggests, prostitution was not the heart of the problem. That there was something wrong not with the content of *Shadows* but its form had already been noted by an otherwise sympathetic reviewer, who concluded that: "[t]here is power enough in these sketches to make us wish that the author had chosen [...] a simpler framework. As matters stand, these histories have to be read backwards" ('Our Library Table' 643–44).

The problem that Froude had with *Daughter* is, I think, the same problem the reviewer ascribed to order and form: *Daughters*, and with it hard determinism, triumphs over the self-help sainthood of *Trials*. By emplotting the vaguely Goethean, vaguely Newmanite ideas of moral self-determination and character formation in a realist, though improbable, narrative, Froude had only revealed the plot holes necessary to make it work. Conversely, in emplotting Spinozism in what with Richardson one might call “unnatural” narration, Froude had been pulled further than he had ever intended to go. In attempting to give form to his understanding of Spinozism – a philosophy which, for Froude, as he wrote that same year, reminded humanity “that what they are to do is to obey God” (‘Life of Spinoza’ 388) and which, as he later claimed, was compatible with reaching “a point of freedom” (‘Spinoza’ 37)<sup>93</sup> – he had been dragged into an ironclad hard determinism, utterly incompatible with moral freedom.

In *Nemesis*, Froude reverses the order of the two contending forces, connecting them in a single narrative, and avoiding the anachronistically original narrative choices he had made in *Shadows*, opting instead for a much tamer originality. This is not to suggest that *Nemesis* is formally conventional but rather that it is a second order unconventionality that is predicated on Froude’s literary models, experimental chiefly in so far as it recasts

---

<sup>93</sup> Whether or not Froude misreads Spinoza lies beyond my expertise to determine, though I suspect that he does. What is apparent is that Froude reads Spinoza attentively and reverently, both in the biographical essay of 1847 and in the more philosophical later essay. His reading of Spinoza, which insists on the ability of humanity to reach a “point of freedom” and means by that practical or moral freedom (‘Spinoza’ 37) – freedom to act freely and to choose one course of action over another – is a minority opinion at best. The majority view appears to be that Spinoza espoused hard determinism or, at most, semi-compatibilism. As Roger Scruton puts it: for Spinoza, “Freedom is not freedom from necessity, but rather the consciousness of necessity” (Scruton 91). Froude’s reading of Spinoza resembles most closely S Paul Kashap’s attempt in *Spinoza and Moral Freedom* (1987) to render ineffective “the crucial argument against [Spinoza], namely, that his determinism implies a denial of moral freedom” (148). I do agree, however, with one reviewer of that book, who found it “frustratingly difficult to follow” (Cover 160), and have found attempts to read actual compatibilism in Spinoza to be either silly or inaccessible, at least to me, which might indicate that the hard determinist reading is correct or that it is simplistic. For the purpose of this chapter it suffices to say that this compatibilist reading is the reading that Froude embraces in his essays and that nevertheless *Daughter* largely through formal means urges towards hard determinism, rather than compatibilism.

the experiments of others. Froude's novel – and I use the term in the most generically flexible, Bakhtinian sense (cf. Bakhtin 3–13) – ventures into formal experiment by having three distinct parts with three different narrative situations. The first part resembles a monologic epistolary novel collected and connected by a fictional editor, Arthur, who is also the letter's addressee. The second section contains a fictional autobiography, titled "confessions of a sceptic". In the final part, the fictional editor of the first part becomes a third-person narrator with an increasingly "omniscient" attitude.

If all of this is daringly complex, it is also a compendium of Goethe's greatest literary achievements. The first part echoes *Werther*, which had popularized this radically subjective form of epistolary novel. The second part duplicates, not only in title, the sixth book of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, "Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele" ("confessions of a beautiful soul"). The third part resembles the third person narration of the *Elective Affinities*, which would probably go unnoticed, if it did not also reproduce its adulterous plot and catastrophic resolution.

But while forms and some plot structures are Goethe's, the content is distinctly Froude's own. The protagonist, Markham Sutherland, has all the hallmarks of the Froudian character: a morally middling Oxford man tormented by the necessity of subscription to the articles and torn apart between Newman, Carlyle, and Spinoza: between the sense of guilt and the intellectual speculation of determinism. In this way, *Nemesis* reconsiders the questions that *Shadows* already raised, but in a more controlled environment, with Goethe as patron saint. There are still two contending forces but here they do not pull independently at the two ropes but inhabit a single novel under a single guiding star, and a single idea: through speculation never, through action always.

That this is the principle which animates *Nemesis* only becomes clear towards the end of the second part, where Froude, in a short and well-hidden passage, gives the "key" to the

novel. Here Markham, explicating in detail Newman's "logic and verbal argument", suggests a "method" for engaging with such speculations:

Here is a theory of the world which you bring for my acceptance: well, there is the world; try – will the key fit? Can you read the language into sense by it?" was the only method; and so I was led always to look at broad results, at pages and chapters, rather than at single words and sentences, where for a few lines a false key may serve to make a meaning..... (*Nemesis* 146)

This passage, much like the "two ropes" letter at the end of *Trials*, presents as a character's credo the principle by which the book is structured and accordingly to be read. Markham's continuous semantic equation of "world" and "book" urges the reader to "read the language" of the world in its pages, chapters, words, and sentences. In this way, Froude uses Markham's engagement with Newman to give a "key" so the reader may avoid a "false key". Not by "single words and sentences", Froude has Markham instruct, are we to make sense, nor by a theory which has not been tested on "the world". Rather, the reader is to consider the larger whole and suspend judging the theory until it has been put into practice.

Occurring two thirds into the book, this instruction to the reader might seem belated but that is because it prepares a shift in the nature of the text: from first-person to third-person narration, from extreme subjectivity towards objectivity, and from speculation to action. With all their differences, the first two parts of the novel are actually remarkably similar, and together very unlike the third. The first part might be modelled on monologic epistolary fiction and the second on fictional autobiography, but the result is that both are highly subjective first-person accounts, crammed full of theological speculation. Apart from a few short interludes by the narrator-editor, the first two sections are occupied by Markham only. The plot is minimal – in the nearly 100 pages of the epistolary section, Markham joins the clergy, despite misgiving and later resigns his living – more importantly, it is told in a minimal way. Markham's letters consistently forego action in

favour of speculation; events are mentioned rather than shown. What matters is what goes on in Markham's head and what goes on in there is speculation. In the 60 pages of the second part, plot development ceases completely, as Markham sequesters himself in Italy to think and write his "confessions of a sceptic". Italy, where "Byron used to ride" (Clough, *Dipsychus* 6 line 3), Goethe longed to be, and many a Grand Tour led, might evoke to the Victorian imagination the idea of adventure, action, and a liberal sowing of wild oats (cf. Black 138). In the second part of *Nemesis*, however, it is merely a place to write, and Markham, if not quite a brain in a vat is at least a brain at a desk. It seems of little import that this desk stands at Lake Como, rather than, say Devon or Ireland.

If fictional characters are, as Vermeule suggests, "the greatest practical-reasoning schemes ever invented" (xii), then Markham, as he is shown in these first two parts of *Nemesis*, is not a fictional character – there is nothing practical about him – but neither is he, as has frequently been alleged, simply Froude's fictional alter ego. Markham is a cypher, not the representation of any human being real or fictional, but rather the rudimentary embodiment of a set of ideas shared by "the very men and women which we ourselves are" ('Preface' v). If Markham, for example, resembles Froude in having qualms about subscription, he equally resembles Arthur Hugh Clough or Charles Redding, the protagonist of Newman's *Loss and Gain* (1848). At the same time, there is something anaemically deindividualized – utterly incompatible with Froude's autobiography – in Markham's cloying reminiscences of home as "Heaven upon earth" (*Nemesis* 106). Nor is Markham what characters are usually presented to be: a physical being. If Markham has a body or a face it is never mentioned; he might be a giant or a dwarf or a spirit, the reader would not know. In the first two parts, Markham has no concerns outside of theology, no love interests, no friends apart from Arthur, himself a bloodless bundle of narrative functions (addressee, narrator, and editor). In writing Markham's "confessions of a sceptic", Froude might affect to present an autobiography

but it is an autobiography purged of all individuality and idiosyncrasy apart from what relates to speculation. As Clough pithily puts it, *Nemesis* is a “religious biography – auto or otherwise” (quoted in Dunn 133). In other words, the “autobiography” is focused precisely on establishing the kind of character who would hold – vehemently, passionately, as if his life depended on it – a certain religious, or philosophical, theory.

The nature of that theory resembles the Spinozism of *Daughter*, but in *Nemesis* it is presented not by a genie considering a prostitute, but by a young Oxford man contemplating his religious inheritance and moral obligations. Instead of asking “If determinism is true, how can we judge fallen women?”, *Nemesis* asks: “If determinism is true, how can we accept the Bible as a guide to morals?”. The question could not be more relevant to men like Froude whose livelihoods depended on their ability to subscribe to the thirty-nine articles and therein swear to the literal truth of both Testaments. The problem, as Markham is quick to point out, is not “metaphysical difficulties” (*Nemesis* 10) – it is not that humans cannot know the truthfulness of these accounts or that science and biblical criticism have shored up evidence contradicting them – the problem with the Bible is moral. As Markham writes breathlessly in the middle of an extended diatribe:

I will not, I must not, believe that the all-just, all-merciful, all-good God can be such a Being as I find him there described. He! He! To have created mankind liable to fall – to have laid them in a way of a temptation under which He knew they would fall, and then curse them, and all who were to come of them, and all the world, for their sake.  
(*Nemesis* 11)

Markham’s complaint is old – how could God punish what he predetermined; how can the Augustinian theodicy be just? – but his anger is fresh and lashes at all those many biblical moments in which God punishes. Markham reviles the Jewish dispensation, for example, because it suggests a God who arbitrarily chooses one people over another and then punishes that other for the sin of not being chosen (cf. *Nemesis* 11).

This critique cannot remain with the Jews because it applies directly to the Augustinian-Thomist theodicy:

And then there is another thing, Arthur, which seems to be taught, not in the Old Testament, but in the New, which I should have to say I believed; a doctrine this, not a history, and a doctrine so horrible that it could only have taken root in mankind when they were struggling in the perplexities of Manicheism [sic], and believed that the Devil held a divided empire with God. I mean that the largest portion of mankind, these very people who live about us, act with us, are our daily companions – the people we meet at dinner or see in the streets, that are linked in with us with innumerable ties of common interests, common sympathies, common occupations – these very people are to be tortured for ever and ever in unspeakable agonies. (*Nemesis* 14–15)

Although Markham's Teutonic sentence length and meandering, paratactic syntax create the impression of a confused mind, Markham's merging of emotional outrage and educated, critical rationality serves a persuasive argument. By joining an abstract point about church history and the belatedness, perhaps inauthenticity, of the doctrine of eternal damnation with a visceral reminder that the people that are to be damned are not abstractions but real acquaintances with "common sympathies", he makes the horror of the doctrine of eternal punishment new again.

For Markham, eternal punishment destroys the very thing Christian theologians from Augustine onward set out to establish through it: divine justice, benevolence, heaven itself. If God is love, if saints are not devoid of sympathy, then eternal damnation punishes saints as much as sinners, for "to know that one single creature is in that dreadful place would make a hell of heaven itself" (Froude, *Nemesis* 16). Markham's critique applies to Anglicanism as much as Catholicism.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, Markham's focus on sympathy and the impossibility to enjoy heaven while others suffer aims at an infamous supplement to Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, in which Aquinas suggests that "in order that the

---

<sup>94</sup> Clark Pinnock writes in the *Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*: "hell as everlasting conscious punishment is the view of all the historic churches and their great theologians and represents the classic, mainstream, traditional, and evangelical opinion on the subject. It was the position of Augustine and of every orthodox theologian since, right through the Reformation" (463).

happiness of the saints may be more delightful to them [...] they are allowed to see perfectly the sufferings to the damned” (Aquinas 2960). Aquinas does not quite propose that the saints get pleasure from the pain of others, but rather that the saintly enjoyment of the divine plan – and their position in it – is so great that they would mourn any alteration. For Markham, *pace* Aquinas, the divine plan cannot bring pleasure if it is predicated on the suffering of others.

In writing Markham’s anti-Augustinian-Thomistic ravings, Froude does not treat the relationship between good fortune and the suffering of others as an abstract theological concern because it is deeply linked to his identity as an Englishman and the conditions of his writing in County Kerry, Ireland. As Froude wrote to Clough concerning the new employer of Matthew Arnold, the 4th Earl of Kerry:

By the bye they hate Arnold’s Lord Lansdowne. He has a large slice of Kerry, and above a thousand people were starved upon it. The crows are very fat and very plenty. They sit on the roadside and look at you with a kind of right of property. There are no beggars – at least, professional ones. They were all starved, *dead*, gone where at least I suppose the means of subsistence will be found for them. There is no begging or starving, I believe, in either of the two divisions of Kingdom Come. (Dunn 123)

Compared with Markham Sutherland’s letters to his Arthur, Froude’s letters to Arthur Hugh Clough might seem laconic, but the sparse sentences and apropos nature of the comment bitterly evoke a truth of which he and his correspondent are painfully aware: these things are connected. English fortunes and Irish suffering, much as the “two divisions of Kingdom Come”, cannot be separated. More than two decades later, as a conservative historian violently opposed to Home Rule, Froude would still describe Irish peasants as “living in houses in which an English gentleman would not keep his sporting dogs” (‘Ireland since the Union’ 520). Regardless of his political agenda, he could not escape the sense of connection and responsibility, nor the horror of it. As he wrote to Clough in the same letter: “I hear horrid stories *in detail* of the famine. [...] It is very

lucky for us that we are let to get off for the most part with generalities, and the knowledge of details is left to those who suffer them. I think if it was not so we should all go mad or shoot ourselves” (Dunn 123). That heaven which for Aquinas is populated with blessed enjoyment of the tortures of the wicked, for Froude would be an asylum.

The analogy might at first appear flawed, for the difference between the Irish and the wicked is that the Irish are not morally responsible for their suffering. They might, as Froude will later suggest, have planted too many potatoes and engendered too many children (‘Ireland since the Union’ 520), but only because they could not have helped it. If they could have, they would have, and would not have freely chosen starvation. The same logic, however, applies to the eternally damned. Froude’s letters repeatedly draw the “parallel between the wretchedness of those days, and the wretchedness of these”, – the Bible and the present – explaining Markham’s rejection of the Bible in *Nemesis* to Charles Kingsley on the basis that Froude would “revolt with horror from hearing men in power gravely urge nowadays that God *ordered* them to inflict” poverty and suffering, and therefore he must revolt when the same is alleged in the Bible or by doctrine (Dunn 134). What makes the positions Markham Sutherland expresses on Scripture and doctrine so forceful is that, in the mind of his creator, they are constantly held to be analogous with the present day. The theological is the political. If we should blame the damned for their damnation, then we should just as soon blame the Irish for starving. What is true of the Irish is true of the damned, which is, in Markham’s words, that it is “self-contradictory and contrary to experience, that a man of two goods should choose the lesser, knowing it *at the time* to be the lesser” (*Nemesis* 91). In other words, if the wicked had been capable of choosing freely – and this capacity includes sufficient knowledge – they would not have chosen that course of action that leads to their damnation. Therefore, whoever is damned cannot have been free to choose, and, as Markham declares, echoing *Daughter*, guilt depends “for its essence on the doer having had the power of acting otherwise than

he did. Where there is no such power there is no sin” (*Nemesis* 90). The more he contemplates the issue, or any individual sinner, the less able is Markham to discover any moment of free choice “in other words, to discover sin” (*Nemesis* 92). Having mulled it over for more than 90 pages, Markham concludes: “Sin [...] is a chimera” (*Nemesis* 92). But Markham goes further than simply rejecting the Augustinian-Thomist theodicy for himself; in his peculiar developmental doctrine the whole world is slowly but surely overcoming this horrid chimera. “It is curious to watch”, he writes in his final letter to Arthur, “in the history of religious beliefs, the gradual elimination of this monster of moral evil” (*Nemesis* 93). This history Markham delineates, step by step. It begins with “what is called the Fall” (*Nemesis* 94) but is actually the anthropomorphization of natural laws into a law-giver, fashioned on the people who first imagined him and therefore “jealous, capricious, exacting, revengeful” (*Nemesis* 94). In the world’s religions Markham sees a development away from this conception of the punitive deity. Manicheanism marks an initial improvement, for it separates the vicious, punitive qualities from the idea of divine benevolence (*Nemesis* 95). The concept of Satan subordinates this principle to God. “Finally”, Markham concludes on those ideas that shapes his present:

rises philosophy, which, after a few monstrous efforts from Calvin to Leibniz to reconcile contradictions and form a theodicee, comes out boldly in Spinozism to declare the impossibility of the existence of a power antagonistic to God [...] the spectre which haunted the conscience is gone. (*Nemesis* 96)

The little lapse in which Markham makes Leibniz precede Spinoza is perhaps owing to his passionate dislike of the theodocist. For Markham, Leibniz is an egotistical monster, the last bulwark of punishment and eternal damnation who chose the topic “as an opportunity for the display of his genius, and cared so little for the truth that his conclusions did not cost his heart a pang or wring a single tear from him” (*Nemesis* 17). His antipode, Spinoza, offers that final release from the spectre of sin, revealing that “our

failures are errors with which God teaches us” (*Nemesis* 96). Not only is it true that humans ascend individually, Markham suggests, but the invention of the theodicy of the Fall is itself a “Fall” and the history of humanity is an ascent away from the “Fall” and towards the comprehension of Spinozan ascent.

With Markham established twice – first in the epistolary and again in the “autobiographical” section – as the literary manifestation of that theory of the world which holds that sin is a chimera and the Augustinian theodicy happily overcome, it is time to apply the key and attempt to “read the language into sense”. With the conclusion of the second part, the narrative shifts dramatically, as Arthur, who solely narrates the third section, explains:

Here ends the manuscript, abruptly. [...] To me, [...] it seemed as if my friend were working round, slowly perhaps, but surely, to a stronger and more real grasp of life; and, if he could only have been permitted some few months or years of further silent communing with himself, the reeling rocking body might have steadied into a more constant motion. But unhappily the trials of life will not wait for us. (*Nemesis* 163)

Using the narrator function to lament a lack of “time permitted”, Froude simultaneously occludes and draws attention to his authorial decision. “Time permitted” lies in the absolute control of the author, who, after 160 pages of indecisive rope pulling, rudely interrupts his protagonist with a plot. Froude might have Arthur regret this, but it is the very thing that Froude’s literary theory, and the novel, has led towards, as the narrator’s use of two of Froude’s favourite metaphors implies. Echoing the image of the boat pulled in different directions, Markham struggles with the “reeling rocking body”, which must be “steadied into a more constant motion”. And what are about to happen are the “trials of life” – the very “fiery trials” that Froude declared the object of literature in his preface to Tieck and enacted in *The Spirit’s Trial*.

With the beginning of the third section, as Arthur takes over the function of narrator, Markham transforms from a reasoning cypher into a fully-fledged fictional character.

Suddenly Markham develops interests outside of theology – medicine, the flute, and significantly, boating (*Nemesis* 163–64) – and makes relationships with human beings which are not merely physical manifestations of differing speculative positions or narrative functions. What truly transforms Markham, and here Froude stays close to the theological brief, is that he meets a woman: Helen Leonard, mother of little Annie, and wife of a benevolent, but absent, husband she does not love. That Markham and Helen have fallen in love remains hidden to the romantically, if in Helen’s case not sexually, inexperienced lovers until a fateful moment in which Helen leans over sleeping Markham, understands her feelings, and in that very moment imbues him with the final hallmark of fictional personhood, a body:

he felt her breath tremble down upon his lips; her long ringlets were playing upon his cheek with their strange electric touches. As she gazed down so close upon him, she forgot her self-command; a tear fell upon his face. He opened his eyes. (*Nemesis* 174)

In one fell swoop Markham receives lips, cheeks, a face, and eyes. Soon arms, hands, fingers, and a beating heart follow (*Nemesis* 175). Everything becomes trembling bodies in “wild and wilder pulsations” (*Nemesis* 175), physically foreshadowing the kind of knowledge of good and evil that makes Adam aware that he was naked (Gen. 3:11). Markham is ready for his trial; the test of his theories – practical reasoning – has begun. It reaches its climax on a boat with Markham and Helen discussing elopement, while Helen’s child, Annie, is looking at the water. Froude does not quite go to the same lengths as Goethe to end his protagonist’s adulterous longing, and rather than having the child fall out the boat and drown, he has the boat reel, dousing little Annie in water – when Annie dies of cold the next morning, it is quite literally because of the unsteadiness of Markham’s boat (*Nemesis* 191).

The plot accelerates. After the catastrophe, Markham leaves Helen to kill himself, but is interrupted, in the last minute, by an English Catholic priest who convinces Markham to

convert. Markham dies shortly after, regretting the conversion as much as everything else. The novel concludes with the narrator declaring that “no living being was left behind him upon earth, who would not mourn over the day which brought life to Markham Sutherland” (*Nemesis* 227). Markham has failed his fiery trial, and for that reason, as Froude first suggested through Tieck, it would have been “[b]etter he had never been born!” (‘Preface’ iii).

The death of children, as has previously been suggested, “pushes theodicy” – specifically the Augustinian theodicy of deserved punishments – “to its limits” (Freiburg and Gruss, ‘Introduction’ 24). In *Nemesis*, however, it restores it with a vengeance. Even before Annie’s death, Markham “felt God had spoken to him [...] Was it the voice of warning, or the voice of judgement?” (*Nemesis* 195). It is the latter. Annie dies, and with her death the cosmos Markham inhabits changes suddenly from one in which a punitive God is a monstrous illusion to one in which He is a terrible reality. “Your philosophy [...] taught you to doubt if sin was not a dream”, the English convert priest urges Markham: “you feel it now; it is no dream, it is a real, a horrible power” (*Nemesis* 220). For a moment the change is as complete as it is shocking. Sin is real. God is punitive. What Markham thought an ascent is really a descent, for, as the narrator asserts, Markham’s “moral nature had been lowered down to it before he sinned” (*Nemesis* 183). Nothing is what Markham reasoned it was for near 200 pages: the Church, the Bible at its most callous, and the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition had it right all along.

It is tempting to read the horrific wretchedness of the ending of *Nemesis* as Froude’s final endorsement of orthodoxy and rejection of scepticism. This is – after it stopped being read as a guidebook to sin – how *Nemesis* has often been read. For Algernon Cecil it declared that “scepticism leads to misconduct” and “infidelity [leads] to immorality” (Cecil 159, 162). More recently, Daniel Cook has read *Nemesis* as a narrative of apostasy in which Froude pulls away from his character “suddenly, brutally, unambiguously” (D.

Cook 63). While Cook is right as far as the suddenness and brutality are concerned, and even, in a certain sense the unambiguousness – there is no ambiguity to the reality of moral evil – he misses a deeper ambivalence. In part this ambivalence is created by the fact that while all voices – Markham, the English priest, Helen, the narrator – agree that Annie’s death is punishment for sin, they remain utterly divided as to the nature of that sin. Where Markham concludes that “On [Helen] it had come as a punishment for loving him [Markham]” (Froude, *Nemesis* 199), Helen is equally convinced that “It is for [her] sin in marrying [Annie’s] father” (Froude, *Nemesis* 199). The Catholic priest concludes that the original sin was “philosophy” and the narrator changes his judgement every other page. Until the end, the text lacks a resolution to the finer details of the cause of the punishment being doled out, remaining highly aware of the lack of resolution. Markham dies not a penitent sinner, but one who in his last moments realized that his “new faith fabric had been reared upon the clouds of sudden violent feeling [...] doubt soon sapped it” (*Nemesis* 226).

Beyond these restrictions on the human capacity to recognize sin, even though it is real, lies a moral ambivalence. While the text leaves no doubt that Markham’s miserable death is the result of moral evil and justified in that way, the narrative strategy seems designed to counteract any tendency to share in the happiness of Aquinas’s saint and take pleasure in the sufferings of the damned. What makes *Nemesis* unique is the doubled insistence that the ending is justified and yet deeply lamentable. One would be hard pressed to find a novel that appears so set to prevent its reader from taking satisfaction in its own conclusion, or a narrator so judgmental of his protagonist and yet so mournful of his fate. Froude might have reasoned his protagonist out of the idea of sin, only to plot him back into it but he has retained the emotional attitude – the sympathy – of that initial speculation. The Augustinian theodicy is correct, *Nemesis* seems to say, but that does not mean, paradoxically, that it is just, or that it is just in a way that humans might morally

appreciate. This is not a celebration of God's justice – it is a warning “and woe to him who fails!” (‘Preface’ iii) .

### An Even Keel

On the day that William Sewell burned a copy of *Nemesis*, Froude wrote frenetically to friends and acquaintances, lamenting the very real consequences that the publication of *Nemesis* was having – the burning of the book, being forced to resign his Fellowship, and most dramatically, the loss of old friendships. Beyond the myriad anxieties, however, there is a sense of calm: “I was in labour with the book. I felt I must write it”, he writes to Charles Kingsley, “[a]nd now [...] I have done for ever with the subjective, and have got my boat on an even keel” (Dunn 133–34). In *Nemesis*, so Froude tells his friends, he had arrived at a conclusion. Having pulled the boat this way and that, he had finally found the conclusion and “even keel” which would, he believed, allow him to move forward and “wisely improve the present, and make my heart up for the future” (Dunn 133–34).

What that conclusion was, Froude tried to make his unenthusiastic audience understand in the preface to the second edition, the last he allowed to be printed during his lifetime. Here he declared – courageously considering the discomforts the book had by then already caused him – that in matters of “pure speculation” he was “ready to avow as [his] own whatever [his] hero expresses” (vii). But that speculation, Froude declared, was only half the truth:

Though it be true that in any high transcendental sense there is no power fighting against God, and in such sense, therefore, no sin; yet, if we doubt whether sin be or be not a reality relatively to our own selves, let us try it and see (Preface to *Nemesis* viii).

In *Nemesis*, the implication is, Froude and his readers could watch Markham's attempt to “try it and see”, and his recognition of how wrong he had been. The reasoning by which Markham “speculates himself out of the idea of sin”, Froude declares to be “(at least in

my opinion) unanswerable” (ix). It is only on the “battle-field of action” (ix), Froude asserts, that Markham’s speculation, and by extension Froude’s own, is proved wrong.

It is difficult not to eye suspiciously, judgementally even, Froude’s apparent failure to recognize that *Nemesis* is not the record of someone trying and seeing, but a deliberate artistic creation, just as the “battle-field of action”, which Markham joins, is not divine reality, but human creation, is not “action” at all, but rather another manifestation of its author’s “speculation”. Such failure is not evidence of a lack of intellectual sophistication, nor as one might suspect, artful deception, but rather it is a result of Froude’s understanding of literary genre and human cognition. Having collapsed into “legend” the boundary between truth and make-belief, Froude reads the fiction of Markham Sutherland as history. Perhaps, justifiably so, for his histories will indeed, as Froude would have been the first to admit, illustrate the very same moral Significance, the same set of prejudices. While Froude smudges the boundary between novel and world as much as that between speculation and action, he remains aware that novelistic “action” – practical reasoning through characters and plot – has helped him do things that purer speculation could not: it has proved to him the reality of moral evil, thereby freeing him, it appears, from the anxiety of it. In that way, *Nemesis* illustrates the conclusions it, aided by *Shadows* before it, has allowed Froude to reach.

*A Sense of the Incomplete:*  
*Arthur Hugh Clough's Poetry of Metaphysical*  
*Evil*

*The true Poet is ever, as of old, the Seer; whose eye has been gifted to discern the godlike Mystery of God's Universe, and decipher some new lines of its celestial writing; we can still call him a Vates and Seer; for he sees into this greatest of secrets, 'the open secret'; hidden things become clear; how the Future (both resting on Eternity) is but another phasis of the Present; thereby are his words in very truth prophetic; what he has spoken shall be done.*

Thomas Carlyle  
 "Death of Goethe"

*As a work of God, the world can also be considered by us as a divine publication of his will's purposes. However, in this respect the world is often a closed book for us, and it is so every time we look at it to extract from it God's final aim ...*

Immanuel Kant  
 "On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy"

*...the last verse of a poem is not a verse...*

Giorgio Agamben  
*The End of the Poem*

I cannot forgive you for the baulking end or no end of the ‘Amours de Voyage.’ [...] when we began to build securely on the triumph of our poet over all gainsayers, suddenly his wing flags, or his whim appears, and he plunges to a conclusion [...] It is true a few persons compassionately tell me, that the piece is all right, and that they like this veracity of much preparation to no result. But I hold tis bad enough in life, and inadmissible in poetry. (*Correspondence* 2 548)

So wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1858, after reading the final instalment of Arthur Hugh Clough’s *Amours de Voyage*, the last poem, and one of the few longer poems, Clough finished at all. Playful in tone, the letter yet reveals the chasm between the two poets – friends for more than a decade – and Emerson’s real sense of disappointment. Having read the poem month by month, Emerson had formed an idea of the final instalment based on his own poetic theory. “The Poet”, as Emerson declared in an essay of that title, has the capacity and obligation to make readers “mount above these clouds and opaque airs” (Emerson, *Essays* 8) so that they may realize that “the evils of the world are such only to the evil eye” (Emerson, *Essays* 11). In other words, the task of poetry was to overcome what Leibniz calls metaphysical evil – the evil of creaturely limitation and limited perception – and take the reader to a “heaven of Truth” (Emerson, *Essays* 8). On that poetic ideal, Emerson had seen the confusion of Clough’s protagonist Claude, his indecisiveness concerning love, war, and religion as a preparation that would be transformed to a higher end. Having expected an ascent and received the realism “of much preparation to no result”, Emerson found the conclusion a failure and a fall. Clough, who unlike Emerson rarely explicated his own poetic theory, replied only indirectly in a letter to their common friend C. E. Norton. “[Emerson] may be right and I may be wrong”, Clough wrote with characteristic reticence, “and all my defence can only be that I always meant it to be so and began it with the full intention of its ending so” (*Correspondence* 2 551).

This chapter explores Clough’s many baulking ends-or-no-ends and the poetics from which they arise as a particular kind of response to metaphysical evil. An awareness of

metaphysical evil – the sense that as Leibniz puts it “the creature is limited in its essence; whence ensues that it cannot know all, and that it can deceive itself and commit other errors” (135) – is by no means unique to Clough. It is shared by Emerson or Carlyle as much as Froude or Newman, but, so these writers seem to suggest, the problem caused by metaphysical evil is solvable, be it by poetry, a commitment to action, or an assent to the Catholic Church. Creaturely limitation, which does not apply to Poets, Prophets, or Popes, becomes itself limited, and metaphysical evil usually remains a minor and ancillary issue, negligible in comparison to moral evil – a difference of which Clough is highly aware. “Act and all will be clear” (Clough and Mulhauser 644 line 9), he has Claude’s friend Eustace recommend in an earlier draft of the *Amours*, echoing Froude, Carlyle, and Goethe. But in a later draft, he gives to Claude – as if in response – the well-known lines: “*Action will furnish belief* – but will that belief be the true one?” (*The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, *Amours* 5.2.20).<sup>95</sup> What other Victorian writers take to be solutions of the problem caused by metaphysical evil, Clough understands as mere suppression. In his own poetry, Clough takes metaphysical evil to its logical conclusion, which is – more often than not – no conclusion at all.

Why Clough understood metaphysical evil as the central problem cannot, I think, be explained by any one intellectual influence but intimated, perhaps, by the interplay between them.<sup>96</sup> When Clough was three, the family moved to Charleston, South Carolina, where Clough spent most of his time with his piously Evangelical mother. According to Clough’s sister, the first Principal of Newnham, Anne Jemima Clough, their mother instilled in Clough a fear of God and fondness for reading “especially works on religious subjects, poetry, and history” (quoted in *The Poems and Prose Remains* 19). At

---

<sup>95</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, references to Clough’s poetry are to the 1974 Oxford edition (ed. Mulhauser), given by title of poem and line number, where applicable, preceded by relevant book, scene, stanza, canto or act number.

<sup>96</sup> And perhaps not even by them; John Goode is not wrong when he declares Clough a “radically different kind of mind” (Goode 276).

ten, Clough followed his older brother to Rugby. Precocious, morally serious, and an avid reader, Clough soon became a favourite of Thomas Arnold, imbibing his austere Broad Church Christianity, which focused on the reality of the Bible as moral principle. Clough's early letters show him embracing a role as moral guardian to his fellow pupils and siblings, urging, for example, his brother George to think of God not only as "your loving Father and Friend [...] but also as your Judge, as one who is so holy and pure that he cannot bear any sin in this world of his, and who at the same time is so powerful as to be able to inflict the heaviest punishments" (*Correspondence I* 27). This youthful priggishness did not hold. On moving up to Balliol in 1837, Clough's mind, which was used to run in the furrow dug by Arnold's sermons, encountered the Tractarians, as well as their many opponents. By the end of the 1830s Clough was reading Carlyle, overshadowing his puerile view of God as Father and Judge with a less anthropocentric belief in an "Invisible, Unnamable" (*Past and Present* 148). Goethe and German philosophy followed.<sup>97</sup> But if Clough devoured theology, philosophy, and poetry, he never returned to his youthful discipleship. Unlike Froude, who developed intellectually by a sequence of commitments – pulling in one direction after another – Clough's reading, after his initial Arnoldianism, which had instilled in him a sense of the utmost importance of religious matters, was a series of resistances. He rarely embraced new material, or embraced it only where it called previous assumptions into question – Clough, at different times, refused to become Newmanite, or Carlylean, or Wordsworthian. For even in Wordsworth Clough found beside all poetic quality a "false or arbitrary Positiveness", so that the poetic model must be tempered by the stern warning not to "draw [...] your conclusions before you have properly got your premises" (Clough, *The Poems and Prose*

---

<sup>97</sup> Clough's correspondence indicates that he was reading Goethe and Schiller in the original in 1839 (*Correspondence I* 98). Evelyn Greenberger suggests that Clough might have read Strauss's *Life of Jesus* in the German original, even before reading George Eliot's translation in 1846, and gives evidence for the influence of German High Criticism on Clough's thinking of the period (Greenberger 99).

*Remains I* 324). Rather than coming to a conclusion, Clough found in his reading an ever growing web of mutual contradiction.

One particularly obdurate foil is Immanuel Kant, whom Clough read diligently in 1842 and mocked, anxiously, ever after. Emerson, too, had read Kant, of course, finding there the key term of his poetics, though, unlike Kant, Emerson uses “transcendental” to describe intuitive, suprarational insight into higher verities (cf. Cromphout 63). What Clough found in Kant was not transcendental philosophy, which aims to overcome scepticism by building exclusively on synthetic a priori statements, but a sense of the limits of that method, namely the “*antinomy*”:

in brief – a contradiction in terms; [...] as for example, *the world must have had a beginning*, and, *the world cannot have had a beginning*, in the transcendental fusion or confusion of which consists the Intelligible or unintelligible truth. (Clough, *The Poems and Prose Remains I* 377)

The antinomies, the first of which Clough summarizes correctly if snidely, mark the point in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) at which Kant turns from defending pure reason against the Scottish empiricist onslaught towards attacking the Prussian mainstream, and its tendency to extend pure reason beyond its capacities and into paradox. In other words, it is here that Kant, who in Königsberg had been inculcated with the philosophy of Leibniz, turns against the Leibnizian premise that reason can comprehend all. Leibniz himself had, in a way, recognized creaturely limitations – ergo the unorthodox inclusion of metaphysical evil – but thought that the “Supreme Reason” (Leibniz 52) had given humans the tool to overcome those limits. His *Theodicy*, which begins with a defence of reason, is first a theodicy in response to the problem posed by metaphysical evil. Limiting, via the antinomies, the kinds of questions that reason can ask, Kant threw a spanner into the works of Leibnizian philosophy, and particularly into his theodicy, a fact Kant made abundantly clear in his essay “On the miscarriage of all philosophical trials in theodicy”. “By ‘theodicy’”, Kant writes here, “we understand the defence of the highest wisdom of

the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counterpurposive in the world” (Kant, ‘On the Miscarriage’ 24). The divine purpose, says Kant, belongs precisely to the realm inaccessible by human reason, which is why philosophy must fail in its attempts at theodicy. That Clough repeatedly makes light of Kantian idealism and specifically the antinomies of “inferior Kant” (*Dipsychus* 12.158) bespeaks, I think, discomfort rather than levity. For taking Kant seriously itself causes a sort of antinomy: between the Christian taught to follow the divine purpose and the creature who cannot know it; or, as the first two epigraphs to this chapter suggest, between the poet tasked with deciphering the divine publication and the human to whom it remains a closed book (Carlyle, ‘Death of Goethe’ 93; Kant, ‘On the Miscarriage’ 31).

That Clough’s poetry is permeated with some kind of metaphysical difficulty and thus struggles with a lack of commitment, uncertainty or doubt is a commonplace in criticism. Where critics differ is in the evaluation of that struggle. Broadly speaking, there are three kinds of critical opinion. The first focuses on “the vexed question of Clough’s failure”, presenting Clough as pathologically incapable of overcoming his doubts or committing to reality, although it would have been desirable for him to do so (Biswas 5; Chorley 1; cf. ‘Thyrsis’ in Arnold, *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold*). The second school depicts the struggle and uncommitted nature of much of Clough’s work not as a pathological flaw but an artistic decision ahead of its time (Houghton 1; Deering 17; Bowers 711–13). Third, Clough initially struggled with uncertainty but he found a solution to his struggle which is reflected in his poetry (Chorley 330; Timko, ‘The “True Creed”’ 209; J. P. Phelan, ‘Introduction’ 25–28). My reading agrees with the first two of these positions that Clough’s poetry does not reveal a teleology towards some kind of solution – unless it is edited to that effect. Where I disagree with the first opinion is in seeing a pathology. There is a marked difference between a morbid inability to commit, which for Chorley results from Clough’s frustrated longing for “complete and exclusive

possession of his mother” (Chorley 352) and what I consider Clough’s mature suspicion that if humanity cannot access divine reality, any action and any expression, however well intentioned, could be contrary to God’s wishes and that therefore any commitment – even a strong commitment to the non-committal and fragmentary – becomes potential evil. I also differ from the proto-modernist interpretation of Clough’s work insofar as I do not see the fragmentary, uncommitted, questioning nature of Clough’s poetry as primarily an artistic decision but as the result of a theological problem posing unique artistic, and in turn critical and editorial, difficulties. Clough’s fragmentary, contradictory and incomplete poetry is one possible outcome of taking more seriously than most a problem of which many were highly aware.

My argument coincides with what has (sometimes controversially) been called the “new formalism” in two ways. First, by reading Clough’s poetry as questioning the Leibnizian project of overcoming metaphysical evil, this chapter aligns itself with recent attempts to locate the value of poetic form in its resistance to the epistemic emphasis of enlightenment thinking (Fry 1–8; Altieri 275–81; cf. Levinson 564). However, the alliance is uneasy because Clough’s poetry affords equal resistance to Romantic alternatives to enlightenment epistemology – other kinds of knowing – and thus does not offer a positive site for value formation in which, as Altieri suggests, poetry “make(s) actual propositions [...] concerned with the feelings performed and extended rather than with truths realized and tested” (279). Which is not to say, as Paul DeMan concludes of Rilke’s poetry, that he “eliminates all truth-claims from his discourse” (De Man 51), merely that Clough’s poetry appears almost equally suspicious of cognitive, affective, and conative propositions. Second, I read Clough’s tendency not to finish poems as a formal feature. Here, I am inspired by Kirstie Blair’s *Form and Faith*, which suggests of the *Amours* that Clough’s “flexible hexameters, so varied in length, emphasis, and punctuation that they almost approximate prose, indicate Clough’s hesitancy at acknowledging even a ‘partial’

approach to religious truth” (Blair 114). This is perfectly accurate but I think there is more to it. For while Clough’s quasi-prosaic style – Shirley Chew calls it “novelistic” (18), Phelan “narrative” (‘Introduction’ 4) – brings his poetry closer to that “transcendental homelessness” that Lukács attributed specifically to the novel “in contrast to other genres whose existence resides within the finished form”, it is in particular Clough’s tendency not to finish his poems that gives his poetry more than merely the appearance of “something in process of becoming” (Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* 72–73). Here I am thinking along the lines indicated by my final epigraph taken from Giorgio Agamben’s lecture “The End of the poem” (‘The End of the Poem’ 112), namely that there happens something transformative in the last line of a poem and that Clough’s oeuvre is permeated by a struggle with and against that transformation. Thus, a large proportion of Clough’s poetry actually is, indefinitely, in the process of becoming.

This makes Clough’s poetry so difficult – not only because it “privileges inexplicable knowledge” as Francis O’Gorman’s recent article on “Clough’s Difficulties” suggests (7) – but also in a more practical sense often lamented by editors but, I think, of equal significance for critics. As P. G. Scott points out in his discussion of “The Editorial Problem in Clough’s ‘Adam and Eve’”, Clough’s way of “writing and rewriting”, makes it particularly “difficult for an editor to work out how the divergent intentions of the manuscripts can be brought to constitute a single defensible text” (P. G. Scott 79).<sup>98</sup> Anthony Kenny also notes the “difficult editorial problem” (‘Introduction’ xi), suggesting, however, that due to Clough’s “ultimate indecision, there is no such thing as *the* text of the poem” (‘Introduction’ xii). Kenny is correct, I believe, and this adumbrates

---

<sup>98</sup> After Clough’s premature death in 1862, his widow Blanche Clough was the first to face this difficulty when she edited the posthumous editions of his poetry, publishing a great deal of material previously unfinished. For this achievement she has over the decades received unfair criticism, despite the fact that most later editions, including the standard edition by Mulhauser – the second Oxford University Press edition, which replaces and is based on the previous edition by H.F. Lowry, A.L.P. Norrington, and F.L. Mulhauser – draws on her decisions.

one of many critical problems, for criticism tends to entail not only existential propositions (that such a poem exists) but also authorial ones – that the poem of which the critic is presenting a reading was written by the author. With Clough’s poetry this is often not entirely the case – and many of Clough’s poems, such as the poem titled either “Fragments of the Mystery of the Fall”, “The Mystery of the Fall” or “Adam and Eve”, might better be considered co-productions between Clough and his various editors. With this caveat in mind, this chapter centres on Mulhauser’s edition of “Adam and Eve” – a work Clough never finished – believing this edition to be “as good and as much intended as another” (*Dipsychus* lines 5-6), and chosen because it is the standard. Here I am working along the lines first established by Blanche Clough, who included poems she believed her husband would not have published “in their present state” because she found them “so characteristic of his thought and style” (footnote in *The Poems and Prose Remains* 1 359). In other words, I focus on “Adam and Eve” because – in part due to the topic’s traditional association with moral evil and the Augustinian theodicy – it offers insight into Clough’s characteristic preoccupation with metaphysical evil. But since my interest lies principally with Clough’s poetics rather than with the practical difficulties faced by his editors, the chapter begins with more authoritative material, namely the two books of poetry Clough published during his lifetime, *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* (1848) and the *Ambarvalia* (1849).

A strange happy sense of completeness: *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*

Clough wrote *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*<sup>99</sup> in September and October of 1848 and it was published in November of that same year. The timing was not only uncharacteristically quick but also conspicuous because it coincided almost exactly with Clough’s final decision to resign his Fellowship at Oriel, since he could no longer

---

<sup>99</sup> First published as *The Bothie of Tober-na-Fuosich. A Long Vacation Pastoral*.

subscribe to the thirty-nine articles. Clough had been considering this step for at least the previous two years and, as early as 1842, he confessed a “repugnance” and “general dislike to Subscription” (*Correspondence I* 124). He had subscribed to attain the degree of M. A. and his Fellowship under the assumption that he was merely attesting to the state of his mind at the time without implications for any future belief. When in December 1847, Clough realized that his position in College implied continued subscription, he attempted to resign almost immediately (cf. *Correspondence I* 191). But Edward Hawkins, then Provost of Oriel, delayed letting him go, largely because Clough was reluctant to explain his problems with subscription, despite Hawkins’s best efforts to find out (cf. *Correspondence I* 224–27). It was at that time, with Hawkins and those that knew of Clough’s resigning struggling to comprehend his motivation, that Clough wrote and published – to general befuddlement – his poem in English hexameters about an undergraduate’s romances during a great vacation reading party in the Scottish Highlands.

A letter which Clough sent to his sister Anne in May 1847, before he recognized the implications of his position at Oriel, indicates the reasons for his resignation. “I do not think”, Clough wrote still unperturbed, “that doubts respecting the facts related in the Gospels need give us much trouble. Believing that in one way or other the thing is of God, we shall in the end know perhaps in what way and how far it was so” (*Correspondence I* 182). Clough’s surprising calm gives way to his explanation of what really matters: “philosophical problems of Grace, and Free Will, and of Redemption as an idea, not as a historical event” (*Correspondence I* 182). In shifting the focus from the historical veracity of Christianity, to the importance of its ideas, Clough anticipates by more than two decades Matthew Arnold’s similar re-evaluation in *The Study of Poetry* (1880). In that work Arnold announces that while the facts of religion were failing, its ideas were upheld in poetry for which “the idea is the fact” (*English Literature and Irish*

*Politics* 161). But while for Matthew Arnold this shift from fact to idea offers a solution, for Clough it causes a bigger problem: how to determine the idea. On this question Clough's letter to his sister continues with a characteristically tentative double negative. Clough "do[es]n't deny" that there may be an answer to the deeper philosophical and theological questions which would be the "perfection" of "God's justice", adding, however, that he does deny the claims of those Calvinists, evangelicals or Tractarians who disagree in everything but that "they say they know" (*Correspondence I* 182). Clough's generalization allows only one exception: John Henry Newman who "falls down and worships *because* he does not know, and knows he does not know" (*Correspondence I* 182). Resisting all camps, Clough recommends a third position:

I think others are more right who say boldly, we don't understand it, and therefore we *won't* fall down and worship it. Though there is no occasion for adding, 'there *is* nothing in it,' I should say, until I know, I will wait, and if I am not born with the power to discover, I will do what I can with what knowledge I have—trust to God's justice, and neither pretend to know, nor, without knowing, pretend to embrace. (*Correspondence I* 182)

Clough becomes more stylistically affirmative, the closer he draws to the conclusion not to affirm anything, no longer merely "not denying" but declaring what he will do in crisp infinitives. For Clough, then, the boldest stance is not to claim knowledge but to admit lack thereof. Clough recommends affirming or resisting nothing. On realizing, as he did later that year, that the Fellowship amounted to continuous affirmation he resigned not due to any positive conviction but because he would not affirm of what he was not certain. Instead his position is to wait, to do, but not to declare, to resist the urge to embrace any of the opposing truth-claims.

It has occasionally been suggested that the *Bothie* "supplies and embodies Clough's justification for quitting Oxford" (Biswas 265) but it might well be Clough's least openly religious poem (subscription and the articles are never even mentioned). The poem opens instead, giddily, with sports, dinners, dancing, and love-making. Even bathing – of which

there is plenty – causes a sort of inebriation when “in the sparkling champagne, ecstatic, they shrieked and shouted” (*Bothie* 3.62). Matthew Arnold dreaded the sense of “plung[ing]” in the “Time Stream” that the *Bothie* evoked in him (*The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough* 96). Arnold’s rebuke has occasionally been used to describe Clough’s poetics as interested exclusively in the vibrant, temporary, and piecemeal. Dorothy Deering, for example, accepts the terms of Arnold’s critique but inverts the value judgement celebrating Clough as a proto-modernist anti-Arnoldian joyously submerged in the ceaseless flux of the world (17–22). Though Deering does not claim that Clough’s poetry is a forerunner of the modernist tradition, her reading describes Clough’s poetry in the idiom of Wallace Stevens, with Clough turning away from a “beatific vision” and walking “barefoot into reality” (Deering 18).<sup>100</sup> Though Deering suggests that this reading of Clough as what Hillis Miller terms “a poet of reality” (Miller, *Poets of Reality* 7) applies to Clough’s poetics overall, it is significant that she focuses exclusively on the *Bothie* – the only poem, I think, of which such a claim can be made at all. But even here, this reading misses something vital beneath all the liveliness.

That there is something else in the poem, beyond bathing, banter, and romances, many of Clough’s acquaintances recognized immediately, though they would not, or could not, put their finger on what it was precisely. When it came out, Froude chastised Clough for publishing the *Bothie* before the more obviously thoughtful *Ambarvalia*, which he felt would have instructed readers on how to read Clough. As it were, with the *Bothie* published first, Froude warned that: “People don’t expect philosophy in a thing coming out in the shape and with the *tone* of a sketchy poem; and won’t look for it, and won’t believe it is there when it seems to be, particularly when you set off so inauspiciously as

---

<sup>100</sup> Charles LaPorte similarly demarcates Clough’s position through Arnold’s opposition. Reading Clough not as a modernist but as a Spasmodic – a group whose most obvious similarity with Clough’s poetry is that Arnold disapproved of both (LaPorte, ‘Spasmodic Poetics and Clough’s Apostasies’ 521).

I think you do in the *whole* of the first section” (printed in Thorpe 34). Froude refrained from sharing what precisely the philosophy was, a trick Charles Kingsley repeated in his review for *Fraser's Magazine* in which he urged the reader to “crack the nut himself” (110). Despite Froude’s avoidance, his description of reading the poem yet illumines the slippage from something light and superficial into surprising vicissitudes and a sense that things are not quite what they pretend to be.

Part of this Clough hints at even in the sub-title: “A Long-Vacation Pastoral” is itself a contradiction in terms. For pastoral is, as William Empson puts it “a puzzling form which looks proletarian but isn’t” (*Pastoral* 6). Of course, labourers do not have long vacations and the poem collapses the pretences of its form before it even begins. Rather than pastoral this is then a sort of meta-pastoral, which constantly alludes to the tradition – most openly in the Virgilian epigraphs which precede the sections – but never fully enters into it, constantly signalling that this is not the real thing but a pretend simplicity and momentary respite before “we return to cares of classes and classics” (*Bothie* 2.252). The *Bothie* remains curiously self-aware of being vacation rather than life – not reality but dissipation – closing with a metafictional reminder, by a somewhat Falstaffian minor character named Hobbes, that these “*things are an allegory*” (9.166, 9.186).

The allegory which occasions this observation, variations of which permeate the poem, casts Philip Hewson as Jacob waiting for his Rachel. It is the fantasy of a working woman “Milking the kine in the field, like Rachel” (2.97-98) that kindles Hewson’s initial attraction for Katie. But the similarity (“Is not Katie as Rachel, and is not Philip a Jacob?” (3.234)) signals Katie’s unsuitability, for the problem with Rachels is that they reveal themselves Leahs by morning. And so Hewson abandons Katie and the idea of the working-class woman for a brief attempt at Lady Maria. His third love interest, another working woman, Elspie, appears a second and – by the logic of the biblical source –

successful attempt at the idea of Rachel. But Elspie has her own allegory. Inspired by watching a bridge being built she confesses to Hewson:

Sometimes I dream of a great invisible hand coming down, and  
 Dropping the great key stone in the middle: there in my dreaming,  
 There I feel the great key-stone coming in, and through it  
 Feel the other part—all the other stones of the archway,  
 Joined into mine with a strange happy sense of completeness.  
 (7.68-72)

Unsurprisingly, the dream of the “key-stone coming in” is commonly read sexually (Houghton 107; Raine 58)<sup>101</sup>; contradicting the “Freudian critics”, Anthony Kenny has cast Elspie’s dream as an image for marriage as a “union between partners allied in service to a goal” (*Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet’s Life* 142). Both readings – sex and marriage – are, in a way, correct and need not contradict each other. But Clough has Hewson offer a rather different interpretation refocusing on the divine implication of “the great key-stone coming down from the heaven of heavens!” (7.80). These also need not contradict each other and are rather – in the poem’s curious allegorical slippage, “Every Woman is, or ought to be a Cathedral” (5.93) – intimately connected. Elspie deftly reinforces the connection when she wards off Hewson’s advances: “But oh, we must wait, Mr. Philip! / We mustn’t pull ourselves at the great-key stone of the centre; / Some one else up above must hold it, fit it, and fix it” (7.104-106). And so Philip, like Jacob, must wait, for sex, for marriage, and for “some one else up above”.

There is a hopefulness, unique to the *Bothie* among Clough’s poems, in this play of allegory, in which women are cathedrals and sex a congress with the divine, because it suggests that a problem might find its solution outside its usual domain, and that the ordinary rules of conclusion need not apply. In that way, Hewson can in near succession express the most typically Cloughian metaphysical muddle, asking, for example:

Where does Circumstance end, and Providence where begins it?  
 What are we to resist, and what we to be friend with?

---

<sup>101</sup> John McGrail produces a humorous critique of the phallic reading (Mcgrail 75–76).

If there is battle, 'tis battle by night [...] (9.49-51)

Shortly after, having explored this sense of “infinite jumble and mess and dislocation” (9.64) through fragments of “[h]eaving, swelling, spreading” (9.76) ocean imagery, he concludes:

Meantime above purer air untarnished of new-lit fires:  
 So that the whole great wicked artificial civilized fabric—  
 All its unfinished houses, lots for sale, and railway outworks—  
 Seems reaccepted, resumed to Primal Nature and Beauty: —  
 —Such—in me, and to me, and on me the love of Elspie! (9.104-108)

In the suggestion that the love of Elspie can help Hewson transcend the “infinite jumble” Clough is simultaneously at his most Arnoldian – the “battle by night”, the use of the ocean, and the turn to love anticipate *Dover Beach* “[w]here ignorant armies clash by night” (*The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* ‘Dover Beach’ line 21) – as well as at his most Emersonian with Hewson ascending to comprehend Nature and Beauty. In this way, Hewson, who is described as a Poet but who, as Francis O’Gorman points out, appears never “to have done anything to deserve the name” (O’Gorman 132) earns the appellation, not because he writes poetry but because he believes the kind of things that poets (at least those of Clough’s acquaintance) believe: that one can mount to purer air in which the wicked is seen as “Primal Nature and Beauty” and that love for a woman can get one there. And it is this poetic idea that makes the poem reach its joyful conclusion not by any kind of metaphysical insight but by accepting marriage in its stead.

Hewson might reach his poetic conclusion but Clough cannot quite let it stand. As the poem reaches its happy ending, with the couple wedded and Hewson receiving gifts and letters from his fellow vacationers, the last substantial word, given to Hobbes, is one of dissent:

I have reflected; *Which things are an allegory*, Philip.  
 For this Rachael-and-Leah is marriage; which, I have seen it,  
 Lo, and have known it, is always, and must be, bigamy only,  
 Even in noblest kind a duality, compound, and complex,  
 One part heavenly-ideal, the other vulgar and earthy:

For this Rachel-and-Leah is marriage, and Laban their father  
 Circumstance, chance, the world, our uncle and hard taskmaster.  
 (9.166-72)

This is a surprising final variation to Hewson's favourite allegory. The question is no longer whether any individual woman is Rachel but rather whether marriage can ever fulfil its own ideal – whether love for another human can actually do the things that Hewson the poet ascribes to it and sustain, beyond earthly comforts, a heavenly ascent. Clough's own answer to that question, as he informed Blanche Clough during their engagement, was a resounding "no". "Love is not everything", he wrote to his soon to be wife "don't believe it, nor try to make me pretend to believe it [...] as for everlasting unions, and ties that no change can modify, do not dream of them – God knows, he only" (*Correspondence I* 300–01). Most of Clough's poetry shares this disbelief in love as a cosmic panacea – in the *Ambarvalia*, Clough calls it "the Poet's love" ("Ah, what is love, our love, she said" line 14) – ascribing rather to Claude's premonition that even the best and most suitable wife might struggle to accept that she is "but for a space, an *ad-interim* solace and pleasure, – / That in the end she shall yield to a perfect and absolute something" (*Amours* 3.6.143). But where in the *Amours* this insight is given to the protagonist and suitor, in the *Bothie* it is relegated to a minor character, so that Hewson can hold on to his poetic vision. It is in this conclusion that the poem is truest to its subtitle, both because Hewson is treated to a vacation from the realities of "Circumstance, chance, the world" and because in his idea of love he is no longer ironically above the pastoral tradition but fully enmeshed in what Empson famously called the "pastoral process of putting the complex into the simple" (Empson, *Pastoral* 22). Taking the (comparatively) simple act of getting married as a solution for the complex problems the poem raises allows the *Bothie* – the only of Clough's poems that delighted Emerson "from beginning to end" (Emerson and Clough letter 7) – to reach in its conclusion that "strange happy sense of completeness".

The Deity to Seek: *The Ambarvalia*

Clough's next work, the *Ambarvalia*, appeared only two months later, in January of 1849, giving perhaps by sheer proximity and speed the impression that Clough was hard at work building a poetic persona and career. This was, however, not the case. If anything, the publication history bespeaks a certain carelessness and ambivalence about the project. The idea for the *Ambarvalia* had come up as early as 1845, when Clough's friend Thomas Burbidge, eager to make his mark as a poet, had evidently suggested a joint venture, which Clough rejected, having not "poemata enough or money" (*Correspondence I* 160). Nevertheless, Clough soon compiled "the casualties of at least ten years" (*Correspondence I* 240) to be published together with Burbidge's poetry, and by September 1848 he expected the *Ambarvalia* to appear within the next two months (cf. *Correspondence I* 217) – in which case it would have been published before the *Bothie*, in the order Froude preferred. However, the publication was delayed, and the eventual order of publication is not strategic but rather a result of outside circumstances and negligence on Clough's part, whose commitment to the project remained nebulous. This hesitancy carries through in a letter in which he announced the poems to Tom Arnold. "Some of them I hope you will like", he wrote, "but I don't think much will come of it. I don't much intend writing any more verse" (Clough, *Correspondence I* 217). Clough did not, of course, carry through and the years of 1849-1850, in which he wrote *Dipsychus* and the *Amours* among other things, turned into his *anni mirabiles*, yet the ambivalence of the remark is not limited to the peculiar publication history of the *Ambarvalia*.

Clough had long been and remained ambivalent about poetry, specifically the kind of poetics most readily described as prophetic – in which the poet is seen as an inspired speaker of higher truths – upheld in different forms on both sides of the Atlantic. Isobel Armstrong has summed up the Victorian poet's task as "[t]he effort to renegotiate a content to every relationship between self and the world" (Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*

7). Broad as this description is, many of Clough's contemporaries saw the poet's role as one of seeing meaning in the world and connecting that meaning through the poetic self to the larger community. To do that the poet must be both a man apart – so that, as J. S. Mill claimed influentially “All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy” (Mill 349) – and a man of the world. The world has need of him and his vision, because he feels himself, as Jan Wojcik puts it, “connected to a better body of knowledge than most mortals will ever be graced to hear of” (Wojcik 13). Such assumptions are at the heart of Carlyle's hero-poet, Emerson's Representative Man, or Whitman's Poet as Prophet.<sup>102</sup> Though the details of the tasks differ, poetry is essentially an act of subsuming experience, emotion, phenomena into something more than momentary or individual. And to do that poems must entail a modicum of teleological transcendence of mere chaotic existence and reveal to the reader glimpses of some higher, more meaningful truth.

Clough himself, as the well-known though unverifiable anecdote goes, was chosen for this role, if not by God, then at least by Emerson. At the end of Emerson's European Voyage in 1848, which had included a joint visit with Clough to revolutionary Paris, Clough saw Emerson off at Liverpool Harbour, complaining: “Carlyle has lead us all out into the desert, and he has left us there” (quoted in Hale 136). Emerson placed his hand on Clough's head as in benediction and replied: “Clough, I consecrate you Bishop of all England. It shall be your part to go up and down through the desert to find out these wanderers and to lead them into the promised land” (quoted in Hale 137). Clough's reaction to this benediction is unknown. In a letter written to Tom Arnold a day after Emerson's departure, Clough mentions leaving Emerson on the deck of the ship without reference to the strange exchange (*Correspondence I* 215). He only notes with some ambiguity that when giving his lectures Emerson had “looked prophetic at times”

---

<sup>102</sup> Fred Manning Smith traces both Emerson's and Whitman's idea of the poet back to Carlyle, and all three to German sources, particularly Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel (1147).

(Clough, *Correspondence 1* 216). It was directly after his travels with Emerson that Clough declared his intention not to continue writing poetry. If this exchange at the docks actually happened, it suggests that Clough had hoped to find a prophet first in Carlyle, then in Emerson, and was unimpressed by having the great task thrust upon himself.

In the twenty-nine poems that make up his part of the *Ambarvalia*, Clough does not style himself as prophet but that is not because he does not find prophecy appealing – quite the contrary. This is most evident in the poem originally titled “When Israel came out of Egypt” and later changed by Clough to “The New Sinai”, which takes as its cue what is probably the most important account of prophecy in the Judeo-Christian tradition: Moses ascending to mount Sinai to receive the divine commandments (Exod. 19:01-33:23). Instead of focusing on Moses as model, however, Clough’s interest lies with what happens below – presenting the sin of the calf (Exod. 32:04) as allegorical warning for the present. The poem opens by drawing a parallel between idol worship, which finds God in everything (“Lo, here is God, and there is God!” (“The New Sinai” line 1)), and atheism born from science, which tells us “There is None!” (54). Both of these positions, though spoken by many voices, are not the true Voice but merely part of an “outer darkness” (64), which obscures our ability to understand the Logos, so that everything becomes polyphony and obscurity. Rather than succumb to the voices, the poem instructs the Victorians to do what the Israelites failed to do and wait until:

Some chosen prophet-soul the while  
 Shall dare, sublimely meek,  
 Within the shroud of blackest cloud  
 The Deity to seek:  
 ‘Mid atheistic systems dark,  
 And darker hearts’ despair (70-76)

This is a hopeful but not a democratic vision. Citizen Clough, as he liked to style himself, due to his support for the revolutionary projects of France and Italy (*Correspondence 1* 216), might believe in democracy in politics but not in prophecy. At least for the speaker

of “The New Sinai”, the *sine qua non* of prophecy is not to choose prophecy as some self-willed act, but to remain “sublimely meek” and wait for one to be “chosen”.<sup>103</sup> Prophecy – like poetry – is a matter of the soul not of politics.<sup>104</sup> If the poet cannot choose to be Moses, so *The New Sinai* suggests, he can (and must) at least choose not to be Aaron and thus not having a prophet-soul must resist claiming the role of prophet. For that reason, next to the allusion to a coming prophet we find a condemnation of “prophet-tongues” (31) and the “Prophet’s brother-Priest” (113). The speaker – neither Moses, true Prophet of God, nor Aaron, false prophet of the Golden calf – yet finds a meaningful role in urging his audience not to confuse the two.

In that role, as a defender against false prophecy, the speaker can become insistently didactic and teleological. The onslaught of idolism, of finding God in everything, for example, is met by the speaker with a simple instruction at the end of the first stanza:

Receive it not, believe it not,  
Believe it not, O Man! (11-12).

This quasi-refrain is repeated and varied throughout the poem until in the antepenultimate stanza, after the introduction of materialist atheism, it becomes:

Receive it not, but leave it not,  
And wait it out, O man! (103-104)

After this rejection of idolism, and the suspension of judgement, the last stanza ends with a final rousing variation:

Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe,  
And thou shalt do, O Man! (125-6)

---

<sup>103</sup> This meekness differs wildly from the kind of “radicalism” that Armstrong attributes to Clough’s politics and his poetics. Part of this difference comes from Armstrong’s almost exclusive focus on the *Bothie* (*Armstrong, Victorian Poetry 178–204*).

<sup>104</sup> Michael Timko has made the related suggestion that for Clough, poetry is the “verbal expression of a man’s innermost being” (Timko, ‘The Poetic Theory of Arthur Hugh Clough’ 240).

Despite the optimism of these last lines, they are not for the present. The moment that the speaker is addressing is neither Egyptian beginnings, nor Mosaic illumination but the muddle of the middle, where all the an Israelite (or a Victorian) may do is to wait and resist the prophet-tongues that invite him or her to join those who “with dance amain, / [a]dore the golden calf” (81-2). It is neither the first nor the final version of the refrain that can instruct the Victorian audience. Instead what most fits the needs of the moment is the middling command to wait, reminiscent of Clough’s letter to his sister quoted above, and to neither receive nor reject. But this injunction to wait does not conclude the poem. The closing lines combine the grammar of the future tense with a lexical pastness (thou shalt), implying that this conclusion is both a command of biblical antiquity and a utopian promise not adapted to the present. In other words, in the closing lines – promising future revelation to urge away from false prophecy – the speaker adopts the voice of the prophet.

Another poem, left untitled by Clough and usually referred to by its first line, falls into a similar inconsistency when considering speech, the central function of the prophet:

Why should I say I see the things I see not,  
 Why be and be not?  
 Show love for that I love not, and fear for what I fear not?  
 And dance about to music that I hear not?  
 Who standeth still i’ the street  
 Shall be hustled and justled about;  
 And he that stops ’i the dance shall be spurned by the dancers’ feet,—  
 Shall be shoved and be twisted by all he shall meet,  
 And shall raise up an outcry and rout  
 (“*Why should I say I see the things I see not*” 1-9)

The poem opens by questioning strong declarations and rejecting false visions. But this rejection does not equate to a celebration of immersion in Arnold’s dreaded time stream. Instead the poem warns that it is the bustle of reality itself that can hurry the speaker to frantic declarations, much as the lines are rushed from measured iambs and trochees to waltzing anapaests. Rather than walking into reality, the speaker warns his audience of

the rushing of feet and form, urging them to understand that while the music of the time stream is “loud and bold and coarse, / And overpowering” (30-1), there is also a second music “With pauses oft and many a silence strange (And silent oft it seems, when silent it is not)” (38-9). As the poem reaches its climax the tension intensifies. Urging the reader to wait for the softer, silent music, the poem becomes insistent, exclamatory, painfully repetitive, and almost loud:

Yet turn to other none,—  
 Turn not, oh, turn not thou!  
 But listen, listen, listen, – if haply be heard it may;  
 Listen, listen, listen, – is it not sounding now?  
 (“*Why should I say I see the things I see not*” 44-47)

It is only the stanza’s final half-line question that brings the pitch back down again, suggesting that this kind of insistence is acceptable only where it serves not the purpose of expression itself but to advocate better listening practices. For a moment, the speaker might sound desperate to claim an audience for his vision, but his ultimate aim seems rather to urge readers away from the world and the poem in order that they may listen and look for the beatific vision themselves. The poem becomes loud in the service of silence.

Clough’s *Ambarvalia* poems are not sceptical in the philosophical sense but their propensity for inconsistency and performative contradiction resembles similar tendencies often identified with scepticism.<sup>105</sup> Hegel, whose philosophy gained popularity among Clough’s acquaintances, especially Tom Arnold and Benjamin Jowett, warns that scepticism “ha[s] propounded the doctrine that the truth cannot be known” (*Hegel’s Logic*

---

<sup>105</sup> As the OED notes, “scepticism” is frequently used in non-philosophical discourse to denote a “disposition to doubt or incredulity in general” (‘Scepticism | Skepticism, N.’). Studies of Victorian poetry often use scepticism in this way. Isobel Armstrong, for example, implicitly adopts this broad definition when she describes what she considers the most prototypically Victorian type of poetry, the “double poem”, as a “deeply sceptical form” (Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry* 13). Clough’s poetry, like most Victorian poetry, is obviously sceptical in this broad sense but not, I think in the narrower philosophical sense. That is, it does not subscribe to the doctrine of the sceptics that, as the OED puts it “real knowledge of any kind is unattainable” (‘Scepticism | Skepticism, N.’).

181).<sup>106</sup> This, for Hegel, is an internally contradictory position that gives rise to the “unhappy consciousness” of the sceptic – contradictory and self-divided – because scepticism “speaks about absolute *disappearance*, but that ‘*speaking about*’ itself *is*, and this consciousness is the disappearance spoken about” (*The Phenomenology of Spirit* 122-123 §205-206). In other words, for Hegel, scepticism suffers from an inconsistency between theory and practice because in knowing or pronouncing that one cannot know one is claiming knowledge. The unhappy consciousness is scepticism aware of its theory-practice inconsistency but unable to overcome it. Clough’s *Ambarvalia* poems do not suggest that “truth cannot be known”. Instead they reaffirm that there is something to be known which future prophets might share and contemporary readers must wait and listen for. But they remain intensely aware of the present limits of humanity. True knowledge, while not impossible, remains beyond creaturely limitation – as the speaker of one of the *Ambarvalia*’s most self-contradictory poems asks: “(for what of earthly kind / Can see Thee as Thou art?)” (“Qui Laborat, Orat” 10-11). The fear of false-prophecy and false knowledge is the other side of respect for true prophecy and true knowledge so that humility and devotion find expression in accepting the limits of knowledge and expression. Possessed of something like Hegel’s unhappy consciousness of the sceptic, the speakers of Clough’s poems cannot avoid the inherent contradiction of their position – they can only humbly accept it as a religious paradox. Even the “bare conscience of the better thing / Unfelt, unseen, unimagined, all unknown”, entails a truth-claim about the unknown and imagines the “unimagined” (“Why should I say I see the things I see not” 53-54). This inconsistency is only heightened by the verbal nature of poetry, which allows

---

<sup>106</sup> Hegel uses this definition to contrast scepticism with another position, which he calls “modern subjective philosophies, or subjective idealism” (Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 181). The difference is that while scepticism acknowledges surfaces only, subjective idealism sees apart from “subjective knowing, still another knowing, not produced by thinking, i.e. the immediate knowing, faith, vision, revelation, longing for a ‘beyond’, or the like” (Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 181). The unknowing submission that Clough criticizes Newman for in the letter to his sister quoted above, can be understood in terms of Hegel’s subjective idealism.

the speaker to make but not to keep the pious promise that “this earthly mind / speechless remain” (“Qui Laborat, Orat” 10).

Clough finishes his part of the *Ambarvalia* with a poem that self-referentially accepts the contradictoriness of his poetics in an enquiry into the nature of poetry, which posits the transcendental understanding of poetry as the “vision and the faculty divine” against a materialist “constitution and condition / Of the brain and of the belly?” (“Is it true, ye gods, who treat us” 1.7, 19-20). The speaker prefers the first kind of poetics but fears the second to be truer. He concludes that the best thing to do is to at least admit the possibility of the profane nature of poetry, rather than make false pretences, declaring: “If it is so, let it be so / And we will all agree so” (26). But here metaphysical evil works in the poet’s favour, undermining good and bad potentialities alike. It prompts the poet to question poet-as-prophet poetics but at the heart of that questioning it must turn against itself, making a profanely materialist understanding equally unreliable. Clough’s *Ambarvalia* ends on the hopeful, contradictory, and ambivalent couplet:

But the plot has counterplot,  
It may be, and yet be not. (27-28)

The ambiguity of “and yet”, at the heart of the couplet, combines both the uncertainty of not knowing which of the two views of poetry is true and the paradox that both might be. At the same time the proximity of “not” also suggests the temporal “not yet” – pointing forward in time and beyond the end of the poem and the book. Echoing many of the self-contradictory phrasings that permeate the *Ambarvalia*, Clough unites in one final paradox the myriad antinomies. As if burdened by the Hegelian “unhappy consciousness” of the sceptic, Clough’s speakers cannot overcome the theory-practice inconsistencies. Nor do they aspire to, for in maintaining the contradictions the speakers resist the opposing forces of silence and expression, constructing a testament to the limits of the human subject position, humbly waiting for a resolution that must come from a higher authority, if at all.

*Adam and Eve and Metaphysical Evil*

In 1848, while he was preparing material for the *Ambarvalia* and writing the *Bothie*, Clough was also working on another poem – likely his first attempt at the long form – which he would continue redrafting for years to come. The poem, as it is usually published following Blanche Clough’s initial editorial work, combines two biblical stories: Adam and Eve’s exile and Cain’s murder of Abel. Following the labelling Clough used in his notebooks but occluding the unusual double focus, the poem is nowadays usually titled *Adam and Eve*. When Blanche Clough prepared the unpublished material for posthumous publication, she concluded that “[t]he poem must have lain long in the author’s mind – how long it is impossible to say, but certainly during several years” (quoted in Clough and Mulhauser 663). Drafts of scenes from *Adam and Eve* share notebooks, and even pages, with Clough’s most successful poems including *The Amours de Voyage (1849 (Roma) Notebook)* and *Dipsychus (1850 (Venice) Notebook.)*. P. G. Scott suggests that Clough first conceived of *Adam and Eve* as early as 1845 because of notebook entries dated to that year in which Clough mentioned the Fall and referred to a review of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem *The Drama of Exile* (1844) (P. G. Scott 82). The first conclusive proof of the existence of drafts of *Adam and Eve*, however, comes in the summer of 1848 in one disapproving and one approving letter from Arnold and Froude respectively (Arnold, *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough* 86; Froude quoted in Mulhauser 27). Clough’s 1845 notes on the topic likely indicate not so much the birth of this particular poem as his long-standing interest in the topic.

Throughout his poetic career Clough continuously draws allegorically on the first parents of humanity. In the *Bothie* Clough introduces “the Tutor, the grave man, nicknamed Adam” (1.20) and Hewson, before he finds his Rachel allegory, imagines “Eve from the hand of her Maker advancing, an helpmeet for him” (2.84). In the *Amours*, Clough similarly has Claude reimagine himself as Adam, a wholly critical “coxcomb”, lamenting

that “for Adam there is not found an help-meet” (1.7.150-51). But Adam and Eve are not merely an aspirational ideal of matrimony, rather they function as an all-purpose – though often deeply gendered – allegory for humanity; as Dipsychus declares “[n]ot as the male is the female. / Eve was moulded not as Adam” (*Dipsychus* 3.76-77). If this compulsion is characteristic of Clough, who throughout his poetry routinely returned to the same issues, images, and poems, it is yet special in degree: the first parents are Clough’s most abiding *idée fixe*.

In itself there is nothing unusual in the fact that Clough’s mind should return to the Genesis story given its double importance both in the Christian and the English literary tradition, especially following the Romantic apotheosis of Milton. And yet, if, as I suggest, Clough is preoccupied with metaphysical evil, his interest in Adam and Eve needs some explanation, since it is on Adam and Eve that the Augustinian-Thomist theodicy, with its exclusive focus on moral evil, rests. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton engraved the Augustinian theodicy of Adam and Eve’s wilful origination of moral evil into the English religious and literary mind. That is not to say that Milton is strictly Augustinian, though the case has been made,<sup>107</sup> merely that *Paradise Lost* engages with the story of Adam and Eve on the largely Augustinian terms of moral culpability and fallenness. At times, especially in the fall of the angels and the role of Satan, Milton enlarges on Augustine, without contradicting him.

Where Milton does differ from Augustine, he places an even higher onus on human free will and moral culpability. For Augustine, humanity before the fall was capable of avoiding sin (*Posse non peccare*) – which makes Adam and Eve’s transgression so

---

<sup>107</sup> For a history of different theological perspectives through which Milton has been read see (Myers 7–10). Peter Fiore’s *Milton and Augustine: Patterns of Augustinian Thought in Paradise Lost* contains the most detailed exploration of Milton’s Augustinianism. The most engaging polemic of Milton’s case against God is still William Empson’s *Milton’s God* (1961). On the basis of seventeenth-century contexts, especially Armenianism, Dennis Danielson responds to Empson, reconstructing Milton’s theodicy in *Milton’s Good God*.

damning a fall. In the expulsion from paradise, humanity loses the ability of not sinning (*non posse non peccare*). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton uses the authoritative voice of God to declare that Adam was created “Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (Milton, *Paradise Lost* 55 Bk. 3 l. 99). The discovery of *De Doctrina* in 1825, which made Milton anathema to the Oxford Anglo-Catholics of Clough’s day, affirmed what *Paradise Lost*’s repeated insistence on human freedom and culpability had hinted at: Milton’s conviction that human knowledge after the fall still suffices to resist sin. Breaking with Augustine as well as Protestant mainstream thinking, Milton declared in *De Doctrina* that “[i]n the end, all are sufficiently equipped with innate reason to be able by themselves to resist depraved feelings” (Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana* 93). For Milton, the first humans and all that followed should and could have known better. Where Augustine had used Adam and Eve to establish the primacy of moral evil, Milton used them to declare the insignificance of metaphysical evil.

This is precisely how Clough reads Milton, as one utterly unconcerned with creaturely limitations and entirely certain of his own righteousness, though Clough himself is characteristically ambivalent about what that means for the Victorian poet. In a *Lecture on the Development of English Literature* (1852) Clough described Milton as:

self-committed, strongly, deliberately, seriously, irreversibly committed; walking as in the sight of God, as in the profound, almost rigid conviction that this one, and no other of all those many paths is, or can be, for the just and upright spirit possible, self-predestined as it were, of his own will and foreknowledge, to a single moral and religious aim. (*The Poems and Prose Remains* 1 342)

The admiration for Milton’s commitment is mixed with a hint of condescension, as if Milton does not quite understand the reality of the human condition, underlined by the addition of “as” and “as it were”, which transforms Milton from one who walks in the sight of God to one who perhaps only believes himself, or was believed, to do so. “The spirit of Milton”, Clough later writes with the same uncertainty “still lives and breathes

in our native airs; we imbibe it in the earliest and commonest influences that environ us; it has entered, for good, for evil, or for both, into the constituents of our national character” (Clough, *The Poems and Prose Remains I* 344). But if the influence of Milton is unavoidable, as the characteristically Cloughian “for good, for evil, or for both” suggests, the question yet remains how to deal with that fact. Clough gave his answer in a review of Arnold’s *Empedocles on Etna* (1852). “Not by turning and twisting his eyes in the hope of seeing things as Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, or Milton saw them”, he wrote, “but by seeing them, by accepting them as he sees them, and faithfully depicting accordingly, will [the poet] attain the object he desires” (*The Poems and Prose Remains I* 374). In other words, regardless of what Milton saw and knew or thought he knew, and regardless of how large his shadow looms, it is futile to try to extend his line of vision into the present.

This is a productive position, for in rewriting the story of Adam and Eve it is the authority of Milton – rather than of God, the Bible, or Augustine – with which nineteenth-century authors tended to contend. That this would be so Andrew Marvell recognized centuries before Harold Bloom diagnosed the anxiety of influence, famously writing in his peremptory poem, in which he also established Milton’s gift of prophecy “that no room is here for writers left but / But to detect their ignorance or theft” (‘On Paradise Lost’ lines 29-30). In the face of Milton, even Lord Byron becomes timid, writing in the preface of his *Cain, A Mystery* (1821): “Since I was twenty, I have never read Milton” only to then sheepishly admit “but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference” (Byron, *Cain, a Mystery*. vi). Throughout his poem, Byron continuously seems to attack Milton’s premises, frequently reminding readers, for example, that in Genesis it was the serpent and not Lucifer in disguise that tempted Eve, and questioning the assumed sufficiency of knowledge. Byron’s self-conscious corrections of Milton emphasize that Milton stands like a sword of fire between the poet and his material.

Showing much greater reverence, Elizabeth Barrett Browning is consumed by the anxiety of not mere influence but blasphemy – against Milton – yet finds herself similarly incapable of resisting the idol. Describing her plan for *A Drama of Exile*, in the preface of her *Poems* (1844), her gaze is always towards Milton:

I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling, – and I, without, with my exiles, – *I* also an exile! It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow. (Barrett Browning vii)

There is a boldness to Barrett Browning's humility. Not merely in the provocative dexterity with which she stages herself both nun-like in her vow to abstain, and as a fallen woman ravished by and herself ravishing Milton's godlike glory ("I stood full in it") but also in the very form of the engagement. The formal gesture of deference to Milton, which makes her start her drama after the end of his narrative to avoid hubristic comparison, inverts gendered spheres: He is safe within, while Barrett Browning is free to roam outside. This mirrors the larger strategy of her work, instead of challenging Milton, she embraces him, carving a space of her own by changing the focus from Adam's instruction to Eve's experiential education. Barrett Browning has her Eve fully acknowledge the freedom of her choice, her fallenness and guilt, while rewriting Eve's sin as sacrifice opening up positive values of motherhood, love, and art. Rather than finding a voice in attack, like Byron's Cain, Barrett Browning declares with Eve that "[o]nly my gentleness shall make me great, / My humbleness exalt me" (67).

Contrasting with Byron and Barrett Browning, Clough's reworking of the Genesis material neither attacks nor embraces Milton, opening instead with Adam struggling to claim Miltonic certainties but powerless to adopt the spirit or the form. Adam, alone with his wife, declares:

Since that last evening we have fallen indeed!

Yes, we have fallen, my Eve! O yes! –  
 One, two, and three, and four; – the appetite,  
 The enjoyment, the aftervoid, the thinking of it –  
 Specially the latter two, most specially the last.  
 There in synopsis, see, you have it all:  
 Come, let us go and work! Is it not enough?  
 What, is there three, four, five? (*Adam and Eve* lines 1-7)

The end-stopped, exclamatory first line asserts a conviction undermined as soon as it is uttered. Semantically redundant, the final “indeed” protests a little too much. Rhythmic as it is, even the first line with its feet tending towards the ternary defies the balanced blank verse that the Miltonic tradition suggests and that both Byron and Barrett Browning adopt for their beginnings. Contrasting with these, Clough opens on a mixture of dactyls, trochees and iambs that form jumbled tetrameters and slip in line three and four into a barely scannable iambic pentameter before losing all measure in the uneasy hexameter of line five. These lines are treacherous. The only fixed point for uncertain feet lies in the weight of the first syllable of “fallen” – with all its Miltonic and Augustinian implications. As that “fallen” repeats within the first two lines, readers are at peril of overstressing it to find their footing and construct a simulacrum of stability. The lines metrically mirror the kind of dilemma that Adam finds himself in, and the temptation to accept that word, “fallen”, as the foundation to build on. Adam seeks order, building in parallel the numeric sequence and a sequence of events as if to say that appetite, enjoyment, “aftervoid”, and contemplation must needs follow each other as two follows one. But again metre undermines matter. English spondees do not build confidence, especially when followed by doubled “and”s. Instead they give the impression that the speaker could not decide between the simpler and more insistent “one, two, three, four” and the Macbethian “one, and two, and three, and four”. Even such simple principles of order will not do. When used to make sense of experience the simple sequentiality of numbers itself becomes insufficient and questionable: “What, is there three four five?”

Adam's failure to embrace Miltonic convictions places him squarely in the Romantic tradition, an impression which Clough strengthens through Wordsworthian echoes. Particularly the opening lines resemble those lines from *The Borderers* which Wordsworth wrote in the 1790s, first published as part of the dedication of *The White Doe of Rylstone*, and only presented in their original context with the publication of *The Borderers* in 1842.<sup>108</sup> In the dramatic climax of that play – in a monologue which for Harold Bloom speaks for nearly all Romantic poets (Bloom 76) – Oswald, having been tricked into murder, summarizes the central predicament:

Action is transitory – a step, a blow,  
 The motion of a muscle—this way or that—  
 'Tis done; and in the after-vacancy  
 We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:  
 Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark  
 And shares the nature of infinity.  
 (Wordsworth, *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* 346 Act 3)

Wordsworth “after-vacancy” might have become Clough’s “aftervoid” but the thought remains the same. Action is fickle, impermanent and yet unavoidable; only Clough’s “thinking of it” or Wordsworth’s “wonder[ing] at ourselves” has any real permanence. That Clough’s poem – like Barrett Browning’s *Drama of Exile* but for very different reasons – begins with the biblical action in the unalterable and unobserved past, and thus here with contemplation and interpretation, gives form to the Wordsworthian sentiment. As the poem begins, the moment of “the fall” itself is already complete and all that is left is “the aftervoid” – Wordsworth’s after-vacancy – and contemplation. Even for the first humans, it is always already too late.

---

<sup>108</sup> Clough was aware that Wordsworth had published “a new vol. of poems including the *Borderers*, a tragedy” by April 1842, though he had not read it yet (*Correspondence* I 118). On June 25, Clough notes in his diary that he read Wordsworth, though he does not say what exactly, which was not his usual practice (*The Oxford Diaries of Arthur Hugh Clough* 209). Given the frequency with which Clough read Wordsworth, it is difficult to imagine that he did not read *The Borderers* in the year of its publication. But even if he did not, he certainly knew *The White Doe of Rylston* well (Clough, *The Poems and Prose Remains* I 314). Clough’s Adam could be inspired by both *The Borderers*’ Oswald and the more positive dedication of *The White Doe of Rylstone*.

Like Wordsworth, who in the dedication to the *White Doe* tempered the obscure darkness with the promise of a “sure ascent” (*The White Doe of Rylstone* lines 11-12), Clough too allows his Adam a more positively Romantic outlook. Within a few lines the event that Adam gave in synopsis as having “fallen indeed” turns into an upward force of active nature:

We were to grow. Necessity on us lay  
This way or that to move; necessity, too,  
Not to be over-careful this or that,  
So only move we should (1.16-19)

Here Clough barely conceals his use of Wordsworth, rendering “The motion of a muscle—this way or that—” as “This way or that to move”. With Adam questioning Miltonic certainties, it is Eve who reasserts the essence of the Augustinian-Miltonic tradition: “Oh, guilt, guilt, guilt!” (1.8). Again and again she repeats that word until the “senseless iteration” (1.24) of her certainty erodes all vestiges of Adam’s own Augustinian-Miltonic leanings. It is in direct opposition to Eve’s orthodoxy that Adam fully embraces the Necessitarian counter-argument, answering Eve’s “guilt” with the assurance – Spinozan in thought, Wordsworthian in tone, with a dark undercurrent of Macbeth – that “[t]is done; it was to be done” (1.10). As the scene unfolds the marital strife between Adam and Eve appears to externalize the struggle between two rival theodicies with Eve defending Augustinian orthodoxy and Adam countering with Irenaean Romanticism.

Adam’s declaration of the Romantic theodicy has often been read as a sincere expression of his and by extension even Clough’s own position. Houghton, for example, writes that “[c]learly, *Adam and Eve* is the final result, in artistic terms, of the long religious debate that culminated in 1848, when Christianity was replaced by an ethical-religious philosophy that came from many sources, but especially from Thomas Arnold and Wolfgang von Goethe” (Houghton 82). Houghton does not expand on the influence of Thomas Arnold on *Adam and Eve* but it seems that what he means by the influence of

Goethe is specifically the kind of Herder-influenced positive Spinozism with its belief in vitality, benevolently-led growth, and melioration, which the Weimar sage embraced as a young man, and later abandoned. P. G. Scott traces Clough's alleged positive, educational view of suffering to a more nearby source, claiming that Clough's *Adam and Eve* "originated as a transcendentalist-inspired, Adam-centred, answer to Elizabeth Barrett's more orthodox and Eve-centred *Drama of Exile*" (P. G. Scott 84) – in other words, Clough is the Emersonian Adam to Barrett Browning's Miltonic Eve.<sup>109</sup> Timko declares Clough's "positive naturalism" the motivating concern central to all his thought and especially to *Adam and Eve* ('The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough' 114). He goes furthest in equating Adam and Clough and ascribing to both a full acceptance of the Romantic version of the Irenaean theodicy, summarizing the message of *Adam and Eve* thus: "To Clough, man, as a human, necessarily has to suffer, but he also has to grow. 'Earthy as well as godlike,' he is bound to develop until his native goodness asserts itself" (*Innocent Victorian* 10–11).

This compelling critical reading, which sees Adam as a mouthpiece of Romantic Optimism, opposing Eve's voice of Augustinian orthodoxy, has one crucial flaw: form.<sup>110</sup> For a poem that celebrates growth, *Adam and Eve* is excruciatingly stagnant. So sluggish is the poem that P. G. Scott's reconstruction of what he believes to be Clough's last intention can leave out three scenes without notable change to the overall story, and without making the poem appear any more dynamic (P. G. Scott 99). There is no action – at least none that is shown in any of the editions or Clough's manuscripts – nor any

---

<sup>109</sup> While the evidence for Clough having read Barrett Browning's *Poems* (1844) is persuasive, Scott neglects to point out that Clough's only comment on the actual content of the collection was that he was "rather disappointed" (*Correspondence* 1 139) and that there is little evidence for more than a passing awareness.

<sup>110</sup> Angela Leighton is, I think, correct that form "cannot be pinpointed by a single definition; it can only be described, progressively, on the hoof" (Leighton 18). What I mean by that complex, ambiguous term here is the way in which content is selected, distributed, and presented.

notable character development. Even Abel and Cain are not seen to grow up. Their births are discussed by their parents in scene III and IV; in scene V they are adults with distinct personalities. If they are supposed to have had a childhood, it is not dramatized or witnessed by the reader. Ideas are similarly unchanging. They appear in the world of the poem as quasi-Platonic “essential Forms” (Plato, *The Republic of Plato* 187), which replace but do not influence each other or, indeed, grow. Everything that will be said in the fourteen scenes of the drama is already mentioned as a fully developed form in the first scene. That is not to say that Adam and Eve are stable in their perspectives; quite the contrary. But rather than developing their world view and building on their own past beliefs they merely switch to and fro: Eve’s “guilt”, which Adam rejects with Necessitarianism in scene I, he adopts in a hysterical fit in scene II. In scene III, in which Eve basks in the purity of her new-born and finds “Paradise come back” (3.4), Adam counters with the thoroughly Augustinian idea of original sin, telling Eve that “The child is born of us, and therefore like us; / Is born of us, and therefore is not pure” (3.48-50). When Eve consequently embraces the notion of original sin, Adam immediately rejects it. Instead of holding a discreet position, Adam inhabits merely a fluctuating muddle that depends on context rather than convictions. Clough might give Adam momentary declarations of growth but not the experience of it.

The dramaturgical torpor of Clough’s poem and the unsubstantiality of Adam’s occasional Romantic theodicy is most glaring in the murder of Abel, which rather than bringing a climax, returns the reader back to the beginning of the poem. As in the beginning, Clough does not show the event itself but jumps directly from “appetite” to “aftervoid”, contemplation, and regret, with Cain echoing his father’s post-lapsarian bewilderment – both sentiment and semantics – asking of his dead brother: “What? fallen? so quickly down, so easily felled, / And so completely?” (9.1-2). Like his father before him, Cain finds himself questioning his lot, yet another man betrayed, wondering

at himself. Adam's attempt to comfort his son entails his most succinct, metrically balanced, and at the same time least convincing expression of Optimism:

My son, 'tis done, it was to be done; some good end  
Thereby to come, or else it had not been (13.2-3).

What makes this so unconvincing is in part that it contains a verbatim repetition in the penultimate scene of the poem of the same Wordsworth-inspired phrase Adam proclaimed in the first scene to assure Eve of the necessity of growth (“[t]is done, it was to be done” (1.10)). Clough thus seems to disprove through repetition the very growth Adam initially asserted – Adam has precisely not grown, he's still saying the very same things he said before his children were born. The added insistence on the “good end” is rife with dramatic irony since it comes at the point that for Eve, who was the first audience of Adam's Romantic theodicy, marks the worst possible outcome, with her favourite son killed, her hopes of “Paradise come back” shattered, and all her fears of original sin renewed. Adam's declaration of growth and a good end comes at the very moment that renders it most dubious.

If the form of the poem does not give credence to Adam's occasional Optimism, it does support his incredulity and overwhelming sense of bewilderment. The text and the world that Adam and Eve inhabit seems designed in a way that renders it impervious to any of the theodicies which they devise – the world of the poem remains, in Kant's words, “a closed book”. The avoidance of the fall, which served Barrett Browning as a signifier of deference before Milton, here forces a questioning of Miltonic assumptions, since the reader does not actually witness the fall. Nor does Clough grant the kind of authoritative witnesses that Milton, Barrett Browning, and even Byron allow for: spirits, angels, demons and devils. The small cast of Clough's verse drama is entirely human. Where Barrett Browning begins her drama at “[t]he outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with clouds, from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire self-moved” (3), and even

Byron explicitly puts his protagonists in the “[t]he Land without Paradise” (*Cain, a Mystery*. 11), thus authoritatively confirming that in the world of his poem there is such a thing as Paradise, Clough stages his drama in a non-descript location with nary a cherubim or self-moving sword in sight. The closest that Adam comes to Paradise is in memories of the Miltonic “marriage Bower” from which he was driven, not by God but by Eve’s dream and her conclusion that the “pleasant woodland shades” were “for the like of us too good” (1.54-6). As time passes – a process signified by truncated moments rather than a slow unfolding – Adam and Eve’s memory collapses into itself. In Adam’s speech the biblical events increasingly resemble not so much lived experience but an oft repeated but unverified story:

What is it then you wish me to subscribe to?  
 That in a garden we were put by God,  
 Allowed to eat of all the trees but one;  
 Somehow – I don’t know how – a serpent tempted,  
 And eat we did, and so were doomed to die;  
 Whereas before we were meant to live for ever. (4.30-35)

Beside the tongue-in-cheek reference to the very specific problem posed by subscription to the thirty-nine articles, and especially those articles concerning the veracity, necessity and morality of the Old Testament (Articles VI and VII), Clough is also making a larger point about the human condition. If even Adam cannot be certain about the truthfulness or significance of the Old Testament account, how can a “child of late posterity” (2.78)? Uncertainty and religious doubts are not the result of scientific or High Critical innovation but of being human and thus being limited in one’s ability to know or fathom even one’s own past.

Through Adam’s and Eve’s uncanny amnesia, together with the excision of the biblical action, and the complete avoidance of supernatural authority, Clough manipulates the tradition of Adam and Eve from an explanation of moral evil into an exploration of metaphysical evil. In Clough’s version, Adam and Eve are not, or not only, the

progenitors of evil but its first victims. They are thrown into a material world drenched with metaphysical evil and their creaturely limitation is, first and foremost, a limitation of knowledge, an inability of humans to know “each other’s hearts” (11.55), and, more importantly, God’s will. Adam and Eve simply do not, cannot, know. They can speculate about a divine plan. They can (and do) question guilt or embrace it. But ultimately they cannot be certain. The uncertainty is such that even simple Eve’s simple questions become inscrutable:

*Eve.* You do not think then, Adam,  
 We have been disobedient to God?  
*Adam.* My child, how should I know, and what do you mean?  
 (4.36-38)

The central conflict between Adam and Eve is not really, as Houghton reflecting the critical commonplace would have it, “between his liberal ethical philosophy and her Christian orthodoxy” (Houghton 83) – that is between two sets of opposing convictions – but between two ways of dealing with a lack of knowledge. Where Eve demands and clings to answers, Adam has only questions, a conflict amplified in their children, with Abel turning into dogma what in Eve was superstition. But ultimately, Eve knows no more than Adam. Like him, she has fears, dreams, hopes, and anxieties but no true knowledge. Even Eve’s own conviction of her guilt, is merely an assumption drawn backwards from her present suffering, rather than certainty of past actions. The difference that Clough ascribes to Adam’s and Eve’s position is one of self-awareness, rather than knowledge. There is something less than certain in Eve’s desperate attempt to make Adam “[a]cknowledge some time somehow we did wrong” (4.83) that merely solidifies in Adam’s “My child, I never granted even that” (4.84). It is with Adam and Eve that humanity becomes incapable of telling whether it suffers because it has sinned, whether it has sinned because of its metaphysical limitations, or whether it merely suffers because metaphysical limitations render it incapable of understanding that it hasn’t sinned at all. And it is this inability to know that is the true evil and true suffering of Adam and Eve.

Eve may or may not be the first sinner but whether she sinned or not, she is the mother of “The questionings of ages yet to be, / The thinkings and cross-thinkings, self-contempts / Self-horror; all despondencies, despairs, / Of multitudinous souls on souls to come” (1.124-28). As *Adam and Eve* suggests, the fragmented uncertainty that for many critics signifies the poets “modernity” is not modern at all. It is as old as humanity itself.

Metaphysical evil, which, in Clough’s rendition often manifests as an epistemic problem, means that one can never be certain that any action is morally evil – that is, opposed to the will of God – and yet uncertainty does not absolve one from moral responsibility. For Cain, it makes moral evil more torturous, for where there is no certainty of sin, there can be no certainty of redemption. And so Cain, remorseful as he is, refuses to be “of that pious kind, / Who, when the blot has fallen upon their life, / Can look to heaven and think it white again” (13.10-12). To him, certainty, especially certainty of redemption, “seems sin – the worst of sin” (13.18). Abel, his mother’s son as Cain is his father’s, has precisely that certainty, convinced both that he is a sinner and – with some dramatic irony given that this declaration directly precedes his physical demise – that his sins are “not to death” (6.14). In his final monologue, Abel condemns his father and brother because they are “prayerless” (6.4) and “[t]hink not of the Fall: e’en less they think / [o]f the Redemption, which God said should be” (6.10-11). Abel is certain that his brother and father are sinners; Cain is certain of nothing but that his brother has got it wrong. The question that *Adam and Eve* revolves around – ponderously and for most of the poem inconclusively – is which of the two sides has got it right.

It is only in the last scene that the poem gives an answer that if not quite surprising after the preceding scenes is yet decidedly unusual. The poem ends, conventionally enough, with a vision. But where Milton has the Angel Michael foretell the future to his hero’s progeny, or Barrett Browning shows her heroes instructed by Christ himself, “Adam’s Vision”, as the scene is titled, is his own: misty, sentimental, and unauthoritative. Even

in the end of his life, Adam receives no supernatural insight but must do with his own, limited as it is. In the vision, which is little more than a dream, Abel is come to life again, and the family is reunited. That the reconciliation of murderer and murder victim entails some form of apology is hardly surprising, what is surprising is who Adam envisions apologizing to whom:

And Abel came and took your hand, my son,  
And wept and kissed you, saying, 'Forgive me, Cain.  
Ah me! my brother, sad has been thy life,  
For my sake, all through me – how foolishly;  
Because we knew not both of us were right. (XIV 8-12)

As Adam's visionary supplication suggests, the real failing of Adam's children is not Cain's action or moral evil but certainty in the face of metaphysical evil. It is Abel more than Cain, who has been wrong in being so convinced of his own righteousness. In a world drenched in metaphysical evil, action, even murder, might be inevitable. The true danger lies in certainty and its expression. On that basis, the poem ends not on revelation but on consolation, as Adam declares that "[t]hough lacking knowledge always, lacking faith / sometimes" (14.41-3) he has found life beautiful. It is difficult to imagine a timider theodicy in the face of metaphysical evil. It is Adam's reluctance to express anything that emerges as his most cogent position, nowhere clearer, if anticlimactically so, than in the poem's last line: "Behold, the words of Adam have an end" (14.50). Adam is announcing his death, but he is also announcing his silence – the final conclusion not to say anything. If Adam has grown at all, it is from saying everything – Augustinian-Miltoic guilt or Irenaean-Romantic ascent – to saying nothing at all. By giving Adam the final, unopposed say, the poem sides, in the end, with prayerless Adam, making his silence speak louder than words.

If there is a collapse into finality in these last lines, as if the poem can no longer sustain its own fluctuating polyphony but must finally come to rest with one voice – and, paradoxically, its declaration of silence – it is important to recall that this finality is not

of Clough's making. Clough might have succumbed to a myriad theory-practice inconsistencies in the *Ambarvalia* but he does not do so here. For it is Mulhauser who ends "Adam and Eve" with the neat meta-poetic finality of Adam's declaration: "the words of Adam have an end". Blanche Clough's edition ends "Oh Cain! behold your father's words are said!" and includes in Adam's final monologue the ill-fitting lines: "As he hath lived he dies. – My comforter, / Whom I believed not, only trusted in, What had I been without thee? how survived?" (Clough, *The Poems and Prose Remains* 2 69). The same monologue Mulhauser relegates to the notes section and ascribes to Cain rather than Adam (Clough and Mulhauser 667). Scott ascribes these lines to Eve herself, where they do seem most fitting, but favours yet another conclusion, finishing his plan for *Adam and Eve* with a lyrical section, the last stanza of which would then end the poem thus:

Now the birds have ceased their singing  
 And all's over for today  
 And the bedtime bell's done ringing,  
     Wherefore stay,  
 Wherefore stay?  
     No! No!  
     Let us go!  
 Let us go! ("Chorus" 21-28, cf. Scott 96)

The manuscript evidence allows for all these possibilities: the ending used by Mulhauser comes from the recto of f. 33 (Clough, *Adam and Eve I*), while the ending Blanche Clough chooses is scribbled on the, otherwise empty, verso of the same page, without attribution to any of the possible speakers. Scott's lyrical ending is written on f. 34 and f. 35<sup>r</sup>, followed on f. 36<sup>r</sup> by a section from the very beginning of the poem headed "(prologue contd)". The position of the lyrical section could mean – as Scott is convinced it does<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Scott claims that the position leaves "little doubt" that Clough intended this to be the ending of the poem (P. G. Scott 96). But such certainty is not born out by the way in which Clough used his notebook. Scott himself describes the composition process thus: "He drafted poems, often very scrappily, on the recto pages only. The verso pages he initially left blank, and they were later filled up in one of two ways – either when he went through the original drafts adding extra material opposite the appropriate lines, or when he wrote a completely new series of drafts, often for quite different poems" (P. G. Scott 89–90). This is correct to a degree but makes the process sound much more orderly and systematic than what is evident in the notebooks, which often deviate from this method. Clough filled in what appears to be an alternative for lines 41–3 at the

– that Clough intended this lyric to follow what is the last scene in Mulhauser. Since there is a good deal of blank space between these texts and a title (rather than a scene number), this section could also be a new poem, and Mulhauser prints it as the separate poem “Chorus”. What all editors have in common is that they are obliged to seek in Clough’s manuscript evidence for the one right ending Clough intended, rather than recognizing that in Clough’s manuscript the poem does not have an ending because it does not reach a conclusion, it dissolves into little islands of text – crossed out and added in – between blank spaces, and then it begins again.

### A sense of the incomplete

“The poem”, so goes an old, formalist definition, “is a prolonged hesitation between sound and sense”.<sup>112</sup> It is tempting to think that Clough would have liked this focus on hesitation, not least because it comes from the French poet-critic Paul Valéry with whom Clough shared the biographical fact of more than a decade of poetic silence. Roman Jakobson applauded the definition not for its focus on hesitation but because it understands the *differentia specifica* of poetry in the oppositional interplay between the semantic and the semiotic (Jakobson 367), and it is this that also attracts Giorgio Agamben to Valéry’s definition. For Agamben, all poetic conventions (rhyme, caesura, etc.) take part in this hesitating opposition but it is nowhere more evident than in the run-on line. Implicitly equating poetry with verse, Agamben suggests that “the possibility of enjambment constitutes the only criterion for distinguishing poetry from prose” (Agamben, ‘The End of the Poem’ 109).<sup>113</sup> Clough is not unusually prone to enjambment,

---

empty bottom of the recto of f.33. And the lyrical section titled “Chorus” is written on both recto and verso in what seems to be one continuous movement. What the notebook shows is that Clough left sections blank – both recto and verso – and often filled in later with things that may or may not be connected to the material already on the surrounding spaces.

<sup>112</sup> “Le poème – cette hésitation prolongée entre le son et le sens” (Valéry 79; translation in Agamben, ‘The End of the Poem’ 109)

<sup>113</sup> Agamben is most likely inspired here by Jean-Claude Milner’s assertion: “En bref, il y a vers dès qu’il y a possibilité d’enjambement” (Milner 301).

though he does use it strategically to ward off a sense of finality that would otherwise attach to certain apodictic utterances, as in the *Amours* where Claude declares:

Dulce it is, and decorum, no doubt, for the country to fall,—to  
Offer one's blood an oblation to Freedom, and die for the Cause; yet  
(*Amours* 2.2.30-31).

For Agamben's definition, however, the actual occurrence of enjambment is irrelevant – even though it here heightens precisely this sense of hesitation – what matters is the potential not the reality of enjambment. Poetry, for Agamben, is that kind of language use in which the opposition of “a prosodic pause and a semantic pause” is possible (‘The End of the Poem’ 109).

What makes this way of defining poetry so interesting – apart from its formalist tangibility – are the consequences it has for the end of the poem. If poetic form rests on the possibility of enjambment, then the last verse of the poem, in which there evidently can be no enjambment, is itself not poetry (Agamben, ‘The End of the Poem’ 112). At the same time, as Agamben puts it, the poem “defines itself only at the point at which it ends” (110). It is only in the end that syllables and lines can be counted, and the poem can be catalogued as form. So too, it is at the end that the poem reaches a semiotic full stop, allowing the cataloguing of sense, or interpretation of meaning, escaping the centripetal force of form. If poetry is marked by hesitation and contradiction, it is in the end that it collapses its *principium individuationis*, ending the hesitation and inviting the unification of contradictions.

Endings have always – for so long that we cannot comprehend the beginning – carried special significance. The word “end” itself signifies limits, and completion, as well as purpose. In many ways, the end makes meanings, unifying words, sentences, and ideas into intelligible, intentional expression (‘End, N.’). For Kant, it is the end in particular – “God's final aim” (‘On the Miscarriage’ 31) – that remains a closed book, which is why humans cannot defend God's wisdom from what appears “counterpurposive”

(*zweckwidrig*) (Kant, ‘On the Miscarriage’ 33).<sup>114</sup> If we only knew the end, we could judge the means and justify God’s justice; then philosophical attempts at theodicy would not be destined to fail. As Frank Kermode puts it in his seminal *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), in which he traces the relationship between theological and literary teleology: “[t]he End changes all” (Kermode 47). Mankind, for Kermode, is caught in an existence whose limits remain incomprehensible, causing “our deep need for intelligible Ends” (Kermode 8). What ends give us, Kermode calls a concordance, and literature a supplier of concordance fiction. Peter Berger has a similar concept, which he calls a *nomos*, “an area of meaning carved out of a vast mass of meaninglessness, a small clearing of lucidity in a formless, dark, always ominous jungle” (Berger 23). The greater the sense of an ending, so this line of thought would suggest, the greater is the clearing in the jungle, the stronger the respite from the counterpurposive. If one purpose of literature is to help us construct meaning – to find concord-fictions, construct *nomoi*, and transcend creaturely limitation – this purpose is never more fully realized than in the end.

In not ending, Clough’s poetry remains in the formless jungle – Clough coins the less ominous phrase “garden of the infinite choices” (*The Poems and Prose Remains I* 341) – a place uniquely suited to his poetics. In never reaching the end, it never quite becomes a poem and it never quite stops being a poem. This sense that Clough’s unfinished poetry is not quite poetry is, I think, often implied in the way that editors speak of the material with which they work, putting, for example, the word “poem” in inverted commas (P. G. Scott 79), as if to indicate that this is and is not quite the right word. It might be more accurate though more cumbersome to think of the manuscripts as containing “poetic potentiality”; that is – adapting the way Agamben conceptualizes potentiality in his

---

<sup>114</sup> It is no coincidence that in Kant’s thought teleological and aesthetic judgements are intrinsically linked, nowhere more so than in his puzzling definition of the beautiful as “purposiveness without purpose” (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*). The phrase is heavily debated; Anthony Savile provides a clear literal interpretation (89–91). Paul Guyer translates the phrase as “purposiveness without an end” (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* 111 §15).

philosophical work – as the possibility of the poem “suspended between occurrence and nonoccurrence” (Agamben, *Potentialities* 276). This is the status of “Adam and Eve”, of which it would not be correct to say that it does not exist or that Clough did not write it, and yet one cannot quite say where it begins, or ends, or what belongs to it, in what order, and what does not. Or whether the two strands – Adam and Eve’s “fall” and Cain’s felling of Abel – are not actually two poems, or three (counting the lyrical “chorus”). The closer one looks at Clough’s poetic remains the more indeterminable the boundaries become. The poems titled by most editors as “Easter Day. Naples 1849” and “Easter Day II” announce the issue even in their title, as do *Dipsychus* and *Dipsychus Continued*. They are most often treated as entirely separate works – both Kenny and Thorpe, for example, print only the first in both cases – but the connections between them, in title and theme, are so evident that, much like the two strands of *Adam and Eve*, they could be rendered as a single poem. What Clough left behind is not fixed in either direction but rather an amorphous mass of interconnected, mutually contradictory, hesitant poetic potentiality. Clough allows the poem(s) to “be and be not” in the same way that he allows that “Christ is not risen” (“Easter Day” 5) and that “He is yet risen indeed, / Christ is yet risen” (“Easter Day II” 20-21) and again that “Christ is not risen!” (*Dipsychus* 11). In other words, what is so often described as an “editorial problem” is a poetic response to a metaphysical problem, or rather, a reaction to metaphysical evil itself. If Clough’s finished poetry declares a need for silence and hesitation, his unfinished poetry actually performs it.

This is not to suggest that Clough did not desire to finish or publish – he was excited to be paid for the *Amours* and giving editorial instructions even on his death-bed – but rather that this drive is opposed, not by some psychological foible but by the very nature of his poetics and metaphysics. This connection has been stated negatively, by Biswas, for example, who suggests that Clough’s poetry ultimately fails because “there is no clear

metaphysic, no clear moral hierarchy” (Biswas 381). What I am proposing instead is that Clough is surprisingly successful – particularly in the poetry often thought of as failed because unfinished – in the self-defeating endeavour of giving form to an inherently contradictory position and in crafting a poetics that respects its own awareness of the limits of the position of the human subject. Clough occasionally is quite explicit in making that connection – between the sense of creaturely imperfection and unfinished verse – having *Dipsychus*<sup>115</sup> declare, for example:

O perfect, if ‘twere all! But it is not;  
Hints haunt me ever of a More beyond:  
I am rebuked by a sense of the incomplete,  
Of a completion over-soon assumed,  
Of adding up too soon. (*Dipsychus* 11.29-33)

The Spirit’s answer in the same scene suggests a way of coping with this haunting, rebuking “sense of the incomplete”:

write verse,  
Burnt in disgust, then ill-restored, and left  
Half-made, in pencil scrawl illegible. (*Dipsychus* 11.131-33)

What is significant here is the linking of the imperfection of human existence with the perception of a “More beyond” – amplifying in its vagueness the *Bothie*’s “some one else up above” – and the potential of half-made verse. Clough suggests, with his usual ambivalence, that half-made verse might give form to the sense of the incomplete.

If poetic potentiality – Clough’s half-made verse – is a formal feature rather than an artistic failure and merely editorial problem, the form is partly lost in publication. Clough’s editors fulfil what Thomas Tanselle calls “an editor’s primary responsibility”, which is “to establish a text” (Tanselle, ‘Some Principles for Editorial Apparatus’ 45).<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> For practical reasons, I refer to speakers by the names given in Mulhauser, despite the fact that Clough was not set in his usage.

<sup>116</sup> There is no genetic edition and such a task seems not economically feasible even if physically, and would likely only postpone the issue to the reader, who would still choose one version over another. Some editions, such as Phelan’s *Selected Poems*, make an effort to be less eclectic. But I agree with Tanselle that “[n]o one is served [...] by the confused thinking that leads to the belief

In other words, editors – by the very nature of their work – end the struggle between occurrence and non-occurrence, collapsing fluctuating potentiality into fixed actuality. This editorial erosion of the sense of the incomplete is sometimes quite intense, as in the suggestion, made by one editor, that *Dipsychus* “brings Clough’s argument with himself to an end” (J. P. Phelan, ‘Introduction’ 3). The same editor writes elsewhere that Clough’s drafts of *Dipsychus* are particularly unfinished and “riddled with inconclusive emendations, cancellations, and other kinds of ‘pencil scrawl illegible’” but somewhere in the work of editorship the “deep need for intelligible ends” takes over and the half-made becomes a conclusion (J. P. Phelan, ‘The Textual Evolution of Clough’s “Dipsychus and the Spirit”’ 230). Even where editors remain acutely aware of the inconclusiveness of Clough’s unfinished poetry and the imposition inherent in editorial work, they cannot avoid fixing – both mending but also making firm and stable – what in Clough was incomplete, fluctuating, and disordered. Neither can critics. For if we want to talk of *Adam and Eve* or *Dipsychus* or “Easter Day”, and I think we should precisely because of their hesitant complexities, these poems must achieve a form. Even if the editorial work remains unseen, as soon as we talk of the poem, we are doing what Clough would not: we are making the poem.

\*

“We cannot, of course”, writes Frank Kermode, “be denied an end; it is one of the great charms of books that they have to end” (Kermode 23). The same is true of poems, of editions, and of criticism, which is part of their charm. Clough’s poetry is in that respect distinctly uncharming – Arnold speaks of a “deficiency of the *beautiful*” (Arnold, *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough* 66) – for it resists the urge to construct a theodicy in the face of metaphysical evil. It refuses to pretend that the final aim is not a

---

that one can alter the text of a document and still have a documentary text” (Tanselle, *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* 64).

“closed book” and it refuses to posit a humanly accessible end and thus abandon hope for a divine conclusion. This refusal entraps Clough’s poetry in a dilemma: the poetry fails if Clough completes it because its inner workings, his poetics of metaphysical evil, demand the sense of the incomplete, which is why the endings of his finished work are often judged unsatisfactory. But the poetry also fails if Clough does not complete it because the incomplete is, in a way, always an artistic failure – though perhaps a devotional success – since it fails to meet any of its communicative or expressive aims. A true sense of metaphysical evil is artistically infecund because it does not, in Hegelian terms, “speak about absolute *disappearance*”. It disappears. Without editorial interference Clough’s unfinished poetry isn’t better; it isn’t at all. Clough’s poetry bespeaks the struggle between the desire to finish and publish, and the need to respect the sense of the incomplete. His unfinished poetry remains hesitant in prayerless humility; it refuses to “pretend to know”, to claim to overcome metaphysical evil. Leaving his unfinished poetry behind, Clough transferred the onus of theodicy-making onto editors and critics – onto Blanche Clough and those who have come after – who, by editing, ending, and publishing both make the poem, as they make it accessible to readers, and, in ending, unmake the integral hesitancy in the face of metaphysical evil.

*The Usefulness of Suffering:*  
*George Eliot and Physical Evil*

*Sentiment de l'utilité de la souffrance, du progrès moral, des équivalences morales à travers l'échelle humaine....*

*A feeling of the usefulness of suffering, of moral progress, moral equivalences throughout the human realm....*

Marcel Proust<sup>117</sup>

*The redemption is only the result of the suffering; the suffering is the cause of the redemption.*

Ludwig Feuerbach  
*The Essence of Christianity* [George Eliot's translation]

*Pain is the transition of man from greater to less perfection.*

Baruch Spinoza  
*Ethics* [George Eliot's translation]

---

<sup>117</sup> From Proust's notes on his reading of George Eliot (Proust 657; translation in Wimmers 10).

### Rosamond's Reward

Tertius Lydgate, so the reader is informed in the “Finale” of *Middlemarch*,

died prematurely of diphtheria, and Rosamond afterwards married an elderly and wealthy physician, who took kindly to her four children. She made a very pretty show with her daughters, driving out in her carriage, and often spoke of her happiness as ‘a reward’—she did not say for what, but probably she meant that it was a reward for her patience with Tertius, whose temper never became faultless, and to the last occasionally let slip a bitter speech which was more memorable than the signs he made of his repentance. He once called her his basil plant; and when she asked for an explanation, said that basil was a plant which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man’s brains. (*Middlemarch* 782)

Lydgate’s death of diphtheria, a bacterial disease first classified in France in the 1820s, and only recognized in Britain in the late 1850s (cf. A. Hardy 81), ironically invokes his medical perspective: the physician with new, continental ideas dies of a continental disease that his old Middlemarch colleagues would not even recognize. The potential scientific focus on physical illness, however, is overshadowed by Rosamond’s domesticated theodicy. In considering her happiness as her “reward”, Rosamond casts Tertius’s death as his punishment for insufficient “repentance”. Tactful Rosamond does not spell out this implication, and even the narrator, suggesting that it was her patience with Tertius that Rosamond considered deserving, leaves it to the reader to conclude that Tertius must then have been deserving *of his punishment*. Rosamond is wrong, of course: her happiness is not her reward, and she is not deserving. If anything, Tertius is a “murdered man,” a conclusion his illness supports: diphtheria strangles its victims to death (cf. Dwyer 15). That the theodicy of just rewards is offered by Rosamond does enough to discredit it. It is easy, the text suggests, to interpret illness, death, and suffering on the scheme of rewards and punishments. By showing Rosamond interpreting her story in this light, Eliot works against Rosamond’s theodicy as an interpretative key, reminding readers in the closing pages how not to read the end of a life or a novel.

Throughout her oeuvre, Eliot uses such strategies of resistance to theodicy in interpreting physical evil. Physical evil in the Leibnizian sense, and in opposition to moral and metaphysical evil, describes suffering, especially physical suffering, death, illness, as well as psychological effects which in Eliot's scientific understanding are closely linked to the physical condition.<sup>118</sup> The chapter shows that even before embarking on her career as a novelist, Eliot was highly aware that writers use physicality to signify metaphysical convictions – that novelists and novelistic conventions do not faithfully depict the world but rather mimesis represents the world in accordance with their own notions of justice. In her criticism, Eliot conceptualizes the realist project precisely around the moral objective to avoid such novelistic theodicies. As a critic, she presents this avoidance as simple, and failure to do so a hallmark of silly novelists. In her novelistic practice, however, the task can come to look dizzyingly complex. I focus on Eliot's first novel, *Adam Bede*, to show the emerging novelist straining to avoid theodicy within her initial realist poetics. Her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, marks maximal distance from her original approach, and my reading suggests a strategy born out of an acceptance of the gravitational pull of theodicies on narrative. By focusing on the work which Eliot does within her novels to stop readers from reading physical evil as part of a divine plan, this chapter argues that while it is possible to use literature to urge readers away from theodicy it is not habitual for the novel to do so and even a writer as masterful, intelligent and ethically committed as Eliot often struggles. Because realist literature focuses on the physical, excluding, as Ian Watt put it whatever is “not vouched for by the senses” (84), it constantly invests physical evil with meaning – there are no meaningless deaths, there is no meaningless suffering. The challenge for the atheist novelist, and as such I read

---

<sup>118</sup> Most important in this respect is the second volume of George Henry Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind: The Physical Basis of Mind*, which Eliot edited and brought to publication after his death. Michael Davis gives a thorough account of George Eliot's theory of Mind and Lewes' influence (1–46).

Eliot, is then to thwart the meaningfulness of suffering and superimpose the randomness and meaninglessness which novelistic lives by the very nature of their purposeful creation lack. The challenge for the moralist is how to do this without losing the secular, ethical objective.

Biographically speaking, Eliot is, of the three authors discussed in this thesis, by far the one to whom the secularization narrative is most accurately applied, and my aim is not to question the validity of her deconversion. The story has often been told: born in 1819 near Nuneaton, Warwickshire as the youngest child of the moderate Anglican Robert Evans and his second wife, Christiana, Mary Anne Evans, as she was christened, soon came under an Evangelical influence, rejoicing in the dutiful, self-negating “fellowship in the sufferings of the Redeemer” (Cross 63). Despite the Evangelical distrust of literature, Eliot became an avid reader, not only of the Bible and religious works, but also of Walter Scott, and later of other Romantic poets, finding particularly in Wordsworth her “own feelings expressed” (Cross 44).<sup>119</sup> Her deconversion at the age of 22 coincides with her acquaintance and influential friendship with the Bray and Hennell family. Charles Bray, a committed phrenologist and author of *The Philosophy of Necessity; or, the Law of Consequences as Applicable to Mental, Moral, and Social Science* (1841), suggested to Eliot the legibility and deterministic significance of the physical. His wife, Caroline Bray, shared Eliot’s religious seriousness, which had been partially responsible for her brother Charles Hennell’s writing of the critical *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838). From a spiritual perspective, Eliot’s deconversion, which happened gradually with a pantheistic respite, was not so much a loss of faith as a gain in moral responsibility. No longer fearing eternal damnation, Eliot found herself free to make “that

---

<sup>119</sup> Ashton notes the distinctions which Eliot sets up to exculpate her reading, allowing, for example, all classics because they could be used to reference common ideals. The one type of imaginative literature Eliot despised during those Evangelical years – as she did afterwards – were religious fictions, which merged religious instructions with romance, and which she felt were a danger to public morality (Ashton, *George Eliot: A Life* 28).

choice of the good for its own sake that answers my ideal” (*Letters I* 144). The personal loss – the “Holy War” with her father (*Letters I* 133)<sup>120</sup> – proved much greater, and was ended only by Eliot’s agreement to resume church attendance. For the sake of others, Eliot was willing to adopt the public forms of faith, on the understanding that her inner self remained free.

The conventional reading of Eliot’s adolescent Evangelicalism and subsequent deconversion sees her embracing an atheist “Religion of Humanity” in the following years.<sup>121</sup> The landmarks in this development are her hugely influential but anonymous translation of Friedrich Strauss’s *Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1835, 1846), an assignment which came to her via the Bray-Hennell connection, and her translation of Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity* (1841, 1854). While the former project famously left her “Strauss-sick” (*Letters I* 206) because Strauss insisted on demythologizing the figure of Christ only to reinstate Christianity, Feuerbach’s humanist de-objectification of Christianity proved more thoroughly to her liking. During this time, Eliot wrote for and served as the de-facto editor of George Chapman’s newly acquired *Westminster Review*, a role in which she furthered her knowledge of continental criticism, philosophy, and literature, as well as becoming increasingly invested in what Helen Small calls “the ongoing debate that was Victorian science” (‘Introduction’ xxiii). Together, so goes the common narrative, positivism, especially that of Comte and Mill, German Romantic idealism, and the humanism of Feuerbach served Eliot to construct her own “Religion of Humanity,” focusing on progress, human fellowship, and the humanizing use of suffering. “Our own suffering,” as Bernard Paris describes Eliot’s “religion”, “if it

---

<sup>120</sup> Rosemary Bodenheimer gives an insightful account of Eliot’s Holy War and its relation to Eliot’s fictions (*The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans* 57–84).

<sup>121</sup> The most influential account of Eliot’s “Religion of Humanity” comes from Bernard Paris, though versions of it can be found throughout Eliot criticism (Paris, *Experiments in Life* 98–102; B. Hardy 53, 236–38; K. M. Newton 4; cf. Haight 506–07). Avrom Fleischman provides a more detailed exploration of Eliot’s reading of Comte and J.S. Mill (Fleishman 58–62).

does not simply embitter, leads us to be sympathetic with the sufferings of others, and our sympathy leads us to behave so that others will not suffer as we have” (‘George Eliot’s Religion of Humanity’ 424). The insertion of the conditional hints at a rarely explicated ambivalence toward suffering, which might be related to her third big translation, that of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, which remained unpublished. Spinoza was thoroughly opposed, as the last epigraph to this chapter indicates, to the idea that *tristitia* (Eliot renders the key term as “pain”) could have any meliorating effect (Spinoza 140, 250). His influence, or perhaps her attraction to him, which first found expression in the aftermath of her father’s death, struggles against that sorrow-worship which her Evangelical youth had instilled, and the positivists reasserted when they viewed human ills as stepping-stones not to God but to fully-realized benevolent humanity.

As part of the larger re-evaluation of the secularization thesis, this narrative of Eliot’s humanist, atheist “religion” has recently come under scrutiny, particularly from authors who find in Eliot’s work precedence for their own contemporary post-modern religion. Liberal theologian Peter Hodgson’s *Theology in the Fiction of George Eliot: The Mystery Beneath the Real* (2001) is a noteworthy example of this tendency. So is Marilyn Orr’s *George Eliot’s Religious Imagination* (2017). Both these works draw attention to the wealth and importance of theological thought in Eliot’s work – as does J. Russel Perkin’s less partisan *Theology and the Victorian Novel* (2009) – and both, I think, are right to counteract the tendency to present Eliot’s novels as proponents of any one ideological, usually positivist, system.<sup>122</sup> They even make a good case for Eliot as a model in which contemporary Christian theologians can find inspiration. Where, I think, these works run

---

<sup>122</sup> In particular, I think they are absolutely correct that Eliot’s oft-quoted statement “[w]ith the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree”, should not be read to mean that she – or her work – was in full agreement with Feuerbach (Orr 139; Hodgson 1). As Hodgson points out, even in the original statement there is much hedging to this agreement (Hodgson 7). More importantly, Eliot was prone to such hyperbole, making equally strong statements about Froude, for example, and it would be ungenerous to read her as a thorough Froudian for it.

into trouble is when they present Eliot herself as a believer in such a theology. There simply is too much hedging required to present Eliot as adhering to a “nonconformist, noncredal, nonpracticing form of Christian belief” (Hodgson 174). These studies end up suggesting what few would doubt: that if Eliot had believed in the divinity of Christ and the existence of God, she would have made an excellent Christian. But they cannot make a convincing case for that belief because, I think, it is not there. One reason that it is not there, and this marks a great difference between Eliot and the two other writers discussed in this thesis, is that Eliot’s larger project does not need it.

“Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending” (*Middlemarch* 779) and for this thesis Eliot can mark both in an order that is predicated not on chronology – for Clough, Froude, and Eliot were born within a two year period, though Eliot turned to literature last – but on ideas. The reading of Eliot’s translation of Strauss propels both Clough and Froude. Its influence is evident in Froude’s prose and in Clough’s poetry, most notably in the poem referred to as Epi-Strauss-ion or Epi-Strauss-ium. The reverse is also true, not merely, as I’ve previously noted, because Eliot was an early admirer of Froude’s fiction, and later a friend – though her admiration diminished with age and acquaintance. Eliot’s relation with Clough was less intimate. She only befriended his widow after the poet’s early death and likely shared the common view of Clough’s “failure” – her husband, George Henry Lewes, certainly did, as he made clear in a review of the 1862 edition of *Poems* (in Thorpe 155). Eliot read Clough’s poems in 1869, while she was working on *Middlemarch*, and it is tempting to imagine that the idea of Clough’s “failure” informs the aside that “scepticism [...] can never be thoroughly applied, else life would come to a standstill: something we must believe in and do” (*Middlemarch* 225). Eliot’s thought does not, like that of Clough revolve around absolute knowledge or knowledge of the Absolute. If Clough’s poetry is always waiting for God – and so, even at its most agnostic-seeming still entirely focused on God – Eliot cares for the “human interest of wondering”

(*The Lifted Veil* 31) and deals harshly with those that look for a universal key. As she wrote in an epigraph added to the 1878 Cabinet edition of the “The Lifted Veil”, a story in which superhuman insight erodes, rather than furthers, sympathy until only pain and suffering remain: “Give me no light, great Heaven, but such as turns / To energy of human fellowship” (*The Lifted Veil* 2). For Eliot, as George Levine has suggested, “knowing was a moral enterprise” (Levine, *Realism, Ethics and Secularism* 9) but only as long as it sympathizes with humanity. What concerns Eliot is not the limitations of human knowledge, nor even sin, but suffering. As she declared of her experience of tending to her dying father: “the worship of sorrow is *the* worship for mortals” (*Letters* 1 283–84). If both Froude and Clough ultimately require a deity to bestow knowledge or justice, the reverse is true of Eliot, for whom, “[t]he highest calling and election is to do *without opium* and live through all our pain with conscious, clear-eyed endurance” (*Letters* 3 366).<sup>123</sup>

Physical evil, too, marks a beginning and an end. It is there, in the sociological account – the tradition of Max Weber and Peter Berger (Weber, *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligion: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* 89–90; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* 53) – at the dual birth of God and theodicy: the sight of pain, suffering, and death makes mankind long for the meaning making deity, and Eliot’s “opium”. But the phenomena subsumed under physical evil are also what remains if moral and metaphysical evil were banished by secularization. A world without God would be a world without (the concept of) sin and – lacking an Absolute standard of comparison – without creaturely limitation but it would not be free of suffering or death. Sin is theological in a way that diphtheria is not and “[d]eath,” Bruce Robbins suggests “is only what is left when other meanings have gone”

---

<sup>123</sup> Karl Marx wrote his famous quip that religion is “the opium of the people” (Marx 131) almost two decades earlier, in *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, which was, however, only published after his death in 1883.

(‘Death and Vocation’ 50). For that reason physical evil can find representation in the most secular of realisms. At the same time physical evil constantly begs for explanation. The spectacle of suffering pushes against theodicy but it also pulls theodicy back towards the centre of its hermeneutics, manifesting the opposition between the realist claim to represent objective reality and the contradicting desire to construct an ethical ideal in the universe.

My exploration of this push and pull of physical evil is informed by two studies in particular. The first is David Carroll’s *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretation* (1992), which, like Hodgson’s and Orr’s explorations of Eliot’s “religion”, inhabits a distinctly post-modern perspective. Rather than attributing to Eliot any post-modern faith, however, Carroll works against such unifying projects, focusing on Eliot’s exploration of her character’s attempts to make meaning of the world, as well as what he sees as the inevitable failure of these interpretations. The second study that informs my thinking is Michiel Heyns’s *Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Scapegoat in English Realist Fiction* (1994), which employs René Girard’s concept of scapegoating: the ostracization of the individual for the sake of the community. There is, of course, large overlap between scapegoating and theodicy<sup>124</sup> – for both deal with the interpretation, necessity and deservedness of suffering – but what interests me in particular is the differentiation which Heyns takes from Girard between “a scapegoat *in* the text (the clearly visible theme)” and a “scapegoat *of* the text (the hidden structural principle)” (Girard, *The Scapegoat* 119; Heyns 4). I examine the struggle with theodicies in Eliot’s realism with a similar distinction in mind between theodicies *in* the text and theodicies *of* the text – that is theodicies as structural principle rather than subject – arguing that Eliot uses the former to work against the latter. But before exploring conflicting theodicies in

---

<sup>124</sup> Most evidently so in Girard’s treatment of Job (*Job: The Victim of His People* 30).

Eliot's novels, this chapter turns to Eliot's criticism, in which she explicates many of the ideas on theodicy and the ethics of realism that inform her later work as a novelist.

### Immoral Fictions and wholesome Truths: Eliot's Criticism

George Eliot wrote the occasional periodical article throughout her adult life but her most productive phase as journalist and critic falls between 1854 and 1857, a period which began at the end of her eight months honeymoon cum research trip to Germany with Lewes, and ended when Marian Evans the journalist, became George Eliot, the novelist.<sup>125</sup> This was a time of scandal for Eliot – given Lewes's inability to get a divorce from his first wife, their union remained a marriage in all senses but the legal – and when she returned to Britain, she had lost her standing as a paragon of female intellect and morality. The phrenologist George Combe, who had previously declared her the possessor of a very large brain, and correspondingly, a very large intellect (quoted in Collins 31), could only explain her sudden elopement, which so contradicted his reading of her physicality, as a sign of madness (*Letters* 8 129). The usual practice of publishing articles without attribution enabled Eliot to consider authoritatively questions of morality in print that would, for the following years at least, have been closed to her in life. But if the elopement with Lewes made her the uncomfortable centre of the biggest scandal literary London would see for years – perhaps matched by the snickering surrounding her marriage, after Lewes's death, to the much younger John Cross – it also prompted a phase of renewed scholarship. As underpaid and underacknowledged shadow editor of the *Westminster Review*, her knowledge had broadened, but alone with Lewes, who was working on his *Life of Goethe*, when he was not too sickly, Eliot's attention focused on philosophy – she translated most of the *Ethics* while in Germany – and literature. Together the couple visited Weimar, Berlin, and Frankfurt – to the Judengasse she

---

<sup>125</sup> See Bodenheimer for a detailed account of Eliot's many names and their relation to the different phases of her career ('A Woman of Many Names').

returned in *Daniel Deronda* – and discussed literature with some of Germany’s most interesting scholars and thinkers.

One of these intellectuals was the progressive critic and writer Adolph Stahr, who had himself only recently left his wife for the author Fanny Lewald. In her Berlin journal Eliot writes:

we had a long discussion about the *Wahlverwandschaften*, with which Stahr found fault on the score of its dénouement. This dénouement was very “unvernünftig”. So I said, were dénouements in real life very frequently: Goethe had given the dénouement wh. would naturally follow from the characters of the respective actors.  
(*The Journals of George Eliot* 247)

It is not surprising that Eliot would defend the plot of *Elective Affinities*, given how much she had enjoyed Froude’s *Nemesis*, though at the time she had not read Goethe’s work, and would not have recognized the similarities. By the time she was debating with Stahr, she had read most of Goethe’s works at least once, and was working with Lewes on his seminal biography. What precisely Stahr found “unvernünftig” – unreasonable or illogical – in the conclusion of Goethe’s work Eliot does not say, though it seems likely that their conflict of interpretations did not revolve around the reasonableness of extra-marital desires. Rosemary Ashton suggests with some understatement that “Stahr probably means in particular Ottilie’s reaction to the accident with the child and her guilt at being in love with a married man. She fades away and dies of guilt and listlessness” (*The German Idea* 224–25). Ashton’s summary helps Eliot’s defence of Goethe on the basis of realism, for it elides the parts that have a more tenuous correspondence with “real life”: Ottilie’s martyrdom (she intentionally starves herself and blissfully anticipates the precise moment of her death), the miraculous integrity of her beautiful corpse, and the similarly miraculous healing of her servant’s broken body after touching Ottilie’s corpse. That Eliot would excuse as natural and realistic a self-consciously Gothic resolution in which all characters, including the narrator, present Ottilie as a Saint – not in a merely

metaphorical sense but with varying degrees of Catholic literalness – indicates the capaciousness and flexibility of the criteria.<sup>126</sup>

Shortly after their return to London, Eliot once again took up the gauntlet for Goethe and the value of his realist conclusions. This time it was *Wilhelm Meister* which she defended, not against a German intellectual's charge of unreasonableness but pre-emptively – the *Life of Goethe* was about to be published – against the charge of immorality levied against it by the English public. If “The Morality of Wilhelm Meister” is a puff piece, it also anticipates and unites many of Eliot's subsequent thoughts about the ethics of the novel. The defence of the German writer as one “whose morality has a grander orbit” soon turns into a critique of those conventions of Victorian realism on which Goethe is found deficient: the final justice of the plot and the moral interpretation of the plot by a narrator.

Of the first Eliot writes:

[F]ar from being really moral is the so-called moral dénouement, in which rewards and punishments are distributed according to those notions of justice on which the novel-writer would have recommended that the world should be governed if he had been consulted at the creation. The emotion of satisfaction which a reader feels when the villain of the book dies of some hideous disease, or is crushed by a railway train, is no more essentially moral than the satisfaction which used to be felt in whipping culprits at the cart-tail. (*Essays* 145)

Goethe's lack of a “moral dénouement” – the happy ending of the domesticated Augustinian theodicy in which goodness is rewarded, vice punished, and justice served – is precisely part of his “true morality” (*Essays* 147). Eliot is ambivalent about wherein precisely the immorality of the conventional happy ending lies. Part of Eliot's critique here is a lack of mimesis – the assumption that the author should represent reality as it is rather than construct it as it ought to be – phrased in the most troubling way for those whose rewards-and-punishment conclusions stem from religiosity and who would surely

---

<sup>126</sup> Froude's translation, which was published that same year, softens the focus which Goethe places on Ottilie's sainthood – perhaps in an effort to downplay the Catholic elements for an English audience – calling her on the last page, for example, merely “saintly” rather than, as Goethe's narrator does, “the saint” (“die Heilige”) (Goethe, *Novels and Tales* 245).

disagree with Eliot's charge of thinking themselves better creators than the Creator. But if Eliot's defence invokes the assumptions of realism, she is also aware of its complexities and seems to be suggesting two things at once: first that it is moral to represent accurately and immoral to alter representation according to one's own notions of justice – here she appeals to the deeply Victorian value of truth-telling – and secondly that these conventional conclusions fail to represent correct notions of justice.

This complexity heightens when Eliot questions the value of a moralizing narrator, not because this kind of moral omniscience undermines the realist project but rather because it is less morally efficient than covert forms of narration. Anticipating future critics of her own novels – beginning with Nietzsche's description of Eliot as a "moralizing little woman" (cf. Nietzsche 11) – Eliot suggests that the perception of "symptoms of an intention to moralize" rather than helping the ethical aim turns the listener against the morality of the tale (*Essays* 145). Goethe is moral precisely because he stays away from "the calculations of the pulpit and of ordinary literature" (*Essays* 144); the phrase echoes the claim in the *Life of Goethe* that Goethe teaches in "the artist's not the preacher's way" (Lewes, *The Life of Goethe* 400). The most didactic tales, Eliot suggests, consist of "an apparently impartial narrative of facts" (*Essays* 145).

That word "apparently" shifts the focus from verity to verisimilitude, that is, as George Levine suggests of Henry James "to the labor of the artist in constructing appearances and away from the simplistic view that he records reality" ('Realism, or, in Praise of Lying' 355). In an article written at Weimar and published a month before the article on Wilhelm Meister, Eliot observes with similar scepticism toward reality in art that portraits of Goethe "are a proof, if any were wanted, how inevitably subjective art is, even when it professes to be purely imitative" (*Essays* 89). Eliot's acknowledgement that art can only ever profess to reality, and is only "apparently impartial" seems more self-aware than some of the descriptions of the realist project with which she later endows her narrators.

But as Eliot's criticism here suggests, these invocations of external reality might be part of an ethical strategy rather than accurate descriptions of Eliot's understanding of her realist project. Used correctly, so Eliot suggests as critic, realism can be more moral than the most moralizing fable, and the more disinterestedly mimetic the appearance the greater the ethical effect.

The morality of the novelist – Goethe serves as ideal – is then that he uses verisimilitude for a moral aim and conversely recognizes and keeps away from the peculiar mixture of falsehood and immorality that is equally at home in literary as well as religious conventions, and particularly where those two coincide, as they do in those literary theodicies of the “moral dénouement”. The “moral superiority” of Goethe lies in understanding “that the line between the virtuous and vicious, so far from being a necessary safeguard to morality, is itself an immoral fiction” (*Essays* 147). “Immoral fictions” – ideas which Eliot holds to be untrue but, more importantly, which it serves no ethical effect to think of as true – form a category to which she returns throughout her criticism. The problem with the moral dénouement, and here Eliot agrees with the speculative half of Froude's *Nemesis of Faith*, is not merely that it is not true to life but that the spectacle of punishment is not morally improving. To take solace in the pain and death of characters destroys sympathy in the same way that enjoying the sight of punishment at the cart-tail would.

“[T]he line between the virtuous and vicious” makes for bad art, as Eliot argues in “The Antigone and its Moral” where she takes issue with those critics that see in Creon only a tyrant and in Antigone only a “blameless victim” (*Essays* 264) but it is also bad morality, as Eliot's caustic writing about the Calvinist preacher Dr John Cumming suggests (*Essays* 165). In criticizing the Evangelicalism of men like Cumming, Eliot turns against his immoral fictions, chastising here a “pernicious fallacy” (*Essays* 166), there “vituperative imputations” (*Essays* 174) and “vulgar fables” (*Essays* 175). If part of her attack focuses

on Cumming's perceived shortcoming of that "highest moral habit, the constant preference of truth" (*Essays* 166), Eliot complicates this naïve criterion arguing that Cumming's "demonstration that the Second Advent is at hand, *if true*, can have no really holy, spiritual effect" (*Essays* 181 [my italics]). If Eliot rebukes Cumming's untruthfulness, she equally notes that his insistence on the doctrine of Eternal Punishments lacks "amiable frailty" (*Essays* 182). In other words, the problem with Cumming is not merely that he is untruthful but that he is unveracious in morally damaging ways, so that his untruthfulness tends to "replace sympathy with men by anxiety for the Glory of God" (*Essays* 186).

Less than a fortnight before beginning "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton", Eliot wrote her most acerbic censure of immoral fictions: "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists", which began not as a piece of literary criticism but as doctrinal critique. "I wonder what the story called 'Compensation' is", Eliot wrote to Chapman "I have long wanted to fire away at the doctrine of Compensation, which I detest" (*Letters* 2 248). The doctrine of compensation – that ideological core of theodicy thinking in which seeming injustice is redressed by future rewards – was familiar to Eliot not only from her dogmatic youth but also from Emerson, whom she met during his European tour in 1848, and who had critiqued the idea of heavenly compensation, arguing that it was in this life that "every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty" (*Essays* 84–85). Whether in this life or the next, the problem with compensation, which Eliot in a letter described as "unveracious attempts at universal consolation" is that it makes sympathy and social action unnecessary. Humanity "would be more tender to each other while we live, if that wretched falsity which makes men quite comfortable about their fellows' troubles were thoroughly got rid of" (*Letters* 6 128).

The story called "Compensation," which Eliot wanted to take as an occasion to vent her distaste, turned out to be a religious novel by the High Church writer Lady Henrietta

Chatterton, who later converted to Catholicism with Newman's guidance. In Chatterton's novel, the doctrine of "compensation" is indeed front and centre. As the heroine marries one man while loving another, she is consoled by her mother-in-law's Augustinian promise that "everyone has their 'Compensation;' that, in fact, there is no actual downright unmitigated misery in this world, except that entailed by guilt and the sufferings of unrepentant remorse" (Chatterton 173). In the end, after the heroine has remained true to her husband and God, the former dies but not before making his by now dutifully loving wife promise to marry the man she actually wanted to marry all along – they live happily ever after. Eliot would have none of it, and in taking such novels down she promised Chapman, not only amusement but also to spread some "wholesome truth" (*Letters* 2 258).

The article that Eliot ended up writing for Chapman – plagued by a painful wisdom tooth and anxious to finally begin writing fiction – does nowhere announce its interest in compensation, the doctrine, but in the composite synopsis of *Compensation*, the novel, and a handful of similar novels, Eliot finds the detested doctrine in characters and structures:

She [the heroine] is the ideal woman in feelings, faculties, and flounces. For all this she as often as not marries the wrong person to begin with, and she suffers terribly from the plots and intrigues of the vicious baronet; but even death has a soft place in his heart for such a paragon, and remedies all mistakes for her just at the right moment. The [...] tedious husband dies in his bed requesting his wife, as a particular favor to him, to marry the man she loves best [...] Before matters arrive at this desirable issue our feelings are tried by seeing the noble, lovely, and gifted heroine pass through many *mauvais moments*, but we have the satisfaction of knowing [...] that whatever vicissitudes she may undergo, from being dashed out of her carriage to having her head shaved in a fever, she comes out of them all with a complexion more blooming and locks more redundant than ever. (*Essays* 302)

Eliot again strikes against that immoral fiction of the contrast between the virtuous – the ideal heroine – and the vicious. But here it is accompanied by a second such fiction,

namely that the virtuous, if they suffer in the interim, are inevitably rewarded for their virtue and amply repaid for their suffering and that this happens within the terrene realm of the novel. The compensatory scheme of the silly novels is Augustinianism, often with an implicit Calvinism that need not correspond to any doctrinal adherence in the author, and domesticated in such a way that the deserved punishment of the unalterably wicked is entirely subordinate to the deserved reward of the inherently virtuous.

Though the novels Eliot ridicules differ in their religious commitments, ranging from the High Church sensibilities of Chatterton to the Evangelicalism of what Eliot calls the “White Neck-cloth School”, they have in common that they translate these commitments into the physical world because it is this world the novel depicts even if it is only an allegory for the other world. In the physical world, the moral, and intellectual qualities of the heroine are marked, unrealistically as Eliot points out throughout the article, as physical beauty. Conversely, the heroine’s release from suffering is brought about through physical evil, which is here integrated into the compensatory plan (“even death has a soft place in his heart”), and her final blessedness is once again signified and rewarded by even greater beauty. The results are novels that pretend everywhere to realism but which are yet, Eliot argues, marked by a “want of verisimilitude” (*Essays* 304). While these novels concern themselves with the tangible world and physical realities, their real interest lies in what lies beyond; the silliness of these novelists is that “the means by which she usually chooses to conduct you to true ideas of the invisible is a totally false picture of the visible” (*Essays* 311). The novel functions as illustration, enactment, and evidence in the physical world of compensations that are held, by their authors, to be theologically true but which, for Eliot, are neither true nor moral. In summing up these violations of “the sacredness of the writer’s art” (*Essays* 323), Eliot provides a warning to those “in danger of adding to the number of ‘silly novels by lady novelists’” (*Essays* 324).

The task that Eliot draws up for the aspiring realist novelist, avoiding the compensatory logic of rewards and punishments, seems simple – so simple that failures need not be addressed as ethical problems but can be brushed off as “silly” – but it becomes complex where the scheme of compensation is not retributive but improving. From Eliot’s humanist perspective, compensation of the Augustinian variety is so patently wrong that she can make light of it but the kind of compensation that has its roots in the Irenaean theodicy is not so simple a foil for the ethical, Wordsworthian novelist. That “suffering humanizes” (Paris, ‘George Eliot’s Religion of Humanity’ 424) might be the Feuerbachian core of Eliot’s ethics but it is also an ethical problem, because it is simply another mode of compensation and thus another “wretched falsity which makes men quite comfortable about their fellows’ troubles” (*Letters* 6 128). For those invested in social justice, the belief that suffering is improving is “argumentative suicide” (Eliot, ‘Belles Lettres.’ 573). This Eliot makes clear in a review, written for the same issue for which Eliot also wrote the silly novels article, of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Dred*. While Eliot is enthusiastic about Beecher Stowe – she is certainly no silly novelist – Eliot also warns that “[i]f the negroes are really so very good, slavery has answered as moral discipline” and that by showing slaves when they appeared “vastly superior” she has lost the “terribly tragic element” of the “vices of the oppressed” (Eliot, ‘Belles Lettres.’ 573). This problem crops up again and again, often when Eliot discusses works of which she otherwise approves. “If it were true,” she writes in her most feminist article on Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft, that women lived “in moral superiority” to men, “then there would be a case in which slavery and ignorance nourished virtue, and so far we should have an argument for the continuance of bondage” (*Essays* 205). For the same reason, Eliot censures idealized depictions of poverty because it breeds “the miserable fallacy that high morality and refined sentiment can grow out of harsh social relations” (*Essays* 272). If

the aim is to promote equality, to end the suffering of the oppressed, one cannot maintain that they are morally improved by that very suffering.

And yet, while the problem with compensation is that it makes suffering seem beneficent and thus makes complacent to the suffering of others, this knowledge itself is the result – the reward perhaps – of suffering:

[A] heart that has been taught by its own sore struggles to bleed for the woes of another—that has “learned pity through suffering” is likely to find very imperfect satisfaction in the “balance of happiness,” “doctrine of compensations,” and other short and easy methods of obtaining thorough complacency in the presence of pain.  
(*Scenes of Clerical Life* 298)

So declares the narrator of “Janet’s Repentance”, a story which like the other *Scenes of Clerical Life*, appears to be oblivious to the tension within that statement.<sup>127</sup> It is only the larger canvas of *Adam Bede* that manifests an increasing awareness of the difficulty of not writing a silly novel of rewards and punishment, as well as the struggle between the need to avoid the “complacency in the presence of pain” offered by a more Irenaean form of compensation and the desire to yet further an ethics of suffering.

#### Evil’s evil, and sorrow’s sorrow: *Adam Bede*’s work against theodicy

*Adam Bede*, as critics have previously noted, pits rival theodicies against one another and exposes their errors: not merely in the symmetrical conflicts between the main characters but in the Manicheanism of Mrs Poyser’s world divided between God and “Old Harry”, Mr. Irwine’s fluctuations between retributive Nemesis and the iron law of consequences, or Bartle Massey’s misogynist Augustinianism and consolatory Optimism. “The author”, argues Carroll of *Bede*, “makes sense of the characters as they seek to make sense of their world. And since this is a traditional, pastoral world, their world-views are best described as theodicies, justification of the ways of God to man” (*George Eliot and the Conflict of*

---

<sup>127</sup> Although, as Knoepfmacher suggests “Janet’s Repentance” is more alive to internal tensions, specifically of the religious type, than the other *Scenes* (76).

*Interpretations* 75). Why a pastoral world would be more conducive to theodicy-making Carroll does not say<sup>128</sup> and I do not think that verisimilitude to the pastoral setting is the reason why there are so many theodicies in Eliot's first novel. Rather, Eliot uses the pastoral setting to expose a concern that is always close to the substance of her fiction writing. When Eliot describes her realist project it is often in opposition to novels that suggest theodicies in their compensatory frames. To write the kind of realism that Eliot envisions is to do without the opium offered by theodicy but that does not mean that she doesn't see the attraction of the panacea. After the successful publication of the first of her *Scenes* and after the dramatic falling out with her brother – caused by the belated announcement of her relationship with Lewes – Eliot was tempted to view writing itself as her compensatory act. "I feel", she wrote to a home friend who had complimented her writing "that all the terrible pain I have gone through in past years [...] has probably been a preparation for some special work that I may do before I die" (*Letters* 2 343). A few days earlier, noticing perhaps the Leibnizian dimensions that her vocation could take in her imagination, she had jokingly complimented Blackwood, her hand-holding "editor, who seems to have been created in preestablished harmony with the organization of a susceptible contributor" (*Letters* 2 335).

The story of *Adam Bede* was inspired by a real event which her Methodist aunt Samuel told Eliot in 1839 of the trial and execution of Mary Voce for infanticide, in which Samuel had lead Voce to confession and a "happy death".<sup>129</sup> The novel is nevertheless named for neither of the characters inspired by the original anecdote – self-centred, carnal Hetty, and self-sacrificing, spiritually aloof Dinah – but for Adam, the moral fulcrum of the

---

<sup>128</sup> Though he does not raise the issue, Carroll implicitly opposes the common linkage of theodicy discourse with the intelligentsia by James Moore or Odo Marquard (J. R. Moore 153; Marquard 11).

<sup>129</sup> "An account of the Experience and Happy Death of Mary Voce, Who was executed on Nottingham Gallows, on Tuesday, March 16, 1802, for the Murder of her own Child" was published in Broadsheet in Nottingham at the time (*Adam Bede* 487).

narrative, who bears some resemblance to Robert Evans but who also, more than any of the other characters, excepting the narrator, resembles Eliot in his stern opposition to the complacent theodicies that surround him. Adam's moral failings – his tendency to be “too hard [...] with people when they do wrong” (*Adam Bede* 182) but a little too soft on Hetty and “never believe evil of the *one* supremely pretty woman” (*Adam Bede* 139) – are amply excused by the narrator, who declares him a “clear sighted, fair minded man – a fine fellow, indeed, morally as well as physically” (*Adam Bede* 292). What makes Adam such a fine fellow is undoubtedly his work ethic, a quality Eliot had learned to admire from her father's example, as well as from Carlyle's or Goethe's, and which Eliot sometimes used as a shield from moral censorship<sup>130</sup> but it is also his constant “clear sighted” rejection of “that notion of compensation for irretrievable wrong, that self-soothing attempt to make evil bear the same fruits as good, which most of all roused his indignation” (*Adam Bede* 418).

Eliot gives Adam ample opportunity for venting his indignation by making his foil another kind fellow whose primary failing is an instinctive belief in compensation. Arthur Donnithorne, heir to the Donnithorne estate, when aged seven kicked down a gardener's broth “from no motive but a kicking impulse” but on learning that it was the man's dinner “took his favourite pencil-case and a silver-hafted knife out of his pocket and offered them as compensation” (*Adam Bede* 281). The thoughtlessness of the action at first, the generous impulse of compensation after, explains Arthur's actions towards Hetty Sorrell, whom he thoughtlessly seduces, for “[h]e had been the same Arthur ever since, trying to make all offences forgotten in benefits” (*Adam Bede* 281). Arthur's idea of compensation hinges on his own social and financial position, on the knowledge that if he were to

---

<sup>130</sup> In a stern letter to Cara Bray, written after her elopement with Lewes, Eliot saw hard work as evidence of the morality of their union: “We are working hard to provide for others better than we provide for ourselves, and to fulfil every responsibility that lies upon us” (*Letters* 2 214). In her letters it can sometimes appear that working is the only moral thing to do, and her and Lewes's various illnesses the only means of escape.

“unfortunately break a man’s legs in his rash driving” he would “be able to pension him handsomely” (*Adam Bede* 113). But, much like the estate which allows him these compensatory gestures, it also rests on a system of religious suppositions that, if they are vague in the worldly mind of Arthur, yet form the fundament of his actions:

[Hetty] would owe the advantage of his care for her in future years to the sorrow she had incurred now. So good comes out of evil. Such is the beautiful arrangement of things! (*Adam Bede* 282)

In Arthur’s mind his future remuneration of Hetty – and the seduction for which he wants to compensate – is integral to God’s benevolent plan and pensions are Providence’s way to make good come out of evil. The theodicy which excuses God from the evil Hetty suffers, also handily exculpates Arthur as a part of that nebulously benevolent “beautiful arrangement of things”.

Arthur is, of course, wrong, and the narrative revolves, slowly but implacably around his error. Early on Eliot uses what Lewes calls the “preacher’s way” to show the flaws of Donnithorne’s attempts to extricate himself from moral responsibility. In a passage that begins as free indirect discourse only to split into Arthur’s direct thought and the narrator’s authoritative comment, Eliot takes position:

[Donnithorne] had an agreeable confidence that his faults were all of a generous kind [...] It was not possible for Arthur Donnithorne to do anything mean, dastardly, or cruel. “No! I’m a devil of a fellow for getting myself into a hobble, but I always take care the load shall fall on my own shoulders.” Unhappily there is no inherent poetical justice in hobbles, and they will sometimes obstinately refuse to inflict their worst consequences on the prime offender. (*Adam Bede* 113)

Arthur’s downfall is his “agreeable confidence” in himself and his universe, to which he clings throughout the drama he causes, and which the narrator later reiterates as “a sort of implicit confidence in him that he was really such a good fellow at bottom, Providence would not treat him harshly” (*Adam Bede* 285). Being wrong about the universe, he ends up being wrong about himself. In a world in which humans are everywhere connected, “evil spreads as necessarily as disease” (*Adam Bede* 380), and one can neither limit

consequences to oneself nor guarantee their compensation. Here, intention, right principles and duty are everything, and compensation leads to catastrophe.

Donnithorne's failing is not, at heart, a moral one but an intellectual one – as Lewes will put it: “so much immorality is sheer stupidity” (*Problems of Life and Mind* 153)– it is his naive conviction that he can control the ends of his actions rather than merely the principles on which these actions are based; and ultimately it is the conviction that his universe is fundamentally just. The narrator thus implicitly advocates a sort of Kantian deontology without the metaphysics, based not on categories and deduction but on lived experience of an obstinate universe that refuses to follow even the most reasonable laws of justice.

When Eliot in the following chapter takes the famous pause in the story, it is to tell a lie about truth-telling. Ostensibly, the occasion of the pause is the almost “pagan” character of Mr. Irwine (*Adam Bede* 160), the Rector of Broxton, whom the narrator explains as the result of the “strongest effort” to give a “faithful account” according to probabilities: in 1799 “there is reason to believe that the number of zealous clergymen was small” and therefore a non-zealous and thereby representative clergyman Mr. Irwine is (*Adam Bede* 160). An early reviewer took issue with this unnecessary pausing for what was the “most harmless and inoffensive proposition” that some good clergymen are not good doctrinarians (quoted in D. Carroll, *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* 76). Irwine's harmlessness is part of the strategy here for it preventively exculpates under the guise of realism the more scandalous aspects of the narrative – for the reader and the conservative editor, who had early on warned Eliot that the flirtation between Hetty and Arthur should “not come to the usual sad catastrophe” (*Letters* 2 446).

But realism is, of course, more than an excuse to tell a story of extramarital sex and infanticide, it is an artistic aim itself, and Irwine is here a pretext to delineate the realist project. By explicating the project so overtly, Eliot is framing moralism as mimesis. There

is what Bonaparte calls, using Bulwer Lytton's term, a double plot, in which the real embodies the ideal (Bonaparte, *The Poetics of Poesis* 7), and Eliot is working to focus the readerly attention on the real: Irwine is a realistically imperfect Christian, but he is also an ideally representative humanist, "large-hearted, sweet-blooded", "of a sufficiently subtle moral fibre to have an unwearied tenderness for obscure and monotonous suffering" (*Adam Bede* 62). For all his verisimilitude, he perfectly illustrates the positivist notion that the moral function of religion can be carried out without any of its dogma. And if in the preceding chapter, which occasions this pause, Eliot did not "put into his mouth" a beautiful "sermon," she did put into Irwine's mouth a speech just as beautifully improbable when she has him insist to Arthur prophetically that "Consequences are un pitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences, quite apart from any fluctuations that went before—consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves" (*Adam Bede* 156). This speech, which the narrator explains as a statement of realism, allowing it to be inevitably "distorted" by cognition, enables Eliot to present Arthur at his most naïve and self-deluding. It is not so much, as some readers have felt, and as Irwine scrupulously accuses himself, that he fails to illicit Arthur's confession, because Irwine's humanism is too gentle (C. A. Martin xi) but that Eliot needs to show Arthur making that initial choice, and thinking those thoughts about hobbles, which determines his later choices, because "[o]ur deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds" (*Adam Bede* 283). For the same reason Dinah fails with Hetty. Rather than a mere double plot, there is a polyphony of signification in these two chapters – which conspicuously mark the boundary between book one and two – and their use of "the real" to signify many different kinds of ideal. Some of these signifying needs, such as the exculpation of the "immoralities" of the unfolding plot and the realist manifesto, synergize. Others, the presentation of the humanist clergyman and the illustration of Arthur's self-deceiving,

determining choice demand different “realities”, and Eliot is everywhere negotiating these opposing demands of signification.

The struggle between these semiotic needs is particularly pronounced in the physicality of characters. There is no probabilistic case for the niece of a Hayslope farmer being “a perfect beauty” (*Adam Bede* 248). Rather than claiming the likelihood of Hetty’s beauty, as she claimed the probability of Irwine, Eliot has her characters emphasize the anomaly of such “pretty arms” (*Adam Bede* 79) doing the hard labour of the dairy.<sup>131</sup> Hetty’s beauty is then not a marker of realism – or only in the bold Aristotelianism the much more confident author will use in *Daniel Deronda* that “it is a part of probability that many improbable things will happen” (*Daniel Deronda* 429) – but the result of very different semiotic needs. Part of it is undoubtedly that beauty gives credence to the love triangle, and so Eliot sacrifices the probability of Hetty’s physical appearance to the probability of both Adam and Arthur falling in love with her. But more importantly, Hetty is beautiful so that Adam, and to a lesser degree Arthur, can be mistaken about the meaning of her beauty. For, Hetty’s beauty, within the fictional reality has no meaning, it is purely accidental. This is the carefully “arranged” meaninglessness, which Levine ascribes to Hardy and other later realists (Levine, ‘Realism, or, in Praise of Lying’ 357), who signify the uncreated, immoral randomness by carefully designing the appearance of the immorally arbitrary. In Hetty, Eliot has thus created a character who undermines the Idealist meaning of beauty – in the Romantic and ultimately Platonist sense, not the Kantian – as equivalent with goodness. Hetty provides an artistic opportunity for the narrator to teach the reader that there is, despite Adam’s assumption to the contrary, no “correlation between eyelashes and morals” (*Adam Bede* 139), and since this wrongly assumed correlation is also the basis of the fictional convention, which Eliot mocked as

---

<sup>131</sup> Eliot herself was familiar with this type of work from her own childhood and vigorously opposed the aestheticizing of peasants in her article on “The Natural History of German Life”, in which she lays out many of the principles of her realism (*Essays* 269).

belonging to silly novels, of signifying goodness by beauty, Hetty undermines this silly literary convention, every time her beauty is noticed or her morality fails.

Improbably, Hetty is not the only beautiful niece the Poyser family has to boast.<sup>132</sup> Dinah's equally anomalous beauty is noted long before Hetty's; the "pretty parson's face" (*Adam Bede* 7) is a subject of discussion in the opening scene in the workshop before the owner of that face makes her first appearance. If some of Dinah's beauty can be explained in the very same fashion as Hetty's – she too meets the aesthetic criteria for being the centre of a love triangle – her beauty also opposes Hetty's. For Dinah is beautiful precisely because she is good, because, as Iris Murdoch puts it "we can see beauty itself in a way in which we cannot see goodness itself" (58), and because the novel – as Eliot's own criticism suggests – habitually signifies the immaterial through the material. That this is the convention she is using, Eliot implies in the initial introduction of Dinah's beauty. In the minute description of Dinah's physicality, the narrator leaves no doubt that Dinah is really, externally – rather than only spiritually – beautiful only to then point beyond the physical, suggesting, of that conventionally meaningful aspect, the eyes, that they "had no peculiar beauty, beyond that of expression; they looked so simple, so candid, so gravely loving" (*Adam Bede* 21). That Dinah's eyes look this way is deeply meaningful, for here there is a correlation if not between eyelashes and morals than at least between morals and the eyes beyond those lashes. If the "pretty butter maker" is beautiful so that she may signify the error of the conventional association between goodness and beauty, the "pretty preacher" is beautiful because Eliot is making use of that very convention. This trick of having her beauty and critiquing it too is one which Eliot will use again and again, not always in a strictly gendered fashion. Romola's and Dorothea's significantly saint-like beauty – which down to their preference of plain clothes and dislike of earrings echoes Dinah – is counterbalanced by the utterly

---

<sup>132</sup> Their common beauty is not genetic, for Hetty and Dinah are not related.

meaningless beauty of Tito and Rosamond and its catastrophic misreading.<sup>133</sup> *Felix Holt* joins these two functions in the single character of Esther Lyon, whose moral development is towards becoming the “beautiful woman whose mind was as noble as her face was beautiful” (*Felix Holt* 223). In these contradictory uses of physical beauty,<sup>134</sup> Eliot is doing what realist authors must constantly do, subverting the conventions of literature – conventions which she ultimately cannot do without – so that she can use them without incurring the full contamination of her realism and thus create in her attempt at truth-telling merely an immoral fiction.

In this respect, endings, being particularly conventionalized pose a particular problem for realist fiction. English Realism, Levine points out, “is, curiously, in the tradition of comedy: virtue is rewarded and marriage brings down the final curtain” (‘Realism, or, in Praise of Lying’ 356). But even beyond those traditional happy endings, realist conclusions rely on conventions because being “committed to ongoing history, [realism] cannot generate conclusions” (Ferris 294). Endings are then problematic for realism for some of the same reasons that they are problematic for Clough’s poetics, they impose closure, suggesting a teleology and purpose, which the preceding text itself, with its focus on process rather than purpose, denies. If the realist novel is to end, it must therefore rely on literary conventions, which it everywhere wishes to reject. This is particularly true of Eliot, who despises the moral dénouement, not only because it contradicts the realist

---

<sup>133</sup> At their first meeting Romola admires “Tito’s bright face [...] its rich-tinted beauty [...]. It seemed like a wreath of spring, dropped suddenly in Romola’s young but wintry life” (*Romola* 59). In *Middlemarch*, Eliot goes furthest towards destabilizing the conventional use of beauty, showing that Casaubon’s Locke-like ugliness is just as meaningless as Rosamond’s beauty. This is also the only book in which Eliot creates a good and ugly female main character in Mary Garth, showing in practice what she asserts in theory in *Adam Bede* – that a man can be perfectly happy with a “wife who waddles” (*Adam Bede* 162).

<sup>134</sup> Gilbert and Gubar describe another way in which Eliot uses beauty to denote meaning in the “fatal females whose beauty, [...] is both sinister and tempting” (460).

project but also because the way in which it is unrealistic is particularly unethical – the pleasurable, aesthetic use of rewards and punishments is in itself deeply immoral.

As *Adam Bede* nears its conclusion, Adam has been proved right to condemn the “self-soothing attempt to make evil bear the same fruits as good”, Arthur’s delusions about “the beautiful arrangement of things” have brought suffering and death, and even old Mrs Bede has warned Dinah not to “make it out as trouble’s a good thing” – improbably, she never does. Eliot gives the final turn to the misogynist pedagogue Bartle Massey:

But I’ve that opinion of you, that you’ll rise above it all, and be a man again; and there may good come out of this that we don’t see.” “Good come out of it!” said Adam, passionately. “That doesn’t alter th’ evil: her ruin can’t be undone. I hate that talk o’ people, as if there was a way o’ making amends for everything. They’d more need be brought to see as the wrong they do can never be altered. When a man’s spoiled his fellow-creatur’s life, he’s no right to comfort himself with thinking good may come out of it: somebody else’s good doesn’t alter her shame and misery. (*Adam Bede* 411)

Like so many heads of Hydra, Eliot is cutting off theodicies. Having shown that suffering cannot be limited to those that bring it about, as Arthur wanted to believe, and that evil does not bring about good, as Adam always knew, she is now using Adam’s well-established moral authority to insist that there is no justice in a cosmic tally, of the kind suggested by Leibniz’s best of all worlds, or the Utilitarian happiness calculus, in which the suffering of some is amply repaid by the greater happiness of others. Adam is not so much concerned with the question of whether justice is possible or impossible, as he was when the focus lay only on Hetty’s individual suffering, but on whether it is right to invoke cosmic justice and engage in the balancing out of individual suffering by individual happiness. The verdict is clear: it is wrong to find solace in balance; it adds insult to injury. Evil, within the fictional reality of *Adam Bede*, is contagious and it is permanent in its effects. As the reader has been told again and again by morally reliable characters and the authoritative narrator: there is no kind of operation in which good can come out of evil.

And yet, that is exactly what happens. Having joined Adam and Dinah in matrimony, Irwine's free indirect discourse asks joyfully: "what better harvest from that painful seed-time could there be" than that "the love that had found its way to the dark prison cell and to poor Hetty's darker soul—this strong, gentle love was to be Adam's companion and helper till death" (*Adam Bede* 477). It needs no Pangloss to see that if Hetty had not become involved with Arthur, had not become pregnant, had not killed the child, had not been imprisoned, then Dinah Morris would never have kept Hetty company in her misery and Dinah and Adam would never have formed a bond of gratitude, sympathy and love; and without that bond, they would not have ended up in their garden tending to their children. Bartle Massey's prognosis, so heavily contested by Adam, comes true for him and his heroine: something good does come out of evil. Of course, that is not the entirety of Adam's argument against Massey's good from evil theodicy; from Adam's perspective his and Dinah's happiness cannot erase Hetty's experience. But here too, the structure of the narrative seems to contradict him. After being found guilty, sentenced to death and half-way pardoned, Hetty leaves the scene: literally (she is shipped off to the colonies) and figuratively, she loses her position as a character focalizer. Hetty, who served as focal character in the beginning of the novel, is completely cast aside after her trial. Instead of experiencing her suffering in the same way the reader was made to experience what led to it – her vain interest in money and station, her disregard for love and human sympathy (her hard heart as she expresses it to Dinah before vanishing (*Adam Bede* 404)) – the reader's attention is now urged to focus on Adam Bede, Dinah Morris and their love making. It is briefly mentioned that Hetty died shortly after returning from exile but that event is not given the space to gain affective relevance. As the novel concludes, Adam's and Dinah's good has come from Hetty's evil, and Hetty's suffering has been replaced by the display of their marital happiness.

That this ending is a problem – or rather two problems – readers have long agreed.<sup>135</sup> The first issue lies in the marriage of Adam and Dinah, the second in the removal and death of Hetty. In other words, what makes the ending of *Adam Bede* so troubling an “indictment against the ethic which the book suggests” (Creeger 231), as one critic put it, is the seeming distribution of rewards and punishments with which the novel concludes. The way in which this critical verdict has been framed frequently adapts a particularly punitive language, accusing Eliot herself – rather than the fictional court or community – of the “excessive efforts to denigrate” Hetty (Knoepflmacher 120), and the “plain lack of charity” (Allen 102) in which Hetty is “punished with awesome severity” (Heyns 143).

That Eliot is working hard against exactly such a verdict has rarely been taken seriously.<sup>136</sup> In the last-minute gallows rescue, Eliot sacrifices her realism, lapsing briefly into melodrama rather than sacrifice Hetty on that “hideous symbol of a deliberately-inflicted sudden death” (*Adam Bede* 414). If this is an error in art, it is one that shows Eliot labouring to avoid the potential of giving any reader “the satisfaction which used to be felt” – and which the audience of Mary Voce’s execution might still have felt – “in whipping culprits at the cart-tail” or killing them on the gallows (*Essays* 145). But in a world in which “deeds carry their terrible consequences” and in which “[t]here’s a sort of wrong that can never be made up for” (*Adam Bede* 482), Hetty cannot go free. And she cannot end happily – as the Methodist account of Mary Voce sees her “so happy” (quoted in *Adam Bede* 489) – because then Eliot would be telling a story of religious salvation (not human growth) reached through necessary, beneficent evil. Eliot’s oddly indeterminate ending, in which Hetty is saved from execution only to be transported and die seven years later on her way back home, results from these different forces and

---

<sup>135</sup> In 1927, Elizabeth Haldane declared that given Eliot’s “conception of sin and its consequences there could have been no happy ending such as was beloved and almost demanded by Victorian readers” (152). John Diekhof agreed that in the ending Eliot “sacrificed her moral” (227).

<sup>136</sup> Creeger for example suggests that Eliot is so harsh with Hetty that she “might just as well have had her hanged to begin with” (Creeger 231). It is doubtful that Mary Voce would have agreed.

implications, which Eliot has to manoeuvre: verisimilitude to historical reality, literary conventions and the demands of the marketplace, the moral importance of the inescapability of consequences, and above all the reluctance to profit or derive pleasure, even artistically, from the suffering of others. Stephen Gill has suggested that “[o]ur interest in the story flags after Hetty’s reprieve because George Eliot’s seems to do so” (38). He is exactly right. Even more, we are repelled by the ending, I think, because Eliot finds it repelling.

Paradoxically, Adam’s and Dinah’s happy ending, which so contradicts the ethics that they have been preaching, signifies their ethical and intellectual correctness. As Paris points out in his recent re-reading of Eliot’s novels, Eliot’s “experiments are often rigged to produce favorable outcomes for characters whose solutions she wishes to show as succeeding” (*Rereading George Eliot* 209). Because Adam is right, Eliot writes the very happy ending that most seems to contradict him; and knowing she will write this ending, as she did early on (Eliot, *Adam Bede* 484), she consistently writes against its implications. The work to defuse the implications of the ending begins long before the compromises that Eliot makes about Hetty’s misery and Adam’s marriage: It is because the compensatory conventions which the act of closing demands are so averse to Eliot’s project that Hayslope is filled with people who everywhere subvert and critique these conventional models of compensation. Anticipating the closing, Eliot gives Adam his last passionate discourse with Bartle Massey precisely because the narrative is approaching the point where its form comes to suggest the opposite. The constant efforts to critique and destroy theodicies – much like the “pretty butter maker” – anticipatorily disarm the eventual use of the compensatory conventions.

If this work seems forced in the compromise which concludes Hetty’s life – because it simultaneously needs to make sure that Hetty cannot recover from the irredeemable wrong of infanticide and yet needs to avoid the Augustinianism of deserved punishments

– it is even more strenuous where it draws near to the core of Eliot’s ethical project, where suffering engenders sympathy. Having united Adam and Dinah, the narrator strains to defeat the various immoral connotations without jettisoning the overall ethical effect:

That is a base and selfish, even a blasphemous, spirit, which rejoices and is thankful over the past evil that has blighted or crushed another, because it has been made a source of unforeseen good to ourselves: Adam could never cease to mourn over that mystery of human sorrow which had been brought so close to him: he could never thank God for another’s misery. And if I were capable of that narrow-sighted joy in Adam’s behalf, I should still know he was not the man to feel it for himself: he would have shaken his head at such a sentiment, and said, “Evil’s evil, and sorrow’s sorrow, and you can’t alter its nature by wrapping it up in other words. Other folks were not created for my sake, that I should think all square when things turn out well for me.” But it is not ignoble to feel that the fuller life which a sad experience has brought us is worth our own personal share of pain: surely it is not possible to feel otherwise, any more than it would be possible for a man with cataract to regret the painful process by which his dim blurred sight of men as trees walking had been exchanged for clear outline and effulgent day. The growth of higher feeling within us is like the growth of faculty, bringing with it a sense of added strength: we can no more wish to return to a narrower sympathy, than a painter or a musician can wish to return to his cruder manner, or a philosopher to his less complete formula. (*Adam Bede* 472–73)

This last bulwark against the compensation of the Irenaean theodicy, Eliot cannot entrust to any of her characters. The point is so crucial to the moral fiction, and the task so great that it must remain with the narrator, whose morality is nearly sacrificed (“if I were capable of that narrow-sighted joy in Adam’s behalf”) to protect Adam’s final benevolent growth. Even though Adam has grown, even though “[d]eep, unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism” (*Adam Bede* 382), as the narrator puts it elsewhere, Adam would never commit that blasphemous act of acknowledging a compensation, or of rejoicing in that suffering which has bought his “baptism” and his marriage. While it is “base and selfish” to rejoice in another’s unhappiness because it has brought one happiness, it is at the same time “not ignoble”, the narrator hedges, to feel that the “personal share of pain” – never the pain of the other – was worth the fuller life. There is a veritable minefield here which the narrator traverses by hovering above all possible commitments, joining in

almost every sentence the enjoyment of growth with a critique of that “narrow-sighted joy” which fails to see the larger consequences. If Eliot’s attempt to defuse the compensations of the ending, and to urge the reader away from the theodicies which she despises is not met with complete success – as the many critical dismissals of the ending indicate – there is no denying that in passages like these Eliot is working strenuously, stretching her narration to breaking point. In the conclusion her narrative splits into mimesis and rhetoric: the rhetoric tells us everywhere that good cannot come out of evil, that there is no just Providence which rewards and punishes but the mimesis of the end shows us the very opposite. What Lewes calls the artist’s way – structured, conventionalized realism – fails to do away with theodicy because the conventions, which realism must turn to in order to generate a conclusion, rest on theodicy. Compensating for that defect Eliot turns to the preacher’s way – the rhetoric of an authoritative narrator – to counteract what the artist cannot avoid creating.

Dickens – who unlike Eliot had no qualms about peddling literary theodicies – knew he was in the minority when he wrote that the part following the trial “exalted [his] sympathy with the writer to its utmost height” (quoted in D. Carroll, *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* 85). It seems significant that it is the writer that he sympathizes with – rather than the characters or humanity at large – and perhaps this is how his sympathy is best understood, as one craftsman recognizing the difficulty which another writer so laboriously negotiates. Henry James, who disliked the ending of *Adam Bede* as he disliked happy endings in general, also addresses the conclusion as a craftsman, if a less sympathetic one: “That [Adam’s] marriage at some future time was quite possible, and even natural, I readily admit; but that was matter for a new story” (James, ‘The Novels of George Eliot’ 485). Eliot, for James, whose endings tend to incarcerate his heroines in the purgatory of indefinitely prolonged suffering, should have focused on Hetty, rather than Adam, to avoid making Adam seem callous. What James’s insistence shows is that

he too recognizes the difficulty that Eliot has created in wanting to go beyond Hetty's suffering. When Eliot, revisited a similar setup in her second Adam, *Daniel Deronda*, she followed James's writerly advice at least in so far as she stayed with Gwendolen's suffering, moving Daniel's happiness out of the English realist frame. Whether the result appears less awesomely severe, more charitable, remains open for discussion.

### Reconciling Criticism with Tenderness: Reading Gwendolen's Suffering

In beginning her final novel with a direct question, it seems at first as if Eliot were asking the reader for an opinion: "Was she beautiful or not beautiful?" (*Daniel Deronda* 3). With only two people as yet implicitly acknowledged in the conversation – the author writing the question, the reader reading it – Eliot continues: "Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams?" (*Daniel Deronda* 3). If these questions are in the next paragraph revealed to characterize both Gwendolen Harleth, the object of whom they are asked, and Daniel Deronda, the subject asking them, they at first appear to relate not to the fictional reality but to the mode of its construction: is this the kind of text which equates beauty with goodness, lack of beauty with an "evil genius", the kind of text which draws a line between the virtuous and the vicious, tying both to physicality? Am I the kind of author, are you the kind of reader who writes and reads this way respectively? If Eliot in her earlier novels, and particularly in *Adam Bede* has used the conventional association of physical attributes with metaphysical qualities clandestinely, or alternatively made a great show of critiquing it, she here brings it to the forefront of attention, but without passing judgement. Rather *Daniel Deronda's* opening is an enquiry into the hermeneutics of the text which for the moment can stand free of ethical considerations. This is not yet the moralising voice of the narrator but truly an author revealing her craft, no longer asking the reader to passively watch a mirrored reality but to acknowledge and join in the construction of fictionality. This opening enacts what the epigraph to the chapter announces, that "[m]en can do nothing without the make-believe

of a beginning” (*Daniel Deronda* 3). What is true of science “the strict measurer” is certainly true of the artist, whose realism too can do nothing without make-believe.

That realism relies on make-believe – the creative intelligence of an author rather than the mirroring of an external reality – is true of all of Eliot’s works but where previous novels tend to hide the imaginative act, with varying degrees of success, Eliot, as Sally Shuttleworth points out, “takes direct responsibility in *Daniel Deronda* for her own constructive role as novelist” (Shuttleworth 175). The corollary of that acknowledgement of authorial construction is a corresponding readerly responsibility. The very form of the text urges the reader to take an active role and construct a chronology out of narrative. The text no longer represents itself as a representation of a “fixed ‘reality’” (Shuttleworth 175) to be read uncritically but as a fictional construct in which a reader may acquiesce but to in relation to which she may also inhabit the very position of scrutiny which Eliot ascribes to Daniel Deronda in his initial suspicious reading of Gwendolen’s physicality.

Deronda has been described as Eliot’s “ideal reader” because he is capable of taking alterity as the basis of sympathy (Albrecht 392) – he has the “habit of thinking himself imaginatively into the experience of others” (*Daniel Deronda* 431) – but the first characteristic of Deronda’s reading is not his sympathy but his suspicion, his capacity to register and resist the coercion of Gwendolen’s beauty. Daniel, in his relationship to Hugo Mallinger but also as ideal reader “reconciles criticism with tenderness” (*Daniel Deronda* 149). He is capable of resisting – in his relationship with Gwendolen, or his initial distance from Mordecai – as much as of submitting. Even his relationship with Mirah, begins with scrutiny of her, himself, and the forces shaping his reading:

He fell again and again to speculating on the probable romance that lay behind that loneliness and look of desolation; then to smile at his own share in the prejudice that interesting faces must have interesting adventures; then to justify himself for feeling that sorrow was the more tragic when it befell delicate, childlike beauty. (*Daniel Deronda* 157)

Deronda's readings are ideal because they are not self-satisfied, they constantly question themselves, their motives, and the conventions on which they rest. But even his ideal reading is not beyond external scrutiny. When Daniel attempts to extricate his interest from Mirah's attraction, telling himself that he "should not have forgotten the look of misery if she had been ugly and vulgar", the narrator corrects that "there was no denying that the attractiveness of the image made it likelier to last" (*Daniel Deronda* 157). Given how enamoured the narrator appears of Deronda, these qualifications of his judgement suggest that even the ideal reader does not produce exclusively ideal readings.

In foregrounding its writing, *Daniel Deronda* is always also foregrounding the act of reading, of misreading, and of reading or misreading the readings of others. Gwendolen reads Deronda reading her, choosing "to call 'dreadful,'" the gaze which "had really a very mild sort of scrutiny" (*Daniel Deronda* 155). The worst kind of readers are those, like Mrs Arrowpoint, who can only accept a single standard of value and thus fail to see the validity of other modes of reading. The very hermeneutics which make her declare in her conversation with Gwendolen that "[s]o many, you know, have written about Tasso; but they are all wrong" (*Daniel Deronda* 37) leads to her failure to recognize her daughter's attraction to Klesmer and to understand that while she (the mother) might consider him unworthy of their rank or inheritance both Klesmer and her daughter have a very different estimate of his and their own value. Gwendolen is equally a bad reader, whose readings are driven alternately by the desire to "differ from everybody" or to read as the author intended and to be "able to tell then which parts were funny and which serious" and never to "laugh in the wrong place" (*Daniel Deronda* 37). Gwendolen's tragedy is that of recognizing her own misreading, of the signification of her beauty, her musical aptitude, or her ability to govern her husband and thus differ from everybody, specifically every woman. Deronda, who can "easily feel the presence of poetry in everyday events" (*Daniel Deronda* 306) because he is constantly trying to find a

hermeneutic centre outside of himself is capable of understanding that there are many ways of reading. What makes him so superior a critic is paradoxically that he “wanted to escape standing as a critic outside the activities of men, stiffened into the ridiculous attitude of self-assigned superiority” (*Daniel Deronda* 396). His standard of reading – like the wisdom of Socrates – is better, Eliot seems to suggest, because he is capable of understanding that it is not and that the way that we read, much like “our consciences are not all of the same pattern, an inner deliverance of fixed laws: they are the voice of sensibilities as various as our memories (which also have their kinship and likeness)” (*Daniel Deronda* 431).

*Daniel Deronda* is famously a bifurcated text – the point was made most insistently by F. R. Leavis who differentiated between the Gwendolen Harleth half and the bad half – and so are its readings, especially when it comes to the issue of Gwendolen’s suffering.<sup>137</sup> The standard view is what may be described as a Feuerbachian reading in which Gwendolen grows through her suffering from selfishness to a renunciation of self. In this reading Gwendolen is cured, and Deronda functions as a proto-therapist (Rotenberg 269; Waddell 278), or alternately, she is saved, and Deronda is her priest. This reading has long been challenged due to the sense that rather than having grown Gwendolen has in fact, much like Hetty before her, been damaged by her sufferings. Elizabeth Daniels notes, for example, that Gwendolen is “left in a state of collapse— a pitiable bundle of conflicts” (Daniels 35). But if Gwendolen does not grow her suffering must, in the by now familiar dichotomy, be a form of punishment and it is once again punitiveness that Eliot has been accused of, ever since Henry James first commented that Gwendolen is

---

<sup>137</sup> Leavis partially revised his initial verdict of the complete separation of the two parts, though he remained convinced of the inferiority of the “Zionist” half (‘George Eliot’s Zionist Novel’ 318; *The Great Tradition* 93–94). A different kind of bifurcation is suggested by Cynthia Chase’s double-reading, which diagnoses the separation into irony and idealism (512). With regards to the topic of suffering, Armstrong suggests the most insightful bifurcation, reading *Daniel Deronda* as both informed by Spinoza’s ethics but also resistant to them (‘George Eliot, Spinoza, and the Emotions’ 306–07).

“punished for being narrow” (‘Daniel Deronda: A Conversation’ 693).<sup>138</sup> Sometimes these two readings even coexist in a single reader, separated by time only, as in Bernard Paris, who in his *Experiments in Life* argued that Gwendolen’s story was one of didactic growth through suffering but who has recently re-examined this reading asking whether Eliot is not actually trying to show “a wicked woman deserving of horrible punishment” (*Rereading George Eliot* 143).

Beyond the aesthetic and the moral questions posited in the opening of the novel, *Daniel Deronda* then raises a third question about Gwendolen Harleth: Is she punished or made to grow? Eliot answered this question in an oft-quoted letter to Blackwood, in which she declared “that poor Gwen is spiritually saved, but “so as by fire” (*Letters* 6 188). This declaration is frequently taken as proof that Eliot meant her heroine to grow into spiritual maturity and that poor Gwen’s suffering was the fire that was necessary for that development. Gwendolen’s suffering is then another version of that “baptism of fire”, which the narrator declares in *Adam Bede* or the “regenerating fire”, alluded to in the epigraph of chapter 55 of *Middlemarch* (*Adam Bede* 383; *Middlemarch* 514).

What is quoted less often is the context in which Eliot made that explication. For she was responding to her publisher’s carefully formulated desire: “The witch will I hope be saved ultimately but you alone must decide” (*Letters* 6 183). Blackwood, who had as early as the publication of *Scenes of Clerical Life* learned how sensitive Eliot was to criticism and how utterly resistant she was to “any cramping influence” in the form of editorial intervention (*Letters* 2 348), was making his by then habitual move of suggesting a preferred outcome and then reassuring Eliot of her exclusive authority. But if Blackwood, not by “preestablished harmony” (*Letters* 2 335) but by sheer experience knew the needs

---

<sup>138</sup> Catherine Brown claims that “[t]he suffering with which Gwendolen’s egotism is punished accords imperfectly with notions of justice which the novel itself suggests”(306). Evelyn Butler assumes punishment when she asks “why is Gwendolen punished?” (51–65). Kathleen Slaugh-Sanford similarly takes Gwendolen’s punishment for granted (411).

of his author, Eliot equally knew those of her publisher: a publisher, who had been resistant to the depressing beginning of “Janet’s Repentance” (*Letters* 2 344), or the equally glum Gothic dénouement of “The Lifted Veil” (*Letters* 3 67), who had wished to avoid the usual catastrophe of Hetty’s plot, and who could accept the drowning of Maggie Tulliver because he had convinced himself that even the “greatest lovers of all ending happily must admit that Providence was kind in removing Maggie” (*Letters* 3 277). Eliot’s answer must then be understood in the context of a twenty year-long relationship between an author and her publisher – a relationship that is always complex, especially where the artistic and ethical aims of the two do not neatly coincide. Eliot’s response bespeaks the careful negotiation of that relationship: “It will perhaps be a little comfort to you to know that poor Gwen is spiritually saved, but ‘so as by fire.’ Don’t you see the process already beginning? I have no doubt you do, for you are a wide-awake reader” (*Letters* 6 188).

There is something strategic in the way that Eliot echoes his language and avows an interest in his comfort. In other words, whatever else Eliot is doing, she is also managing her publisher, and managing him on the very assumptions of individuated hermeneutics that she illustrates everywhere in *Daniel Deronda*. Calling him a “wide-awake reader”, she is not only paying him the kind of compliment that might make him more amenable to her newest fiction – and more likely to pay her in turn the kind of compliments she desperately desires – she is also steering the reading of that fiction. “[A]ll meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation” (*Daniel Deronda* 36), declares the narrator of *Daniel Deronda*. By promising the salvation of “poor Gwen” Eliot is presenting the key of interpretation directing Blackwood to the way in which she knows he will most enjoy to read. By foreshadowing a salvation “but ‘so as by fire’” she is preventively subsuming under his preferred reading whatever might resist this key.

If Eliot's explanation of Gwendolen's suffering is not quite trustworthy because of the complexities of the relationship with the man to whom it is made, this is even more the case with the final declaration on the issue which Eliot gives to Gwendolen in the letter Deronda receives on his wedding day:

Do not think of me sorrowfully on your wedding-day. I have remembered your words—that I may live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born. I do not yet see how that can be, but you know better than I. If it ever comes true, it will be because you helped me. I only thought of myself, and I made you grieve. It hurts me now to think of your grief. You must not grieve any more for me. It is better—it shall be better with me because I have known you. (*Daniel Deronda* 682)

Like Eliot's letter to Blackwood, Gwendolen's letter seems tactical rather than truthful and it uses many of the same strategies: the verbatim echoing of his words, the complimenting tone, the avowed interest in his comfort. Much more so than Eliot's, Gwendolen's letter appears interested in nothing but the relationship to the recipient, utterly focused on what he might think, rather than what is. The instruction not to think of her as sorrowful says nothing about her actual emotional state, effectively treating it as irrelevant. What matters is only what Deronda shall think of her, and that he shall think of her. Much like the final meeting with Deronda in which she keeps up a "difficult rectitude", only to "burst [...] out hysterically" once he is no longer there to hear (Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* 680), her letter seems to be written to placate Deronda and secure the approval, which Gwendolen desires more even than her notoriously demanding creator.

This is not to say that Gwendolen's story is not in fact a story of growth but rather that the evidence is not quite convincing – if Gwendolen's suffering is indeed "preparation", so that she may be "among the best of women", as Deronda assures her, it is noteworthy that the result of this preparation is nowhere indicated in the novel. Rather than giving Gwendolen even the most perfunctory purpose, be it in marriage as Eliot did with Dinah, Esther Lyons, or Dorothea, or, in a novel abundant with superfluous children, by making

her a selfless caretaker who makes “others glad that they were born” like Romola, Eliot gives Gwendolen the acknowledgement that she “do[es] not yet see how that can be” (*Daniel Deronda* 682). If Gwendolen reads improvement in her life, it is on the evidence of Deronda’s reading and not her own experience. The same is true of the reader, who is presented with a mimesis that is made morally improving only through Deronda’s reading but which remains curiously reluctant to supply its own evidence.

This startling incongruity between rhetoric and mimesis has previously been noticed. Paris concludes not entirely complimentarily that “it is to George Eliot’s credit that she does not sacrifice the realistic depiction of her heroine to the demands of form and theme” but offers little in the way of explanation why this mismatch occurs in the first place (*Rereading George Eliot* 177). Heyns boldly claims the incongruity as evidence that Eliot is what Girard calls a “naïve persecutor”, that is an author who is “*unaware of what they are doing*” and therefore does not “cover up or censor the fundamental characteristics of their persecution” (Heyns 180–81). In other words, Heyns suggests that Eliot is so unaware that the text might be read as punitive, specifically unjustly punitive, that she sees no need to hide punitive implications, and therefore doesn’t. This, I think, is almost the opposite of what is going on here. In part, because we’ve seen Eliot work very hard against precisely those implications in *Adam Bede*, and while an author might grow less technically skilful or adventurous with age – though I think not in Eliot’s case – it is difficult to imagine them growing less aware of how texts might be read. More importantly, the text often appears to force the punitive reading in direct opposition to the theme of growth. Early on, Gwendolen opposes reading the loss of her family fortune as “Providence”, declaring that the man responsible for the speculation “ought to be punished” (*Daniel Deronda* 195). When Mrs Glasher in another significant letter, following Gwendolen’s marriage to Grandcourt, declares that “God is too just” to allow Gwendolen to be happy and prophesies that “you will have your punishment”,

Gwendolen is struck by a “spasm of terror” (*Daniel Deronda* 300) because it confirms what she feared all along “that a punishment might be hanging over her” (*Daniel Deronda* 296). Rather than being naïve, Eliot is everywhere aware of the punitive tendencies of the text. However, instead of covering them up, she draws readerly attention towards them, supplying ample evidence for those readers, such as Heyns or indeed Gwendolen herself, who read the text as punitive.

Gwendolen’s suffering enables different readings but this is not an accident but rather built into the very structure of the fictional universe. “While Mordecai was waiting on the bridge for the fulfilment of his visions,” Deronda’s free indirect discourse suggests after their fateful meeting “another man was convinced that he had the mathematical key of the universe [...] another, that he had the metaphysical key, with just that hair’s-breadth of difference from the old wards which would make it fit exactly” (*Daniel Deronda* 430). The meditation might throw doubt on Mordecai’s vision, suggesting that the fact of his certainty does not prove that he is right, for there are many who think that their keys, and only theirs, “fit exactly”. But if Mordecai’s certainty cannot prove his key, neither does the existence of other keys disprove it. Deronda too has his key and it is one that Eliot everywhere sympathizes with – that suffering leads to sympathy, that our own experience of suffering makes us avoid causing pain to others and has, in fact, an ennobling effect. But if the text sympathizes with Deronda – as Deronda sympathizes with Mordecai – that does not mean necessarily that he is right. And the text pits Deronda against another mode of reading in Lydia Glasher, or in his mother who asks perversely out of her suffering: “Shall you be glad to think that I am punished because I was not a Jewish mother to you?” (*Daniel Deronda* 559). Even Mordecai, whose deliverer and inheritor Deronda is to be, reads suffering by a key quite distinct from Deronda’s own, excusing what he perceives as the baseness of the Cohen family as the result of their suffering, which is everything but ennobling, and wishing, specifically, for a Jewish deliverer who, having never

suffered from being Jewish, does not “bear[...] the stamp of his people amid the signs of poverty and waning breath” (*Daniel Deronda* 399). Mordecai, who knows a deeper kind of suffering than Daniel, knows what Eliot asserted before the beginning of her novelistic career – adumbrated in her criticism of the saintly vision of Beecher Stowe’s slaves – and reiterated in *Theophrastus Such*: that having suffered more than others, the Jews are likely to “have suffered some corresponding moral degradation” (*Impressions of Theophrastus Such* 156).<sup>139</sup>

\*

“Here is a theory of the world which you bring for my acceptance: well, there is the world; try – will the key fit?”, asks the narrator of Eliot’s early favourite the *Nemesis of Faith*, before coming down with a definite “no”. In writing *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot allows for no such certainty. Instead the text brings varying keys to the forefront of readerly attention, resisting the urge to make any key fit exactly. Eliot is aware that there are specifically two keys – the punitive and the meliorating; or since both ultimately integrate suffering into their visions of justice the Augustinian and the Irenaean – which writers and readers use, and there is no doubt that she has a preference. But she is no longer writing against undesirable readings as she had done in *Adam Bede*; in part because she knows that the exercise is likely futile since readers bring their own keys and are apt, like the characters of *Daniel Deronda*, to read according to their keys regardless of how well they fit. But also because, I think, she has come to realize that she too reads – and writes – according to a key. In other words, Eliot has, I think, realized precisely what Heyns claims she fails to understand that the “very form imposes the ethical sanctions of older traditions on to its material” (Heyns 183). Rather than pretending to the formlessness of her product – to the pure mimesis of an entirely disinterested realism – Eliot is

---

<sup>139</sup> Theophrastus’s conclusion is that they have not degraded to the degree that should be expected – thus the text struggles to save Jewish morality without making suffering appear beneficial. Theophrastus’s Jews are moral despite their suffering, perhaps this is their true election.

acknowledging everywhere the conventions which go into writing as they go into reading. Like Gwendolen, who is torn between the reading she desires to be correct, and the reading she fears to be true, the reader too is forced to take responsibility for their reading. In Daniel's Romantic Irenaean vision, Gwendolen is transformed through her suffering into the "best of women". In Lydia Glasher's Augustinian reading of the "too just God" she remains a sinner deservedly punished for her wrongdoings. But in the interstices of these two modes, through the "iridescence of her character" (Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* 33), which is the iridescence of Eliot's text, Gwendolen can be glimpsed as a human being in pain, whose suffering might be neither justified punishment nor beneficial growth but simply inexplicable, purposeless misery, an inscrutable reality of the human condition.

## Conclusion

*We are so apt to take it for granted that the world has outgrown the religious thirst for sanctification, for a perfect moral consistency, as it has outgrown so many of the older complications of the sentiment of honour. And meanwhile half the tragedy of our time lies in this perpetual clashing of two estimates of life—the estimate which is the offspring of the scientific spirit, and which is for ever making the visible world fairer and more desirable in mortal eyes; and the estimate of Saint Augustine.*

Mary Augusta Ward

In 1888, Mary Augusta Ward's *Robert Elsmere* became one of the best-selling novels of the century. The novel revolves around the conflict between a young curate who comes to doubt the historicity of the Bible, and his deeply Anglican wife, Catherine. In the epigraph, which ends Catherine's dark night of the soul following her husband's admission of doubts concerning the gospel, the narrator describes the central conflict as the "perpetual clashing of two estimates of life", one scientific, the other religious. The "tragedy" which Ward diagnoses is a failure to realize the limits of secularization (Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, vol.1 221); thinking the age "scientific" one fails to realize that it yet also remains Augustinian.

The premise of this thesis is that *Elsmere's* narrator is correct; in other words, that the secularization thesis, which was at the heart of the sociology of religion for the larger part of the last century and which was hugely influential in the professionalization of English studies, specifically the study of Victorian literature, is inaccurate. More importantly, in taking the secularization thesis as the basis of our critical concern for certain literary works of the time, we have underestimated and obscured their religious forms and effects. This is not only detrimental to our understanding of these works but also to our understanding of the role that literature plays in the entrenchment of religious narratives.

In this respect, it is noteworthy that Ward's narratorial diagnosis, though it neatly encapsulates the predicament of the secularization thesis, is a misdiagnosis as far as the novel itself is concerned. The struggle between Robert Elsmere and his wife is never the struggle between science and religion. For Elsmere, if he loses his faith in the factual veracity of the gospel never loses his faith in God, and nothing about his beliefs is scientific, if by that we mean evidence-based, materialist, secular, or indeed atheist. Rather his faith rests on story-telling and it is through stories, mainly novels, that he instructs his flock long before his deconversion, and it is in stories that his faith survives as other kinds of evidence lose their hold. Ward, indebted to her uncle Matthew Arnold and her reading of George Eliot, ascribes two functions to literature in the conservation and renewal of religion: "the rousing of moral sympathy and the awakening of the imaginative power" (*Robert Elsmere*, vol.3 122). It is here that my argument parts ways with Ward. On the one hand, because I think that sympathy is not inherently religious, or vice versa, and that, indeed, when religion invokes a benevolent and just Creator it tends to erode sympathy, because it renders care for the suffering other misguided or superfluous or at least minor. Apart from this ethical concern – a bias which I share with some of the secular critics who have formed the bedrock of this thesis, most importantly George Levine, Bruce Robbins, and Martha Nussbaum – my argument differs from Ward on formal grounds: it is not, or not primarily, by raising the imagination but by pretending to be unimaginative that literature serves religion. When literature presents its highly ordered, meaningful structures as representative of external reality it legitimizes the view that external reality itself is meaningful and ordered and thus helps to counteract one of the chief arguments that can be brought against the existence of a purposeful Creator. Thus, literature which claims a representative relationship with external reality tends towards theodicy.

This is to simplify a highly complex issue. By exploring the historical and philosophical background of theodicy writing throughout the eighteenth century, the first chapter excavated some of the complexities. To this end, the chapter introduced two kinds of descriptive lens to the study of theodicy in literature: the first one, Leibniz's tripartite typology of evil draws attention to the different aspects of worldly phenomena usually described as evil, namely moral, metaphysical, and physical evil. Secondly, I adopted John Hick's distinction between Augustinian and Irenaean theodicies to draw attention to the fact that Christian theodicies – in Victorian literature and beyond – need not follow the common Augustinian pattern of moral evil deservedly punished but that the ascent pattern, which in secular terms might be described as progress or humanist *Bildung*, has much older religious correlatives in the theologies of Irenaeus or Origen.

Beyond these methodological additions, the chapter also added some limits to the argument. One necessary caveat – by way of Voltaire, Lessing and Mendelssohn – is that literature is not philosophy and that if it entrenches theodicy patterns, it cannot serve as evidence in any systematic sense. In fact, by refocusing on the concrete and experiential, imaginative literature has proved quite detrimental to the acceptance of systematic efforts in philosophical theodicy. Thus, my work, remains sympathetic to the claim that the realist project encourages secularism because it focuses on the tangible and visible rather than the spiritual or metaphysical. However, this, I think, is only half the story. To claim that realism is secular because it focuses on physical reality is akin to suggesting that the Eucharist is materialist because it brings bread and wine to the centre of its attention. Literature, like Christianity, often invests physical emblems with metaphysical meaning. Unlike Christianity, however, literature, and especially formal realism, often aims to erase evidence of this semiotic investment.

In this way literature can provide religion with a particularly resilient type of evidence, one that is susceptible neither to logical, nor historical, or scientific arguments. This, I

argue in the second chapter, happens in the fictional works of James Anthony Froude. Here fiction presents itself as experimental, puts secular theories to the test – and finds them wanting. Having argued that it is neither philosophically nor ethically sound to read human suffering as deserved punishment for moral evil, Froude structures the content of his *Nemesis of Faith* in such a way that it shepherds the author and the audience right back into the Augustinian theodicy which it at first claimed to critique, albeit with a new sympathy, lacking from its theological predecessor. The novel, which treats individual characters as if they were representative of humanity, supplies a justification for the Augustinian theodicy that can no longer be attained by more systematic means.

Though Froude's fiction is significantly more complex than has often been assumed – and the second chapter throws the formal and ethical intricacies of his work into relief – its struggle with theodicy is ultimately simpler than that of Clough and Eliot, as was suggested in chapter three and four. Froude, if he opposes theodicy patterns at first, in the end uses his authorial control over the plot to reinstate them. Clough and Eliot, on the other hand, remain resistant to the pull of theodicy, though the strategies with which they do so differ. Because Clough focuses on metaphysical evil, the creaturely limitation which results in an inability to understand if existence is purposive, his poetry does not attempt to thwart any specific Christian type of theodicy – though his *Adam and Eve* does rewrite the biblical narrative away from the Augustinian tradition. Rather, Clough's poetry works against the broader sense of teleology and purposiveness in the cosmos which any kind of literary ending presents. Where evil is metaphysical, manifest in the human inability to perceive with certainty any kind of overall meaning, meaning-making becomes theodicy, and literary closure threatens to overcome the underlying sense of unknowability. By leaving his poetry unfinished, Clough resists overcoming metaphysical evil. By editing, publishing, and critiquing his poetry, scholarship

inevitably overcomes some of that opposition, bringing Clough's texts closer to closure and the very theodicy pattern they resisted.

In Clough's work, resistance to theodicy pushes the literary text to its formal vanishing point; Eliot's approach is more pragmatic. This is in part, I have suggested, because Clough is in his own minimal way a religious author, whose very reticence in affirming the existence of the Deity stems from humility before Its ineffableness. Eliot's ethics, on the other hand, are firmly rooted in humanity, making human suffering the aspect of evil which her novels focus on. Eliot, in other words, unlike Froude and Clough, is precisely the kind of secular author whose realist project aims to urge readers away from theodicy, and it is no wonder that those who wish to champion literature as a means of fostering secular ethics often invoke her as model. But despite the secular ethics which underlie Eliot's work as novelist, her novels have frequently, justifiably, been critiqued for their punishing and rewarding aspects – for the sense that the cosmos her novels create, while claiming to represent external reality, actually follows a judiciary principle. The last chapter argues that it is because Eliot's realism must rely on literary conventions which pull towards theodicy – and because readers are ultimately trained to read novels according to those conventions – that she cannot help legitimizing these religious patterns. By bringing theodicies into the text, and constructing the rhetoric to oppose them, Eliot works strenuously against the theodicies suggested by the very form and conventions of the novel. The visibility of that labour emphasizes its difficulty, and Eliot's last work integrates the acceptance that a certain theodicy effect is perhaps unavoidable. Instead of trying to obscure the overall theodicy pattern by structuring the rhetoric to oppose it as Eliot did in *Adam Bede*, her final novel, *Daniel Deronda* integrates the Augustinian and the Irenaean theodicies into its text. Thus Eliot draws attention to the fact that these are readings demanding scrutiny, rather than representations of external

reality, and that ultimately part of the responsibility for the ethics of the text lies with the reader.

Although these readings focused on individual authors, and individual works, they are representative, not only of what has sometimes been referred to as Victorian “crisis in faith” literature but also of the ways in which literary texts struggle with the problem of evil and its solution. Though Froude, Clough, and Eliot are extreme in their preoccupation with moral, metaphysical, and physical evil respectively, what separates them from each other as well as other writers of fiction, is a matter of degree. The problems that these perspectives on evil raise extend beyond the scope of this thesis and Victorian literature.

Their examples, with the necessary caveats added in the first chapter, point towards three conclusions: first, extending from the original premise, that literary forms, and especially the conventions that pertain to endings, even if they remain utterly focused on the material and “real” suggest cosmic justice or purpose and thereby a just, purposeful Creator. Where there is any claim of mimesis and representation of external reality, literature therefore urges towards theodicy. This is not only true of the conventional happy ending, in which the good end happily, the bad unhappily (according to those notions of “good” and “bad” the text establishes), but also in less obviously conventionalized endings, such as the sombre sinner’s death which ends Froude’s *Nemesis*, or conversely, the death as release, which ends texts as diverse as *Clarissa* or indeed *Mill on the Floss*. Secondly, extending further, particularly with a focus on metaphysical evil: any kind of closure, even if it is only the closure of the finished form, tends towards theodicy because it points towards an overall teleology, purpose, and meaning. This is again particularly true where the text operates under the assumption of mimesis and one interesting way to extend the work done here would be to go beyond Victorian realism into modernism and postmodernism. The third conclusion begins this look beyond Victorian realism: if the pull of theodicy on literature is unavoidable since it is built into its very forms – the mere

fact of being cast into form – one way in which literature can urge readers away from theodicy is by focusing readerly attention towards its own, inevitable, theodicies.

This is not as paradoxical as it might sound. For in critiquing Eliot's punitive lack of charitableness towards her characters, the reader is made to inhabit the very charitableness that Eliot is perceived to lack. By drawing attention to the theodicies of the text, Eliot encourages resistance to theodicy – but at the cost of fostering resistance to the text itself. This might be a fruitful authorial strategy. George Orwell, I think, uses it to great effect when he ends *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with Winston Smith emerging from his suffering a saved man finally happy to love Big Brother (Orwell 342). But here the effect depends on the reader's ability to construct the author as opposing the ending of the text; were we to read Orwell as championing Big Brother, the effect would be very different indeed. The risk of fostering resistance to the theodicies of the text, and one which I think Eliot has sometimes been a victim of, is that it can render the text as a whole ethically untenable. In other words, if we want literature and its study to urge society away from theodicy and foster secular ethics – and I remain sympathetic to that aim – the work cannot lie wholly in a hermeneutics of suspicion. To locate the value of the production and study of literature exclusively in resistance to it, seems a perversely Orwellian exercise and not one destined to foster humility, respect, or sympathy for the other.

The question then is how to remain receptive to the ethical effects of a text, while also resisting the theodicies it presents; how to construct a hermeneutics that is both suspicious and sympathetic, and reconcile, as Eliot puts it, criticism with tenderness? This has been the aim of my critical practice and this work ultimately suggests two ways of achieving that end. In focusing on the form of the text, the conventions which go into the construction of even the most realist text, and the implications about the nature of reality these patterns carry, the burden of suspicion is removed from the author and focused on certain aspects of the texts – aspects which might not always lie within the complete

control of the author and which the author might in fact be writing against. The text can then be read as the struggle with its own production and signification, a struggle of which authors, editors, critics, and readers form a part. Accordingly, the second critical strategy is to take responsibility for the ways in which we read. Rather than trusting form – be it high realism or modernist meta-discourse – to draw readers away from theodicy, those of us who want literature and its criticism to champion secular ethics would be well advised to pay renewed attention to those aspects of literature which pull towards religious significance, and thus garner in ourselves and those we teach a sensibility for those aspects of the text which may run contrary to our ethical objectives.

## Works Cited

- ‘A Bleak Outlook Is Seen for Religion’. *New York Times*, 25 Feb. 1968, p. 3.
- Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. Norton, 1971.
- . ‘Realism and Naturalism’. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th ed., Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999, pp. 260–62.
- Adams, Marilyn McCord. ‘Foreword’. *Evil and the God of Love*, New, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. xv–xix.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, 1999.
- . ‘The End of the Poem’. *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 109–15.
- Alber, Jan, et al. ‘Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models’. *Narrative*, vol. 18, no. 2, May 2010, pp. 113–36.
- Albrecht, Thomas. “‘The Balance of Separateness and Communication’: Cosmopolitan Ethics in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*’. *ELH*, vol. 79, no. 2, 2012, pp. 389–416.
- Allen, Walter Ernest. *George Eliot*. Macmillan, 1964.
- Altieri, Charles. ‘Taking Lyrics Literally: Teaching Poetry in a Prose Culture’. *New Literary History*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2001, pp. 259–281.
- Antognazza, Maria Rosa. *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation: Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century*. Yale University Press, 2007.
- Aquinas, St Thomas. *Summa Theologica, Volume 5 (Part III, Second Section & Supplement)*. Vol. 5, Cosimo, Inc., 2013.
- Armstrong, Isobel. ‘George Eliot, Spinoza, and the Emotions’. *A Companion to George Eliot*, edited by Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 294–308.
- . *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics*. Routledge, 1993.
- Arnim, Bettina von. *Bettina’s [v. Arnim] sämtliche Schriften: Goethe’s Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde. Zweiter Theil*. Vol. 5, v. Arnim’s Verlag, 1857.
- Arnold, Matthew. *English Literature and Irish Politics. The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*. Edited by R. H. Super, vol. 9, University of Michigan Press, 1973.
- . *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*. Edited by Howard Foster Lowry, Oxford University Press, 1932.
- . *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold*. Edited by Howard Foster Lowry, Reprint, Oxford University Press, 1957.
- Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Ashton, Rosemary. ‘Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction, by Gillian Beer (Book Review)’. *Review of English Studies*, vol. 36, no. 143, 1, pp. 442–44.

- . *George Eliot: A Life*. Hamish Hamilton, 1996.
- . 'Introduction'. *The Nemesis of Faith*, Reprint of 2nd edition, Libris, 1988.
- . *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1860*. Libris, 1994.
- . *Thomas & Jane Carlyle: Portrait of a Marriage*. Chatto & Windus, 2002.
- Attridge, Derek. *The Singularity of Literature*. Routledge, 2004.
- Augustine. *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis: Against the Manichees; and, On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*. Translated by Roland J. Teske, Vol. 84, Catholic University of America Press, 2001.
- Averill, James H. *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering*. Cornell University Press, 1980.
- Badger, Kingsbury. 'The Ordeal of Anthony Froude, Protestant Historian'. *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1952, p. 41.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 'Epic and Novel'. *The Dialogic Imagination*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson, University of Texas Press, 1981, pp. 3-41.
- Barish, Evelyn. *Arthur Hugh Clough: The Growth of a Poet's Mind*. Harvard University Press, 1970.
- Barrett Browning, Elizabeth. *The Poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. Vol. 1, Edward Moxon, 1844.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, Translated by Geoffrey William Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich, vol. III,3, T&T Clark.
- Bayle, Pierre. *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle*. Edited by Pierre Des Maizeaux, The 2nd ed., Carefully collated with the several eds. of the original, in Which many passages are restored, and The whole greatly augm., Particularly with a translation of the quotations from eminent writers in various languages., vol. 1, J.J. and P. Knapton, 1734.
- . *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle*. Edited by Pierre Des Maizeaux, The 2nd ed., Carefully collated with the several eds. of the original, in Which many passages are restored, and The whole greatly augm., Particularly with a translation of the quotations from eminent writers in various languages., vol. 2, J.J. and P. Knapton, 1735.
- . *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle*. Edited by Pierre Des Maizeaux, The 2nd ed., Carefully collated with the several eds. of the original, in Which many passages are restored, and The whole greatly augm., Particularly with a translation of the quotations from eminent writers in various languages., vol. 4, J.J. and P. Knapton, 1737.
- Beer, Gillian. *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 3rd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Berger, Peter. 'Further Thoughts on Religion and Modernity'. *Society*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2012, pp. 313-316.
- . 'The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview'. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, edited by Peter Berger, Ethics and Public Policy Center and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999, pp. 1-18.

- . *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Anchor Books, 1990.
- Berkoben, L. D. *Coleridge's Decline as a Poet*. Mouton, 1975.
- Berlina, Alexandra, and Viktor Shklovsky. 'Art, as Device'. *Poetics Today*, vol. 36, no. 3, Sept. 2015, pp. 151–74.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 'Evil and the Temptation of Theodicy'. *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, edited by Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 252–67.
- . *Radical Evil*. 1st ed., Polity, 2002.
- Biswas, Robindra Kumar. *Arthur Hugh Clough: Towards a Reconsideration*. Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Black, Jeremy. *Italy and the Grand Tour*. Yale University Press, 2003.
- Blackburn, Simon. 'Morality'. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Blair, Kirstie. *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Blomfield, Arthur. 'Letters to the Editor: "Burned Books"'. *Daily News*, 2 May 1892.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*. Cornell University Press, 1971.
- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. 'A Woman of Many Names'. *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, edited by George Levine, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 20–37.
- . *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans*. Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Bonaparte, Felicia. *The Poetics of Poesis*. University of Virginia Press, 2015.
- . *The Triptych and the Cross: The Central Myths of George Eliot's Poetic Imagination*. Harvester Press, Ltd, 1979.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*. University of California Press, 1988.
- Bowers, Frederick. 'Arthur Hugh Clough: The Modern Mind'. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1966, pp. 709–716.
- Brady, Ciaran. *James Anthony Froude: An Intellectual Biography of a Victorian Prophet*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Braiterman, Zachary. *(God) after Auschwitz*. Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Braun, Theodore E. D. 'Voltaire and Le Franc de Pompignan: Poetic Reactions to the Lisbon Earthquake'. *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*, edited by Theodore E. D. Braun and John B. Radner, Voltaire Foundation, 2005, pp. 145–55.
- Braun, Theodore E. D., and John B. Radner, editors. *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*. Voltaire Foundation, 2005.
- Brewer, David A. *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.
- Brown, Catherine. 'Daniel Deronda as Tragicomedy'. *Essays in Criticism: A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism*, vol. 59, no. 4, Oct. 2009, pp. 302–23.

- Brown, Robert H. 'The "Demonic" Earthquake: Goethe's Myth of the Lisbon Earthquake and Fear of Modern Change'. *German Studies Review*, vol. 15, no. 3, Oktober 1992, pp. 475–91.
- Büchner, Georg. *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck*. Translated by Victor Price, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- 'Burned Books.' *Daily News*, 28 Apr. 1892.
- Butler, Evelyn. 'Daniel Deronda: Why Is Gwendolen Punished'. *Recovering Literature: A Journal of Contextualist Criticism*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1977, pp. 51–65.
- Byron, George Gordon. *Cain, a Mystery*. A. and W. Galignani, 1822.
- . *The Complete Poetical Works*. Edited by Jerome J. McGann, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, 1980.
- Campbell, Joseph Keim. *Free Will*. Polity Press, 2013.
- Carlyle, Thomas. 'Death of Goethe'. *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: Collected and Republished*, vol. 3, Chapman and Hall, 1847.
- . *German Romance: Translations from the German, with Biographical and Critical Notices*. C. Scribner's sons, 1901.
- . *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh: In Three Books*. Saunders and Otley, 1838.
- . *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in Thirty Volumes: Past and Present*. Centenary Edition, vol. 10, Chapman and Hall, 1897.
- . *Voltaire and Novalis*. John W. Lovell Company, 188AD.
- Carlyle, Thomas, and Jane Welsh Carlyle. *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*. Edited by Clyde De L. Ryals et al., vol. 24, Duke University Press, 1995.
- Carroll, David. *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- , editor. *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Carroll, Lewis. *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*. Edited by Roger Lancelyn Green, Reprint, vol. 1, Greenwood Press, 1971.
- Carroll, Robert, and Stephen Prickett, editors. *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*. Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Casanova, José. 'Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective'. *The Hedgehog Review*, vol. 8, no. 1–2, Spring/Summer 2006, pp. 7–22.
- Cecil, Algernon. *Six Oxford Thinkers: Edward Gibbon. John Henry Newman. R.W. Church. James Anthony Froude. Walter Pater. Lord Morley of Blackburn*. John Murray, 1909.
- Chadwick, Owen. *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Chase, Cynthia. 'The Decomposition of the Elephants: Double-Reading Daniel Deronda'. *PMLA*, vol. 93, no. 2, 1978, pp. 215–227.
- Chatman, Seymour. 'Backwards'. *Narrative*, vol. 17, no. 1, Jan. 2009, pp. 31–55.
- Chatterton, Georginia Lady. *Compensation: A Story of Real Life Thirty Years Ago*. Vol. 1, John W. Parker and Son West Strand, 1856.

- Chew, Shirley. 'Introduction'. *Selected Poems*, FyfieldBooks, 2003.
- Chorley, Katharine. *Arthur Hugh Clough: The Uncommitted Mind: A Study of His Life and His Poetry*. Clarendon Press, 1962.
- Christianson, Gale E. *Isaac Newton: Lives and Legacies*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Clough, Arthur Hugh. *1849 (Roma) Notebook*. Balliol Library, MS Clough 44.1a.
- . *1850 (Venice) Notebook*. Bodleian Library, MS.Eng.Poet.d.133.
- . *Adam and Eve I*. Bodleian Library, MS.Eng.poet.d.125.
- . *The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough*. Vol. 1, Clarendon Press, 1957.
- . *The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough*. Vol. 2, Clarendon Press, 1957.
- . *The Oxford Diaries of Arthur Hugh Clough*. Clarendon Press, 1990.
- . *The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough: With a Selection from His Letters and a Memoir: Edited by His Wife: In Two Volumes: With a Portrait*. Edited by Blanche (Smith) Clough, vol. 1, Macmillan, 1869.
- . *The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough: With a Selection from His Letters and a Memoir: Edited by His Wife: In Two Volumes: With a Portrait*. Edited by Blanche (Smith) Clough, vol. 2, Macmillan, 1869.
- . *The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*. Edited by Frederick Mulhauser, 2nd ed., Clarendon Press, Poems.
- Clough, Arthur Hugh, and Frederick Mulhauser. 'Notes'. *The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, 2nd ed., Clarendon Press, 1974, pp. 563–816.
- Cockshut, A. O. J. *Man and Woman: A Study of Love and the Novel, 1740-1940*. Collins, 1977.
- Colby, Vineta. *Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel*. Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*. Edited by Nicholas Halmi et al., Norton, 2004.
- . *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. 1, Clarendon Press, 1956.
- . *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, 1956.
- . *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. 6, Clarendon Press, 1971.
- . *Lectures 1795: On Politics and Religion*. Edited by Lewis Patton and Peter Mann, vol. 1, Princeton University Press, 1971.
- . *On Religion and Psychology*. Edited by John Beer, Springer, 2002.
- . 'Table Talk'. *Church and State: A Lay Sermon: Table Talk, &c*, edited by W.G.T. Shedd, vol. 6, Harper & Brothers, 1884.
- . *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Including Poems and Versions of Poems Now Published for the First Time*. Edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, vol. 1, Clarendon Press, 1912.
- . *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by W.G.T. Shedd and Henry Nelson Coleridge, vol. 5, Harper & Brothers, 1856.

- Collins, K. K. *George Eliot: Interviews and Recollections*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Cook, Daniel. 'Froude's Post-Christian Apostate and the Uneven Development of Unbelief'. *Religion & Literature*, vol. 38, no. 2, July 2006, pp. 49–71.
- Cook, Jonathan A. *Inscrutable Malice: Theodicy, Eschatology, and the Biblical Sources of Moby-Dick*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2012.
- Cooper, Astley. *James Anthony Froude: A Lecture Delivered at the Richmond Athenaeum, Surrey*. Elliot Stock, 1908.
- Cornwell, John. *Newman's Unquiet Grave: The Reluctant Saint*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011.
- Cover, J. A. 'Spinoza and Moral Freedom (Book Review)'. *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 100, no. 1, Jan. 1991, pp. 160–164.
- Creeger, George R. 'An Interpretation of Adam Bede'. *ELH*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1956, pp. 218–38.
- Critchley, Simon. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Blackwell, 1992.
- Cromphout, Gustaaf Van. *Emerson's Ethics*. University of Missouri Press, 1999.
- Cronk, Nicholas. *Voltaire: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Cronk, Nicholas, and David Beeson. 'Voltaire: Philosopher or Philosophe?' *The Cambridge Companion to Voltaire*, edited by Nicholas Cronk, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 47–64.
- Cross, J. W. *George Eliot's Life: As Related in Her Letters and Journals*. Vol. 1, Harper & Brothers, 1885.
- Crousaz, Jean-Pierre de. *An Examination of Mr Pope's Essay on Man. Translated from the French of M. Crousaz*. printed for ADodd, 1739.
- Daniels, Elizabeth. 'A Meredithian Glance at Gwendolen Harleth'. *George Eliot: A Centenary Tribute*, edited by Gordon S. Haight and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, Macmillan, 1982, pp. 28–37.
- Danielson, Dennis Richard. 'Imago Dei, "Filial Freedom," and Miltonic Theodicy'. *ELH*, vol. 47, no. 4, Winter 1980, pp. 670–81.
- . 'Milton and the Problem of Evil: An Essay in Literary Theodicy'. *Dissertation Abstracts: Section A. Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 40, 1980.
- . *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy*. Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- . 'The Fall of Man and Milton's Theodicy'. *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, edited by Dennis Danielson, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 113–29.
- Davis, Lennard J. *Resisting Novels (Routledge Revivals): Ideology and Fiction*. Routledge, 2014.
- Davis, Michael. *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology: Exploring the Unmapped Country*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006.
- Davis, Philip. *1830-1880: The Victorians*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- De Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. Yale University Press, 1979.

- Dean, Joanna. *Religious Experience and the New Woman: The Life of Lily Dougall*. Indiana University Press, 2007.
- DeCurtis, Anthony. 'Britain's Mavericks'. *Harper's Bazaar*, no. 3359, Nov. 1991, pp. 146–47.
- Deering, Dorothy. 'The Antithetical Poetics of Arnold and Clough'. *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 16, no. 1/2, 1978, pp. 16–31.
- Dibble, Jerry Allen. 'Carlyle's "British Reader" and the Structure of Sartor Resartus'. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1974, pp. 293–304.
- Diekhoff, John S. 'The Happy Ending of Adam Bede'. *ELH*, vol. 3, no. 3, Sept. 1936, pp. 221–27.
- Dobbelaere, Karel. 'Some Trends in European Sociology of Religion: The Secularization Debate'. *Sociological Analysis*, vol. 48, no. 2, 1987, pp. 107–137.
- . 'Towards an Integrated Perspective of the Processes Related to the Descriptive Concept of Secularization'. *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1999, pp. 229–247.
- Donat, Alexander. 'Voice from the Ashes: Wanderings in Search of God'. *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, edited by Steven T. Katz et al., Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 275–86.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Karamazov Brothers*. Translated by Ignat Avsey, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Dunn, Waldo Hilary. *James Anthony Froude: A Biography*. Vol. 1, Clarendon Press, 1961.
- Dwyer, Michael. *Strangling Angel: Diphtheria and Childhood Immunization in Ireland*. Liverpool University Press, 2017.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory an Introduction: Anniversary Edition*. Blackwell, 2008.
- . *On Evil*. Yale University Press, 2010.
- Edwards, Amelia B. 'The Art of the Novelist.' *The Contemporary Review, 1866-1900*, vol. 66, Aug. 1894, pp. 225–42.
- Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. Edited by Carol A. Martin, New edition, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . 'Belles Lettres.' *Westminster Review*, vol. 66, no. 130, Oct. 1856, pp. 566–82.
- . *Daniel Deronda*. Edited by Graham Handley, New edition, Oxford University Press, 2014.
- . *Essays of George Eliot*. Edited by Thomas Pinney, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.
- . *Felix Holt, The Radical*. Edited by Fred C. Thomson, Clarendon Press, 1980.
- . *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. Edited by Nancy Henry, Pickering, 1994.
- . *Middlemarch*. Edited by David Carroll, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . *Romola*. Edited by Andrew Brown, Clarendon Press, 1993.
- . *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Edited by Thomas Noble, New edition, Oxford University Press, 2015.
- . *Selected Critical Writings*. Edited by Rosemary Ashton, Oxford University Press, 1992.

- . *The George Eliot Letters: 1836-1851*. Edited by Gordon S. Haight, vol. 1, Yale University Press, 1954.
- . *The George Eliot Letters: 1840-1870*. Edited by Gordon S. Haight, vol. 8, Yale University Press, 1954.
- . *The George Eliot Letters: 1852-1858*. Edited by Gordon S. Haight, vol. 2, Yale University Press, 1954.
- . *The George Eliot Letters: 1859-1861*. Edited by Gordon S. Haight, vol. 3, Yale University Press, 1954.
- . *The George Eliot Letters: 1874-1877*. Edited by Gordon S. Haight, vol. 6, Yale University Press, 1954.
- . *The Journals of George Eliot*. Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . *The Lifted Veil; Brother Jacob*. Edited by Helen Small, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . 'Thomas Carlyle'. *Leader and Saturday Analyst*, vol. 6, no. 292, Oct. 1855, pp. 1034–35.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays*. J. Munroe and company, 1841.
- . *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Alfred R. Ferguson and Jean Ferguson Carr, vol. 3, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, and Arthur Hugh Clough. *Emerson-Clough Letters*. Edited by Howard Foster Lowry and Ralph L. (Ralph Leslie) Rusk, The Rowfant Club, 1934.
- Empson, William. *Milton's God*. Chatto & Windus, 1961.
- . *Some Versions of Pastoral*. New Directions, 1974.
- 'End, N.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com.ubproxy.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/view/Entry/61863>. Accessed 2 Mar. 2017.
- 'Ethics, N.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com.ubproxy.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/view/Entry/355823>. Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.
- Evans, A. W. (Arthur William). *Warburton and the Warburtonians: A Study in Some Eighteenth-Century Controversies*. London, 1932.
- Ferris, Ina. 'Realism and the Discord of Ending: The Example of Thackeray'. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 38, no. 3, Dec. 1983, pp. 289–303.
- Fessenden, Tracy. "'The Secular" as Opposed to What?' *New Literary History*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2007, pp. 631–636.
- Fisher, Peter F. 'Milton's Theodicy'. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 17, 1956, pp. 28–53.
- Fleishman, Avrom. *George Eliot's Intellectual Life*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Florida, R. E. *Voltaire and the Socinians*. Vol. 122, Voltaire Foundation, 1974.
- Freiburg, Rudolf, and Susanne Gruss, editors. 'But Vindicate the Ways of God to Man': *Literature and Theodicy*. Stauffenburg, 2004.

- . 'Introduction'. *'But Vindicate the Ways of God to Man': Literature and Theodicy*, edited by Rudolf Freiburg and Susanne Gruss, Stauffenburg, 2004, pp. 13–47.
- Frick, Werner. *Providenz und Kontingenz: Untersuchungen zur Schicksalssemantik im deutschen und europäischen Roman des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*. Walter de Gruyter, 1988.
- Froude, James Anthony. 'A Legend of St. Neot'. *Lives of the English Saints: Hermit Saints*, edited by John Henry Newman, James Toovey, 1844, pp. 73–127.
- . 'Faustus. A Dramatic Mystery. Translated from the German of Goethe, and Illustrated with Notes, by John Anster, LL.D., of Trinity College, Dublin. London, 1835.' *The Oxford and Cambridge Review.*, no. 2, June 1846, pp. 1–23.
- . 'Ireland since the Union'. *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, New Edition, vol. 2, Longmans, Green and Co., 1896, pp. 515–62.
- . 'Louisa Varden'. *The Oxford and Cambridge Review.*, no. 2, June 1846, pp. 349–66.
- . 'Morals of the Public Schools'. *Leader and Saturday Analyst*, vol. 1, no. 30, Oct. 1850, pp. 710–11.
- . 'Preface'. *Tales from the 'Phantasus,' Etc*, James Burns, 1845.
- . *Shadows of the Clouds*. John Ollivier, 1847.
- . 'Spinoza'. *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, New ed., vol. 1, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891, pp. 339–400.
- . 'Spinoza'. *Westminster Review*, vol. 64, no. 125, July 1855, pp. 1–37.
- . 'The Life of Spinoza'. *The Oxford and Cambridge Review.*, no. 5, Dec. 1847, pp. 387–427.
- . *The Nemesis of Faith*. Reprint of 2nd edition, Libris, 1988.
- . 'The Science of History'. *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, New ed., vol. 1, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897, pp. 1–39.
- Fry, Paul H. *A Defense of Poetry*. Stanford Univ. Press, 1995.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. First Princeton Paperback ed., Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Garrett, Clarke. 'Joseph Priestley, the Millennium, and the French Revolution'. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1973, pp. 51–66.
- Geary, Robert F. 'Milton, Pope, and the Divine Harmony: Notes on the Secularization of Theodicy'. *James Madison Journal*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1977, pp. 33–45.
- Geyer, Carl-Friedrich. 'Das "Jahrhundert Der Theodizee"'. *Kant-Studien*, vol. 73, 1982, pp. 393–405.
- Gibson, Andrew. *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel: From Leavis to Levinas*. Routledge, 2002.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press, 1980.
- Gill, Carolyn Bailey. *Time and the Image*. Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Gill, Stephen. 'Introduction'. *Adam Bede: Edited with an Introduction by Stephen Gill*, Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 11–39.

- Girard, René. *Job: The Victim of His People*. Translated by Yvonne Freccero, Stanford University Press, 1987.
- . *The Scapegoat*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- Gisler, Monika. 'Optimism and Theodicy: Perceptions of the Lisbon Earthquake in Protestant Switzerland'. *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*, edited by Theodore E. D. (ed. and introd.) Braun and John B. (ed. and introd.) Radner, Voltaire Foundation, 2005, pp. 247–64.
- Godfrey, Esther. 'Fallen Woman Trope'. *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work*, edited by Melissa Hope Ditmore, vol. 1, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006, pp. 149–50.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Gedichte und Epen I*. 12th ed., vol. 1, C.H. Beck, 1981.
- . *Goethes Werke*. Vol. 1. Abtheilung: 26. Band, Böhlau, 1889.
- . *Novels and Tales: Elective Affinities, The Sorrows of Werther, German Emigrants, The Good Woman, and a Nouvelette, Tr. Chiefly by R.D. Boylan*. Edited by R. Dillon Boylan, Henry G. Bohn, 1854.
- . *Werke: Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit: Erster Theil*. Vol. 1, Cotta, 1830.
- Goode, John. 'Amours de Voyage: The Aqueous Poem'. *The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations*, edited by Isobel Armstrong, Routledge, 2011, pp. 275–97.
- Grabes, Herbert. 'Structure and Intention: Milton's Paradise Lost as a Theodicy'. *Proceedings from the Second Nordic Conference for English Studies*, edited by Håken (ed. & pref.) Ringbom et al., Åbo Akademi, 1984, pp. 437–50.
- Gray, F. Elizabeth. *Christian and Lyric Tradition in Victorian Women's Poetry*. Routledge, 2010.
- Greenberg, Irvin Yitzchak. 'Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust'. *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, edited by Steven T. Katz et al., Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 499–523.
- Greenberger, Evelyn Barish. *Arthur Hugh Clough: The Growth of a Poet's Mind*. Harvard University Press, 1970.
- Guyer, Paul, and Anthony Savile, editors. 'The Idealism of Purposiveness'. *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, pp. 87–99.
- Haight, Gordon S. *George Eliot: A Biography*. Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Haldane, Elizabeth Sanderson. *George Eliot and Her Times; a Victorian Study*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1927.
- Hale, Edward Everett. *James Russell Lowell and His Friends*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1899.
- Hampson, R. 'Beer, Gillian "Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction" (Book Review)'. *English*, vol. 34, no. 150, 1985, p. 259.
- Hardin, Richard F. 'Emerson and Milton: Allusion and Theodicy'. *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*, vol. 17, no. 2–3, 2007, pp. 263–66.
- Hardy, Anne. *The Epidemic Streets: Infectious Disease and the Rise of Preventive Medicine, 1856-1900*. Clarendon, 1993.

- Hardy, Barbara. *The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form*. Athlone Press, 1959.
- Harnack, Adolf von. *Geschichte der Königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*. Vol. 3, Gedruckt in der Reichsdruckerei, 1900.
- Hartley, David. *Observations on Man: His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations. In Two Parts. By David Hartley, M. A.* printed by S. Richardson; for James Leake and Wm. Frederick, Booksellers in Bath: and sold by Charles Hitch and Stephen Austen, Booksellers in London, 1749.
- Haydon, Benjamin Robert. *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*. Edited by Willard Bissell Pope, vol. 2, Harvard University Press.
- Hazlitt, William. *Lectures on the English Poets. By William Hazlitt. Third Edition. Edited by His Son [William Hazlitt the Younger]*. John Templeman, 1841.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*. Translated by William Wallace, 3rd ed., Clarendon Press, 1975.
- . *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Translated by T. M. Knox and Arnold V. Miller, Clarendon Press, 1985.
- . *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Edited by Terry P. Pinkard, Translated by Terry P. Pinkard, Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Hellwig, Marion. *Alles Ist Gut: Untersuchungen Zur Geschichte Einer Theodizee-Formel Im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland, England Und Frankreich*. Königshausen & Neumann, 2008.
- Heyns, Michiel. *Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Scapegoat in English Realist Fiction*. Clarendon, 1994.
- Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. New, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Hickey, Alison. *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth's Excursion*. Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Hillier, Russell M. 'The Patience to Prevent That Murmur: The Theodicy of John Milton's Nineteenth Sonnet'. *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2007, pp. 247–73.
- Hodgson, Peter Crafts. *Theology in the Fiction of George Eliot: The Mystery beneath the Real*. SCM Press, 2001.
- Houghton, Walter E. *The Poetry of Clough: An Essay in Revaluation*. Yale University Press, 1963.
- Howe, T. H. *Lessons on the Globes, on a Plan Entirely New, in Which They Are Taken Together in Illustration of Terrestrial and Celestial Phaenomena: With Original Familiar Explanations of the Ever-Varying Circumstances of Our Planet and the Solar System Generally, and Extended Notices of Several Departments of Natural Science, Interspersed with Numerous Corroborative Quotations from the Best Popular Authors*. Cradock and co., 1842.
- Hübener, Wolfgang. 'Sinn Und Grenzen Des Leibnizenschen Optimismus'. *Studia Leibnitiana*, vol. 10, no. 2, Jan. 1978, pp. 222–46.
- Hughes, Gerard. 'Conscience'. *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, edited by I. T. Ker and Terrence Merrigan, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 189–220.

- Hughes-Hallett, Penelope. *The Immortal Dinner: A Famous Evening of Genius and Laughter in Literary London, 1817*. Random House, 2012.
- Hume, David. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. By David Hume, Esq. To Which Is Added, Divine Benevolence Asserted; and Vindicated from the Objections of Ancient and Modern Sceptics. By Thomas Balguy, D. D. Archdeacon Of Winchester*. Vol. 1, 1782.
- Iotti, Gianni. 'Voltaire as Story-Teller'. *The Cambridge Companion to Voltaire*, edited by Nicholas Cronk, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 109–23.
- Irenaeus. *The Writings of Irenaeus*. Edited by Alexander Roberts et al., vol. 1, T&T Clark, 1868.
- Jakobson, Roman. 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics'. *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas Albert Sebeok, M.I.T Press, 1960, pp. 350–77.
- James, Henry. 'Daniel Deronda: A Conversation'. *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 38, 1876, pp. 684–94.
- . 'The Novels of George Eliot'. *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 18, 1866, p. 479.
- . *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*. Edited by James Edwin Miller, University of Nebraska Press, 1972.
- John, Donald. 'They Became What They Beheld: Theodicy and Regeneration in Milton, Law and Blake'. *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650-1830: From Revolution to Revolution*, edited by Timothy (ed. and introd.) Morton and Nigel (ed. and introd.) Smith, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 86–100.
- Johnson, Samuel. *Johnson's Life of Pope*. Edited by Peter Peterson, MacMillan and Co., 1899.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Translated by Paul Guyer, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . *Kants Gesammelte Schriften: Vorkritische Schriften I: 1747-1756*. Akademieausgabe, vol. 1, Reimer, 1902.
- . 'On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy'. *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kashap, S. Paul. *Spinoza and Moral Freedom*. State University of New York Press, 1987.
- Kaufmann, Michael W. 'The Religious, the Secular, and Literary Studies: Rethinking the Secularization Narrative in Histories of the Profession'. *New Literary History*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2007, pp. 607–28.
- Kaufmann, Walter Arnold. *Tragedy and Philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Keats, John. *Selected Letters of John Keats*. Edited by Grant F. Scott, Rev. ed., Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Kenny, Anthony. *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet's Life*. Continuum, 2005.
- , editor. 'Introduction'. *Mari Magno, Dipsychus, and Other Poems*, Carcanet Press Limited, 2014.
- Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction: With a New Epilogue*. New ed., Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Kidder, Paulette. 'Martha Nussbaum on Dickens's Hard Times'. *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2009, pp. 417–26.

- King, William. *An Essay on the Origin of Evil. By Dr. William King, ... Translated from the Latin, with Notes. To Which Is Added, a Sermon by the Same Author, on the Fall of Man.* Edited by Edmund, Lord Bishop of Carlisle, 5th ed., printed for RFaulder, and Tand JMerril, 1781.
- Kingsley, Charles. 'The Bothie of Toper-Na-Fuosich.' *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 39, no. 229, Jan. 1849, pp. 104–09.
- Kline, Morris. *Mathematics in Western Culture.* Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Knoepflmacher, U. C. *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism.* University of California Press, 1968.
- Korsmeyer, Jerry D. *God-Creature-Revelation: A Neoclassical Framework for Fundamental Theology.* University Press of America, 1995.
- Korthals Altes, Liesbeth. 'Ethical Turn'. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman et al., Routledge, 2010.
- Lactantius. 'The Wrath of God'. *The Minor Works*, vol. 54, Catholic University of America Press, 1965, pp. 59–118.
- Lærke, Mogens. 'Leibniz's Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God'. *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie*, vol. 93, no. 1, Jan. 2011, pp. 58–84.
- LaPorte, Charles. 'Spasmodic Poetics and Clough's Apostasies'. *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2004, pp. 521–36.
- . 'Victorian Literature, Religion, and Secularization'. *Literature Compass*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2013, pp. 277–287.
- . *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible.* University of Virginia Press, 2011.
- Larrimore, Mark J. (Mark Joseph). *The Problem of Evil: A Reader.* Blackwell, 2001.
- Larsen, Timothy. *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England.* Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Larson, Jil. *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel, 1880–1914.* Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Leavis, F. R. 'George Eliot's Zionist Novel'. *Commentary*, vol. 30, 1960, pp. 317–25.
- . *The Critic as Anti-Philosopher.* Chatto Windus, 1982.
- . *The Great Tradition.* Penguin Books, 1962.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil.* Edited by Austin Farrer, Translated by E. M. Huggard, Open Court, 1985.
- Leighton, Angela. *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word.* Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Laocoon.* Macmillan, 1874.
- . *Werke.* Vol. 3, CHanser ; Darmstadt, 1970.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Useless Suffering.* Edited by Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, Translated by Richard Cohen, Routledge, 1988, pp. 156–67.
- Levine, George. *Boundaries of Fiction.* Princeton University Press, 2015.
- . *Darwin Loves You: Natural Selection and the Re-Enchantment of the World.* Princeton University Press, 2008.

- . 'Introduction'. *The Joy of Secularism: 11 Essays for How We Live Now*, edited by George Levine, Princeton University Press, 2011, pp. 1–23.
- . *Realism, Ethics and Secularism: Essays on Victorian Literature and Science*. Reprint edition, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- . 'Realism, or, in Praise of Lying: Some Nineteenth Century Novels'. *College English*, vol. 31, no. 4, Jan. 1970, pp. 355–365.
- . "'Sartor" Called "Resartus" the Genesis, Structure, and Style of Thomas Carlyle's First Major Work'. *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1966, pp. 482–85.
- , editor. *The Joy of Secularism: 11 Essays for How We Live Now*. Princeton University Press, 2011.
- . *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterly*. University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Levinson, Marjorie. 'What Is New Formalism?' *PMLA*, vol. 122, no. 2, 2007, pp. 558–569.
- Lewes, George Henry. *Problems of Life and Mind*. Vol. 1, James R. Osgood and Company, 1874.
- . *The Life of Goethe*. 2nd ed., Smith, Elder and co., 1864.
- Loewer, Barry. 'Leibniz and the Ontological Argument'. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, vol. 34, no. 1, July 1978, pp. 105–09.
- Logan, Deborah Anna. *Fallenness in Victorian Women's Writing: Marry, Stitch, Die, Or Do Worse*. University of Missouri Press, 1998.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Loveland, Jeff. 'Guéneau de Montbeillard, the Collection Académique and the Great Lisbon Earthquake'. *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*, edited by Theodore E. D. Braun and John B. Radner, Voltaire Foundation, 2005, pp. 191–207.
- Lowe, Brigid. *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy: An Alternative to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*. Anthem, 2007.
- Lukács, Georg. 'From The Historical Novel'. *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, edited by Michael McKeon, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- . *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Translated by Anna Bostock, Merlin Press, 1978.
- Lytton, Edward Bulwer Lytton. *Caxtoniana: A Series of Essays on Life, Literature, and Manners*. Copyright ed., vol. 2, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1864.
- MacCallum, Hugh. "'Most Perfect Hero": The Role of the Son in Milton's Theodicy'. *Paradise Lost: A Tercentenary Tribute*, edited by Balachandra(ed.) Rajan, University of Toronto Press, in association with University of Western Ontario, 1969, pp. 79–105.
- Mack, Maynard. 'Introduction'. *An Essay on Man*, Methuen, 1950, pp. xi–lxxx.
- Marquard, Odo. 'Unburdenings: Theodicy Motives in Modern Philosophy'. *In Defense of the Accidental: Philosophical Studies*, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 8–28.

- Marshall, Gordon, and John Scott. 'Secularization (Secularization Thesis)'. *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Martin, Carol A. 'Introduction'. *Adam Bede*, New, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. vii–xxix.
- Martin, David. *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*. Ashgate, 2005.
- Marvell, Andrew. 'On Paradise Lost'. *Paradise Lost*, Penguin Popular Classics, 1998, pp. lvi–lvii.
- Marx, Karl. *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy Of Right'*. Edited by Joseph O'Malley, Translated by Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley, Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Maurois, André. 'An Appreciation'. *Candide*, Random House Publishing Group, 2003, pp. 1–15.
- McFarland, Thomas. *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*. Clarendon Press, 1969.
- Mcgrail, John. 'Three Image Motifs in Arthur Hugh Clough's "The Bothie of Tober-Na-Vuolich"'. *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 13, no. 1, Apr. 1975, pp. 75–78.
- McLeod, Hugh. *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914*. Macmillan, 2000.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Autobiography and Literary Essays*. Edited by John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, vol. 33, University of Toronto Press, 1981.
- Miller, J. Hillis. *Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers*. Harvard University Press, 1965.
- . *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James, and Benjamin*. Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Milner, Jean Claude. *Ordres et Raisons de Langue*. Seuil, 1982.
- Milton, John. *De Doctrina Christiana. Vol. 1. The Complete Works of John Milton*. Edited by John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington, vol. 8, Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . *Paradise Lost*. Edited by John Leonard, Penguin Popular Classics, 1998.
- Mommsen, Wolfgang J., and Wolfgang Schluchter. 'Wissenschaft Als Beruf: Editorischer Bericht'. *Wissenschaft Als Beruf, 1917/1919 ; Politik Als Beruf, 1919*, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992, pp. 71–111.
- Moore, Cecil A. 'Did Leibniz Influence Pope's Essay?' *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 16, no. 1, Jan. 1917, pp. 84–102.
- Moore, James R. 'Theodicy and Society: The Crisis of the Intelligentsia'. *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Religious Belief*, edited by Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard V. Lightman, Macmillan, 1990, pp. 153–81.
- Mulhauser, Frederick L. 'An Unpublished Poem of James Anthony Froude'. *English Language Notes*, vol. 12, no. 1, Sept. 1974, pp. 26–30.
- Murdoch, Iris. *The Sovereignty of Good*. Routledge, 2014.
- Myers, Benjamin. *Milton's Theology of Freedom*. Walter de Gruyter, 2006.
- Nadler, Steven M. *The Best of All Possible Worlds: A Story of Philosophers, God, and Evil in the Age of Reason*. Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Neiman, Susan. *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 2002.

- Newman, John Henry. 'A Legend of St. Bettelin'. *Lives of the English Saints: Hermit Saints*, James Toovey, 1844, pp. 57–72.
- . 'A Legend of St. Gundleus'. *Lives of the English Saints: Hermit Saints*, James Toovey, 1844, pp. 1–8.
- . *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. James Toovey, 1845.
- . *Apologia pro Vita Sua : Being a History of His Religious Opinions*. Clarendon Press, 1967.
- . *The Development of Christian Doctrine*. Sheed and Ward, 1960.
- Newton, Adam Zachary. *Narrative Ethics*. Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Newton, K. M. *George Eliot: Romantic Humanist*. MacMillan, 1981.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Nussbaum, Martha Craven. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1990.
- . *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Nygaard, Margaret Cruden. *James Anthony Froude's Protestantism and the History of England*. University of Berkeley, 1960.
- O'Gorman, Francis. 'Clough's Difficulties'. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2006, pp. 125–138.
- O'Keefe, Paul. *A Genius for Failure: The Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon*. Random House, 2011.
- Orr, Marilyn. *George Eliot's Religious Imagination: A Theopoetics of Evolution*. Northwestern University Press, 2018.
- Orwell, George. 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'. *The Complete Novels, Annotated*, Penguin, 2001.
- 'Our Library Table'. *The Athenaeum*, no. 1025, June 1847, pp. 643–44.
- 'Out of the Depths'. *The Universal Review*, vol. 2, July 1859, pp. 90–110.
- Pactwa, David P. 'Leibniz's God: Cosmic Calculator and his freedom of willing the best of all worlds'. *Bijdragen*, vol. 70, no. 3, Jan. 2009, pp. 304–36.
- Pape, Walter. 'Happy Endings in a World of Misery: A Literary Convention between Social Constraints and Utopia in Children's and Adult Literature'. *Poetics Today*, vol. 13, no. 1, Apr. 1992, pp. 179–96.
- Paris, Bernard J. *Experiments in Life : George Eliot's Quest for Values*. Wayne State University Press, 1965.
- . 'George Eliot's Religion of Humanity'. *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History*, vol. 29, Jan. 1962, p. 418.
- . *Rereading George Eliot: Changing Responses to Her Experiments in Life*. State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Paul, Herbert. *The Life of Froude*. Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd., 1905.
- Pearson, Roger. 'Introduction'. *Candide and Other Stories*, New ed, Oxford University Press, 2006.

- Perkin, J. Russell. *Theology and the Victorian Novel*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009.
- Perry, Seamus. *Coleridge and the Uses of Division*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Phelan, J. P. 'Introduction'. *Clough: Selected Poems*, Longman, 1995.
- . 'The Textual Evolution of Clough's "Dipsychus and the Spirit"'. *The Review of English Studies*, vol. xlvi, no. 182, 1995, pp. 230–39.
- Phelan, James. *Living to Tell about It*. 1st ed., Cornell University Press, 2005.
- . 'Teaching Narrative as Rhetoric: The Example of Time's Arrow'. *Pedagogy*, vol. 10, no. 1, Jan. 2010, pp. 217–28.
- . 'The Ethics and Aesthetics of Backward Narration in Martin Amis's Time's Arrow'. *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, edited by Jakob (ed. and introd.) Lothe et al., Ohio State University Press, 2012, pp. 120–39.
- Pinnock, Clark H. 'Annihilationism'. *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, edited by Jerry L. Walls, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 462–75.
- Plato. *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, 4th ed., vol. 1, Clarendon Press, 1953.
- . *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, 4th ed., vol. 3, Clarendon Press, 1953.
- . *The Republic of Plato*. Translated by Francis Macdonald Cornford, Clarendon Press, 1941.
- Plumly, Stanley. *The Immortal Evening: A Legendary Dinner with Keats, Wordsworth, and Lamb*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.
- Poma, Andrea. *The Impossibility and Necessity of Theodicy: The "Essais" of Leibniz*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012.
- Pope, Alexander. *An Essay on Man*. Edited by William Warburton, Enlarged and Improved by the Author, George Perrin, 1791.
- . *Correspondence of Alexander Pope*. Edited by George Sherburn, vol. 4, Clarendon Press, 1956.
- Priestley, Joseph. *Defences of the History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. printed for JJohnson in StPaul's Church-Yard, 1783.
- Proust, Marcel. *Contre Sainte-Beuve ; précédé de, Pastiches et mélanges, et suivi de, Essais et articles*. Gallimard, 1971.
- Quenet, Grégory. 'Déconstruire l'événement: Un Séisme Philosophique Ou Une Catastrophe Naturelle?' *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*, edited by Theodore E. D. Braun and John B. Radner, Voltaire Foundation, 2005, pp. 127–44.
- Raine, Craig. 'Sex in Nineteenth-Century Literature'. In *Defence of T. S. Eliot: Literary Essays*, Picador, 2000, pp. 55–79.
- Real, Herman. 'Conversations with a Theodicy: William King's "Essay on the Origin of Evil," with Some Sidelights on Hobbes, Milton, and Pope'. *But Vindicate the Ways of God to Man': Literature and Theodicy*, edited by Rudolf Freiburg and Susanne Gruss, Stauffenburg, 2004.

- Reed, Walter L. 'The Pattern of Conversion in Sartor Resartus'. *ELH*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1971, pp. 411–431.
- Richardson, Alan. 'Archaism and Modernity: Poetic Diction, Period Style and the Romantic Canon'. *Southern Humanities Review*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1994, pp. 209–28.
- Richardson, Brian. "'Time Is Out of Joint": Narrative Models and the Temporality of the Drama'. *Poetics Today*, vol. 8, no. 2, Jan. 1987, pp. 299–309.
- . *Unnatural Narrative: Theory, History, and Practice*. The Ohio State University Press, 2015.
- Robbins, Bruce. 'Death and Vocation: Narrativizing Narrative Theory'. *PMLA*, vol. 107, no. 1, Jan. 1992, p. 38.
- . 'Enchantment? No, Thank You!' *The Joy of Secularism: 11 Essays for How We Live Now*, edited by George Lewis Levine, Princeton University Press, 2011, pp. 74–94.
- . 'Is Literature a Secular Concept? Three Earthquakes'. *Modern Language Quarterly: A Journal of Literary History*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2011, pp. 293–317.
- Roberts, Jonathan. 'Wordsworth on Religious Experience'. *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, edited by Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 693–711.
- Rogers, Robert W. 'Critiques of the Essay on Man in France and Germany 1736-1755'. *ELH*, vol. 15, no. 3, Sept. 1948, pp. 176–93.
- Rotenberg, Carl. 'George Eliot—Proto-Psychoanalyst'. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1999, pp. 257–270.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emilius and Sophia: Or, a New System of Education. Translated from the French of J. J. Rousseau, ... By the Translator of Eloisa. ... Vol. 1*, printed for RGriffiths, TBecket and PAde Hondt, 1762.
- . *The Works of J. J. Rousseau. Translated from the French*. Vol. 9, Printed for Alex Donaldson, 1774.
- Russell, Bertrand. *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz: With an Appendix of Leading Passages*. Cambridge University Press, 1900.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. 'Narration in Various Media'. *Handbook of Narratology*, edited by Peter Hühn, Walter de Gruyter Berlin, 2009, pp. 263–82.
- Sabor, Peter. 'Rewriting Clarissa: Alternative Endings by Lady Echlin, Lady Bradshaigh, and Samuel Richardson'. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2016, pp. 131–150.
- Saine, Thomas P. *The Problem of Being Modern, or, The German Pursuit of Enlightenment from Leibniz to the French Revolution*. Wayne State University Press, 1997.
- Salvey, Courtney. 'Norman Vance. Bible and Novel: Narrative Authority and the Death of God.' *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 65, no. 272, Nov. 2014, pp. 949–51.
- Sandberg, K. C. 'Pierre Bayle's Sincerity in His Views on Faith and Reason'. *Studies in Philology*, vol. 61, no. 1, 1964, pp. 74–84.
- Sandkaulen, Birgit. "'...überall nur eine Natur...". Spinozas Ethik als Schlüssel zu Goethes Wahlverwandschaften'. *Goethes 'Wahlverwandschaften': Werk und Forschung*, edited by Helmut Hühn, Walter de Gruyter, 2011, pp. 177–92.

- Savoie, John. 'Justifying the Ways of God and Man: Theodicy in Augustine and Milton'. *Augustine and Literature*, edited by Robert P. (ed. and introd.) Kennedy et al., Lexington, 2006, pp. 139–54.
- 'Scepticism | Skepticism, N.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/172253>. Accessed 31 Mar. 2017.
- Schmidt, Julian. *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur seit Lessing's Tod: Die Romantik, 1797-1813*. F.W. Grunow, 1866.
- Schofield, Robert E. *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1773 to 1804*. Penn State Press, 2004.
- Schönfeld, Martin. *The Philosophy of the Young Kant: The Precritical Project*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Scott, Mark S. M. *Journey Back to God*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . 'Suffering and Soul-Making: Rethinking John Hick's Theodicy'. *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 90, no. 3, 2010, pp. 313–334.
- Scott, Patrick Greig. 'The Editorial Problem in Clough's "Adam and Eve"'. *Browning Institute Studies*, vol. 9, Jan. 1981, pp. 79–104.
- Scruton, Roger. *Spinoza: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Seth, Catriona. "'Je Ne Pourrai Pas En Faire Le Récit": Le Tremblement de Terre de Lisbonne vu Par Le Brun, Marchand et Genlis'. *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*, edited by Theodore E. D. Braun and John B. Radner, Voltaire Foundation, 2005, pp. 173–90.
- Shuttleworth, Sally. *George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Singles, Kathleen. *Alternate History: Playing with Contingency and Necessity*. De Gruyter, 2013.
- Slaugh-Sanford, Kathleen. 'The Other Woman: Lydia Glasher and the Disruption of English Racial Identity in George Eliot's Daniel Deronda'. *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 41, no. 4, Winter 2009, pp. 401–17.
- Small, Helen. 'Introduction'. *The Lifted Veil; Brother Jacob*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . *The Value of the Humanities*. First edition, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Smith, Fred Manning. 'Whitman's Poet-Prophet and Carlyle's Hero.' *PMLA*, vol. 55, no. 4, Dec. 1940, pp. 1146–64.
- Solomon, Harry M. *The Rape of the Text: Reading and Misreading Pope's Essay on Man*. University of Alabama Press, 1993.
- Späth, Eberhard. "'Did He Smile His Work to See?": Blake and the History of Theodicy'. *'But Vindicate the Ways of God to Man': Literature and Theodicy*, edited by Rudolf Freiburg and Susanne Gruss, Stauffenburg, 2004, pp. 261–77.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *Ethics*. Edited by Thomas Deegan, Translated by George Eliot, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1981.
- Stark, Rodney. 'Secularization, R.I.P.' *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1999, pp. 249–273.

- Steiner, Uwe. 'Voltaire oder der Optimismus. Zu einigen philosophischen und poetischen Aspekten von Voltaires Gedicht über das Erdbeben von Lissabon. Mit einer Neuübersetzung von Voltaires "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne"'. *Daphnis*, vol. 21, no. 2, Jan. 1992, pp. 305–407.
- Stocker, Margarita. 'God in Theory: Milton, Literature and Theodicy'. *Literature and Theology*, vol. 1, no. 1, Mar. 1987, pp. 70–88.
- Strachey, Lytton. *Eminent Victorians*. Edited by John Sutherland, Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Swatos, William H., and Kevin J. Christiano. 'Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept'. *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1999, pp. 209–28.
- Swinburne, Richard. *The Existence of God*. Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Tanner, John S. "'By Faith to Stand": Faith in the Theodicy of Paradise Lost'. *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*, edited by Charles W. (ed.) Durham and Kristin Pruitt (ed.) McColgan, Susquehanna University Press, 1994, pp. 47–56.
- Tanselle, G. Thomas. *A Rationale of Textual Criticism*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.
- . 'Some Principles for Editorial Apparatus'. *Studies in Bibliography*, vol. 25, 1972, pp. 41–88.
- Tatar, Maria. *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Tennyson, G. B. *Sartor Called Resartus*. Princeton University Press, 1965.
- . *Victorian Devotional Poetry: The Tractarian Mode*. Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Thorpe, Michael. *Clough: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.
- Timko, Michael. *Innocent Victorian: The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough*. Ohio University Press, 1966.
- . 'The Poetic Theory of Arthur Hugh Clough'. *English Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1–6, 1962, pp. 240–47.
- . 'The Satiric Poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough'. *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1963, pp. 104–14.
- . 'The "True Creed" of Arthur Hugh Clough'. *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3, Jan. 1960, pp. 208–22.
- Token, Leona. *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction: Narratives of Cultural Remission*. Ohio State University Press, 2010.
- Treadwell, James. 'Coleridge in "Sartor Resartus"'. *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1998, pp. 68–71.
- Trollope, Anthony. *Barchester Towers*. Edited by Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page, Oxford University, 1996.
- Valéry, Paul. 'Rhumbs'. *Tel Quel*, 28th ed., vol. 2, Gallimard, 1944.
- Vance, Norman. *Bible and Novel: Narrative Authority and the Death of God*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

- Verchick, Robert R. M. *Facing Catastrophe*. Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Vermeule, Blakey. *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Vieira, Estela J. 'Coping and Creating after Catastrophe: The Significance of the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 on the Literary Culture of Portugal'. *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*, edited by Theodore E. D. (ed. and introd.) Braun et al., Voltaire Foundation, 2005, pp. 282–97.
- Voltaire. *Babouc; Or, the World as It Goes. By Monsieur de Voltaire. To Which Are Added, Letters Concerning His Disgrace at the Prussian Court: With His Letter to His Niece on That Occasion. Also, the Force of Friendship, Or, Innocence Distress'd. A Novel*. H. Saunders, 1754.
- . *Candide and Other Stories*. Translated by Roger Pearson, New ed, Oxford University Press, 2006.
- . *Correspondance 2*. Nouvelle, vol. 34, Garnier Frères, 1880.
- . *Correspondance 6*. Nouvelle, vol. 38, Garnier Frères, 1880.
- . *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. Printed for C. Davis and A. Lyon, 1733.
- . *Philosophical Dictionary*. Translated by Peter Gay, Vol. 1, Basic Books, 1962.
- . *Poem upon the Lisbon Disaster = : Poème Sur Le Désastre de Lisbonne, Ou, Examen de Cet Axiome 'Tout Est Bien'*. Translated by Anthony Hecht, Penmæn Press, 1977.
- . *Poèmes et Discours En Vers*. Vol. 12, Garnery, 1827.
- . *Poemes sur le desastre de Lisbonne et sur la loi naturelle, avec des prefaces, des notes & c.* 1755.
- . *Voltaire: Political Writings*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death*. Dell Publishing, 1991.
- Waddell, Margot. 'On Ideas of "the Good" and "the Ideal" in George Eliot's Novels and Post-Kleinian Psychoanalytic Thought'. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1999, pp. 271–86.
- Walsh, C. J. (Christopher John). *A Critical Study of the Literary Works of J.A. Froude with Special Reference to the Novels, the Essays and the Biography of Carlyle*. University of Oxford, 1981.
- Warburton, William. *A Vindication of Mr. Pope's Essay on Man, : From the Misrepresentations of Mr de Crousaz ...* Printed for JRobinson, under the Inner-Temple-Gate, Fleet-Street, 1740.
- Ward, Mary Augusta Humphry. 'Marius the Epicurean'. *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 52, no. 308, June 1885, pp. 132–39.
- . *Robert Elsmere*. Vol. 1, Tauchnitz, 1888.
- . *Robert Elsmere*. Vol. 3, Tauchnitz, 1888.
- Watt, George. *The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*. Croom Helm ; Barnes & Noble, 1984.
- Watt, Ian P. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. University of California Press, 2001.

- Weber, Max. 'Science as a Vocation'. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated by Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Oxford University Press, 1946.
- . *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligion: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus*. Edited by Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer and Petra Kolonko, Mohr Siebeck, 1989.
- . 'Wissenschaft Als Beruf'. *Wissenschaft Als Beruf, 1917/1919; Politik Als Beruf, 1919*, edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Wolfgang Schluchter, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992, pp. 71–111.
- White, Hayden V. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
- Whitfield, Archie Stanton. *James Anthony Froude: Historian and Man of Letters, a Paper*. Walsall, 1919.
- Wilde, Oscar. *Oscar Wilde - The Major Works*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Willey, Basil. 'Coleridge and Religion'. *Writers and Their Background: S.T. Coleridge*, edited by R. L. Brett, G. Bell & Sons, 1971.
- . *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest Doubters*. Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Wimmers, Inge Crosman. 'Proust and Eliot: An Intertextual Reading'. *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012.
- Wimsatt, W. K., and Monroe C. Beardsley. 'The Intentional Fallacy'. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, University of Kentucky Press, 1954, pp. 3–21.
- Wojcik, Jan. 'Introduction: The Prophet in the Poem'. *Poetic Prophecy in Western Literature*, edited by Jan Wojcik and Raymond-Jean Frontain, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984, pp. 13–30.
- Wolfson, Susan J. *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism*. Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Wood, James. 'Between God and a Hard Place'. *The New York Times*, 23 Jan. 2010, p. 11.
- . *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief*. Jonathan Cape, 1999.
- Wordsworth, William. *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years : Including The Borderers, a Tragedy*. Edward Moxon, 1842.
- . *The Excursion*. Edited by Sally Bushell et al., Cornell University Press, 2007.
- . *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850; Authoritative Texts, Context and Reception*. Edited by Jonathan Wordsworth et al., Norton, 1979.
- . *The White Doe of Rylstone or The Fate of the Nortons*. Edited by Kristine Dugas, Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Wray, T. J. *What the Bible Really Tells Us: The Essential Guide to Biblical Literacy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011.
- Wu, Duncan. *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Youpa, Andrew. 'Spinoza's Model of Human Nature'. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2010, pp. 61–76.
- 'Zadig, Ou, La Destinée : Histoire Orientale'. *SOLO – Search Oxford Libraries Online*, <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primos>

[explore/fulldisplay?docid=oxfaleph011121896&context=L&vid=SOLO&search\\_scope=LSCOP\\_ALL&tab=local&lang=en\\_US](#).

Zipes, Jack. 'Introduction: Rediscovering the Original Tales of the Brothers Grimm'. *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm: The Complete First Edition*, Princeton University Press, 2014.