Edmund Gosse's Aesthetic Antinomianism

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IN HIS 'CONFIDENTIAL PAPER ON SWINBURNE'S MORAL IRREGULARITIES' (*c.*1917-19), a document long withheld from the public, buried in the vaults of the British Museum, Edmund Gosse anxiously recorded the masochistic practices of his friend in a manner that reveals his own ambivalence towards sadomasochistic fantasies of relief. Gosse attempts to distance himself from Swinburne's 'irregularities' by professing both his unfamiliarity and his lack of sympathy with such practices, which he calls 'disagreeable and unintelligible', 'obscure and unaccountable', 'atrocious', and 'horrible'.[1] But Gosse's disingenuousness is suggested not merely by the hysterical character of his protestations ('I confess that Swinburne occasionally makes me physically sick', he would remark in 1909), but also by his own memoir, which reveals an intimate familiarity with masochistic desire since childhood.[2] In *Father and Son* (1907), Gosse tells of how he sought self-cure in self-harm as a young child suffering under a 'ferment of mind':[3] under the delusion that 'practical magic' could be achieved by pain, he tells us that he 'began, in extreme secrecy, to run pins into [his] flesh and bang [his] joints with books'. Later in the memoir, when he is taken to a doctor for

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looking 'delicate', the doctor finds 'nothing the matter' with the child, and the only outcome of the appointment is that the boy finds what he takes to be 'valuable hints for [his] magical practices' in the physician's diagnostic actions in stripping and tapping his body (pp. 26-7). That Gosse sees his childhood masochism as bound up with fantasies of magical cure which parody actual medical practices suggests the porous border between health and illness in his imagination. As Sally Shuttleworth points out, Gosse describes himself as a child hysteric in the memoir.[4]

Attempting to downplay the 'sexual' character of his friend's masochism in the 'Confidential Paper', Gosse questions whether Swinburne's desire to be flagellated might be comprehended as a desire for *therapeutic* relief: 'I cannot help believing that these scourgings were in some extraordinary way a mode by which the excessive tension of Swinburne's nerves was relieved. I do not know whether the medical authorities would admit this possibility'.[5] Attempting to reassure himself that he is not dealing with 'any sexual phenomena', Gosse rationalises his friend's 'mania for suffering pain, or whatever it was' as a therapy for excessive nervous tension, providing Swinburne with catharsis of a kind.[6] But in accepting the masochist's conflation of apparent opposites (pain and pleasure, submission and release, harm and care), Gosse is drawn to a conclusion that discomfits him. By consequence of the rationalisation, Gosse finds himself in a state of epistemic helplessness ('I cannot help believing…') in which he can only wait, submissively, on the 'authorities' to 'admit' and approve his tentative suggestion. The phenomenon of sadomasochism vexes Gosse's contest of therapies because it implies that pain and pleasure, cure and harm, are not mutually exclusive.

It is in this moral twilight that Gosse becomes acquainted with the antinomianism of the aesthetic life. What exactly *is* antinomianism? In the technical theological sense, the word nominates the belief that 'Christians are by grace set free from the need to observe the moral law'; in a looser metaphorical sense, it refers to the view that one is not bound by the dictates of morality; and there was a substantial risk of slippage between these meanings when the concept was considered in relation to

art.[7] As he suggests in his account of the aesthetic awakening he undergoes on gazing upon illustrations of the Greek gods and hearing of their sins, Gosse recognises that, for the aesthete, 'beauty palliates evil' – that is, *justifies* it on extra-moral grounds.[8] Significantly, Swinburne had praised what he called William Blake's 'antinomian mysticism' in *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (1868) – perhaps thinking of such 'Proverbs of Hell' as 'He who desires, but acts not, breeds pestilence' and 'The soul of sweet delight, can never be defil'd'; it was a language that Pater would draw upon in *The Renaissance* (1873).[9] From a very different angle, in his *Christian Ethics* (1871-78), Hans Martensen, Primate of Denmark and professor at the University of Copenhagen, whom Gosse had met and charmed on his Scandinavian tours of 1872 and 1874, characterised Schillerian aesthetic education as an attractive attempt to overcome dry nominalism: 'it promises and desires, instead of slavish fear, in obedience to the law, which with threatenings was given amid the thunders of Sinai, to evoke a free inclination, or willingness, namely, love, and by this to free man from the bondage of law'.[10] But he also warned that the 'mere æsthetist' was liable to be 'led into [an] antinomianism' if not more dangerous.[11] These various employments of the language of 'antinomianism' would have been thick upon Gosse's brain. For his own part, he recommended in his Wharton Lecture of 1915 that his audience might trace the 'antinomianism' (or 'lawlessness') of the Romantic movement, with its characteristic 'instinct for insisting that genius is a law unto itself', to the 'hedonist essays' of Wilde, among other works of modern literature.[12]

Father and son, though commonly contrasted by critics as starkly opposed – a clash between 'Victorian and late Victorian/ Edwardian ethical assumptions', in the phrase of Jil Larson – share a common antinomian tendency, the father towards that of a religious 'Elect' (as the Brethren are recorded as calling themselves in the memoir), and the son towards that of an aesthetic 'elect' (as Gosse jokingly calls appreciators of Turner in the memoir).[13] Neither Edmund nor Philip Henry Gosse would have *self*-identified as antinomian in the technical Christian sense of the word, of course. In his biography of his father, *The*

Life of Philip Henry Gosse, Gosse suggested that the Brethren, the fundamentalist sect to which Philip Henry and Emily Bowes Gosse belonged, certainly did have a clear ethic which was to be observed: 'The Brethren held that it was the duty of the Christian to leave all revenge to God, to bow to injury and insult, and, above all, on no occasion to use any words stronger than affirmation':[14] he was always opposed to the punishment of criminals, for example.[15] But more generally, Gosse depicts his father as rather inconsistent about the degree to which 'Law' applies to the 'saints' of their sect, and to Christians generally.[16] The Brethren were certainly accused of antinomianism by various commentators in tracts throughout the father's lifetime, and not without reason. As Gosse wryly relates in *Father and Son*, one member of the Brethren forged a will, considering himself a justified sinner, because he intended to do the Lord's work with the wrongfully obtained inheritance: it was an event that caused much embarrassment to Philip Henry Gosse.[17]

Even if one takes the hyperbole of the theological controversialists with a large dose of salt, the tracts suggest that the beliefs of the Darbyite faction of the Brethren, who splintered off in 1845, can be more justly described as antinomian than Philip Henry Gosse's own circle of believers.[18] Yet, whether *doctrinally* accurate of the Gosses or no, the extent of Philip Henry Gosse's disparagement of good works and moral considerations tells in the eccentricities of Edmund's upbringing, as recorded in *Father and Son*. The father's dismissal of ethical considerations is often lost upon readers who contrast the conflict between father and son as simply an Arnoldian clash of Hebrew and Hellene. Gosse describes how his father's early religious instruction, which he calls 'exclusively doctrinal', lacked the 'moral injunctions' which usually 'form the basis of infantile discipline' (p. 53):[19] as David Hempton has claimed, Philip Henry Gosse 'stood in direct succession from the great English divines of the seventeenth century in his insistence that faith was more important than love, charity, or ethics in his hierarchy of Christian virtues'.[20] Gosse notes how his father's 'incessant exhortations always dealt, not with conduct, but with faith' (p. 175). If he knew that the son departed from the faith of his father, his friend Charteris also thought that the religion of his childhood

enabled Gosse to relegate 'moral preoccupations' to merely a 'secondary position' as a critic of literature, unlike the generation of Victorian critics immediately prior to Gosse's heyday, such as Arnold, Ruskin, and Hutton: 'If the reaction to a literary work was pleasure, [Gosse] had an adequate basis for criticism without any sizing-up of moral values'.[21] While this overstates matters slightly, it does suggest how father and son both disparaged moral considerations for the sake of some other kind of non-moral good.

Pater had claimed that the antinomian tendency was most likely to surface when a culture was struggling to transform itself.[22] Gosse suggests this is true also of an individual's struggle to grow and develop. We see this play out in the ways in which Gosse draws on his antinomian inheritance to overcome the ethical impingements of his father. Gosse implies that an antinomian suspension of ethical consideration is required for self-invention, and his attempt to 'fashion [an] inner life for himself', as opposed to merely succumbing to his father's overbearing spiritual stipulations, duly draws upon an antinomian undercurrent in his religious heritage (p. 186). This is indirectly and humorously brought out in his account of misunderstanding such scriptural passages as 'all things are by the Law purged with blood, and without blood is no remission of sin' (Hebrews 9: 22) while reading with his father as a child. The epistle attempts to warn Jewish converts to Christianity off from a 'dangerous conservatism', Gosse explains, that would consider the observance of 'the formalities of the Law of Moses' as necessary for Christian salvation (p. 54). The Plymouth Brethren had their own theory of how the Mosaic Law related to the Christian era; they believed in what is now called dispensationalism, in which each historical age has its own 'dispensation' from God, with the 'Jewish dispensation' no longer applying to the Christian era.[23] The disregard of the Mosaic Law within their theological tradition is given ironic expression in Gosse's childish misapprehension of the epistle:

> Suddenly by my flushing up with anger and saying, 'Oh how I do hate that Law', my Father perceived, and paused in amazement to perceive, that I took the Law to be a

> person of malignant temper from whose cruel bondage, and from whose intolerable tyranny and unfairness, some excellent person was crying out to be delivered. I wished to hit Law with my fist, for being so mean and unreasonable. (p. 54)

Gosse's misconception of the 'Law' as a cruel tyrant strikes us as an unconscious allegory of the father: Gosse will echo the language of cruelty in calling his father's religion 'sterile and cruel'; he says he needs to 'escape' from the 'narrowness' of his 'upbringing' and his '*bondage* to the *Law* [my emphasis] and the Prophets' (pp. 183, 199).[24] To do so, Gosse makes for himself a new dispensation – and it is the dispensation of an *aesthete*, suggesting how, unbeknownst to his father, he appreciated the scriptures as a child with a 'purely aesthetic emotion' only (p. 53).[25]

But why does Gosse feel the need to throw off the moral law (and not merely the Mosaic Law) in order to individuate himself from his father, given that his father, in principle, disparaged moral considerations? For much of *Father and Son*, it is the Fifth Commandment – to 'honour thy father and mother' – that is most pertinent (Exodus 20: 12). 'Few men have kept the fifth commandment so closely', claims Charteris of his friend in a moment of telling hyperbole.[26] At the beginning of the memoir Gosse himself claims that he finds 'mournful satisfaction, but yet a satisfaction', in recognising that father and son 'were both of them able to obey the law which says that ties of close family relationship must be honoured and sustained. Had it not been so, this story would never have been told' (p. 5). But both Gosse and Charteris protest too much. The reviewer of *Father and Son* for the *Times Literary Supplement* reflected disapprovingly that Gosse had 'no doubt settled it with his conscience how far in the interests of popular education and amusement it is legitimate to expose the weaknesses and inconsistencies of a good man who is also one's father'.[27] Henry James had warned Gosse that the memoir went too far in its depiction of his father's shortcomings: 'not too far . . . for truth', but 'too far for filiality [and] tenderness'. [28] Gosse needed to occupy the

antinomian space of the 'cruel', thankless child for therapeutic, developmental purposes. Much as William James suggests in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) that the 'antinomian' tendency in the spiritual life characteristically emerges with 'congenital' optimists 'passionately flinging themselves upon their sense of the goodness of life, in spite of the hardships of their own condition, and in spite of the sinister theologies into which they may be born', Gosse demonstrates the uses of an antinomian reaction for purposes of individuation, and escaping from the impingements of one's upbringing.[29] Crucially, however, unlike James's healthy-minded account of antinomianism, Gosse shows himself 'sinister' (sadistic) in his own way, and thereby reinstates ethics, aesthetics, and religion as clashing spheres.

Gosse foregrounds the antinomian, sadomasochistic character of the aesthetic life in a satirical episode of *Father and Son* that recounts the violent delights he felt as a child watching a Punch and Judy show. Punch becomes here an allegory for the lawless, amoral tendency of the aesthetic life towards sadism, and a satire upon Schiller's idealisation of childhood play as a fit model of the aesthetic life. After the death of his mother, Gosse's lonely life as an 8-year-old is relieved only by the amusement he steals from watching the regular traffic of the street outside their house in Islington. Gosse describes the street as his 'theatre', taking aesthetic pleasure in several grotesque local personages, the routine characters of its stage. He then proceeds to describe the 'tragedy of Mr Punch' as 'another, and a still greater delight':

> I was never allowed to go out into the street [but] when, by happy chance, the show stopped opposite our door, I saw enough of that ancient drama to be thrilled with terror and delight. . . . The momentous close, when a figure of shapeless horror appears on the stage, and quells the hitherto undaunted Mr. Punch, was to me the bouquet of the entire performance. When Mr. Punch, losing his nerve, points to this shape and says in an awestruck, squeaking whisper, 'Who's that? Is it the butcher?' and the stern answer comes,

> 'No, Mr. Punch!' And then, ''Is it the baker?' 'No, Mr. Punch!' 'Who is it then?' (this in a squeak trembling with emotion and terror); and then the full, loud reply, booming like a judgement-bell, 'It is the Devil come to take you down to Hell', and the form of Punch, with kicking legs, sunken in epilepsy on the floor, – all this was solemn and exquisite to me beyond words. I was not amused – I was deeply moved and exhilarated, 'purged', as the old phrase hath it, 'with pity and terror'. (pp. 48-9)

Punch is pulled down to hell like Don Juan, Kierkegaard's supreme representative of the aesthetic life in *Either/Or*. Much in the manner of Hardy's grim allegories of tragedy and their satires of high-minded Aristotelianism[30], Gosse rejects any final distinction between low and high morals, and low and high art, ironically suggesting that his child self could be 'purged' in an Aristotelian manner by the 'ancient drama' – a central trope of conceptions of art as an ethical therapy. The prettifying euphemisms, so ludicrously applied, show themselves up. *Prima facie*, the episode satirises idealistic attempts to harmonise the ethical with the aesthetic. In later decades of the nineteenth century, there was a consistent attempt to moralise the Punch show to make it more acceptable to middle-class audiences, and it is this trend that Gosse in part appears to be ironising with his mock-moral ending.[31] The episode stresses the ineluctable presence of aggression in aesthetic experience, the Victorian bourgeois household, and civilisation more broadly.

But that does not exhaust the significance of the Punch episode. Gosse uses the free play of the child – *qua* natural 'savage' – as an allegory for the aesthetic life in a state of immediacy. The Punch puppet appears to enact the wish-fulfilments of his younger self, fascinated (as he records) at various points with 'debauchee[s]', 'wanton[s]', and even murderers: natural bedfellows, one would think, for Mr Punch (pp. 143, 94, 67). Gosse's reflective return to the passions of his naive younger self does not merely ironise the moralists who want to curb Punch's lawless violence – the child's pleasure in the violence is also ironised. We register the child's delight as a guilty pleasure for

reasons beyond the child's ken, even as it is couched in terms excessively moralised that are equally foreign to childish consciousness. Gosse's vision thus evolves into a tragicomic species of self-conscious escapism. The adult aesthete's effort to recapture the child's innocent, because unconscious, sadism – now viewed through the lens of post-adolescent, postlapsarian knowingness – feels the weight of a knowledge of good and evil since acknowledged, and not now to be unknown.

This double consciousness, as we might call it, allows ethics back in through the back door, albeit not with the warmest of welcomes. Gosse talks in the memoir of our human propensity to cultivate a 'double nature', which he comprehends as our capacity to hold two contradictory beliefs or investments at once: in his case it was a love of 'Jesus and Pan [holding] sway together' in his 'hot and silly brain' as an adolescent (p. 171). In the Punch episode in particular, this double nature manifests as a conflict between ethical and aesthetic propensities, the desire to imitate ethical ideals (Aristotelian pity and fear) and our desire to kick back against the pricks of conscience ('exquisite' but guilty pleasure), and even to push beyond them (Punch's own lawlessness, stopped only by infernal punishment). In comparing high art to savage entertainments, Gosse suggests how this double nature can make us return to our savage passions with a reflective eye and thereby question our investment in aesthetic productions, even while suspending any automatic assumption that the ethical might have the last word.

Gosse's use of the Punch puppet raises the debate, as ancient as Plato, of whether art helps us safely expel unwanted passions, such as aggression, or whether it further incites them.[32] In the century of Gosse's childhood, the puppet became a talking point concerning the sublimation of aggression *avant la lettre*. 'In my opinion', Dickens wrote to a private correspondent in 1849, 'the Street Punch is one of the extravagant reliefs from the realities of life which would lose its hold upon people if it were made moral and instructive', as it was in other countries. Dickens defended the spectator's 'extravagant reliefs' on the grounds that the Punch show constituted an 'outrageous joke', which 'no one in existence would think of regarding as an incentive to any course of action, or a model for any kind of

conduct'. One 'secret source of pleasure very generally derived from the performance', Dickens thought, was the 'satisfaction that the spectator feels in the circumstances that likenesses of men and women can be so knocked about, without any pain or suffering'.[33]

But Hardy would record hearing of a rather endearing case, happening within his lifetime, of a woman's naive surprise that there was 'a man inside!' the Punch puppet.[34] The puppet has long been associated with the uncanny or *Unheimlich*, which disturbs our sense of the alive and the dead, and characteristically parodies all we take for granted as homely, right, and natural, such as our notions of the family and the human.[35] Ruskin would further record in his autobiography *Præterita* (1885-89) how his 'Puritan' mother confiscated a 'Punch and Judy' set bought for him by a more worldly 'Croydon aunt' because she viewed the puppets as spiritually dangerous.[36] As an older man, however, Ruskin would dream of the Judy puppet as 'seem[ing] to bruise under [Punch's] blow, so as to make the whole thing as horrible and as nasty as possible' – an unconscious critique, as it were, of the laxness of such opinions as that of Dickens regarding the representation of violence as just a bit of a laugh, and an implicit endorsement of his mother's Evangelical wariness.[37]

While Gosse would have read and known Ruskin's autobiography, a clear influence upon *Father and Son*, he couldn't have read either letter or diary, then still unpublished.[38] Our author did, however, know of an argument comparable to that of Dickens's letter in the classicist Gilbert Murray's *History of Ancient Greek Literature* (1897), which he edited for Heinemann with a marked conscientiousness – and Gosse implicitly draws on this text to suggest how ethics and aesthetics both conflict as well as complement each other in the memoir.[39] With obvious relevance for the Punch episode, Murray claims in his book that the bawdy 'phallic performances' of ancient Greek comedy worked to purge their audiences of 'pent-up force[s]'. Though Murray acknowledges how the sexual frankness of the comedies tend to 'shock' the 'modern imagination', he nonetheless defends the psychological utility of the ancient genre regardless.[40] Apart from 'possible elements of

unconscious hypocrisy on our own part', Murray reflects, 'there are many things to be borne in mind' when considering the value of such an outlet:

> In dealing with those elements in human nature which are more permanent than respectable, the characteristic Greek method was frank recognition and regulation. A pent-up force becomes dangerous; let all natural impulses be given free play in such ways and on such occasions as will do least damage.[41]

Drawing upon a Schillerian idiom of 'free play' (inflected by Spencer's physiological aesthetics), Murray defends 'licences in comedy' by drawing on Aristotle's conception of the cathartic function of tragedy. Comedy allows for a 'frank recognition and regulation' of pent-up sexuality, with 'roughly speaking, no shame and no secrecy'; Murray further suggests that these forces require an even more 'necessary purgation' than that of pity and fear.[42] Murray's argument thus allows us to understand how the Punch satire attempts to overcome arbitrary sexual norms, but the fact that he is concerned with sadistic aggression, rather than mere sexuality, makes Gosse's Punch show a more morally vexed spectacle than Murray's 'phallic performances', even for a more liberated sexual ethics.

The ironic character of Gosse's delicate language ('the bouquet of the entire performance', 'solemn and exquisite', etc.) in the episode works to puncture a hypocrisy regarding cruelty comparable to that which Murray identifies in his late Victorian readership as regards sexual mores. The figure of 'Mr Punch' is overdetermined: it can be understood as a satire of the violence of the child's desires *and* a satire of the 'violence' of the father (p. 70). In favour of the former identification is the fact that the name 'Punch' was thought in the period to be either a corruption of *Pontius Pilate*, the radical sceptic who jested 'What is truth?' before allowing Jesus to be crucified (John 18: 38); or a derivation of the Italian *pulcinello*, which means literally a little chicken, but could refer to a little boy, and so a puppet.[43] But there is much in the favour of the paternal identification. Much as Dickens in *Dombey and Son* (1848) uses Punch as a revealing

brutish parallel for Mr Dombey's harmful delusions of grandeur, Gosse's Punch show insinuates that the impingements of his childhood, physical and psychical, come from a cruder source than his father realised.[44] In this view, we are invited to identify 'the internal troubles of the Punch family' with those of the Gosse family: 'I was much affected by the internal troubles of the Punch family', Gosse relates: 'I thought that with a little more tact on the part of Mrs Punch and some restraint held over a temper, naturally violent, by Mr Punch, a great deal of this sad misunderstanding might have been prevented' (pp. 48-9). Gosse presents the Punch family drama as a 'struggle between two temperaments' (or 'temper[s]'), like his own narrative (p. 5). The recourse to a language of 'tact' and 'restraint' in Edmund's reading of the Punch show is made ironic in light of the way a comparable vocabulary plays out in other recollected episodes in the memoir. Gosse describes his delicate attempts not to provoke confrontation with his father in their religious disputes – 'I was docile, I was plausible, I was anything but combative' – as efforts in restraint and 'tact' that eventually fail (p. 182).

Yet because he reveals how, as a child, he identified with Mr Punch's sadism, Gosse also identifies the 'murderous hatred' in his own breast – and helps us see the Punch in ourselves (p. 30). Our investment in the memoir's critical representation of the father, which James thought too far for tenderness, becomes conscious of its own capacity for sadism. It is this stress on 'frank recognition and regulation', on self-conscious escapism in other words, that divides son from father, and suggests how art, rather than religion, might offer a better form for the sublimation of aggression. Whereas his father's 'violent' Evangelicalism tended towards self-deception, or 'unconscious hypocrisy' to use Murray's term, Gosse shows how art can induce self-consciousness. He thus dangles the possibility that art might regulate aggression in a self-conscious way, a recuperation of the notion of art as an ethical therapy, which is *prima facie* satirised in the passage.

Gosse leaves us in a state of suspension, in which the potential of art to function as an ethical therapy seems both insinuated and ironised. Without such an ultimate harmonisation of

ethics and aesthetics in the manner Schiller so desired, we are left in a state of suspension between the two spheres of life. But it is my claim here that this suspension, far from falling into an obstructive aporia, is in fact conducive to the exercise of a 'human being's privilege to fashion [an] inner life [of one's own]' – the very attempt to 'think for [one]self' in the face of an existential predicament that Gosse undertakes in *Father and Son* (p. 184).

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NOTES

[1] Edmund Gosse, 'Confidential Paper', in *Portraits from Life*, ed. Ann Thwaite (Aldershot, 1991), pp. 73-4.
[2] Gosse, quoted ibid., p. 59.
[3] Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*, ed. Peter Abbs (1983), p. 26. Further references are given in the text.
[4] Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900* (Oxford, 2010), p. 309.
[5] Gosse, 'Confidential Paper', pp. 76-7.
[6] Ibid., p. 74.
[7] 'Antinomianism', in Andrew Louth (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 2022).
[8] Gosse, *Father and Son*, p. 146.
[9] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *William Blake: A Critical Essay*, 2nd edn. (1868), p. 96. 'Proverbs of Hell', in *The Poems of William Blake*, ed. W. B. Yeats (1893), pp. 169, 170. Cf. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Oxford, 2020), pp. 16-17. For discussions of the antinomian trope, see Adam Lee, *The Platonism of Walter Pater* (Oxford, 2020), p. 31; Stephen Cheeke, *Walter Pater and Persons* (Oxford, 2024), p. 179.
[10] Hans Martensen, *Christian Ethics. Special Part. First Division: Individual Ethics* (Edinburgh, 1884), p. 45.
[11] Ibid., pp. 52-3.

[12] Edmund Gosse, *Some Diversions of a Man of Letters* (1920), p. 73.
[13] Jil Larson, *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel, 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 32. Gosse, *Father and Son*, pp. 208, 195.
[14] Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.* (1890), p. 214.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Cf. the discussion of the Sabbath, Gosse, *Father and Son*, p. 137.
[17] Ibid., p. 132. Edward Harley Dewart, *Broken Reeds; or, The Heresies of the Plymouth Brethren Shown to be Contrary to Scripture & Reason* (Toronto, 1869), pp. 7-9. James Crawford Ledlie Carson, *The Heresies of the Plymouth Brethren* (1870), pp. 134-245. James Grant, *The Plymouth Brethren: Their History and Heresies* (1875), p. 61. Daniel Steele, *Substitute for Holiness; or, Antinomianism Revived; or, The Theology of the So-Called Plymouth Brethren Examined and Refuted* (Illinois, 1899 [1887]), *passim*.
[18] For a reference to the Darbyite split, see Edmund Gosse to Philip Henry Gosse, 24 Oct. 1871, in Evan Charteris, *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse* (1931), p. 37.
[19] For Gosse's childhood as *unrepresentative* of Victorian childhood generally, see Francis O'Gorman, 'Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*, Modernism, and a History of Nerves', in Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (eds.), *Modernism and Autobiography* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 3-17.
[20] David Hempton, *Evangelical Disenchantment: Nine Portraits of Faith and Doubt* (New Haven, Conn.,2008), p. 168.
[21] Charteris, *Life and Letters*, pp. 221, 444.
[22] David DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England* (Austin, Tex., 1969), pp. 241-2.
[23] Ibid. Cf. Gosse, *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, p. 368; Massimo Introvigne, *Plymouth Brethren* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 43-5.
[24] For the controversy as to whether Gosse's portrait of his father as cruel tyrant was accurate or over-harsh, see Ann

Thwaite, *Glimpses of the Wonderful: The Life of Philip Henry Gosse* (2002), p. xvii.

[25] Cf. Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, pp. 16-17: 'One of the strongest characteristics of that outbreak of the reason and the imagination, of that assertion of the liberty of the heart in the middle age, which I have termed a mediæval Renaissance, was its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the age. In their search after the pleasures of the senses and the imagination, in their care for beauty, in their worship of the body, people were impelled beyond the bounds of the primitive Christian ideal; and their love became a strange idolatry, a strange rival religion. ... It influences the thoughts of those obscure prophetical writers, like Joachim of Flora, strange dreamers in a world of flowery rhetoric of that *third and final dispensation of a spirit of freedom, in which law has passed away*' (emphasis added).

[26] Charteris, *Life and Letters*, p. 42.

[27] Quoted ibid., p. 305.

[28] Henry James to Edmund Gosse, 10 Nov. 1907, in *Selected Letters of Henry James to Edmund Gosse 1882-1915: A Literary Friendship*, ed. Rayburn S. Moore (Baton Rouge, La., 1988), p. 230.

[29] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. Martin E. Marty (1982), p. 79.

[30] Harry George Daniels, '"Certain Cathartic, Aristotelian Qualities" in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy', *Modern Philology*, 122, no. 3 (2025), 398-421.

[31] Rosalind Crone, 'Mr and Mrs Punch in the Nineteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 1055-82: 1056, 1071-2.

[32] For the persistence of this debate, see Alexander Nehamas, 'Plato and the Mass Media', in *Virtues of Authenticity* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), pp. 279-299.

[33] Charles Dickens to Mary Taylor, 6 Nov. 1849, in *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Jenny Hartley (Oxford, 2012), p. 204.

[34] Thomas [and Florence] Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (Basingstoke, 1984), p. 505.

[35] Kenneth Gross, *Puppet: An Essay of Uncanny Life* (Chicago, 2011), p. 35. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud (1999), xvii. 217-56. Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester, 2003), p. 1 and *passim*.

[36] John Ruskin, *Præterita and Dilecta*, in *The Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 34 vols. (1903-12), xxxv. 20.

[37] *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, ed. Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1959), ii. 684, quoted in Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, *Performing the Victorian* (Columbus, Ohio, 2007), p. 124 n. 1.

[38] Cf. Francis O'Gorman, 'Romance and Victorian Autobiography: Margaret Oliphant, Edmund Gosse and John Ruskin's "needle to the north"', in Corinne Saunders (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Romance* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 360-74.

[39] For Gosse as editor, see Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, pp. 395-6.

[40] Gilbert Murray, *History of Ancient Greek Literature* (1897), pp. 210-11.

[41] Ibid., p. 211.

[42] Ibid.

[43] 'Punchinello', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edn. (1894), vol. xx.

[44] Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, ed. Alan Horsman and Dennis Walder (Oxford, 2020), p. 473.

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