

## **'The John Millennium': John Stuart Mill in Victorian Culture**

Submitted by Demelza Jo Hookway to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English in December 2012.

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## Abstract

As one of the most well-known figures of the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill was depicted extensively in journalism, pictures, life-writing and fiction. This thesis draws on a selection from these diverse and underexplored sources to offer a new perspective on Mill's presence in Victorian cultural and emotional life. It shows how Mill figured in fierce debates about science and culture in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and how ideas of Mill's 'femininity' were used to both attack and commend him philosophically, politically and personally. Mill's 'Saint of Rationalism' label continues to belie the extent to which he was associated with ideas of passion, sensitivity, tenderness, feeling, and emotion in the nineteenth century. This project explores how such terms were invoked in relation to Mill as a philosopher and politician, but also how they related to readers' encounters with his works. More than any previous study, this thesis pays close attention to the interaction between verbal and visual depictions, and considers official images and caricatures of Mill alongside written accounts.

Though much scholarship emphasises that Mill's reputation went into decline after his death in 1873 (to be recovered in the late twentieth century), this thesis demonstrates the vitality and diversity of literary engagements with Mill in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. It offers case studies of three authors – Thomas Hardy, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner – and reads both the form and content of their fiction as involved in recognisably Millian experiments in living. Exploring the Millian concepts that figure in novels by Hardy, Caird and Schreiner not only expands the sense of the philosophical context to their writings, but underscores the continued relevance of Mill to discussions of self-development and education, free discussion and intellectual independence. Finally, this thesis suggests ways in which work on representations of Mill could be developed to gain further insight into the cultural history of the philosopher, into interactions between philosophy and literature, and into the nineteenth-century definitions of liberal culture that inform twenty-first century debates.

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**Fig. 1. 'The "Mill"-ennium'. *Fun.* 4 May 1867.**



## Preface

In April 1863, the *Reader: A Review of Literature, Science and Art* published an article on ‘Mr John Stuart Mill and his Influence’. The editor of the journal at the time – and possible author of this unsigned piece – was David Masson, a friend and protégé of Mill’s.<sup>1</sup> The article is ostensibly a review of Mill’s *Utilitarianism* and Herbert Spencer’s *First Principles*, but Spencer is only given a cursory mention in the last few lines, and two columns are devoted to reflecting on Mill’s eminence before a discussion of *Utilitarianism* begins. One of the concerns of the article is how to quantify the value of philosophic endeavour. The writer offers a literary analogy, comparing ‘*the Poet*’ with ‘*the Philosopher*’ and suggesting that Mill is the national philosopher, akin to, or even more important than, the national poet Shakespeare (376, emphasis in original). Readers were likely to be receptive to such a laudatory assessment of Mill: the intended audience of the recently-launched journal was men who were highly educated, politically liberal and philosophically inclined.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the writer makes such readers integral to the assessment of Mill’s current presence in British life, claiming that: ‘Wherever one goes among our thoughtful younger men in England – say, our men under forty – it is Mill’s name, Mill’s authority, Mill’s ideas, that one now hears quoted’ (376) and ‘It is the spirit of Mill, the philosophy of Mill ... that is in the ascendant among those minds ... that are now leading the instruction of the public in most of our fresher literature of criticism and speculation, and discussing as brisker and younger men discuss, our public questions’ (376). Four years after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* it was still possible for Mill to be regarded as the era-defining influence. Underscoring the pervasiveness of Millian thought, and associating this with youth, innovation, leadership and public education, the writer notes that it is somewhat irreverent to say, as others do, that ‘the age we are now living in may be called the John-Millennium’ (376).

The writer offers the phrase half-approvingly, half-disapprovingly, because while it proclaims Mill’s eminent status, its punning playfulness also hints at the opposite

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<sup>1</sup> Masson describes his friendship with Mill in *Memories of London in the 'Forties* (1908), 33, 98–107. Full bibliographic details for all works referred to in footnotes are given in the Works Cited and Consulted at the end of the thesis.

<sup>2</sup> The *Reader*’s audience, and all aspects of its publication history are discussed in an unpublished doctoral dissertation by John Francis Byrne, ‘*The Reader: A Review of Literature, Science and the Arts, 1863–1867*’, (1968). Byrne explains that in 1864, Mill became one of the journal’s proprietor-contributors; others included Charles Darwin, Thomas Hughes, T.H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer (19, 21).

tendency to mock or condemn. ‘The John-Millennium’ announces both the endurance and transience of Mill’s influence: Mill was in the ascendant at that moment, he was ‘the English philosopher of the present’, but he had displaced other influences to arrive at this prominence, thus the moment when he would be superseded is prefigured (376). The moment of renown that the *Reader* describes came after Mill had published most of his major works – *System of Logic* in 1843, *Principles of Political Economy* in 1848, *On Liberty* in 1859, and *Utilitarianism* in 1861. At this point, the *Logic* and *Political Economy* were textbooks at the universities; digested versions of the *Logic* were even written for ‘poor lads who are to be examined’ (‘Our Library Table’ 233).

The *Reader* article appeared a couple of years before Mill was proposed as a Liberal candidate for Westminster in 1865, when the attention he received as a distinguished author was set to intensify.<sup>3</sup> ‘Mill’s immense reputation and his previous seclusion made his parliamentary performance the object of very general curiosity’, Leslie Stephen later coolly observed in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (396). Alexander Bain said that when his candidature was proposed ‘his name blazed out into a sudden notoriety’ and book sales went up – ‘the cheap volumes went off like wildfire, while there was an increased demand for the *Logic*’ (*John Stuart Mill* 124). Bain’s comments reflect more accurately the mixture of veneration and condemnation which Mill’s foray into Parliament occasioned; for, if it was during the 1860s that Mill became an ‘iconic liberal figure’ (Varouxakis and Kelly 7), it was also during this time that his cultural function as a touchstone for all kinds of prejudice was confirmed. ‘The John-Millennium’ is such an evocative phrase because it draws attention to this movement between reverence and irreverence (during the 1860s, but also before and after), and thus to many of the contrasts and tensions which this project seeks to explore. Importantly, ‘The John-Millennium’ pun also invites questions, which underpin this thesis, about nineteenth-century readers and interpreters of Mill: questions about who was reading him, where in the world they were located, what parts of his oeuvre they were engaging with, and how they were responding to what they read.

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<sup>3</sup> For a summary of the different phases of Mill’s career, see Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists* (1991), 123. For recent biographical accounts see Nicholas Capaldi’s *John Stuart Mill: A Biography* (2004), Bruce L. Kinzer’s *J.S. Mill Revisited: Biographical and Political Explorations* (2007) and Richard Reeves’s *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (2007). For ease of reference, a brief chronology of key events, publications and memorials is given in an appendix to this thesis.

## 1. Introduction

After reading John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* in 1869 Frances Power Cobbe thought: 'How he will be abused for this! What an avalanche of sarcasms and rebukes and jokes will be flung at him ...' (56). When his *Autobiography* was published posthumously in 1873, a reviewer in the *Athenaeum* expressed relief at the chance to read Mill's own story. 'To see the sweet nature of the man coming out from under the overlaying mass of other men's opinions', noted the reviewer, 'gives the reader, who has any sympathy with the character of Mill, a sense of deep and lasting pleasure' (*Autobiography: By John Stuart Mill* 521). The publication of *Three Essays on Religion* in 1874 provoked a more frustrated response from a commentator in the *British Quarterly Review*:

The essays have received from so many hands exposition and criticism, that the former seems now almost unnecessary, while the latter has already become a very complicated task. The comments by distinguished admirers or honourable opponents of Mill's philosophical career already form a body of disquisition far exceeding in bulk the original essays.

(Review of *Three Essays on Religion* 60)

These three reviewers convey a sense of the proliferation of commentary on Mill during his lifetime (1806–73) and in the decades of the nineteenth century which followed. This thesis takes as its subject a selection from these jostling accounts of Mill's life and work. This is a history of ideas about Mill with a large component of literary analysis, seeking to understand the issues at stake in representations of the most famous liberal of the period and the reception of his moral philosophy.

My project gives an account of Mill's presence in Victorian cultural life by analysing portrayals in the periodical press, newspapers, memoirs, biographies, diaries, letters and novels. It considers how he was depicted visually, in photographs, portraits and caricatures. It asks how ideas about the man and his works were articulated in public and personal accounts of meeting Mill or reading his work. Unlike the *Athenaeum* reviewer, or the most recent biographer of Mill, Richard Reeves, I am not concerned with establishing Mill's 'true character' or a definitive narrative of his life (*John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* 2). In chapters two and three, my focus is on the often contradictory stories and themes which make up the avalanche of sarcasms, rebukes and jokes, the overlaying mass of opinion, and the body of disquisition on his

philosophical career. These chapters are organised thematically, exploring how Mill's philosophy, politics, personality, and physicality, instigated and perpetuated debates about science, culture and gender. Chapters four, five and six are case studies of how three authors – Thomas Hardy, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner – engaged with some of Mill's ideas in their fiction and other writings. The author-centred chapters also pursue specific themes: Hardy's concern with intellectual independence and connected thinking, Caird's treatment of free discussion, and Schreiner's spiritual experience of reading Mill.

Of course, the plurality of opinion on Mill did not end in the nineteenth century. The rich variety of Mill's thought has provoked an equally rich secondary literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The University of Toronto's edition of the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, begun in 1965 and finished in 1991, has made Mill's oeuvre available in thirty-three volumes. Mill's reputation and relevance have been appraised and reappraised from a variety of disciplinary perspectives spanning philosophy, history, economics, politics, and literary criticism. In their introduction to *John Stuart Mill – Thought and Influence: The Saint of Rationalism* (2010), a collection of essays which originated as lectures at a bicentennial conference held in 2006, Georgios Varouxakis and Paul Kelly chart the decline of Mill's social and political philosophy after his death in 1873, through to its recovery in the late twentieth century (2–3). Varouxakis and Kelly affirm the relevance of Mill's philosophy to twenty-first century discussions of liberty, individuality, diversity, gender equality, freedom of thought and speech, forms of democracy, and political representation (1).

Mill's life and works form part of cross-disciplinary monographs dealing with diverse aspects of Victorian social and political life, particularly those grappling with contesting historical and contemporary definitions of liberalism. Mill, as David Wayne Thomas observed in *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic* (2004), is 'the preferred Victorian liberal spokesman' (29). For Thomas, Mill is a problematic spokesperson for ideas of cultivation and self-development because his 'thinking enacts an incessant oscillation between two antithetical values: on the one hand, a vision of genius, understood as a heroics of individuality; and on the other hand, a practice of liberal many-sidedness ...' (33). Thomas's position on the irreconcilability of elements of Mill's thought resumes a strand of Victorian thinking discussed in chapter two of this thesis. For Elaine Hadley irreconcilability is also an issue, as she contends that Mill's *Autobiography* provides ample evidence of the disconnections between liberal ideals

and lived realities. Hadley argues, in *Living Liberalism: Practical Citizenship in Mid-Victorian Britain* (2010), that though Mill was ‘deeply invested in the romance of liberal individualism’, his *Autobiography* reveals ‘the difficulties of living liberalism, of simultaneously being interested and disinterested, of being a body and an abstraction’ (103). In chapter three of this thesis, I consider how nineteenth-century commentators debated Mill’s embodiment of his liberal principles, and how his ‘femininity’ was invoked both by those who thought he did this successfully, and those who thought he failed miserably. The theory–practice debate is also important to Thomas Hardy’s engagement with Millian philosophy and in chapter four I consider how Hardy’s fiction is ever alert to the difficulties of living liberalism, particularly in relation to forming independent opinions and adhering to them consistently, but how it nevertheless champions an ideal of intellectual independence and connected thought, and makes space for moments when this is successfully achieved.

While Thomas and Hadley emphasise antitheses, others – in accordance with another strand of Victorian thought – see Mill’s synthesis of ideas, and intellectual practices, as the most significant aspect of his philosophical legacy. For Lauren Goodlad, Mill is an important figure in the history of liberal thought because he is ‘a hybrid thinker who blended Enlightenment ideas with civic republicanism and a Romantic stress on history and diversity’ (“Character Worth Speaking Of” 9). In *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (2003), Goodlad’s account of the contest between idealist and materialist worldviews, Mill is ‘the arch-exponent of a principled liberal middle ground’ (27–8), urging ‘a liberal balance between civil and state authority and between local and centralized government’ (28). In chapters two and three of this thesis I examine the views of Victorians who commended Mill’s ability to bring together disparate concepts and to apply his synthesised thinking to the practical problems of the state.

In Amanda Anderson’s *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (2001), Mill is the spokesperson for an ‘ideal of impartiality ... tinged with sympathy’ (16). Anderson argues that Mill ‘privileges the capacity to achieve distance from one’s own perspective and interests’ but that his approach to intellectual impartiality involves ‘a complex dialectic of detachment and engagement’ which also accords value to sympathetic understanding of opposing viewpoints (17). Anderson identifies ‘the opposition between desirable and undesirable forms of detachment’ as a ‘general tendency within Victorian cultural debate’ (4) and in the

viewpoints I consider in chapters two and three this opposition is clearly at work in depictions of Mill. Those who sought to undermine Mill's authority often represented him as isolated and out of touch, but equally, many detractors insisted that Mill was too impassioned. Supporters were more likely to take the line that Anderson does, by suggesting that Mill was able to combine detached analysis with sympathetic understanding. As I argue in chapter five, this characterisation of Mill's abilities was particularly important for Mona Caird, as she drew on Millian philosophy to support her contributions to the *fin-de-siècle* New Woman debates.

The relationship of Mill's thought to literature has been of perennial interest. In the 1950s, M.H. Abrams, F.R. Leavis and Raymond Williams considered Mill's own literary criticism, 'What is Poetry?' (1833), and his essays on Bentham (1838) and Coleridge (1840). Isobel Armstrong's *Victorian Poetry* (1993) took the concept of 'two systems of concentric circles' (from Mill's essay on Bentham) as the starting point for an account of two traditions of poetry that developed in the Victorian period, one democratic and radical, the other conservative (ix). In his 1971 introduction to Mill's *Autobiography*, Jack Stillinger drew parallels with Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850), in terms of each text's treatment of early education, crisis and recovery. Janice Carlisle's *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character* (1991) argued that Mill's notion of character (as articulated throughout his works rather than in one particular publication), which made the process of writing central to the formation of individuality, is particularly worthy of study by literary and cultural critics. John Plotz's 'Mediated Involvement: John Stuart Mill's Antisocial Sociability' (2010) shifted this focus slightly, arguing that 'Mill's liberalism is in fact profoundly indebted to his theorizing about the role that reading can – and should – play in crafting character' (70).

In *J.S. Mill* (1974), political scholar Alan Ryan noted that Mill's own literary interests were 'more sociological and psychological than textual' and it was this approach that had appealed to Leavis and Williams (50). Critics contemporary to Mill shared the view that Mill's literary interests were not primarily textual. The literary scholar William Minto wrote in a memorial essay that 'Mr Mill was not a cultivator of art for art's sake. ... He read poetry for the most part with earnest, critical eye, striving to account for it, to connect it with the tendencies of the age, or he read to find sympathy with his own aspirations after heroic energy' (50–1). Outside of his literary criticism, however, Mill did pay close attention to matters of language. In the *Logic* and then in *On Liberty*, he developed a theory of the difference between living language and beliefs, and

dead ones, and the need for frequent discussion of familiar ideas to keep them alive. These concepts were very important in the fiction of Hardy, Caird and Schreiner, as I discuss in detail in chapters four, five and six.

Within the voluminous criticism, the key influences on this project have been Stefan Collini's *Public Moralists* (1991) and Goodlad's "'Character worth Speaking Of": Individuality, John Stuart Mill, and the Critique of Liberalism' (2008). *Public Moralists* places Mill in British intellectual history, focusing on his 'inescapable presence' in political debate during the last fifteen years of his life, and his posthumous canonisation as a political thinker (121, 314). Collini's attention to the 'cultural needs' Mill was recruited to serve in England from 1873 until 1933, has particularly informed the approach I have taken (314). However, as I outline in the section on Victorian readers below, I take a quite different view from Collini on the possible effects of reading Mill. Goodlad identifies Mill as 'the most important nineteenth-century liberal' for those 'interested in the ongoing legacy of Victorian ideas' (9). This, Goodlad concludes, is because 'Mill's complex writings on liberty and individuality, despite their manifest flaws, challenge us to experiments in living' (30). Sharing Goodlad's viewpoint about the enduring value of Mill's writing, I pay close attention to three novelists, who, I think, were particularly alert to the complexities of Millian liberty and individuality. I read both the form and content of their fiction as involved with the recognisably Millian project of experiments in living.

This thesis argues that despite the accumulation of research, there is more to be said about how Millian debates and commentary took shape in nineteenth-century journalism, pictures, life-writing and fiction. Mill is a familiar figure in academic criticism, but the diversity of Victorian interpretations provides a rich and previously underexplored resource for those interested in the cultural history of the philosopher, in interactions between philosophy and literature, and in liberal culture. Most studies take Mill's own works as their starting point, whereas the primary focus in this project is on Mill as refracted through the lenses of others' readings. This is not to say, of course, that Mill's own works do not figure among my sources: there has been a symbiotic relationship between my readings of Mill and my understandings of the debates and creative responses which his written output provoked. I draw directly from Mill's works most often in the author-centred chapters, as I consider the Millian themes, images and rhetorical strategies which it is possible to trace in the letters and fiction of Hardy, Caird and Schreiner.

Even before the completion of the *Collected Works*, the trend in Millian scholarship was towards holistic readings, with some arguing that the parts of Mill's corpus can only be fully understood in the context of the whole.<sup>4</sup> Though, in what follows, I have cause to refer to most of Mill's major works, from *System of Logic* in 1843 through to *Three Essays on Religion* in 1874, I do so in varying detail, and I have not attempted to cover the whole of Mill's oeuvre – which includes multiple volumes of letters, newspaper writings, debating and parliamentary speeches, and correspondence produced in his day job for the East India company – anymore than I have tried to give an exhaustive account of all the Victorian references to Mill. Instead my aim is to deepen the understanding of Mill's place in Victorian cultural and emotional life by examining a selection of sources which illuminate the complex interplay of ideas in circulation about Mill's writings, Mill as an individual, and Mill as a representative figure (of philosophy, liberalism or feminism, for example).<sup>5</sup> Many of the sources I use throughout this introduction and the following chapters are drawn from the 1860s, when Mill's transition from philosopher to politician generated so much interest, but others are ranged on either side of this decade – going as far back as Thomas Carlyle's letters of the 1830s, and as far forward as Mona Caird's last novel, published in 1931.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that the commentators I draw on in chapters two and three are chiefly concerned with Mill's philosophical and political roles, rather than his thirty-five year career (from 1823–58) as an imperial administrator for the East India Company. Likewise, Hardy's, Caird's and Schreiner's engagements with Mill's moral philosophy are not directly concerned with his thoughts on Britain's imperial encounter with India. Historian Trevor Lloyd offers a possible explanation as to why these aspects of Mill's life and work were peripheral or invisible to many: 'there was no doubt in the mind of Mill or of his admirers that the main importance of his job was that it enabled him to do things that had nothing to do with his job' (74). Evidence that Mill's contemporaries subscribed to this view is found, for example, in narratives by Alexander Bain and Barclay Fox. They depicted India House as a backdrop for sociable

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<sup>4</sup> On the importance of reading Mill's works in their entirety in order to understand the coherence and evolution of his thought see Ryan, *J.S. Mill*; William Stafford, *John Stuart Mill* (1998); Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill* (2004); and Carlisle's *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*.

<sup>5</sup> I rely on the context of each use of 'Mill' or 'Millian' to indicate whether the reference is to the person, his writings, or this complex interplay of ideas.

<sup>6</sup> The majority of Mona Caird's journalism and fiction was published in the late-nineteenth century, but I include her twentieth-century novels to show the development of her treatment of Millian free discussion. Likewise, with Olive Schreiner and Thomas Hardy, I include works from the early twentieth century which demonstrate the continuation of their engagement with him.



intellectual encounters with Mill.<sup>7</sup> 'His Career at the India House' was one of the memorial essays which made up *John Stuart Mill: His Life and Works, Twelve Sketches by Herbert Spencer, Henry Fawcett, Frederic Harrison and Other Distinguished Authors* in 1873.<sup>8</sup> Mill's colleague, W.T. Thornton, began unassumingly by stating that on the subject of Mill's official career, he had 'scarcely any thing to add to the few particulars on the subject which have already found their way into print' (30). A brief summary of Mill's work on Indian despatches is given, but much of the sketch is devoted to personal reminiscences about generous support for Thornton's career, and Mill's unfavourable reaction to the gift of a silver inkstand upon his retirement – 'He hated all such demonstrations' remembered Thornton (36). Though Thornton conveys a sense of pleasure in relating these anecdotes, he also worries that they are an inappropriately trivial way to pay tribute to a figure such as Mill. In an obituary, the *Saturday Review* highlighted the way Mill's job had benefitted his other work: 'It is probable that his employment in the India Office saved him from being a bookworm, and checked his propensity to become an impracticable dreamer' ('Mr Mill' 638).

Recent re-evaluations have challenged the idea that Mill's work for the East India Company should be underplayed or seen as separate to his philosophical and political roles. In particular, Lynn Zastoupil's *John Stuart Mill and India* (1994) has foregrounded the connections between Mill's administrative responsibilities and his intellectual development, arguing that 'What needs to be done is to investigate the subtle or submerged influence of India House ideas in the published works of Mill', and aiming to demonstrate how 'the Imperial experience in India left its mark on Mill and, through him, on Victorian Liberalism' (171). In *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (1999) Uday Singh Mehta is less interested in policy decisions, than in how Mill and his father had 'conceptualized India and its past within the broader terms of their political thought' (78). While Zastoupil seeks to establish that Mill's intellectual encounter with India was not a purely exploitative one (175–6), Mehta finds that Mill's commitments to individuality and progress failed the challenge posed

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<sup>7</sup> For Bain's account of meeting Mill at India House, with a lengthy footnote describing the building, see *John Stuart Mill: A Criticism with Personal Recollections* (1882), 64–5; *Barclay Fox's Journal 1832–1854* (2008), edited by R.L. Brett, contains several references to meeting Mill at India House: see 184, 192, 196, 341.

<sup>8</sup> In an introduction to Thornton's essay in *Lives of Victorian Political Figures IV: John Stuart Mill* (2009), David Martin notes that of the commentary which appeared after Mill's death 'relatively little referred to the main source of his employment, the thirty-five years with the East India Company. This neglect was reinforced by Mill's own account. In the *Autobiography* he confined to four or five pages a few factual details and general reflections on his career' (221).

by the unfamiliarity of ideas about Indian life (20). Zastoupil and Mehta's approaches suggest ways in which my work on depictions of Mill could be developed in future projects, to investigate in more depth how Victorian commentators characterised his imperial involvements in writing and in person.

My approach in this thesis places more emphasis than previous studies on the connections between verbal and visual depictions. Mill apparently took little interest in the self-fashioning of his public image in photography or other portraiture and he remains strongly associated with the written word and abstraction. This has not made him an obvious subject for studies of visual culture in the way that other eminent Victorians, such as Queen Victoria, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Darwin, have been.<sup>9</sup> Works which do include images of Mill tend to let them speak for themselves, or include only very brief analysis of how these images might link to other issues.<sup>10</sup> The notable exception to this is 'Mill in Parliament: The View from the Comic Press' (1990), by John M. Robson (who was head of the Mill Project at the University of Toronto which produced the *Collected Works*). The article contains many of the cartoons from the periodical press which feature Mill and considers these alongside puns and verse. Robson's very specific aim was to clarify a point of political history: to establish that it was not Mill's "crochets" or "whims", especially women's suffrage and proportional representation, that damaged his chances for re-election in 1868, but the hardening of party allegiances' (102). One of the aims of this thesis is to build on Robson's account by further analysing the significance of these caricatures, and importantly, to connect them with other types of image, and other textual accounts of Mill's appearance, personality and social role.

The following three sections of this first chapter introduce these interconnected elements of my thesis. First, I explain how two tropes of Millian commentary – fire and ice – function as shorthand for an array of issues which I discuss in chapters two and

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<sup>9</sup> See John Plunkett's *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (2003); and *Tennyson Transformed: Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture* (2009), ed. by Jim Cheshire. Janet Browne has written several pieces on Darwin and visual culture: 'I Could Have Retched All Night': Charles Darwin and His Body' (1998), 'Darwin in Caricature: A Study in the Popularisation and the Dissemination of Evolution' (2001), and 'Looking at Darwin: Portraits and the Making of an Icon' (2009).

<sup>10</sup> Janice Carlisle's *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character* (1991) contains two cartoons from *Judy of Mill* dressed as a woman, but only discusses these briefly (114–17). *A Moralist In and Out of Parliament: John Stuart Mill at Westminster, 1865–1868* (1992) by Bruce L. Kinzer, Ann P. Robson, and John M. Robson includes fifteen cartoons featuring Mill, but does not make any direct link between these and the discussion of Mill's political career (perhaps because John Robson does this in his article on cartoons in the comic press, discussed above). Biographies by Michael St. John Packe, Eugene August, Nicholas Capaldi and Richard Reeves all contain a variety of images with brief captions.

three. Second, I begin to consider the range of visual representations of Mill which were available to the Victorians, alongside writing which emphasises Mill's appearance, or comments particularly on visual portrayals. Third, I focus on the questions prompted by the *Reader* article on Mill's influence, about nineteenth-century readers of Mill, and how these relate to my case studies of Hardy, Caird, and Schreiner.

### 1.1 Fire and Ice: Two Tropes of Commentary on Mill

Fire and ice, warmth and chilliness, are tropes which run through commentary on Mill, from the nineteenth century through to the present day. To give some relatively recent examples, in a survey of Mill's life and reputation in *John Stuart Mill* (1998), William Stafford notes that 'A picture has developed of a chilly, bloodless man, over-intellectual, under-sexed, uxorious, priggish and humourless' (23). In Rosemary Ashton's *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* (2006), Mill is characterised as 'the ascetic John Stuart Mill' and 'that cold philosopher J.S. Mill' (40, 286). Ashton sees this disposition as an anomaly in the world of John Chapman and his associates, representing something antithetical to their warmer, creative energies. Conversely, in *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (2007), Richard Reeves signals his desire to reclaim Mill for passion and action in the biography's subtitle; the book as a whole setting out to challenge the 'received picture of Mill as a bone-dry, formal, humourless Victorian' (3). The firebrand designation did not ring true for some reviewers, however. Hilary Spurling in the *Guardian* still focused on Mill's chilliness, as described by Thomas Carlyle and Caroline Fox and also, according to Spurling, Thomas Hardy. Equally, Adam Gopnik in the *New Yorker* suspected a marketing ploy: 'The book's subtitle, meant to be excitingly commercial, is ill chosen; a firebrand should flame and then die out, while Mill burned for half a century with a steady heat so well regulated that it continues to warm his causes today – "Victorian Low-Simmering Hot Plate" might be closer to it'. Here and elsewhere in depictions of Mill, coldness is almost always regarded as a fault, synonymous with a range of deficiencies including lack of humour and lack of feeling. Warmth, however, is associated with a variety of attributes, from lamentable excess to commendable consistency and compassion.

In chapter two, 'Man of Science or Man of Letters? Mill and the "desire of culture"', I draw on books, journals, and newspapers from the 1860s and from the 1870s and 1880s, after Mill's *Autobiography* and *Three Essays* were posthumously published, to show how Mill was variously placed on a spectrum ranging from 'hard',

'cold' science at one end to 'soft', 'warm' feeling and imagination at the opposite. Mill's move from philosopher to politician, his own account of his childhood, and the disclosure of his views on religion, all provoked extensive debate revolving around the questions: was he a man of science or a man of culture? Was he an incoherent mixture of the two or was he a perfect combination of both? Sympathisers insisted that Mill's greatness was based on his ability to synthesise an appreciation of the imaginative, with a logical, rational approach to social problems. Detractors sought to emphasise the impossibility of Mill ever being a man of well-rounded culture, and therefore of philosophical or practical authority.

Bound up with the questions of science and culture, and animating much of the Victorian conversation about Mill, was the relation of the theoretical to the practical. This relation was also often imagined in terms of temperature. The *Saturday Review* was not unusual in associating theorising with coldness, and action with heat. They thought Mill's 'fervour of temperament' in relation to the Governor Eyre controversy, and proposals for Irish land reform, preferable to 'cold-blooded indifference' – before proceeding, in their review of *Subjection*, to suggest that such heated interest made Mill forgetful of logic ('The Subjection of Women' 37). In *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*, Carlisle argued that Mill was the victim of a Victorian prejudice which 'valued practice over theory' (49). Despite the eminence that Mill achieved, Carlisle even contends that Mill's *Autobiography* reveals how he shared the prejudice that saw theorists 'too often dismissed as powerless and marginal figures' (44). As chapter two shows, it suited many to insist that Mill's status as a 'cold thinker' disqualified his opinions on practical topics, and some forceful anti-philosophical opinions were expressed about him.<sup>11</sup> However, the chapter also demonstrates how multi-faceted the theory–practice debate was, particularly in the slew of articles which reflected on the value of having 'literary men' in Parliament. Some thought that Mill's theoretical knowledge raised the level of debate in the House of Commons, and national life more generally, and that it added authority to the Liberal cause. For some, such as theatre critic and writer Thomas Purnell, Mill's time as an MP damaged his philosophical credentials: 'All that abstraction and disinterestedness which gave him authority has vanished. He is no longer umpire, but a party to the squabble' (61). In the sources I examine, the interrelationship between Mill's philosophy, his own life, and the lives of

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<sup>11</sup> 'Cold thinker' is a description from the *Daily News*, as reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in a round-up of opinions given in obituaries of Mill ('Epitome of Opinion in the Morning Journals' 3).

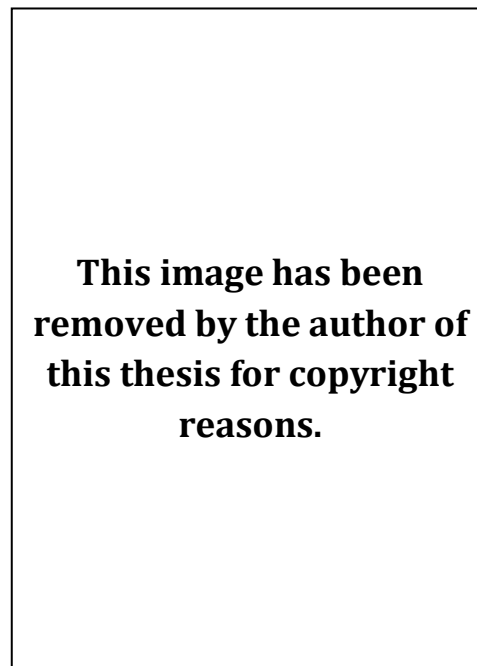
others is constantly interrogated, but – in line with Amanda Anderson’s theory of the ‘powers of distance’ in Victorian culture (5) – some value his theory over his practice.

In chapter three, ‘A Feminine Philosopher’, I explore how the evocations of warmth and coldness in debates about Mill’s relation to science, emotion and imagination were aligned to ideas about gender. Both coldness and warmth were used as indicators of Mill’s lack of ‘manliness’: his ‘coldness’ was associated with a lack of virility and his ‘warmth’ with a feminine excess of emotion. As Mill set out to challenge ideas about separate spheres and essential differences between the sexes, those committed to such views used them to question his own performance of masculinity. However, the shifting and conflicting nature of these portrayals allowed some to interpret his ‘feminine’ qualities as particular virtues, adding to rather than detracting from his eminence. For many, Mill’s modesty, delicacy, and nurturing skills – all characteristics more readily associated with Victorian constructions of femininity – were part of what made him so admirable. And, as with the commentators discussed in chapter two who believed that Mill had a unique ability to synthesise the imaginative and the scientific, the highest praise came from those who thought that Mill was successfully able to combine masculine and feminine qualities.

In Hadley’s *Living Liberalism*, she considers ways in which William Gladstone embodied liberalism ‘in his tone, temper, and policy’, during the Midlothian election campaign of 1889 (293). Hadley argues that ‘the public was notably fixated on his body, his voice, and moreover, to what degree the body and voice signalled his political integrity’ (307). Though Mill’s status as a liberal icon in the 1860s did not create a moment of popular celebration when ‘plates, trays, mugs and other consumer goods sported his visage’ as it did for Gladstone towards the end of the century (Hadley 292), chapter three shows how, alongside Mill’s emotions, his body and voice were regularly anatomised. In Gladstone’s case, the strength of his body and voice were frequently lauded (Hadley 308). In Mill’s case, the weakness of his body and voice were often alluded to, but the target does not seem to have been his political integrity. My focus in chapter three is on how caricatures of Mill, mostly during his time as an MP, and commentary about Mill both in out and of Parliament, drew on long-standing and newly emerging stories about what type of bodies produce authoritative knowledge, as well as accounts of Mill’s support for women’s rights. As a result, Mill’s body was often construed as lacking the strength and solidity expected of a man in such a prominent public position. Official images of Mill and reverential tales of seeing or meeting him,

provided a counterpoint to the satirical drawings in the periodical press, and derogatory descriptions of his physicality. In the next section, I consider how these figured, and continue to figure, in estimates of Mill as a philosopher.

## 1.2 A Face as well as a Name: Mill in Visual Culture



**Fig. 2. Cameo of Mill, c. 1840. London School of Economics archive.**

The official images of Mill – a cameo of him as a young man, studio photographs taken in the mid-1860s, engravings based on these photographs, a George Frederic Watts portrait, and a statue on the Thames Embankment by Thomas Woolner – seem so ordinary as to hardly be worthy of further investigation.<sup>12</sup> They do not stray beyond any of the norms or conventions of photography, portrait painting, or sculpture of their time. Though they might not be regarded as particularly aesthetically innovative, they are important in that Mill's personal appearance was always integral to the discussion of the value of his philosophic endeavours as I explore in detail in chapter three. Moreover, his appearance has continued to feature in such discussions. In Isaiah Berlin's

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<sup>12</sup> By calling these 'official images' I mean to differentiate them from the caricatures in the periodical press. With the exception of the Woolner statue, they are all images which Mill sanctioned (however reluctantly, as discussed below).

classic lecture on 'John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life' in 1959, Mill's sombre appearance belied the liveliness of his intellectual commitments: 'Despite the solemn bald head, the black clothes, the grave expression, the measured phrases, the total lack of humour, Mill's life is an unceasing revolt against his father's outlook and ideals, the greater for being subterranean and unacknowledged' (227). More recently, Janice Carlisle complained that the contrast between Mill's appearance and his writing had been elided: 'After nearly one hundred and fifty years of commentary on his work, he has become too much the sad and wizened man who looks out from the late, touching portrait by George Frederick [sic] Watts' (xii). Commentary on images and the contexts of their production also provides insight into the issues at stake in the ongoing process of memorialising Mill.

The cameo in Figure 2, which depicts Mill in his thirties, is thought to have been based on a lost portrait, made when he visited Cornwall, and stayed with the Foxes, an influential Quaker family of shipping merchants and industrialists, in 1840.<sup>13</sup> Though they were first published in 1882, extracts from Caroline Fox's journals, *Memories of Old Friends*, describe the time when this image was created, shortly before the *Logic* appeared in 1843. Fox wrote about Mill's 'extraordinary power and genius' in visual terms, evoking the links between facial appearance and character explored in the illustrations of the eighteenth-century Swiss physiognomist Johann Lavater (*Memories of Old Friends* I: 107). She observed that Mill 'is a very uncommon-looking person – such acuteness and sensibility marked in his exquisitely chiselled countenance, more resembling a portrait of Lavater than any other that I remember. His voice is refinement itself, and his mode of expressing himself tallies with voice and countenance' (I: 132–3). Evidence of Mill's strong sense of social responsibility was also visible in 'his careworn and anxious, though most beautiful and refined, countenance', recorded Fox (I: 138). In Lavater's physiognomic scheme, the belly and reproductive organs were associated with animal life, the breast and heart with moral life, and the head and eyes with intellectual life. Different regions of the face provided evidence of these characteristics: 'the mouth and chin related to animal life; the nose and cheeks represented moral life; and the forehead and eyebrows epitomised intellectual life' (Hartley 34). Using the terms of physiognomy, Fox suggests a perfect harmony between Mill's inner properties and outer form – a remarkable face to match his remarkable intellect.

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<sup>13</sup> In *The Life of John Stuart Mill* (1954) Michael St John Packe suggests that the lost portrait by the Cornish painter 'was probably not a good one' but that it was used as the basis for the cameo (263, note).

Fox evokes not only Lavater, but the veneration of heroes in classical Greece and Rome. The sculptural allusions – ‘his exquisitely chiselled countenance’ and refined beauty – are suggestive of his rising celebrity, as if Mill’s living body already commemorates his achievements and fame in the form of an animated bust or statue. The Foxes were accustomed to hosting distinguished guests – Fox’s brother, Barclay, wrote in his diary about an after dinner walk with Mill and John Sterling where they ‘divided lions’ (183). Nevertheless, Caroline’s narrative conveys a sense of the oddness of Mill’s presence outside of his metropolitan milieu – light-heartedly suggesting that lighted candles be left at Pendennis Cavern ‘as an offering to the gnomes’, ‘unhooking a bramble’ from her dress, concocting for her ‘an almanac of odours that scent the air’ (I: 135, 154, 156) – and a desire to solemnise the encounter. A concern with both celebration of Mill’s emerging eminence, and its commemoration, is evident in Fox’s description of the local artist’s attempts to capture his likeness: ‘John sitting for his portrait; fell first into a reverie, and then into a doze; nevertheless the artist is hopeful’ (I: 158). A few days later, Fox reiterated her view of the harmony between Mill’s temperament and the outward expression of this, in her assessment of the painting: ‘Cunningham showed us his portrait of J.S. Mill, which is very beautiful; quite an ideal head, so expanded with patient thought, and a face of such exquisite refinement’ (I: 168). Sterling wrote to Mill to say: ‘... not having seen your head according to Cunningham of course, I can give no opinion of it. Any likeness of you would give me pleasure. I wish you would get Morrison to make a medallion then any of your friends could have copies to any extent’ (qtd. in Packe 263, note). The cameo, which accords with Fox’s descriptions of Mill’s refined and patient features, without evidence of the careworn and anxious expression, does not appear to have been copied in this way. Fox’s account of Mill’s reverie/doze while sitting for Cunningham suggests that Mill took little interest in the self-fashioning of his public image through portraiture, or even the reproduction of his image as a more intimate keepsake for friends and family.

Allusions to Lavater’s scheme of classification are discernible in later accounts of Mill, which focus on his forehead and eyes, and which were as certain as Fox’s about the connection between appearance and intellect. The Danish scholar Georg Brandes recalled that Mill’s brow was ‘high and arched, with a strongly marked protuberance over the left eye; he looked as though the labor of thought might have forced its organs to extend in order to make more room’; when departing from Mill, Brandes ‘gazed long into his deep, blue eyes’ (*Eminent Authors* 124, 145). Reporting on the election for



American readers of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1865, the social campaigner Moncure Daniel Conway was aware that his exuberant admiration for the Millian brow was liable to be misinterpreted as mockery:

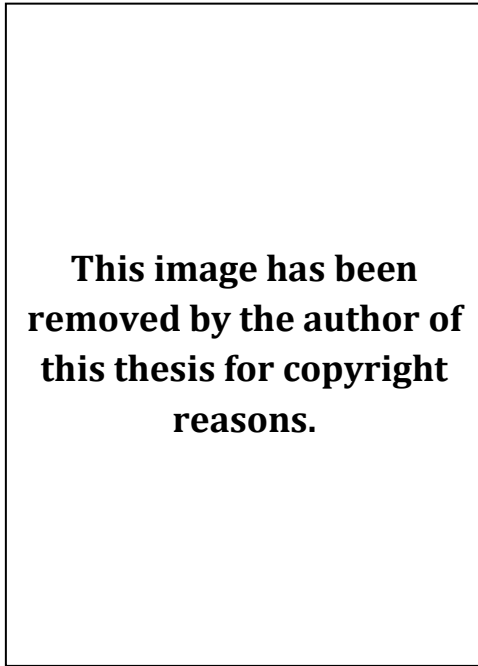
... speaking in all soberness, his forehead is the best I ever saw. ... Broad and high with an undulating surface, and a bump on one side, which nature would seem to have extemporized to hold a surplus of brain, the forehead was merged into a noble dome of a head whose fine outline was disclosed by the baldness. ('The Great Westminster Canvass' 737)

Conway recounts with breathless excitement the effect of Mill's presence at a public meeting: at first he was just 'a delicate blue-eyed stranger' who 'entered the house with the stream of people'. When the audience realised who he was, it generated a collective frisson: 'There was something in the first glance which passed between the simple, unworldly scholar and the English crowd which electrified them, and caused an effusion of genuine emotion to his face and eye' ('The Great Westminster Canvass' 737). Hardy's letter to the times in 1906, which I discuss in chapter four, also dwells on the shape of the philosopher's head, and his effect on the crowd gathered at the hustings, but Hardy places more stress than Conway on Mill's vulnerability.

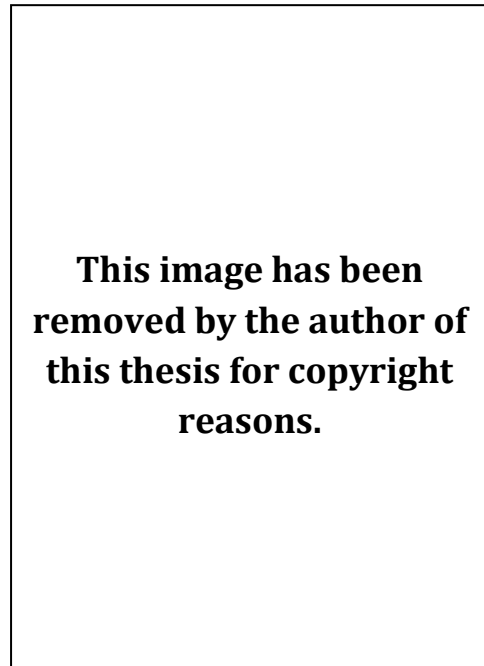
In his *Reminiscences* (1899), Justin McCarthy, an Irish nationalist, Liberal politician, historian and novelist, claimed that when Mill stood for parliament in 1865, 'His very appearance was unknown to the vast mass of the community; no photographs of him were to be seen in the shop windows' (I: 92). McCarthy remembers that leading Conservatives tried to exploit the fact that his appearance was little known by circulating rumours that Mill did not really exist – this was done 'half in jest and half for a serious electioneering purpose' (I: 93). Even when Mill's renown was at its greatest, questions of absence and obscurity arose. However, if there were few images of Mill, or descriptions of his appearance, in circulation prior to his election as MP, then this was set to change. Mill had been reluctant to have his photograph taken, but by July 1865 had been 'so urged to have one taken' that he finally agreed to sit for John Watkins of Parliament Street.<sup>14</sup> Mill then supplied John Plummer with two *cartes de visite*

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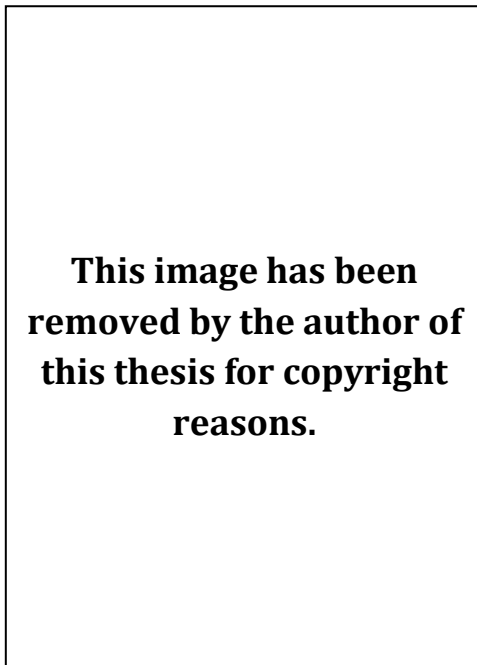
<sup>14</sup> Letter from Mill to John Plummer, 14 July 1865. In a letter to Edwin Chadwick dated 15 May 1865, Mill had written 'As to the application you have received about having my likeness taken for publication, I have a real difficulty about it, owing to having refused my photograph to friends who much wished for it. If it should be necessary, however, there is a cameo likeness of me from which a copy could be taken'.



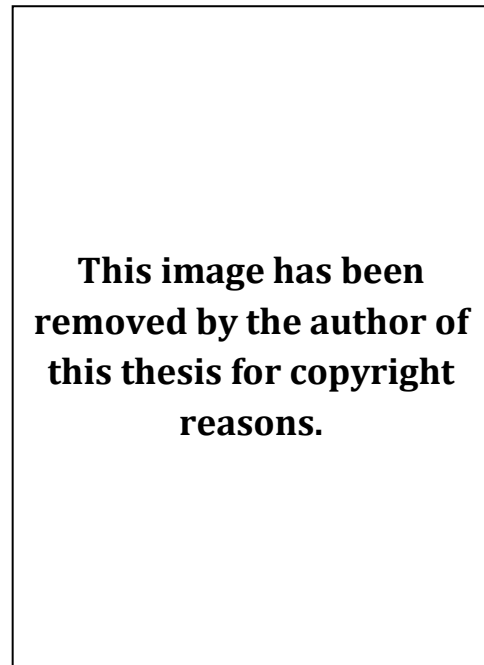
**Fig. 3a. Studio photograph of Mill by John Watkins, 1865.**



**Fig. 3b. Studio photograph of Mill by John Watkins, 1865.**



**Fig. 3c. Studio photograph of Mill by John Watkins, 1865.**



**Fig. 3d. Mill and Helen Taylor by John Watkins, 1865.**

photographs which Plummer used as the basis for a pen and ink illustration in *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper*, accompanying an article on 'Remarkable Men: Members of the New Parliament'. As well as providing the basis for numerous engravings in the periodical press, the photographs themselves were widely displayed in London, according to the doorkeeper of the House of Commons, William White: 'Of the personal appearance of this extraordinary man we need say nothing, for thanks to photography, his thoughtful features, copied with wonderful faithfulness, look at us from hundreds of shop-windows' (II: 72). Mill resisted subsequent requests from photographers, writing to Edward Walford, the editor of Hardwicke's *Shilling House of Commons* in 1867, to explain that: 'Want of time, combined with dislike for the operation, has obliged me to refuse all proposals from photographers to take my likeness, except in one instance, when I sat to Mr Watkins'.<sup>15</sup>

The studio photographs by Watkins are shown in Figures 3a–d. In Figure 3a where Mill looks directly towards the camera, and in the profile view in Figure 3b, the physical features which attracted much comment – the bump on his forehead and his domed, bald head – are pronounced. The focus on these features, which referenced physiognomy, as well as phrenology, to account for Mill's extraordinary intellect, also referenced older visual traditions of depicting philosophers. Janet Browne has shown how photographs of Darwin similarly emphasised his forehead and baldness, following conventions established in images of ancient philosophers such as Socrates. However, the custom of depicting philosophers with a 'capacious forehead' and 'bald pate' always included one other feature, which Browne attaches great significance to in images of Darwin: a beard ('I Could Have Retched All Night' 277). Darwin's beard, Browne argues, was 'a dramatically masculine beard, a very visual symbol of the real seat of Victorian power ...' (275). In mid-Victorian Britain, as Christopher Oldstone-Moore explains, beards became increasingly popular because it was believed that they were '... integral to that elemental masculinity which still pertained in the modern age, first by contributing to men's health and vitality, and second by serving as the outward mark of inward qualities – particularly independence, hardiness, and decisiveness – that they were the foundations of masculine authority' (8). The images of Mill's side-whiskered face, which presented quite a contrast to photographs of other prominent men, such as

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<sup>15</sup> Letter from Mill to Edward Walford, 14 February 1867. On Watkins and Walford, see notes to this letter by Mineka and Lindley, *Collected Works* rpt. in *The Online Library of Liberty*.

Darwin, Carlyle and Charles Dickens, with full beards, may well have been a factor in the feminisation of Mill in some of the periodical press cartoons I discuss in chapter three.

Figure 3c shows Mill seated and reading, in front of a plain background. His long legs extend outside of the frame of the picture, conveying a sense of his height. Contrastingly, as I discuss in chapter three, caricatures by John Tenniel in *Punch* depicted Mill as of diminutive stature. In this photograph, Mill's gaze is absorbedly and introspectively directed towards the book he holds, rather than towards the camera and the spectator. Mill's philosophic role is signified by his book, but books were also commonly used in studio photographs of the time to suggest literacy.<sup>16</sup> As such, Mill's prop is rather less exotic than the microscopes, bones, globes, maps or travelling boxes other eminent men used to symbolise their intellectual interests.<sup>17</sup> The lack of grandeur in these photographs may have reflected Mill's lack of concern for the images of him which were to be circulated, or may have been carefully managed to avoid any sense of ostentation. Either way, they suggest Mill's humility and provide a counter narrative to the focus on his extraordinary life. The book appears again to signify his philosophising in Figure 3d, where he poses with his step-daughter Helen Taylor. The configuration in this photograph, with Helen stood behind the seated Mill, her hand placed affectionately on his shoulder, suggests her role as intellectual and emotional support for her step-father since the death of Harriet Taylor in 1858. But with Helen standing, dressed in mourning robes, Mill does not take precedence in the frame: the familial relation depicted also conveys something of Mill's political commitment to equality for women.

In 1873, Sir Charles Dilke, a Liberal politician and writer, commissioned the successful and popular George Frederic Watts to paint a portrait of Mill. It seems that Mill was as reluctant to sit for a portrait painter as he was a photographer, writing to Dilke: 'I have hitherto disliked having my portrait taken, but I am unwilling to refuse the high compliment paid me by Mr Watts and yourself' (qtd. in Mary S. Watts 273). The portrait (Figure 4) was painted shortly before Mill contracted the bacterial infection which was to prove fatal. After Mill died, his step-daughter Helen Taylor wrote to Lady Dilke asking if a copy could be made, envisaging it as a gift to the nation for all admirers of Mill – this copy still hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.<sup>18</sup> At a time when

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<sup>16</sup> See Audrey Linkman, *The Victorians: Photographic Portraits* (1993), 52.

<sup>17</sup> See Browne, 'I Could Have Retched All Night', 263–9.

<sup>18</sup> '... I would give much now to have such a portrait where it could be seen by all who live and look up to his name and work; and when I saw you I felt that I should have liked to ask you to allow the first portrait to be copied for me in order that I might give it to the nation' (20 November 1873).

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**Fig. 4. Portrait of Mill by George Frederic Watts. 1873. National Portrait Gallery.**

photography was 'building a new legacy of the more complex personality constructed from multiple perspectives taken at different points in time', Watts was known to be a proponent of a different tradition which saw 'the single iconic image as a distillation of a complete personality and an entire life' (Hamilton and Hargreaves 51). In a biography of her husband, *George Frederic Watts: The Annals of an Artist's Life* (1912), Mary S. Watts underscored the uniqueness and authority of his painting:

As this is the only portrait for which Mr Mill ever sat, it may be reckoned amongst the most fortunate accidents of the artist's career that he succeeded in painting what must be called one of his most subtle delineations of character. During these sittings Mr and Mrs Fawcett came to see the portrait, and I think then first made acquaintance with Signor [Watts]. Mrs Fawcett tells me Signor seized that characteristic of Mill which gave the impression of his great refinement and delicacy. ... [Watts] found his sitter surprisingly sympathetic; sensitive to all that was beautiful in form and poetic thought. (273-4)

In reporting Millicent Garrett Fawcett's response to the painting, and hinting at how prevailing perceptions of Mill had influenced the artist before they met, Mary S. Watts points to ideas which recur in discussions of Mill's appearance and personality in chapter three. Refinement, delicacy and sensitivity are terms which were bound up with debates about his suitability for the role of philosopher and politician, and were used by some as praise and by others as condemnation.

In Watts's portrait, Mill's dark, downcast eyes and closed, firmly-set mouth bespeak contemplation and interiority. The gnarled face, surrounded by dark tones, looks sad and bereft, foregrounding both Mill's sense of grief at the loss of Harriet and the sombre intensity and isolation of life as a philosopher. His expression seems humourless and closed to discussion rather than open to it. In Virginia Woolf's 1915 novel *The Voyage Out*, the portrait is a symbol of convention and a lack of aesthetic innovation. A copy resides in a 'dull' and 'dingy' drawing room which is 'without definite character, being neither typically and openly hideous, nor strenuously artistic, nor really comfortable' (199). Today, the Watts portrait is probably the most familiar picture of Mill, adorning the cover of many modern editions of works by and about him, and fulfilling the role of the single iconic image.

Shortly after Mill's death in 1873, George Jacob Holyoake, a self-educated secularist and promoter of the co-operative movement among the working classes, issued a pamphlet called *John Stuart Mill: As Some of the Working Classes Knew Him*. In it he devotes considerable attention to appropriate memorials for Mill. He notes that 'A statue of John Stuart Mill is to be raised' and 'scholarships open to both sexes are to be founded in his name' (11). Holyoake thought the scholarships more fitting as tributes, while nevertheless desiring the statue because 'future generations will be glad to look on that wise and patient face, with its lines of ever-purposing thought' (11). While a likeness of Mill for posterity was desirable, the less tangible work of making education and free discussion more widespread, and making Mill's ideas more accessible to readers of all classes was equally important. Holyoake's way of venerating Mill was to insist that Mill would not have wanted veneration. 'If he should return to earth', speculated Holyoake, 'I do not think Mr Mill would ever go to see his own statue; but if any one shall extend mental and sociological science he would be sure to read their essays' (12). More cheap editions of his works might also be 'one of the very few things which he would be likely to approve as a memorial of him' (12). Another practical possibility, Holyoake reported, was 'the erection of "Memorial Halls" in towns where his name is regarded, in which discussion of all important questions should be free, and meet, as Milton expressed it, "in fair and open" encounter' (12). In a concluding suggestion, Holyoake evoked Mill's love of walking in the countryside:

For himself he would have been content that a few working men and women, whom he had inspired with self-respect and who discerned some path to self-help which he had pointed out, should raise a cairn to his memory, and carve merely his initials on the topmost stone. He would sleep more proudly under that than under the costliest pyramid raised by any who had no regard for intelligent individuality, toleration, and self-limiting liberty in the people ... (28-9)

Though his pamphlet strikes a hyperbolic note in its praise for Mill, Holyoake's possible memorials are interesting for the way in which they suggest the need for a material point of reference – like a memorial hall or a cairn – which acknowledged Mill's own lack of concern with the preservation of his image for posterity.

Nevertheless, a bronze statue of Mill was created by Thomas Woolner, one of the original seven members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, in 1878 (see Figure 5).

Those who contributed money towards the statue included Herbert Spencer, Frederic Harrison, G.H. Lewes, John Tyndall and T.H. Huxley, but other prominent figures did not want to be part of the process of memorialising Mill. Gladstone withdrew his support for the monument after the controversy sparked by a hostile obituary in the *Times*. The obituary, written by barrister and essayist Abraham Hayward (though it appeared anonymously), included a story about Mill's arrest when he was seventeen, for distributing a pamphlet about contraception.<sup>19</sup> In her 1877 autobiography, Harriet Martineau publicly declared that she did not wish to be associated with the statue of Mill, because though she had a 'great admiration for his intellect, and a strong regard for his heart, and a full belief in his innocence of intention ... he was deplorably weak in

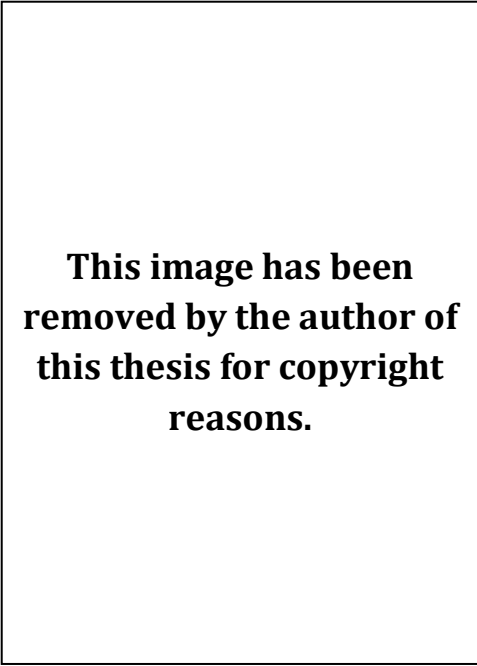


**Fig. 5. Bronze statue of Mill by Thomas Woolner, raised on the Thames Embankment in 1878.**

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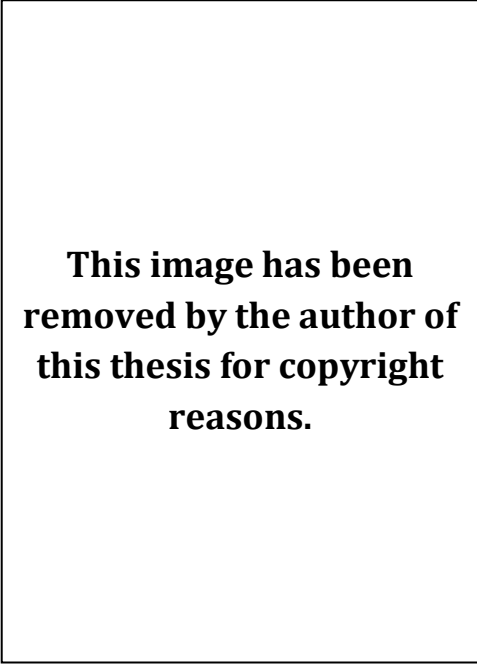
<sup>19</sup> Holyoake lists contributors in *Bygones Worth Remembering*, 272. An extensive discussion of the Hayward controversy is given in David Stack's 'The Death of John Stuart Mill' (2011) – Hayward had apparently developed a grudge against Mill after they clashed at the London Debating Society as young men (Stack 171). See also Collini, *Public Moralists*, 312–14; Stafford, 13–14; and Reeves, 481–4.





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**Fig. 6. Detail from 'How to Improve London'. *Punch*.  
1881.**



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**Fig. 7. Millicent Garrett Fawcett and other suffragettes lay wreaths by Mill's  
statue in 1928.**

judgment, with the weakness, so damaging to a man, of being as impressionable as a woman' (2: 505). From Holyoake's deliberations about the best way working people could commemorate Mill, to Martineau's accusation of Mill's debilitating impressionability, the Woolner statue is bound up with the movement from reverence to irreverence evident in so much Millian commentary.

In an article on 'How to Improve London' in 1881 (Figure 6), *Punch* made fun of the Woolner statue for not being sufficiently reverential of Mill, comparing it unfavourably to a more pleasant statue of George Peabody, the American banker and philanthropist, at the Royal Exchange:

The great political economist is represented seated on an iron stool so constructed that the cushion placed upon it cannot be retained in its place. Consequently it has slipped down, causing Mr Mill to want to get up. This natural desire has been restrained. The martyr is seemingly mesmerised. In an attitude suggestive of extreme torture he gazes at the time-tables of the District Railway which have been placed just far enough away from him to be illegible. In his hand he has seemingly a dictionary – the only literature the hard-hearted sculptor has given to him. His costume is a disgrace to his tradesmen. His coat is a shapeless garment, boasting only two buttons. His collar seems attached to a flannel shirt. And as for his boots, no words can describe their hideous make. They are square-toed and 'roomy'. They suggest numberless bunions. (252)

*Punch's* irreverent take on the Woolner sculpture draws attention to just the kind of everyday details least associated with a permanent record for posterity: minor bodily discomforts caused by seating and clothing. Despite *Punch's* conclusion, that Mill 'has been insulted – grossly insulted', Holyoake wrote that the statue 'stands on the Thames Embankment and allures more pilgrims of thought than any other there' (*Bygones worth Remembering* 370). The statue was to become an important point of commemoration for suffragettes, with Millicent Garrett Fawcett leading a delegation there in 1928 when all women got the vote (Figure 7). Attention to Mill's presence in visual culture expands the sense of his place in the Victorian imaginary and thus the understanding of the way readers of Mill, whom I turn to consider in the next section, interacted with him.

### 1.3 Victorian Readers of Mill

The *Reader* article on Mill's influence discussed in the preface was concerned with widespread engagement with Mill's ideas in Britain in a 'top-down' way: the men who constituted the up-and-coming leaders of thought were immersed in all things Millian, and diffusing this beneficial knowledge via their speculation, criticism and instruction. William White also used a top-down model to account for the dissemination of Mill's ideas:

Great thinkers like Mr Mill never have a large audience. But think not, reader, that they do not ultimately influence the mass. The works of men like Mr Mill are like the watersheds of the world, high up in the mountain, down which the waters flow in thousands of tortuous courses till they reach the plain, and refresh millions who know nothing of their source.

(31)

White was including the majority of MPs in this mass, noting that 'Country gentlemen and men of business do not as a rule study philosophy, or logic, or even political economy' (30). Others also observed that many prominent public men were not assiduous readers of Mill. In Anthony Trollope's *He Knew He was Right* (first published serially from 1868–9) there is an exchange which plays on the cultural and political currency to be gained from reading, or at least professing to read, Mill: "Your John S. Mill is a great man', said the minister. 'They tell me so', said Mr Glascock. 'I don't read what he writes myself'. This acknowledgement seemed to the minister to be almost disgraceful, and yet he himself had never read a word of Mill's writings" (521).

Elsewhere in Trollope's fiction it is female characters who take Mill more seriously, with Lady Laura Standish in *Phineas Finn* (first published serially from 1866–7) telling a friend 'I shall knock under for Mr Mill, and go in for women's rights' (490). In the same novel, Phineas, musing on his political career, remarks to Violet Effingham 'A man should try to be something'; Violet responds 'And a woman must be content to be nothing, – unless Mr Mill can pull us through!' (566).<sup>20</sup>

The references to Mill that Trollope included in these novels reflected his topicality when they were being written – it was in May 1867 that Mill proposed the word 'man' be replaced by the word 'person' in the clauses of the Reform Bill which

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<sup>20</sup> For analysis of Mill's influence on Trollope's views about equal rights for women, see John Sutherland's introductions to the OUP edition of *He Knew He Was Right* (xviii) and the Penguin edition of *Phineas Finn* (23–4).

dealt with enfranchisement. The caricature shown in Figure 1 (see page 8), from an 1867 issue of *Fun*, a periodical known as ‘the poor man’s *Punch*’ (Sullivan 135), satirises this moment and demonstrates how the millennium pun had taken on a more specific meaning in the periodical press with Mill’s role in Parliament.<sup>21</sup> (I outline the wider issues encoded in this picture in chapter three.) Moncure Conway had also used the millennium pun in this new, more specific way, to denote an age of greater gender equality. Conway referred to the ‘large number of men of letters and science’ who formed part of the audience for Mill’s first public address as parliamentary candidate, but also acknowledged the unusually large number of women present: ‘Here, then, was a prefiguration of England’s *Mill*-ennium; a well-dressed and good-looking young English woman rising to speak in a public political meeting!’ (‘The Great Westminster Canvass’ 739, emphasis in original).

For Conway – a fervent supporter of Mill, who had read *On Liberty* bound for Britain on the steamship *City of Washington* in 1863 (*Autobiography* I: 390) – a familiarity with the works of Mill and a desire to see him in person was a marker of cultivation. Conway thought that for British citizens of all kinds, it should be a matter of national pride. In ‘The Great Westminster Canvass’ Conway remarked with disappointment that the excitement many felt at Mill’s candidature was countered by a distinct lack of awareness in some parts of the electorate:

It was shown that after all the vaunted spread of education and the labors of the penny press there was a vast number of well-to-do tradesmen that had never heard the name of England’s chief political economist. This ignorance was so great that the story may be regarded as true in spirit if not in letter that a bookseller put a card in his window announcing:

FOR SALE HERE.

Mill on Political Economy.  
*Ditto* on the Floss.

But this ignorance extended upward as far as it did downward. There were large numbers of editors and ecclesiastics, presumably belonging to the higher and to the educated classes, who roared out their sudden

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<sup>21</sup> John Robson’s 1990 article in *Utilitas*, ‘Mill in Parliament: The View from the Comic Press’, provides more instances of Mill puns in the periodical press, including windmill, watermill, powder-mill, Mill-stones, milliner, and, from *Judy*, ‘The Ladies’ Favourite Scent – Mill-fleurs’ (103–5).

discoveries of Mr Mill's religious heresies, with the manifest impression that they were entirely unknown. (736)

Some members of the working classes were more careful readers of Mill's works than wealthy tradesmen and professionals thought Conway, recounting with relish the story of a preacher on a street corner being told: "'See 'ere, pars'n, Jon-stote Mill says as how that ere's oll bosh!'" (736). Conway's article – which offers perhaps the only instance of Mill's name being rendered in colloquial language – is as rhapsodic in its praise for Mill's entry onto the political scene as the *Reader* article was in its account of Mill's influence. But Conway's assessment of the British election for American readers makes room for a more diverse engagement: dissemination of ideas via the popular press, yes, but perhaps also women and the working classes reading and responding to Mill's work directly. Bain's comment about the popularity of the People's Editions of Mill's works supports this view, as do the words of Holyoake. In his pamphlet on *John Stuart Mill: As Some of the Working Classes Knew Him*, Holyoake paid homage to Mill's accessibility to the working classes, in print and in person. On Mill's appearance at a raucous public gathering to discuss co-operative working, Holyoake commented: 'What man save he, eminent as a thinker, has in this generation incurred the odium, peril, and discomfort of attending ... a workman's meeting such as that?' (5–6); on the educative value of Mill's writing he insisted, 'He could be trusted, and to those we wanted to convince we could say – *read him*' (11, emphasis in original).

An authoritative account of the type of readers the *Reader* aimed at is given in Collini's *Public Moralists*. Taking Mill as the exemplar of the public moralist, Collini analyses Mill's self-representation within a group of mostly 'well-connected, conventionally educated, comfortably situated, professionally successful, intellectually inclined men' (3). Throughout this project, I also draw on the views of members of the group *Public Moralists* describes, which includes John Morley, Leslie and Fitzjames Stephen, Herbert Spencer, Charles Kingsley, Henry Fawcett and Frederic Harrison. But Collini's characterisation of Millian prose left me wanting to investigate Victorian experiences of reading Mill further. He argues that Mill never wanted to nurture a sense of complicity between himself and his readers because that would have been antithetical to his role 'as moral coach', urging the nation on 'to yet more strenuous efforts' (133). As a result, Collini contends that Mill 'never manages to create that sense of intimacy between reader and author, that warming feeling of sharing a sensible view of a mad world' (132). In different ways, each of the authors I have chosen to read

closely in chapters four, five and six, as well as some of the commentators included in chapters two and three, challenge the idea that Mill's writing does not engender a warm or intimate bond with the reader. They show that for those less comfortably situated or conventionally educated, intellectual engagements with Mill are connected to issues of creativity and emotion.

There are certainly Victorian precedents for Collini's view of reading Mill. Writing to a friend about her experience of reading *On Liberty*, Caroline Fox registered both her awe, and the kind of discomfort that Collini argues Mill was aiming at:

I am reading that terrible book of John Mill's on Liberty, so clear, and calm, and cold: he lays it on one as a tremendous duty to get oneself well contradicted, and admit always a devil's advocate into the presence of your dearest, most sacred Truths, as they are apt to grow windy and worthless without such tests, if indeed they can stand the shock of argument at all. He looks you through like a basilisk, relentless as Fate.  
(*Memories of Old Friends* II: 269–70)

Fox's statement of the disquiet she felt at reading *On Liberty*, is all the more striking for the contrast it presents to her earlier views of Mill's warmth and generosity in person.

James Martineau, reviewing *Dissertations and Discussions* in 1859, was in some ways deferential about the extraordinary abilities of 'the most elaborated mind of our age' (474). But he did not enjoy reading Mill, complaining: 'our author seems to sit apart, with genial pity for the multitudes below him, with disdain of whatever is around him' (478). He continued: 'No one would believe beforehand that a writer so serene and even, not to say cold, could affect the reader with so much sadness. You fall into it, without knowing whence it comes. All the lights upon his page are intellectual, breaking from a deep reserve of moral gloom' (478). The nub of Martineau's objection to Mill's prose style, which he felt was most conspicuous in the essays collected in *Dissertations and Discussions*, was what he termed a 'suppressive air' (507). In a writer of Mill's stature, such a trait had a damaging effect, claimed Martineau:

It seems hardly becoming in an author who has attained the highest rank of influence in the intellectual councils of his time, to write as if there were something behind which, as a veracious thinker on human life and morals, he would like to say, but which, under the pitiable bigotry of society, must be reserved for an age that does not persecute its

benefactors. Such a demeanour appears to us the counterpart, among speculative men, of dogmatic self-assurance among religious professors: and Pharisaism hurts the humanities and the humilities as much in the 'Wiser than thou', as in the 'Holier than thou'. (508, emphasis in original)

Martineau's insistence that Mill alienated 'modest' and 'homely' readers (496), was a theme taken up in the pages of the *Spectator*. As I discuss in chapters two and six, the *Spectator's* editor, R.H. Hutton, also accused Mill of 'a want of homeliness' ('Mr John Stuart Mill's Autobiography' 1339), and thought he was unable to create an intimate bond with his readers because of the monotonous and impersonal quality of his prose. The most forceful challenge to this line of thought about Millian prose is provided by Olive Schreiner, as chapter six demonstrates. For the 'homely' readers in her fiction 'dogmatic self-assurance' is everywhere around them – apart from in the pages of Mill. Schreiner's personal accounts of reading Mill emphasise the beneficial effects they have on her mental wellbeing, in contrast to Martineau's description of sadness and moral gloom.

Others among Mill's contemporaries also provide evidence of less detached reading experiences. Some were less than favourable responses. For Spencer, Carlyle's dramatic reaction to *On Liberty* was very telling: 'One who grew blindly furious over John Mill's work *On Liberty* ... displayed an inability to think discreditable to an ordinary cultivated intelligence, much more to one ranked as a thinker' (*An Autobiography* I: 380–1). However, Bain recalled that Kingsley wrote to Mill declaring that *On Liberty* 'affected me in making me a clearer-headed, braver man on the spot' (*John Stuart Mill* 112). 'Kingsley first saw the *Liberty* on the table in Parker's shop', Bain reports. 'He sat down and read it through, there and then; and made the remark before he left the shop' (112). George Meredith was apparently similarly affected by *Subjection*. Morley describes the episode in his *Recollections*, in terms more readily associated with novel-reading: 'One morning in 1869 I put into his hands Mill's new little volume, less than two hundred pages long, on the *Subjection of Women*. Meredith eagerly seized the book, fell to devouring it in settled silence, and could not be torn from it all day' (47).

George Eliot re-read *Political Economy*, *On Liberty*, and *Considerations on Representative Government* when they were issued in the cheap editions in 1865 (Haight 196, note). Writing to a friend she observed: 'I agree with you in your feeling about Mill. Some of his works have been frequently my companions of late, and I have been going

through many *actions de grace* towards him'.<sup>22</sup> Her re-reading of Mill prompted her to reflect on his candidature for Parliament, and in the same letter she wrote: 'I am not anxious that he should be in Parliament: thinkers can do more outside than inside the House. But it would have been a fine precedent, and would have made an epoch, for such a man to have been asked for and elected solely on the ground of his mental eminence. As it is, I suppose it is pretty certain that he will *not* be elected' (Eliot's emphasis). Eliot was, of course, wrong in her prediction that Mill would not be elected, but her remarks about whether his status as a thinker made him unsuitable for political life, and what would be the significance if he were to be elected on the basis of his intellectual stature, reflect the questions which were central to much of the commentary on Mill's political role.

Mill's influence was felt emotionally as well as intellectually in the art world, too. In 1862, when he was seventeen years old, the up-and-coming artist Walter Crane accompanied ornithologist John Richard de Capel Wise on a tour through the New Forest. In *An Artist's Reminiscences* (1907), Crane recalled that during 'a very wet June' they collaborated on *The New Forest: its History and Scenery* and as they worked, they talked about Mill (68). Wise, who later went on to contribute to the *Reader*, 'belonged to the school of J.S. Mill in philosophical thought and politics' and shared with Crane his 'free opinions' on religion and politics – opinions which had caused him to leave Oxford and quarrel with his family (69). Crane, immersed in the views of John Ruskin (aged fifteen he was an 'enthusiastic admirer and follower', 57) was unsettled by Wise's Millian opinions: they 'came rather in the nature of a counterblast to those in which I had been brought up, and told rather against the Ruskinian point of view, which at first was rather a shock to me, until I was able to see things in a broader light' (70). Crane's reaction to seeing Mill in person a few years later suggests that what appealed to him most was the contrast to Ruskin's paternalism presented by Mill's libertarianism.

By twenty-three Crane still took a keen interest in the views Wise had introduced him to on their New Forest tour. In 1865, Crane saw 'the same sort of men' being returned to Parliament, with 'a few notable exceptions, such as that of John Stuart Mill' (94). Caught up in the possibility of change which Mill's political presence seemed to represent, Crane went to see Mill speak at St James's Hall, and described the philosopher's public appearance in affectionate terms:

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<sup>22</sup> Eliot to Mrs Peter Alfred Taylor, 10 July 1865. See Haight, 196.



Gentle-mannered, small and spare of figure, but of very marked intellectual aspect, and a great earnestness, he spoke in what truly might be described as 'a still small voice'. Philosopher and recluse, it was extraordinary the enthusiasm he evoked, standing, too, as he did for all sorts of advanced and unpopular opinions (94).

On another occasion he saw Henry Fawcett introduce Charles Dilke as candidate for Chelsea by emphasising his Millian credentials – 'Great applause followed' (95). This period of political excitement, in which a philosopher could emerge from his study, talk on controversial topics, and have such a positive effect on an audience, inspired Crane to produce a painting 'on the theme of Freedom, in which Humanity was personified by a youth chained in a prison', with 'Freedom – a figure in floating draperies' in the centre of the picture (95). Crane is remembered as the man who, along with publisher Edmund Evans, transformed the quality and design of children's books and Mill was woven into the fabric of his aesthetic interests.

The authors I focus on in chapters four, five and six were more removed from Mill in time and space than the commentators described above. When Mill died in 1873, Hardy was thirty-three years old, Caird was nineteen and Schreiner was eighteen. Hardy was the only one of the three to see him in person. Despite the diversity of their writerly engagements with Mill, they have common ground in their formative encounters with Mill as part of a process of self-education. Hardy famously described the 'Of Individuality' section in *On Liberty* as one of his 'cures for despair' (*The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* 59). Two of his fictional characters – Ethelberta in *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) and Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) – read Mill at times of crisis in their lives. Hardy's annotated copies of *On Liberty* (in Dorset County Museum) and *Utilitarianism* (in the Beinecke at Yale) provide evidence of his careful attention to Mill's thought. Hardy's letter to the *Times* in 1906, describing the moment he saw Mill on the hustings, renders in beautifully compact form many of the debates about Mill's status as a philosopher which I explore in chapters two and three. In addition to the direct references to *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty*, Hardy's novels engage with concepts from the *Logic, Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865), *Subjection*, and *Three Essays on Religion*. Hardy's relation to Mill was far from straightforwardly approving, and in chapter four I argue, that in line with his self-proclaimed suspicion of systems of philosophy, Hardy was concerned with critiquing Mill's theories in his fiction. But at the same time, Hardy's

fiction takes a recognisably Millian approach in the value it places on independent thought and individual choice.

In an interview with the *Women's Penny Paper* in 1890, the essayist and novelist Mona Caird said that reading John Stuart Mill had played a formative role in her intellectual development. She recalled that her views on gender equality were pronounced at an early stage of her life, but that Mill “was the first to help me bring these thoughts and feelings into form by his writings” (‘Interview: Mrs Mona Caird’ 421). In chapter five, I argue that the effect of this formative educational encounter with Mill resonates throughout her fiction. In the seven novels she wrote, Caird engages with the forms of free discussion Mill argues for in *On Liberty* and the model of self-developmental conversation he sets out in his *Autobiography*. In doing so she offers an ideal of creative, liberating conversation and explores many deviations from this ideal, including persuasion, manipulation, mockery, banality and silence. Embedded in the *fin-de-siècle* New Woman debates, her nineteenth-century novels focus on private discussions in upper-class domestic settings, while her early twentieth-century novels depict political and scientific discussion groups, which are accessible to a greater diversity of participants, and consider directly how private conversational practices can translate into public discourse.

Like Caird, Olive Schreiner credited reading Mill with a formative role in her intellectual development. And like Hardy, Schreiner included characters who read Mill in her fiction: the eponymous heroine in *Undine* (published posthumously in 1929) and Waldo in *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) both read *Principles of Political Economy*. Born and raised in South Africa, Schreiner occupied a more marginal position in Victorian society than Hardy or Caird. In chapter six, I situate Schreiner’s representations of Mill within the context of her major preoccupations, including agnosticism, feminism, colonial society and British imperialism, at the same time as locating ‘Schreiner’s Mill’ within the context of other views of Mill. Her effusive praise of Mill’s works is far from unprecedented, but her conception of the spiritual effect of reading Mill provides a quite different perspective from other writers. In her letters and fiction, Schreiner makes a strong statement about the emotional effects of reading Mill, linking Millian prose to creative day-dreaming, art, beauty and romance.

All three of the authors I look at in detail subvert gendered assumptions in their fiction about who was reading Mill and what parts of his oeuvre they engaged with.

Even Mill's protégé John Morley – who supported Mill's views on women's rights<sup>23</sup> – remarked on 'the comparatively few women whose intellectual interest was strong enough to draw them to his books' ('The Death of Mr Mill' 671). Hardy, Caird and Schreiner engage with *Subjection* to a degree which, I suggest, disproves Peter Nicholson's statement, in his chapter on 'The Reception and Early Reputation of Mill's Political Thought' in *The Cambridge Companion to Mill* (1998), that in the period from 1873 to 1900, 'There is very little to report about *The Subjection of Women*' (483). But they also show that female readers moved beyond the 'Bible' of the women's movement in their engagements with Mill. The Hardyean fictional readers, Ethelberta and Sue, read *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty* respectively. Though Caird was immersed in the arguments of *Subjection*, her fiction demonstrates that she was equally immersed in the arguments of *On Liberty* and the *Autobiography*. For Schreiner, the *Logic* and *Principles of Political Economy* were central texts for the young and powerless of both sexes.

When it came to expressing the form and scope of Mill's public standing and influence, Victorian commentators offered a variety of images. In a digest of opinion after Mill's death, the *Pall Mall Gazette* reported: 'Mr Mill's thoughts and principles had entered into the very life of the time. They had become part of its mental food' ('Epitome of Opinion in the Morning Journals' 3). Others found railway analogies most apt. Journalist and individual rights campaigner Joseph Hiam Levy suggested that Mill was 'the great intellectual pointsman of our age – the man who has done more than any other of his generation to give direction to the thought of his contemporaries' ('His Work in Philosophy' 55). Levy's pointsman metaphor struck a similar note to William White's watershed comparison, by suggesting that despite Mill's fame, his influence was imperceptible to the majority of people. If collective knowledge was represented by 'a railway train in motion' then most people did not realise that 'that blustering machine, which puffs and snorts, and drags a vast multitude in its wake, is moving along a track determined by a man hidden away from the public gaze' (55). For Georg Brandes the railway was also evocative of Mill's importance in various ways. Brandes made connections between this new technology, philosophy and national identity, as he recalled arriving in Britain:

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<sup>23</sup> In 1870, in support of women's enfranchisement, Morley translated Condorcet's 'Plea for the Citizenship of Women' for the *Fortnightly Review*.

From Dover, the train went at a speed of sixty miles an hour, and made one think him a great man who invented the locomotive, as great as Aristotle and Plato together. It seemed to me that John Stuart Mill was that kind of man. He opened, not roads, but railroads; his books were like iron rails, unadorned, but useful, leading to their goal. And what *will* there was in the English locomotive that drew our train, – like the driving instinct of England’s character! (*Reminiscences* 273, emphasis in original)

In Brandes’s view of the grand narrative of English nationhood, technological development and historical progress, Mill had a strong, well-defined and functional role.

However, perhaps the most democratic and appealing description of Mill’s impact did not have recourse to a railway metaphor. In Bain’s conclusion to *John Stuart Mill, A Criticism: with Personal Recollections* (1882) he remarked: ‘Who shall sum up Mill’s collective influence as instructor in Politics, Ethics, Logic, and Metaphysics? No calculus can integrate the innumerable little pulses of knowledge and of thought that he has made to vibrate in the minds of his generation’ (195). Bain’s description is more alert to the connection between shared knowledge and personal experience, and it suggests more openness, variety, and imagination in responses to Mill. In the pages that follow, I attempt to trace and to reconstruct just some of the ‘innumerable little pulses of knowledge and thought’ that vibrated in the minds of Mill’s own generation, and the generation that followed.

## 2. Man of Science or Man of Letters? Mill and ‘the desire of culture’

If a ‘culture’, as it is called, is the final end of man, meaning by that the harmonious development of two only of the three inalienable faculties of man, then Mr Mill was, after Goethe perhaps, one of the most cultured men of modern times. Differing from Goethe only in this, that he was a scientist first, and a man of imagination and sentiment afterwards, it was his life study, as it had been Goethe’s before him, to make incursions into other regions of thought than those in which his life studies lay. Goethe ... was a poet and an artist, but he felt that, to round off his intellectual life and complete his ideal of culture, he must also include exact science, and therefore in his old days he studied botany and comparative physiology... . Mill on the other hand, whose education was on a different plan, began as a student of exact science and branched off in his latter days into sentimental theories, and what were called by political economists of the old school his heresies, as to the rights of women, the unearned increment of land, and other such sentimental views of the laws of wealth. It was the desire of culture in both cases which drew these men off in directions the very opposite to what they had set out with – the poet dabbling in science and throwing out theories in optics and botany which were little else than poet’s dreams, the man of exact science falling into sentimentalisms quite as far-fetched or alien to his true genius. (108)

Anonymous, *Leisure Hour*, 1875<sup>1</sup>

The anonymous reviewer of *Three Essays on Religion* (1874) in *Leisure Hour*, who wrote of Mill’s and Goethe’s opposing, but comparable ‘desire of culture’, concludes regretfully that for all their interest in science and poetry, their lack of religious faith meant that culture in the highest sense – spirituality – was unknown to them both. Nevertheless, the phrase ‘desire of culture’ is a useful starting point for thinking about mid- to late-nineteenth-century debates on Mill’s relation to science, emotion, and imagination. The *Leisure Hour* writer uses ‘desire of culture’ to denote a capacity for a broad and inclusive level of learning with the potential to harmonise subjects as diverse as poetry and physiology. On the one hand, these incursions into areas outside individual specialisms are not deemed very successful: Goethe’s scientific theories are fantasies and Mill’s unscientific views are sentimentalisms. On the other, the ‘desire of culture’ indicates an admirable open-mindedness which makes the writer’s disappointment in Goethe and Mill’s lack of religious faith – the third of the ‘inalienable faculties’ in the passage from the *Leisure Hour* – all the keener. In suggesting that Mill

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<sup>1</sup> Several of the responses to *Three Essays* which I draw on in this chapter (as indicated by cross references in the Works Cited and Consulted) are collected in *Mill and Religion: Contemporary Responses to Three Essays on Religion* (1997), edited by Alan P.F. Sell. Sell’s introduction contains brief biographical and contextual details about each of the respondents (where they have been identified; many are anonymous). It is part of the Thoemmes Press ‘Key Issues’ series which also includes volumes of contemporary responses to *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women*, edited by Andrew Pyle. Contemporary responses to Mill and a variety of his works are collected in Pickering & Chatto’s more recent *Lives of Victorian Political Figures IV: John Stuart Mill* (2009), edited by David Martin, but Mill scholarship would be well served by individual source books, like those in the Thoemmes series, collecting responses to the *Autobiography*, *Utilitarianism*, *Political Economy*, *Representative Government* and the *Logic*.

was able to harmonise a scientific perspective with a more imaginative one, and then conflating imagination with supposed sentimentalism, the *Leisure Hour* writer points to some of the recurring themes of nineteenth-century representations. The extract from the *Leisure Hour* is concerned with antitheses: Mill versus Goethe, the man of exact science as opposed to the poet, science in contrast to imagination (imagination in Mill's case being synonymous with sentiment). At the same time it is concerned with the synthesis that defines a cultivated or cultured individual – the harmonious combination of science, imagination, sentiment and religion. This fascination with antithesis or synthesis animated much of the Victorian conversation about Mill. This chapter explores how these issues were debated in books, journals, and newspapers from the 1860s – when Mill was elected to Parliament – and from the 1870s and 1880s – after his *Autobiography* and *Three Essays* were posthumously published.

Mill's own terms for describing the desirable balance between poetry and science were part of the vocabulary used to depict his personality and philosophy. In 'What is Poetry?' (1833)<sup>2</sup> Mill had stated:

The object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions; and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from what Wordsworth affirms to be its logical opposite, namely, not prose, but matter of fact or science. The one addresses itself to the belief, the other to the feelings. The one does its work by convincing or persuading, the other by moving. The one acts by presenting a proposition to the understanding, the other by offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities. (344)

Later in the same essay Mill turned to the pleasing possibility that these effects could be combined: if 'a poetic nature has been united with logical and scientific culture' then a 'philosopher-poet' is formed (364). As to whether a 'philosopher-poet' is superior to a poet 'it would be absurd to doubt ... whether truth is more certainly arrived at by two processes, verifying and correcting each other, than by one alone' (364). Famously, in his *Autobiography*, Mill described how Wordsworth's poetry remedied an imbalance in his own life. After recovering from a 'mental crisis' aged twenty, he gained a new perspective: 'The maintenance of a due balance among the faculties, now seemed to me of primary importance. The cultivation of the feelings became one of the cardinal points in my ethical and philosophical creed' (118). Mill's claims about the necessity of

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<sup>2</sup> Renamed 'Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties' in *Dissertations and Discussions* (1859).

balancing intellect and emotion provoked extensive debate about how successfully he accomplished this: was he one of the most cultured men of modern times, or was he one of the least cultured ever to rise to prominence?

Those who were sympathetic to Mill looked for – and celebrated – the synthesis: the points in his work and the moments in his life which they believed exemplified his ‘desire of culture’ and rare capacity to make unexpected connections which had a material effect on Victorian society. Conversely, his detractors mainly sought to emphasise the impossibility of Mill ever being a man of well-rounded culture, and therefore of philosophical or practical authority – or even personal likeability. They did this by portraying him as a man of extremes – coldly, abstractedly scientific or dangerously susceptible and passionate – or an incoherent mixture of both. This chapter considers how a variety of nineteenth-century commentators placed Mill on this spectrum ranging from ‘hard’, ‘cold’ science at one end, to ‘soft’, ‘warm’ feeling and imagination at the opposite. Some depicted Mill’s position on this spectrum as fixed, usually at the scientific end, while others thought that he moved from one extreme to the other. In the middle there was the possibility of synthesis, but there was also the possibility of an irreconcilable clash.

Ideas of theory versus practice often map on to this spectrum: the ‘hard’ science end of the range was seen as too abstract and therefore too unrelated to worldly concerns; the ‘soft’ emotional or imaginative end could similarly betoken impracticality. The commentators who believed that Mill had achieved a synthesis were also the ones who thought he had a unique ability to relate theory to practice. Ideas about gender were also an important factor. Mill’s ‘softer’ qualities were often taken as evidence of his ‘truly feminine sensibility’ (Harrison 502), though there was no corresponding alignment of his ‘harder’ qualities with manliness. In the next chapter, I discuss this bias towards the feminisation of Mill in greater depth. In this chapter, the discussion is divided into four sections: ‘Scientific sympathy’ examines the scientific end of the spectrum, while ‘Passionate emotionism’ explores the emotional end. ‘Duality of character’ considers perceptions of unresolvable clashes between elements of Mill’s personality and philosophy, and the final section, ‘Emotional synthesis’, deals with representations of integration and balance.

## 2.1 'Scientific sympathy'

The 'hard' science end of the spectrum was baldly expressed in an article celebrating 'The Spiritualism of Tennyson' (1882) in *Light: A Journal Devoted to the Higher Interests of Humanity, both Here and Hereafter*. The journal for spiritualists cast Mill in the role of man of science, to which the poet, 'a being of intuitions' capable of fusing intellect and emotions, was the necessary corrective (286). *Light* objected to the characterisation of the man of science as 'the man of exact knowledge' because scientific terms and definitions denoted a limiting narrowness and lack of emotion (287). For *Light*, Tennyson and the Brownings were the best representatives of discovery and progress because they could '... express the deeper emotions of our time. There is something more than Utilitarianism in our day. "In Memoriam", and the sonnets of the two Brownings, are a sign that the age not only marches with the slow method of a scientific intellect, but soars into the Infinite with irrepressible yearnings' (287). Belief in an afterlife was the crux of the matter for *Light* and comparing 'two of the purest unbelievers' – Mill and George Eliot – the writer asserted that Eliot had 'a soul impaired in the love sentiment' (287); but, in terms of soulfulness, 'J.S. Mill [is] on a lower level certainly, far below, deep down there in Chamouni [sic], while G. Eliot is up there on the heights of Mont Blanc' (287). The novelist, though irreligious, was still antithetical to Mill, because, while Mill's 'intellect was great his emotions were scarcely developed at all. He was a soul without balance – a man of one-sided culture ...' (287). Despite the 'void' in Eliot's character caused by her secularism, her novels can still provoke people to worship and they can stimulate spiritual growth, while Mill's writings can only act 'as a kind of ballast in our reading' (287). The reader of Eliot's novels is elevated, the reader of poems by Tennyson and the Brownings can take flight; but the reader of Mill's work is slowed up, weighed down, shut off from wonder and mystery by the hardness of his style and the heartlessness of his subject matter. From *Light's* perspective, Mill had no desire – or capacity – to make his 'one-sided culture' whole. *Light's* view of Mill seems influenced by the views of utilitarianism put forward by Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens and others earlier in the century – even though Mill had challenged these in his own essay *Utilitarianism* in 1865. Political scholar William Stafford has argued that despite Mill's 'brilliant rescue-operation', the prevailing nineteenth-century perception



of the creed with which Mill was inextricably linked, was that it was 'hard, heartless, mechanical, philistine, godless and base' (13).<sup>3</sup>

In *Job's Comforters: Scientific Sympathy* (1874), Joseph Parker, a Nonconformist with a reputation for lively preaching (Sell xxvii), grouped Mill with T.H. Huxley and John Tyndall as a leader of science and one of Job's comforters, attempting – and of course failing – to account for the troubles which had descended upon him. In Parker's parable, Job reproaches 'Huxley the Moleculite, Stuart the Millite, and Tyndall the Sadducee' for paying too little attention to spirituality in their teachings: 'Miserable comforters are ye all, though ye are the men, and wisdom will die with you! When you have exhausted your pretty science what have you told me that can touch the agony of my heart or bring back the light of my house? ... You throw hard words at me, but you have no balm for my healing' (20). An introductory note to an 1876 reprint of *Job's Comforters*, written by George Zabriskie Gray, a rector from New Jersey, explains that Huxley is a Moleculite because of this view that 'All mental phenomena are to be accounted for by molecular motion and molecular grouping' (7); Tyndall's materialism makes him comparable to a Sadducee, a member of a politico-religious sect of the intertestamental period, who did not believe in the immortality of the soul (9); and Mill is a Millite because 'He was a disciple of no one but his father, James Mill, and believed only in himself' (8). Parker's Mill is, however, more earnest and hopelessly misguided – a true believer in the false religion of science – than egotistical and narrow-minded. Indeed, the parable, which, without seeking to denigrate the achievements of Tyndall, Huxley and Mill, suggests the inadequacy of an exclusively scientific viewpoint, is unusual in representations of Mill for its playfully humorous tone. 'John Stuart the Millite' becomes uncharacteristically animated as he declares 'What time I am afraid I flee to metaphysics, and when conscience threatens to get the upper hand of me I consider the functions and the logical value of the Syllogism' (19). Mill was understood to be a man of science because of his work on logic, which Parker refers to here, and also for his work on political economy. Mill was not a practical scientist in the sense that

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, this view of utilitarianism has been remarkably persistent, according to Alan Ryan, writing in 2004: 'Innumerable students of English Literature go through their whole lives believing that the portrait of Mr Gradgrind in Dickens's *Hard Times* [1854] is the last word on utilitarianism and on utilitarianism's impact on education, on imagination, and on individual character. But Mill's essay make it clear that Dickens was attacking a straw man; utilitarianism proposed as its ideal the happiness of fully developed human beings, not the commercial success of the stunted creatures Mr Gradgrind set out to produce' (8). Ryan's comment is made in his introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*. From a political scholar's point of view Mill is misrepresented in English studies as well as in *Hard Times*.

Huxley and Tyndall were; in his *Autobiography* Mill regrets that as a child he only became familiar with experimental science by reading about it (35–6). Nevertheless, in *Job's Comforters*, 'John Stuart the Millite' tells Job that:

When my father ... melted into the infinite azure of the past, I comforted myself under such melting by testing Berthollet's curious law, that two soluble salts mutually decompose one another whenever the new combinations which result produce an insoluble compound; or one less soluble than the two former; and the comforting effect of the experiments was remarkable, – so much so that in an ecstasy of scientific surprise and delight I almost wished that he had melted sooner, that I might have had longer possession of this prize. (19)

For Parker, then, the difference between practical and abstract science matters less than the scientific spirit which he takes Mill to be a representative of, in just the same way as Huxley and Tyndall. The playful tone was designed to convey a serious message: scientists are detached, bewildered and ineffective in the face of fear, grief, or existential crises.

Not only the content but also the form of Mill's education was regarded as scientific. In *Job's Comforters* it is Mill himself who carries out the experiments, but in other accounts, he is the one who is subject to the experiment. Abraham Hayward resumed the hostile tone he had adopted for Mill's obituary in the *Times*, with his review of the *Autobiography* for *Fraser's Magazine*. Hayward insisted that the *Autobiography* frequently recalled the scene in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) when the 'monstrous creation ... reproaches his creator with having formed him in a manner to unfit him for happiness or utility' ('John Stuart Mill' 664). Suggesting that James Mill was his son's Frankenstein evoked the novel's concerns with the enticements and drawbacks of scientific work, and how scientific discourse can function to include some and exclude others. It also emphasised Mill's anomalous and isolated state. A review of the *Autobiography* in the *Times* on 4 November 1873, which claimed that his life story was more engaging than any of his other works, used the image of a scientific experiment to describe Mill's education:

Could we suppose the subject of this terrible process under a glass case, hermetically sealed against not only all foreign and inimical, but common social influences, breathing an ordained atmosphere, and sustained on

chymically [sic] portioned food, that would only represent a fraction of the mental coercion he submitted to, and the moral durance he delighted to bear. ('The Autobiography of John Stuart Mill' 7)

This description captures the combined sense of horror and fascination which many reactions to the *Autobiography* expressed. It also seems a particularly apt image of the scrutiny to which Mill was subject throughout the nineteenth century. The *Times* drew attention to the scientific as well as the literary value of the *Autobiography*: 'fortunately for the progress of psychological science, we have in this Autobiography as careful and exact a record of the experiment as logbooks and automatic instruments could supply' (7). The scientific theme was continued in order to call Mill's practical abilities into question: 'if the object be to produce intellect in its purest virgin state, without alloy of concrete matter, and if this be the rod of iron earth is henceforth to be ruled by, then the laboratory that made J.S. Mill was the right one' (7). Foregrounding hardness, inflexibility and lack of feeling, the *Times*, like Parker, thought that Mill's education made him as unfit to be a leader of thought, as it did to interact normally with others.

Though practical science is referred to, it is done so to emphasise Mill's lack of worldly knowledge. This becomes bound up with issues of nationality and what constitutes a 'genuinely' English character. In a continuation of the review on 10 November, the writer maintains: 'In all that he wrote or said there is little evidence that he knew what an ordinary Englishman, let alone an Englishwoman, is made of. His philosophy deals with words, images, the mere counters of a game, all stamped with J.S. Mill's own image and superscription' (6). This encapsulates many aspects of the unsympathetic representations of Mill's personality and philosophy. It mocks the unrelenting seriousness he was commonly associated with. Herbert Cowell, a barrister and regular reviewer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, lamented the lack of 'childish play' permitted to Mill in his youth (76),<sup>4</sup> just as Anne Mozley's review of *Subjection* for the magazine in 1869 had condemned Mill for 'his want of playfulness in himself and repugnance to it in others' (107). A writer in the *Saturday Review* was confident that 'he never was a boy' ('Mr Mill' 638). It suggests the egotism and narcissism which Mill is elsewhere accused of (for instance, in Gray's comment that he is 'John Stuart the Millite' because he believes only in himself). It also expresses anxieties about Mill – known, not only for his anomalous, scientific education, but also

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<sup>4</sup> David Martin identifies Herbert Cowell as the author of 'John Stuart Mill: An Autobiography' in *Lives of Victorian Political Figures IV* (247-9).

for his Francophilia and outspoken criticism of English society – as a representative of Englishness at home and abroad. Under his ‘glass case’, Mill had been cut off from common social interactions. Living only with abstractions he had no understanding of the ‘ordinary’ English men and women, whose lives he presumed to philosophise about.

The anonymous author of *The Battle of Two Philosophers* (1868) – a response to Mill’s *Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy* (1865) – found it threatening that ‘he is looked upon by foreigners as in some sort our national intellectual champion’ (2). But elsewhere, commentators lauded Mill’s ‘world-wide fame’: ‘He is one of the kings of thought, and his kingdom stretches through the civilized world’, declared William D. Christie in *Macmillan’s Magazine* (‘Mr John Stuart Mill for Westminster’ 92, 94). When the final volume of Hippolyte Adolphe Taine’s *History of English Literature*, ‘Modern Authors’, was published in 1865, Mill appeared alongside Dickens, Thackeray, Macaulay, Carlyle and Tennyson as a representative of English literature. The *Westminster Review* said that the essay on Mill’s doctrines was ‘the best exposition and fairest estimate of them which has yet been written in any language’ (‘Taine’s History of English Literature’ 22). While the *Saturday Review* found something to smile at ‘in the ease with which M. Taine passes from discussing Becky Sharpe to discussing Mill’s logic’ they also commended the French author for drawing on a variety of sources in order to illustrate ‘the English character’ (‘Taine’s Contemporary English Literature’ 21). In suitably Millian style, Taine analyses *System of Logic* in the form of a dialogue between himself and an English friend, which weighs up the strengths and weaknesses of Mill’s work. It includes an explanation of why Mill’s philosophy is considered to be scientific:

What is logic? It is a science. What is its object? The sciences ... . Sciences ... are as real things as facts themselves, and therefore, as well as facts, become the subject of study. We can analyse them as we analyse facts, investigate their elements, composition, order, relations and object. There is, therefore, a science of sciences; this science is called logic, and is the subject of Mill’s work. (481)

The Millian abstractions and analyses, which others criticise or mock, are taken by Taine to be foundational to English national character and activity. Mill’s distinguishing feature is that ‘He excels in giving precision to an idea, in disentangling a principle, in discovering it amongst a number of different facts; in refuting, distinguishing, arguing’ (480).

In his broad view of scientific processes and systems, which helps others to clarity, Mill's writing is sharply distinguished from that of Dickens, whose imagination Taine compares to that of a monomaniac: 'To plunge oneself into an idea, to be absorbed by it, to see nothing else, to repeat it under a hundred forms, to enlarge it, to carry it thus enlarged to the eye of the spectator, to dazzle and overwhelm him with it ... these are the great features of this imagination and style' (344). Where Dickens dazzles and thus 'moves his reader in the most inner depths, and becomes the master of all hearts' (366), Mill instead helps his reader to a new vision of the world around him. At the end of the dialogue, Taine pauses to reflect but is distracted, in a seeming whimsy, by the 'lovely August morning'; seeing some 'enormous trees, four centuries old' he 'found in them a new trace of that practical good sense which has effected revolutions without committing ravages; which, while reforming in all directions, has destroyed nothing ... which has lopped off the dead branches without levelling the trunk' (517). After pages of dense analysis of the *Logic*, this ending conveys a sense of lightness – as if a burden has been lifted – very unlike the stance that *Light* would take in 1882 in describing the heaviness induced by reading Mill. Outward rather than inward-looking, Mill's self-effacing search for truth is, according to Taine, a reasonable, measured and peaceful way of effecting social change. In his new view of the history of social advances inscribed in the environment around him, Taine suggests there is a certain poetry and romance to Mill's scientific approach.

The political economist John Elliott Cairnes also saw 'scientific' Mill as a positive figure. Cairnes, a friend and disciple of Mill, thought, like John Morley, that Mill was able to extend his scientific approach well beyond the realms of theory, to the point where it could have an impact on lived experience. In 'His work in Political Economy' (1873) he argued that the originality of Mill's contribution to 'the science of political economy' was obscured by his insistence on fitting his own views into the existing framework of thought (72). Unlike those who viewed Mill as hopelessly lost in irrelevant abstractions, Cairnes thought that Mill's innovations to existing theories of political economy were nothing but enlivening. He used a suitably embodied image to convey this: '[David] Ricardo supplied the backbone of the science; but it is not less certain that the limbs, the joints, the muscular developments, – all that renders political economy a complete and organized body of knowledge, – have been the work of Mill' (67). Rather than Frankenstein's monster, Mill becomes a kind of successful Frankenstein, creating a functioning body out of constituent parts. In stark contrast to the many commentators

who portrayed Mill as completely detached from knowledge of ‘ordinary’ human bodies and feelings, Cairnes maintained that Mill’s explanation of production, distribution and exchange made tangible Ricardo’s abstractions: ‘In Mill’s exposition ... [t]he conditions and modes of action are exhibited by which human wants and desires – the motive powers of industry – come to issue in the actual phenomena of wealth, and political economy becomes a system of doctrines susceptible of direct application to human affairs’ (67). Cairnes might have argued that ‘scientific sympathy’ was not an oxymoron when it came to Mill’s approach. Cairnes concludes that ‘he has been enabled to divest of repulsiveness even the most abstract speculations, and to impart a glow of human interest to all that he has touched’ (73).<sup>5</sup> This, alongside the image of Mill fleshing out the bare bones of political economy, evokes warmth instead of the coldness commonly associated with Mill as a man of science.

## 2.2 ‘Passionate emotionism’

Evocations of warmth and heat are more commonly found at the other end of the spectrum, in representations which – at the most extreme point – depict Mill as too emotional, too fanciful, too susceptible to ‘softer’ influences such as poetry. In another anonymous review of *Three Essays* in 1875, this time for the *Dublin Review*, the writer notes that Mill’s ‘passionate attempts to construct some kind of religious edifice do more credit (if we may use the common antithesis) to his heart than to his head. Such attempts, we think, are due to that passionate emotionism [sic], which was so very prominent and so very singular a part of his character’ (82). The ‘Saint of Rationalism’ – in Gladstone’s famous phrase – was, surprisingly often, perceived to be ruled by his emotions rather than his intellect. In his *Life of John Stuart Mill* (1889), the philosopher and journalist W.L. Courtney included a letter from Gladstone which explained why Mill was called the Saint of Rationalism. It was apparently because Mill was unmoved – to the point of complete detachment – by attempts to rile him when he spoke in Parliament. But elsewhere, Mill’s enthusiastic praise for his wife’s intellectual abilities, and his support for the issues which were considered his ‘crotchets’ when he was in Parliament, such as women’s rights and Irish land reform, brought accusations that he

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<sup>5</sup> That the most abstract of speculations should be considered repulsive gives some weight to the argument made by Janice Carlisle in *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character* (1991) about the level of prejudice which existed in Victorian Society against theory as opposed to practice. Carlisle’s thesis that Mill shared this prejudice against writers, and that his emotional crisis should therefore be read in terms of a vocational crisis, is much more problematic; mainly, I believe, because of the way it is used as the key to interpreting all of Mill’s life and works.

was fanciful, overly-sentimental, even delusional.<sup>6</sup> Abraham Hayward in *Fraser's Magazine* noted that, soundly, Mill had introduced balance to his philosophy after his mental crisis, before observing: 'Unluckily he did not maintain the due balance. He ran off into the opposite extreme, and suffered feeling to overcome judgement to an extent almost unparalleled in the history of mind; at least a mind like his' (672). Hayward thought that Mill had behaved in such an unprecedentedly irrational way because of his feelings for Harriet Taylor, which were 'an extravagant delusion' (672). He implied that Mill had betrayed his rationalist roots, at the same time as finding that rationalism inadequate. In the *Spectator*, R.H. Hutton insisted that Mill's view of his wife was an hallucination ('Mr John Stuart Mill's Autobiography' 1338), as did Bain in his biography (171), and Goldwin Smith, writing on 'Female Suffrage' in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1874. Smith, a Professor of Law at Oxford, and later the first Professor of English at Cornell University, felt that the *Autobiography*, by revealing details of Mill's 'extraordinary' education and 'singular' marriage, also exposed areas where his judgement was clouded and his authority weakened (268).<sup>7</sup>

In 1896, Frederic Harrison, a positivist and author, who had served on the committee Mill headed for the prosecution of Governor Eyre, wrote a retrospective assessment of Mill's influence in the *Nineteenth Century and After*. Harrison claimed to be an impartial judge of Mill because he combined 'vehement aversion to some of Mill's

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<sup>6</sup> In *A Moralist In and Out of Parliament* (1992), John M. Robson discusses Mill's 'crotchets'. At a meeting on 3 July 1865, during Mill's election campaign, Mill introduced the idea of his 'crotchets'. Without specifying what they were he argued that 'the crotchet of one generation, becomes the truth of the next and the truism of the one after' (qtd. in Kinzer, Robson and Robson 63).

<sup>7</sup> There has been an extensive scholarly debate about the significance of Mill's praise for Harriet. Jack Stillinger's dismissive comment in his 1971 introduction to the *Autobiography* – 'It is unfortunate that Mill did not simply thank his wife for encouragement, perhaps also for transcribing a manuscript or making an index, and let it go at that' (xix) – has its echoes in later scholarship. In *John Stuart Mill* (1998), Stafford remarked: 'Serious doubts hang over what he writes about Harriet Taylor Mill. She must have been a remarkable woman, intelligent, committed and inspirational. But it is difficult to believe that she was as brilliant as Mill said' (46). In *English Past* (1999) Collini describes Mill's praise for Harriet in the *Autobiography* as 'his embarrassing eulogy' (123). Other critics have been less dismissive, and have sought to understand the complexities of Mill's view of his wife. In 'The Feminization of John Stuart Mill', Susan Groag Bell argues that in his representation of Harriet, Mill drew on a Romantic model of extravagant praise for women, but rather than focusing on 'beauty and rapture', he combined this Romantic sensibility with his own keen sense that women's intellectual abilities must be fully acknowledged (86–90). In *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832–1920* (1991), Regenia Gagnier argues that 'whatever Harriet Taylor Mill's psychological effect upon her husband, her appearances in the *Autobiography* function rhetorically to represent the consistency of Mill's private desire and political project. Opposed to stereotypes, he represented his wife as a thinker greater than the men of his age; opposed to the subjection of some to others, he made her his collaborator', 256. Works by Jo Ellen Jacobs – *The Complete Works of Harriet Taylor Mill* (1998) and *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill* (2002) have foregrounded Harriet's role in the collaboration.

cherished ideals and doctrines' (such as criticism of Harrison's 'master' Auguste Comte) with 'a deep reverence for his noble qualities' (488). Rather than achieving impartiality, Harrison's estimate of Mill vacillates between criticism and praise in just the way these two extremes suggest. In reverential mode, Harrison asked his readers to consider 'what tenderness underlies the precise statements even of such pieces as the *Autobiography*, the *Subjection of Women*, and the *Liberty*: pieces which are red-hot within with affection, pity, and passion' (489). As a consequence, he remembered, 'Some of us were always more attracted by Mill's character than by his intellect: we rated his heart above his brain: and his failures seemed to us mental, not moral perversities' (489). In suggesting that Mill's personality and compassion outshone his intellect, Harrison presented a much more appealing portrait than Carlyle, James Fitzjames Stephen and Hutton (discussed in the next chapter), who thought that Mill's intellect was so dominant it rendered him disembodied, characterless and unmanly. But in the same move he clearly wished to indicate that Mill's philosophical credentials were not as unassailable as some maintained:

The truth is that Mill, for all his apparent proof armour of dry logic, was continually moved by what has been called 'the logic of feeling'. He was excessively sensitive and indeed impressionable; and was often carried away by new ideas and intense feelings. In the course of his career he passed through the tremendous grinding of Bentham and James Mill's cast-iron machine, and ultimately ended in social utopias and sentimental ideals. It was said of the great Condorcet that he was a volcano covered with snow. And Mill had something of that temperament – without, a method of severe logic, within, intense sympathy and aspirations after new ideals. (505)

'The Logic of Feeling' was a term of Comte's which G.H. Lewes appropriated in *Problems of Life and Mind* (1879) to designate 'those mental processes in which the elements of the judgement or the determinants of the act are sensations, perceptions, images, appetites, instincts, or emotions' (238). The 'Animal Logic – the Logic of Feeling –' said Lewes, 'is never critical, always intuitive' (228). In evoking these associations to account for the waning of Mill's influence at the end of the century, Harrison denied Mill one of the fundamentals of Millian philosophy – agency to decide one's own course in life. Harrison's Mill is acted upon by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, then carried away by



his reaction against them into the realms of idealism and impracticality. 'A volcano covered with snow' corresponds somewhat with Carlyle's image of Mill imprisoned in ice and stone as a result of his upbringing, which I discuss in the next chapter. Mill's iciness and stoniness were Carlyle's preoccupations; Harrison's volcano reference places much more emphasis on the blazing inferno at the core: unstable and liable to erupt in spectacular, devastating fashion. A theatre critic and writer, Thomas Purnell, thought that as a politician, Mill demonstrated just such unpredictability, giving way to furies and passions that undermined the authority of his writings and rendered him 'a lost philosopher' (61). Harrison concluded that Mill's sensitivity and passion 'overpowered his science', leading to unexpected inconsistencies in his philosophy (508).

At the scientific end of the spectrum Mill's anomalous position was often emphasised to denote a lack of feeling and sympathy for others. But when connected to sensitivity and emotion, his isolation denoted naïveté. 'Goethe and Mill: A Contrast' (1874), published in the *Westminster Review*, stated that 'Mill had not the splendid vitality of Goethe, and was thus spared many of the sensual temptations to which the latter too often yielded'; nevertheless, 'of "reason divine, red-hot with passion pure" ... Mill was the very embodiment' (52). The article, which stressed Goethe's greater worldliness throughout, presented them as 'essentially antagonistic natures' because 'Goethe looked upon Bentham as a Radical madman and Mill was but a spiritualized Bentham' (70). Nevertheless 'Goethe and Mill' concludes that their one, overriding point of union was their desire for social improvement.

Mill's 'red-hot' passion was not construed as sexual, but as religious in spirit. In a memorial essay called 'His Place as a Critic' the literary scholar William Minto characterised Mill's aesthetic sense as 'interpenetrated by a certain militant apostolic fervour; his love was as the love of a religious soldier for a patron saint who extends her aid and countenance to him in his wars' (51). Cowell, in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, labelled Mill 'incarnate analysis', but the context of this designation was Mill's relationship with Harriet Taylor: 'Incarnate analysis was in love, and, of course, with the wrong woman' (84). This, thought Cowell, was corroboration of Mill's innate qualities, which had much in common with those a Romantic poet was typically assumed to possess:

He had the ardent sympathies, the imaginative faculty, the love of nature, and the disposition to worship and revere which would have united him

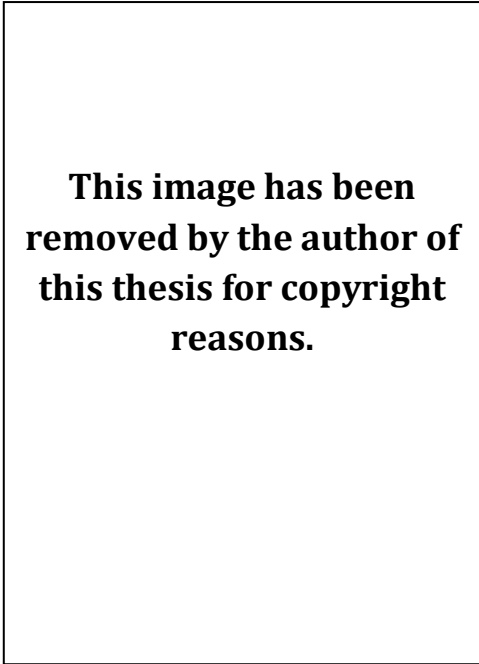
to his kind. His father failed to crush them out, but he fixed a gulf between his son and the world which was never afterwards filled up. Mill went through life fitted to excel in the pursuit of abstract science; but hopelessly wrong in his estimate of men and women, and unversed in practical life. (80–1)

Had Mill's innate sympathy and imagination been developed in conjunction with his intellect he would have been able to connect with other people, and this would have made him truly great, argued Cowell. In particular, the 'disposition to worship and revere' which Mill revealed in his relationship with Harriet Taylor, should have been nurtured; as it was, 'Religion was crushed out of Mr Mill from his cradle by an artificial process' (90).

Mill was not religious in any orthodox sense, as *Tomahawk* drew attention to in their cartoon "'Not for Jo"(hn) Stuart Mill, or A Smith for Westminster' on 7 November 1868 (Figure 1). In a reference to Mill's donation to the campaign fund of the radical atheist Charles Bradlaugh, *Tomahawk* depicted 'Mister Mill' fishing for voters next to a bag of bait marked 'Atheism', 'Dreams', and 'Claptrap' (202). However, other commentators found evidence of Mill's religious disposition in his unstinting pursuit of social change and his unquenchable quest for knowledge and truth. In 1868, *Punch* even gave this religious association pictorial form, by having Mill appear at the head of their 'Essence of Parliament' column dressed as a priest, holding a baby in a dress marked political economy, standing next to an M-shaped altar (Figure 2). *Punch* depicted Mill 'christening' a new kind of political economy for Ireland in a reference to his speech on 'The State of Ireland', delivered to the House of Commons on 12 March 1868.

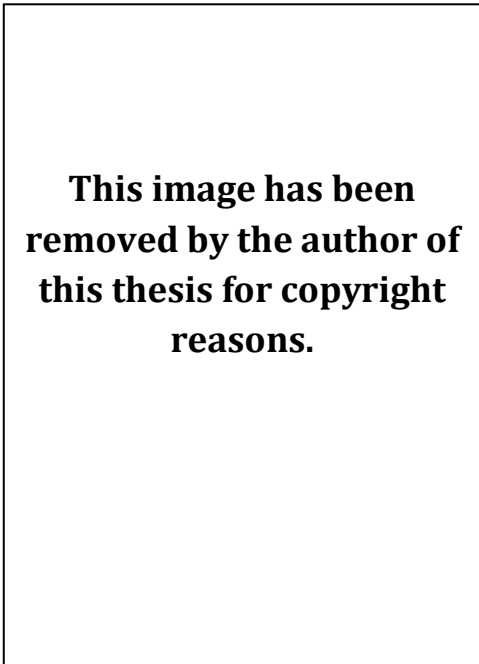
In *The Hopes of the Human Race, Hereafter and Here* (1880), Frances Power Cobbe added a footnote to her criticism of *Three Essays*:

Let it be understood that, in speaking of the Religious Sentiment as deficient in Mr Mill's nature, I use the term expressly in the sense of *that spiritual organ whereby man obtains direct perception of the Living God*. In the broader meaning of the word, implying general reverence and tenderness towards all things noble and holy, – a sense of the mystery surrounding human life, and a fervent devotion to the ideal of Duty, – Mr Mill was assuredly an eminently religious man. (202, Cobbe's emphasis)



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**Fig. 1. “Not for Jo”(hn) Stuart Mill, or A Smith for Westminster’. *Tomahawk*. 7 November 1868.**



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**Fig. 2. Illustration accompanying ‘Essence of Parliament’. *Punch*. 21 March 1868.**

*Three Essays* displeased Christians and secularists in equal measure. Cobbe objected to the portrayal of God as 'so feeble a Being' (198): Mill had conceded the possibility that an intelligent mind had created the world, but added that if such a supernatural being existed, it was limited in its powers and benevolence. Like the *Leisure Hour* reviewer, she was disappointed that a man such as Mill should not have any recognisable faith. However, in a laudatory obituary of Mill in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* the American social reformer Moncure Conway thought that it mattered little if Mill's religious feeling did not express itself in conventional ways when, 'it is probable that if Mr Mill's intimate friends were one and all asked to-day what they considered the profoundest element in their great friend's character, each would reply: his essential religiousness' (534). Conway shared Cobbe's estimate of Mill's magnanimity of soul, without a corresponding sense of regret.

Abnormal, but also marvellous: many accounts dwelt on Mill's anomalous and isolated position. The *Blackwood's* reviewer, Cowell, used a geological metaphor to accentuate this:

The abnormal development of intellect, joined to singular ignorance of life and all its incidents, rendered him a portent; but the fact that a rich vein of poetry, and a real tenderness of nature, lay beneath, oppressed but not driven out by the iron discipline he had endured, gives the real and enduring interest to the subsequent pages of the book. (81)

In 1891, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (as I discuss in chapter four), Hardy was to reverse this image in his description of the intractable element hidden within Angel Clare's gentleness and affection: 'a hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it' (241). For *Blackwood's*, it was Mill's tenderness that was buried within him: influencing everything but unlikely, as Harrison suggested, to 'overpower his science'. Cowell identified the contrast between the 'hard' and 'soft' aspects of Mill's life story as the most compelling aspect of the *Autobiography* and many others agreed.

### 2.3 'Duality of character'

In December 1873, local and national newspapers covered the fourth Earl of Carnarvon's lecture to the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. Carnarvon spoke about the increasing tendency for education to

prioritise science and warned about the dangers of neglecting the softening and refining influences of literary and religious studies. The prevailing scientific bias had unwelcome implications for the types of leaders and policies which would be seen in the future, argued Carnarvon, recalling the fear expressed the previous month in the *Times* about rule by rod of iron. On 8 December the *Pall Mall Gazette* reported: 'When science was pushed to the extreme his lordship said its professors would not be the best rulers for mankind, and he, for one, should regret to see the affairs of men regulated solely by such a standard as they should apply' ('Summary of this Morning's News' 6). On 12 December in a piece on 'The Lesson's of Mill's Autobiography', the *Pall Mall Gazette* again made reference to Carnarvon's lecture:

Speaking of a certain narrowness and want of liberality which he imputes as too common a result of education in abstract science, he would quote, he said, an illustration from 'one of the most remarkable and touching books he had ever read – the autobiography of John Stuart Mill. He should be sorry to take Mr Mill as a representative of hard, abstract science; for throughout his nature there ran veins of feeling softer and more tender than he was willing himself to allow ... Those who had read the book would remember how carefully Mr Mill – partly under the influence of his father and partly through self-education – endeavoured not merely to suppress but to trample down and to crush out everything approaching to feeling in his nature'. (10)

As the *Pall Mall Gazette* reported it, Carnarvon went one step further than *Blackwood's* in describing the effect produced by reading the *Autobiography* – for him the contrast between the 'hard' and 'soft' elements of Mill's life were not only compelling, but moving. Carnarvon attributed much more agency to Mill than other commentators, who gave James Mill sole responsibility for crushing out, starving or cramping his son's feelings. The *Pall Mall Gazette* disagreed with Carnarvon about the effect of Mill's education. They suggested that his 'veins of feeling' had been strengthened by it, rather than repressed; his sentiment and his sympathies were prevented from becoming fanaticism by the strength and clarity of his intellect. Moreover, both sides of his personality were partly the result of nature and partly the result of nurture. He developed 'an "indignation" like Swift's, not only fierce but profound, ingrained in his disposition'. 'As a political writer and thinker', the *Pall Mall Gazette* averred, 'he played

through great part of his life a double part, his reason moving in one direction, his heart in another. This duality of character comes to light in almost every memorial which he has left'. Though the *Pall Mall Gazette* initially implies a kind of balance induced by the presence of such duality, by invoking what the *Dublin Review* was to call the 'common antithesis' of head and heart, it also suggests that this was at best a precarious balance, involving Mill in a constant battle between different aspects of his personality.

The *Pall Mall Gazette's* report highlights another perceived clash: Mill's personal lack of liberality versus his political liberalism. Noah Porter, a Professor of Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics at Yale College, writing in 1875 in *Dickinson's Theological Quarterly*, thought that Mill's 'Nature' essay demonstrated a particularly regrettable regression:

Though written in the maturity of the powers of the author, after he had felt and acknowledged the liberalizing and elevating influences of both poetry and love, and had learned to be catholic in judging, and kindly in appreciating, the opinions and feelings of men from whom he differed very widely, this essay seems to reflect the narrowest and the most acrid spirit of his unripe youth ... (67)

Porter's comments, read in conjunction with the *Pall Mall Gazette's*, indicate the extent to which Mill's literary interests were bound up with his politics; his receptivity to poetry was perceived by some as an integral part of his liberalism. Here, Harriet Taylor is portrayed as a positive influence in this respect, just as Mill himself insisted.

Hutton, who thought Mill's view of Harriet's influence was embarrassingly inaccurate, also thought that such a mental crisis as Mill underwent was 'never followed by a less radical moral change' ('Mr John Stuart Mill's Autobiography' 1339). Though Hutton felt that Mill's recourse to Wordsworth and Coleridge had given him a huge advantage over his fellow utilitarians, he also insisted that Mill's compassion for others remained too abstract throughout his life. According to Hutton, Mill had: '... no pleasure in men, no delight in actual intercourse with this strange, various, homely world of motley faults and virtues. ... His tastes were refined, but there was a want of homeliness about his hopes' (1339). Hutton suggests that the effect of Mill's mental crisis was to create the impression of a vast change or growth in his thought, which succeeded in widening his philosophical and political influence. However, Hutton felt that it was an impression of change and growth only: in actuality his philosophy and his politics

merely became ambiguous because of this literary influence. Likewise, Hayward complained that both Mill's personality and his philosophy were inescapably contradictory: 'the harder and softer elements of his character never blended; they rose to the surface alternately; and hence much of the subsequent incoherence of his opinions and his life' ('John Stuart Mill' 673).

A Baptist minister from New York, Cephas Bennett Crane, invoked opposite ends of the spectrum simultaneously in order to portray Mill as completely incoherent. In rhetorical mode – 'John Stuart Mill and Christianity' was given as an address to the Rochester Theological Seminary before it was published in *Baptist Quarterly* in 1874 (Sell 8) – Crane declared that Mill was:

A product of culture, rather than of nature; incisive, rather than comprehensive; cold, yet capable of torrid heats; a vassal to persons, yet a despiser of the public; a discoverer, but not an inventor; analytic, but not synthetic; a slave to prejudice, yet inquisitive and innovating; refined, yet often coarse; self-controlled, yet erratic; challenging admiration, yet disappointing admiration; kindling enthusiasm, yet quenching enthusiasm; scientific, yet unscientific; a builder, yet not a founder; a Uhlan [a soldier], but not a general; a gatherer of material, but not an organizer of material; it is easy to over-estimate him, equally easy to under-estimate him. (11)

Crane's Mill was composed of a breathtaking series of contradictions. What Mill denies in his *Autobiography* – that he was a 'mere parroter' of his father's opinions (45) – Crane asserts emphatically in order to undermine what he felt to be Mill's insufficiently reverential account of Christianity: 'James Mill is the explanation of John Stuart Mill' (10). In Crane's view, culture is that which is opposed to the natural – and therefore the divine – so Mill could be eminently 'cultured' and still lack the requisites of a philosopher. The force of Crane's hostility against Mill is evident in the way he attempts to deny, not only Mill's intellectual status, but also his status as an autonomous individual, capable of ordinary human interactions. Rather than duality, Crane creates the impression of nonentity. Crane's warning that it is as easy to underestimate Mill as it is to overestimate him, is telling. This warning resonates with many of the reactions to *Three Essays* and other negative criticism of Mill. Mill's wide influence, throughout his lifetime, had to be tackled by those wishing to challenge his ideas. One way to do this

was to dwell on or exaggerate the perceived inconsistencies in his personality and philosophy – Crane’s list is an extreme example of this approach.

A more generous view of Mill’s perceived inconsistencies was taken by James Baldwin Brown, a Congregationalist preacher, who was known for his support of working-class causes and Dissenters (Sell xxx). Writing on ‘Mr John Stuart Mill’s Legacies’ (1874) in the *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, he thought that after reading *Three Essays* ‘Multitudes who have thought of him as a cold, hard, incarnate thinking-machine will be profoundly thankful to find that he shared that aspiration for a wider and nobler field of thought and activity than this life can furnish’ (39). Moreover, he ‘was always breaking out of the bounds of his dark sad philosophy, and flashing out sentiments, resolutions, aspirations and hopes, which had their origin and justification in a quite higher sphere’ (40). Though Baldwin Brown evidently discerned two sides to Mill, his language suggests there was an appealing sparkiness and irrepressibility to Mill’s oscillations. Baldwin Brown’s ‘breaking out’ reads much more positively than the *Times*’s use of a similar phrase in their review of the *Autobiography*: ‘It was only when nature did at last break through the biggest and tightest swaddling clothes ever strapped round human soul that Mr Mill was discovered to be a lovable and interesting person’ (7). For Baldwin Brown, Mill’s philosophical inconsistencies and contradictions did much to humanise him in the eyes of others, making it easier for them to identify with him, and it was this that underpinned his wide influence.

#### **2.4 ‘Emotional synthesis’**

Between the representations of imbalance were those that maintained that Mill’s greatness was based on his ability to synthesise his ‘passionate emotionism’, and an appreciation of the imaginative, with a scientific approach. When, on 10 May 1873, the *Spectator* reported Mill’s death, it commented that ‘He had his father’s abilities softened by a touch of poetry and a capacity for wide sympathy which raised talent into genius’ (‘News of the Week’ 589). This view accords with the *Leisure Hour*’s, that Mill was a scientist first, and a man of imagination and sentiment second. But while, for the *Leisure Hour*, Mill’s sentimentalisms were ‘alien’ to his ‘true genius’, in the *Spectator*’s news item, his appreciation of poetry and his sympathy were the qualities which transformed his other abilities into genius. W.L. Courtney said that ‘He had been declared to be Adam Smith and Petrarch rolled into one; and if he thus combined sentimentalism with the



doctrines of political economy, he equally exhibited the cold clearness of the Rationalist thinker, tempered by the emotional warmth of high moral ideas' (*Life of John Stuart Mill* 143). For Courtney, this balance of qualities demonstrated Mill's practical abilities. Henry Fawcett, in 'His influence at the Universities', thought that Mill's appreciation of subjects other than his specialism – such as poetry – was the defining feature of his liberalism: 'avowing himself a liberal, he never forgot that it is the essence of true liberalism to be tolerant of opinions from which one differs, and to appreciate the advantages of branches of learning to which one has not devoted special attention' (79). Contrastingly, argued Fawcett, those who are too caught up in a specialist subject, and have no desire to supplement their knowledge with a broader view, are frequently sneering and illiberal (79).

The *Reader* article on 'John Stuart Mill and His Influence', discussed in the Preface, argued that though the philosopher is distinct from the poet, there is nonetheless something poetic in the philosopher's abilities: '... the *poetic* mode or cast of genius is distinguishable from that which is more expressly, exclusively, perseveringly, and systematically *poetic*. This latter cast of mind – the genius of the philosopher or pure reasoner – is, in its higher degrees, quite as rare as the higher degrees of the poetic intellect' (376, emphasis in original). Other commentators compared Mill to great poets, dramatists, and novelists in his grasp of the human condition. Georg Brandes, the influential critic who wrote the first Danish translation of *Subjection*, commenting on Mill's description of Harriet, preferred to attribute his praise to poetry rather than hallucination: 'I do not know that any poet has ever given truer or more passionate expression to loving reverence of a woman's nature than he has in the passage which conveys his esteem of her worth and lasting influence' (*Eminent Authors* 126). When Mill died, Kate Amberley's sister wrote: 'One feels in reading about him, what a tender poet he was besides being a stern philosopher – What an education of the mind & soul you have had all these years thro yr [sic] intercourse with him' (qtd. in Russell 2: 541).

For Mill's disciple, John Morley, if *On Liberty's* style did not match the literary grandeur of Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644), 'the idealism of it, the enthusiasm sustained as it was for page after page, very nearly approached the electrifying region of the poetic, in the eyes of ardent men and women in our age' (*Recollections* I: 62–3). When it came to Victor Hugo, Morley thought Mill failed to grasp that

... by bringing all the strength of his imagination and all the majestic fullness of his sympathy to bear on the social horrors and injustices which

still lie so thick about us, he kindled an inextinguishable fire in the hearts of men of weaker initiative and less imperial gifts alike of imagination and sympathy, and so prepared the forces out of which practical proposals and specific improvements may be expected to issue. ('Mr Mill's Autobiography' 149–50)

In the end, though, Morley thought that Mill's view of Hugo reflected 'how afraid he always was of everything that seemed to dissociate emotion from rationally directed effort' (150), thus demonstrating that Mill's sense of pity and injustice was as acute as Hugo's own. In his review of *On Liberty* for *Fraser's Magazine*, the historian Henry Buckle suggested that Mill had the same ability as Shakespeare to touch the surface and penetrate the centre of human problems (26). Of Shakespeare he said 'No other mind has thoroughly interwoven the remote with the proximate, the general with the special, the abstract with the concrete. No other mind has so completely incorporated the speculations of the highest philosophy with the meanest details of the lowest life' (28) – except, suggested Buckle, for Mill.

In the coverage of Mill's parliamentary career, Mill's aptitude for interweaving in this way was the subject of intense scrutiny. He became interchangeably a literary figure or a man of science because literature and science were perceived as theoretical, and therefore opposed to the practical business of Parliament. In April 1865, the *Reader* ran an article on 'Literature and Statesmanship' which began:

The requisition to John Stuart Mill to allow himself to be nominated as a candidate for the representation of Westminster raises questions which are of special importance to those who have at heart the best interests of literature. How far is a great writer qualified for the duties of a statesman? Is a man whose distinguishing characteristic is the possession of an acute and powerful intellect worthy of a seat in the House of Commons? Ought literature and science to be specially represented in Parliament, and have a voice in the affairs of the nation? (389)

The article was a response to a piece in the *Morning Advertiser* – 'the organ of the Licensed Victuallers' Association' (Brake and Demoor 258) – which had suggested that Dickens or Tennyson would be a more suitable candidate for parliament than Mill, on the grounds of their popular appeal. The *Morning Advertiser* had insisted that Mill 'has no deep sympathies with the people. He belongs to the cold, dry, cheerless, dictionary

school of politicians' (qtd. in 'Literature and Statesmanship' 389). Further, it maintained that 'Mr Mill is little known out of certain scientific circles. His great book on logic has been before the public some twenty years, and has not been sold to the extent of 5,000 copies; while of the chief works of Dickens the sale has reached 150,000. The multitude would be moved at the names of Dickens or Tennyson, but of Mill they know little or nothing' (qtd. in 'Literature and Statesmanship' 389). The unsigned article in the *Reader* pointed out that if sales alone were to be the criterion then the novelists who contributed to the *London Journal*, a best-selling penny weekly, would be the 'fittest literary candidate[s]' (389). The writer of the *Reader* article, resolutely supportive of Mill, declared that '... the writers least qualified for seats in Parliament are novelists. They have no leisure for studying the complicated problems of government. Their minds are turned towards depicting the various grades and phases of society. They aim at telling attractive stories rather than solving social problems' (389). The *Reader* did not deny the importance of Dickens's role as a social commentator: 'So long as he writes novels containing eulogies on the poor and the oppressed, sparkling with sarcasm against the rich and the foolish, overflowing with attacks upon the administration of our Courts of Law and the management of our Government offices, he will fulfil the end for which he was obviously created' (389). But Mill's philosophy had demonstrated his potential to step out of 'the solitude of his closet' and become a statesman and a legislator (389). Moreover, the conditions which he imposed on his nomination – particularly his stipulation that he would not contribute to his election expenses – proved him to be a model for any future 'literary candidate[s]' (389). For the *Morning Advertiser* Mill was part of 'scientific circles' and as such, distinct from novelists and poets. For the *Reader*, Mill was a 'literary candidate', though nevertheless to be distinguished from Dickens and Tennyson.

In 'Literary Candidates' on 1 April 1865, the *Saturday Review* mocked the *Morning Advertiser* for suggesting that Tennyson and Dickens would make more effective Members of Parliament than Mill, on the grounds of their popularity, without wholly supporting Mill's candidacy either. 'Literary Candidates' was ambivalent about the connection between 'literary success and political capacity' (371), worrying that if more authors were in Parliament 'the material interests of the nation might suffer from the excessively spiritual characteristics of its rulers' (370). The article acknowledged the literary successes of Benjamin Disraeli and Edward Bulwer Lytton, but saw this as incidental to their political lives. Nonetheless, in the same issue of the *Saturday Review*

'Westminster Candidates' offered more support for Mill. Though Mill's doctrines were known to verge on 'extreme Liberalism', he would still add 'authority to Liberal theories' (359). 'Westminster Candidates' put forward the view that Mill would be an MP who taught, rather than learnt, which would be a welcome novelty: Mill would bring diversity to Parliament, and a philosopher in the House of Commons was therefore an experiment that should be tried. On 13 May, in 'The Westminster Election', the *Saturday Review* continued to call for Mill's election on the grounds of the greater variety he would introduce to Parliament as a theorist. His presence would go some way towards redressing the bias towards representatives of the 'prosaic side' of English life (558). Those who thought that Mill's arguments would in all cases be 'unpractical or crotchety' were borrowing terms of contempt 'from the arsenal of complacent dullness' (558). Very unusually, in this context, the familiar image of Mill as a thinking machine is given positive connotations: 'it is evident that cases in which Mr Mill's advice would be extremely valuable would be constantly occurring; he would be a kind of animated calculating machine, capable of being turned on at any political or economical problem' (559).

In May 1865, William D. Christie, a diplomat who knew Mill personally, wrote 'Mr John Stuart Mill for Westminster' for *Macmillan's Magazine*. He looked back to Mill's articles published in the *Westminster Review* between 1835 and 1840 to provide evidence of Mill's practical political engagement. In those articles, Christie said, 'Mr Mill appears constantly as the anxious observer, the counsellor, the critic, the animator and inspirer of a party of parliamentary Liberals, not inconsiderable in number and very distinguished in talents and character' (94). What provided evidence of Mill's suitability for a parliamentary career was that 'those numerous articles are mingled with many others on subjects of poetry and general philosophy' (96). He continued:

The time is past of vulgar abuse of philosophic politicians and political economists; but, if any vestige of old prejudices remain, it is well that the electors of Westminster have undertaken the task of carrying to the House of Commons one whose eminent philosophy embraces all letters, art, and imagination, combines the ancient and the new, reform and tradition, the principle of permanence and the principle of progression, the practical spirit of Bentham and the reverent ideal politics of Coleridge – is catholic, practical, genial, sympathetic ... . (96)

Again, Mill's receptivity to literature and the arts, and his ability to relate them to other areas of knowledge, becomes a defining feature of his liberalism. Christie states more wholeheartedly the views expressed in the *Saturday Review*, that Mill's range of integrated and practically applicable knowledge would do much to shake up, not just the views of his fellow Liberals, but the complacency and dullness of the entire House of Commons.

The strongest denial that Mill was a man of extremes and inconsistencies was given by Morley, in his review of the *Autobiography* for the *Fortnightly Review* in 1874. For Morley, Mill's intelligence was all about stability, organic structure and order. Mill's opinions did not vacillate, shift or flit about; they were adaptable and pliable in a way that distinguished him positively from his father: they were – in a phrase which anticipates the *Leisure Hour's* phrase 'desire of culture' – a 'feeling outwards' (141). Mill's 'intellectual impressionableness on the most important subjects of human thought was so cultivated as almost to acquire the strength and quick responsiveness of emotional sensibility' (140), said Morley, perhaps responding to Hutton when he insisted that this finely-calibrated sensibility denoted strength rather than the weakness of over-refinement. If the *Autobiography* did not take the reader up to 'enkindled summits', then neither did it take the reader down into abysses (142). It was quiet, practical and self-effacing – just like its author. Though Morley said that the *Autobiography* was not a work of imagination or art, he was far from denying Mill any creativity. Morley said that Mill's self-consciously persistent attention to difficult subjects was common to 'every truly scientific thinker', but that what distinguished Mill from others was the systematic way he expanded this, bringing it to bear on moral and social issues (143). It was always this mixture of skills and perspectives that differentiated Mill's works as far as Morley was concerned; *Subjection* was notable for 'the combined rationality and beauty of its aspirations' (153) and over all, his originality was based on the way he acquired '*plenary possession* of truths' before transfusing them 'with sympathetic and contagious enthusiasm' (154, Morley's emphasis). Morley describes how Mill introduced balance into his life as a result of his mental crisis:

[His] dejection was dispelled mainly by the influence of Wordsworth – a poet austere yet gracious, energetic yet sober, penetrated with feeling for nature yet penetrated with feeling for the homely lot of man. Here was the emotional synthesis, binding together the energies of the speculative and

active mind by sympathetic interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings' (155).

If Wordsworth balanced austerity with grace, and energy with sobriety, then so, after reading him, did Mill. Morley thought that Mill's appreciation of this emotional synthesis became the keynote of his life and work, challenging Hutton's claim that Mill's hopes lacked 'homeliness'. Mill's was 'a perfect rationality' because intellect was allied to emotion, and the abstract to the everyday (140).

When Mill's *Three Essays* were published, Morley objected strongly to the concessions he felt 'the rationalist master' had made to supernaturalism (*Recollections* 106). These were: the possibility that the universe was created by an 'Intelligent Mind', albeit one whose powers, and benevolence, were limited; the possibility that Christ, therefore, had a God-given role; the possibility, however slight, that there was an after-life and the validity of holding such a hope where it gave comfort (*Mr Mill's Three Essays* 166–8). Morley deeply regretted that Mill had not made known his thoughts on evolutionary theory and its moral and social applications (184), and he was not alone in expressing this opinion. The anonymous reviewer in *British Quarterly Review*, who noted that *Three Essays* showed no evidence of the spiritual progress he made by reading poetry, also found that Mill strangely ignored 'modern science' (63). The secularist George William Foote, complained in 1887 that 'Mill neither understood nor felt the force of Darwinism' (222). By the time that Morley came to write his 'Valedictory' piece for the *Fortnightly Review* in 1882, he indirectly acknowledged the negative impact of *Three Essays* but returned to the sense of balance he had previously attributed to Mill: 'Time has done something to impair the philosophical reputation and political celebrity of J.S. Mill; but it cannot alter the affectionate memory in which some of us must always hold his wisdom and goodness, his rare union of moral ardour with a calm and settled mind' (283). Then, in a piece on 'The Life of George Eliot' (1885), Morley described Eliot's ability to systematise the ideas of different thinkers. Morley quoted passages from Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850), which Eliot had used as epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda* (1876) to illustrate her 'growth and diversity of opinion' (312). Underneath this growth and diversity of opinion, Morley said, 'we see George Eliot's oneness of character, just, for that matter, as we see it in Mill's long and grave march from the uncompromising denials instilled into him by his father, then through Wordsworthian mysticism and Coleridgean conservatism, down to the pale belief and

dim starlight faith of his posthumous volume' (312). Thus Morley's view of the parity between Eliot and Mill strikes a very different note to the *Light* article in 1882.

I conclude this chapter with a piece from the *Spectator* which is particularly interesting for the way it strikes a different note to many representations of Mill's talent for synthesis. 'Mr John Stuart Mill as a Politician' (1865) suggested that Mill's presence in Parliament would produce the same effect as his books did: it would be both edifying and energising.

He is a thinker, but a thinker whose thoughts visibly multiply and increase in vigour where he approaches the surface of actual life. He has always had a delicate appreciation for poetry. The 'wonder and bloom of the world' had ever a melancholy fascination for him, though he was compelled by his classifying and generalizing powers to apply himself chiefly to the analysis of the paler realm of underlying ideas. There is a sensitive fibre about all his writings which gives them a sensibly increased power and animation when he feels that they are touching the point where they may influence the thoughts and actions of living men.  
(325)

Clearly not written by the *Spectator's* editor, Hutton, the article turns Mill's 'delicate appreciation for poetry' and the 'sensitive fibre' of his writings into strengths, rather than presenting them as evidence of over-refinement or naïveté. The article does not categorise Mill as either a man of science or a man of letters, but depicts him working at the interface of theory and practice in a dynamic, effervescent way, using his 'desire of culture' to enliven his own work and the lives of others. As the range of sources discussed in this chapter demonstrates, Mill's 'desire of culture', or lack thereof, was a highly contentious issue in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals and books, depictions of antithesis and synthesis were used to attack or defend Mill personally, philosophically and politically. Millian representations were also the site of wider debates which contested the connections and disjunctions between science, emotion and imagination – and the best way of exploiting these to bring about social improvements.

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**Fig. 1. 'A Feminine Philosopher'. Caricature in *Vanity Fair* by Sir Leslie Ward.  
29 March 1873.**



### 3. A Feminine Philosopher

The vibrant chrome lithograph of Mill shown in Figure 1 appeared in *Vanity Fair*'s popular and well-established 'Men of the Day' series on 29 March 1873, shortly before Mill's death in May of that year. The image by Sir Leslie Ward (who signed his pictures 'Spy'), was called 'A Feminine Philosopher'. This moniker was explained in some accompanying text by Jehu Junior (the pen name of Thomas Gibson Bowles, founder of *Vanity Fair*), which offered a short account of Mill's life and achievements. Jehu Junior described Mill as revolutionary because of his audacious criticism of society:

Like all [modern] thinkers he is a thorough heretic in all his beliefs – social, moral, and religious. He represents the very extreme outposts to which the most adventurous of modern thinkers have pushed, and has often found himself out of the reach of the support even of the boldest forces of Democracy. For he is a feminine philosopher, a man of vast intellect and tender feelings. (n. pag.)

The feminine philosopher designation here seems ambivalent: if Mill's tender feelings were indicative of idealism and impracticality, which in turn could lead to isolation and unpopularity, they were also part of what enabled the adventurous thought and non-conformism which made him an important thinker. The preface to the fifth volume of *The Vanity Fair Album* in which the caricature of Mill appeared alongside other 'Sovereigns, Statesmen, Judges, and Men of the Day' from 1873, claimed that the *Vanity Fair* portraits aimed at honesty, rather than controversy – in Jehu Junior's words they were concerned with 'the unheroic representation of heroes' (n. pag.). Identifying Mill as 'The Feminine Philosopher' was not intended to be particularly contentious, indicating the extent to which Mill had become associated with ideas of femininity.

This chapter explores the feminisation of Mill. I take a different view from Susan Groag Bell in her chapter on 'The Feminization of John Stuart Mill' in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender* (1990). Bell argues here that Mill went through a process of 'self-feminization' whereby he made a conscious attempt to develop 'qualities which he believed to be feminine – sensitivity and emotional warmth' (91). I aim to show how others' portrayals of Mill drew on his own views about gender equality, as well as long-standing and newly emerging stories about what types of bodies produce,

develop and disseminate authoritative knowledge. I argue that a number of the debates around Mill converge in gendered representations of him. These debates, which are explored in *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge* (1998), are: the long tradition of stories in Western cultures which link philosophers with ideas of asceticism, abstinence, abstraction and disembodiment (Shapin 21–50); ideas about maintaining a balance between the intellect and the moral feelings and affections (a subject Alison Winter explains in relation to the nineteenth-century mathematician Ada Lovelace, 202–36); and the version of manliness cultivated at Cambridge University from the 1840s onwards, which saw high intellectual achievement in mathematics allied to athletic excellence (Warwick 288–326).

In the five sections that follow I begin by considering the *Vanity Fair* caricature alongside Ward's account of creating it, and show how Ward's view intersects with other accounts which scrutinised Mill's voice, head, and frame, reading them as indicators of his aptitude for his philosophical and political roles. In the second section, 'Miss Mill Joins the Ladies', I explore how Mill was portrayed in other caricatures, mostly from the politically liberal *Punch*, and its conservative rival *Judy* in the 1860s. I show how *Punch*'s caricatures played on the two senses of Mill's stature: his physical height and the status he had gained by his achievements, while *Judy*'s cartoons constantly sought to undermine Mill's standing by depicting him dressed in women's clothing. The third section, 'Cold as ice', returns to written accounts and considers the views taken by Thomas Carlyle, Leslie and James Fitzjames Stephen, Alexander Bain, and others, about what was lacking in Mill's manliness. Section four, 'A heart of truly feminine sensibility' continues to address the issue of imbalance, by examining the perspectives of those who insisted that Mill suffered from an excess of 'feminine' emotion, as well as more sympathetic views which stressed that Mill's great strength was his balance of 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics. Finally, in 'A Goddess called "The Passion of Reason"' I turn to a depiction by Florence Nightingale, which, in its attempt to account for Mill's uniqueness, combines elements of many of the ideas discussed in the chapter, in an unusual and compelling way.

### 3.1 The *Vanity Fair* Caricature

Though Ward's caricature was created several years after Mill's time as an MP (1865–8), it engaged with the debate about Mill's masculinity brought to the fore by his

political career. In *Forty Years of 'Spy'* (1915), Ward described making the study for the *Vanity Fair* caricature (Figure 2) as he listened to Mill give a lecture on women's rights at Exeter Hall. He remembers that as Mill 'recited passages from his notes in a weak voice, it was made extremely clear that his pen was mightier than his personal magnetism upon a platform' (104). The perception that when Mill stood for Parliament he was moving from the study to the platform, from writing to speaking, and from

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**Fig. 2. Sir Leslie Ward's study for the *Vanity Fair* caricature.  
National Portrait Gallery.**

theory to practice, had generated much speculation – in the same vein as Ward’s – about how effectively he would be able to conduct himself in a public arena. That Parliament was regarded as a combative environment is evident from a line in a *Saturday Review* piece on ‘Philosophers and Politicians’ in 1865. ‘The prime characteristic of the Englishman’, stated the *Saturday Review*, ‘is activity and energy, and the conflicts of the political arena gratify a national instinct’ (253). According to the *Saturday Review*’s definition, a man who did not thrive in such an environment would be anomalous in terms of his Englishness and his masculinity. Doubts that Mill possessed the intrinsic qualities demanded for political success were expressed from the outset of his candidature. Reporting on the campaign process the month afterwards, the *Saturday Review* implied that Mill was too delicate to endure a boisterous crowd and too refined to come face-to-face with working men, when it remarked: ‘No one could have thought without a shudder of Mr Mill making an appearance in a public hall to be cross-examined by a costermonger’ (‘The Westminster Election’ 558).

Many years later John Morley recorded the female stereotypes which were used to disparage Mill’s parliamentary appearances:

Meredith, who did not know Mill in person, once spoke to me of him with the confident intuition proper to imaginative genius, as partaking of the Spinster. Disraeli, when Mill made an early speech in Parliament, raised his eyeglass, and murmured to a neighbour on the bench, ‘Ah, the Finishing Governess’. We can guess what they meant. Mill certainly had not Bacon’s massive cogency, nor the concentrated force of Hobbes, nor the diversified amplitude of Adam Smith. (*Recollections* I: 54–5)

Though Morley was perhaps Mill’s most fervent supporter, here he gave credence to those who found something suspect in Mill’s manliness; the knowing phrase, ‘We can guess what they meant’, signalling Morley’s own membership of a more assuredly masculine group. Morley goes on to partially rebut the spinster charge (Mill ‘knew how to run an adversary clean through with a sword that was no spinster’s arm’, I: 55), but the sense of Mill’s uncertain place in a genealogy of public men remains. Morley’s terms for the desirable attributes of authoritative male speakers – massiveness, force and amplitude – suggest robust vocal and physical strength, and Mill apparently lacked these qualities.

Many commentators reflected on the weakness of Mill's voice and frame, as well as on the peculiarities of his head and face. As I noted in the introduction, the obsession with Mill's body and voice could be compared to the fixation on Gladstone's body and voice during his 1889 Midlothian campaign, as described by Hadley in *Living Liberalism*. With Gladstone, Hadley argues, this fixation related to the electorate's desire to ascertain his political sincerity. Hadley stresses that political sincerity in the late nineteenth century was understood 'to be a coherence of body, voice, opinion, and thus, mind ...' (308). When it came to Mill in the 1860s and early 1870s, there was often perceived to be a lack of coherence between his body/voice and his opinion/mind. However, the target does not seem to have been his political integrity, for even after he failed to get re-elected in 1868, he was often represented as exemplifying, originating or defining liberal principles. When Mill's candidature for Parliament was first mooted, the *Saturday Review* was broadly welcoming on the grounds that Mill would be someone who 'added authority to Liberal theories, instead of merely hanging on to the doctrines which happen to be locally dominant' ('Westminster Candidates' 359). Further, they observed that 'As long as the eminent candidate was, on the whole, regarded as a genuine Liberal, individual eccentricities of thought would be readily pardoned' ('Westminster Candidates' 359). For the *Spectator*, Mill was 'A thorough Liberal, – in social philosophy a very advanced Liberal (for he maintains the right of women to be admitted to the same careers as men ...)' whose opinions even if controversial or erroneous would 'clear the intellectual atmosphere', 'define better the fundamental principles at issue before the country' and 'raise the whole tone of Parliamentary debate' ('Mr Mill as a Politician' 325). Furthermore, the *Spectator* saw value in 'a man who can obtain a hearing for ultra-Liberal ideas from ultra-Tory landowners' ('Mr Mill and the Ten-Pounders' 742).

By the time Mill sought re-election in 1868, the *Saturday Review* was far less well-disposed towards him, invoking *On Liberty's* contention that 'All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility' (22), and the Papal history of Mill's retirement residence in Avignon, to mock his 'Pope-like' relations to the Liberal cause. They claimed that he was 'according to his own estimate, the Vicegerent and sole centre of authority from which all Liberals derive their jurisdiction, and even their Liberal being' ('Mr Mill and the Infallible' 584) – but even this mockery had the effect of reiterating his importance to the Liberal cause. On his death, the *Spectator* noted 'the

extent and length of his services to the Liberal cause, which he has defended for thirty years, and frequently in an apparently hopeless minority' ('News of the Week' 740). The *Pall Mall Gazette* repeated a resounding endorsement of his sincerity given in the *Standard*: 'Mr Mill was the Gamaliel at whose feet were reared the modern school of Liberals. Of his honesty there can be no more doubt than of his perfect fearlessness' ('Epitome of Opinion in the Morning Journals' 3). In his *Life of John Stuart Mill* (1889), W.L. Courtney suggested that many people took the view that Mill 'was the natural leader of Liberal thought; not in the House, but out of it' (142).

Instead of Mill's Liberal credentials, the perceived gap between his undeniable intellectual pedigree, and his public embodiment of this, was the difficulty with which many grappled. Supporters worried about how successfully he would be able to convey his theoretical knowledge in person, while detractors claimed that he was doomed to fail in any attempt to do so. Justin McCarthy, for instance, agreed with Ward that Mill's voice was weak and that this made him seem inherently unsuited to public speaking. To accentuate the incongruousness of Mill appearing in public, McCarthy labelled him 'a silent, shy, shrinking man, of feeble frame and lonely ways' (*Modern Leaders* 112). In the metaphorical sense, McCarthy thought that Mill's voice was strong – 'Mr Mill was to his countrymen but as an oracle – as a voice – almost as a myth' – but this popular sense of a disembodied voice only served to heighten the sense of its weakness in the physical sense (*Modern Leaders* 112). Like Ward, McCarthy thought that Mill's weak voice was compounded by inadequate oratorical skills, and suggested that his parliamentary speeches were 'only spoken essays. They differ in no wise from the speaker's writings' (*Modern Leaders* 113). Though an avid supporter of Mill, McCarthy's terms here come very close to those of detractors such as Carlyle and James Fitzjames Stephen who conflated Mill's body with the books he wrote, or those who dismissed Mill as incarnate analysis, an incarnate thinking machine, a reasoning machine, a reading machine and so on. Carlyle's view of Mill as an abstraction, discussed below, shows that though such ideas are frequently found in commentary on Mill's political career, they were in circulation some time before the 1860s.

Others who admired Mill also had reservations about his voice, and their references to its pitch and strength all suggest that Mill was being judged against an ideal of manly sonorousness. Mill's 'thin voice approaching to sharpness, but with nothing shrill or painful about it' was part of Alexander Bain's recollection of their first

meeting (64). In an extremely detailed analysis of Mill's 'Arts of Persuasion', Bain heaped praise on Mill's powers of speech in public and private, but reiterated the lack of strength in his voice: it was 'agreeable, although not specially melodious; it was thin and weak' (*John Stuart Mill* 188). Walter Crane respectfully described it as 'a still small voice', but this contrasted with his impression of John Bright, who had 'a fine resonant rich voice, and all the hidden art of a practised and eloquent speaker' (95). On first meeting Mill, Kate Amberley interpreted the quietness of his voice as evidence of his humility and likeability, recording in her journal, 'He speaks in a very gentle voice, and is not in appearance like a great man' (qtd. in Russell 1: 297). Transposed to the House of Commons, however, the quietness took on a new, more disappointing aspect: 'Mill's speaking seems to bore the house, they say he has spoken too often – much, and cannot be heard' (qtd. in Russell 1: 470). The doorkeeper of the House of Commons William White thought that Mill 'has not a powerful voice, but then it is highly pitched and very clear; and this class of voice goes much further than one of lower tone – as the ear-piercing fife is heard at a greater distance than the blatant trombone' (II: 33). White's contrast between the higher pitch of Mill's voice and the lower tones of other MPs seems the most obviously gendered, yet in this case it becomes a virtue rather than a cause for regret: a symbol of the different quality Mill introduced to parliamentary debate, and his far-reaching influence.

For Ward – like Conway, Brandes, Hardy, and others – the shape of Mill's head and forehead were especially fascinating. Recalling the difficulties of observing Mill from a distance Ward remarked, 'A strange protuberance upon his forehead attracted me; and, the oddly-shaped skull dipping slightly in the middle, "the feminine philosopher" just escaped being bereft not only of his hair when I saw him, but of that highly important organ – the bump of reverence' (104).<sup>1</sup> According to phrenology manuals such as *How to Read Character: Hand-book of Physiology, Phrenology and Physiognomy, Illustrated with a Descriptive Chart* (1869), the area associated with 'Reverence for sacred things – devotion – respect' was located on the top of the head and called the organ of 'Veneration' (35).<sup>2</sup> Ward's phrenological reference could refer to

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<sup>1</sup> This term was also associated with Darwin: in his *Autobiography* Darwin had reported that a meeting of the German Psychological Society had reviewed his photograph and declared that 'I had the bump of reverence developed enough for ten priests' (45).

<sup>2</sup> In manuals such as *How to Read Character* and *Heads and Faces: How to Study Them* (1896) by H.S. Drayton and Nelson Sizer, Mill was not associated with the 'bump of reverence' but was deemed to have a

ideas about Mill's religious disposition (as discussed in chapter two), but it is also suggestive of the way in which his domed head and bumpy forehead were interpreted as bodily manifestations of his vast intellect, and as such referred to more reverentially than other aspects of his physicality. Elsewhere in Ward's memoirs, the bump on Mill's forehead became the definitive feature of his appearance: discussing the art of the caricaturist, and the decision about which 'defects' to exaggerate, Ward insisted: 'I could not have left out the cyst upon the forehead of John Stuart Mill' (111).

Conversely, Mill's facial tics were often seen as worrying indicators of instability for a man of such eminence. Leslie Stephen remembered that 'His figure was spare and light, his voice weak; a constant twitching of the eyebrow betrayed his nervous irritability' (*The English Utilitarians* III: 64). In his inimitable style, Carlyle wrote that: 'His eyes go twinkling and jerking with wild lights and twitches' – for Carlyle this was one point in a whole list of defects which indicated an impoverished and unmanly body.<sup>3</sup> Bain, too, commented on 'the twitching of his eyebrow as he spoke' (64) and McCarthy on 'a nervous, incessant twitching of the lips and eyes' (*Modern Leaders* 113). When Conway, the foremost admirer of the Millian brow, spent time with Mill and Helen Taylor, he observed a contrast between different parts of Mill's face: 'His delicate mouth, almost feminine, – which twitched nervously at times, – and the small chin, were in contrast with the breadth and height of his brow' (*Autobiography* II: 16). Notwithstanding the positive effect which Conway thought Mill had on a crowd, he also had 'a nervous way of shutting and opening his eyes as if to clear his mental vision' ('The Great Westminster Canvass' 737). Brandes, however, saw more of a favourable connection between these involuntary facial tremors and Mill's intellect, recalling that Mill's face was 'continually distorted by a nervous twitching, which seemed to betray the restless, tremulous life of the soul' (*Eminent Authors* 124).

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particularly pronounced 'organ of Individuality' located 'immediately above the top of the nose' (95). These manuals reproduced engravings of the profile photograph of Mill shown in chapter one, Figure 3b to illustrate this. Though it can hardly have been a coincidence that the man dubbed 'the apostle of individuality' was thought to exemplify this characteristic, the organ of individuality seems to have had little to do with the model of individual choice set out in *On Liberty*. Rather, it had to do with superior powers of observation: 'Those in whom it is large are eager to see all that may be seen and nothing escapes their attention. It opens the door for the action of all the other perceptive organs' (*Heads and Faces* 98). For Mill's own views on the pseudo-science of phrenology see Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture 1850–1880* (2000), 99–100.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from TC to his wife, Jane Welsh Carlyle, 24 July 1836. All quotations from Carlyle's letters in this chapter are from *The Carlyle Letters Online* (CLO).



Mill's frame was also thought to be indicative of inner qualities. Ward saw a connection between his thinness and his philosophising ways: 'His nose resembled a parrot's, and his frame was spare. In fact, he was ascetic and thin-looking generally; but his manner and personality breathed charm and intellect' (104–5). In their history of *Vanity Fair*, Roy T. Matthews and Peter Mellini suggest that Ward's focus on the slightness of Mill's frame had the effect of aging him. They argue that in the final caricature, Ward 'made Mill look older by thinning out his body and bending it forward, and by sloping the shoulders and placing Mill's hands behind his back' (93). Matthews and Mellini's reading of the *Vanity Fair* caricature raises the question of the extent to which Mill's age was a decisive factor in the depiction of his physical frailties more generally – to what extent his body was being compared to that of a more vigorous younger man, rather than that of a woman.

Generally, Mill's physical shortcomings – his weak voice, twitching eye or delicate frame – were not depicted as owing to an age-related debilitation, but as present from young adulthood. One account which did refer to his age dwelt on his deceptively youthful appearance. In *Eminent Authors* (1886) Brandes described meeting Mill for the first time in 1870. He recalled that: 'Although sixty-four years of age, his complexion was as pure and fresh as that of a child. He had the smooth, childlike skin and the rosy cheeks that are scarcely ever seen in elderly men of the continent ...' (124). In Brandes's idealised recollections of his intellectual hero, the curious focus on his rosy, pure, childlike skin was surely a reference to the absence of that Victorian symbol of masculinity, a full beard. Consequently, Brandes's reminiscences reinforce ideas of Mill's femininity. A possible explanation for the lack of attention to Mill's age (as well as Brandes's emphasis on his youthful appearance) is offered in David Stack's 'The Death of John Stuart Mill'. Stack argues that owing to his late entry into Parliament, 'The cliché of the young radical buck tamed in middle age into an avuncular reformer and safely neutered by the time of his death was not apropos to Mill' (169).<sup>4</sup> While it is true that this conventional trajectory of a male public figure was not applicable, I would argue that it is for different reasons from the one Stack suggests. Mill was never seen in the

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<sup>4</sup> In the *Spectator*, Mill's nomination to Parliament was associated with youthful innovation, as it was in the *Reader* article discussed in the preface. In a piece entitled 'Young England in the Next Parliament', the *Spectator* maintained that his candidature 'shows how thoroughly the younger generation is weary of the old formulas, and how anxious it is for some more intelligible principles' (604).

kind of testosterone-fuelled terms implied by a buck in need of neutering. As I discussed in the previous chapter, and as I discuss below, Mill's political passion, as well as his feelings for Harriet, were construed in terms of a religious disposition, or an excess of 'feminine' emotion.

For all the ways in which Ward's visual and verbal representations engaged with the debates about Mill's lack of manly robustness, his final verdict on Mill's 'personal magnetism' was not entirely damning: if he 'breathed charm and intellect' then he had at least enough charisma to appeal in some ways to his audience. The softer lines and warmer tones of the study for the caricature capture the more attractive side to Mill that Ward perceived. Indeed, although Ward thought that Mill was more suited to the study than the lecture hall, choosing to exaggerate his physical frailty in the image which represented 'The Feminine Philosopher' among 'Men of the Day', by depicting Mill standing, in public, mid-speech, he nevertheless provided a counterpoint to the sense of philosophic interiority conveyed by the focus on Mill's face in Watts's portrait, which appeared the same year. Mill's stance in the *Vanity Fair* image also contrasts with some of the more belittling and emasculating caricatures from *Punch* and *Judy* in the 1860s.

### 3.2 'Miss Mill Joins the Ladies'

In 1904, the caricaturist Harry Furniss claimed that cartoons from the 1860s had left more of an impression on the popular imagination than any other aspect of Mill's life and work – aside from the noteworthy detail of his support for women's rights. Furniss recalled that Mill 'was a remarkably able man, treated with reverence and respect by all who admired philosophical thought and true greatness of mind – until he touched politics. Then he was laughed at' (29). Furniss went on to observe that Mill's support for female suffrage 'was the turning-point of his sublime literary reputation into a ridiculous parliamentary one. Being small of stature and severe of countenance, he was an easy prey for the pen and pencil' (29). Furniss comments particularly on two full page cartoons by John Tenniel in *Punch*, 'Mill's Logic; or, Franchise for Females' and 'The Ladies' Advocate'. On the impact of such representations of Mill Furniss concluded: 'He did a great work and left a name England might well honour; but ninety-nine out of every hundred "persons" merely recall a very little, thin man, with a severe mouth, bushy hair and side whiskers, the advocate of women's rights – and they laugh!' (30).

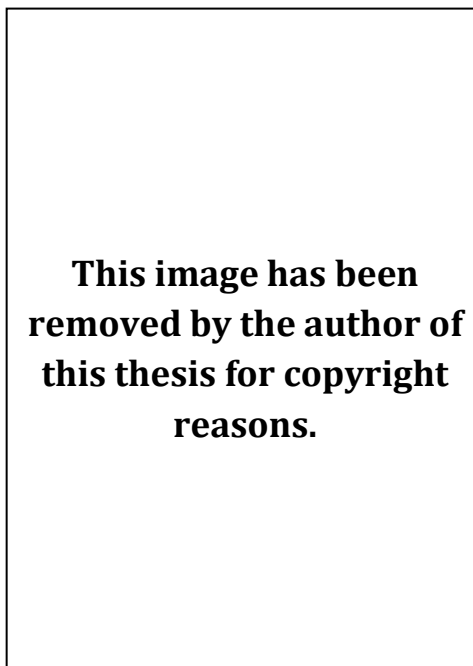
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**Fig. 3. Caricature of Mill from *Harry Furniss at Home, Written and Illustrated by Himself*. 1904.**

Alongside this description, Furniss included his own caricature sporting all of these features (Figure 3), which he is unlikely to have drawn after direct observation of Mill.<sup>5</sup> Furniss's written description seems to be as much caricature as his drawing, but the issues he chose to exaggerate all had their basis in debates of the 1860s. As I discussed in chapter two, many articles in newspapers and periodicals debated the issue of literary men in Parliament, and Mill was often the focus of such debate. Some argued that his reputation did indeed move from the sublime to the ridiculous. Furniss's representation of Mill as 'easy prey' for visual satire emphasised his vulnerability.

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<sup>5</sup> See David Martin's introduction to *Lives of Victorian Political Figures IV: John Stuart Mill*, xlii.



**Fig. 4. Detail from 'Punch's Essence of Parliament'. 10 February 1866.**

Where Ward's caricature drew attention to Mill's height, Furniss insisted that Mill was 'small of stature' and 'very little'. If Furniss was basing this view of Mill on caricatures from *Punch* then it is easy to see why. Just as Mill's small voice was compared to John Bright's rich and resonant one, the two men's physicalities were regularly contrasted in *Punch's* satirical depictions of political life. 'Punch's Essence of Parliament' on 10 February 1866 was a garland featuring all the newly elected MPs. Positioned prominently in the illustration, at the top and in the centre, is an emaciated Mill, clutching a copy of *On Liberty*, but shackled to a stout, bear-like Bright (Figure 4 shows a detail from the garland). While some of the other figures are also depicted with large heads on small bodies, Mill's diminutive size and strength is accentuated by being positioned in proximity to Bright, as well as other figures wielding signifiers of male authority and aggression. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Cranworth, appears to Mill's left 'with his awful mace' and 'fiery Roebuck' wields 'his ready lance' below Bright, to the right-hand side (53). Roebuck's friendship with Mill had ended after a youthful debate about poetry in which different models of masculinity were implicitly at stake – Roebuck had championed Byron, whose poetry he thought epitomised 'action and struggle', while Mill had made the case for the more 'quiet and contemplative' verses of Wordsworth. Roebuck dismissed Wordsworth's poems as having to do with 'flowers

and butterflies' (Mill, *Autobiography* 122). The rhyme accompanying *Punch's* garland included the lines:

Then see a splendid ring, its centre BRIGHT,  
Grimly preparing for Reform to fight,  
'Twere a good omen should his stubborn will  
Yield to the chain of intellectual MILL. (53)

As these lines indicate, *Punch* was broadly sympathetic to Mill, welcoming the softening influence he might have on Bright's supposed intransigence.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, *Punch* consistently portrayed Mill as lacking the same robustly male physique as the central figures in the 'battlefield' of public life. In 1867, the journal ran a John Tenniel cartoon (Figure 5) in which a diminutive Mill was again positioned close to a bulky Bright. This time the physical contrast was further underscored by Bright squaring up to a punch bag marked 'Aristocracy'. A feeble-looking Mill with downcast eyes lurks behind him clutching a cup marked 'Logic', the most insubstantial of the 'Gladiators Preparing for the Arena'. The theme of physical combat was extended beyond the parliamentary context when, the month afterwards, *Punch* featured Mill's inaugural lecture as rector of St Andrews University. They noted that 'Mill had fought a good fight about education' (102), and depicted him as a tiny figure, in the guise of a naughty school boy, squaring up to a giant, rotund, cane-wielding don (Figure 6). In the run up to the 1868 election, *Punch* continued to portray Parliament as a battleground. In 'Before the Tournament' (Figure 7), also by Tenniel, Mill appeared as a small figure to the left of the cartoon, which is dominated by an armoured, lance-wielding Gladstone, preparing to face Disraeli in a joust. Mill's small size and sidelined position in this cartoon might be accounted for by his relative political importance, next to the party leaders Gladstone and Disraeli – except that, Robson has observed how, due to his extra-parliamentary renown, Mill was generally given unusual precedence in such groupings, 'closely – indeed sometimes intimately – clustered with the party leaders ('Mill in Parliament' 116).

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<sup>6</sup> See Robson's 'Mill in Parliament: The View from the Comic Papers', 105–11, on *Punch's* support for Mill.

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**Fig. 5. Detail from 'Gladiators Preparing for the Arena'. *Punch*. 2 February 1867.**

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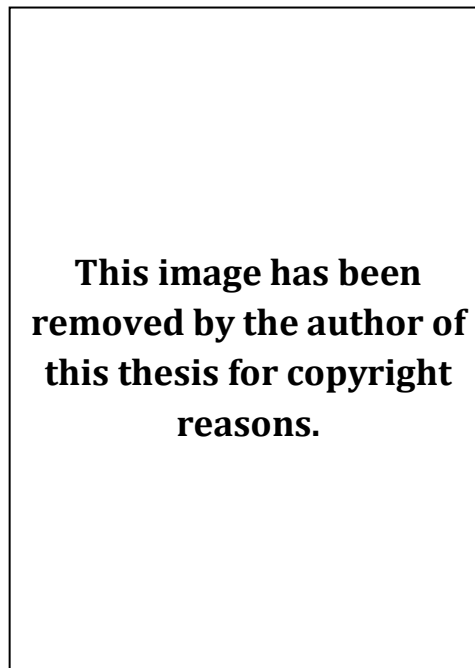
**Fig. 6. Detail from 'February'. *Punch*. 9 March 1867.**

Moreover, in the *Punch* cartoons where the focus was particularly on Mill, rather than on an ensemble of politicians, he was also depicted as a small figure. In 1867, *Punch* ran two Tenniel caricatures to comment on Mill's proposal that the word 'man' be replaced by the word 'person' in the clauses of the Reform Bill which dealt with enfranchisement. These were 'Mill's Logic; or, Franchise for Females' (Figure 8) and 'The Ladies' Advocate' (Figure 9). In Tenniel's female suffrage cartoons, Mill is particularly contrasted to personifications of England, in the form of John Bull in 'Mill's Logic' and Mrs Bull in 'The Ladies' Advocate'. Dressed in his trademark philosopher's frock coat in 'Mill's Logic', and in a barrister's wig and gown in 'The Ladies' Advocate', Mill is a dapper figure. John Bull and Mrs Bull, in contrast, are large and rotund. In 'Mill's Logic' John Bull looks at Mill with hostility as he clears the way for female voters. In 'The Ladies' Advocate' Mrs Bull's maternal solicitude is combined with condescension towards Mill's misguided attempts to represent women's views. Her cheerful obliviousness is contrasted with Mill's humble, downcast stance. Thus Tenniel's drawings for *Punch*, though they may have mocked the seriousness and earnestness with which Mill was so commonly associated, were not wholly belittling. They also played on the idea of Mill's refinement and sensitivity in comparison to the supposed coarseness and vulgarity of the general national view.

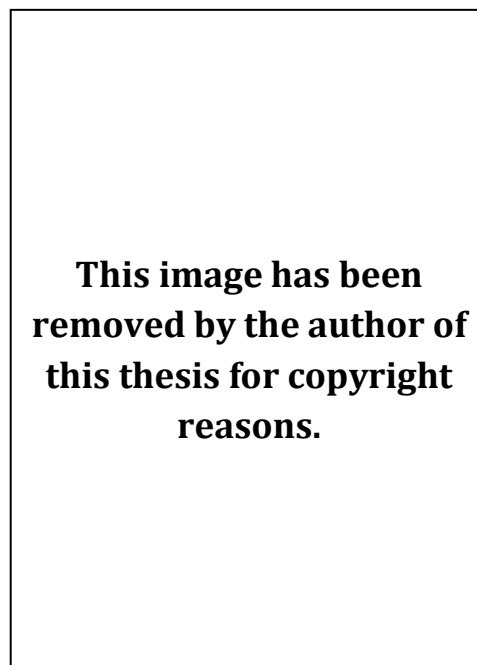
It was in *Judy*, a conservative journal set up to rival *Punch* that Mill's feminisation was the most blatant: in their cartoons, he frequently appeared dressed as a woman.<sup>7</sup> The striking illustration accompanying an 1867 piece called 'Parliamentary' shows Mill wearing a bonnet, holding a parasol, and daintily lifting his skirts out of the mud (Figure 10). Here, the focus was on Mill's support for women's suffrage. The article concentrates on the way 'the LADY'S MILL' had disappointed women, by failing to secure them the vote (156). *Judy* revels in the way 'both his theory and his advocacy have proved a signal failure', before moving on to recount the journal's supposed correspondence from disappointed women:

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<sup>7</sup> Robson has observed that 'In several of the major political cartoons, no matter what the actual issue involved, Mill appears as a woman' ('Mill in Parliament' 116). See also Carlisle, 114–17.

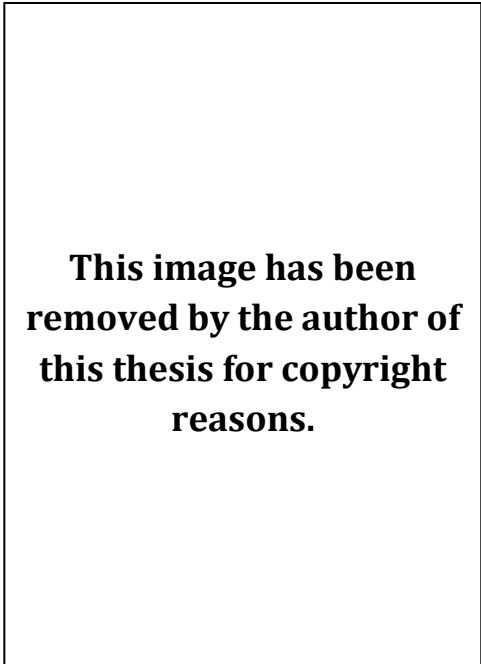


**Fig. 7. 'Before the Tournament'. *Punch*. 21 November 1868.**



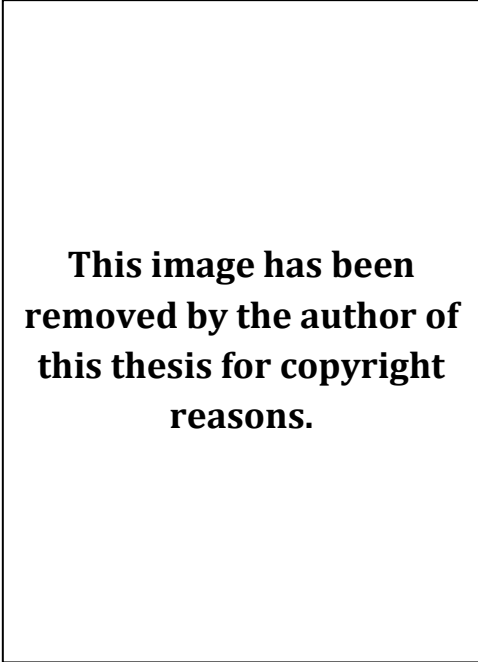
**Fig. 8. 'Mill's Logic; or, Franchise for Females'. *Punch*. 30 March 1867.**





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**Fig. 9. 'The Ladies' Advocate'. *Punch*. 1 June 1867.**



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**Fig. 10. Cartoon accompanying  
'Parliamentary'. *Judy*. 24 July 1867.**

Many of these lady correspondents have waxed exceeding bitter, not to say savage, on the matter; they have in some cases even had recourse to satire, and by no means weakly satire either, suggesting that he belongs really to them as a 'muff'; advising him to assume the non-virile garments of his and their proper sex, and many other similar unamiable propositions. (156, emphasis in original)

In *Judy's* view, there could be no more appropriate humiliation for a man who had proved his 'womanly' weakness, than to be dressed in women's clothes, and their cartoon brought this vividly to life. The article affects indignation at the supposed outcry against Mill, in order to underscore the idea that he had handled the situation stupidly. Professing to defend Mill against the complaints, *Judy* made the familiar point

about his impractical and isolated theoretical viewpoint – ‘It is not his fault, poor man, if the nation does not see with the spectacles of his philosophy’ (156). The image of ‘philosophical spectacles’ was a popular one when attacking Mill’s position on sexual equality – Margaret Oliphant was to use it in a similar fashion in a hostile review of *Subjection* where she constantly invoked the contrast between ‘the philosopher’s study’ and the world of ‘common experience’ (114).<sup>8</sup>

*Judy* added to the charge of philosophical isolation by suggesting that Mill had been sullied by his involvement with this cause, joking: ‘VENUS forbid that he should descend to posterity with a draggled reputation’ (156). This play on ideas of Mill’s sexual innocence would be reprised in the poem and cartoon ‘Miss Mill Joins the Ladies’ discussed below. *Judy*’s aim was clearly to suggest political naïveté, but the faux concern with his ‘draggled reputation’ anticipated the prominence which would be given to this very issue after Abraham Hayward’s hostile obituary of Mill in the *Times*. In Hayward’s obituary, as David Stack has shown, ‘A double-headed allegation of adultery and promoting birth control placed a question mark against Mill’s character’ (170). Such allegations prompted Mill’s supporter, William D. Christie, to defend Mill’s purity in feminised terms: ‘The young boy-philosopher, all mind, of delicate frame and features, even feminine in manners and appearance, moved among his companions, an intellectual wonder, and was like Milton, who was called the lady of his college’ (*John Stuart Mill and Mr Abraham Hayward, Q.C.* 10). Stack offers an in-depth analysis of the Hayward controversy in ‘The Death of John Stuart Mill’ and argues that ‘Christie did Mill a grave disservice’ in making sexual morality central to the defence of his character, by shifting the focus away from his intellectual legacy (175). Even if Christie’s strategy was as damaging as Stack contends, it is interesting to note how similar ideas to those that *Judy* used to mock Mill – ‘feminine in manners and appearance’, ‘called the lady of his college’ – and the same physical and mental attributes that some identified as evidence of weakness – ‘all mind, of delicate frame and features’ – could also be used in an attempt to honour him.

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<sup>8</sup> In spite of Oliphant’s hostile response to *Subjection*, Elise Michie argues, in *The Vulgar Question of Money: Heiresses, Materialism, and the Novel of Manners from Jane Austen to Henry James* (2011), that in her domestic novels *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866) and *Phoebe Junior* (1876), Oliphant engages with ideas from *On Liberty* and *Dissertations and Discussions*. Michie characterises these novels as taking ‘a more playfully satiric attitude’ towards Millian arguments, gently mocking them at the same time as seriously considering their implications ‘for both society and the form of the novel’ (144).

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**Fig. 11. Detail from 'Going to the Country'. *Judy*. 29 July 1868.**

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**Fig. 12. Cartoon accompanying 'All About Everything'. *Judy*. 25 November 1868.**

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**Fig. 13. 'Miss Mill Joins the Ladies'. *Judy*. 25 November 1868.**

In 1868, when Mill sought re-election, *Judy* continued to feminise Mill as a means of undermining his political credibility. Thus, in 'Going to the Country' (Figure 11), on 29 July 1868, a cartoon depicting the issues at stake in the election, Mill appeared in a dress embroidered with the words 'Woman Suffrage' and reaching for a baby in a gown marked 'Suspensory Bill'. When Mill failed to retain his seat in Parliament, *Judy* made enthusiastic use of their established mode of representing him. On 25 November 1868, 'All About Everything' celebrated the fact that Westminster had not re-elected 'the greatest thinker of the age', or as *Judy* irreverently abbreviated it, the 'G. T. O. T. A.' (43). In the accompanying picture Mill was both feminised and infantilised, depicted sitting on the floor wearing a bonnet and dress (Figure 12). On the same page, a poem called 'Miss Mill Joins the Ladies' also delighted in Mill's defeat, satirising him as 'Miss Mill, enchantress chaste', with a 'coy, reluctant glance' and 'bewitching ankles' (43). In an accompanying full page cartoon of the same name (Figure 13), Mill, bedecked with hair ornaments, holding a fan, and dressed in an ostentatious and revealing off-the-shoulder gown, is pictured delivering his 'coy, reluctant glance' as he leaves the room. Robson explains the political context of this caricature: 'Mill is shown out by [W.H.] Smith, while [Robert Wellesley] Grosvenor averts his eyes to study his wine, Eyre looks on from the wall, and Judy waits quizzically on the stairs' (138). 'Philosophy' is written on the lampshade in the hallway and is clearly aligned with Mill's retreat into the private sphere.

Perhaps the most significant point about this cartoon is the link between Mill's feminisation and his involvement in the campaign to prosecute Governor Eyre. *Judy* was not the only publication to make such links. The following month in the *Saturday Review*, the Governor Eyre affair was seen as chief among the aspects of Mill's political life 'which have most completely alienated him from not only the confidence of the Westminster electors, but the masculine mind generally' ('Mr Mill and Mrs M'Laren' 815). In *White, Male and Middle Class* (1992), Catherine Hall has written about how, ranged on different sides of the mid-1860s debate about the violent suppression of unrest in Jamaica, 'different notions of what constituted a proper English manhood' was one of the issues at stake between Carlyle and Mill (277). Mill, who headed the Jamaica Committee formed to campaign for the prosecution of Eyre, was in favour of equality and independence. Carlyle, head of the Eyre Defence League, favoured a model of manhood based on hierarchy, passionate action and physical strength, a model

‘underpinned by an insistence on the essential difference between the sexes’ (266).

Hall concludes her reading of the differences between the Carlylean and Millian models of manliness by invoking a connection between the inner and outer properties of the two men: ‘Carlyle, then, was the man of passion, Mill the man of reason, a difference which can be traced in their very physiques; the one craggy and rugged, the other with the aquiline features of the classical’ (288). Though the clashing views of masculinity that Hall identifies clearly played a central role in this debate, Mill’s position as ‘the man of reason’ was complicated by the frequent allusions to his passion and his emotions. In the next two sections, I turn to consider written accounts from the 1830s through to the early twentieth century, whose depictions of Mill’s gender identity intersect with the caricatures from the 1860s, beginning with how Carlyle applied his model of ‘proper English manhood’ to Mill himself.

### 3.3 ‘Cold as ice’: Mill’s Lack of Manliness

Reminiscing for the purposes of Moncure Conway’s obituary of Mill in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, Thomas Carlyle recalled that James Mill was ‘a man of somewhat stouter make and more vigorous look than his son’ and that ‘The younger Mill was a thin, delicate, handsome youth’ (529). As Conway reported it, this was a seemingly innocuous recollection about the contrasting physicalities of father and son, but it belied a history of Carlylean comment, which placed great importance on his perception that the younger Mill’s physical presence was less commandingly masculine than his father’s. In letters to his brother, his wife and John Sterling in the 1830s, Carlyle disparagingly conflated Mill’s body with the books he wrote, complaining: ‘I find him really assiduously serviceable: but he is so *theoretic* a man, and like a printed Book, I never open myself to him ...’.<sup>9</sup> Mill, Carlyle insisted, was at once emotionally inaccessible and lacking a suitably robust physical presence: ‘I love very truly the Abstract-idea of him: but the Abstract-idea of him is all you can get; were the man himself never so near you, *he* remains unattainable’.<sup>10</sup> For Carlyle, Mill’s intellectualising obscured his personality and this excluded him from the benefits of male friendship.

Carlyle persistently depicted Mill as someone who, at his core, was pure, clear-minded, creative and emotional, but who was prevented by some kind of barrier from

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<sup>9</sup> TC to his brother, John A. Carlyle, 12 January 1835, Carlyle’s emphasis, CLO.

<sup>10</sup> TC to John A. Carlyle, 25 June 1836, Carlyle’s emphasis, CLO.

expressing this authentic, inner self. He was ‘a man cased up (against his own will) in the miserablest impenetrable coating of stone and ice’.<sup>11</sup> By suggesting that Mill was thus constituted against his own will, Carlyle was blaming James Mill and Jeremy Bentham for these infirmities. Carlyle’s view of Mill was bound up with his intense dislike for the utilitarianism with which the elder Mill and Bentham were synonymous. Many years later, Herbert Spencer would recall how, in addition to his ‘blindly furious’ reaction to *On Liberty*, Carlyle ‘scornfully called utilitarianism “pig-philosophy”, and thereby identified the pursuit of utility with the egoistic pursuit of material gratifications, spite of the proofs before him that it comprehends the pursuit of others’ welfare and the exercise of the highest sentiments’ (*An Autobiography* I: 381). Mill’s inextricable associations with a philosophy that Carlyle characterised in this way were part of the bar to his true character. Carlyle expressed this in another image which stressed Mill’s lack of agency, and his faulty skills of perception: ‘Mill ‘is a pure-minded clear man [in] every way; but with the strangest, unluckiest Utilitarian husk round him, which he will never cast off: it strikes me very much how all these people look forever at some *theory of a thing*, never any *thing*’.<sup>12</sup> According to Carlyle, Mill was both a uniquely odd individual and linked irrevocably to utilitarians and philosophical radicals. In the same letter, he remarked that the radicals particularly valued an article by Mill because of its ‘precision, closeness, coldness, – barrenness’, thus extending his sense of Mill’s personal deficiencies to the work he produced.

In other letters, the references to Mill being imprisoned or frozen within ice were repeated again and again, especially in relation to Mill’s relationship with Harriet Taylor. Writing of the gossip provoked by Mill’s relationship with Harriet he described the scandal as ‘this very item that he does not speak, that he never could speak, but was to sit imprisoned in as in thick ribbed ice, voiceless, uncommunicating’.<sup>13</sup> Again, a few months later, Carlyle insisted: ‘I love him much; as a friend *frozen within ice* for me!’.<sup>14</sup> Most strikingly, when Carlyle wrote to Jane Welsh Carlyle to report on his stay with Mill’s family in the wake of James Mill’s death, he claimed that Mill was emotionally, physically and intellectually impoverished. He observed that Mill ‘talked much and not stupidly, far from that, but without emotion of any discernible kind; he seemed to me

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<sup>11</sup> TC to John A. Carlyle, 30 April 1835, CLO.

<sup>12</sup> TC to John A. Carlyle, 30 April 1835, Carlyle’s emphasis, CLO.

<sup>13</sup> TC to John Sterling, 3 October 1836, CLO.

<sup>14</sup> TC to John Sterling, 7 January 1837, Carlyle’s emphasis, CLO.



withering or withered into the miserablest metaphysical *scrae* [thin, shrivelled creature], body and mind, that I had almost ever met with in the world.<sup>15</sup> Later in the century Carlyle expressed the same sentiments more publicly. In his *Reminiscences* (1881) he dismissed Mill's editorship of the *Westminster Review* as 'sawdust to the masthead, and a croakery of crawling things, instead of a speaking of men' (I: 417). He also disparaged the personal conversations he had with Mill: 'Dialogues fallen all dim, except they were never in the least genial to me, and that I took them as one would wine where no nectar is to be had, or even thin ale where there is no wine' (I: 410). The catalogue of epithets that Carlyle used, privately and publicly, to characterise Mill and his work, were concerned with undermining Mill's status as an independent man, and thus with negating the power of a voice which pronounced so many contrary sentiments to Carlyle's own.

Towards the end of the century, an account of Mill appeared which seemed to owe much in tone and theme to Carlyle's views. In *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen* (1895), Leslie Stephen reported that his brother had pronounced Mill to be "cold as ice", a mere "walking book" (316). James Fitzjames Stephen's intellectual engagement with Mill was deep: having taken several of Mill's books with him in a travelling library on a voyage to India, he published *Liberty, Fraternity, Equality* – a book-length attack on *On Liberty* – in 1873. However, the issues he had with Mill were at least as much to do with his temperament and physicality as with his philosophy. According to Leslie Stephen:

He seemed to Fitzjames at least to dwell in a region where the great passions and forces which really stir mankind are neglected or treated as mere accidental disturbances of the right theory. Mill seemed to him not so much cold-blooded as bloodless, wanting in the fire and force of the full grown male animal, and comparable to a superlatively crammed senior wrangler, whose body had been stunted by his brains. Fitzjames could only make a real friend of a man in whom he could recognise the capacity for masculine emotions as well as logical acuteness ... (231)

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<sup>15</sup> TC to Jane Welsh Carlyle, 24 July 1836, Carlyle's emphasis, gloss in square brackets given by CLO.

Though Leslie Stephen is mediating his brother's views, his own interest in the link between physical and intellectual prowess is evident. During his time at Cambridge Leslie Stephen had embraced wrangler culture and become one its biggest proponents. Mill was an example of someone who has failed to achieve the demanding balance required. Though wrangler culture was associated with sexual abstinence,<sup>16</sup> it is strongly implied here that Mill's lack was also a sexual one. The Stephens gave a different take on Mill's unworldliness, with the emphasis on his failure to mature sexually and to display an acceptable level of heterosexual desire. The concept of 'masculine emotions' seems particularly connected to the Carlylean model of masculinity – for Fitzjames Stephen, like Carlyle, Mill's perceived inadequacy in this respect prevented him from partaking of the benefits of homosocial relationships.

As Leslie Stephen developed his account of his brother's characteristics and values, Mill continued to be a useful point of contrast. Thus he speculated further on the reasons for the discord between Fitzjames and Mill:

The two men could never come into cordial relations, and the ultimate reason, I think, was what I should call Mill's want of virility. He might be called 'cold', not as wanting in tenderness or enthusiasm, but as representing a kind of philosophical asceticism. Whether from his early education, his recluse life, or his innate temperament, half the feelings which moved mankind seemed to him simply coarse and brutal. They were altogether detestable – not the perversions which, after all, might show a masculine and powerful nature. Mill's view, for example, seemed to be that all the differences between the sexes were accidental, and that women could be turned into men by trifling changes in the law. To a man of ordinary flesh and blood, who had actually grounded his opinions, not upon books, but upon actual experience of life, such doctrines appear to be not only erroneous, but indicative of a hopeless thinness of character. And, so, again, Fitzjames absolutely refused to test the value of the great patriotic passions which are the mainsprings of history by the mere calculus of abstract concepts which satisfied Mill. Fitzjames, like Henry

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<sup>16</sup> See Warwick, 'Exercising the Student Body: Mathematics and Athleticism in Victorian Cambridge', on wrangler life and sexual abstinence (312) and Leslie Stephen's involvement with wrangler culture (313).

VIII, 'loved a man', and the man of Mill's speculations seemed to be a colourless, flaccid creature, who required, before all things, to have some red blood infused into his veins. (316–17)

Some familiar charges against Mill are here given vehement expression. Theory is opposed to experience; abstraction is opposed to flesh and blood. Mill's non-essentialist view of gender is seen as abnormal and impractical. This appeal to common sense and experience was not unlike the position taken by Oliphant, and also by Anne Mozley, in their unfavourable reviews of *Subjection* in 1869. Both Oliphant and Mozley, like Fitzjames Stephen, accused Mill of a scanty knowledge of real, unphilosophical bodies, driven by or responding to biological impulses. Fitzjames Stephen, according to his brother Leslie, took this line of attack even further by framing Mill's perceived personal deficiencies in terms of nationhood, history, royalty and procreation. His fitness to form part of a powerful homosocial group in the present, and take his place in a genealogy of powerful men, was called into question in strikingly sexualised terms: Mill was effete and impotent. He was refined to the point of irrelevance. The objection was not just to Mill's personal behaviour, but to how he conceived of masculinity in general.

Leslie Stephen's own views on Mill – expressed in volume three of *The English Utilitarians* (1900) – are more measured. Indeed, in 1906 Mill's disciple, Morley, was effusive in his praise for Stephen's assessment, asserting that: 'So far, the most elaborate exposition, criticism, and amplification of Mill's work and thought has come from the brave and true-hearted Leslie Stephen, in one of his three volumes on the Utilitarians' ('John Stuart Mill' 174). Unlike his brother Fitzjames, Leslie Stephen thought that Mill was an 'unsurpassable ... interpreter between the abstract philosopher and the man of common sense' (17). Stephen's retrospective view states in bald terms the hostility felt towards the utilitarians and philosophical radicals: 'Philosophical in English is synonymous with visionary, unpractical, or perhaps, simply foolish. The philosophers seemed to be men of crotchets, fitter for the study than the platform' (31). Mill, he acknowledged, 'softened', 'qualified' and popularised the views which the utilitarians propounded, even if his links with this group still made him, for a time, 'something of an alien' (13). And there was one major difference between James Mill and his son that compounded Mill's difficulties: 'James Mill, whatever his faults, was a man, and born to be a leader of men. He was rigid, imperative, and capable of controlling and dominating.

John Stuart Mill was far weaker in that sense, and weaker because he had less virility' (71). In Stephen's view, Mill's 'unusual tenderness' indicated womanliness:

His feelings ... were ... as tender as a woman's. They were wanting, not in keenness, but in the massiveness which implies more masculine fibre. And this, indeed, is what seems to indicate the truth. Mill could never admit any fundamental difference between the sexes. That is, I believe, a great but a natural misconception for one who was in character as much feminine as masculine. (72-3)

So for Leslie Stephen, Mill's intellectual and political achievements were still marred by his refusal to take an essentialist view of differences between men and women. Moreover, his receptivity rendered him too open and credulous, 'like a woman' (73). However, like Jehu Junior, Stephen was willing to concede that this was not wholly disadvantageous: if Mill's sensitivity and shortage of masculine vigour made him unable to originate new ideas, it did at least enable him 'to develop and widen the philosophy in which he was immersed' (73). This image of widening, growth, and development, features in other depictions of Mill's relation to his utilitarian roots. Even R.H. Hutton, who criticised Mill's 'radical deficiencies as a philosopher' acknowledged 'his genius for ... giving breadth and elasticity to an apparently inelastic and rigid set of notions' ('Mr John Stuart Mill, 205, 206).

Mill's friend, Alexander Bain, also offered a more measured view than Carlyle or Fitzjames Stephen, but like Leslie Stephen, he still found aspects of Mill's masculinity questionable, in ways that impacted on his philosophical role. In the final chapter of Bain's 1882 biography of Mill, 'Character and Influence', Bain claims not to offer any new perspective on Mill, but only to consolidate information already in the public domain. Throughout, Bain stresses Mill's refinement: though he had 'very large emotional susceptibilities' he never became angry or enraged (149, 151). In Bain's more sympathetic account, tenderness was evidence of kindness rather than womanly weakness: Mill's capacious tenderness meant that 'kindness to animals was a characteristic form' for him (150). This, combined with his interest in botany, meant that he did not partake of traditionally masculine sports:

Plant-hunting was to him what sports are to other persons. I doubt whether, under any circumstances, he could have brought himself to be a sportsman. Hunting and shooting would, I am pretty certain, have been abhorrent to him; and, while his excursions often brought him into opportunities for fishing, he never availed himself of these. The chase for plants was all that he desired. (152)

Not for Mill the type of recreations indulged in by the male characters in the first novel by Charles Kingsley, where the chase of live creatures gave 'hunting and fishing their unutterable and almost spiritual charm' (*Yeast: A Problem* 14). Kingsley's portrayal of 'the chase' in such mystical terms indicates the potential for a plant-hunting preference to be interpreted as a reflection on Mill's masculinity.

If, at the same time as commending Mill's aversion to blood sports, Bain implied that there were drawbacks to such a shortage of aggression, then he was not alone. In his *Autobiography* Herbert Spencer maintained that Mill misunderstood the motivations for participating in fishing. After Spencer had invited Mill salmon fishing, Mill responded, 'My murderous propensities are confined to the vegetable world. I take as great a delight in the pursuit of plants as you do in the pursuit of salmon ...' (2: 213). Spencer defended his own love of fishing by insisting that: 'Having in boyhood had no experience of the ordinary boyish sports, Mill had a somewhat erroneous conception of them. Hence the inappropriate use of the word "murderous"; as though the gratification was exclusively in killing' (2: 213). In a memorial essay, the botanist Henry Trimen had similarly drawn attention to the solitary and peaceful nature of Mill's recreational interest. He painted a leisurely picture of Mill pottering around 'with his trousers turned up out of the mud ... in the search after a marsh-loving rarity' (47). Mill's botanising, Trimen noted, was strictly a hobby and he never 'entered into the battle-field where the great biological questions of the day are being fought' (47). There is a hint of regret in Trimen's observation that Mill took a relaxed attitude to biology, rather than the more confrontational – and manly – approach apparently required to engage with topical issues (just as, in response to *Three Essays on Religion*, Morley was to express his disappointment that Mill had not made his views on evolutionary theory known). Biological debate, like parliamentary debate, was considered one of the 'battlegrounds' of public life in which Mill occupied a dubious position.

Bain not only drew attention to Mill's distaste for manly sports, but also his low appetites for sex and food:

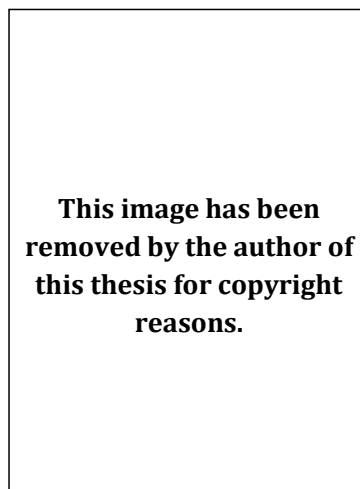
I am not singular in the opinion that in the so-called sensual feelings, he was below average; that in fact, he was not a good representative of humanity in respect of these; and scarcely did justice to them in his theories. He was not an ascetic in any sense; he desired that every genuine susceptibility to pleasure should be turned to account, so far as it did not interfere with better pleasures; but he made light of the difficulty of controlling the sexual appetite. He was exceedingly temperate as regarded the table; there was nothing of the gourmand superadded to his healthy appetite. (149)

In 'The Philosopher and the Chicken: On the Dietetics of Disembodied Knowledge', Steven Shapin considers the ascetic ideal in representations of the philosopher, and how, historically, dietary and sexual abstemiousness were associated with intellectual life (24–37). He notes such ideas shift in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century to a rejection of the 'idea of disembodiment as the condition for making and recognizing truth' (43). Bain refuted the charge of asceticism which others, such as Ward and Leslie Stephen, were to make so freely against Mill. Nevertheless he highlighted the way that Mill's life corresponded to the hierarchy of pleasures outlined in *Utilitarianism*, where intellectual gratifications were privileged over bodily ones. From Carlyle's letters of the 1830s (so earlier in date than the trend Shapin observes), through to the later nineteenth-century accounts from Bain and the Stephens, abstinence and disembodiment were rejected as acceptable conditions for Mill's philosophising, and they were done so in gendered terms. As with Mill's parliamentary performances, embodied ideals of masculine authority, foregrounding virility and physical prowess were held up by way of contrast. However, the accounts of Mill's unacceptably disembodied state are complicated – as the next section explains – by competing interpretations which emphasised not lack, but excess.

### **3.4 'A heart of truly feminine sensibility'**

Though Bain depicted Mill's life as conspicuously restrained in its theoretical consideration and practical pursuit of bodily pleasures, he took an opposite view of his

‘emotional susceptibilities’. Like many commentators then and since, Bain did not conceal his disdain for Mill’s publicly-expressed devotion to Harriet Taylor.<sup>17</sup> This Bain put down to ‘excessive emotion’ and ‘overweening passion’ (169, 171). As I argued in chapter two, Mill’s ‘Saint of Rationalism’ label belies the extent to which he was associated with emotion, passion and sensitivity. The accusations of imbalance, and dangerous heat, which I highlighted in the ‘Passionate emotionism’ section of chapter two, were frequently aligned with a feminine disposition.



**Fig. 14. Heart-shaped pocket watch detail from ‘The “Mill”-ennium’. *Fun*. 4 May 1867.**

Such ideas are subtly encoded in the cartoon from *Fun* shown in chapter one, Figure 1 (page 8). The cartoon depicts the moment when Mill proposed the amendment to the wording of the Reform Bill, which if passed, would have allowed women to vote. Though it referenced a very specific moment in British politics, the cartoon also engaged with the broader debate about the suitability of a philosopher taking on a political role, and the widespread claim that, because he envisioned an age of greater gender equality, Mill was not sufficiently in touch with practical realities. The pose of Bright, in the foreground of the picture, indicates his ambivalence concerning the amendment (he voted in favour of it, though this was at odds with the objections to female suffrage he expressed beforehand and afterwards<sup>18</sup>); it also suggests doubt about Mill’s status within this group of politicians. The heart-shaped pocket watch suspended from Mill’s waistcoat (Figure 14) is a small but telling detail, symbolising the extended discussion about Mill’s tendency to be ruled by his heart, rather than his head.

<sup>17</sup> See note 6 to chapter 2 (page 55).

<sup>18</sup> According to extracts from Bright’s diaries on the Rochdale Boroughwide Cultural Trust website.

More blatantly, in their obituary of Mill, the *Saturday Review* linked Mill's commitment to gender equality to a mental imbalance. They asserted that: 'Mr Mill's profound belief in the intellectual and political equality of the sexes was a delusion which would alone have diminished the confidence which might have been reposed in his authority. There was in truth something feminine in his own mental constitution which disturbed the calm balance of his judgment' ('Mr Mill' 639). While the *Saturday Review* made the predictable connection between Mill's commitment to gender equality and his own purportedly feminine constitution, it was not just his support for women's suffrage that prompted such comments. The accusation of feminine imbalance was used to attack various tenets of Mill's theories and his philosophical practices.

In 1871, a professor of political economy at Oxford, Bonamy Price, included the following assessment of Mill's mental powers in a critique of land reform proposals:

The disturbing forces in Mr Mill's mind which pervert the faculty of judgment are many, and their action is incessant. He is destitute of true fairness; he seldom does justice to the position of his opponent. He constantly neglects to notice his reasoning ... . The reason of this singular weakness in a writer endowed with so much mental power, is the feminine passionateness of his nature, the quickness with which his feelings are excited, even on the most abstract subject, and the consequent eagerness to establish his own side, and his dislike of giving due weight to the side of his adversary. (203)

Price created an image of Mill completely opposed to that of the 'Saint of Rationalism' – easily riled, unfair, and egotistical. He picked on an issue central to Mill's account of successful intellectual endeavour: cognisance of opponents' arguments. In *On Liberty* Mill had argued that 'He who knows only his side of the case, knows little of that' (42), and in his *Autobiography* he was to assess his one great intellectual strength as his 'readiness and eagerness to learn from everybody, and to make room in my opinions for every new acquisition by adjusting the old and the new to one another' (189). So the 'feminine passionateness' charge was used to discredit Mill's philosophical *modus operandi* as much as his specific views on land reform.

In Frederic Harrison's critique of 1896, Mill's 'feminine' qualities were initially depicted as both strength and weakness. Harrison praised the direct connection



between Mill's compassion and his intellect, asserting: 'Mill himself was a man with a heart of truly feminine sensibility. His heart was even richer than his brain. Under the stimulus of indignation for the outrages and obstacles of which he saw women to be frequent victims, his acute reasoning powers caught fire' (502). However, like many, Harrison felt that ultimately this led to an unforgiveable imbalance – an imbalance which was palpable in the pages of *Subjection*. Harrison maintained that 'there are purple patches in the book where we seem to hear that spiteful wrongheadedness of some woman who has grown old in nursing her wrongs, out of touch with actual life and with her own sex' (502). Complex layers of prejudice are made visible here, as Mill is supposed to have uncritically given voice to a woefully mistaken female viewpoint. Harrison further contended that Mill describing British women's position under nineteenth-century marriage laws and customs as equivalent to, or worse than, that of slaves, was an instance of his 'feminine want of balance, of knowledge, and of impartiality' (502–3). In making this argument, Harrison was completely out of step with New Women writers of the 1890s, such as Mona Caird, who found Mill's rhetorical stance on women and slavery deeply resonant and praised his rationality on the subject.

However, when the focus was on qualities such as sensitivity, delicacy, modesty and refinement, rather than unruly emotions and passions, Mill's 'truly feminine sensibility' also accommodated more sympathetic ideas. John Morley's account of Anthony Trollope's life for *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1883 included a description of Trollope's only meeting with Mill. It made much of the clash between the two men's characters: 'The contrast was too violent between the modesty and courtesy of the host and the blustering fashions of Trollope. These came out the worse when they figured in the same room with the gentle precision of Mill ... . It was a relief to get the bull safely away from the china-shop' ('Anthony Trollope' 55–6). If there is some sense here that Trollope's 'sterling manliness' (55) is bolstered by way of contrast with Mill's more placid demeanour (anticipating Morley's comparison of Mill to more manly speakers in his *Recollections*), others cited his modesty and gentleness in a whole-heartedly approbative way. After talking with Mill in 1840, Barclay Fox recorded in his diary that he was 'most cordial affectionate & in short J. Millish' (192); a few days later after dinner and conversation, he noted 'such a combination of giant intellect with feminine modesty, is rare indeed' (194). For Fox, Mill's 'feminine modesty' denoted a refreshing absence of egotism, just as it did for Conway, who observed in his *Autobiography* that

Mill 'was a man of delicate sentiment, elegant manners, and affectionate nature. By the personal care he had given to his stepdaughter, a care maternal as well as paternal, she was able to appreciate his philosophy, learning, and his unique personality' (II: 16–17). In Conway's portrait, Mill's step-parenting skills and his support for Helen Taylor's intellectual development were appealingly androgynous.

An 1875 article on 'Genius and Sensitiveness' in *Bow Bells*, a family magazine of literature and art, declared that: 'With men of genius, sensitiveness is a perfect disease; indeed, it is this very quality which enables them to feel and to express those emotions which escape other men' (223). For such extraordinary individuals, sensitiveness caused loneliness, and a sense of idealism doomed to generate disappointment, but it was also the characteristic which enabled an unusually strong sympathy with others. Mill featured in the roll call of eminent men, which also included Byron and Dickens, who were perceived to have been both afflicted and invigorated in this way. Though the most obvious reason for Mill's inclusion here was the relatively recent publication of his *Autobiography*, such a view of the connection between genius and sensitivity might well have been drawn from the pages of *Subjection*, in which Mill had equated nervous temperaments in both men and women with latent ability to bring about societal change. Sensitivity, delicacy, modesty and refinement were all qualities more commonly associated with ideals of Victorian femininity, and as such, capable of being used disparagingly to provide evidence of Mill's weakness as an eminent public man. However, they were also the qualities which were frequently interpreted as signs of Mill's unique strength and appeal as a philosopher, and as a human being.

### **3.5 'A Goddess Called "The Passion of Reason"'**

After Mill's death in 1873 Florence Nightingale wrote to the social reformer Edwin Chadwick, who had introduced her to Mill, and said:

The loss we have in John Stuart Mill is irreparable – I think there must have been a Goddess called "The Passion of Reason" in olden times: & *he* was that Goddess returned in the flesh to life. And he would not at all have considered the gender humiliating. For he was like neither man nor woman – but he was Wisdom 'thrilling' with emotion to his figures 'ends' (which last was truly said of him) – impassioned Reason – or reasonable Passion – in the sense which one supposes the Greeks had in their mind

when they made Wisdom a Woman. Or shall we call him Sancta Sophia?  
(qtd. in Vicinus 343, Nightingale's emphasis)

In 'A Sub-"Note of Interrogation": I – What Will be Our Religion in 1999?' in July of 1873, Nightingale included a version of her note to Chadwick. In the article for *Fraser's Magazine* she argued that people needed to develop powers of discrimination which are neither 'Universal toleration' nor 'Universal criticism', and used the example of misrepresentations of Mill's position to illustrate her point:

There are some who see no difference between the mutual flattery of clever men of a college or members of family; and the real, honest sympathy and co-operation in the real honest search after truth. There are some who see no difference between a Positivist and a John Stuart Mill – oh! too soon taken from us – 'he should have died hereafter', – when shall we see again that true 'liberality', which would *wish* to be defeated in the cause of truth? – when shall we see again that Passion of Reason or Reason of Passion – impassioned Reason and reasonable Passion – wise, but 'thrilling with emotion to his fingers' ends' – passionate in the cause of Truth alone, Sancta Sophia? – Had there been a goddess called the 'Passion of Reason', *he* would not have considered the gender humiliating, but have asked: Why did the Greeks make Wisdom a woman? There are none like him – none to come after him. (34–5, Nightingale's emphasis)

Nightingale's words stand out among nineteenth-century depictions for their unapologetic comparison of Mill to a strong female figure. Nightingale challenged the viewpoint, epitomised in the pages of *Judy*, that there could be no more demeaning way of representing an eminent Victorian man than to say that he was like a woman. Moreover, in stark contrast to Carlyle, James Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen, and others, Nightingale put the emphasis on Mill's successful embodiment of knowledge and compassion. Above all, in her semantic experiments with combinations of passion and reason, she insisted that what Mill had achieved was a commendable balance rather than a lamentable imbalance – a balance that was exciting and inspirational.

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**Fig. 1. Newspaper clippings pasted into the front cover of Thomas Hardy's copy of *On Liberty*. On the left, 'A Glimpse of John Stuart Mill' from the *Times* on 20 May 1906 and on the right, folded up, 'John Stuart Mill' by John Morley from the *Times Literary Supplement* on 18 May 1906. Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum.**

#### 4. 'My theoretic unconventionality broke down': Millian Philosophy in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy

It is not the fault of any creed, but of the complicated nature of human affairs, that rules of conduct cannot be so framed as to require no exceptions, and that hardly any kind of action can safely be laid down as either always obligatory or always condemnable. There is no ethical creed which does not temper the rigidity of its laws, by giving a certain latitude, under the moral responsibility of the agent, for accommodation to peculiarities of circumstances; and under every creed, at the opening thus made, self-deception and dishonest casuistry get in. There exists no moral system under which there do not arise unequivocal cases of conflicting obligation. These are the real difficulties, the knotty points both in the theory of ethics, and in the conscientious guidance of personal conduct. They are overcome practically with greater or with less success according to the intellect and virtue of the individual; but it can hardly be pretended that anyone will be the less qualified for dealing with them, from possessing an ultimate standard to which conflicting rights and duties can be referred. (297–8)

*Utilitarianism*, 1861

But I was a coward – as so many women are – and my theoretic unconventionality broke down. (213)

*Jude the Obscure*, 1895

Pasted into the front cover of Thomas Hardy's copy of *On Liberty* are two newspaper clippings (see Figure 1). One is a tribute to Mill by John Morley, published in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 18 May 1906, to mark the one hundredth anniversary of Mill's birth. The other is 'A Glimpse of John Stuart Mill', a letter Hardy wrote to the *Times* in response to Morley's article. These early twentieth-century assessments of Mill bring together many of the themes I have discussed in the previous chapters, and provide a useful starting point for thinking about the ways in which Hardy engages with Millian philosophy throughout his fiction.

In his review of Mill's achievements, Morley insisted that the defining feature of the philosopher's greatness was a seamless connection between his theory and his practice: 'His life was true to his professions, and was no less tolerant, liberal, unselfish, singleminded, high, and strenuous than they were' (173). The link between theory and action was obvious and automatic for Mill, Morley suggested: 'His postulate of a decided predominance of the active over the passive meant devotion of thought to practical ends. His life was not stimulated by mere intellectual curiosity, but by the resolute purpose of furthering human improvement' (174). Morley presented Mill's accomplishments in reverential and religious terms, asserting that Mill saw 'life as a sacred instrument for good purposes', that he was 'held in general honour as a sort of oracle' and that he 'really succeeded in procuring a sort of popular halo round the

dismal and derided name of philosopher' (174). 'Only those who can recall the social odium that surrounded heretical opinions before Mill began to achieve popularity', maintained Morley, 'are able rightly to appreciate the battle in which he was in many aspects the protagonist' (174). Here he alluded to difficulties – a time before Mill achieved renown, the hostile reaction provoked by heterodox opinions – but in his retrospective overview he also conveyed a sense of inevitability about Mill's central role in the struggle.

It is only when Morley described Mill's entrance into politics, 'during a short and a bad Parliament' that a stronger sense of disjunction between theory and practice crept in (174). Fellow parliamentarians 'felt that his presence was in some way an honour to them', Morley recalled, 'and they listened with creditable respect to speeches that were acute, well-argued, apt for the occasion, and not too long nor too many. But, after all, Mill was not of them, and he was not at home with them' (174). In the centenary piece, Morley repeated Disraeli's sneering comment about Mill being a 'finishing governess', but did so matter-of-factly, without the hint of collusion in this viewpoint which, as I noted in chapter three, he conveyed in his *Reminiscences* (174). On the contrary, in his record of Mill for posterity, Morley affirmed Mill's manliness by asserting that he was a protagonist in the battleground of public opinion, and that he was involved in 'an incessant and manful wrestle for what he thought was true and right' (174).

While Morley considered Mill from the point of view of his confirmed position in the history of philosophy and social change, Hardy's 'footnote' conveyed a far greater sense of uncertainty, of provisionality. Hardy dwelt on the idea, shared by many of the commentators discussed in chapters two and three, of Mill not being at home at a public meeting – 'a man out of place'. Observing the philosopher on the hustings, he saw a series of contrasts and tensions. Mill, the author of *On Liberty*, was unexpectedly transplanted from his writing desk to the open air as a parliamentary candidate. Mill, 'one of the profoundest thinkers' of the nineteenth century became Mill, 'a human personage in his actual form and flesh'. In seeking to personalise Mill's experience as a public intellectual, Hardy created a strikingly visceral portrait of the man of letters.

Hardy's Mill is a figure of intellectual authority who is also an individual taking a personal risk. Mill's 'religious sincerity' and 'personified earnestness' are juxtaposed with the ambivalent crowd, not fully committed to understanding, or capable of comprehending, what they hear. The group watching Mill on the hustings are like his fellow parliamentarians when he does get elected: aware that they are in the presence

of greatness, but somewhat bewildered by it. Hardy reflects on the potential for philosophers and teachers to be misunderstood. His description of Mill's head draws attention to the philosopher's physical vulnerability as he faced a potentially agitated or violent crowd. Even the appearance of Mill's profile against St Paul's Church suggested antagonism, evoking as it did for Hardy Mill's views on religion, which ran counter to the prevailing ones. 'The cameo clearness of his face ... against the blue shadow of a church' recalls the beginning of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and the description of Dick Dewey walking to choir practice at dusk: 'his profile appearing on the light background like the portrait of a gentleman in black cardboard' (12). Hardy's portrayal of a great philosopher is not dissimilar to his depiction of a common working man, thus providing another counterpoint to the grandeur of Morley's terms: 'sacred instrument', 'sort of oracle' and 'popular halo'. Nevertheless, the sense of contingency extends to Hardy in his role as spectator, too. The viewpoint Hardy offers is that of 'the man in the street'. Having gained fame and recognition himself by the time he wrote the letter, he recalls a time when he was an anonymous part of the crowd, observing an extraordinary philosopher. The contrast between Mill's fame and Hardy's anonymity is nicely captured in the heading given to the letter by the *Times*, 'A Glimpse of John Stuart Mill'.

The letter encapsulates Hardy's interest in the role that eminent theorists and well-known theories can play in ordinary, everyday lives and is significant when considering how he engaged with Millian philosophy in his fiction. Hardy turned Morley's statement into a question: what does it mean to say that a person's life is true to their professions? This question, which animated many of the depictions of Mill discussed in the previous chapters, is also a question that runs through Hardy's fiction, from *Under the Greenwood Tree* – when the vicar says "You know Dewey, it is often said how difficult a matter it is to act up to our convictions and please all parties. It may be said with equal truth that it is difficult for a man of any appreciativeness to have convictions at all" (86) – to *Jude the Obscure* (1895) – when the narrator comments that with Sue Bridehead 'things which were right in theory were wrong in practice' (210). *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) is a novel particularly concerned with the relationship between philosophy and conduct. At the beginning of the story, when Gabriel Oak's dog is shot after he chases his sheep over a precipice, it is 'another instance of the untoward fate which so often attends dogs and other philosophers who follow out a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and attempt perfectly consistent

conduct in a world made up so largely of compromise' (87). In the quotation from *Utilitarianism* at the head of this chapter, in which Mill defends his version of Bentham's moral code, he concedes that adherence to any set of principles is affected by individual circumstances and complicated by difficulties. Hardy's focus might be said to be resolutely on the 'knotty points' of ethics and personal conduct: how ties to family, friends, and communities, or receptivity to the views of others, can make forming or sticking to our own views problematic.

The autobiographical *Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* (1984) contains a note Hardy wrote in 1882 on the value of theory as a guide in everyday life:

Since I discovered, several years ago, that I was living in a world where nothing bears out in practice what it promises incipiently, I have troubled myself very little about theories ... .Where development according to perfect reason is limited to the narrow region of pure mathematics, I am content with tentativeness from day to day. (160)

A passage written in 1901 reiterated his earlier note about theories:

After reading various philosophic systems, and being struck with their futilities, I have come to this: – *Let every man make a philosophy for himself out of his own experience.* He will not be able to escape using terms and phraseology from earlier philosophers, but let him avoid adopting their theories if he values his own mental life. Let him avoid the fate of Coleridge, and save years of labour by working out his own views as given by his surroundings. (333, emphasis in original)

Hardyeian critics have often taken their cue from these declarations, offering readings of Hardy's work which acknowledge the influence of multiple thinkers but definitive commitment to none. Robert Schweik, for example, warns that the diverse and overlapping sources for Hardy's writing make it difficult to identify precise influences. He argues that 'elements of contemporary thought in Hardy's works tend to be embedded in a densely intricate web of imaginative connections and qualifications' (54). Accordingly, Schweik very briefly examines Mill's influence on Hardy as one among several others including Leslie Stephen, François Fourier, Herbert Spencer, Ludwig Feuerbach, Auguste Comte, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Eduard von Hartmann.



When other critics have considered Mill in relation to Hardy, they have also done so by considering at least part of this intricate web. Angelique Richardson and Jane Thomas have both considered Mill's influence on Hardy in detail, but in the context of how Hardy also engages with Spencer and Darwin. In 'Hardy and the Place of Culture' (2009), Richardson argues that 'Hardy was caught between biology and philosophy, between, in essence, Darwin and Mill, and not always able to accommodate both' (55). In *Thomas Hardy, Femininity and Dissent: Reassessing the 'Minor' Novels* (1999) Thomas says that 'Among the contemporary thinkers whose philosophical and ethical systems provided Hardy with ideas, terms and phraseology for his own views were Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill' (12). In 'Literature and Science: Hardy's Response to Mill, Huxley and Darwin' (1981), G. Glen Wickens explores the scientific context of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, emphasising parallels between the novel and definitions of nature in *Three Essays on Religion*, *Origin of Species* and Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature* (1863).

In focusing solely on Hardy's engagement with Mill, this chapter does not seek to dismiss the significance of other influences, but rather to offer an extended reading of the Millian terms and phraseology that Hardy could not escape using. For, even in disavowing particular philosophic systems, the philosopher that Hardy echoes is Mill, especially a line Hardy highlighted in his copy of *On Liberty*: 'it is the privilege and proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, to use and interpret experience in his own way' (64).<sup>1</sup> In line with this emphasis on intellectual independence, Hardy's fiction pays sustained attention to the disjunctions or correspondences between the inner and outer lives of its characters. Here, too, Mill's terms come to mind. In *On Liberty* Mill wrote that 'To what an extent doctrines intrinsically fitted to make the deepest impression upon the mind may remain in it as a dead belief, without being ever realized in the imagination, the feelings, or the understanding, is exemplified by the manner in which the majority of believers hold the doctrines of Christianity' (46). Mill was concerned that, when it came to Christian morality, people inherited or adopted practices which were unconnected to theory on a personal level. In Hardy's fiction this type of discontinuity is explored even in minor characters, like the pub landlord in *A Laodicean* (1881) who explains that he became a Methodist because the church was conveniently situated: "'Twas owing to my taking a

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<sup>1</sup> For consistency with other chapters, page references to *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism* given in this chapter are to the editions listed in the Works Cited and Consulted, rather than Hardy's own copies.

house next to the chapel; so that what with hearing the organ bizz like a bee through the wall, and what with finding it saved umbrellas on wet Sundays, I went over to that faith for two years” (33). The weather-prophet in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) is uniquely placed to understand the disconnections between what people say about religion and superstitions and what they actually believe: ‘He was sometimes astonished that men could profess so little and believe so much at his house when at church they professed so much and believed so little’ (184–5). In spite of, or perhaps because of Hardy’s tentativeness about theorising, his fiction – as I shall show – often investigates Mill’s contention that, sets of beliefs, religious or secular, which are outwardly professed, should connect meaningfully with a person’s inner world, and provide consistency and coherence to the different parts of their existence.

Hardy’s recourse to Mill to express ideas about intellectual independence and connected or disconnected thought provides a broad framework for approaching his fiction. At the same time, his annotations in copies of *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*, and his direct references to *On Liberty* in *Jude the Obscure* and to *Utilitarianism* in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, provide evidence of his specific engagements with Mill.<sup>2</sup> I pay attention to the passages highlighted, underlined and annotated by Hardy in his own copies of *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*, but I also argue that Hardy’s fiction engages more broadly with ideas from the *Logic, Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865), *Subjection* and *Three Essays on Religion* – works which Hardy may have become familiar with indirectly through the periodical press, even if he did not engage with them directly.<sup>3</sup> The following sections of this chapter examine Hardy’s fictional treatment of several Millian concepts: overcoming deep-rooted ideas; the value of self-sacrifice; the link between personal happiness and general happiness; what makes life satisfactory; and language

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<sup>2</sup> Hardy’s copy of *On Liberty* is in the Hardy Collection at Dorset County Museum. His copy of *Utilitarianism* is in the Richard L. Purdy Collection of Thomas Hardy at Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library – it is marked with crosses and lines in the margins, but no comments. In *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography* (1954), Evelyn Hardy (who was not related to Thomas Hardy), describes how the annotations to *On Liberty* are more extensive than other books in Hardy’s library: ‘It is more heavily scored and underlined than any other of Hardy’s extant books which it has been my privilege to examine. There are as many as fifty marked passages, a paper marker, and, in addition, several annotations. His statement that he knew the essay “almost by heart” is visually corroborated when we see the intense study which he gave to it in young manhood’ (69).

<sup>3</sup> Jane Thomas argues that this is quite likely to be the case with *Subjection*, for example. She notes: ‘Hardy’s *Literary Notebooks* show that periodicals such as the *Saturday Review*, the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century* provided him with an endless fund of information, opinion and anecdote. These periodicals functioned as a forum for debate on subjects related to the general emancipation of women as well as containing reviews and notices of works such as John Stuart Mill’s *On the Subjection of Women* and articles clearly informed by the ideas of leading contributors to the “Woman Question”’ (28).

as ‘the conservator of ancient experience’. Finally, this chapter considers how Hardy draws on Mill to theorise about ‘The Profitable Reading of Fiction’ (1888), and reflects on how reading Mill alongside Hardy defamiliarises parts of Mill’s writing by making them unexpectedly applicable to literary endeavours.

#### 4.1 Overcoming Deep-Rootedness

An image that recurs in Mill’s writing, and in Hardy’s, is that of deep-rooted feelings and opinions in need of excision. The corollary to this is the often insurmountable difficulty of overcoming notions which are entrenched – in public opinion, communities, and individuals – in order to bring about social change. Mill opens *Subjection* by calling attention to the difficult terms of the debate about the social position of women: ‘there are so many causes tending to make the feelings connected with this subject the most intense and most deeply-rooted of those which gather round and protect old institutions and customs’ (471). Mill’s frustration about the way society views issues of female freedom is comparable to Elfride’s complaint about her father’s domineering in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873): ‘He is either biassed in favour of a thing, or prejudiced against it. Argument is powerless against either feeling’ (90). In ‘The Utility of Religion’ Mill considers the tremendous power given to religious beliefs by their early inculcation:

Now it is especially characteristic of the impressions of early education, that they possess what it is so much more difficult for later convictions to obtain – command over the feelings. We see daily how powerful a hold these first impressions retain over the feelings even of those, who have given up the opinions which they were early taught. While on the other hand, it is only persons of a much higher degree of natural sensibility and intellect combined than it is at all common to meet with, whose feelings entwine themselves with anything like the same force round opinions which they have adopted from their own investigations later in life; and even when they do, we may say with truth that it is because the strong sense of moral duty, the sincerity, courage and self-devotion which enabled them to do so, were themselves the fruits of early impressions.

(81)

For Mill, it is the early exposure to religious ideas that makes them so compelling, rather than anything inherent in religion itself. Other ideas which people are exposed to during childhood will therefore be similarly commanding, and involve a lifelong process of negotiation. Always an advocate of intellectual independence, Mill still recognises that it takes exceptional strength to successfully disentangle opinions acquired in adulthood from early associations when the two conflict, and even then the groundwork for success must have been laid in childhood.

*Jude the Obscure* explores exactly these difficulties in negotiating and overcoming deep-seated conventions and feelings. When Sue Bridehead agrees to marry Phillotson in the first instance, she does so because of her sensitivity to gossip – gossip provoked when she stays away from her teaching training college all night with Jude: “I became rather reckless and careless about conventions. Then you know what scandals spread ... Of course I, of all people, ought not to have cared what was said, for it was just what I fancied I never did care for. But I was a coward – as so many women are – and my theoretic unconventionality broke down” (213). Sue’s comment about female cowardice registers her sense that women in particular may find difficulty challenging the prevailing attitudes and social arrangements that restrict them. In ‘Theoretic and Practical Unconventionality in *Jude the Obscure*’ (1965), William J. Hyde reads Sue’s retreat from theoretic unconventionality as a failure of character, without taking into account Hardy’s recognition of the strength of prevailing attitudes and social arrangements – such as the unacceptability of male–female relationships outside of marriage, the lack of liberty within marriage, narrow educational and vocational opportunities for women – impinge upon her.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the idea that women are essentially less courageous than men, and will therefore be less likely to actively challenge conventions, crops up several times in Hardy’s fiction. George Somerset in *Laodicean* is angered by Paula Power’s refusal to make a formal announcement of her love for him: ‘He silently reproached her, who was apparently so independent, for

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<sup>4</sup> Hyde defines practical as a ‘natural state’ or ‘liberty unhampered by theory’ (158). He conceives of four levels of existence in *Jude the Obscure*: the ‘natural state’; a variation of Matthew Arnold’s Hebraic world of right conduct; a Hellenic world of joy and intellectual freedom; and finally, ‘J.S. Mill’s ideal of a fusion of worlds, “a Greek ideal of self-development, which the Platonic and Christian ideal of government blends with, but does not supersede”’ (155). He considers how the different characters in the novel move between these different levels. In particular, he argues that the ‘natural state’ occupied by Arabella can appear in its practice to be like Mill’s ideal fusion of worlds, with Arabella ‘acting instinctively on advanced notions of liberty’ (158), because of her strong character. In comparison, he insists that Sue fails to act upon Mill’s words because of her weaker, less energetic personality.

lacking independence in such a vital matter. Perhaps it was mere sex, perhaps it was peculiar to a few, that her independence and courage, like Cleopatra's, failed her occasionally at the last moment' (240). Edred Fitzpiers in *The Woodlanders* (1887) thinks that it is Grace's naiveté, as opposed to her boldness, which leads her to imply that she had a sexual relationship with Giles Winterbourne: 'His wide experience of the sex had taught him that, in many cases, women who ventured on hazardous matters did so because they lacked imagination gross enough to feel their full force' (332). Viviette Constantine in *Two on a Tower* (1882) immediately and irrevocably abandons her plans to let Swithin St Cleeve pursue his astronomical research uninterrupted, on discovering that she is pregnant. Just as 'Hardy is ambivalent, conflicted, contradictory on the place of culture' (Richardson 55), he is uncertain about women's commitment to putting theory into practice.

In *Jude the Obscure* when Sue decides to leave Phillotson, she returns to her position of theoretic unconventionality, using her reading of *On Liberty* to support and justify her actions, and eliciting a wearied response from her husband:

'She, or he, "who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation". J.S. Mill's words, those are. I have been reading it up. Why can't you act upon them? I wish to, always'.

'What do I care about J.S. Mill!' moaned he. 'I only want to lead a quiet life'. (215)

For Rosemarie Morgan, Sue's recourse to Mill signifies her limits rather than her advancement. In *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (1988) she argued that Sue 'has available only a language invented by men for men ... she has no radical feminist guidelines, no inspiring models, nor even the literature of liberation beyond Mill' (122). However, in the sense that Mill's language of liberty offers Sue clarification and fortification – of the same kind implied by Hardy when he says that he and other students of Mill knew *On Liberty* 'almost by heart' and that the section on individuality was one of his 'cures for despair' (*The Life and work of Thomas Hardy* 59) – it signifies possibility rather than limitation. Sue draws strength and solace from her engagement with *On Liberty*. 'Reading it up' and quoting from it is a constructive process, a means of articulating and rationalising an emotive and unconventional request, a bridge from thought to action, and a practical aid to disassociating herself from ingrained feelings

about propriety. In the exchange of notes across the schoolroom which follows, Sue underscores the value she sees in Mill's language of liberty by referring to a quotation from Phillotson's own reading, which also happens to be the epigraph to *On Liberty*. Sue insists: "To produce "Human development in its richest diversity" (to quote your Humboldt) is to my mind far above respectability" (216). In contrast to Sue, Phillotson gains no consolation or clarification from philosophy, even though he is well-versed in it. Like Hardy, Phillotson professes to favour his own experience over his reading.

However, Phillotson is similar to Sue in that he is painfully aware of the conflict between that which has been deeply-rooted in him since childhood and his current position. His conventional ideas of marital propriety, implanted in him by his early religious education, clash with his strong inclination to respond sympathetically to Sue's distress. He tells his friend Gillingham: "I know I can't logically, or religiously, defend my concession to such a wish of hers; or harmonize it with the doctrines I was brought up in ... I am simply going to act by instinct, and let principles take care of themselves" (222). He later tells his friend: "I'm a feeler, not a reasoner" (223). While disregarding Mill's theory in name, Phillotson is able to put it into action, but only by denying that his action has anything to do with argument or logic. He acts according to his own wishes, and in a way that grants Sue liberty, but he describes it in terms that Mill would question. Mill complained that "[f]or the apotheosis of Reason we have substituted that of Instinct; and we call everything instinct which we find in ourselves and for which we cannot trace any rational foundation" (*Subjection* 474), so he would probably argue that Phillotson misnames his motivation in calling it an instinct. In Richardson's discussion of how Hardy was caught between Darwin and Mill, she observes that "For Hardy ... instinct is often related to a greater authenticity of feeling and action, a greater truth value [than it is for Mill]" (61). Though Hardy may have thought that Phillotson correctly attributes his actions to inscrutable instincts, this does not make it any the less difficult for Phillotson to deal with the reaction to his unconventionality, and the deep-rooted attitudes of others.

Phillotson succeeds in giving precedence to his sympathetic feelings for Sue up to a certain point, facing the ignominy of defending his actions to the school board, the hostile reaction of the 'respectable' citizens within his local community, and the violent 'support' of a group of assorted itinerants. But as Phillotson prepares to marry Sue again, Gillingham wonders if these difficulties will lead him to a lapse from liberalism, where he is crueller to Sue than he has formally been kind.

[Phillotson] ... did not care to admit clearly that his taking Sue to him again had at bottom nothing to do with repentance of letting her go, but was, primarily, a human instinct flying in the face of custom and profession. He said, "Yes. I shall do that. I know woman better now. Whatever justice there was in releasing her, there was little logic, for one holding my views on other subjects". (354)

At the same time that Phillotson exercises his right to interpret experience in his own way, causing a clash between his advanced and traditional beliefs, he illustrates the danger of denying a consistent theoretical framework or basis for ideas, whether of our own construction or derived from someone else: kindness can more easily give way to cruelty. The impulse to defy custom is insufficient without a corresponding attempt to implant supporting opinions.

After the tragedy of their children's deaths, both Sue and Jude conceive of their new and opposing world views in terms of rootedness. Sue now inverts Mill's image of deep-rootedness, thinking of her unconventionality as something embedded within her and in need of removal: "I wish my every fearless word and thought could be rooted out of my history" (334). On the other hand, Jude's conventional views have been successfully displaced: "You root out of me what little affection and reverence I had left in me for the church as an old acquaintance" (339). Jude's problem in overcoming early education relates instead to his view of Christminster. Though he now recognises its inequalities, it remains inextricably bound up with the aspirations he formed in childhood: "it is the centre of the universe to me, because of my early dream: and nothing can alter it" (308). Jude's awareness that "It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one" (316) and Sue's that "Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that's all" (276) connect with Mill's prediction in *Utilitarianism*, that in the course of removing the sources of human suffering from the world (which Mill believed to be entirely achievable) 'a long succession of generations will perish in the breach' (286).

In *The Human Predicament in Hardy's Novels* (1985) Jagdish Chandra Dave quotes the same piece of *Utilitarianism* to argue that:

Hardy did not share the liberal hope and the view of evolution as progress with his contemporary thinkers ... . Hardy, in fact, never envisaged a success in the distant future, or failure for that matter, for he was neither

an idealist visionary nor a pessimist. What seems important to him is the struggle against evils today irrespective of the eventual result. (147)

It is clear that Hardy was concerned with the struggle of his characters in their moment, but more debatable that he did not anticipate any societal improvements. For example, many of his novels might be said to look to a time when laws relaxed ‘the adamant barrier of marriage’ (*The Woodlanders* 277). Moreover, in his copy of *On Liberty*, Hardy annotated text which expressed ideas about a time of improvement in the future. He put a cross in the margin next to Mill’s assertion that ‘At present individuals are lost in the crowd’ and linked it to a line from Tennyson’s ‘Locksley Hall’ (1842) – ‘And the individual withers, & the world is more & more’ (see Figure 2). He also put a cross in the margin next to the phrase ‘The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement ...’ and annotated this with the words “‘Custom – heavy as frost”, Wordsworth’. This is a reference to lines from ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality’ (1807): ‘Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight, / And custom lie upon thee with a weight / Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!’ (129–131). Mill’s view of conformism in British society, which Hardy considered to be anticipated in Wordsworth’s and Tennyson’s poems, was highly contentious. Andrew Pyle explains in his introduction to *Liberty: Contemporary Responses to John Stuart Mill* (1994) that most reviewers responded to ‘Mill’s warning that the pressures of public opinion could turn Victorian Britain into a nation of dull conformists. ... with incredulity and outright denial. ... Clearly, Mill’s portrait of Victorian Britain was unrecognizable to many’ (viii–ix). When Hardy was writing *Jude the Obscure*, over thirty years after the publication of *On Liberty*, he found this controversial portrait of mid-nineteenth-century British life more relevant than ever.

Though Sue says that ‘the general question is not our business’, they are both representatives of more general problems (276). Hardy calls Jude and Sue ‘the supersensitive couple’ (293) and in *Subjection*, as discussed in chapter three, Mill equates sensitivity in both men and women with spirit, passion, and latent ability to inspire others, and to bring about societal change. In Jude’s impromptu speech to the crowds at Christminster, gathered to watch the university celebration day procession, he becomes the representative of Mill’s injunction to think and act independently:

‘It is a difficult question, my friends, for any young man – that question I had to grapple with, and which thousands are weighing at the present



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**Fig. 2. Annotated page from Hardy's copy of *On Liberty*. Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum.**

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**Fig. 3. Annotated page from Hardy's copy of *On Liberty*. Image  
courtesy of Dorset County Museum.**

moment in these uprising times – whether to follow uncritically the track he finds himself in, without considering his aptness for it, or to consider what his aptness or bent may be, and reshape his course accordingly. I tried to do the latter, and I failed. But I don't admit that my failure proved my view to be a wrong one, or that my success would have made it a right one; though that's how we appraise such attempts nowadays – I mean not by their essential soundness, but by their accidental outcomes'. (316)

Hardy gives far more space than Mill to the ramifications of failure. But Jude's plea for connected thought is very Millian: people should not only critically appraise their own circumstances and potentialities. They should strive to understand the links between a person's practice and the theory that informs it, rather than satisfy themselves with a more superficial judgement concerning consequences.

The plot of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) also turns on Mill's idea about the power of early education, specifically Angel's inability to live up to the advanced ideas he develops in adulthood. After Tess makes her wedding-night revelation about the rape/seduction, the narrator says: 'over them both there hung a deeper shade than the shade which Angel perceived, namely, the shade of his own limitations. With all his attempted independence of judgement this advanced man was yet slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings' (264–5). His newly-acquired thoughts are only effective when not subjected to a practical test. The impact of Angel's failure to connect progressive thoughts with his everyday life is life-altering for Tess, who 'wept for the beloved man whose conventional standard of judgement had caused all these latter sorrows ...' (301). In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy explores the ways in which family ties complicate individual freedom, for 'though legally at liberty to do as he chose...', it causes Angel pain to disturb his parents' world view by forging a life with Tess (165).

Angel's father is a religious fanatic who 'had in his raw youth made up his mind once for all on the deeper question of existence, and admitted no further reasoning on them thenceforward' (157). Although Angel is opposed to his father's dogmatism, he admires his determined attempts to convert others and his lack of concern for material gain. At the same time he feels a sense of superiority to the limited and insufficiently reflective outlook of his brothers. Both Felix and Cuthbert Clare are blinkered by the institutions of which they are a part – Felix by the church and Cuthbert by the academy:

Neither had an adequate conception of the complicated forces at work outside the smooth and gentle current in which they and their associates floated. Neither saw the difference between local truth and universal truth; that what the inner world said in their clerical and academic hearing was quite a different thing from what the outer world was thinking. (159–60)

Angel sees more value in his father's misguided self-sacrifice because though his views are fixed, his work unflinchingly confronts the knotty points in other people's lives. Felix and Cuthbert Clare fail to see the difficulties which afflict those who are less privileged and they fail to notice that the declarations of their milieu might not have wider applications.

In pursuit of mental liberty, Angel initially grows 'away from old associations' (118). Hardy uses a subterranean image to explain Angel's lack of sympathy for Tess's plight: 'Within the remote depths of his constitution, so gentle and affectionate as he was in general, there lay hidden a hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it' (241). Buried within Angel's apparent flexibility is an intractable element. The narrator calls it a logical deposit, but elsewhere the narrative works to question Angel's power of perception. Angel thinks that he sees things more clearly than Tess, but in misunderstanding his own unorthodoxy he misunderstands hers. In Millian terms he assumes his own infallibility. He thinks that thoughts original to Tess 'could only have been caught up ... by rote' (126) and that she has 'automatic orthodoxy' (164).

In fact, Tess's experiences cause her to question much around her, to the extent that her 'passing corporeal blight had been her mental harvest' (124). The narrator suggests, though, that this is just an extension of Tess's predisposition to be questioning and receptive, in contrast to her mother, Joan Durbeyfield, who seems to be just as pacified by the ceaseless 'nick-knock, nick-knock' of the cradle as her babies are (20). Tess perceives a disconnection between the language of religious orthodoxy and its true meaning. She tries to convince the Vicar – who had spent ten years endeavouring to 'graft technical belief on actual scepticism' (96) to give her baby a Christian burial by imploring: 'Don't for God's sake speak as saint to sinner, but as you yourself to me myself – poor me!' (97). She challenges a man who paints biblical texts on stiles and walls for a living to connect his outer life with his inner – "Do you believe what you paint?" – but he responds indifferently in a 'trade voice' (80). Similarly, she cannot sing



**Fig. 4. Annotated page from Hardy's copy of *On Liberty*. Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum.**

a hymn with the ‘phlegmatic passivity’ and unquestioning spirit of her younger siblings (357). Not believing as they do in a benevolent God, Tess is impelled to action on her family’s behalf: as they are forced to leave their home, ‘it behoved her to do something; to be their Providence’ (357). Action, in her limited world, means returning to Alec, and the sacrifice of her own well-being. Tess repeatedly strives to connect religious beliefs to individual experience, to humanise and personalise doctrine that others do not interrogate.

Hardy annotated his copy of *On Liberty* with thoughts on Christian morality, underlining the words indicated in the following passage:

It holds out the hope of heaven and the threat of hell, as the appointed and appropriate motives to a virtuous life: in this falling far below the best of the ancients, and doing what lies in it to give to human morality an essentially selfish character, by disconnecting each man’s feelings of duty from the interests of his fellow-creatures, except so far as a self-interested inducement is offered to him for consulting them. (56)

Next to this Hardy pencilled: ‘Do unto others as you would they should do unto you’ (see Figure 4). Mill goes on to remark that ‘even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honour, is derived from the purely human, not the religious part of our education ...’ (56). Next to this Hardy put a question mark, perhaps preferring the more succinct ‘Love one another’ he pencilled in the margin (see Figure 4). Hardy’s annotations to *On Liberty* correspond almost exactly to Mill’s ‘ideal perfection of utilitarian morality’ which is ‘To do as one would be done by, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself’, which Hardy also highlighted with double lines in the margin, in his copy of *Utilitarianism* (288). In ‘The Utility of Religion’ Mill proposes a replacement for, or progression from, religious belief. He suggests that:

A morality grounded on large and wise views of the good of the whole [world], neither sacrificing the individual to the aggregate nor the aggregate to the individual, but giving to duty on the one hand and to freedom and spontaneity on the other their proper province, would derive its power in the superior natures from sympathy and benevolence and the passion for ideal excellence: in the inferior, from the same feelings

cultivated up to the measure of their capacity, with the superadded force of shame. (108)

This Mill calls the Religion of Humanity, after Comte's system. In *Auguste Comte and Positivism* he credits Comte with being the first to recognise the full scope of such an idea: 'The power which may be acquired over the mind by the idea of the general interest of the human race, both as a source of emotion and as motive to conduct, many have perceived; but we know not if any one, before M. Comte, realized so fully as he has done, all the majesty of which that idea is susceptible' (74).

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* hints at the possibility of a religion of humanity, though it is everywhere met with resistance. Angel's parents fail to see the use of an education which serves humans rather than religion. Tess, who always seeks to humanise religion challenges Alec:

'Why, you can have the religion of loving-kindness and purity at least, if you can't have – what do they call it – dogma'.

'O no! I'm a different sort of fellow from that! If there's nobody to say, "Do this, and it will be a bad thing for you", I can't warm up. Hang it, I am not going to feel responsible for my deeds and passions if there's nobody to be responsible to; and if I were you, my dear, I wouldn't either!' (330)

Alec's response encapsulates Mill's concerns about the divisiveness and self-interest which can result from belief in an afterlife. But Alec also fails to see other people's needs as a motive to action and, feeling no shame in this respect, he would also fail to meet even Mill's inferior category for participation in a religion of humanity.

After Tess's revelation, Angel's path to self-awareness begins with an accusation of impracticality against 'great and wise men of all ages' who recommend working on as usual through difficulties (259). An image of Tess, and their life together, is so integral to his agricultural plans that Angel cannot work on as before and 'he concluded that not one of those great and wise men had ever gone so far outside themselves as to test the feasibility of his own counsel' (259). His coming to consciousness is achieved via the words of a cosmopolitan stranger he meets on his travels. These have a greater influence on him than 'all the reasoned ethics of the philosophers' (341). Though this is Hardy's injunction to form an individual philosophy based on experience and surroundings, by the time Angel returns from Brazil 'mentally aged a dozen years' (340), his view of Tess's predicament corresponds with a line from *Utilitarianism*: 'The

morality of the action depends entirely upon the intention – that is, upon what the agent *wills to do* (290, note, Mill’s emphasis). Hardy questions the power of personal intellect and virtue to overcome deep-rooted ideas, but in *Angel* he creates a character who learns ‘that hardly any kind of action can safely be laid down as either always obligatory or always condemnable’ (*Utilitarianism* 157).

#### 4.2 The Value of Self-Sacrifice

The image of Tess on the stone of sacrifice at Stonehenge, and the tragic consequences of Jude’s and Sue’s challenges to conventionality, suggest that society insatiably exacts personal sacrifice (this is an important theme in Mona Caird’s writing, too, as I discuss in chapter five). Hardy also addresses this issue in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a novel which ascribes different value to different kinds of self-sacrifice. Readings of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Simon Gatrell and Mary McBride have argued for its links to *On Liberty*, but, as I shall show, the novel is also deeply engaged with the concerns of *Utilitarianism* and *Subjection*.<sup>5</sup> In *Utilitarianism* Mill says that self-sacrifice should be a means to an end, not an end in itself: ‘The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice itself is a good. A sacrifice which does not increase, or tend to increase, the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted’ (288). In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Hardy distinguishes between the types of sacrifices made by Susan Henchard and those made by her daughter Elizabeth-Jane according to this utilitarian model.

In ‘The Influence of *On Liberty* on Thomas Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1984)’, McBride draws several specific parallels between Mill’s text and the novel. Commenting on the violation of the principle of liberty in the auction of Susan, she compares Mill’s view ‘that an individual cannot be allowed to sell himself even if such a sale is personally desirable and endurable’ (14).<sup>6</sup> However, the novel is not concerned with Susan’s loss of liberty at the hands of a despotic husband in such a straightforward

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<sup>5</sup> Gatrell’s ‘*The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Fate of Michael Henchard’s Character*’ (2000) argues for strong links between Mill’s definition of energetic character in *On Liberty* and Hardy’s depiction of Henchard.

<sup>6</sup> McBride also notes that ‘Mill uses the example of a corn dealer to illustrate the difference between freedom of opinion and freedom of action’ (13), Henchard’s oath of sobriety is a self-imposed version of what Mill recommends as a way to deal with misconduct which results from drunkenness, and that ‘Henchard’s attempt to mediate between his own energetic individuality and society’s conventional expectations’ (16) is based on ideas of Millian individualism.



way as McBride suggests. After the infamous wife-sale at the beginning of the novel, Susan 'went out of the tent, sobbing bitterly, and apparently without a thought that she was not strictly bound to go with the man who had paid for her' (13). That Susan's self-immolation is wasted is suggested by the slight narrative importance accorded to her experiences with Newson in Canada: 'The history of Susan Henchard's adventures in the interim can be told in two or three sentences' (25). Susan's helpless acquiescence is contrasted with Elizabeth-Jane's purposeful selflessness: 'If there was one good thing more than another which characterized this single-hearted girl, it was a willingness to sacrifice her personal comfort and dignity to the common weal' (42). While Susan's self-sacrifice is attributed to her simplicity, Elizabeth-Jane's forms part of her growing intellectual awareness, and her need to create a consistent philosophy out of her own experience. Elizabeth-Jane's contribution to the 'common weal' is linked to self-respect and a craving for self-improvement. When Susan re-marries Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane is restrained about buying new clothes 'because it was inconsistent with her past life to blossom gaudily the moment she had become possessed of money' (94). She regrets the increased attention she does pay to her appearance because she perceives a mismatch between the status it confers and her level of education: "Better sell all this finery and buy myself grammar-books, and dictionaries, and a history of all philosophies!" (95). In preference to making herself more attractive to men, Elizabeth-Jane educates herself. She seeks consolation from study when Farfrae rejects her in favour of Lucetta. In this she adheres to the hierarchy of pleasures in *Utilitarianism* where mental pleasures are seen as superior to bodily ones. Elizabeth-Jane also fulfils the ideal which Mill puts forward in *Utilitarianism*: she makes an automatic link between her personal happiness and the happiness of others.

In addition to exploring the ways in which utilitarian morality figures in Elizabeth-Jane's everyday life, Hardy evokes passages in *Subjection* in his depiction of her restricted opportunities. Susan is said to have 'long perceived how zealously and constantly the young mind of her companion was struggling for enlargement; and yet now, in her eighteenth year, it still remained but little unfolded. The desire – sober and repressed – of Elizabeth-Jane's heart was indeed to see, to hear, and to understand' (26). This recalls one of the most vivid phrases in *Subjection*, when Mill talks about women who 'pine through life with the consciousness of thwarted vocations, and activities which are not suffered to expand' (579). In *Subjection* Mill conveys a striking sense of restriction, limitation and 'disparity of privilege', a sense which resonates in Hardy's

portrayal of Elizabeth-Jane (472). Rather than gaining access to any kind of educational opportunity, Elizabeth-Jane is shown to be constitutionally prone to reflection: 'When she walked abroad she seemed to be occupied with an inner chamber of ideas, and to have slight need for visible objects' (93). Thus Elizabeth-Jane's mind unfolds by her own strenuous efforts to educate herself. Her ability to observe closely and to philosophise allows her to expand as a human being, and gives her consolation for disappointments, but also causes her pain: 'There was something curious in the way in which Elizabeth, though the younger, had come to play the part of experienced sage in these discussions ... Elizabeth, who in spite of her philosophy was very tender-hearted' (173). Like Sue and Jude her sensitivity reveals her latent abilities but is the source of much anguish: 'She had learnt the lesson of renunciation, and was as familiar with the wreck of each day's wishes as with the diurnal setting of the sun. If her earthly career had taught her few book philosophies it had at least well practised her in this' (178). In accordance with Hardy's stated scepticism about 'book philosophies' the emphasis here is on the greater relevance of lived experience.

Nevertheless, Elizabeth-Jane's situation at the end of the novel brings to mind Mill in *Utilitarianism* considering what constitutes happiness: 'not a life of rapture; but moments of such, in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with a decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as the foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing' (284). In accordance with Mill's definition of happiness, Elizabeth-Jane puts her self-education to work for the greater good by becoming a teacher of modest ambition:

As the lively and sparkling emotions of her early married life cohered into an equable serenity, the finer movements of her nature found scope in discovering to the narrow-lived ones around her the secret (as she had once learnt it) of making limited opportunities endurable; which she deemed to consist in the cunning enlargement by a species of microscopic treatment, even to the magnitude of positive pleasure, those minute forms of satisfaction that offer themselves to everybody not in positive pain; which thus handled, have much of the same inspiriting effect upon life as wider interests cursorily embraced. (322)

Her route to this point also accords with Mill's assertion that 'the conscious ability to do without happiness gives the best prospect of realizing such happiness as is attainable' (288) – a sentiment Hardy highlighted in his own copy of *Utilitarianism* by drawing double lines next to it in the margin.

In many ways, Elizabeth-Jane's character plays out the type of societal improvements Mill envisaged. In 'Nature' Mill accuses his own generation of a lack of precision in deciding on a standard from which to 'deduce rules of actions' – instead they 'live in a kind of confusion of many standards' – this allows people to alter and manipulate their arguments to suit what is currently fashionable rather than developing 'steady moral convictions' (11). Elizabeth-Jane, unlike Lucetta with her artificial poses, attempts to create a consistent philosophy out of her own experience. The 'equable serenity' of Elizabeth-Jane's eventual partnership with Farfrae is also significant. Farfrae is shown to recognise the need for equality in marriage. He promises to defer to Lucetta's wishes once they are married and carries out his promise. He recognises that 'It is I who have come to your house, not you to mine' (212). As a couple they are described as 'a bee and a butterfly in league for life' (232). They are different but complementary and therefore achieve an effective partnership: the type that Mill praised in *Subjection* (though, after the revelations about Lucetta's past, Farfrae does not hold on to ideas of reciprocity). In *Subjection* Mill says 'I believe that equality of rights would abate the exaggerated self-abnegation which is the present artificial ideal of feminine character, and that a good woman would not be more self-sacrificing than the best man' (516). In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Susan's 'exaggerated self-abnegation' precipitated by Henchard's tyranny over her gives way to the more balanced conditions of her daughter's life: marriage to Farfrae, who is capable of imagining marriage on equal terms, and Elizabeth-Jane's own attempts to balance her concern for the happiness of those around her with her own, albeit humble, individuality.

The relationship between self-sacrifice and education is central to *The Return of the Native* (1878), where Clym Yeobright's plan to teach is based on the Comtean theory he discovers in France: 'Yeobright loved his kind. He had a conviction that the want of most men was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence. He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class. What was more, he was ready at once to be the first unit sacrificed' (170). In *Auguste Comte and Positivism* Mill critiques Comte's self-abnegating concept of altruism, and the kind of readiness to relinquish personal interests Clym evinces. For

Mill, Comte's fundamental error was over-estimating the importance of unity and systemization, and denying the importance of individual inclinations:

... M. Comte infers that the good of others is the only inducement on which we should allow ourselves to act; and that we should endeavour to starve the whole of the desires which point to our personal satisfaction, by denying them all gratification not strictly required by physical necessities. The golden rule of morality, in M. Comte's religion, is to live for others, 'vivre pour autrui'. To do as we would be done by, and to love our neighbour as ourself, are not sufficient for him: they partake, he thinks, of the nature of personal calculations. We should endeavour not to love ourselves at all. (76)

Clym Yeobright's family and community likewise question the value and achievability of this Comtean altruism and they do so by constantly drawing attention to the difference between theory and practice.

On hearing of Clym's plan to open a school, the local barber Fairway predicts that "He'll never carry it out in the world" (169). Mrs Yeobright wants Clym's efforts to bring affluence not knowledge. She blames Eustacia for Clym's persistence in his altruistic scheme, but only because she provides a too-compelling reason to stay on the heath:

'Well, I know you had decided it before you saw her; but that would have ended in intentions. It was very well to talk of, but ridiculous to put into practice. I fully expected that in the course of a month or two you would have seen the folly of such self-sacrifice, and would have been by this time back again to Paris in some business or other'. (188)

Clym might have rejected the 'flashy business' of Paris (173), but Eustacia reminds him that his appreciative view of the heath is partly dependent on the perspective-altering privilege of experiencing a new culture. When Clym says "I remember when I had the same longing for town bustle. Five years of London or Paris would be a perfect cure for that", Eustacia replies "Heaven send me such a cure" (184). (Just as when Stephen in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* complains that his life is "solitary as death" and Elfride, keenly aware of her circumscribed circumstances, responds sharply "The death that comes from a plethora of life?", 22.) Clym has some freedom to renounce, while Eustacia's starting

point is far more restricted. After Clym studies so much in pursuit of his plan that he damages his eyesight, Eustacia complains to Wildeve: “He’s an enthusiast about ideas, and careless about outward things. He often reminds me of the apostle Paul.”... though Paul was excellent as a man in the Bible he would hardly have done in real life” (271–2). The traditional Mrs Yeobright and the non-conformist Eustacia represent very different world-views, but both consider their practical knowledge a corrective to Clym’s abstractions. In their view Clym’s dedication to helping strangers is a form of selfishness.

Hardy dwells on the conflicting obligations which Clym’s personal attachments give rise to (evoking the representations of Mill as passionate but chaste as he does so):

Three antagonistic growths had to be kept alive: his mother’s trust in him, his plan for becoming a teacher, and Eustacia’s happiness. His fervid nature could not afford to relinquish one of these, though two of the three were as many as he could hope to preserve. Though his love was as chaste as that of Petrarch for his Laura it had made fetters of what previously was only a difficulty. A position which was not too simple when he stood whole-hearted had become indescribably complicated by the addition of Eustacia. (197)

As Mill argues in his critique of Comte, placing too much importance on self-abnegation can be counter-productive. Moreover, it is almost impossible to sustain because personal interests, even if these take the form of relationships with others, will always intrude. Clym resists compromise, but has compromise foisted upon him. After the death of Mrs Yeobright, and then of Eustacia, Clym is still driven to educate others, but his approach to the practical implementation of his beliefs changes: ‘He had tested and weighed his convictions again and again, and saw no reason to alter them, though he had considerably altered his plan’ (385). In his eventual role as an itinerant preacher he draws on both secular and religious texts and leaves ‘alone set creeds and systems of philosophy, finding enough and more than enough to occupy his tongue in the opinions and actions common to all good men’ (389). In the end Clym’s position is the same as that which Hardy advocates: he interprets his experiences to create his own philosophy. Nevertheless, he is isolated, lonely, and regretful, suggesting the possible drawbacks of true intellectual independence.

### 4.3 The Link between Personal Happiness and General Happiness

As long as self-sacrifice was a means to an end rather than an end in itself, Mill believed that education and public opinion should promote an automatic continuity between individual and general happiness so that: 'a direct impulse to promote the general good may be in every individual one of the habitual motives of action' (289). Hardy placed a single line next to the passage containing this phrase in his copy of *Utilitarianism*, and, in addition to exploring its relevance to Elizabeth-Jane's self-education and Clym's teaching, considered its implications in relation to multiple national and individual interests including war, astronomy, art, social mobility and marriage.

In *The Trumpet-Major* (1880) Hardy considers the link between personal and general happiness in the context of the Napoleonic wars, exploring ideas of patriotism, and the challenges it poses for individual liberty, in his depiction of brothers John and Bob Loveday. In *Auguste Comte and Positivism* Mill avers the benefits of military training in promoting a habitual desire to be useful and dutiful to others: 'Something has been lost as well as gained by no longer giving to every citizen the training necessary for a soldier' (80–1). And in 'The Utility of Religion' he sees patriotism as the precursor to a state of universal fellow feeling: 'When we consider how ardent a sentiment, in favourable circumstances of education, the love of country has become, we cannot judge it impossible that the love of that larger country, the world, may be nursed into similar strength, both as a source of elevated emotion and as a principle of duty' (107). In Hardy's novel, the Trumpet-Major, John Loveday, is attractive to women because of his 'love of country' – it is known that 'he was not a soldier from necessity, but from patriotism' (95). However, John Loveday never reflects on the source of his patriotism or the purpose of his role as a soldier, and the novel's ending casts doubt on the value of such unquestioning national feeling in one devastating line – as Anne Garland says goodbye to John and his comrades, the narrator says: 'Of the seven upon whom these wishes were bestowed, five, including the trumpet-major, were dead within the few following years, and their bones left to moulder in the land of their campaigns' (300). There is no reciprocity between John Loveday's patriotism and his personal happiness: duty annihilates individuality.

In contrast, John's brother, Bob Loveday, is a sailor with a less than wholehearted commitment to seafaring – a disposition presented as more promising for his survival and future happiness than John's unquestioning loyalty. Bob is forced to reflect on his

patriotism when he is pursued by a press-gang determined to deprive him of his liberty. His impulse is to evade capture, but by doing so, with the help of his lover Anne and his one-time fiancée Matilda, his sense of self-worth and manliness is damaged:

In four-and-twenty hours Bob had recovered. But though physically himself again, he was not at all sure of his position as a patriot. He had that practical knowledge of seamanship of which the country stood much in need, and it was humiliating to find that impressment seemed to be necessary to teach him to use it for her advantage. Many neighbouring men, less fortunate than himself, had been pressed and taken; and their absence seemed a reproach to him. He went away by himself into the mill-roof, and surrounded by the corn-heaps, gave vent to self-condemnation.  
(236–7)

As a result of his self-reproach Bob presents himself before Nelson's captain, Captain Hardy, and is accepted for service on board *The Victory*. Bob convinces himself he has some agency in the proceedings by evading the press-gang only to seek out the Captain, and by asking to join a prestigious ship. His request is initially met with bewilderment by the individuality-denying Captain, but granted when Bob reminds him that both their families come from the same part of the world. Bob returns home to tell his family: "The press-gang has been here, and though I showed them that I was a free man, I am going to show everybody that I can do my duty". (245). He escapes direct coercion, but 'the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling' proves a more effective force (*On Liberty* 9). Nonetheless, Bob's struggle to balance a sense of personal freedom with duty to his country is 'a source of elevated emotion', whereas in *A Laodicean*, published the year after *The Trumpet Major*, Hardy links lack of national feeling to selfishness and unscrupulousness in his portrayal of the photographer William Dare. Dare declares "I am a citizen of the world. I owe no country patriotism, and no king or queen obedience" (124) – his lack of national feeling denotes licence, rather than liberty.

In *Two on a Tower*, the national interest at stake is scientific rather than militaristic. Viviette Constantine self-consciously grapples with the problem of reconciling her individual happiness with potential advances in scientific knowledge. In its portrayal of Viviette's support for Swithin St Cleve's career in astronomy, *Two on a Tower* evokes the discussion in *Subjection* about women's practical abilities, and the advantage of intelligent female companionship for men whose work involves

abstraction and speculation. Like Elfride, Elizabeth-Jane and Ethelberta, Viviette is dissatisfied with both her emotional and intellectual life. Her attractive younger lover Swithin saves her from despair and in return she provides practical help and morale-boosting conversation. Viviette recognises that her support for Swithin is not disinterested – part of Swithin’s draw is his potential to be successful and well-regarded in the future. She thus blames herself for his loss of scientific focus as their relationship develops and they marry in secret. On discovering that her marriage to Swithin is illegal because her previous husband was still alive at the time of the ceremony, and that Swithin’s misogynistic uncle has made a provision for him in his will on the condition that he does not marry before he turns twenty-five, Viviette questions herself rigorously about how much importance to accord her personal interests:

That in immolating herself by refusing him, and leaving him free to work wonders for the good of his fellow-creatures, she would in all probability add to the sum of human felicity, consoled her by its breadth as an idea, even while it tortured her by making herself the scapegoat or single unit on whom the evil would fall. Ought a possibly large number, Swithin included, to remain unbenefited, because the one individual to whom his release would be an injury chanced to be herself? (215)

Viviette is able to anticipate Swithin’s future success and her own future unhappiness, but she does not foresee how her pregnancy will impact upon her carefully-reasoned resolutions:

She realized a condition of things that she had never anticipated, and for a moment the discovery so overwhelmed her that she thought she must die outright. In her terror she said she had sown the wind to reap the whirlwind. Then the instinct of self-preservation flamed up in her like a fire. Her altruism in subjecting her self-love to benevolence, and letting Swithin go away from her, was demolished by the new necessity, as if it had been a gossamer web. (227)

In theory, Viviette rejects the counsel of Christian morality to ‘save thyself’ in favour of a more intellectually-appealing alternative. In practice, Hardy suggests here that the consolations of philosophy are insufficient to counter a biological imperative. As



discussed above, it is not clear if this narrative endorses an essentialist view of a female instinct for nurturing or critiques socially-constructed ideas of propriety.

Viviette's 'cribbed and confined' life is initially opened up by her partnership with Swithin, but then reduced to ideas of her 'narrow honour' in contrast to 'the wide promise of his ability', her propriety as against his 'earthly utility' (214, 215). As it turns out, Viviette is too late to stop Swithin departing on a research trip, which, like Clym's time in Paris, alters his perspective on many things and offers ample discovery for self-development. Viviette's brother, keen to benefit financially from her re-marriage, has already engineered a proposal from a Bishop, and to save her reputation Viviette is forced to accept. Perceiving Viviette's lack of attraction for him, the Bishop invokes ideas of sacrifice to the greater good in his addresses to her: 'Even if there be a slight deficiency of warmth on your part, my earnest hope is that a mind comprehensive as yours will perceive the immense power for good that you might exercise in the position in which a union with me would place you, and allow that perception to weigh in determining your answer' (189). But, the Bishop dies, and in melodramatic mode, Viviette is so overcome by Swithin's eventual return to her that she dies in his arms. As she does so, Swithin turns his attention to Tabitha Lark, the local girl turned New Woman, whose time in London has enabled her to become confident in the connection between her principles and her actions.

Like Sue Bridehead, Ethelberta in *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) turns to Mill's writing at a time of crisis in her life. Where Sue reads *On Liberty* to back up her desire for independence, Ethelberta reads *Utilitarianism* to clarify her responsibilities in balancing her personal happiness with her family's. As she contemplates marriage to a much older man whose only attraction is his ability to provide for herself and her family, Ethelberta reads Mill:

The ingenious Ethelberta, much more prone than the majority of women to theorise on conduct, felt the need of some soothing defence of the actions involved in any ambiguous course before finally committing herself to it.

She took down a well-known treatise on ethics which she had perused once before, and to which she had given her adherence ere any instance had arisen wherein she might wish to take it as a guide. Here she desultorily searched for argument, and found it; but the application of her

author's philosophy to the marriage question was an operation of her own, as unjustifiable as it was likely under the circumstances. (287)

If, as Tim Dolin has argued, *The Hand of Ethelberta* is a novel about Hardy's 'suspicion of slavishness, of unoriginality in thought and opinion' in both the producers and consumers of mass fiction ('Introduction' xxvi), then the episode where Ethelberta reads *Utilitarianism* also dramatises the risks Hardy saw in being an insufficiently detached and critical reader of philosophy. Made vulnerable by her family's precarious social and financial circumstances, Ethelberta defers to the authority of the 'well-known treatise' and fails to adequately interrogate how her theoretical assent to the ideas in *Utilitarianism* will translate into lived realities.

As Ethelberta is lulled into a false sense of comfort, her reading experience is replicated for the reader, with extended quotation from *Utilitarianism*:

'The ultimate end', she read, 'with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable (whether we are considering our own good or that of other people) is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality ... . This being, according to the utilitarian opinion, the end of human action, is necessarily also the standard of morality'.

It was an open question, so far, whether her own happiness should or should not be preferred to that of others. But that her personal interests were not to be considered as paramount appeared further on: –

'The happiness which forms the standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator.

As to whose happiness was meant by that of 'other people', 'all concerned', and so on, her luminous moralist soon enlightened her: –

'The occasions on which any person (except one in a thousand) has it in his power to do this on an extended scale – in other words, to be a public benefactor – are but exceptional; and on these occasions alone is he called on to consider public utility; in every other case private

utility, the interest or happiness of some few persons, is all he had to attend to’.

And that these few persons should be those endeared to her by every domestic tie no argument was needed to prove. That their happiness should be in proportion to her own well-doing, and power to remove their risks of indigence, required no proving either to her now.

By a sorry but unconscious misapplication of sound and wide reasoning did the active mind of Ethelberta thus find itself a solace.  
(287–9)

The work is not directly identified as *Utilitarianism*, and Mill is not named as the author, but the powerful influence of both is inferred by the space given to the quotations. Ethelberta’s ‘luminous moralist’ is deceptively clear, and in the tricky task of balancing personal concerns with domestic ties, Ethelberta ends by giving too much credence to the value of self-sacrifice. Looking for legitimation in her philosophical reading, Ethelberta only achieves a false position as a ‘*pseudo-utilitarian*’ (289, emphasis in original).

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Gabriel Oak’s utilitarian code of morality is automatic, not consciously adopted like Ethelberta’s but he similarly struggles to balance his own happiness and that of others. Bathsheba recognises that:

Boldwood, who seemed so much deeper and higher and stronger in feeling than Gabriel, had not yet learnt, any more than she herself, the simple lesson which Oak showed a mastery of by every turn and look he gave – that among the multitude of interest by which he was surrounded, those which affected his personal well-being were not the most absorbing and important in his eyes. Oak meditatively looked upon the horizon of circumstances without any special regard to his own standpoint in the midst. That was how she would wish to be. (354–5)

Gabriel is willing to risk his life in saving Bathsheba’s corn from the rain, mindful of the potential loss of food for humans and animals, but also motivated by his individual desire for Bathsheba’s favour. Despite his feelings for Bathsheba, when he hears the news of Boldwood’s losses during the storm, he realises that the greatest good would have been accomplished by helping Boldwood. The novel considers the problems which

Gabriel's 'direct impulse to promote the general good' causes for him on an individual level. It means he is not calculating enough in his personal plans: 'Oak was an intensely humane man: indeed, his humanity often tore in pieces any politic intentions of his which bordered on strategy, and carried him on as by gravitation' (86). In superintending Bathsheba's farm he is heedless of the right moment for personal action, compromising his own chances of success: 'Men thin away to insignificance and oblivion quite as often by not making the most of good spirits when they have them as by lacking good spirits when they are indispensable' (94). Though active in his concern for the general good, Gabriel is too passive with regard to his own self-development.

In *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* (1892) and *The Well-Beloved* (1897), two versions of the same story, Hardy explores the ramifications of a more strategic approach to life. Patricia Ingham has argued that the protagonist in both narratives, Jocelyn, 'reveals himself to be a literary artist in relation to his own tyrannical acts as he skilfully turns morally undesirable conduct into aesthetically pleasing forms' ('Introduction' xxv). Jocelyn's actions are impelled by his search for his ideal woman and this pursuit provides inspiration for sculptures which are a critical and commercial success, though his pursuit of his Well-Beloved is paralleled artistically by his attempts to create a perfect statue of Aphrodite. The narrator asserts that: 'He would not have stood where he did stand in the ranks of an imaginative profession if he had not been at the mercy of every sentiment of fancy that can beset a man. It was his in his weakness as a citizen and a national unit that his strength lay as an artist, and he felt it childish to complain of susceptibilities not only innate but cultivated' (*The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* 80). Jocelyn's practice is true to his professions, but his professions are designed to make his own self-interest, and exploitation of women, sound more appealing. Hardy's portrayal of Jocelyn in the *Well-Beloved* stories suggests that susceptibility can be a useful quality, but only if (like Phillotson's defiance of custom), it has some kind of moral ballast.

#### **4.4 What Makes Life Satisfactory**

In *The Woodlanders* Hardy explores the hierarchy of the pleasures which Mill establishes in *Utilitarianism*, in which sensual or bodily pleasures are lower down the scale than mental or intellectual ones. Mill argues that anyone who is acquainted with both types will prefer higher pleasures. He warns that: 'next to selfishness':

... the principle cause which makes life unsatisfactory, is want of mental cultivation. A cultivated mind – I do not mean that of a philosopher, but any mind to which the fountains of knowledge have been opened, and which has been taught, in any tolerable degree, to exercise its faculties – finds sources of inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds it; in the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry, the incidents of history, the ways of mankind past and present, and their prospects in the future. (285)

Moreover, anyone who endeavours to indulge ‘animal appetites’ while also maintaining ‘nobler feelings’ will ultimately fail: ‘many in all ages, have broken down in an ineffectual attempt to combine both’, argues Mill (282). Hardy tests this supposition out in *The Woodlanders* through the storylines involving Felice Charmond and Edred Fitzpiers. Both are well-educated, but both prefer to seek sexual satisfaction rather than learn about the history of Hintock or integrate themselves into community life.

Mrs Charmond has ‘a mien of listlessness which might either have been constitutional, or partly owing to the situation of the place’ (59). She is aware that in theory she should be more active, though she cannot achieve it in practice: “I am the most inactive woman when I am here”, she said. “I think sometimes I was born to live and do nothing, nothing, nothing but float about, as we fancy we do sometimes in dreams. But that cannot be really my destiny, and I must struggle against such fancies” (59–60). Felice Charmond’s torpidity is contrasted with Grace’s kindness and appreciativeness, and with Marty South’s uncomplaining industry. Her character highlights the difficulties involved in reconciling individual and communal desires. Mrs Charmond complains bitterly about:

‘The terrible insistencies of society – how severe they are, and cold, and inexorable – ghastly towards those who are made of wax and not of stone. Oh, I am afraid of them; a stab for this error, and a stab for that – correctives and regulations pretendedly framed that society may tend to perfection – an end which I don’t care for in the least. Yet for this all I do care for has to be stunted and starved’. (197)

On the one hand, her boredom can be attributed to her selfishness, and her lack of interest in the common good, but on the other, she complains that restrictive ideas of sexual propriety inhibit the expression of her individuality.

Fitzpiers has an enervated disposition which corresponds to Mrs Charmond's. Unexpectedly for a doctor, he 'was not a practical man, except by fits, and much preferred the ideal world to the real, and the discovery of principles to their application' (122). Like Mrs Charmond he finds village life oppressive:

... whether he meditated the Muses or the philosophers, the loneliness of Hintock life was beginning to tell upon his impressionable nature. Winter in a solitary house in the country, without society, is tolerable, nay, even enjoyable and delightful, given certain conditions; but these are not the conditions which attach to the life of a professional man who drops down into such a place by mere accident. They were present to the lives of Winterbourne, Melbury and Grace; but not to the doctor's. They are old association – an almost exhaustive biographical or historical acquaintance with every object, animate and inanimate, within the observer's horizon. (125)

In Mill's scheme of things, the desire for knowledge must be animated by moral and human interest, not idle curiosity, otherwise it will lead to indifference. And the same applies in *The Woodlanders*. Mrs Charmond's and Fitzpiers's boredom results from a failure to see the archive of human interest in their surroundings. In this sense, for both Mill and Hardy, old associations are constructive rather than damaging: they enliven individual interactions with the environment and animate otherwise narrow existences. In 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' (1888) Hardy invoked a version of the utilitarian hierarchy of pleasures in his view of fit subjects for fiction:

The higher passions must ever rank above the inferior – intellectual tendencies above animal, and moral above intellectual – whatever the treatment, realistic or ideal. Any system of inversion which should attach more importance to the delineation of man's appetites than to the delineation of his aspirations, affections, or humours, would condemn the old masters of imaginative creation from Aeschylus to Shakespeare. (245)

Again, old associations, this time literary ones, inform current-day practice. The writing of meaningful fiction must be enervated by knowledge of what mattered to literary forebears, just as successful village life depends on a knowledge of local landscape and history. The fates of Mrs Charmond and Fitzpiers, who lack moral aspirations or

constant affections, certainly suggest that Hardy gives credence to the utilitarian hierarchy of pleasures: Felice is shot dead by a disappointed lover and Fitzpiers's future cohabitation with Grace rests on his ability to become a more practical man.

*A Laodicean* engages with the sources of interest which Mill says should be alive to the cultivated mind, but also considers the dissatisfactions this can foster: receptivity to new ideas can clash with a romantic view of the past; an appreciation of art and poetry can conflict with the need to earn a living. The central characters, George Somerset, an architect, and Paula Power, a railway heiress and the Laodicean of the title, are both interested in nature, art, history and the human predicament. Forced to abandon an unsuccessful poetical career in order to train as an architect, the narrator compares Somerset's return to professional pursuits to a horse being broken in:

The operation called lunging, in which a colt having a rope attached to its head is made to trot round and round a horsebreaker with the other end of the rope in his hand, till it makes the beholder dizzy to look at them, is a very unhappy one for the animal concerned. During its progress the colt springs upward, across the circle, stops still, flies over the turf with the velocity of a bird, and indulges in all sorts of graceful antics; but he always ends in one way – thanks to the knotted whipcord – in a level trot round the lunger with the regularity of a horizontal wheel, and in the loss for ever to this character of the bold contours which the fine hand of Nature gave it. Yet the process is considered to be the making of him. (6)

This image strikingly captures Mill's concerns about loss of individuality and how society works to ensure conformity. Somerset's openness to ideas about art – 'the modern malady of unlimited appreciativeness' (7) – causes him to delay specialising in architecture and hampers his chances of commercial success compared to more thoughtless peers who 'had blunderingly applied themselves to whatever form of art confronted them at the moment of making a move' (7). This concern with the difficulties attached to a receptive worldview recalls Mr Maybold's comment in *Under the Greenwood Tree* that 'it is difficult for a man of any appreciativeness to have convictions at all' (86). Mr Maybold's comment is disingenuous, designed to further his aim of replacing Mellstock choir with a church organ, but Somerset and Paula's confusion is genuine.

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**Fig. 5. 'But my dear lady, you promised'. Illustration for *A Laodicean* in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1880) by George Du Maurier.**

As Somerset watches Paula Power, in a Baptist chapel built by her father, he sees her about to be baptised in line with her father's dying wishes, but then change her mind and refuse to proceed with the ceremony (unlike the astronomer Swithin in *Two on a Tower*, who goes ahead with being confirmed to please Viviette rather than because he believes in the ceremony). As Somerset watches her he imagines that she 'was even at that moment living, a clandestine, stealthy inner life which had very little to do with her present outward one' (12). In Millian terms there is no disconnection between Paula's inner and outer lives: she is ambivalent about religion and therefore refuses to go through with the baptism.<sup>7</sup> In *A Laodicean* a strong inner life is shown to be both a hindrance in the practical world and a source of strength which is necessary to non-conformism. George Du Maurier's illustration in Figure 5 depicts this incident in the novel: Paula is far from 'lost in the crowd' in Mill's famous phrase from *On Liberty* but glows with the spotlight of surveillance cast by the minister, the congregation and

<sup>7</sup> In *Thomas Hardy, Femininity and Dissent* Jane Thomas argues, in relation to this scene, that 'The collision between the happiness of the individual and the demands of the status quo is a strong motivating force in Hardy's writing' ... (103-4). She also points out that *A Laodicean*, and *Jude the Obscure*, articulate 'the insurmountable difficulties that beset the pioneer spirit and the "comforting", and at times irresistible, pull of tradition and the urge to conform. Paula, by virtue of her gender, occupies a position between the pioneer and the conformist' (104).



Somerset (73). As Somerset watches, he begins to sense that Paula's ability to withstand the disapproval of the minister and the congregation is not as autonomous as it first appears: 'it seemed to him more than probable that this young woman's power of persistence in her unexpected repugnance to the rite was strengthened by wealth and position of some sort, and was not the unassisted gift of nature' (15). Circumstances have differentiated her from the other parishioners who belong 'to that vast majority of society who are denied the art of articulating their higher emotions, and crave dumbly for a fogleman – respectably dressed working people, whose faces and forms were worn and contorted by years of dreary toil' (10). Somerset betrays an undertone of resentment for the increased choices which Paula's inheritance opens up for her, and his resentment continues when she prevaricates about her choice of husband.

Paula Power inhabits the De Stancy castle, bought by her railway magnate father, after the improvident Sir William De Stancy is forced to sell his ancestral home. The friendship between Sir William's daughter Charlotte and Paula Power, who are 'diametrically different ... in associations, traditions, ideas, religion' appeals to the part of Somerset prone to daydreams about human progress, which has been necessarily superseded by his material needs (40). He praises the liberal and forward-looking spirit of their friendship. Like Somerset, Paula is receptive to new ideas, but here, and in her view of history, she lacks the critical insight she has into religious matters: 'Every philosopher and man of science who ventilates his theories in the monthly reviews has a devout listener in her' (150). Somerset favours a sceptical view of the De Stancy family portraits, feeling 'that it required a profounder mind than his to disinter from the lumber of conventionality the lineaments that really sat in the painter's presence, and to discover their history behind the curtain of mere tradition' (21). But Paula is drawn to Charlotte's brother Captain De Stancy because of his 'Protean quality ... by means of which he could assume the shape and situation of almost any ancestor at will' (170). Paula and Captain De Stancy openly discuss the practical advantages their marriage would bring. The Captain thinks that a marriage between aristocracy and new money is a neat fit, but true to her non-compliance in church at the beginning of the novel, Paula says: 'I hope I am not so calculating as to risk happiness in order to round off a social idea' (302). The end of *A Laodicean* suggests a middle ground between appreciating the past and embracing a modern spirit. Paula marries Somerset, and when Dare, Captain De Stancy's illegitimate son, sets fire to the castle, Somerset and Paula decide not to restore it but to 'build a new house from the ground, eclectic in style' next to the ruins

(378). The architectural compromise is parallel to Paula's agnosticism – Paula is 'one of a body to whom lukewarmth is not an accident but a provisional necessity, till they see a little more clearly' (376).

#### 4.5 Language as 'the conservator of ancient experience'

Although the desirability of overcoming deep-rooted ideas is a powerful idea in both Mill's and Hardy's writing, there are also overlaps between the ways in which they conceive of the benefits of deep-rootedness. On the subject of the useful knowledge which resides in language, which can be used as guide for conduct, Hardy showed remarkable affinity with Mill's view. In the *Logic* Mill said that language is 'the conservator of ancient experience; the keeper-alive of those thoughts and observations of former ages, which may be alien to the tendencies of the passing time' (680). In the *Logic*, concerned with establishing the requisites of a philosophical language, Mill suggests that the average person has little or no awareness of the richness and complexity of their day-to-day language and the implications this has for their conduct. He observes that:

... nothing is more common than for propositions to be mechanically repeated, mechanically retained in the memory, and their truth undoubtingly assented to and relied on, while yet they carry no meaning distinctly home to the mind; and while the matter of fact or law of nature which they originally expressed is as much lost sight of, and practically disregarded, as if it had never been heard of at all. (8: 681)

This is an idea which Mill returns to in *On Liberty* when making the case for free discussion. Hardy drew a line beside the following passage in his own copy:

All languages and literatures are full of general observations on life, both as to what it is, and how to conduct oneself in it; observations which everybody knows, which everybody repeats or hears with acquiescence, which are received as truisms, yet of which most people first truly learn the meaning, when experience, generally of a painful kind, has made it a reality to them. How often, when smarting under some unforeseen misfortune or disappointment, does a person call to mind some proverb or common saying, familiar to him all his life, the meaning of which, if he

had ever before felt it as he does now, would have saved him from the calamity. (49)

Versions of the above passage from *On Liberty* occur several times in Hardy's novels. Like his friend, Mona Caird, whose work I discuss in next chapter, Hardy paid careful attention to Mill's concept of the difference between living language and beliefs, and dead ones, and the need for frequent discussion of familiar ideas to keep them relevant.<sup>8</sup>

Faced with the news that her husband Fitzpiers may have been injured, Grace Melbury in *The Woodlanders* feels more sympathy for his mistresses, Felice Charmond and Suke Damson, than for her husband. This experience makes Grace aware of the inadequacy of conventional language:

It was well enough, conventionally, to address either one of them in the wife's regulation terms of virtuous sarcasm, as woman, creature, or thing. But life, what was it, and who was she? She had, like the singer of the Psalm of Asaph, been plagued and chastened all the day long; but could she, by retributive words, in order to please herself, the individual, 'offend against the generation', as he would not? (261)

The Preface to the 1896 edition of *The Woodlanders* struck a very Millian note in relation to this subject. The assumption referred to in the following extract is that 'matrimonial divergence' (that is, interest in a third party once married) is depraved:

From the point of view of marriage as a distinct covenant or undertaking, decided on by two people fully cognizant of all its possible issues, and competent to carry them through, this assumption is, of course, logical. Yet no thinking person supposes that on the broader ground of how to afford the greatest happiness to the units of human society during their brief transit through this sorry world, there is no more to be said on this covenant; and it is certainly not supposed by the writer of these pages. (368)

Here Hardy links ideas from *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*, by proposing that discussion of individual stories about marriage is the way to work towards the greater good. It

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<sup>8</sup> On Hardy's friendship with Caird, see Richardson, *Love and Eugenics*, 193, note.

evokes Mill's warning against the complacency which sets in when a topic 'is not fully, frequently, and fearlessly discussed' (*On Liberty* 40).

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the narrator considers the disconnection between Troy's words and his feelings, as he attempts to seduce Bathsheba:

The wondrous power of flattery in *passados* [forward movement – a term from fencing] at women is a perception so universal as to be remarked upon by many people almost as automatically as they repeat a proverb, or say that they are Christians and the like, without thinking much of the enormous corollaries which spring from the proposition. Still less is it acted upon for the good of the complemental being alluded to. With the majority such an opinion is shelved with all those trite aphorisms which require some catastrophe to bring their tremendous meanings thoroughly home. (221)

Here there is an allusion to both Mill's concern about the intellectual origins of religious faith, and the stock of common proverbs and aphorisms which are unheedingly repeated until adverse experiences reveal that what is supposedly banal is actually replete with meaning. People fail to perceive the emptiness of Troy's words and therefore fail to perceive that 'his reason and his propensities had seldom any reciprocating influence, having separated by mutual consent long ago' (220).

*A Laodicean* explores the way that proverbs can also be manipulated – or manufactured – to appease individual consciences and justify morally dubious actions. Sir William De Stancy, who has gambled away his fortune, litters his conversation with proverbs and sayings about frugality. George Somerset feels that Sir William is a man 'who flattered his own understanding by devising Machiavellian theories after the event, to account for any spontaneous action of himself, or his daughter, which might otherwise seem eccentric or irregular' (40–1). The pub landlord observes that "Sir William, so full as he is of wise maxims, never acted upon a wise maxim in his life, until he had lost everything, and it didn't matter whether he was wise or no" (41). Sir William's method of dealing with the disjunction between words and action is to embrace sophistry. By this means he can create a consistent account of his own behaviour (he asserts that he has applied the principles of frugality to his life from his youth) and deal with the anxiety that actions may be perceived as unconventional.

In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Knight's words, both written and spoken, diminish and disparage Elfride. Yet when they first meet, she perceives a lack of spontaneity and originality in them: 'There was a hard square decisiveness in the shape of his sentences, as if, unlike her own and Stephen's, they were not there and then newly constructed, but were drawn forth from a large store ready-made' (146). Knight's lack of individuality is indicated from his first introduction to the narrative when Stephen, in an attempt to convey Knight's status, says 'his personality, and that of several others like him, is absorbed in a huge WE, namely, the impalpable entity called THE PRESENT – a social and literary Review' (60). This lack of character is no bar to his making authoritative statements, however. The epigraph to Chapter XIII, from Ecclesiastes, is 'He set in order many proverbs', indicating the confidence Knight reposes in his view of the world, (120); in Millian terms he relies too greatly on a sense of his own infallibility. Knight's intellectual output is likened to the common store of trite maxims. However, as he falls in love with Elfride his experiences defamiliarise his own pronouncements. Knight becomes aware that his own writing has been a mechanical exercise, unconnected to lived experience. As he considers how best to act, he realises that his writing is an untapped resource:

'What was he coming to? It was very odd to himself to look at his theories on the subject of love, and reading them now by the full light of a new experience, to see how much more his sentences meant than he had felt them to mean when they were written. People often discover the real force of a trite maxim only when it is thrust upon them by a chance adventure; but Knight had never before known the case of a man who learnt the full compass of his own epigrams by such means. (177)

Ultimately, though, Knight is paralysed by the conflict which this realisation brings. Though he comes to a theoretical understanding of his own fallibility, he is unable to translate this into practice. When he belatedly has promptings to 'stand forward, seize upon Elfride, and be her cherisher and protector through life' he is able to 'reason her down' by dwelling on her supposed 'indifference to decorum' (317). That he has previously written about issues of decorum in 'the pleasant social philosophy and satire of his essays' becomes a source of shame rather than a catalyst for self-development (317).

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* explores the qualifier that Mill adds to his analysis of proverbs and common sayings: 'there are many truths of which the full meaning *cannot* be realized, until personal experience has brought it home' (49, emphasis in original).

If before going to the D'Urbervilles' she had rigorously moved under the guidance of sundry gnomonic texts and phrases known to her and to the world in general, no doubt she would never have been imposed on. But it had not been in Tess's power – nor is it in anybody's power – to feel the whole truth of golden opinions when it is possible to profit by them. She – and how many more – might have ironically said to God with Saint Augustine, 'Thou hast counselled a better course than Thou has permitted'. (98)

Tess's reproach to her mother – "Why didn't you tell me there was danger?" (82) – points to Mill's insistence on the importance of unwearied discussion: 'But much more of the meaning even of these would have been understood, and would have been far more deeply impressed on the mind, if the man had been accustomed to hear it argued *pro* and *con* by people who did understand it' (*On Liberty* 49, emphasis in original). In 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', discussed below, Hardy says that fiction has become a guide to conduct for young people and Tess laments her lack of access to such a guide, thinking that 'Ladies know what tricks to guard against' because they use novels as a means of sex education (82).

#### **4.6 Philosophy in Fiction, Fiction in Philosophy**

In this chapter I have argued that in his fictional treatment of Millian ideas, Hardy is ever alert to the difficulties of putting philosophical ideals into practice, but that equally, he sometimes draws on Mill's own terms to problematise the relationship between theory and practice, and he sometimes champions Millian ideals. In 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' in 1888 Hardy also insisted on the importance of individual interpretation, warning against taking fiction too literally as a moral guide:

If it be true, as is frequently asserted, that young people nowadays go to novels for their sentiments, their religion, and their morals, the question as to the wisdom or folly of those young people hangs upon their methods of acquisition in each case. A deduction from what these works exemplify by action that bears evidence of being a counterpart of life, has a distinct

educational value; but an imitation of what may be called the philosophy of the personages – the doctrines of the actors, as shown in their conversation – many lead to surprising results. They should be informed that a writer whose story is not a tract in disguise has as his main object that of characterizing the people of his little world. A philosophy which appears between the inverted commas of a dialogue may, with propriety, be as full of holes as a sieve if the person or persons who advance it gain any reality of humanity thereby. (246)

If novels have replaced family or community as sources of moral guidance for young people, this would seem to make a wider and more independent engagement with the world possible; more possible than in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, for instance, where Mr Swancourt tells Elfride that she must defer to the views prevalent in their county, 'which is the world to us' (80). But Hardy emphasises that it is the way people read novels that is meaningful: it must be in an interrogative mode, ever alert to both fictional devices and the inconsistencies of life. Hardy's theory of how to read fiction evokes *On Liberty*, and the phrase used in *Jude the Obscure*: 'He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation' (65).

Mill was interested in the way in which theory is understood to be distinct from or opposed to practice: not in Hardy's sense of disavowing theories and theorising, but of the practical as a corrective to the speculative, with each element necessary to balance the other. In *Subjection* Mill avers the benefits of an intelligent female companion for a man involved in theorising:

A woman seldom runs wild after an abstraction. The habitual direction of her mind to dealing with things as individuals rather than in groups, and (what is more closely connected with it) her more lively interest in the present feelings of persons, which makes her consider first of all, in anything which claims to be applied to practice, in what manner persons will be affected by it – these two things make her extremely unlikely to put faith in any speculation which loses sight of individuals, and deals with things as if they existed for the benefit of some imaginary entity, some mere creation of the mind, not resolvable into the feelings of living beings. (534–5)

My main reason for drawing attention to this quotation from *Subjection* is not to engage with Mill's supposition that women's abilities might be different to men's (a position frequently drawn attention to as at odds with other arguments in *Subjection*<sup>9</sup>). Rather, it is to note, that like the practical women in Mill's *Subjection*, Hardy's primary concerns are keeping sight of individuals within the group (as well as the philosopher upon the hustings) and understanding how speculations are resolvable into the feelings of living beings; even though, he is, of course, working in the realm of imaginary entities and creations of the mind. Mill's description of women's practical abilities is inadvertently a useful way of thinking about Hardy's novelistic skills.

In Hardy's copy of *On Liberty* he highlighted Mill's contention that: 'the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind' (25). Though Mill was not talking about literature, this sounds like the way a reader of fiction, or a novelist, might engage empathically with a variety of characters. Hardy's multivocal engagement with Millian philosophy enhances our understanding of the holes in the sieve, the knotty points and the places where theory breaks down, but also reminds us of the value of book philosophies, the cultivated mind and the enthusiast about ideas.

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<sup>9</sup> For a nineteenth-century example of this objection, see Edith Simcox, in an otherwise celebratory piece on 'The Influence of John Stuart Mill's Writings' (1873) for the *Contemporary Review*: 'Mr Mill, as if bad reasoning were contagious, sometimes consents to speak, like his opponents, of the "nature of women" as a fixed and ascertainable quantity' (315). For a more recent reading of this part of *Subjection*, see, for example, William Stafford's *John Stuart Mill* (1998). Stafford suggests that although Mill 'runs the risk of bringing natural difference, and natural inferiority, back in' to the discussion here, 'he *never* concludes that there are essential differences of character, aptitude and ability between men and women' (134–5, emphasis in original).



## 5. Liberating Conversations: Millian Free Discussion in the Fiction of Mona Caird

They plunged into still more intimate talk, as if in truth they were old friends meeting again after long absence. Claudia brought floating to the surface all sorts of ideas that her companion had not definitely known were in his mind, as if she had set going in him a creative, liberating process. (36)

*The Stones of Sacrifice*, 1915

Mrs Ellwood had no difficulty in persuading Dick to tell her more about his life and his surroundings. She listened to him in amazement. The picture that he drew had all the qualities of a work of art. The critical faculty in her made her appreciation as delicate and perfect as his own unconscious masterpiece. (72)

'A Romance of the Moors', 1891

He never lectured or declaimed, or engrossed the talk. He paused at due intervals, to hear what others had to say; and not merely heard, but took in, and embodied that in his reply. With him, talk was, what it ought to be, an exchange of information, thought and argument, when it assumed the form of discussion; and an exchange of sympathies when the feelings were concerned. He did not care to converse on any other terms than perfect mutuality. (189)

Alexander Bain, *John Stuart Mill, A Criticism: with Personal Recollections*, 1882

Representative assemblies are often taunted by their enemies with being places of mere talk and *bavardage*. There has seldom been more misplaced derision. I know not how a representative assembly can more usefully employ itself than in talk, when the subject of the talk is the great public interests of the country, and every sentence of it represents the opinion either of some important body of persons in the nation, or of an individual in whom some such body have reposed their confidence. (283)

John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, 1861

Mona Caird was an essayist and novelist who became well known at the end of the nineteenth century for her unflinching criticism of marriage laws and customs in an article for the *Westminster Review* entitled 'Marriage' (1888). Caird's controversial article initiated a thoroughgoing nationwide debate about the marriage question, conducted through the letters columns of the *Daily Telegraph* and other national publications.<sup>1</sup> In 1910, the writer and editor Elizabeth A. Sharp declared that Caird's essays and novels 'have been potent in altering the attitude of the public mind in its approach to and examination of such questions, in making private discussion possible' (142). Caird not only encouraged debates about marriage during the 1880s and 1890s, she made liberty of discussion one of the major themes of her fiction. Discussion was

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<sup>1</sup> Most recent discussion of Caird gives an account of the 'Marriage' controversy, starting with Lucy's Bland's *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* in 1995 (126-34). See also, for example, Tracey S. Rosenberg's 'Breaking out of the Cage: Mona Caird and her Reception in the Victorian Press' in 2004 (9-12).

also important to the form her fiction took. Her novels and short stories consist largely of dialogue: it drives her plots and through it her characters are created. This chapter considers the links between Caird's fictional exploration of open and unrestricted discussion and *On Liberty, Subjection*, Mill's *Autobiography* and his 'Nature' essay. Throughout the seven novels she wrote, Caird engages with the forms of free discussion Mill argues for in *On Liberty* and the model of self-developmental conversation he sets out in his *Autobiography*. In doing so she offers an ideal of 'creative, liberating' conversation and explores many deviations from this ideal, including persuasion, manipulation, mockery, banality and silence.

The first section of this chapter sets Caird's treatment of discussion, and her recourse to Mill, in the context of *fin-de-siècle* New Woman debates and recent scholarship on this topic. The second section outlines the model of conversational excellence that was such a powerful influence on Caird's fiction, as Mill describes it in his *Autobiography* and Bain describes it in *John Stuart Mill – A Criticism: with Personal Recollections* (1882). The remaining sections consider the ways in which Caird's fiction scrutinises the relationship between discussion and social change. As I noted in the introduction, her nineteenth-century novels – *Whom Nature Leadeth* (1883), *One That Wins* (1887), *The Wing of Azrael* (1889), *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) and *The Pathway of the Gods* (1898) – focus on private conversations in upper-class domestic settings. *The Daughters of Danaus* and *The Pathway of the Gods* begin to explore how these private conversations relate to public debate; and her early twentieth-century novels – *The Stones of Sacrifice* (1915) and *The Great Wave* (1931) – depict political and scientific discussion groups, which are accessible to a greater diversity of participants, and consider directly how private conversational practices can translate into public discourse. I also show how conversation is of central importance to Caird's short stories 'A Romance of the Moors' (1891) and 'The Yellow Drawing Room' (1892) and to a polemical play about animal rights *The Logicians: An Episode in Dialogue* (1905).

### **5.1 New Women: Debates and Scholarship**

In 1989, when The Feminist Press published *The Daughters of Danaus*, Caird's best-selling fourth novel, it was the first time that one of Caird's novels had been reprinted since the original editions. Since that publication there has been a revival of interest in Caird. Ann Heilmann's 1996 article, 'Mona Caird (1854–1932): Wild Woman,

New Woman, and Early Radical Feminist Critic',<sup>2</sup> as well as her 2004 book *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner and Mona Caird*, established the importance of Caird's work to New Woman scholarship and the history of feminism, focusing on Caird's insights into the social construction of marriage and motherhood. In 2010, Valancourt Books re-published *The Wing of Azrael*, Caird's third novel which appeared in the wake of the 'Marriage' controversy. Edited and introduced by Tracey S. Rosenberg, it contains an appendix of contemporary responses to the novel. Pickering & Chatto also published *The Wing of Azrael* in 2010 as volume three of *New Woman Fiction, 1881–1899*, edited by Alexandra Warwick. Since The Feminist Press edition of *The Daughters of Danaus* in 1989, digital reprints of Caird's works are increasingly available and selections from Caird's journalism and fiction are anthologised in *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key Texts* (1998), edited by Heilmann.

In her afterword to The Feminist Press edition, Margaret Morganroth Gullette declared that *The Daughters of Danaus* – which tells of the stultifying domestic and social arrangements that thwart Hadria Fullerton's musical talent – was the novel in which Caird most successfully combined feminist convictions with literary achievement. Perhaps aware that acknowledging Caird's polemicism would cast doubt on her artistic credentials, Gullette contrasts her with Mill, observing that in *The Daughters of Danaus* 'Caird made the inequities/iniquities of the [marriage] system exceptionally vivid – far more vivid than Mill had done in his scrupulously reasoned essay on *The Subjection of Women* in 1869. Clearly what this author valued were *women's* points of view: their subjectivity and their subjection' (497, Gullette's emphasis). Given the space that Mill devotes to discussing female writers in *Subjection* and the possibility of 'a literature of their own' (548), it seems likely that he had more interest in female subjectivities than Gullette credits him with. When it came to marriage, Mill, like Caird, paid attention to 'how the unthinkable is worked out in daily detail' (*Wing of Azrael* 2: 167). Vivid also seems an apt word to describe the heartfelt vocabulary of *Subjection*: the sense of crushed, thwarted and stunted potential is forceful and memorable and these words resonate through Caird's prose. Gullette was making the case for the importance and

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<sup>2</sup> Biographical and archival sources for Caird are scarce. Heilmann's article represents the fullest biographical account, based on interviews with Caird's descendants. Tracey S. Rosenberg's unpublished thesis 'Gender Construction and the Individual in the Work of Mona Caird' (2006) also contains some biographical information. There is no archive of Caird's letters or other papers.

authority of Caird's voice in the New Woman debates of the 1890s and her continued relevance to feminist studies in the twentieth century, but in so doing she overlooked the complexity of Caird's engagement with Millian philosophy – Caird sought to align herself with Mill as a voice of reason, but also as a voice of sympathy and compassion.

Most critical accounts of Caird mention Mill and *Subjection* in order to position Caird's work in the context of first-wave feminism and to note that Caird borrows a Millian rhetorical strategy when she likens women's position under nineteenth-century marriage laws and customs as equivalent to, or worse than, that of slaves.<sup>3</sup> However, it was Angelique Richardson's *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century* (2003) which established the extent to which 'Mill's ideas on nature, society, and the individual had a formative influence on Caird's thinking' (187). In *Love and Eugenics* Richardson demonstrated that by 'positioning Mill's ideas on individual liberty in a biological context' Caird was able to offer a powerful challenge to biological determinism and the eugenic discourses of other New Women writers such as Sarah Grand (207). By paying close attention to how Millian ideas of freedom permeate her journalism and fiction, and the way she, like Mill, 'exposes the social and economic concerns which underpin discourses on the natural', Richardson made clear that Caird held very different views from many of the New Women writers with which she is habitually grouped (187).<sup>4</sup>

In an interview with the *Women's Penny Paper* in 1890 Caird said that reading Mill had had a formative role in her intellectual development. In the interview, she described her childhood as one of instinctive rebellion against current thought and of resistance to the influence of her surroundings. Owing to her father's ill health her childhood was one of seclusion, where personal influence played little part in her development and she was forced to 'scramble up' ('Interview: Mrs Mona Caird' 421). She said that writing was her habitual form of expression, but that she was prevented from writing when she became too absorbed by it. Her family's expectations for her were the conventional ones of marriage and domesticity: literary pursuits were not

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<sup>3</sup> In *Subjection* Mill said that 'I am far from pretending that wives are in general no better treated than slaves; but no slave is a slave to the same lengths, and in so full a sense of the word, as a wife is' (504). For discussion of how Caird uses the slavery analogy, see Patricia Murphy's *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender and the New Woman* in 2001 (163), Lisa SurrIDGE's *Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction* in 2005 (192) and Warwick's introduction to *The Wing of Azrael* (viii).

<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg's unpublished thesis also considers Mill as an intellectual influence on Caird, emphasising their shared views on gender construction: neither denied the existence of biological differences, but both refused to accept these as an argument for determining social position (28).

compatible with this. When asked if she was influenced by any women in forming her views about gender equality she responded: “No, not particularly. I knew so few whose intellect I respected. My views were pronounced at an early stage. John Stuart Mills [sic], I think, was the first to help me to bring these thoughts and feelings into form by his writings” (421). Reading Mill enabled her to move from the disorder of inadequate education and scarce opportunities for expression, to a place of greater security, structure and clarity.

Caird also named Shelley, Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer and Darwin as influences on her work, mentioning that “I came in contact with no leading minds, except in their writings, but these were more than sufficient education” (421). Despite having no personal contact with poets, philosophers and scientists in her early years, Caird confidently conveyed a sense of intellectual equality with these leading male figures based on her reading of their work. Caird (along with Olive Schreiner) became a member of The Men and Women’s Club – a London-based discussion group which was founded in 1885. Lucy Bland has suggested that many of the female members felt themselves to be intellectually inferior to the men (*Banishing the Beast* 6), but Caird does not appear to have shared this sense of inequality. In the *Women’s Penny Paper* interview she conveyed a fearless approach to canonical texts and authors, respectful of, but not intimidated by, voices of male authority. In 1890, the *Women’s Penny Paper* illustrated the difficulties faced by women seeking intellectual independence, by following Caird’s comments about her self-education with the sentence: ‘Here the entrance of tea and of Mrs Caird’s husband put a stop to our conversation’ (421). The interviewer, like some diarists and reviewers of Caird’s work in the periodical press, was sympathetic to Caird and her earnest advocacy of women’s rights, but sought to reconcile her controversial views with an image of serene and tasteful domesticity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The positive review of *The Wing of Azrael* in the *Young Folks Paper*, for example, includes the following picture of Caird’s domestic life: ‘She had one child, a bright little fellow of five years of age, and a well-known writer recently described to us a charming scene which he had just left – the author of “The Wing of Azrael” sitting in the garden correcting the proofs of her new book, while her mother assisted her in the arduous task of revision, but the novelist with eyes much more constantly on the frolicsome youngster (rolling about on the grass with his pet lamb “Peter”) than on her literary task’ (‘The Literary Mirror’. 350). And Katherine Tynan’s diary entry of 2 July 1889 discusses the controversy caused by Caird’s ‘Marriage’ article at the same time as observing: ‘She was a very agreeable surprise to those who met her. She was a pretty young woman, with a look of honest sunburn about her, and very true, gentle brown eyes, and she dressed charmingly. That summer we were all wearing streamers to our hats, and I have a vivid memory of her green ribbons, going well with the browns of her face and eyes and hair’ (300).

After reporting Caird's account of 'literary work ... done under adverse circumstances' (421) the interviewer apparently sees no sense of irony in the abrupt end to a discussion of Caird's intellectual influences. In her fiction she explores the impact of such interrupted and halted conversations or provides a space for their continuation.

The *Women's Penny Paper* interview points to an interest, explored throughout Caird's work, in the potential for cooperation between men and women. The most productive conversations she imagines take place between men and women in a spirit of friendship and collaborative work. Her advocacy of women's rights has been well-established, and this critical focus has tended to obscure the importance she places more broadly on human rights.<sup>6</sup> While Heilmann has observed that Grand 'combined social purity discourses with an at times spectacular exploration of female libidinal desire' (*New Woman Strategies* 3), Caird's work shows a preoccupation with intimate but Platonic friendship between the sexes, unrestricted by possible accusations of impropriety. In *The Morality of Marriage* (1897) a collection of her essays which had first appeared in the periodical press, she asserted that 'It is certain that we shall never have a world really worth living in, until men and women can show interest in one another without being driven either to marry, or to forego altogether the pleasure and the profit of frequent meeting' ('A Moral Renaissance' 103). Accordingly, there is very little flirtatious conversation in Caird's fiction and when it does occur it is deeply problematic. As I discuss further below, Caird's Platonic ideal is reminiscent of Mill's account of his relationship with Harriet Taylor, where 'all subjects of intellectual or moral interest [were] discussed between them in daily life, and probed to much greater depths than are usually or conveniently sounded in writings intended for general readers' (*Autobiography* 183–4).

In her introduction to *The Morality of Marriage* Caird linked Mill's philosophy with journalism by saying that 'What John Stuart Mill saw so clearly about half a century ago is gradually and slowly coming to be recognised and proved, bit by bit, through

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Heilmann's *New Woman Strategies*: 'Both [Caird and Sarah Grand] employed male points of view because they wanted to school women readers in what Judith Fetterley has called "the process of exorcising the male mind that has been implanted within us"' (163). See also Patricia Murphy's analysis of *The Daughters of Danaus* and 'the ruinous effects wrought by patriarchal culture's stringent regulation of a woman's time through numbing domestic routine' (*Time is of the Essence* 151). However, Lucy Bland notes that 'To facilitate contact and open friendship between the sexes, she advocated co-education, and the breaking down of sex segregation in the work place' (*Banishing the Beast* 129).

observation and research directed to the subject' (13–14). Caird quoted from *Subjection* to illustrate what Mill saw so clearly: that the whole organisation of society tended to the distortion of women's natures, so that it had become impossible to say what their true character and capacities were. In her fiction, Caird took as her point of departure Mill's assertion in *Subjection* that the discussion about women's legal and social position 'must be a real discussion, descending to foundations, and not resting satisfied with vague and general assertions' (492). Millian conversation is invariably rigorous and demanding and Caird takes her cue from this serious tone in order to insist on the importance of free discussion in the face of those who wish to mock, dismiss or undermine it. In 'Foibles of the New Woman' (1896) Ella W. Winston, a little-known American writer who had previously written against women's suffrage, suggested that the New Woman 'is a stranger to logic' and 'she has made many strange statements' (170). For many, Mill's voice was the voice of logic and reason, and yet he was also a controversialist, no stranger to making challenging statements which commanded attention. By filling her work with allusions to Mill's ideas and prose style, Caird claims him as her ally in challenging the accusations of illogicality and irrelevance made by Winston and many other commentators. And, as I will show, Caird valued highly the compassion which she thought animated Millian rationality.

Caird made the case for Mill's enduring relevance at a time when others associated him with an old-fashioned perspective. George Bernard Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* was published in 1897, the same year as *The Morality of Marriage*. References to John Stuart Mill in the stage directions are used to indicate Mrs Clandon's out-of-date approach to life: 'Mrs Clandon is a veteran of the Old Guard of the Women's Rights movement which had for its Bible John Stuart Mill's treatise on *The Subjection of Women* ... passion in her is humanitarian rather than human; she feels strongly about social questions and principles, not about persons' (219–20). In the Preface to *The Wing of Azrael*, written in the wake of the controversy caused by her article 'Marriage' for the *Westminster Review*, Caird had been anxious to refute the idea that her characters were representatives of social questions and principles: 'Human affairs are too complex, motives too many and too subtle, to allow a small group of persons to become the exponents of a general principle, however true. An argument founded on this narrow basis would be without value, though it were urged with the eloquence of a Demosthenes' (viii). Reviewers debated whether *The Wing of Azrael* had artistic value,

or whether it was purely a didactic work. The *Academy* declared that: 'It is avowedly a story with a purpose ... Yet there is abundance of cleverness in it' ('New Novels' 355), while a reviewer in the *Young Folks Paper* was far more laudatory of Caird's skills: 'She has wit, humour, dramatic intensity, and tragic force, and with these qualities so highly developed as they are with her, she may achieve a wide and enduring fame' ('The Literary Mirror' 350).

Today, 'The Yellow Drawing Room' is perhaps the most well known piece of Caird's fiction, anthologised in *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women 1890–1914* (2002), edited by Angelique Richardson. As Richardson's introduction to that collection shows, the short story form 'was perfectly suited to give expression to the turbulence and uncertainties of the late nineteenth century' (xlvii). In contrast, Caird's first four novels are multi-volume works – *One That Wins* was published in two volumes, *Whom Nature Leadeth*, *The Wing of Azrael* and *The Daughters of Danaus* were all triple-deckers. Heilmann describes *Whom Nature Leadeth* as 'a sensation novel with a tortuous plot' (*New Woman Strategies* 212) and Rosenberg describes *The Wing of Azrael* as a 'sprawling three-volume novel, primarily of interest because it presents the seeds of many of Caird's later ideas' ('Introduction' ix). Though Caird's fiction, for the most part, may have conformed to an old-fashioned format, the numerous subplots and minor characters required to populate the pages of these lengthy novels gave her additional space to explore her ideal of creative, liberating conversation, and deviations from it.

## 5.2 Millian Conversation

The art of conversation is the keynote of Mill's *Autobiography*. It is an analysis of the manner and modes in which discussion is conducted, not just of the opinions professed. The *Autobiography* culminates in Mill deploying, as a member of parliament, the discussion skills he has been developing all his life. Throughout the *Autobiography*, Mill is concerned with the concept of 'personal ascendancy' by virtue of conversational ability. Those with outstanding conversational abilities have the power to change the world, though they accomplish nothing else. Their influence 'deserves to be accounted an historical event' (75). Among Mill's peers, the legal philosopher John Austin's vigorous and expressive conversation was instructive and character-building. His lack of achievement in other areas, due to a debilitating perfectionism, was compensated for



by his conversational ability. His brother Charles Austin, a barrister, was a controversialist, taking risks with what he said, deliberately trying to provoke and startle, and taking pleasure in his own audacity. He thus created far-reaching, though paradoxical, impressions of what constituted utilitarian belief. Discussing Jesus as a historical figure in *On Liberty*, Mill remarks that it was his 'life and conversation' that left such an enduring impression of 'moral grandeur' (30). The quotation from *Considerations on Representative Government* at the head of this chapter acts as a useful summary of the importance Mill accords to 'mere talk': at the highest level it has the power to transform society for the good.

In terms of the personal influence he was exposed to and the structure of his education, Mill's childhood could not have been more different from Mona Caird's 'scramble up'. Mill's conversation is seemingly always at an adult level – he has little contact with his peers as a child. From his early years, conversation is a formalised, work-related activity. In the walks he describes with his father, talking is linked to a sense of learning and of achievement. He has to give verbal summaries of the books he has read, using slips of paper to aid his memory. (In his biography of Mill, Richard Reeves suggests that the Latin phrase *solivitur ambulando*, literally interpreted as 'the solution comes through walking', could have been Mill's epitaph, 468.) In the *Autobiography* a positive connection is established between walking and talking: there is something structured and purposeful in the way father and son literally walk through problems as they talk, but perhaps also something liberating in that this takes place outdoors, among 'green fields and wild flowers' (29). Early on Mill also learns about the history of dialogue and discussion by studying classical oratory. All aspects of public speaking are anatomised: composition and delivery of speeches, timing, gauging the effect likely to be had on an audience, elocution and precise understanding of the units which compose speech. Mill is the heir to all of this through his education. The idea that people will pay attention to the minutiae of what he says is normalised and reinforced when his father makes him define the words 'idea' and 'theory'. Every word and sentence has significance and may need to be defended. It is normal to have opinions and articulate them privately and publicly – to argue and to press your point. This risks censure, but saying nothing is not an option. Mill is alert to the role education plays in building a child's confidence to speak out in this way.

The daily discussion group Mill convenes as a young man further formalises conversation. It makes it a consciously productive process, a form of work, with participants who are very aware of its potential contribution to the public good. The discussion is unapologetically specialist: methodical, detailed, intense, searching and lengthy. It fosters attributes such as tenacity in problem-solving. The group is beneficial in helping individuals to work through ideas, reach their own conclusions and bring new ideas to the surface. Conversation is collaborative, leading to writing and publishing. Mill says the *Logic* came directly out of the discussions with this group. It was also transformational, turning Mill into 'an original and independent thinker' (105). Afterwards Mill develops his public speaking skills in a newly formed debating society. Again the discussion is intense, detailed and precise. Mill thinks that this helped him to improve his writing style by giving him a sense for smoothness, rhythm, telling sentences and effect on an audience. His attitude to his own public speaking abilities is functional rather aspirational: though he lacked fluency and grace – as many commentators were keen to emphasise – he could make himself listened to.

Mill describes his father's conversational virtuosity in the most laudatory terms, implying that with him conversation really was an art form. James Mill could make his most carefully thought out ideas accessible in 'colloquial discussion' (91). There was no disconnection between his 'great mental resources' and the language in which he expressed them (91). He also had a sense of humour, and of story. James Mill's conversational skills acted as a catalyst for the thoughts of other men. His enthusiasm 'warmed into life and activity every germ of similar virtue that existed in the minds he came into contact with' (92). He evoked a desire for his approval in his interlocutors and offered moral support to people with the same aims via his conversation. This private activity was suffused with public spirit and an awareness of its relation to power, progress and improvement. Conversation with James Mill was never idle: it was always about either work or intellectual sympathy or both. It also seems never to have been personal, and it is lack of conversation on this level that contributed to Mill's mental crisis in his early twenties: 'I sought no comfort by speaking to others of what I felt. If I had loved any one sufficiently to make confiding my griefs a necessity, I should not have been in the condition I was' (113). In later life, Harriet Taylor fulfils the role of his 'almost infallible counsellor' (192). Just as the *Logic* came out of his discussion group, his later works emanate from his discursive life with Harriet. When Harriet dies,

her daughter Helen Taylor steps into the role of ‘companion, stimulator, adviser, and instructor’ (196). In his own family life, Mill expands his father’s unrelentingly intellectual approach to conversation into something less competitive and manipulative, more tolerant and sympathetic.

In contrast, Mill finds conversation in what he terms ‘General Society’ dull and unpleasant. He observes a difference between social interaction in French and English society. English society inhibits profession of high feelings or principles; it tends to ‘sneering depreciation’ (62). Intellectual or improving conversation will not be had in the normal run of things, so it is necessary to seek out the people who will provide this and create formal groups or arrangements to pursue it. France has a ‘culture of the understanding’ which permeates all classes, unlike England (62). English conversation is more restricted, more reserved, and less friendly, and assumes that other people are bores or enemies. English feelings and intellects are perpetually diminished or limited by ‘the habit of not speaking to others, nor much even to themselves, about the things in which they do feel interest’ (63). Controversy and argument are not allowed and the English, unlike the French, have neglected ‘the cultivation of the art of talking agreeably on trifles’ (173) due to being less lively and sociable. Mill does not dismiss the idea of small talk, just believes that the English are no good at it. English conversation is always concerned with matters of personal advancement or ‘compliance with custom’ (173) and people are fearful of breaking out of conventional modes. Intelligent people who participate in General Society will therefore be damaged by it. They will become demoralised by having to remain silent on important issues and unconsciously begin to adopt the same modes of interaction. Because English conversation is not open, Mill closes himself off from it.

Despite Mill’s own account of being highly selective in his choice of interlocutor, in his *John Stuart Mill, A Criticism: with Personal Recollections* Bain insists that Mill was not reluctant to talk to ‘ordinary mortals’ (187). He also dismisses views of Mill as shy, awkward, hesitant, slow and humourless, and Carlyle’s description of his conversation as ‘sawdustish’ (190). Instead he offers the laudatory portrait of Mill’s conversational power quoted at the head of this chapter. Mill’s conversational mode, according to Bain, demonstrated an unsurpassed intellectual generosity: ‘He poured himself out in conversation, and his ideas were caught up and used, with or without acknowledgement’ (155). In Bain’s view, he put into practice his own advice about the

benefits of 'correcting and completing his own opinions by collating it with those of others' (*On Liberty* 25); his verbal authority was based on the openness he advocated in his writing. He actively listened, was willing to be guided by his interlocutors as to the direction of the conversation, and was contemptuous of 'monologue talkers' (190). Mill's conversational virtuosity was not limited to the intellectual – he also displayed understanding when discussing people's feelings and had a sympathetic rather than mocking sense of humour. Speculating on the role Harriet played in his work (though in order to suggest that it was not as significant as Mill believed) Bain suggests that she induced him to 'exert his powers in talk, which was a standing pleasure of his life' (173). (In *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*, Jo Ellen Jacobs imagines the corresponding benefits for Harriet in a fictionalised diary entry: 'I adore my children, but what a joy to have some retreat into adult conversation when Mr Mill arrives to talk about ideas' (15, Jacobs's emphasis).)

On Mill's view of conversation in England, Bain observed that 'General Society is a very large phrase; it comprises coteries where such a man as Mill would be out of his element, and others where he might discuss any subject, and utter any opinions that he pleased' (162). Caird seems to have participated far more enthusiastically in general society than Mill, living for part of each year 'at a pleasant house in South Hampstead, in the midst of quite a little colony of artists and literary people', attending and hosting parties ('The Literary Mirror' 350). Caird's participation in society life did not stop her from being extremely critical of 'the washed-out flattened humanity of the British drawing-room' (*One That Wins* 1: 146), however. While Mill rejects the world of small talk, Caird examines its complexities, offering as an alternative to its rituals and superficiality an extraordinarily well-worked-out ideal of meaningful conversation between pairs and larger networks of people. Ever-present in her fiction is the contrast Mill establishes between harmful small talk or conventional phrases, and meaningful conversation. Several other of the themes in the *Autobiography* also underpin her work: the association of walking and outdoor spaces with productive talk; conversation on an adult level (in *One That Wins* one of the characters refers scornfully to the 'Bedlamite tongue reserved for intellectual communication with infancy', 90); attention to the intricacies of language and the precise meanings of words, and perhaps most importantly, the image of conversation warming ideas into life and activity. The way in which Caird's characters conform to or deviate from the Millian ideal of mutuality in

verbal exchange, including Bain's version, of it is always indicative of their morality and intelligence. The detailed readings which follow attempt to trace all of these threads through Caird's stories.

### 5.3 'A medley of broken phrases' in *Whom Nature Leadeth*

Mona Caird's first novel *Whom Nature Leadeth*, published under the pseudonym G. Noel Hatton in 1883, establishes many of the prevailing themes in her later fiction. Caird's heroine is Leonore Ravenhill, an heiress who struggles to reconcile her intellectual curiosity and love of freedom with the conventional values repeatedly impressed upon her. Both aspects of Leonore's psychology evoke passages in Mill's writing. Her openness to new ideas and experiences calls to mind Mill's description of a cultivated mind in *Utilitarianism*. Throughout Caird's fiction, perceptive and sensitive characters are interested in nature, art, history and public-spiritedness, but they are also very aware of the disconnection between their own outlooks and those of narrow-minded and conformist people around them. In *Whom Nature Leadeth*, Leonore's hunger for knowledge and experience is shown to be in tension with inclinations towards flirtation and vanity. This recalls Mill's description in *Subjection* of how women are trained to devote too much time to making themselves attractive to men. During the course of the novel Leonore's world contracts. From the possibilities represented by pursuit of her talent for painting, she becomes mired in domestic and maternal responsibilities. This is represented in her dialogue: at the start of the novel she speaks out impulsively against restrictions to her freedom but towards the end she has been reduced to socially acceptable wit and epigram infused with bitterness. Leonore's relationships with three suitors – Crawford Stephens, George Meredith (it seems that no comparison to the real-life novelist was intended) and Austin Bradley – are characterised by the level of communication she can achieve with each. The novel also features numerous subplots which explore unhappy relationships between men and women. Each of the couple's discontents are revealed through their conversational traits. Thus Josephine's open-minded attitude to travel and culture, and her disposition to talk through her problems, is contrasted with her fiancée's destructive gambling addiction, and his reluctance to communicate his debt problems with her. Alfred Leigh is a man who has become withdrawn and reluctant to talk by marrying a woman devoid of all personal interests. Estelle Leigh's early training in securing a wealthy husband is

blamed for her vacuousness. On a light-hearted but pointed note, Lady Alderstone discourages her husband from pursuing and discussing his avocation for insects: 'the one pursuit which led his thoughts from the pettiness of self and selfish pleasures to the problems and mysteries of nature' (2: 85).

Leonore's young life takes the form of a confrontation with her Machiavellian stepmother Mrs Ravenhill. Denied a constructive outlet for her power, Mrs Ravenhill finds every opportunity she can to assert it illegitimately: her interventions in the lives of her social circle were 'a masterpiece of management, combining delicate yet firm-handed adjustment of the finest modes of speech and action' (2: 152). She cultivates her husband's dependence on her opinions and uses her sway to suggest her much older brother as a suitable husband for Leonore. The potential for this type of misplaced female energy and ambition is one of Mill's concerns in *Subjection*, and he suggests that equality of vocational opportunities would eliminate such abuse of power within families. Mrs Ravenhill only becomes seriously interested in Leonore when she becomes of marriageable age. Until this point Mrs Ravenhill 'used to amuse herself by exciting the child to talk upon any subject that came uppermost' (1: 29). Paradoxically, as the accepted method of educating girls is so defective, her stepmother's lack of care for her charge as a child has a beneficial effect on Leonore's mental development. Therefore when she attempts to control her stepdaughter as a young woman, Leonore speaks out spontaneously in Millian phrases, saying to her stepmother: "Do you want to curtail my liberty, regulate my coming and going, chalk out my thoughts for me, and draw a map of my future feelings?" (1: 19). Mrs Ravenhill's response is to quote the epigraph to Madame de Staël's *Delphine* (1802), which Mill draws attention to in *Subjection*: 'Un homme peut braver l'opinion, une femme faut [Mill says 'doit'] s'y soumettre' (1: 19–20, *Subjection* 498). Leonore declares: "I will give the lie to that clever saying" (1: 20). Having had opportunities to form her own opinions as a child, Leonore can articulate her desire to disprove the idea that men can brave public opinion while women must submit to it. She draws attention to the misleadingly epigrammatic expression of a restrictive sentiment. Her bold and direct statements also implicitly challenge apparently innocuous aphoristic language which hides harmful judgements within it. In Millian terms she is defying the dead dogma of inherited language. The fact that she has arrived at her opinions independently and speaks them with conviction means that she expresses herself in a living language.

Mrs Ravenhill's treatment of Leonore as a child establishes another theme which Caird returns to repeatedly: the difference between those who are in earnest when they speak and those who joke out of malevolence, indifference or thoughtlessness. What is serious to Leonore is a game to Mrs Ravenhill and her companions, whose coarseness is barely covered by a veneer of social etiquette. Caird's contemporaries did not perceive her to be an author without a sense of humour. Indeed, a contemporary reviewer of *The Wing of Azrael* remarked:

It is a tragedy, and the note of gloom and misery is struck constantly throughout the book from the fascinating opening to the terrible close; yet it is so lightened with a never-ending play of humour and with such acute and delightful depicture of nature and humanity, that it may be read with keen enjoyment even by those who hate tragic stories. ('The Literary Mirror' 350)

However, Caird was ever alert to the exhibition of cruelty through laughter. This may be another reason that she found so much affinity with Mill's writings. In *Subjection*, for example, he argues that the situation is so dire and the ill-effects so keenly felt by so many women, that humour is insulting and undermines the urgency of the need for change. Mill deliberately juxtaposes 'lovers of fun' or 'those who find it easier to draw a ludicrous picture of what they do not like, than to answer the arguments for it' with 'the dull and hopeless life' many women are reduced to (580). Bain noted that Mill's sense of humour was of the sympathetic rather than the mocking kind, and that he was unable to render it in well in writing and so did not attempt to do so (*John Stuart Mill* 189–90).

In *Whom Nature Leadeth*, Leonore goes to live with her relatives, the Merediths, a family who are disposed to treat most people 'with familiar jibes and jeers' (1: 5). In the clamour of the Meredith household, where conversation is as savage as fox hunting, Caird's passionate opposition to animal cruelty and her belief in the value of free discussion are brought together:

It was very seldom that the most dextrous member of the family, much less Mrs Meredith, succeeded in finishing a sentence of any length; the old lady spoke slowly, and her daughters spoke quickly, so that she was, as they technically expressed it, 'quite out of the hunt'... . Then the

conversation again closed in, becoming a medley of broken phrases,  
impossible to reproduce. (1: 81)

In a drawing room where conversation resembles hounds barking and yelping as they close in on a fox, self-improvement is impossible.<sup>7</sup> Not only is there no chance for ideas to be brought to fruition before they are killed off, dissentient opinions are laughable:

There was a feeling of stagnation in this constant intercourse with one set of people; in the evitable sameness of opinion, of language, even of jokes ... She felt it would be a relief if only someone would appear and rudely disagree with the whole family. But after all, of what avail? For the Merediths would regard a person who differed from them seriously as too puerile to oppose. They would endeavour rather to draw out that quaint and harmless lunatic, assembling to enjoy together the grotesqueness of his delusions. (1: 176–7)

Here Caird considers how people wield power by their flexibility and quick-wittedness in speech, by the speed and effectiveness with which they can put thoughts into words. The Merediths, however, give nobody a chance to fully work through their thoughts, breeding an atmosphere of homogeneity, desperately in need of a serious opponent or devil's advocate to unsettle their complacency. Caird's image of broken phrases can be applied to Leonore's plight: her bold statements are eventually broken down into trite remarks.

Caird provides another striking portrait of dysfunctional conversation in *Whom Nature Leadeth*. The figure of Mrs Bleek is a mixture of Millian ideas. She is represented as a woman whose originality and intellectual ability have been stunted by conversing with less intelligent people than herself. Her mental power still seeks an outlet, though,

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<sup>7</sup> If Caird was aware of Mill's reputation for kindness to animals, as discussed in chapter three, then this must have added to his appeal as a touchstone for her. She would surely have approved of the way Morley linked Mill's concern for women's rights with his concern for animal rights in his centenary piece for the *Times Literary Supplement*: 'The same wrath that blazes in him when he is asked to use glozing words about the moral atrocities of Nature to man, breaks out unabated when he recounts the tyrannical brutalities of man to woman. Nor even did the flame of indignation burn low, when he thought of the callous recklessness of men and women to helpless animals – our humble friends and ministers whose powers of loyalty, attachment, patience, fidelity so often seems to deserve as good a word as human or better' (174).



and this results in a lifetime of sophisticating: 'Mrs Bleek shut herself away from all fresh influences, exerting her very originality in forming ingenious explanations of manifold revered but irrational doctrines' (2: 237). Mrs Bleek's contributions to group discussions therefore command attention, but for all the wrong reasons:

... by dint of taking up audacious positions, entirely ignoring the point, together with a system of wildly inapposite repartee, she generally managed to have the laugh on her own side. The rest of the party sat watching the fray in rapt attention. The combatants were well matched; Crawford's stubborn materialism and stern logic being pitilessly teased and tormented by the erratic fancies of his adversary, and by the sudden attitudes of moral elevation to which she resorted when driven into a corner. ... It would be hard to state the subject of the discussion, for Miss Bleek's strategical methods rendered a line of connected argument on one topic impossible, but it ran towards the original question of good and evil ... (2: 242-3)

Leonore explores different possibilities for escape from such damaging conversation. Crawford Stephens is the friend with whom she first has the opportunity to indulge 'the luxury of verbal expression', walking and talking with him despite her stepmother's accusations of impropriety (1: 26). However, Crawford's scepticism means that he cannot see past the element of coquetry in Leonore's confidences and she senses that he does not take her completely seriously. Leonore seeks conversations which transgress class boundaries, and has 'extraordinary discussions' with the gardener about 'Rhine wines, black-beetles, life after death, and Heaven knows what ...' (1: 190-1). Her encounters with the gardener, however, are merely offered as a suggestion and not pursued in depth as a serious possibility. It is with the writer Austin Bradley that Leonore finds engrossing discussion and a sense of intellectual equality. On a journey to London their conversation progresses like the train itself: 'It swam swiftly and smoothly on, each word and tone instantly conveying its meaning, as if, for the time being, the two minds had actually become one' (2: 230). With Austin she discovers the pleasures of mutual understanding; each perceives a perfect connection between what is thought and what is said. In contrast, Leonore's conversation with her cousin George is ominously halting and awkward. He struggles to keep pace with the flow of her

thoughts. Like Caird, Leonore pays close attention to verbal exchange: 'She was fond of studying the formation and expression of ideas, she told George. Some people let them ooze lazily out without superintendence – these were generally stupid people. Others on the contrary, appeared to take pride and pleasure in their fit: they liked to feel the vigorous grasp of two colliding minds' (1: 198). Despite their obvious mismatch intellectually and conversationally, Leonore convinces herself that George belongs to the second category of people and marries him.

Marriage, motherhood, and frustrated artistic ambition then petrify Leonore's yearnings to voice different ideas, and damage her cerebral relationship with Austin. When Austin sees Leonore in the domestic role she has taken on he initially misinterprets her demeanour: 'She was entirely self-possessed, and had plenty of brilliant small-talk. Sometimes a witty little epigram would escape her, though it was always given with such grace and suavity that few people noticed its bitterness. As Austin had prophesied, Leonore had fallen into to her position, and became it admirably' (3: 235). In response to this, Austin becomes a spokesperson for Millian liberty, articulating the concepts which came so readily to Leonore at the beginning of the novel, challenging her and his sister Patricia to recognise the underlying social reasons for their behaviour and doing all in his power to entreat them to change. The novel ends with a wide-ranging conversation between Austin and Leonore, which takes place beside the sea, Caird's favourite liminal space. It is the Millian model of male-female friendship, but ultimately, with Leonore married to George, it cannot be mutually beneficial, and Austin heads off to satisfy his 'world-hunger' (298). Despite the collapse of Leonore's ambitions and opportunities, the last chapter does point to a way forward. The conversation is of the most serious, searching kind, going to the foundations, seeking for the deepest meanings and a clearer understanding of the way to live. Leonore is left with the consolations of philosophy rather than the emptiness of epigram.

#### 5.4 *One That Wins*: 'think only of the thing said'

Caird's 1887 novel, *One That Wins*, is sometimes reminiscent of Henry James's novella of 1878, 'Daisy Miller'. Set mostly in Rome, the plot revolves around Launcelot Sumner's relationships with the passionate but troubled artist Oenone and the seemingly unremarkable Nelly Erskine. Nelly's willingness to talk to the hall-porter recalls Daisy Miller's rapport with her courier; the way her volubility is misread by her social circle, including her eventual husband Launcelot, evokes Daisy's enigmatic qualities. Like Leonore in *Whom Nature Leadeth*, Nelly is caught between the desire to expand her intelligence and the urge to behave in an accepted way. Her interlocutors therefore detect unevenness in her conversation and she is misunderstood and underestimated: her startling comments are dismissed as humourous nonsense and her seriousness is mistaken for frivolity. *One That Wins* has, however, perhaps the most optimistic and positive tone of Caird's novels and finishes on a very different note to 'Daisy Miller' and indeed *Whom Nature Leadeth*. The ending of Caird's novel is inconclusive, but suggests a domestic arrangement achieved through open discussion, involving Nelly, Launcelot and Oenone, which will enable one of 'a thousand possible unions of spirit' with the potential to 'fill the world with freshness and joy' (3: 149). Instead of female characters focalised through the view of a male narrator as in 'Daisy Miller', the narratorial mode of *One That Wins* is established on a much broader basis, purporting to a kind of documentary style, recording moments of conversation that would otherwise be forgotten and allowing readers to eavesdrop. Thus *One That Wins* opens with Launcelot and his friend Joe Hazlitt and 'a random dive into the stream of their conversation' (1: 7). This demonstrates Launcelot's generous nature, in contrast to his friend's 'immovable definiteness of view' which 'rendered it impossible to engraft upon his mind any really foreign idea' (15). The image of engrafting strongly recalls Mill's image of intellectual development in his *Autobiography*: integration and accommodation of different viewpoints by constantly weaving anew the fabric of his opinions. In this open-minded mode, Launcelot is captivated by both Oenone and Nelly as speakers. Conversing with them leads him to modify his view of the world in different ways.

Launcelot's conversations with Nelly and Oenone also draw on the idea Mill expresses in *On Liberty* that "There must be discussion to show how experience is to be interpreted ... .Very few facts are able to tell their own story, without comments to bring

out their meaning' (25). Oenone's conversation with Launcelot, in which she relates how her stepmother stifled her own and her father's artistic and intellectual development, is a meaningful exchange. Both she and Launcelot interpret the effects of her past experiences on her present life, and the process is initially a cathartic one for Oenone, though it becomes unsettling. Oenone appreciates the way in which Launcelot breaks with traditional expressions of romantic love and refrains from complimenting her beauty. Lancelot listens respectfully and is able to make connections between Oenone's inner and outer life. Oenone can talk freely to Launcelot, but switches to a rigid observation of etiquette when her studio is opened up to the general society of Rome. Talking to Oenone makes 'the world anew' for Launcelot in both positive and negative ways (1: 55). Oenone's ability to narrate the events of her own life has a powerful effect on him. He recognises her potential to influence others with her eloquence, but is shocked by her frank statements about the indignities of her marriage.

Convinced by Oenone's suggestion that Nelly is intellectually lightweight, Launcelot is startled by her burgeoning resistance to her conventional upbringing when he talks to her for the first time. Unexpectedly, as Nelly endeavours to expand her own view of the world, she provokes new insights for Launcelot: 'Previous unregarded hints that he had met in reading, in conversation, flashed back upon his memory, no longer dead and unmeaning, but clothed with vivid significance. Nelly had become their unconscious interpreter' (1: 137). Throughout *One That Wins* the power of discussion to translate previous experience into something more meaningful for the future is emphasised. While Launcelot is attracted to Oenone's potential as an artist, with Nelly he is sympathetic to her struggle to make the most of an average intellect. Nelly is aware of her limitations, but striving to be the best that her capabilities will allow. The potential Launcelot sees in Nelly recalls the ending of *Middlemarch* when George Eliot's narrator says of Dorothea: 'the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts' (785). Others also find conversation with Nelly productive in modest ways: her suitor Sir Rupert gets practical ideas for his philanthropic projects from her and she draws Launcelot's narrow-minded friend Joe Hazlitt beyond his 'half-scoffing habit of speech' and his 'veil of slang and cynicism' (3: 156, 173).

A moment of class consciousness punctuates Nelly and Launcelot's relationship when she tells him that she dislikes people of their own class because of the

homogeneity of their views. Though Launcelot assures her that he is committed to making friendships which pay no heed to class boundaries, this is not sustained throughout the novel. Later on, in an effort to reassure Nelly about her powers of perception, he insists that the peasants of an Italian village have no consciousness of the sublime qualities of the landscape in which they live. In contrast, Nelly has a full appreciation of its beauty, sparking her complex trains of thought. Echoing Mill's famous dictum that 'it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied' (*Utilitarianism* 140), Launcelot tells Nelly "Once realize what the curtailment of consciousness means, and no one can wish for it who does not wish to lose his personality" (2: 167). For both Nelly and Launcelot, lessening of consciousness is bound up with the claustrophobia of uncommunicativeness. As they talk beside a fountain, Nelly contemplates the drops on the surface of the water: 'They were like human lives, she thought, each so round and individual, till, in a moment, the form breaks up, and the bubble melts into the general tide. But why that fevered little journey across the basin, why that dividing into drops, if the end of it all was merely this ruthless submerging?' (2: 170). The communicative connection she has with Launcelot, she realises, means sympathy and happiness in a way which gives purpose to life and makes her individuality reconcilable with contemplation of non-existence. Life without the transformative potential of talking to Launcelot would be akin to death: like being 'closed in with walls of silence' (172).

Dialogue between the female characters in *One That Wins* is also constructive. Caird introduces the comic figure of Miss Goblin who facilitates the freest of discussion:

Those evenings at the *pension* had a flavour quite their own; there was a refreshing absence of personality in the conversation, an atmosphere of mutual respect and generous feeling which gave a sense of spiritual expansion, and a delightful vividness of feeling to all were susceptible to these subtle influences. Nelly's whole nature, mind and heart, opened like a flower to the sunshine. (2: 158).

Miss Goblin is also Oenone's confessor and 'safety valve' allowing her to say whatever she pleases when she becomes frustrated by the need for moderation in speech and behaviour (1: 44). She is plain-speaking and sincere, offering Oenone the consolations of philosophy, as Austin does to Leonore in *Whom Nature Leadeth*, and reminding her that

the mark of a true connection between people is the ability to talk through difficult issues: “there is no more certain sign of distance between two persons than the banishment of all painful topics from their talk” (2: 58–9).

Oenone thinks that life with Nelly will be silence and darkness for Launcelot, but the novel ends with a creative, liberating conversation between the two women, which is revelatory, consolatory and developmental. Oenone seeks to be Nelly’s mentor, breaking through the crust of her early training and raising her some way to Launcelot’s intellectual level. Still underestimating Nelly’s abilities, Oenone tells her: “... I want you to try and put the thing I say to your mind and your heart, not to your social instincts and sense of propriety. Don’t think *who* it is that says it, or how, or why, or how extraordinary; think only of the thing said” (3: 192, Caird’s emphasis). Real conversation is considering the force and sense of the thing said, rather than who says it, its strangeness to our ears, our assumptions about the speaker’s motivations or what we have been educated to believe is normal. This opens the way for new modes of living. Caird also foregrounds the rarity of the skill of active listening. Nelly acknowledges that Oenone’s words cause her to think more deeply and to develop intellectually; however, the process is not just one way. Nelly reminds Oenone that there needs to be practical application of knowledge gained through talking: “Remember we are in a real world of desperate issues ...” (3: 192).

### **5.5 *The Wing of Azrael* and ‘the disease of words’**

In *The Wing of Azrael*, published in 1889, it is the desperate issues which come to the fore: the novel ends with Viola Sedley stabbing her abusive husband Philip Dendraith and then committing suicide. *The Wing of Azrael* explores what happens when ideas and discussion are suppressed and language becomes a destructive force. The central character Viola is, in Millian terms, one of those people with ‘promising intellects combined with timid characters’ (*On Liberty* 36). As discussed in previous chapters, Mill equates sensitivity with spirit, passion, leadership and the ability to inspire others: a woman with a nervous temperament betrays latent talent. Viola’s timidity is the result of a deficient education. Her mother is passively obedient to Christian morality recalling both *On Liberty*, when Mill argues that most people derive their creed from the people around them, and his essay on ‘Theism’ (1874) when he juxtaposes ‘thoughtful unbelievers’ with ‘unthoughtful believers’ (126, 138). She is also

unfailingly submissive to her husband and the Sedley household is therefore one of silenced discussion. Mrs Sedley tries hard to pass on her received opinions about religion to Viola. However, Viola's response to reading the Bible, and to watching the wildlife in her garden, is to be filled with a tumult of questions, putting her firmly in Mill's 'thoughtful unbelievers' category. Encouraged by her mother to suppress her questions about religion and nature, Viola internalises her sensitivity to cruelty and suffering: 'she wondered as painfully as ever at the strange conflict and struggle of Nature, though she closed her lips and let the problem eat deeper and deeper into her soul' (1: 14–15). Though Mrs Sedley consciously aims to crush Viola's questioning spirit, she succeeds only in limiting her ability to articulate her thoughts. Other clever girls in the novel, such as Adrienne Lancaster, are shown to adopt accepted and customary forms of speech in order to provide an outlet for their intelligence. Viola, however, has a keen sense of the disjunction between ordinary phrases and their true meaning. As a consequence she is left incapable of speech at decisive moments in her life. When faced with Viola's pained silences, both her father and Philip Dendraith attempt to make her parrot their words. When her father demands to know whether or not she will accept Philip's proposal of marriage he lambasts her for her silence, taunting her for being the result of the inadequate education with which he has provided her. Her 'somnambulist repetition of her father's words ... brought down upon her head a series of consequences for which she was totally unprepared' (2: 3). Caird's portrayal of Viola movingly captures the feeling of powerlessness in childhood which can result from an inability to verbalise thoughts and feelings. She then turns her attention to the terrifying repercussions of an education which does not allow for progression beyond this state in adulthood.

The formative event of Viola's childhood is an enactment of Mill's observation that 'Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave, but a willing one; not a slave merely, but a favourite. They have therefore put everything into practice to enslave their minds' (*Subjection* 436). Having broken free of her claustrophobic home Viola is wandering on the cliffs. Here she happens upon Philip Dendraith, in conversation with Harry Lancaster and Caleb Foster. Unable to enter into discussion with anyone, Viola's intellectual curiosity manifests itself in listening secretly to others. When her pet dog betrays her presence, Philip

physically restrains her, declaring: “it is of no use fighting, for I am stronger than you; but I don’t want to make you stay here against your will; I want you to stay willingly, and to say that you forgive me, and that you like me very much” (1: 92–3). Even when Philip is more subtle in his approach to Viola, attempting to distract her by ‘cleverly spinning stories’, she remains aware of the disconnection between his charming manners and his capacity to laugh at suffering (1: 95).

Later in the novel, his ‘honeyed phrases’ (2: 17) are contrasted to his capacity for cruelty towards a frightened horse. As Viola struggles to escape from Philip she accidentally pushes him over the cliff-edge on which he is perched. Harry, in an attempt to search for Philip, becomes stranded on a ledge of rock, while Caleb Foster continues the search. Harry, concerned for Viola’s wellbeing suggests that she communicates with him by throwing pebbles if she can hear him. This ‘pebble language’ represents the way accepted forms of language can conspire to silence and repress individuality: the stones are worn by the waves until they all appear the same (1: 110). Later in the novel, Harry puts this in even stronger terms, by speaking of conventional language as a devouring and destructive force. He speaks sadly to his friend Sibella of the division which he now feels from his sister Adrienne, after the openness of their childhood communications: “She belongs to that vast band who suffer from what I call the disease of *words*; who are eaten up by words, as some wretched animal is devoured by parasites. Adrienne pronounces to herself (for instance) the word ‘duty’ or ‘right’ and lets it fasten upon her soul and feed there as a leech” (201, emphasis in original). This striking image seems like an elaboration of Mill’s warning about what happens when opinions become habitual:

The words which convey it, cease to suggest ideas, or suggest only a small portion of those they were originally employed to communicate. Instead of a vivid conception and a living belief, there remain only a few phrases retained by rote; or, if any part, the shell and the husk only of the meaning is retained, the finer essence being lost. (*On Liberty* 45)

In Caird’s re-imagining of this concept, the disconnection between words and their true meaning becomes even more frightening, actively threatening health and survival. Philip survives his cliff-edge plummet and cultivates Viola’s guilt as she grows up, eventually bullying her into marrying him. Philip uses his cold and unfeeling mastery of



language to dominate and subdue. Viola is as unequal to his verbal onslaught before their marriage as she is to his sexual violence after it. He is the type of power-loving domestic tyrant Mill describes in *Subjection*, delighting as much in her speechlessness as her physical subjugation. As a married woman, individual words take on unwonted significance: 'Freedom was an unknown word; the only words that ruled in that red-hot Purgatory were right, duty, submission' (2: 169). When Viola is finally forced to attempt to use her own words, Philip maintains that he cannot understand her nonsense talk.

*The Wing of Azrael* offers various alternatives to the domineering figures of Mr Sedley and Philip Dendraith. Harry Lancaster is funny, provocative and empathic. Able to recognise his own fallibility, but willing to dare an extreme opinion, Harry uses conversation to provoke, stimulate and advise. While Philip laughs at suffering, Harry's sense of humour has a positive role. In his verbal sparring with the witty but superficial Lady Clevedon, he uses comedy to challenge her most cherished convictions in a non-threatening way, seeking to pin down the precise meaning of words such as 'gentleman'. In his attempts to rescue Viola from her desperate situation, his language becomes increasingly reminiscent of Mill's. Harry's words are straightforward and truthful, but also heartfelt and passionate. He tells Viola that he wants to find out what her true nature is:

'... I know that underneath the crust of your acquired sentiments there lies some feeling which responds to mine. We can break the loneliness and silence for each other; we can piece together some of our broken fragments, and be more clearly whole and sane, more nearly complete beings, together than apart. If the artificial crust has so far prevailed, yet I am sure that if I only had a fair chance to make you understand your own latent self, I should prevail ...' (2: 70)

Viola does not have the verbal resources to respond to what he says, replying that she can only cling to the ideas which she has been raised on. Viola's life plays out the idea Mill expresses in *Subjection* and his essay on 'The Utility of Religion' of the often insurmountable difficulty in overcoming that which is deeply rooted – in ourselves from childhood, or in public opinion. Viola's brother Geoffrey is nevertheless shown to develop over the course of the novel, moved by conversations with Viola to become more thoughtful. His education at Eton encourages a frivolous and carefree attitude to

life, in stark contrast to the austerity of Viola's upbringing. After their mother's illness and death they realise that they must reassess the religious convictions on which she raised them and reach their own conclusions: 'The conversation was an epoch in Geoffrey's life, and the strengthening of a new impetus in Viola's. It was also the beginning of a friendship on fresh foundations between brother and sister, which entirely altered the development of Geoffrey's character' (3: 100). Caleb Foster is Caird's most fully realised working-class character – a scholar and philosopher whom Harry has rescued from poverty. Caird conveys the sense in which there is more at stake for Caleb in ensuring rigorous discussion of the way to live, by the way he is 'persistently philosophic', 'taking up the lost thread of conversation with his usual pertinacity' (1: 82, 1: 87). As a child, listening to Caleb excites Viola's intellectual curiosity and as an adult she finds relief in being carried away into his 'cold, clear, sorrowless world of "pure reason"' (3: 80). It is Harry's friend Sibella, though, who finally provides Viola with a true conversation:

Before half-an-hour has passed Viola was speaking as she had never before spoken to a human being; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes burnt with excitement. The unwonted utterance had thrown a confused light upon her own emotions, while the comments of her companion, flinging brilliant cross-flashes, frightened and allured at the same time. (3: 7)

In the end, Viola's 'heart stirred beneath its crust of acquired sentiment, but she felt as if she could curse the man and woman who had disturbed that crust, and awakened her to a new and more exquisite anguish' (3: 67). Though she agrees to Harry and Sibella's plans for leaving Philip, she falters because she cannot escape the deep-rootedness of the ideas of her subjugation. She responds to something in their entreaties, but has not made the ideas her own convictions through thought and experience.

### **5.6 Short stories: 'A Romance of the Moors' and 'The Yellow Drawing Room'**

Conversation causes a revolution in the lives of the characters in Caird's 1891 short story set in Yorkshire, which offers the art of conversation as a means of social mobility and intellectual development. It strikes a far more positive tone than *The Wing of Azrael* in that crusts of acquired sentiments are successfully broken through. Dick Coverdale is a farmer's son who has been sent to the University of St Andrews.

Discontented with manual labour after he returns to work on the farm, Dick happens upon a book of Shelley's poems. These are a revelation to him, making him feel less isolated. Just as reading Wordsworth allows Mill to recover from his mental crisis, the language of Romantic poetry gives Dick access to his feelings and the ability to describe them. In a dull and stifling social circle, where talk is of trivial local interest, Bessie's pretty face stands out, and he mistakes the rapturous emotions the poetry has awakened in him for being in love with her. Dick considers how he might make Bessie happy, at the same time as recognising how she will restrict his progress. When he meets Mrs Ellwood, an artist and New Woman, walking on the moors, he has an awareness of class difference which he resents – he feels that she creates an 'imaginary mental form' for him (58). However, their dialogue breaks through the class barrier, disrupting Mrs Ellwood's preconceptions, and transforming Dick's solitary feelings into ones of hope. This story contains the memorable image quoted at the head of the chapter. Rather than writing a poem or painting a picture, Dick takes the stuff of his everyday life and translates it into artful talk. The image also stresses the exceptional skill involved in active listening. Dick's parents expect him to marry Bessie and he confesses to Mrs Ellwood that he feels horribly trapped by this. She counsels him not to marry Bessie, for Bessie's own sake. The story explores how Bessie's desire for marriage exists through inexact language and masks of politeness and small talk. As Mill contends, conventions thrive through vague language – to give precision to your desires or objections is to overcome restriction. With Mrs Ellwood Dick exists in and through meaningful language, with Bessie he is outside of it. Dick tells Bessie he does not return his love and she becomes distraught, running off on the moors and causing a scandal among the 'evil-speaking' local gossips (181). Mrs Ellwood also counsels her, as Oenone does Nelly, advising her on how to act if she does marry Dick. In the end, Bessie says she will not marry him and Mrs Ellwood encourages her to pursue her own life, arguing that this will in fact bring her closer to Dick. Mrs Ellwood is direct and fluent in her speech, acting as counsellor and advisor to Bessie and Dick, bringing them to consciousness of the role of language in their life.

In Caird's 1892 short story, 'The Yellow Drawing Room' the floundering narrator St Vincent is discomposed by New Womanly eloquence rather than assisted by it. In contrast to her aunt's visitors, who attempt to keep conversation within the bounds of propriety by not referring to the colour of the drawing room, and to St Vincent who

paces the terrace uselessly, Vanora is eloquent, speaking with passion, conviction and directness. She initiates and draws out the conversation between herself and St Vincent, striving to understand his position, but not without a sense of humour at his confused response to her unorthodox behaviour. St Vincent, on the other hand, is out of control conversationally, as his narration reveals: 'I replied crazily' (27), 'I plunged headlong' (28), 'I pleaded like a lunatic, argued, urged' (29). His desire to dominate Vanora is worthless because he can't convincingly articulate it, only mutter it inaudibly: "She *shall* love me, and she *shall* learn, through love, the sweet lesson of womanly submission", I said to myself ...' Where Vincent is discomposed by Vanora's conversational mastery – and longs for the 'conversational repose' (24) that her quiet sister Clara would provide – she is clear-sighted in her interpretations of his doctrines and how they would translate into restriction of freedom and unhappiness. She also recognises that though St Vincent's sentiments are deeply rooted, he is an inheritor rather than an adopter of those opinions: 'they seem to me like soap-bubbles; full of emptiness' (28). St Vincent's wish to study his encounter with Vanora scientifically, brings 'Daisy Miller' to mind again, with its subtitle 'A Study'. But though Vanora's conversational prowess is narrated by St Vincent, it has the power to disrupt and unhinge in its sheer unconventionality.

### **5.7 *The Daughters of Danaus* and the 'Preposterous Society'**

Though *The Daughters of Danaus* tells the story of Hadria's thwarted musical career, much of the novel depicts how she, like Vanora, demonstrates her artistry through her conversation. The first chapter focuses on a meeting of the Preposterous Society, a forum for debate among the Fullerton siblings. The name Preposterous Society points to four important issues within the novel which connect to both the arguments and rhetorical strategies of *On Liberty* and *Subjection*. First, the outrageous state of a society in which women are politically and socially subordinate. In *Subjection* Mill repeatedly draws attention to the disconnection between women's subjection and the improving spirit of the age, declaring it to be 'a monstrous contradiction to all the principles of the modern world' (557). Second, the deep-rooted viewpoint that it is not the current arrangements, but the idea of changing them, that is nonsensical. Though the subjection of women is an anomalous component of modern life, Mill argues, it is also woven into people's feelings to such an extent that 'any departure from it quite

naturally appears unnatural' (484). Third, the role of discussion in individuality, family life and wider society. Fourth, an insistence on the seriousness of the issue in the face of mockery and humour that constantly tries to undermine it.

For Caird's heroine Hadria, and her sister Algitha, discussion is a serious business because it is how they interpret their circumstances, define their position and decide what action to take. With the Preposterous Society, they formalise discussion because, like Caleb in *The Wing of Azrael*, so much is at stake for them. Though their brothers are part of this group, their role is more playful and flippant.<sup>8</sup> The discussion the sisters have with each other, and later with their friends/mentors Professor Fortescue and Valeria Du Prel, is concerned with examining their own lives and how they fit into wider social arrangements. At the start of the novel discussion with her siblings precipitates Algitha's decision to confront parental disapproval and leave for London to work with the poor. Much later on, a conversation between Algitha, Professor Fortescue and Hadria, which draws directly on the ideas in *On Liberty* about individual choice, culminates in an epiphany for Hadria, when she realises she has to leave her children and husband to pursue her musical career in Paris. The convictions she has gained through youthful discussion with her siblings in The Preposterous Society are a resource for her to draw on – part of her educated, upper-middle class identity that enables her to attempt to put her principles into action. Mill advises 'He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that' (*On Liberty* 42) and Hadria often deliberately steps into the role of devil's advocate to bring about more searching discussion. As a result, Algitha admits to her brothers that she has changed the plan for her life by listening to Hadria's ideas.

More than just 'Caird's spokesperson of compassionate humanity and universal brotherhood' as Heilmann has argued (*New Woman Strategies* 220), Professor Fortescue is Hadria's friend and their relationship represents the benefits of a sympathetic and mutually beneficial male–female friendship grounded in intellectual equality. Professor Fortescue's wide-ranging and inclusive interlocution is set against that of Hadria's eventual husband, Hubert Temperley, whose conversation never descends below the surface. His speech betrays his closed-mindedness. Embodying the

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<sup>8</sup> The Preposterous Society inverts the normal order of precedence in the Fullerton family, just as the 'Shakespearean preposterous' identified by Patricia Parker is concerned with 'reversals of order, succession and sequence' (196) – See 'Preposterous Events' (1992).

‘vague and general assertions’ which Mill says plague society (*Subjection* 492), ‘He swept away whole systems of thought that had shaken the world, with a confident phrase’ (77). Hubert says of Hadria and her siblings: “‘They don’t know the real import of what they say’” and then ‘hugged this sentence with satisfaction’ (134). Convinced of his own infallibility, Hubert perceives a disconnection between what they say and what they mean, when in fact it is his own words which are unreflectively uttered. Like *The Wing of Azrael*, this engages with a key argument in *On Liberty* about the characteristics of conventional language and how it is deployed to harmful effect. In *The Daughters of Danaus*, as in *On Liberty*, words should have a meaningful connection with a person’s inner life of reason and imagination. Heilmann has written about how Caird re-writes classical myth in *The Daughters of Danaus*, but the moment when Hadria lies ‘under a singular spell’ (137) also strongly recalls Mill in *Subjection* when he writes that if women had options other than marriage ‘few women, capable of anything else, would unless under an irresistible *entraînement*, rendering them for the time insensible to anything but itself, choose such a lot’ (501, Mill’s emphasis). Mill points out that just because most men do not take full advantage of their legal power over their wives, it does not mean that the law should remain unchanged. Hubert’s sister Henriette has coached him to engage with Hadria’s insistence on liberty by avowing that he won’t take full advantage of her legal subordination as his wife. However, Hadria recognises that there is a disconnection between what Hubert says and what the words actually mean and she is therefore compelled to ask him: “‘And you realise that I mean it, *mean* it, with every fibre of me’” (142, Caird’s emphasis).

In *New Woman Strategies* Heilmann argues that a ‘chorus of female voices’ (219) contributes to Hadria’s downfall. Reading the novel through a Millian lens it becomes clear that the main female characters each have a specific discursive role. Hadria has to contend with the ‘intellectual pacification’ of her mother’s banal domestic talk and the inane chitchat of her social group (*On Liberty* 38). Valeria, though opposing Hadria’s views is still an enabler of discussion – she is a sympathetic listener and more open-minded than others. As with Hubert, there is a disconnection between what Henriette says and what she means, but she is more consciously engaged in persuading and manipulating Hadria. Having infiltrated the Fullerton family, Henriette insists on participating in a meeting of the Preposterous Society, oblivious to her incongruous appearance: ‘Henriette’s figure, in her well-fitting Parisian gown, looked singularly out

of place in the garret, with the crazy old candle-holder beside her, the yellow flame of the candle flinging fantastic shadows on the vaulted roof, preposterously distorting her neat form, as if in wicked mockery' (123). Henriette has fitted herself into one of 'the small number of moulds which society provides in order to save its members the trouble of forming their own character' (*On Liberty* 72). She is therefore out of place in a forum for real discussion. Ill-equipped for real discussion on a basis of mutuality, Henriette has to retreat to a one-to-one discussion with Hadria in her own room, to narrow the opportunity for dissenting opinions which she cannot rebut. The really productive conversations in *The Daughters of Danaus* take place outdoors, in gardens and fields away from domestic restrictions. In Millian terms, Henriette, like Hubert, is an inheritor of opinions and Hadria is an adopter, so the result of both interactions is mutual incomprehension.

Professor Theobald is the other character who talks to manipulate: he exploits ambiguity to skilfully flatter and seduce, by making lightweight utterances appear more interesting than they are. Caird explores how Hadria's sexual attraction to Professor Theobald complicates her normal facility for negotiating the world through words. On the brink of being seduced she longs for clarifying conversation with Professor Fortescue to determine the moral acceptability of her infidelity. Eventually she brings the affair to a halt because of the way Professor Theobald compares unfavourably to Professor Fortescue: 'Every cadence of their voices, every gesture, proclaimed the radical difference of nature and calibre' (416). When Mill refers to 'collision of adverse opinions' in *On Liberty* (59) he is talking about people with equal seriousness and commitment to the debate, not collision between people who are in earnest and people who are playing, or attempting to manipulate their interlocutors. Collision of adverse opinions is an intellectual endeavour requiring 'studied moderation of language, and the most cautious avoidance of unnecessary offence' (*On Liberty* 61). However, discussion and debate is a game for the Fullerton brothers Ernest and Fred. While Hadria and Algitha contend with the weight of parental and societal expectation, their brothers are whimsical and light-hearted, they mock and laugh, secure in the knowledge of the choices that are open to them. They nevertheless demand that their sisters act in accordance with the convictions they have declared. Fred's reaction to Hadria's marriage leads to their estrangement: 'For a long time he had regarded it all as a joke. He shook his head knowingly, and said that sort of thing wouldn't go down. When he

was at length convinced, he danced with rage. He became cynical. He had no patience with girls. They talked for talking's sake. It meant nothing' (164).

More than Caird's other novels, *The Daughters of Danaus* also explores collision of opinion between people of different educational and social status. Servants are a troubling presence for Hadria as a frustrated artist, anticipating Virginia Woolf's fraught relationship with her servants. Working class characters are representatives of the domestic worries which ultimately contribute to the ruin of Hadria's musical ability. As such they are dismissed, mocked and inattentively engaged with. They are unwanted interruptions to Hadria's edifying conversation with Valeria. Hadria's problems are of an existential quality, as compared to the petty 'manufactured' problems of the cook (418). Hadria's escape to Paris is predicated upon being accompanied by Martha's nurse Hannah, to care for Martha and help with housework. While Martha's intelligence is awakened by the trip, Hannah is too stupid to benefit from the new experience. Working class female characters are representatives of the domestic drudgery and sacrifice Hadria and Algitha must endure, rather than agents with similarly constricted opportunities.

George Gissing's 1893 novel *The Odd Women* is forthright on this breakdown of communication between the classes. Rhoda Nunn, a campaigner for women's rights, unapologetically declares "I think that as soon as we begin to meddle with uneducated people, all our schemes and views are unsettled. We have to learn a new language for one thing" (53). In *The Daughters of Danaus* an important counterpoint is provided by Professor Fortescue's sympathetic inclusiveness: "Poor cooks and dressmakers!"... "where are *their* serenities and urbanities?" (225, Caird's emphasis). The most effective cross-class communication in the novel takes place between Hadria and the gravedigger Dodge. After Hadria's marriage to Hubert he is the only person who 'felt some curiosity as to the cause of a sadness in one so well treated by destiny' (148) and their conversation is mutually consolatory. Though impeded in her attempts at expressing her artistry, Hadria's ability to make sense of and create her life through discussion with others is ultimately hopeful and life-affirming. In *On Liberty* Mill emphasises the creativity of the process of conversation, the empathic skills it teaches: 'the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind' (25). Even though he



is making the case for argument and logic – balanced, rational, calm, considered – he is also inadvertently making the case for imaginative work. And with Mill, as with Caird, argument is a vibrant, passionate force with life-changing power.

### 5.8 ‘Leading questions’ in *The Pathway of the Gods*

Caird’s 1898 novel *The Pathway of the Gods* explores many of the ideas in *On Liberty* and *Subjection*. It tells the story of a failed romance between Julian Ford and Anna Carrington. They meet in Rome fifteen years after they first knew each other, growing up in the stagnant environment of a small English town. Caird has both Julian and Anna assert the dictums of *On Liberty* to explain their decisions to break free from the restrictions of their upbringings in the face of family opposition. Julian thinks ‘One cannot live one’s life on other people’s motives’ (13) and Anna calls it “‘the dreadful question’”: “‘ought I to act on my own convictions, and see what life is and what I could do with it, before I died?’” (48). Anna notes and envies the greater freedom enjoyed by Julian in attempting to follow his own life plan. Anna’s family are pleased that she has given up youthful attempts ‘to make her living by journalism, or public speaking’ (18) and retreated to the domestic realm. Anna is in Rome as a governess-chaperone, while Julian has become a traveller and artist. Julian finds Anna’s intellectual abilities sadly reduced. Her story is the story of Mill’s women who ‘pine through life with the consciousness of thwarted vocations’ (*Subjection* 579). Nevertheless, Caird also considers how social arrangements have a harmful effect on men.

Julian is so alert to Roman history that as he contemplates the city, visions of its past inhabitants appear to him. In Millian terms this is an exceptional skill, vital to understanding the present and striving to improve society:

The truth is, that people of the present and the last two or three generations have lost all practical sense of the primitive condition of humanity; and only the few who have studied history accurately, or have much frequented the parts of the world occupied by the living representatives of ages long past, are able to form any mental picture of what society then was. People are not aware how entirely, in former ages the law of superior strength was the rule of life; how publicly and openly it was avowed ... (*Subjection* 477)

An acute awareness of the previous conditions of humanity pervades Caird's fiction and in *The Pathway of the Gods* the reader has access to Julian's mental pictures of bygone Roman brutality. He imagines the moment a gladiator meets his death: "*Habet! habet!*" from thousands of lips were the last words in his ear, as his spirit passed away from the insults of the crowd' (32). This is a terrifying realisation of Mill's concern that 'individuals are lost in the crowd' (*On Liberty* 73). The inexorable force of the crowd's chanting and the victim's voicelessness are in contrast to the transformational potential of one-to-one conversation, in this, as in all of Caird's fiction. Just as the cry from the crowd signals the gladiator's death, it is 'one fatal sentence' that causes Julian to be excluded from his family (13). After failing to establish himself in one of the occupations his family would like, he utters a 'hapless motto' (15): 'For the vagabond shall inherit the earth' (13) and jokingly sketches a coat of arms for the Vagabond family. Julian's 'delicate jeer at the order of society in which his father lived and moved and had his being' (15) enrages Mr Ford. 'The absolutism of the head of the family', which Mill refers to in *Subjection* (507) is the late-nineteenth-century equivalent of the absolutism of a Caligula or Domitian. There is no possibility of discussion between father and son about the course Julian's life will take and with his father's disapproval supported by an 'impacted group of uncles and aunts', Julian is forced to leave the family home (15). While it is easier for Julian to negotiate his family's expectations as a man – he is troubled by the idea of disappointing them, but not to the point of debilitating guilt – it is noteworthy that Caird explores the damaging effects of male familial tyranny on sons as well as daughters.

When Julian encounters Anna in Rome she tells him that she wanted 'to teach women the secret of their wretchedness, and men the madness of their tyranny' (96). Ironically, her frustrated ambition sounds exactly like the project of *Subjection*. Anna's conversations with Julian about her life reveal that she has what Mill defines as spirit. People with a temperament of this kind, Mill says, are 'particularly apt for what may be called the executive department of the leadership of mankind. They are the material of great orators, great preachers, impressive diffusers of moral influences' (*Subjection* 537–8). Anna recognises her power and how it has gone to waste: "I wanted to be a speaker, to hold sway over the emotions of men and women – it is mere tilting at windmills to attack their minds! I had so much I wanted to say, so much that others had said that I wanted to send flying, with winged words, into the very hearts of my

generation!” (95) Instead of being a great orator, Anna, like Leonore in *Whom Nature Leadeth*, is forced to retreat into the kind of unintellectual society which Mill scorns in his *Autobiography* and to participate in trivial conversation which lowers the spirit and the intellect. She attracts attention within her social circle by the use of wit and epigram, and Julian regrets that this superficial mode of talk is a bar to more open and meaningful conversation with him.

As the novel progresses, Anna demands of Julian an all-consuming, individuality-denying love, which takes them even further away from the ideal of frank, mutual conversational exchange. Anna comes to rely on Julian’s conversation for intellectual pacification and emotional fortification, at the expense of his own well-being: ‘She looked to him now for what she called his “incantations”, and these must be provided whatever his own mood or preoccupations might be” (101). In the end, the complete breakdown of communication between them hinges on the different way each of them defines love: “we ought to have exchanged our ideas on the subject, and not have gone on at cross purposes”” concludes Julian (307). As Anna and Julian’s relationship deteriorates, the figures of Mrs Charnley and Clutha Lawrenson are introduced to the community of artists and socialites of which Anna and Julian are a part. For reasons which remain unclear, they decide to interfere in Anna and Julian’s relationship to prevent their marriage. Mrs Charnley is a kind of spiritual extremist who has “no desires apart from her theories””. Chapter XIX of the novel is a case study in how someone can manipulate a group discussion to convince others of her viewpoint: ‘Julian began to suspect that though apparently so fortuitous, the conversation was being skilfully guided by Mrs Charnley, who did no more than ask a leading question now and then’ (160–1). As the discussion develops:

Julian’s impression strengthened that Mrs Charnley had been pursuing a Socratic method, by which she made her unconscious interlocutor establish, for her, the point which she wished to make clear. Not even the sudden sorties of Mrs Vincent could deflect her smooth line of progression. What her object might be was not easy to guess; but it was difficult to avoid thinking that it had some reference, direct or indirect to Anna and himself. (163)

Mrs Charnley knows when to talk and when to stay quiet, she makes well-timed, strategic interventions, magnetising the group, but not in an open and honest way: 'She threw out suggestions: little barbed hints that pierced to the inner lines of thought; and in a moment seemed to undermine the fabric of our common work-a-day convictions' (166). By the end of the novel, Anna is condemned to 'suffering and solitude unspeakable' (336). In *New Woman Strategies* Ann Heilmann struggles to reconcile the unsympathetic portrait of Anna, the ambiguous motivations of Mrs Charnley and Clutha, and the neo-pagan festival at the end of *Pathway of the Gods* with Caird's feminist principles. The key to the novel perhaps lies in Anna's statement that 'We luckless beings of the transition period have to suffer the penalty of being out of line with the old conditions, before the new conditions have been formed with which we could have harmonised' (316). Within such a transition period there will always be those who manipulate discussion, persuading, convincing and compelling others to take on views against their better judgments or in contradiction to their values.

### **5.9 'Wild statements' in *The Logicians: An Episode in Dialogue***

In 1905 Caird published a short play which offers a more positive view of the Socratic method. Two men of science and rivals for Dorothy Lee's love, Dr Catchpole and Professor Cooper are challenged about their experiments on animals by two anti-vivisectionists and New Women, Mrs Langton and Mrs Cruncheon. Dorothy has been brought round to the campaigners' point of view, much to the horror of her conventional, unquestioning aunt, Mrs Gibbins, and her friend Mrs Tresham. A third rival for Dorothy's love, Bob Eccles, also becomes convinced of the campaigners' arguments, revealing himself to be Dorothy's 'Ideal Man': both receptive to new ideas and sympathetic to the plight of animals' suffering. The play's title calls to mind *On Liberty* when Mill points out the need for negative logic in the Socratic mode for 'convincing any one who had merely adopted the commonplaces of received opinion, that he did not understand the subject – that he had as yet attached no definite meaning to the doctrines he professed' (50). Dr Catchpole and Professor Cooper assume their own infallibility in matters of science and seek to silence discussion. To placate Mrs Gibbins and Mrs Tresham, Dr Catchpole says:

The fact is, that the whole subject has been obscured by these hysterical agitators – Logic is in vain. You may take it from me, my dear ladies – I have had a large and intimate experience of laboratory practice – that there is not the slightest vestige of truth in the wild statements of these good people. Their assertions are the offspring of an inflamed imagination. Inspired by it, these enthusiasts – let us call them so in charity – do not hesitate to vilify an honourable profession, accusing us of the most atrocious crimes! (31)

Like the New Woman, the animal rights campaigner is labelled extreme, disruptive, illogical and incapable of plain statements. The campaigners seek to reveal how the scientists obscure meaning themselves by use of authoritative but misleading statements. They turn the accusations of madness back on the scientists. As elsewhere in Caird's work, and strongly recalling Mill in his 'Nature' essay, much attention is paid to establishing the precise meanings of words and phrases. There is a lengthy exchange about the meaning of the word 'consistent' and how it can be applied to people's behaviour. By the end of the play the process of negative criticism has at least disrupted Miss Gibbins's calm certainties and causes the scientists to retreat from their position of unassailable authority.

### 5.10 Twentieth-century Novels: *The Stones of Sacrifice* and *The Great Wave*

In *The Stones of Sacrifice*, published in 1915, but set in the 1890s, the protagonists Alpin Dalrymple and Claudia Temple both find themselves alienated by their interactions with a society whose conversation features 'haver' and 'blether' (nonsense talk), 'artless prattle', 'spiritual filibustering', 'baby-language', 'pitiful sentences', 'disjointed words' and 'sentimental phrases'.<sup>9</sup> While the fellow residents of the small Scottish town of Culmore feel 'pulled together again' after hearing a rousing sermon in church, Alpin feels 'miserably alien and cut off from his fellows' (23). Alpin fully comprehends Claudia's desire to leave her home only after he experiences the deadening effect of Lady Temple's speech: 'The mere sound of that loud, assured, prosaic voice sent scuttling to their hiding-places every living thought and feeling he had ever had! It left the world a blank; washed the colour out of everything' (55). When

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<sup>9</sup> See pages 139, 141, 260, 339, 405, 420 and 452.

Claudia does escape to Paris to teach, the directive parents of her pupils leave her 'tongue-tied' (87) and her romantic experiences leave her with an intense appreciation of the disconnection between words and their true meaning – between 'expressed sentiments of actual worship' and the promise of 'ordinary stodgy domesticity' (131). On her return to England she overhears a conversation between her brother's friends which makes her think: "Only a subject and despised race could be spoken of as those men spoke of us" (130).

*The Stones of Sacrifice* juxtaposes the drawing room – where young women are advised by even the more open-minded older women to discuss unconventional thoughts about motherhood '*in camera*' (77) – with a society for the discussion of socialism founded by Alpin, where he is expected to speak '*ex cathedra*' (174). Alpin's motivation for forming the discussion group is to discuss possibilities rather than promulgate foregone conclusions: 'Socialism is a *tendency*, an idea, acting as a principle of growth, like the life-principle that guides the development of every living organism. Believing that the capitalist system is increasingly a failure, we are simply trying to suggest the gradual substitution of a less cut-throat idea' (124, Caird's emphasis). As the speakers at the Guild begin to emphasise the need for individuals to be sacrificed for the good of the race, Alpin realises their eugenic ideas are in direct opposition to his own views. Claudia is already unable to reconcile her love of liberty with ideas of self-sacrifice. Their provisional proposals for socialism, which combine individual liberty with state regulation that safeguards the welfare of workers and members of the public, sound very much like Mill's, who says in the *Autobiography*:

The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action, with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour. We had not the assumption to suppose that we could already foresee, by what precise form of institutions these objects could most effectually be attained, or at how near or how distant a period they would become practicable. (175–6)

In creating the *Guild of the New Order* Caird also recalls Mill's fragmentary *Chapters on Socialism* (written in 1869 and published posthumously in 1879). In these, as ever, he pays much attention to the terms of the debate, suggesting that via 'the press, public

meetings and associations' (374) the widest number of working-class viewpoints must be taken into account. Repeating his call in *Subjection* for a discussion that goes down to the foundations of society, he insists on the inclusion of working class voices, because 'they will not allow anything to be taken for granted' (375). Caird's depiction of this type of forum pays attention to dissenting voices by including the character of Mr Scrase, who objects vociferously every time something is said in support of religion or the wealthy classes. The dominant views of the club become bound up with their mode of address which promotes style over substance. Recalling Vanora's 'soap bubbles' in 'The Yellow Drawing Room', Alpin thinks of their speeches as composed of 'rhetorical ragdolls' (221), which dazzle with their eloquence thus obscuring ill-thought-out doctrines.

As an alternative to the frustrations of general society and the one-sidedness of club debate, Caird offers the 'creative, liberating process' which Alpin and Claudia experience when they talk together. The effect of their conversation strongly recalls Mill's description of life with Harriet. Like John and Harriet, Claudia and Alpin's relationship is companionable, respectful and above all productively communicative. When they marry they live together in an unorthodox space, where they have meals together in a communal room, but have their own rooms for working and sleeping in. They conceive of the large central room in the flat as 'a haven of peace and inspiration for all who entered it' (377). The emphasis is on conversation: it becomes a space where people can talk fluently about their lives, vent their feelings and literally talk freely, without interruption. Again recalling Mill and Harriet, the novel ends with the focus on Claudia as Alpin's counsellor, allowing him to 'turn to his work for light and comfort: to the widening reaches of experience and faculty which that work was helping to discover and to add to the human inheritance' (456). As he contemplates a Scottish landscape he feels 'translated into a different order of experience' (458). The idea of conversation as a means of translating or interpreting experience, seen in *One That Wins* and 'A Romance of the Moors' finds its most positive and hopeful expression in *The Stones of Sacrifice*.

Caird's final novel *The Great Wave*, was published in 1931, but is set just before the First World War. In the novel, free discussion is an important feature of the novel's call for humane and responsible use of scientific developments. *The Great Wave* is the only piece of Caird's fiction to refer directly to Mill. The novel's central character, Grierson, consolidates his views on political liberty by reading either *Subjection* or *On*

*Liberty*: 'Grierson, who had come across a book by John Stuart Mill on the subject, could not understand how any man who himself cared for freedom should desire to deny it to others, let alone be capable of treating those who asked for it with insult and ridicule' (26). Typically for one of Caird's protagonists, Grierson's commitment to individual expression is problematic. As he challenges the stereotypes of masculine domination and aggression cherished by his family, his 'very respect for their right to their own opinions, foolish though he deemed them, tended to hold him apart from a family who regarded opinions other than their own very much as a terrier regards a rat' (403). Recalling the fox hunting image used to describe the Meredith's conversation in *Whom Nature Leadeth*, this image of the terrier and rat demonstrates Caird's enduring concern that suppression of opinion was a form of cruelty.

As Grierson eschews his family's tradition of military service in favour of scientific research, he is surrounded by conventional talk: his sister repeats 'correct sayings' (16), those around him pay 'stupid deference to a musty old phrase about the "fighting instinct"' (30), his social circle talk according to 'a strictly standardized pattern' (407). The novel's scientific theme is extended to the damaging effects of small talk when Grierson worries that one of his interlocutors 'has a genius for what might be termed, in technical phrase, "reducing the chemical potential of human conversation to the condition of unavailable energy"' (211). The insidious effects of reductive small talk are considered alongside the dangers presented by obscure or misleading scientific terminology. After listening to a lecture on negative eugenics, advocating the view that 'the average and weakly must ever subserve the superior and the powerful' (161), Grierson thinks that:

Waldheim's baldness of statement was to be welcomed. Keeping the brutal nature of the teaching hidden under scientific jargon and generalities – as English men of science almost always did – led to its getting mushed up by the Mrs Verrekers and so spreading, hopelessly bowdlerized – like a sugar-covered virus – to the general public. And the general public eventually decided the destinies of the world. (161)

In her depiction of Grierson's interactions with a community of scientists, Caird highlighted the vital importance of communicating specialist ideas to a wider audience in plain and accessible language.



As in all her previous novels, Caird contrasts unproductive conversation with the transformative potential of free discussion. After Grierson makes a discovery related to his 'search for the power imprisoned in matter' (340), he is overwhelmed by ethical considerations (the discovery is also obliquely referred to by an unscrupulous rival scientist as having to do with the development of 'mechanical slaves, possessed of powers hitherto undreamt of', 487). Grierson negotiates his scientific responsibilities regarding the discovery through discussion with Nora, a suffragist with a regard for 'their common humanity' and a genius for 'perfect companionship' (336). Nora, like Claudia in *The Stones of Sacrifice* has a clarifying effect on his thinking: 'Grierson caught his breath. She had put into words the faint hope that had lain at the back of his mind through all his ups and downs of elation and discouragement ... . Grierson felt as one sailing into harbour after a long and tempestuous voyage' (340). Grierson and Nora's relationship is a romantic one, but one founded on words: 'he wanted to talk to her about everything in heaven and earth' (347). Like Claudia and Alpin, and John and Harriet, theirs is a working partnership predicated on free discussion: 'At last, after talking it over from every conceivable point of view and finding themselves exquisitely poised between tremendous pros and appalling cons, they decided to banish the subject (for the time) and let it soak into their minds' (443).

The novel's epilogue describes Grierson's malaise after his life has been shattered by the First World War – and here, too, free discussion is seen as an invigorating force. Nora deliberately takes the part of controversialist – 'running amok among scientific dogmas to an alarming degree' (509), encouraging a conversation about the misuse of scientific developments in order to restore Grierson's drive for research:

The Schopenhauer form of pessimism, backed up by the doctrine of the degradation of energy, had been too much for Grierson. It caused a reaction. And Nora's wild suggestion of a possible recalling to life of the sleeping energy – coupled with her assertion of man's power to possess himself and therefore his destiny – seemed to have broken the spell that held him and to have set the currents of his being flowing again. (512)

In response to the extremity of Grierson's post-war depression, Nora abandons measured interaction and resorts to rhetorical tricks. The restorative effect these have on Grierson strongly recall Mill's image of ideas warmed into life and activity.

### 5.11 'What John Stuart Mill saw': Caird's Dialogue with Mill

Though reviewers contemporary to Caird praised the wit and 'never-ending play of humour' in her prose, for the modern reader, there is also often an overwhelming impression of gloominess conveyed by narratorial intrusions which anticipate individual or relationship breakdown. The transformational potential of conversation is a powerful counterpoint to this melancholic tone. As the quotations from *The Stones of Sacrifice* and 'A Romance of the Moors' at the head of the chapter illustrate, Caird celebrates the pleasures of free conversation: the possibilities it offers for creativity and even for turning what is quotidian or painful into something artful. Though some of her characters delight in verbal manipulation or domination others appreciate the chance to listen, counsel or persuade. Origination, both in the sense of being the first to offer a new perspective, and in the sense of individuals thinking things through for themselves, is as central to Caird's fiction as it is to Mill's philosophy. Like Hardy, Caird's recourse to Millian philosophy was strongly connected to individuals working out their ideas independently, rather than, as Mill would put it, unthinkingly inheriting the opinions of those closest to them.

The phrase Caird used to describe her own childhood – her 'scramble up' – and her consequent need for self-education is important to bear in mind. After an inadequate education in childhood, many of Caird's protagonists, both male and female, consciously take responsibility for their own learning, not through private study, but through discussion with others. Meaningful conversation gives time and space for development of ideas and individuality. This seems like an obvious enough statement, but the striking thing about Caird's fiction is the way it consistently heeds Mill's dead dogma/living truth warning (that a subject must be fully, frequently and fearlessly debated) in relation to free discussion itself. Caird did not see the life-long process of learning through talking as an obvious or inevitable event: her heroes and heroines self-consciously seek out opportunities for such expansion. Drawing on Mill, Caird's fiction offers discussion as a means for self-education, self-development and reconciling individual interests with the greater good.

## 6. Olive Schreiner's John Stuart Mill: 'the purest & greatest soul God has yet given the English race'

About my feeling with regard to Jesus it is not strong in any way. But I deeply understand your feeling. The only man to whose moral teaching I am conscious of owing a profound & unending debt is John Stuart Mill; when I got home to Europe & found men & women whose views exactly coincided with indifference to his works or ridiculing them as old-fashioned, it was keenly painful to me; because they had been the channels through which most of the spirit of current modern science reached me.

Letter from Olive Schreiner to John T. Lloyd, 29 October 1892, lines 94–101<sup>1</sup>

Olive Schreiner's sensitivity to indifferent or unfavourable views of Mill among late-nineteenth-century European intellectuals did nothing to diminish her own deep-felt regard for the philosopher. Charles Darwin may have transformed the 'world of thought', but Mill was 'beloved' (*Thoughts on South Africa* 336). Herbert Spencer was beloved, too, but where his *First Principles* (1862) had been an 'intellectual aid' to Schreiner, 'Mill's aid was directly spiritual'; in fact, reading Mill was even more spiritually enriching than reading Plato.<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx's 'analysis of economic fact' was far superior to Mill's, but his ability to seek after the truth paled in comparison.<sup>3</sup> As a young governess, Goethe meant more to Schreiner than any writer 'except Mill'.<sup>4</sup> When Schreiner wrote that the 'most sacred spot' in Europe was Heinrich Heine's grave, she had to qualify her admiration for the German poet: 'I don't say he was the greatest man; he has never helped me or modified my life as Mill did'.<sup>5</sup> Towards the end of her life, in 1918, Schreiner was still writing of Mill in the most reverential terms. In a letter written to be read out at a commemoration meeting for Mill, she described him as 'the noblest of those whom the English-speaking race has produced in the last hundred years' and insisted on both the enormity of his achievements and the continued relevance of his works: 'John Stuart Mill laboured for the freedom of Woman. But he did more. He

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<sup>1</sup> National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Cape Town, Special Collections, *Olive Schreiner Letters Project* transcription. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from letters are from the *Olive Schreiner Letters Project* (OSLP), an online, searchable archive of around 4,800 of Schreiner's letters available at [www.oliveschreiner.org](http://www.oliveschreiner.org). For readability, all citations from OSLP will be given in footnotes rather than parenthetically.

<sup>2</sup> OS to Betty Molteno, 24 May 1895, University of Cape Town (UCT), Manuscripts & Archives, OSLP transcription, 39–43, emphasis in original.

<sup>3</sup> OS to Betty Molteno, 24 May 1895, UCT, OSLP transcription, 25–32.

<sup>4</sup> OS to S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, 15 June 1914, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 12–13.

<sup>5</sup> OS to Adela Villiers Smith née Villiers, 10 September 1906, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 5–6.

laboured for human freedom. Women can best show their gratitude to him by studying his writings especially his essay on Liberty'.<sup>6</sup> As well as figuring his legacy in such grand terms, Schreiner's letters reveal that references to Mill were part of the smaller day-to-day details of her life. One of her dogs – an Irish terrier – was called Mill; she refers to him sleeping behind the stove and swimming in the sea.<sup>7</sup> When she met the peace campaigner Norman Angell, she described him as 'a delightful man, something like John Stuart Mill in the face'.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter takes a close look at Schreiner's representations of Mill, and his works, throughout her published writing and her private letters. There is a slippage in her writing between generalised references, where Mill's name is invoked as part of a roster of intellectual, political and literary figures, and more specific references, of the type outlined above, which are concerned with describing particular qualities attributable to Mill, or the effects induced by reading his works. This chapter aims to situate Schreiner's Millian representations, both general and specific, within the context of her major preoccupations, including agnosticism, feminism, colonial society and British imperialism, at the same time as locating 'Schreiner's Mill' within the context of other views of Mill. As I will discuss below, her effusive praise of Mill's works is far from unprecedented, but her conception of the spiritual effect of reading Mill provides a quite different perspective to other writers. In *The Healing Imagination of Olive Schreiner* (1989), Joyce Avrech Berkman suggests that what Schreiner 'absorbed from Mill appeared mostly to be his moral commitment to empirical and logical reasoning' (70). This seems to be a critical commonplace about Mill rather than an adequate description of the ideas that Schreiner fuses together in her representations. In Schreiner's writing, Millian prose is strongly associated with creative day-dreaming, art, beauty and romance.

In the sections that follow, I begin by considering exactly what constitutes the spiritual effect that Schreiner describes in her private letters and in her unfinished

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<sup>6</sup> Cronwright-Schreiner, *Letters of Olive Schreiner*, 402.

<sup>7</sup> The reference to the Irish terrier is in a letter from OS to Jessie Rose Innes nee Dods Pringle, July 1896, UCT, OSLP transcription, 22–23; 'Mill is sleeping behind the stove' is from an extract of a letter from OS to her husband S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, 4 July 1896, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 3; and in a letter to Betty Molteno, about a trip to Port Alfred, OS says 'We brought Mill with us, & he will try to swim out into the big breakers', 20 August 1896, UCT, OSLP transcription, 27–28.

<sup>8</sup> OS to Havelock Ellis, 2 November 1914, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 7–8.

novel *From Man to Man* (published posthumously in 1926), particularly as it relates to *System of Logic* (1843). I then explore how this differs from other accounts of reading Mill which deal with emotions and mental wellbeing. I move on to show how *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) figures in her first novel, *Undine* (written before she was 20 years old, but published posthumously in 1929) and her best-selling, critically acclaimed novel *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). My focus with these novels is on how Schreiner imagines that reading Mill forms part of self-education, especially for readers, like Waldo and Lyndall in *African Farm*, who are not privileged enough to have access to any kind of formal education – who are, in Lyndall’s words, poor, young, and friendless (156). In the final section of this chapter I consider the more generalised references Schreiner makes to Mill in her private letters and her political writings, in particular *Woman and Labour* (1911) and *Thoughts on South Africa* (1923). These have to do with how Mill is figured as an idealised national representative and agent of international progress.

Reading Mill plays a formative part in Schreiner’s intellectual development as it does for Mona Caird. Like Caird, Schreiner reads Mill as part of a process of self-education, but that she does so growing up in South Africa marks an important difference between these two New Woman writers. As the quotation at the head of this chapter highlights, it was only when Schreiner, as she put it, ‘got home to Europe’ that she became aware of ambivalent attitudes towards Mill. Schreiner was born and raised in South Africa, so this is a telling phrase. In *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism* (2001), Carolyn Burdett argues that ‘Schreiner confronted, and was compelled creatively to work with, various productive contradictions’ (6). As a first generation colonial, she conceived of England as ‘a land of intellectual richness’ in contrast to the ‘physically and spiritually bleak land’ of her birth, but this view was accompanied by ‘the profoundest sense of how South Africa was affected by England’ (Burdett 7). Nadine Gordimer also writes of Schreiner’s sense, which was shared by other South African writers, of being ‘cut off from the world of ideas’ (224). Ultimately, though, Gordimer finds her guilty of ‘abandoning the search for a form of fiction adequate to contain the South African experience’ (226). In *An Olive Schreiner Reader* (1987) Carol Barash, like Burdett, sees the conflicting elements in Schreiner’s life as productive: though Schreiner is both ‘coloniser and colonised’, she ‘believed fundamentally in unity, and always advocated political and economic equality for all people in South Africa. Both the force

and ideological ruptures of Schreiner's prose come from her attempts to bridge political divisions ...' (19). Similarly, in her introduction to the first collected edition of Schreiner's dreams and allegories, Elisabeth Jay emphasises the need to pay attention to the complex situation occupied by a writer 'whose idealist concerns recognised no simple geographical boundaries' (ix). In *New Woman Strategies* (2003), Ann Heilmann notes that Schreiner's identification with the political struggles of the Boers against British capitalist interests and her condemnation of the 'oppression of the black population by both British colonialists and Boers' coexisted with a tendency to 'deal out stereotypically raced roles' in her fiction (123). All these critics, except perhaps Gordimer, affirm Schreiner's commitment to progress. Burdett's terms are useful again here: she says that Schreiner 'became a critic of progress who never abandoned her commitment to it' (7). In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate how Schreiner's Mill formed an integral part of her commitment to progress at both an individual and societal level. Schreiner's Mill is a role model and he is a provider of books to be mined for philosophical and political ideas about work, education, and liberty, and, most significantly (in terms of the new perspective it offers on Mill), used as a stimulus for creativity.

### 6.1 The Spiritual Effect of Reading Mill

*The Life of Olive Schreiner* (1924), Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner's biography of his wife, includes extracts from diaries which record Schreiner reading the *Political Economy*, aged 18, while living in tents with family members near the diamond mine at Kimberley, and the *Logic*, aged 20, while she worked as governess (92, 94).<sup>9</sup> Cronwright-Schreiner also describes the room at Ganna Hoek farm near Colesberg in which Schreiner wrote *Undine*:

The room was mud-floored and ceilingless. It leaked badly; when the rain was heavy Olive used to put an umbrella over herself and lead the water out of the room by making a small furrow in its mud floor. The room contained a primitive bedstead, a box to hold her clothes and nothing else

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<sup>9</sup> My correspondence with Liz Stanley, Principal Investigator for the Olive Schreiner Letters Project, in April 2012, indicates that Schreiner read Mill assiduously in later life, too. Schreiner requested books by Mill in letters to the London Institute Librarian. These are yet to be transcribed and made available on the online archive.

(except Mill's *Logic* to read); she used to wash in the little stream in the kloof [ravine] near by until she secured a basin. (107)

Cronwright-Schreiner makes Mill's *Logic* the symbol of Schreiner's engagement with European intellectual life in very unlikely circumstances. There is something incongruous about Mill's *Logic* being found in the mud and the rain, but delightfully, fortuitously so. It is a symbol of Schreiner's self-education and desire for personal improvement against all odds, and of the possibility of a different kind of work (she intensely disliked being a governess). Ruth First and Ann Scott, in their 1989 biography of Schreiner, along with Gordimer in a review of their work, see Cronwright-Schreiner's account of his wife as an unforgivable series of misrepresentations which, in its desire to define her writerly genius, removes her from her social context. If this vignette romanticises Schreiner in her isolation, it also draws on Schreiner's own remarkably consistent representations of the way ideas about Mill and his works were incorporated into her life and her worldview, from her first youthful encounters onwards.

The quotation at the head of the chapter, in which Schreiner empathises with her correspondent's deep feelings for Jesus by comparing them with her own deep feelings for Mill, is from a letter sent in 1892 to John T. Lloyd, a church minister who later left the ministry and became a freethinker. In lamenting the European men and women who were indifferent to Mill's works, or ridiculed them as old-fashioned, Schreiner seems less to be making the case for the currency of his ideas, than their timelessness. Schreiner's reverence for Mill is bound up with her view that his works 'had been the channels through which most of the spirit of current modern science' reached her. The spirit of science is something which informed Schreiner's critical engagement with the world and her creativity. In the same letter she explains the position she has reached with regard to religion, telling Lloyd that she believes in the 'unity of all things' and that 'there is nothing but God'.<sup>10</sup> She describes the agonising process, during her childhood, of reconciling her '^direct^ perception' of the world with the things she is taught about Christianity, and the subsequent pleasure of discovering scientific knowledge which harmonised with her observations of her environment.<sup>11</sup> Writing to Edward Carpenter

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<sup>10</sup> OS to John T. Lloyd, 29 October 1892, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 33–34 and 51.

<sup>11</sup> OS to John T. Lloyd, 29 October 1892, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 39–42. ^^ indicates Schreiner's insertions.

in 1889, she had also commented on her view of the connectedness of all phenomena and experience. She wrote that:

the same joy and peace comes to my little soul from reading Spencers First Principles or Mills Logic or even Gibbons Decline and Fall [sic] that comes to it from looking at a sunset behind these tall mountains. God can and does reveal himself through the intellect as through nature, through the reason of man as in the blowing of the wind.<sup>12</sup>

Mill's *Logic*, alongside Spencer's *First Principles* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89), is associated with the beauty of a natural landscape, harmony and organisation. Where others fear the unsettling effects of Mill's prose, Schreiner consistently connects ideas of the intellectual stimulation he provides with ideas of consolation. A note to Havelock Ellis in 1887 simply reads: 'I wish I could see you this evening. I am reading Mill's Logic. It comforts me so'.<sup>13</sup> Mill gave Schreiner tools for challenging the religious beliefs she was expected to inherit unquestioningly, and for connecting up different parts of her thinking, and this was fortifying.

Thus when Schreiner commented, in a letter to her friend Betty Molento in 1895, that 'Mill himself is to my mind the purest & greatest soul God has yet given the English race', Schreiner's 'God' does not signify a single creator in the traditional Christian sense.<sup>14</sup> In this letter to Molteno, Schreiner offers her most significant elaboration on what Mill's thinking meant to her:

They wrote & asked me some time ago (some English paper did) to mention for publication the passage in the bible or any other work that had been of most aid to my moral & spiritual growth. I wrote back I could not give a ^one^ passage, but the book which has had most effect on my spiritual life was Mill's Logic, & more or less all his works, especially his political economy. I think they hardly believed me; that they fancied I was confusing between the intellectual knowledge of facts, & the spiritual attitude of soul. But I was not. Modern Political Economists, such as Karl

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<sup>12</sup> OS to Edward Carpenter, 21 January 1889, Sheffield City Library, Archives & Local Studies, OSLP transcription, 10–14.

<sup>13</sup> OS to Havelock Ellis, 20 March 1887, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 4–5.

<sup>14</sup> OS to John T. Lloyd, 29 October 1892, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 29.



Marks [sic] have gone much further than Mill in the analysis of economic fact, & as far as mere technical knowledge of logic goes other writers will now reproduce for you all Mill stated, but the spiritual, the pure soul searching after the truth which is God, seeking to know nothing, to seek nothing, to discover nothing but the truth, that, just that you will find nowhere else as in following & watching the mind of Mill work! I never read a page of Mill but I seem to enter a higher holier atmosphere, even Plato does not affect me in the same way. I have owed spiritually singularly little to other people; but to Mill my debt can never be paid. In the little book I wrote for my baby before it was born, in case I died, I begged it to re-read Mill all its life. Spencer has also helped me, but less than Mill. When I was sixteen & doubted every thing, his *First Principles* showed me the unity of existence; but it was an intellectual aid, which I myself had to transmute into spiritual bread. Mill's aid was directly spiritual<sup>15</sup>.

Just as Mill is Schreiner's equivalent to Jesus in her letter to Lloyd, Mill's *Logic* and *Political Economy* are here the sacred texts which replace the Bible. If Mill gives Schreiner tools for challenging Christian teaching, then religion also gives Schreiner a vocabulary for talking about Mill. As Elisabeth Jay has observed, freethinkers like Schreiner rifled 'the terminology of orthodox faith, reinterpreting such words as "soul", "immortality", or "God" to incorporate elements of other philosophies that attracted them' (xix). Frances Power Cobbe and the other commentators I discussed in chapter two considered the unquenchable quest for knowledge and truth displayed in Mill's work to be evidence of a religious disposition. Schreiner takes this idea further, finding that reading Mill induces an exalted intellectual and emotional state, which helped her to deal with big questions about birth and death. She is conscious that this is an unusual position to take, and the likelihood is that it will be thought ill-considered, but insistent about this connection between her intellectual and emotional life. Though Spencer is as beloved to her as Mill is, and his *First Principles* underpinned Schreiner's views on unity, Mill's help is more enduring. Burdett explores how Schreiner draws on Spencer and concludes that while his 'influence is detectable in Schreiner's vision of a complex,

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<sup>15</sup> OS to Betty Molteno, 24 May 1895, UCT, OSLP transcription, 18-43.

aesthetic and intellectual, *evolved* form of sexual love ... or in the emphasis on global and holistic development ..., the Spencerian doctrines of struggle, competitiveness and survival are untiringly criticized and condemned' (29, Burdett's emphasis). Schreiner retained less of a critical distance in relation to Mill's ideas, believing that they unfailingly enlivened her thoughts and opened up meaning.

The links Schreiner draws between intellectual stimulation and the emotional consolations of reading Mill are underscored by the circumstances in which her letter to Molteno was written. Less than a month before, on 30 April 1895, after wanting a child for many years, Schreiner had given birth to a daughter, who had lived only for a few hours.<sup>16</sup> During her pregnancy, Schreiner had mentioned the book she was writing for her baby to another friend, Isaline Philpot, telling her: '... every day I write a little to it; so that, in case I should die, it will still have that, and I am writing it out a list of all the books I want it to read'.<sup>17</sup> Schreiner was also making other plans for the education of her child, informing Philpot: 'If my child is a girl I shall bring her up from the time she is quite tiny always to look forward to some definite work in life'.<sup>18</sup> Schreiner's letter to Molteno reveals that she saw reading and re-reading Mill as a particularly important part of a child's education, and perhaps especially valuable if that child was a girl, who needed to be taught to develop a robust inner life, look forward to the possibility of a professional life, and counter other people's preconceptions about the limits of her abilities. Even as she mourned the loss of her baby, and was comforted by expressing her deeply personal debt to Mill, Schreiner looked to the hope which she believed that reading Mill could provide for future generations who were interested in progress and improvement.

*Subjection* was the key Millian text for women involved in agitating for women's rights at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, but Schreiner did not limit herself to this most obvious object of study. Her letter to the commemoration meeting thirteen years later reiterates this by singling out *On Liberty* rather than *Subjection*, and then extending her recommendation to all of Mill's works. This is an important point, given the prevalence of gendered assumptions in Britain

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<sup>16</sup> On Olive Schreiner's baby, see First and Scott, 213–14; and Burdett 11–12.

<sup>17</sup> OS to Isaline Philpot, 3 November 1894, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 4–6.

<sup>18</sup> OS to Isaline Philpot, 3 November 1894, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 8–10.

about who read Mill, and what parts of his oeuvre they studied. Even Mill's protégé John Morley – who Schreiner knew and thought had a 'touch of genius', unlike Leslie Stephen<sup>19</sup> – remarked on 'the comparatively few women whose intellectual interest was strong enough to draw them to his books' ('The Death of Mr Mill' 671). Morley fully supported Mill's views on women's rights, but his comment does not indicate any alertness to the institutional and educational structures which might have influenced this state of affairs.

The quality which Schreiner says she prized most in Mill, as expressed in the letter to Molteno and others, is his commitment to seeking the truth.<sup>20</sup> In the introduction to the *Logic* Mill explained that he thought it would be helpful if

... we were to define logic as the science which treats of the operations of the human understanding in the pursuit of truth. For to this ultimate end, naming, classification, definition, and all other operations over which logic has ever claimed jurisdiction, are essentially subsidiary. They may all be regarded as contrivances for enabling a person to know the truths which are needful to him, and to know them at the precise moment at which they are needful. (7: 6)

An attack on the intuitionist school of thought, the *Logic* grappled with the big questions that: 'What are facts? and, What is experience? and, What are the consequent conditions of reasoning about facts?'; it was intended to 'provide a logical armoury for all assailants of established dogmatism' (Stephen, *The English Utilitarians* 79, 76). Such questions about truth, facts, classification, definitions and proof are found throughout Schreiner's fiction, from Undine wondering 'why anything was where it was, and why the world was the world, and the sun the sun, and she, she' (21) to Lyndall in *African Farm* asking 'And how do we know that the story is true, Uncle Otto?' (28). This foregrounding of epistemology in Schreiner's fiction was not to everybody's taste – the *Saturday Review*, for example, hoping to 'hear of encounters with ravening lions, and of hairsbreadth escapes from raiding Zulus' was disappointed to find that *African Farm* was 'hyper-philosophical' ('The Story of an African Farm' 507-8).

<sup>19</sup> OS to Havelock Ellis, 21 January 1887, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 5–6.

<sup>20</sup> Schreiner thought that John Maynard Keynes's *The Economic Consequence of the Peace* (1919) was 'worthy of John Stuart Mill in its large truth-loving spirit'. OS to Havelock Ellis, December 1919, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 11–12.

In *From Man to Man*, which Schreiner regarded as her major work, she further explored the ideas about pursuing and knowing truths expressed in her letter to Molteno about Mill. In a letter to Karl Pearson, Schreiner outlined the narrative of the never-completed *From Man to Man*:

... two sisters grow up on An African farm; the elder [Rebekah] reserved and self-contained with a passion for physiology, & Mill's Logic as her particular companion. The younger [Bertie] beautiful & sweet, with the clinging, where she loves, self forgetful nature, incapable of enduring the anger of anyone who is near her which forms the ideal wife ^in most men's minds^. She becomes a prostitute, not through any evil, but through her ~~gentleness~~ lovingness, & non-power of opposing human creatures who are near her. ... Rebekah the intellectual sister marries ... [whereupon] She grows harder & colder & deader to the outer world, more careful in the performance of her outward duties, but ~~longing~~ finding her life only in her tiny study with her books & her microscope....<sup>21</sup>

Though the *Logic* is mentioned as Rebekah's 'particular companion' in this letter, it is not directly named in the novel (as a whole host of other books are, including Darwin's *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*); however, the chapter 'Raindrops in the Avenue', which is given over to Rebekah's philosophising, explores the *Logic's* thesis that a belief in innate truths waiting to be discovered must be replaced with a system of analysed experience.

Even the circumstances of Rebekah's speculations – enclosed within the small space of a study adjoined to her children's bedroom, 'carrying on a long discussion with herself as to what was the real cause of that curious hunger for an exact knowledge of things as they are, of naked truth about all things small or great, material and also psychic ...' (177) – recalls Mill explaining that 'The sole object of Logic is the guidance of one's own thoughts' rather than the communication of those ideas to others (7: 6). Mill adds that 'Logic takes cognizance of our intellectual operations, only as they conduce to our own knowledge, and to our command over that knowledge for our own uses' (7: 6). Rebekah's self-contained reasonings on abstract questions are all for her own use, a product of her self-guided reading of books on geology, geography and botany, books

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<sup>21</sup> OS to Karl Pearson, 10 July 1886, University College London Library (UCL), OSLP transcription, 15–45.

which were ‘much more poetry to her’ than stories or poems (174). Her thoughts turn on what she calls the ‘new spirit’ or ‘a keen unending questioning of the facts of life’ (178). The new spirit is rooted in experience, rather than faith, and an understanding that ‘the true revelation of the unseen and the unknown beyond was to be found in the study of the seen and knowable about us’, so much so that ‘the true act of religious worship was the search after a knowledge of all reality’ (182). A work of art is defined as that which satisfies an emotional need by its representation of the truth. Thus in *From Man to Man* a book like the *Logic* is associated with ideas of worship and artistry, as it is in Schreiner’s letter to Molteno. Rebekah’s search for ‘almighty sincerity’, which makes it painful to encounter the majority of people busy lying to themselves, or (recalling *On Liberty*), spending a life time sophisticating with their own intellects, eventually leads her to find intellectual and emotional sympathy with her neighbour Mr Drummond, but Schreiner’s narrative cuts off at that point (184).

## 6.2 ‘Following & watching the mind of Mill work’: Other Perspectives

What exactly was involved in, as Schreiner put it, ‘following & watching the mind of Mill work’? In order to more fully understand Schreiner’s construction of the spiritual effect of reading Mill, particularly in relation to the books she singles out – the *Logic*, *Political Economy* and *On Liberty* – it is useful to consider comparisons with other accounts of his ability to guide, teach and inspire through his writing. I begin with a twenty-first century reader of Mill, Stefan Collini, because his account distils a certain line of thinking about the dryness of Millian prose and provides a direct contrast to Schreiner’s view. Collini has argued that:

The *Logic* is hardly attempting to awaken in us a sense of the mysteries of the universe, and none of the essays in the volumes of *Dissertations and Discussions* leaves us feeling that we now possess our experience in a quite new way. Nothing in Mill’s philosophy strains at the limits of the plainly expressible, and if this restriction gives his prose a rather pedestrian quality by comparison with that of the Sages, we might remember that it is part of the definition of the pedestrian that he has his feet on the ground. (*Public Moralists* 135)

Clearly for Schreiner the opposite was true: Mill's writing did awaken a sense of the mysteries of the universe and leave her feeling that she possessed her experience in a new way. Collini's comments about Mill's style might be said to follow in the tradition of the Victorian literary critic R.H. Hutton, who acknowledged Mill's powerful influence over English thought, but insisted that there was something lacking in Millian prose:

What we miss in Mr J.S. Mill are personal characteristics beneath and beyond the permanent characteristics of his rational disquisition. There is a monotony in the calm, evenly flowing, impartial, didactic pertinacity of the disquisition, which is almost appalling, when we consider the number of volumes into which it has flowed with steady and uniform current, without a single important variety of doctrine or manner. ('Mr John Stuart Mill' 204)

Hutton describes an unappealingly flat reading experience: relentlessly serious discourse with no 'relieving glimpses' of humour or idiosyncrasy (203). For Hutton, Mill's strengths lie in his ability to systematise knowledge, but he does this at the cost of the human details which help readers to relate to a text. Schreiner thought that Mill's style was consistent – 'seeking to know nothing, to seek nothing, to discover nothing but the truth' – but she interpreted this consistency very differently. It was marvellous rather than appalling, a reliable source of inspiration for diverse thoughts of her own.

Other Victorian readers describe an experience closer to that which Schreiner represented. In 1860, the clergyman R.W. Church published a response to *On Liberty* – the text which Schreiner felt that it would be most instructive for all women to study – in *Bentley's Quarterly Review*. He disagreed with much in Mill's essay but had this to say about the reading experience:

The distinctness, the daring, the vigour of the discussion, the novelty which it throws round what is old and trite, the reality into which it quickens what is inert and torpid, even the peril and menace which it not obscurely discloses to convictions which may be matters of life and death to us, act as a tonic to the mind, and awaken, exercise, and brace it, even if they do not, as they well may, elevate the heart and widen the range of its

ordinary contemplations. The reading of a book like this ought to be an event in a man's mental history. (211)

The invigorating effects which Church recounts anticipate the position which Schreiner was to take, even though Church stops short of making a connection between intellectual and emotional benefits. The quality that Church identifies in Millian prose, of making old views new, was also highlighted by the American social reformer and preacher Moncure Daniel Conway, the author of the lively representations of Mill discussed in the first three chapters. In 1863 Conway was asked to give a series of lectures in Britain, to represent his anti-slavery views. Bound for Britain on board the steamship *City of Washington*, he read Mill:

I have brought along John Stuart Mill's new book on Liberty, published in Boston the day I left. It is a book of wonderful truisms, of startling commonplaces. In reading it one feels that such a book should be in the course of college study everywhere, so axiomatic are the laws it states; and yet there is scarcely a state on earth that would not be revolutionized by a practical adoption of his principles. (*Autobiography* I: 390)

Living in London during the First World War, Schreiner stayed up all night reading Conway's *Autobiography* (1904) – which, as well as this diary entry about his transatlantic voyage, also contained reminiscences of time spent with Mill and his step-daughter Helen Taylor<sup>22</sup> – and described it as delightful, charming and fascinating.<sup>23</sup> Schreiner would perhaps have appreciated his view of the potential for Mill's theories to be taught and practically applied across the globe.

John Morley undoubtedly saw *On Liberty* and most of Mill's works as transformational, but he expressed his approval in measured terms, making virtues of the weaknesses which Hutton perceived in Mill's literary skills:

Literary grandeur ... matters little where the kernel is a restatement and new reinforcement of Tolerance, discussion without restriction, the free life of the individual, so long as he does not injure other people, fair play

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<sup>22</sup> Schreiner had also spent time with Helen Taylor after meeting her at a meeting of a socialist organisation, Democratic Foundation, in 1884. See OS to Will Schreiner, 21 April 1912, UCT, OSLP transcription, 9–12. In the letter Schreiner mistakenly refers to Helen Taylor as Mill's niece.

<sup>23</sup> OS to John Hodgson, 1 April 1916, HCCR, OSLP transcription, 16–18.

for social experiment. On all this nothing could be more bracing than Mill's handling of his lofty case, and the idealism of it, the enthusiasm sustained as it was for page after page, very nearly approached the electrifying region of the poetic, in the eyes of ardent men and women in our age. (*Recollections I*: 62–3)

For Morley, Mill's unambitious style gives his work a transparency, perfectly suited to guide and teach his readers. Though it does not aim at literary grandeur, the quality and intensity of the affects produced by reading it are comparable to the affects produced by reading poetry. The same mode of address sustained for page after page is exciting, rather than monotonous as it is for Hutton. In his centenary tribute to Mill Morley tried to pinpoint even more precisely the *feeling* of reading Mill.

He has none of the incomparably winning graces by which [John Henry] Newman made mere siren style do duty for exact, penetrating, and coherent thought ... Style has worked many a miracle before now, but none more wonderful than Newman's. ...These graces were none of Mill's gifts, nor could he have coveted them. He did not impose; he drew, he led, he quickened with a living force and fire the commonplace that truth is a really serious and rather difficult affair, worth persistently pursuing in every path where duty beckons. He made people feel, with a kind of eagerness evidently springing from internal inspiration, that the true dignity of man is mind.

As I discussed in chapter four, Hardy cut out the article in the *Times Literary Supplement* which this quotation is taken from and pasted it inside the front cover of his copy of *On Liberty*. He drew a line in pencil the margin next to the paragraph which compares Mill's style to Newman's, perhaps indicating his agreement with Morley's view. Morley's view of Mill's constant search for truth accords with Schreiner's, but Schreiner went much further in her claims for the poetry of Mill's prose.

Though *On Liberty* was the book which Schreiner recommended women to read, it was the *Logic* and *Political Economy* which she identified in her letter to Molteno as having the most impact on her own life. Reviews and discussion of different editions of the *Logic* appeared from its original publication in 1843 and throughout the century.



Reviewing the fourth edition in 1856, the *Saturday Review* reflected on the energy which the English expended on ‘trivial, unsatisfying, not to say base objects’ and ‘the frothy excitements of the hour’ (‘Mill’s Logic’ 736). Existing in parallel with this, though, was ‘a solid demand for solid books on abstract subjects’ (‘Mill’s Logic’ 736). However, sales of books on philosophy did not necessarily equate to serious readers of books on philosophy. It could mean readers who engaged only superficially with such works, out of a desire to keep up with current literary trends and ‘a liking for the imposing forms of scientific language’ (‘Mill’s Logic’ 736). A different kind of reading was demanded by such works as the *Logic*, the writer explained:

To be fruitful, they require to be studied with an intensity and perseverance which Englishmen rarely give to an abstract subject except in early youth. The exigencies of life very soon absorb all the powerful intellects, and there remain for philosophy only the halt, the maimed and the blind. In other words, metaphysics and logic only penetrate and discipline the mind so far as they enter into education; and this Mill’s *Logic* is really doing. It is admirably qualified to be a learner’s book – much more so than if it had been merely elementary. It *is* this, for it is simple and systematic; but at the same time, it lures the young curiosity onwards to the inner sanctuary. (‘Mill’s Logic’ 736, emphasis in original)

That the *Logic* is particularly suited to be ‘a learner’s book’ and that ‘it lures the young curiosity onwards to the inner sanctuary’ precisely because of its difficulty are ideas which were to find expression in Schreiner’s personal writings. Though Mill’s work was of enduring educational value to her, it is strongly associated with the formation of youthful thoughts. The difference was that Schreiner imagined that diligent students grappling with the complexity of such philosophical texts were not just English men or ‘poor lads who are to be examined’, as a reviewer of one of the digested versions of the *Logic* for university students termed it, but men and women of all types around the world (‘Our Library Table’ 233).

Upon its first publication in 1848, a reviewer of *Political Economy* in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* decided that despite the book’s ‘severe character’ and lack of concession to popular appeal – qualities it shared with the *Logic* – it could not be considered ‘dry’ by anyone interested in the current state and future prospects of

society ('Political Economy, by J.S. Mill' 412). The book's sense of intelligence and philanthropy made it impossible for even 'the most complete opponent of the work not to rise a gainer from its perusal', the reader would benefit from it whether their pre-existing views caused them to 'struggle with it, or acquiesce to its guidance', and though the style is generally didactic, there are passages 'which have had on us all the effect of the most thrilling eloquence, from the fine admixture of severe reasoning and earnestness of feeling' ('Political Economy, by J.S. Mill' 412). The reviewer in *Fraser's Magazine* similarly praised the spirit in which the book was written, declaring that 'every page evinces the warm sympathies of the writer with the joys and sorrows of his fellow-men. The happiness of mankind is ever before him as the object of inquiry; though no mawkish sentimentality blinds his judgement' ('Mill's Political Economy' 247). The reviewer emphasises that the book's value lies not in offering new ideas, but in its ability to bring together, and apply to practical problems, disparate elements of political economy. Thus the pleasure of reading *Political Economy* is a reposeful one, 'analogous to that which we receive from contemplating a quiet, serene landscape by Claude, or a Madonna by Perugino, after tasking our aching eyes with the melodramatic extravagance – the lamp-black and lightening of modern art' ('Mill's Political Economy' 260, emphasis in original). Though Schreiner refers to feelings of peace, joy and comfort as effects of reading Mill, the register of her comments is different to the conservatism implied in the *Blackwood's* reviewers distaste for modern art. For her these are qualities which are linked to the process of developing and understanding new views.

The features which these early reviewers of the *Logic* and *Political Economy* praised were reiterated, years later, in memorial essays on Mill which reflected on the canonical status the texts had achieved. For Henry Fawcett 'one reason of his attractiveness as a writer ... is the unusual power he possessed in applying philosophical principles to the facts of ordinary life' (75). The Irish economist John Elliot Cairnes agreed, observing that in Mill's writing (unlike Ricardo's) 'Principles of the most abstract kind are translated into concrete language, and brought to explain familiar facts ...' (67). Cairnes concluded that 'he has been enabled to divest of repulsiveness even the most abstract speculations, and to impart a glow of human interest to all that he has touched' (73). Discussing 'His Influence at the Universities' Fawcett dwelt on the tolerance, kindness and sympathy which animated Mill's writing and which encouraged the reader to trust him as a guide. Fawcett did not meet Mill until years after attending

university, and recalls that the effect of reading his books was a desire to meet the author: 'I remember that we often used to say that there was nothing we should esteem so great a privilege as to spend an hour in Mr Mill's society. There is probably no bond of attachment stronger than that which unites a pupil to one who has attracted him to new intellectual pursuits, and has awakened in him new interests in life' (77). Schreiner never expressed a wish that she could meet Mill, who died when she was first reading his works in the early 1870s, but she does lionise him in the way that Fawcett and Cairnes did.

By 1893, in Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*, the way in which Mill's *Logic* and *Political Economy* had become standard texts at Oxford and Cambridge was reflected in a character's indifference to studying them. In the first chapter Alan Merrick says to Herminia Barton:

When I go up to Oxford and see the girls who are being ground in the mill at Somerville, I'm heartily sorry for them. It's worse for them than for us; they miss the only part of university life that has educational value. When we were undergraduates, we lived our whole lives – lived them all round, developing equally every fibre of our natures. We read Plato and Aristotle and John Stuart Mill, to be sure – and I'm not quite certain we got much good from them; but then, our talk and thought were not all of books and of what we spelt out in them. (27)

Reading philosophy is, for Allen's character, something to be taken for granted, and, as a result, boringly institutionalised. Its value is questionable in comparison to the moral and social education provided by rowing boats, playing cricket and drinking wine with his peers. Herminia agrees with Alan and criticises the 'affectation of one-sided culture' demanded of female students at Somerville (28) – the college which in 1907 was to receive from Helen Taylor what remained of Mill's library. Somerville students being 'ground in the mill' may also be a dismissive reference to their involvement in the campaign for women's suffrage, which had been supported by Mill – such puns were a favourite in the comic press during the time that Mill was in parliament.<sup>24</sup> Schreiner read *The Woman Who Did* in 1895 and remarked 'It's not a work of art at all'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Robson's 'Mill in Parliament: The View from the Comic Papers', 103–05.

<sup>25</sup> OS to Mary Sauer nee Cloete, 1 April 1895, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 34–35.

Schreiner's specific objection was to the portrayal of the relationship which develops between Alan and Herminia, who she felt were bound together by the lower rather than the higher aspects of their natures; but, she may well have objected to the casual disregard which Alan Merrick has for reading Plato and Aristotle (in 1899 she told Havelock Ellis that she loved them and their beautiful work),<sup>26</sup> as well as Mill. Schreiner's personal experiences of reading Mill take place outside of the establishment, and the results she describes are not separate from, but an integral part of, a well-rounded education; they have intense intellectual and emotional implications. Her fictional characters who read Mill likewise do so outside of the academy, and the effect is similarly profound. By considering Schreiner's approach to Mill and his works in the context of these other views, it is possible to see that she brings together and develops several strands of thinking about the benefits of reading Mill.

### 6.3 'Beautiful dreams' in *Undine*

As Burdett explains in *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism*, the unevenness of the narrative in *Undine* – the 'jolting move from feminist critique to romance' – makes for a very disconcerting read; Schreiner was aware of these flaws in her story and never intended for this first attempt at a novel to be published (14–15). Nevertheless, as Burdett observes, the story is full of the themes and issues which Schreiner was to rework so powerfully in *African Farm* (14). One of these is the link between reading Mill and productive day-dreaming. The first few chapters of *Undine* are the ones primarily concerned with feminist critique. In these chapters, Undine Bock is 'a queer little child' growing up in South Africa, and then an equally 'queer and strange and odd' adolescent in England, struggling to understand her religious doubts and develop her intellectual inclinations, but thwarted by unsympathetic family members (13, 34). In England, Undine is courted by three members of the Blair family: brothers Harry and Albert and their odious father George. Undine has 'contemptuous pity' for Harry's lack of independent thought (84) but her desire for the 'Piece-of-perfection' Albert marks the narrative's shift into romance, as she renounces her books and her opinions in an effort to conform to a passive model of femininity (116). Like Hadria in Caird's *Daughters of Danaus* negotiating her relationship with Professor Theobald,

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<sup>26</sup> OS to Havelock Ellis, 25 July 1899, Harry Ransom Research Center (HRRRC), University of Texas at Austin, OSLP transcription, 68–69.

Undine is painfully aware that her attraction to Albert compromises her ability to articulate her opinions. In a passage which bears remarkable affinity to Caird's fictional treatment of Millian free discussion, the narrator in *Undine* reflects: "There are men and women in whose presence we seem to be released from ourselves and to be possessed of ideas and powers of expression which till then we never dreamed of; while others seem to shrivel us up and leave us standing without a correct word in all our vocabulary on which we can lay hands. One of these latter was Albert Blair" (78). When Albert rejects Undine, she marries his father in order 'serve' Albert, by securing a settlement which his father intends to deny him. Undine has a baby with George and this new life briefly reignites her passion for learning; her books become 'as food to one who wakes after a long, dark dream' (144). But the baby dies, and then George does too. Undine, having ensured that her inheritance is divided equally between Harry and Albert, returns to the diamond fields in South Africa to look for work, but finding only insufficient ironing and sewing dies in poverty, heartbroken at the loss of her intellectual life.

One of the intellectual interests that Undine abandons in order to please Albert is reading Mill. The episode involving a copy of *Political Economy* in *Undine* has been read by First and Scott, and by Burdett, as concerned with a gendered difference between types of reading material. When Undine's Cousin Jonathan accuses her of reading 'trash and sentimentality' and 'effete nonsense' in the form of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetry, Undine responds "'There lies what I have been reading", she said, pointing to where Mill still lay on the ground. "There is nothing very sentimental in that, I fancy"' (70). First and Scott think the scene mirrors a 'division in culture' which the novel as a whole is concerned with exposing: 'non-sense and non-sentiment are polarized, as though symbolizing the meaning of female and male' (87). Burdett suggests that 'Undine's reply upholds the gendered distinction implied in Cousin Jonathan's jibe ... But her "masculine" reading does little or nothing to moderate Undine's response to romance when confronted by Albert Blair; instead, her intellectual ambition simply dissolves under the force of her feeling for him' (15). As I will show, reading this episode in the context of Schreiner's other representations of Mill complicates these binaries.

When Undine points out that she has been reading unsentimental Mill, Cousin Jonathan is still sneeringly dismissive, remarking: "'You are likely to get just as much good from this style of reading as the other"' (70). The issue at stake is not primarily the

genre of the reading material, but Cousin Jonathan's attitude to Undine's independent thinking and her attempts at self-education. Undine, however, (at this point in the story at least) is quietly confident of her own ability to engage with Mill. When she subsequently finds herself forced to make conversation with the foolish Harry Blair, it is this they discuss: "You have Mill's *Political Economy* here, I see," he remarked. "I am just going through his works with very great pleasure. They are beautiful, are they not?" "Very," said Undine, smiling inwardly' (72). Undine's inward smile has a double meaning, indicating both her own sense of the beauty of Mill's works, and her contempt for Harry's confident pronouncement. The latter is connected to Undine's realisation that Harry's expensive formal education has left him full of 'knowledge and acquirements of every kind' which are completely unconnected to his inner life (72). The first few chapters of *Undine* explore issues of self-education, including the satisfaction to be had in independent reading and the striving to make connections between an inner and outer life. In the first chapter, when Undine is reading 'an old man's book' – *A Careful and strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of Will, which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame*, by Jonathan Edwards, A.B. – the narrator remarks that:

There was a strange contrast between the little reader and her great brown book as she sat there on the floor on that Sunday afternoon. The child so warm, with the wild blood dancing in every vein, looking so eagerly into the world, so ready to give and take – the book so old, so dead, with the life-thoughts of another generation petrified in its old yellow leaves, now probably being read for the last time. (26)

The book represents her father's break with the conventions of his own religious upbringing: a move from 'truth and Arminianism to the ways of Calvinism and error' perceived by her grandfather to be evil (26). A frisson of intellectual pleasure is evoked here, in the contrast between the old, dead book and the youthful, lively Undine. By gaining an individual insight into material seen as irrelevant or inappropriate for a young female reader, in making it her own, Undine is transgressing familial and gender norms and takes pleasure in doing so. Such pleasure is also evident in Undine's self-confident attitude to reading Mill, when others find it incongruous, derisory, or simply

fail to understand its significance. Unlike the ideas in Edwards's religious treatise, however, the ideas in *Political Economy* are not petrified, they are very much alive and bound up with Undine's inner and outer life.

In a letter to Havelock Ellis, Schreiner described the stimulating effect of reading Karl Pearson's book *The Ethic of Freethought* (1888) and then elaborated on this quality in other writers:

Someone has said that the power of stimulating thought ^& feeling^ is the power of genius. Only genius can do it, but all genius doesn't do it. Mill does, Spencer doesn't to the same extent. Goethe does, Schiller does not at all. Whitman & Browning do, Tennyson does not at all. I personally prize the stimulators most, I like a book you can only read a few pages of & then you have to throw it down you have so many thoughts of your own. I have never fully analyzed what this stimulating power is but it is possibly [sic] only ^to a very complex nature, & is the result of their seeing things with something of that wonderful complexity that exists in life. ... ^27

In *Undine* Schreiner dramatises this moment when a book must be thrown down to allow for personal reflection, and it is the wonderful complexities of Mill's *Political Economy* that stimulate the eponymous heroine's thought:

One afternoon, late in the summer, Undine sat half buried among the long grass at the foot of the tree. Mill's *Political Economy*, with its face turned on the ground, lay at her feet, while a little black beetle scudded hither and thither among its pages, all unnoticed. Her hands were busily employed in picking off small bits of dried bark from the trunk of the old tree; while her thoughts were in the same key, and as sweet and impossible of fulfilment, as ever were little Ellie's when she sat along 'mid the beeches in the meadow. (66)

When Undine complains about the lack of intellectual sympathy between herself and Cousin Jonathan, what most distresses her is that he accuses her of 'dreaming, not reasoning' (70), that he fails to recognise the value of the 'beautiful dreams' and 'happy

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<sup>27</sup> OS to Havelock Ellis, 19 January 1888, HRRRC, OSLP transcription, 9-19.

thoughts' she has underneath the tree (111). The comparison to Ellie day-dreaming in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's ballad 'The Romance of the Swan's Nest' (1850) certainly evokes negative connotations in relation to day-dreaming. In the poem, Little Ellie fantasises that a duke's eldest son will become her lover, and that she will show him a swan's nest that she has discovered, but when she emerges from her day-dream she discovers that the swan has deserted the nest and a rat has gnawed the reeds. For Little Ellie, day-dreaming is not productive: 'Love, sexuality, fertility, a cosy Victorian home: while she dreams of annexing male power – *because*, presumably, she dreams of it – she loses the secret treasure of a woman's life' (Mermin 105, emphasis in original). But in Undine's case, it is not chivalric romance or fairy tales that have provoked her 'sweet' thoughts; rather it is the concerns which Mill explores in *Political Economy* and how these connect to her own situation.

In Book IV, on the Influence of Progress, Mill reflects on the conditions necessary for individuals to cultivate, under a system of individual property, the 'Art of Living' as opposed to the 'art of getting on' (129). These include 'sufficient leisure, both physical and mental, from mechanical detail, to cultivate freely the graces of life' and also sufficient solitude for thinking (128). Predicting the pressures which would result from an increase in production and population, Mill notes that 'Solitude, in the sense of being often alone, is essential to any depth of meditation or of character; and solitude in the presence of natural beauty and grandeur, is the cradle of thoughts and aspirations which are not only good for the individual, but which society could ill do without' (129). So the scene focusing on Undine's dreamy seclusion, entangled in nature, connects to Mill's discussion of the necessary conditions for developing the life of the mind, which in turn is linked to individuals' ability to contribute to society through being productive in the work that they do. When Undine returns to South Africa and tries to become financially independent, she confronts one of the other concerns in *Political Economy*, that 'All persons are not equally fit for all labour...' (14). She earns her transport to the diamond fields by caring for another woman's children and wonders, 'When we labour like brutes, do our hearts become like theirs, till to eat and rest becomes all our ambition? (190). Forced to search for the most menial of labour at the diamond fields, Undine's need for subsistence supersedes all else, but she '... tried to be profoundly philosophical and to place before herself very clearly her own advanced ideas of the



subject of labour. ... Is not all work, if it be earnestly done, noble and ennobling?' (199).<sup>28</sup> Clearly, in Undine's case, the answer to this question is no, as the pursuit of a 'higher' life is denied her (191). At her most impoverished, 'she held the creed of the hungry – that ideas are a delusion and sentiments a snare' (205).

#### 6.4 'Startled joy' in *The Story of an African Farm*

The episode in which Waldo discovers a copy of *Political Economy in African Farm* is central to the novel's treatment of self-education. This relates to Lyndall, too, who self-educates in preference to enduring the destructive lessons of her finishing school, but the first reviewers often focused on Waldo's situation, remote from any centre of learning or means of formal education. In the *Fortnightly Review*, Henry Norman observed that *African Farm* 'is the story of the growth of the human mind cut off from all but the most commonplace influences' (882). The *Athenaeum* said that it set 'before the reader with striking vigour the problems which trouble a strong intelligence and an imaginative ambition remote from any possibility of culture' ('Novels of the Week' 276). A reviewer in *Time* found this aspect of the story likely to have wide appeal: 'The vivid description of the aspirations of a partially educated boy is most true to nature, and the reader will probably find many of his own youthful doubts and fears placed before him again the pages of this book' ('The Story of an African Farm' 508). In 1888, W.L. Courtney wrote a piece on 'The Agnostic in Fiction' for Harry Quilter's short-lived journal, the *Universal Review*. Courtney felt that female novelists were guilty of confusing the intellectual motivations of agnosticism with emotional ones, but praised the 'much more robust and masculine intellect' which Olive Schreiner displayed in her portrait of the 'intellectual freethinker' Waldo in *The Story of an African Farm* (78). In the same article, Courtney, who was to publish a biography of Mill the year after, observed:

The popularity of the Agnostic is a curious feature in modern English fiction. For being a purely intellectual character, the natural inference would be that he was not an essentially dramatic one. The late Mr John Stuart Mill was a capital instance of an Agnostic, and though of great

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<sup>28</sup> On Schreiner's attack on 'the female parasite who contributed nothing to the sustaining labors of her society' in *Woman and Labour*, see Regenia Gagnier's *The Insatiability of Human Wants* (2000).

interest in the intellectual world, no one would have the hardihood to say that he could be made the central figure in a romance. (73)

The rigid divide which Courtney perceived between intellectual and emotional motivations was something which Schreiner's novel, and all her writings, actually sought to challenge. Part of this challenge was having the hardihood to give Mill, or at least, his *Political Economy*, a role in *African Farm* which included elements of romance.

Where Hardy's characters, Ethelberta and Sue Bridehead, turn somewhat knowingly to *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty* respectively, for pragmatic reasons, Waldo, perhaps the youngest reader of Mill in fiction, happens upon a copy of *Political Economy* by chance. It is a moment of empowerment for him when his thoughts are given form by reading Mill – thrown into sharp relief by his subsequent violent mistreatment by Bonaparte Blenkins. The pleasure in incongruity found in *Undine* is also expressed in *African Farm*. Em's warning about the books in the loft – 'I don't think they are very nice, not stories' – their location, hidden 'Under a pile of sacks' in 'a rough packing case', and the appearance of the 'dull, brown volume' that Waldo settles on to read, are all contrasted with Waldo's 'startled joy in the book' (75–6). Waldo reads *Political Economy* avidly, in an absorbed manner more readily associated with novel reading, and has a bodily reaction which combines excitement, comfort and 'triumphant joy' (76). Waldo's reading merges the shock of the new, with the shock of the familiar, allowing him to give form to his religious doubts, and learn about the possibility of making productive connections between deep historical knowledge and the present. For Undine reading *Political Economy* provokes day-dreaming, and it sends Waldo into a reverie too. Afterwards he ponders Schreiner's favourite theme of unity as he stares dreamily at a sow and her little pigs and decides: 'Taken singly they were not beautiful; taken together they were' (78). Later in the novel, when Waldo encounters his stranger, the qualities of art and truth once more associated with the effects of reading Mill, when the stranger says: 'And the attribute of all true art, the highest and the lowest, is this – that it says more than it says, and takes you away from itself. It is a little door that opens into an infinite hall where you may find what you please' (133). Both Mill and Schreiner are not concerned with a monolithic 'Truth'; but rather with something many-sided, the kind of truth that Waldo's stranger describes when he says that 'There is nothing so universally intelligible as truth. It has a thousand meanings and suggests a thousand more' (134).

As Waldo dreams, Bonaparte ‘reasons’. The narratorial voice mocks Bonaparte’s ignorance of the pleasures of learning and of Mill in particular, in Millian terms, referring to his speculation that Waldo has been eating smoked sausages in the loft as a ‘chain of inductive reasoning’ and his ‘simple rule’ regarding books as ‘of infinite utility’ (77, 79). Bonaparte’s rule is:

*Whenever you come into contact with any book, person or opinion of which you absolutely comprehend nothing, declare that book, person, or opinion to be immoral. Bespatter it, vituperate against it, strongly insist that any man or woman harbouring it is a fool or a knave, or both. Carefully abstain from studying it. Do all that in you lies to annihilate that book, person, or opinion.*  
(79, emphasis in original).

Schreiner’s satirical take on Bonaparte’s ignorance seems particularly poignant in light of some of the vituperative attitudes towards Mill that I discussed in chapters two and three. This abuse is made literal in *African Farm*, as Waldo’s copy of *Political Economy* lands in the mud when Bonaparte pushes him into the pig sty, is branded ‘Polity-gollity-gominy’ by Tant’ Sannie before being flung at Waldo’s head, and finally thrown in the fire: ‘It lay upon the heap of coals, smoked, flared, and blazed, and the “Political Economy” was no more – gone out of existence, like many another poor heretic of flesh and blood’ (81).

The burning of one of Mill’s books was not unprecedented in fiction: the 1867 American novel *St Elmo* by August J. Evans sees a character disgusted by Mill’s support for women’s suffrage throw a copy of *Considerations on Representative Government* into the fire, but in that instance the book was at least read by the person doing the burning. Reading Mill could also provoke threats of violence. Schreiner’s friend, the peace campaigner Norman Angell recalled a much more idyllic experience of reading Mill, somewhat akin to Undine’s, lying, aged seventeen, ‘under the trees near his Lincolnshire home, reading, once more, John Stuart Mill *Essay on Liberty*; and eating chocolate creams’ (1), but this was followed by a threat from his older brother that ‘one more quotation from John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer or Darwin’ would result in ‘a first-class hiding’ (4). In *African Farm*, Bonaparte and Tant’ Sannie’s reaction to Waldo reading Mill serves to emphasise Waldo’s powerlessness and vulnerability (which as Lyndall points out is not as great as hers). Prior to Waldo reading the chapter on property in *Political*

*Economy*, Bonaparte has destroyed the sheep-sheering machine which Waldo has spent nine months lovingly crafting.<sup>29</sup> Having no heed for the pleasure which Waldo has taken in his work, Bonaparte also denies Waldo his right to the produce of his labour. But their incomprehension of Mill also serves to fortify Waldo's desire for book-learning and philosophising. *The Story of an African Farm*, like *Undine*, evokes the contrast in *Political Economy* between the 'art of getting on' which is concerned only with the accumulation of wealth and the 'Art of Living' – which takes into account the relationship of education to labour, the different motivations for work, and the fitness of different people for different tasks: in short, the cultivation of individuality.

### **6.5 'World-wide functions in the unfolding of human life on the globe': Mill as National Representative**

In the final section of this chapter I turn to consider the more generalised references to Mill in Schreiner's work, and how her idea of Mill as a national representative – 'the purest & greatest soul God has yet given the English race' – functions. If Mill was a hero for Waldo, then he was also, in Schreiner's view, a hero in his own romance. In letters to her husband, Schreiner used Mill's marriage to Harriet as a model of the 'happiest marriages'.<sup>30</sup> In 1906 she wrote to Cronwright-Schreiner of 'the wonderful effect of sex love in stimulating & raising the intellectual faculties, as in the case of the Brownings p̄who both produced nearly all their best & greatest work during their intensely happy married life, & Mills case & a great many others'.<sup>31</sup> Schreiner's conception of the intellectually enriching nature of 'sex love' was part of her 'overt aim to imagine what "progress" might mean in relation to heterosexual love' (Burdett 87), her belief 'that equal education and access to labor would strengthen the "sexual" bonding of men and women' (Gagnier, *Insatiability of Human Wants* 85), and her 'fundamental conviction that emotion or feeling cannot be kept separate, or expelled from, the sphere of intellect and reason (Burdett 90). Pursuing these ideas in *Woman and Labour*, Schreiner observed that: 'A Mill, a Shelley, a Goethe, a Schiller, a Pericles, have not been more noted for vast intellectual powers, than for the depth and intensity of their sexual emotions' (233). As I have noted throughout this thesis, Mill was

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<sup>29</sup> See Burdett on Waldo's 'maternal projects of nine months' labour' (39).

<sup>30</sup> OS to S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, 4 June 1907, NLSA, OSLP transcription, 2.

<sup>31</sup> OS to S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, 24 November 1906, National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, OSLP transcription, 9–12.

characterised by Bain and other male commentators as lacking in sexual feelings. He was typically seen as representing the opposite to Goethe in this respect, as 'Goethe and Mill: A Contrast' (1874), which I discussed in chapter two, demonstrates. And in Caird's engagement with Millian ideas she focuses on Platonic companionship between men and women, seeing sexual attraction as weakening rather than strengthening individuality. So in making Mill one of her national representatives of an idealised heterosexual love Schreiner offered a very different perspective.

In 'The Englishman', one of the essays collected in her *Thoughts on South Africa* (1923), Schreiner is concerned to establish the characteristics of the individuals who make the most contribution to cultural, artistic and social development around the world. Her connected interest in this essay is the 'welding together' of the populations in South Africa: Black, Boer, English, and Asian, and the contribution which English people had to make to global development (322). In Schreiner's view the latter influenced the former. Schreiner hoped for an egalitarian or meritocratic society but saw things as they were in hierarchical terms: 'What we consider the attitude of the Englishman in South Africa should be to the alien, and especially the African, races beneath him, depends mainly on the view we take of his nature and his world-wide functions in the unfolding of human life on the globe generally' (331). Identifying herself as English in this instance, Schreiner outlined four groups or viewpoints to explain the English nature and function globally. The first was the 'average Englishman' who carried on his life selfishly without considering his relation to the greater good (331). The second was a group that held illogical and vaguely expressed ideas that 'the whole world was made for the Englishman'; the 'Impossible and repulsive' conception held by this type of person was that English people would come to dominate at the expense of 'all the other infinitely complex interesting forms of human life on earth's vast continents' (332, 333). The third was the view generally held by 'all non-English nations and peoples' and this was that 'there is something not merely astonishing but ludicrous in the conception that earth's vast millions, civilized and uncivilized, Asiatic and European, black and white, are to be swept away by this trading fragment of the race' (334). The fourth was the one that she subscribed to, which was that, though, in terms of art, science, philosophy and religion, the English were 'far more receivers from the common stock than contributors', the contribution which they had made and could continue to make was their love for individual freedom (339).

Schreiner then identifies three ways to love freedom, a tendency which she believes to be present in varying degrees in all English people. The first is a selfish love, whereby individuals prize freedom 'as a possession for themselves alone' (342). The second, drawing on *On Liberty*, involves loving 'liberty so dearly that we would not willingly inflict an injustice or a wrong on another' (343). The third love of freedom involves 'a burning passion to spread it broadcast over the globe' (343). Schreiner rehearses numerous objections to her idea that English people wish to promote personal freedom on a global scale. These include slavery, a 'stained ... African record' leaving 'a trail of slime and gore' and the 'inhuman and fiendish barbarities of the Indian Mutiny (344–346). There is also the problem of the English inability to tell the truth to themselves and others; in fact, 'In the history of the world there was never a people whose record of relations with other peoples showed so hideous a record of falsehood and self-deception' (348). Coexisting with Schreiner's dream that the English, will lead the way in creating societies 'in which every creature from its birth shall stand free and untrammelled' is an awareness that her view of the 'liberating power' inherent in Englishness begins to sound dangerously like the 'national egoism and mental refraction' which she criticises in others (357, 365).

The idea of national character that Schreiner constructs in 'The Englishman' has its highest and lowest points. The highest point that she perceives involves 'the master minds which express our race' (351). When she discusses what she believes to be lacking in the English contribution to world-wide learning, the only person she thinks can really take a place on the world stage is Darwin, 'great and beloved as to many of us of to-day are the names of J.S. Mill and Spencer' (336). However, in making the case for the global dissemination of individual liberty, Mill took his place alongside a range of greater and lesser known international public figures:

If it is said to us that our idea of the function of the English race is all very well, but in reality all that races seek is self-aggrandisement, we reply that we are fully aware of this tendency to the most blatant self-aggrandisement in our people, but we also know other tendencies; and Washington, Lincoln, John Brown, Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, John Stuart Mill, Howe, Livingstone, Moffat, and the multitudes who harmonize with and follow them, are not less truly English. In every land

where the English race is growing, in Australia, New Zealand, America, England and even South Africa, side by side with its less specialized elements we have this broad humanitarian element, as surely and unfailingly developed in every land, and on this we build our hope. (361)

As I have shown in this chapter, Mill meant many specific things to Olive Schreiner in her own life and the lives of her fictional characters, but he also embodied and disseminated 'this broad humanitarian element' which offered most hope for progress across the world. Schreiner's Mill was a complex, many-sided figure who made dreams of changes big and small possible.





## Conclusion

‘What do I care about J.S. Mill!’ moaned he. ‘I only want to lead a quiet life’. (215)

*Jude the Obscure*, 1895

It was the reference to Mill in *Jude the Obscure* that provided me with the starting point for this project. I was struck by Hardy’s portrayal of Mill as a potentially disruptive presence in late-nineteenth-century domestic life: Sue’s earnest enthusiasm for Mill’s theory of liberty, Phillotson’s reluctance to engage with it. The words Hardy gave to Phillotson invited questions: What did individual Victorians *care* about Mill? How did they *feel* about their encounters with his philosophy? How did Millian philosophy have to be negotiated in nineteenth-century lives? The words Hardy gave to Sue – Mill’s words – led to questions about interactions between philosophy and literature: did other novelists have recourse to Mill? How did they represent Millian thought in their fiction? The dialogue between Sue and Phillotson also pointed to the interplay between interpretations of Mill’s philosophy and perceptions of him as an eminent philosopher. Phillotson’s ‘J.S. Mill’ evoked a different set of associations from Sue’s careful reading of ‘J.S. Mill’s words’, and yet the two things were clearly inextricably linked.

In the search for answers to the questions prompted by my reading of *Jude the Obscure* I have tried to construct an account of Mill that is as many-sided as possible (to use Goethe’s term, which Mill valued highly<sup>1</sup>). The sources I have brought together reflect diverse engagements with Mill in many respects. They deal with different aspects of his life and thought, and they do so in varying depth. Some offer incredibly well worked out responses, others are more cursory. Most were produced for public consumption by specific audiences, but some formed part of private communications or personal reflections. Some were highly conscious of the way Mill’s philosophy was being invoked to comment on wider attitudes towards science, culture and gender. Others were more concerned with scrutinising the details of Mill’s extraordinary life (a tendency encapsulated by an image in the *Times* of Mill ‘under a glass case, hermetically sealed’). The *British Quarterly Review*’s description of ‘the distinguished admirers or honourable opponents of Mill’s philosophical career’ has often seemed like a constrained way of describing the passionate adherence or the vehement disavowals

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<sup>1</sup> See Mill’s *Autobiography* (129 and 131).

expressed. Taken together, these sources reveal the ways in which one of the most authoritative men of the nineteenth century was venerated, but also the extent to which his voice was vulnerable to mockery or condemnation.

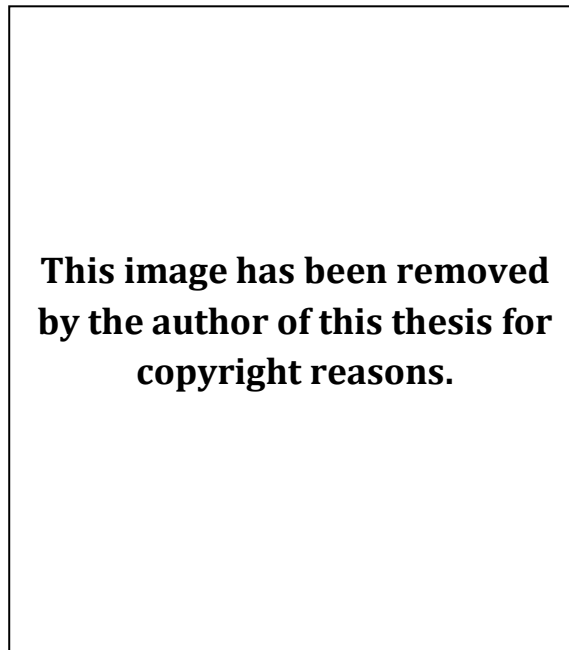
The many-sidedness of responses to Mill inevitability presents other areas for investigation. One of the future directions for Victorian studies that Regenia Gagnier identifies in her 2011 article 'Whither Victorian Studies?' is 'global interactive networks' (53). Further work on representations of Mill could engage with two of these: *Literature Compass's* Global Circulation Project and the Archive of Working-Class Writing, hosted by Liverpool John Moores University. In *Eminent Authors* Georg Brandes claimed that Mill 'was equally true and equally great, whether he addressed his maturely considered thought in some renowned work to a circle of readers spread over the whole globe, or whether in his own home, without any assumption of superiority, he dropped an accidental remark to a chance visitor' (146). By including the viewpoints of Brandes, Conway, Taine and Schreiner, this thesis has considered a few members of that global circle of nineteenth-century readers beyond Britain, but clearly there is much scope for further research here. In 1865, *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper* noted that Mill's works had been translated into French, German, Italian and Russian, and that his writings were 'highly prized' in America (88). The Global Circulation Project, headed by Gagnier, has considered responses to *On Liberty* in China, as one example of how liberalism 'circulated through cultures in contact since the mid-nineteenth-century ('Whither Victorian Studies?' 54). A call for papers could invite further international perspectives on representations of Mill and responses to his work.

The British sources I have considered in this thesis have mostly represented middle-class perspectives, but two commentators in particular point to alternative approaches. First, Moncure Conway, whose lively anecdotal accounts for American readers of *Harper's*, portrayed working-class conversations about Mill. In addition to his story, discussed in the introduction, about hearing a man in the street challenge a preacher "'See 'ere, pars'n, Jon-stote Mill says as how that ere's oll bosh!'" ('The Westminster Canvass' 736), Conway suggested the extent to which Mill's lack of religious faith was a familiar point of reference on the streets of London, and in churches up and down the country: 'He is pitied in a thousand chapels, and denounced in ten thousand, as a man without "saving faith". I heard a street preacher in Marylebone Road, standing in the rain with an umbrella over him, deploring that a "man

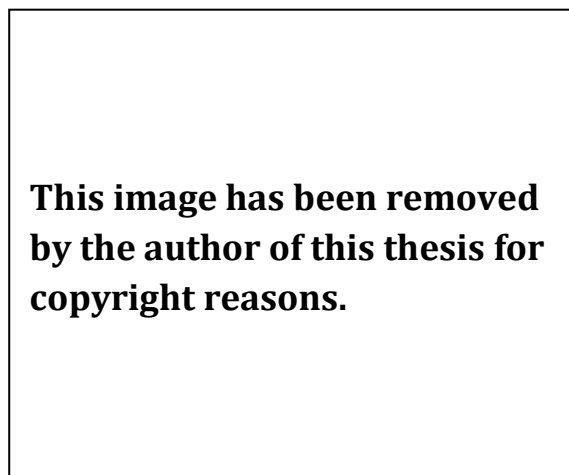
of such talons had not hofferred 'is 'eart to God ...'" ('John Stuart Mill' 534). Second, George Holyoake, whose pamphlet *John Stuart Mill: As Some of the Working Classes Knew Him* praised Mill's accessibility to the working classes, in print and in person. The top-down models of Mill's influence, proposed by, among others, the *Reader* and the House of Commons doorkeeper William White, are called into question by Conway's and Holyoake's accounts of direct working-class responses to, and discussions of Mill. The Archive of Working-Class Writing, due to launch at the end of 2012, will include nineteenth-century autobiography, poetry, prose, fiction, journalism, pamphlets and polemics, and could potentially provide further evidence of direct or indirect engagements with Mill.

Research by Janet Browne, Constance Areson Clark and Suzanne Gapps into the iconography of Darwin from the nineteenth century through to the twenty-first century suggests corresponding ways in which work on Mill and visual culture could be developed. Harry Furniss's early twentieth-century view of Mill, which I discussed in chapter three, may not offer the most subtle analysis of Mill's parliamentary career or his philosophical legacy, but it does raise an important point about the significance of images to perceptions of Mill. In addition to the scope for further research into nineteenth-century images of Mill, it would be interesting to investigate the continuities between nineteenth-century uses of Mill's image and later ones. Figures 1 and 2 are examples of twentieth-century images that could prompt further research.

Figure 1 shows the cover image for the 1969 edition of F.A. Hayek's *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: Their Friendship and Subsequent Marriage* (first published in 1951). Varouxakis and Kelly note that for 'Hayek and classical liberals inspired by him, Mill became a figure of deep suspicion. This is perhaps most curious in the case of Hayek who, whilst regarding Mill as a liberal apostate, was also important in encouraging a number of scholarly initiatives that contributed to the subsequent late-twentieth-century reappraisal of Mill's ideas' (5). The cover of Hayek's book used the 1840 cameo of Mill, which, as discussed in the introduction, was concerned with celebration of his intellect, having been produced at a time when Mill's eminence was rising and. Occupying Mill's oft-remarked-upon brow in this re-use of the cameo is a depiction of Harriet Taylor in bright pink – giving pictorial form to the idea that the balance of Mill's brain was unsettled by his relationship with Harriet. The David Levine caricature in Figure 2 is an angular, elongated rendering of Mill's profile that recalls not only the



**Fig. 1.** Dust jacket for 1969 edition of F.A. Hayek's *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor* (first published 1951).



**Fig. 2.** Caricature of Mill by David Levine. *New York Review of Books*. 31 October 1974.

*Vanity Fair* caricature, but also Hardy's description of his head 'sloped back like a stretching upland' ('A Glimpse of John Stuart Mill'). It puts the emphasis firmly back on Mill's head as a symbol of his intellect, unaffected by Harriet. The Levine caricature accompanied a review of Gertrude Himmelfarb's *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill* in the *New York Review of Books* in 1974, which linked Himmelfarb's position to Hayek's. In 'Did Mill Go Too Far?' Ronald Dworkin was unconvinced by Himmelfarb's hypothesis that the explanation for *On Liberty* was that Harriet Taylor 'took over Mill's mind' (1). Thus these images are bound up with the issue of Mill's collaboration with Harriet, which has been of interest to so many commentators, and with the twentieth-century reappraisal of Mill's oeuvre.

Mill may not have had the sway that Darwin had in twentieth-century cultural life and continues to have today, but he is still an important presence. Suzanne Gapps, with reference to Geoffrey Cubitt's introduction to *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives* (2000), argues that Darwin is a 'cultural hero' and as such remains the object of 'collective emotional investment' (341–2). Can the same be said of Mill? Crossovers between specialist and general interest in Millian philosophy are suggested by the *Mill News Letter*, which combined Millian scholarship with elements of the fanzine. Produced biannually from 1965 to 1988, by the editorial team responsible for the *Collected Works*, each issue began with an item of 'Milliana': a snippet from a Victorian text or a reference in twentieth-century popular culture, from detective novels to Monty Python's 'Philosopher's Song'. Another research question that might be productively asked is what cultural values are associated with references to Mill in popular culture?

Since beginning this project I have received weekly Google alerts which list new references to Mill on the internet. These alerts show that Mill features regularly in personal blogs and journalism, on all of the topics for which Varouxakis and Kelly argue he has continued relevance: liberty, individuality, diversity, gender equality, freedom of thought and speech, forms of democracy and political representation. Viewing Victorian cultural life through a Millian prism has foregrounded these enduring concerns with voice and voicelessness. Thomas Hardy, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner shared a keen sense of how reading Mill could form part of self-education, and how it related to imagination and the formation of intellectual independence. Their fiction is deeply engaged with Mill's warnings about conformism and conventional language. In the course of considering the arguments for and against Mill, I have found myself most

drawn towards the unconventional depictions, especially the vivid, heartfelt, and sympathetic views offered by Florence Nightingale and Olive Schreiner. However, these gained much of their force by being read alongside equally vivid and heartfelt depictions which were wholly unsympathetic to Mill and his philosophic endeavours. Mill said in *On Liberty* that 'the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind' (25). This has been the most effective way of gaining some sense of what constituted 'the John-Millennium'.

## Appendix: Chronology of Key Events, Publications and Memorials

This chronology of Mill's life and works combines details from the brief chronologies given in: the Broadview edition of *Three Essays on Religion*, edited by Louis J. Matz, the OUP edition of *On Liberty and Other Essays*, edited by John Gray, and *Lives of Victorian Political Figures: Part 4*, edited by David Martin. It also draws on Kinzer, Robson and Robson's *A Moralist in and Out of Parliament* and Mill's *Autobiography*, and includes dates of images and other memorials discussed in this thesis.

- 1806** Born on 20 May in London, eldest child of Harriet and James Mill.
- 1809–20** Educated at home by his father, James Mill. Begins to learn Greek, so he later reports, at three years old and Latin at eight. Helps to teach some of his eight younger siblings (five sisters and three brothers). Spends time in the company of his father's friends, especially Jeremy Bentham.
- 1820–1** Year-long visit to France, staying with the brother of Jeremy Bentham, Sir Samuel Bentham, and his family.
- 1822** Finds a discussion group called the Utilitarian Society which continues until 1826.
- 1823** Begins work for the East India Company as a junior clerk in the same department as James Mill. Arrested for distributing handbills about contraception and imprisoned for one night.
- 1825** Helps to found the London Debating Society.
- 1826–7** Suffers a mental crisis (as he later calls it in his *Autobiography*).
- 1830** Begins friendship with Harriet Taylor.
- 1835** Finds and edits the *London Review*, later to become the *London and Westminster Review*.
- 1836** James Mill dies.
- 1840** Stays with the Fox family in Cornwall. The cameo of Mill is thought to date from this time. Mill's brother, Henry, dies in Cornwall.
- 1843** *System of Logic* published.
- 1848** *Principles of Political Economy* published.
- 1851** Marries Harriet Taylor.
- 1858** Retires from the East India Company after having risen to the position of

- Chief Examiner of Indian Correspondence. Harriet Taylor Mill dies on 3 November in Avignon and is buried there.
- 1859** *On Liberty* published. *Dissertations and Discussions* – a collection of Mill's essays previously published in the periodical press – is also published.
- 1861** *Utilitarianism* published in *Fraser's Magazine*. *Considerations on Representative Government* published.
- 1865** Parliamentary candidature announced on 23 March. Elected MP for Westminster on 12 July. *Auguste Comte and Positivism* and *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* published. Mill is photographed by John Watkins. From 1865–68 many caricatures of Mill appear in the periodical press.
- 1866–8** Heads the Jamaica Committee, formed to call for the prosecution of Governor Eyre, who was responsible for the brutal suppression of a rebellion in Jamaica in October 1865.
- 1867** Delivers Inaugural Address to the University of St. Andrews on 1 February. On 20 May, proposes that the word 'man' be replaced by the word 'person' in the clauses of the Reform Bill which dealt with enfranchisement. The amendment is defeated, but attracts 73 votes.
- 1868** Loses seat in Parliament in November's General Election.
- 1869** *The Subjection of Women* published.
- 1873** Sits for portrait by George Frederic Watts. Caricature by Sir Leslie Ward appears in *Vanity Fair* on 29 March. Mill dies on 6 May, aged 66, in Avignon, and is buried there, next to Harriet. The Mill Memorial Committee is formed. The *Autobiography* is published on 17 October.
- 1874** *Three Essays on Religion* published.
- 1878** Thomas Woolner statue raised on the Thames Embankment.
- 1879** *Chapters on Socialism* published.
- 1882** Extracts from Caroline Fox's journals, *Memories of Old Friends*, published. Alexander Bain's *John Stuart Mill – A Criticism: With Personal Recollections* published.
- 1889** W.L. Courtney's *Life of John Stuart Mill* published.



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