

12-2018

Periodicals in Transition: Politics and Style in Victorian Higher Journalism

David Blaine Walker
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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Periodicals in Transition: Politics and Style in Victorian Higher Journalism

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

David Blaine Walker
University of Arkansas
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, 2006
University of Arkansas
Master of Arts in Journalism, 2008
University of Arkansas
Master of Arts in History, 2010

December 2018
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

Joel Gordon, PhD
Dissertation Chair

Laurence Hare, PhD
Committee Member

Ren Pepitone, PhD
Committee Member

Abstract

Covering a period roughly from the mid-1820s through the early-1880s, this dissertation investigates transformations in the style and substance of political discourse practiced in British organs of “higher journalism.” Animating certain key moments and figures along the way, it explains the shift from a periodical market dominated by the anonymous, lengthy treatises found in quarterly reviews like the *Edinburgh Review* (f. 1802) and its rivals, to an industry dominated by monthly reviews that generally eschewed both the anonymity of its contributors as well as the prohibitive length of its predecessors. In exploring this transition from the “Age of the Quarterlies” to the “Age of the Monthlies,” the essentially domestic source of Victorian anxieties is underscored, especially as it pertained to spread of democracy at home. Additionally, the roles of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Babington Macaulay are given central importance, highlighting the continuous interaction between stylistic clarity and political substance in Victorian higher journalism. As the two chief non-fiction essayists of the “Age of the Quarterlies,” Carlyle and Macaulay respectively provided subsequent generations of higher journalists with both positive and negative examples regarding substance and style. Analyzing critical essays by Walter Bagehot and Matthew Arnold, it will be seen how a mid-century reaction against the once universally admired quarterly reviews culminated in the creation of a monthly system of reviews, around which British public debate soon began to revolve. Having established the foundation of the “Age of the Monthlies,” the career of John Morley is evaluated as a representative figure of this newly-dominant forum of British political discourse. Highlighting various sources of continuity and change between the “Age of the Quarterlies” and the “Age of the Monthlies,” we gain an appreciation of higher journalism’s ability to adapt to ever-changing conditions and, in the process, remain a relevant genre of opinion-making journalism right up to the present-day.

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Abbreviations

- CPWMA* Arnold, Matthew. *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*. Edited by R.H. Super. 11 vols. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77.
- LMA*, Russell Arnold, Matthew. *Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888*. Edited by George W.E. Russell. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1895.
- TLMA*, Lang Arnold, Matthew. *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*. Edited by Cecil Y. Lang. 6 vols. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996-2001.
- CLO* Carlyle, Thomas, and Jane Welsh Carlyle. *The Carlyle Letters Online*. Edited by Brent E. Kinser. Duke University Press, 2007, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.
- JTBM* Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *The Journals of Thomas Babington Macaulay*. Edited by William Thomas. Pickering Masters Series. 5 vols. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008.
- LTBM* Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*. Edited by Thomas Pinney. 6 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974-81.
- ODNB* Matthew, H.C.G., et al., eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-Present
- CMN* Napier, Macvey. *Selection From the Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier*. Edited by Macvey Napier (d. 1893). London: Macmillan, 1879.
- WIVP* Houghton, Walter E., et al., eds. *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*. 5 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966-89.

Introduction

The Journalists are now the true Kings and Clergy: henceforth Historians, unless they are fools, must write not of Bourbon Dynasties, and Tudors and Hapsburgs; but of Stamped Broad-sheet Dynasties, and quite new successive Names, according as this or the other Able Editor, or Combination of Able Editors, gains the world's ear.¹

Journalism will, no doubt, occupy the first or one of the first places in any future literary history of the present times, for it is the most characteristic of all their productions.²

As the conditions change so the essayist, most sensitive of all plants to public opinion, adapts himself, and if he is good makes the best of the change, and if he is bad the worst.³

I. Overview

The subject of this dissertation is one of the great holdovers from Britain's nineteenth century political and cultural hegemony: the weekly, monthly, and quarterly reviews of its periodical press. The British Empire has gone the way of the dodo, but the significance of the medium first developed in the Victorian era remains wherever the English language is spoken, offering a forum for intelligent, but accessible, discussion of the day's most pressing issues. In its most overt form, this can be seen through the staggering trans-Atlantic success of the *Economist* (founded in 1843), the consensus periodical of choice for elites in the twenty-first century.⁴ But

¹ [Thomas Carlyle], "Sartor Resartus [Book I, Chapters 5-11]," *Fraser's Magazine* 8, no. 48 (December 1833): 669 [sic]-684, at 672.

² [J. Fitzjames Stephen], "Journalism," *Cornhill Magazine* 6, no. 31 (January 1862): 52-63, at 52.

³ Virginia Woolf, "The Modern Essay," in *The Common Reader*, by Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925), 293-307, at 300.

⁴ See Aram Bakshian, Jr., "'The Economist,'" in *Irrepressible Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics, and Culture in Britain*, edited by Wm. Roger Louis (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 45-54; Alexander Zevin, "Imprinting Modern Liberalism: Empire, Financial Capitalism and the 'Economist,' 1843-1938," PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2013; Zevin, "Victorian Magazine Flourishes in the Twenty First Century: Bucking the Trend," *Le Monde Diplomatique [English Edition]*, September 2012: <http://libweb.ben.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1037819558?accountid=40667>; and Zevin, "Victorian Magazine Flourishes in the Twenty First Century: The Economist's Secret," *Le Monde Diplomatique [English Edition]*, September 2012: <http://libweb.ben.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1037972575?accountid=40667>. See also, Michael Hirschorn, "Last Stand: Why the 'Economist' is Thriving While 'Time' and 'Newsweek' Fade," *Atlantic*

this is merely the most obvious example of the far-reaching relevance of the Victorian innovation known as “higher journalism.”⁵ A fuller discussion of what is meant here by the term “higher journalism” is provided in the next chapter (see especially, Section II), but for now it may be helpful for readers to think of John Sturrock’s 1999 observation that the ideal essay for higher journalism would “strike academic readers as journalistic and journalistic readers as academic.”⁶ We might also describe it as a sort of journalism whose pretensions of intellectual prestige and aspirations for cultural, literary, and/or political influence set it apart from other organs of the press, namely newspapers. Whereas a newspaper’s principle function is to *report* the facts, a periodical of higher journalism goes beyond mere reportage in which the reader may draw his or her own conclusions on “what to think.” Higher journalism seeks to *analyze* the facts and *persuade* its readers of a particular point of view, whether it be on the merits or faults of a book, a particular governmental policy, or even a general cultural viewpoint. Throughout the nineteenth century, this was the dominant medium for British public discussion. Even in the present-day era of social media and one-hundred-and-forty character takes, higher journalism remains a hallmark of public discourse (as evidenced by the continued success and general cultural cachet of not just the *Economist*, but the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *New York Review of Books*, as well as the *London Review of Books*).

Monthly 304, no. 1 (July-August 2009): 48-51, esp. 51, where Hirschorn credits the *Economist*’s marketing ability to convince readers looking to be informed on all politics, economics, and culture of that magazine’s irreplaceable relevance. “it takes time and millions of dollars, and possibly risible branding campaigns, to turn quintessentially middlebrow secondary reads into upper-middlebrow must-reads.”

⁵ In the Conclusion to this dissertation, we will offer a few observations on higher journalism’s continued relevance into the twentieth and twenty-first century.

⁶ John Sturrock, “Introduction,” in *The Word from Paris: Essays on Modern French Thinkers and Writers*, by idem (London: Verso, 1999), ix-xv, at x.

The focus of the pages below is an exploration of a heretofore underappreciated (though widely acknowledged) inner transformation of the nineteenth century British periodical industry. As it evolved through the decades, Victorian higher journalism gradually shifted from being an industry dominated by the anonymous, lengthy treatises found in quarterly reviews like the *Edinburgh Review* (f. 1802) and its fellow quarterly rivals, to an industry dominated by monthly reviews that generally eschewed both the anonymity of its contributors as well as the prohibitive length of its predecessors. It is the particular concern of this paper to trace this shift from what we call “The Age of the Quarterlies” to the “Age of the Monthlies.” To track such modifications in the style and substance of discourse practiced in the Victorian organs of higher journalism, the role played by certain contemporary British anxieties will be stressed and animated through descriptions of several key figures and moments along the way.

Within the prism of this charge to analyze the shift from a quarterly-dominated system to a monthly-dominated system, there are three general lines of argument that frame the pages below. Before offering a more detailed contextualization of each, a brief description of these arguments may be convenient. First, this dissertation looks to inject a hitherto neglected political dimension into the history of Victorian periodicals. Without doing away with the literary emphasis that marks most scholarship on the subject, this paper demonstrates how enmeshed were the twin concerns of politics and style for key players in the monthly and quarterly Victorian reviews of higher journalism. Second, guided by the belief that an emphasis on the interaction between debates over politics and style allows for a fresh look at some of the most well-known authors of the Victorian era, this dissertation highlights the centrality of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Babington Macaulay. As the two chief prose writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, Carlyle and Macaulay became critical touchstones for their immediate

successors, providing both positive and negative examples with regard to later standards of Victorian higher journalism. The third line of argumentation points to the essentially domestic nature of the anxieties encountered. In particular, at least until the 1880s, the primacy of the so-called “Condition of England Question” among Victorian thought leaders provides an important insight on British political life in the century it reigned supreme on the global stage. Aside from the occasional drama provided by an event like the 1857-58 Sepoy Rebellion in India or the Governor Eyre controversies over Jamaica in the 1860s, the British were, it seems, absent-minded imperialists. The real source of anxiety came from home, namely in the form of democratic reforms that expanded the electorate and dramatically empowered a populace some Victorian higher journalists felt unprepared for such massive political responsibility.⁷

II. Historiography

As for the lack of a political dimension in recent scholarship on the Victorians, to grasp the irony of this unfortunate situation, we might go back to a signal moment in the emergence of Victorian Studies as an academic discipline. This was the appearance in September 1957 of the peer-reviewed journal, *Victorian Studies*. Though founded and edited by three young faculty members of the English Department at Indiana University (Philip Appleman, William Madden, and Michael Wolff), the founders’ “Prefatory Note” to the first issue declares an “openness to critical and scholarly studies from all the relevant disciplines” that might profitably study the

⁷ The 1832 Reform Act increased the electorate from about 516,000 to 813,000 out of a population of 24 million. Making the total percentage of adults with suffrage rise from 5% to 7%. The main beneficiaries of 1832 were the industrial middle class. The 1867 Reform Act nearly doubled the size of the electorate, from 1.31 to 2.5 million (out of a population of about 31 million—meaning 16% of adults were able to vote.) The majority of the new voters were skilled artisans, considered the “respectable” portion of the industrial working class. In 1884, the electorate was once again expanded, from 3.1 million to 5.6 million (out of 34.9 million), allowing two out of every 3 males to vote, but still only about 28% of all adults. Unskilled industrial laborers and agricultural workers made up the bulk of the newly enfranchised. Only in 1928 was full democracy achieved, when women aged 21 and over were given the vote (though in 1918, women over 30 were enfranchised).

Victorians.⁸ Thus, as a field of scholarly inquiry, Victorian Studies (and the subfield of Victorian Periodical Studies⁹) was (were) founded on the principle of being interdisciplinary. From the outset, however, the field skewed decidedly in favor of literary studies, to the general neglect of history, politics, art, music, and other disciplines; political history being a particular weakness.¹⁰ By the 1980s and 1990s, there were occasional calls for a “Return to History.”¹¹ Nonetheless, Victorian Studies (and Victorian print culture, in particular) continued to lack “binding theoretical coherence,”¹² thanks to what Robert Darnton once called “interdisciplinarity run riot.”¹³ Since the turn of the millennium, history and politics have continued a sort of second-class existence among Victorian specialists.¹⁴ As recently as 2015, the “Manifesto” for the V21 collective declared that “Victorian Studies in the 21st Century” should carry on with the

⁸ Philip Appleman, William A. Madden, and Michael Wolff, “Prefatory Note,” *Victorian Studies* 1, no. 1 (September 1957): 3.

⁹ In 1968, Michael Wolff became the first editor of the *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, which remains (under its new name, the *Victorian Periodicals Review*) the standard academic journal of Victorian higher journalism.

¹⁰ As recalled by Asa Briggs in a review of *The Victorians Since 1901: Histories, Representations, and Revisions*, edited by Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff in the *English Historical Review* 120, no. 485 (February 2005): 175-7, at 175.

¹¹ See, generally, David Simpson, “Literary Criticism and the Return to ‘History,’” *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1988): 721-47; and, with regard to Victorian Studies, see John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten, “Introduction: Publishing History as Hypertext,” in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, edited by Jordan and Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-18, esp. 1, where the editors endorse Simpson’s plea.

¹² John Sutherland, “Publishing History: A Hole at the Centre of Literary Sociology,” *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1988): 574-89, at 576.

¹³ Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?” *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 65-83, at 67.

¹⁴ As acknowledged by Martin Hewitt in 2001 as he ended his term as editor for another academic journal founded on the same ostensibly interdisciplinary ideals as *Victorian Studies*. See Martin Hewitt, “Victorian Studies: Problems and Prospects?” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 137-61, esp. 146. See also, James Vernon, “Historians and the Victorians Studies Question: Response,” *Victorian Studies* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 272-9, at 272. Noting that all agree that “history and literature were the founding ‘interdisciplinary dyad’ of Victorian studies,” then “Why,” asked Vernon in 2005, “are historians so overwhelmingly outnumbered at NAVSA [North American Victorian Studies Association] conferences? Why, indeed, have they become an endangered species in the pages of Victorian Studies, at least outside of the book review section?” For a thoughtful reflection on the challenges posed by this imbalance, see James Eli Adams, “The Function of Journals at the Present Time,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 257-66.

preoccupation for literary criticism and resist falling victim to “positivist historicism.”¹⁵ There is nothing inherently *wrong* with such a goal, though it is certainly an odd ambition for a field that is supposedly meant to be interdisciplinary. Moreover, while reading the V21 Manifesto’s complaints of “bland antiquarianism” and “an endless accumulation of mere information,” one begins to suspect that their hostility is not to the strawman of “positivist historicism,” but *any* history that does not fall under the umbrella of postmodern theory. Such suspicions give way to reality when the historian, Martin Hewitt,¹⁶ let it be known that his attempt to carry on an interdisciplinary discussion with the V21 Collective (by way of offering an “alternative” manifesto) was rebuffed precisely because “it was by an historian.”¹⁷

For much of the period under review, the division between politics and literature was nowhere near as distinct as today’s readers would likely presume. Scholars still seem unwilling to accept this, however. In her 2016 contribution to *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Literary Culture*, Josephine Guy pounces on John Morley’s 1887 declaration in a speech to the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching that “[n]othing can be more unlike in aim, in ideals, in method, and in matter, than are literature and politics” as reflective of a general Victorian acceptance that the two operated in separate spheres.¹⁸ In fact, as will be seen in the

¹⁵ V21: Victorian Studies for the 21st Century, “Manifesto of the V21 Collective,” March 2015. <http://v21collective.org/manifesto-of-the-v21-collective-ten-theses/>.

¹⁶ Hewitt is the former editor of the *Journal of Victorian Culture* (see note 23, above). In addition to numerous scholarly articles, he is the author of *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain* (2013) and editor of noteworthy essay collections such as *An Age of Equipoise?* (2000) and *The Victorian World* (2012).

¹⁷ See Martin Hewitt’s blog, *Victorian Manchester and More* (<https://profmartinhewitt.com/>), especially the posts “V21 Manifesto: Ten Alternative Theses” (March 26, 2015) and “Victorian Studies: Some Historical and Historiographical Ruminations” (March 29, 2015). For another critical response to the V21 Manifesto, see Peter K. Andersson, “How Civilized Were the Victorians?” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 20, no. 4 (December 2015): 439-52, esp. 444.

¹⁸ Josephine M. Guy, “Politics and the Literary,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Literary Culture*, edited by Juliet John (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 65-82, at 65. For the quote within the full context of Morley’s speech, see John Morley, *On the Study of Literature: The Annual Address to the Students of the London*

concluding chapter of this dissertation, Morley's own career proves that nothing could be further from the truth in the Victorian context. Guy's usage of the quote mistakes Morley's intention by opportunistically taking it at face value. Most likely, it was merely an attempt at humor (as the opening lines of many speeches are), setting up the punchline that directly succeeds the remark: "I have, however, determined to do the best that I can." Even if Guy is correct to take Morley's comment as sincere, it was a relatively new development in Morley's mind, arising only after he left the realm of letters to pursue a life in politics earlier in the decade.

Of course, political historians are hardly blameless for allowing the interaction between Victorian politics and Victorian periodicals to be so underappreciated. In an essay published in 2000, William Thomas underscored the role historians of politics and government have played in what he describes "an academic division of labor." Because these historians "already enjoy an unmanageably large range of sources," Thomas suggests that his colleagues have deemed it "quite reasonable to leave the conduct and influence of higher journalism to students of literature." After all, he continues, "If you can study in detail the motives of men in power, why bother with those who, for all their eloquence and skill, can only comment after policy has been determined?" The answer is that high politics and higher journalism were so thoroughly entwined in nineteenth century Britain, as Thomas vividly points out:

Politicians and men of letters mingled in the same clubs, the same salons, and the same country house parties. The reading public was small, the manipulation of opinion was still rudimentary, and a naive faith in the power of argument, and even in the effect of individual example, was widespread. Political office and its responsibilities were shouldered, broadly speaking, by the same class that read and wrote the reviews, and the 'classic gladiatorship' which marked its parliamentary eloquence had its counterpart in a literary convention

Society for the Extension of University Teaching, Delivered at the Mansion House, February 26, 1887. London: Macmillan, 1887), 2-3.

that reviewers were custodians of a classical canon of literary taste who wrote with a patrician disdain for the hacks of Grub Street.¹⁹

For the purposes of this dissertation, the scholarly drift away from political, biographical, and historical explanations has left a void which we hope to remedy here. In particular, it more fully describes a transformation in Victorian periodical literature that has heretofore been either vaguely hinted at or recognized only within the framework of literary criticism, ignoring the crucial role of politics. An example of the former may be found in John Gross' excellent 1969 study, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*. At one point Gross notes a shift in the style of Victorian periodical writing:

Most Early Victorian criticism was heavily didactic in tone, uncompromisingly moralistic, political, or religious in standpoint. By the end of the 1870s, however, a distinct change could be felt in the atmosphere. The winds of doctrine were dying down, the lay sermon was giving way to the causerie, the emphasis had shifted to appreciation.²⁰

Thus, Gross dates a shift around the end of the 1870s, but the precise causes (be they intellectual or more broadly historical) are left uninvestigated. Isobel Armstrong's *Victorian Scrutinies* (1972) is similarly vague as to the explanation for "changing emphases of criticism" which she locates in the 1860s.²¹ More recently, Neil Berry has published a highly readable book titled *Articles of Faith: The Story of British Intellectual Journalism*.²² Though Berry's subtitle suggests his work is an attempt to offer something like a comprehensive overview, it is actually a series of

¹⁹ William Thomas, "Religion and Politics in the 'Quarterly Review,' 1809-1853," in *History, Religion, and Culture: British Intellectual History, 1750-1950*, edited by Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 136-55, at 136.

²⁰ John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: English Literary Life Since 1800*, [1969], 2nd edn. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 145. All subsequent references to Gross's book refer to this edition.

²¹ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies: Reviews of Poetry, 1830-1870* (London: Athlone, 1972), 1.

²² Neil Berry, *Articles of Faith: The Story of British Intellectual Journalism*, 2nd edn. (London: Waywiser Press, 2008).

attractive pen portraits of British periodical editors over the past two centuries. More important for our purposes here, however, is that Berry also implies that a shift occurred sometime in the last third of the nineteenth century without any further explanation. For instance, *Articles of Faith* opens with three chapters on the Francis Jeffrey, whose editorship of the *Edinburgh Review* (1802-29) is a starting point that few would think to question. After Jeffrey, though, Berry turns directly to John Morley, editor the *Fortnightly Review* from 1866 to 1882—thus skipping right over critical years of transformation in the way Victorian periodicals went about their business.

Up to this point, there have only been two attempts to offer a detailed explanation of this transformation in Victorian periodical writing, the first being John Woolford's 1982 essay, "Periodicals and the Practice of Literary Criticism, 1855-64."²³ As we shall see, Woolford's periodization is somewhat similar to the one adopted in this dissertation. But Woolford's examination is limited exclusively to the criticism of poetry, as is Joanne Shattock's 2002 essay that posits that "the changes in reviewing came much later." The political dimension remains neglected, a fact Shattock acknowledges when she states that "there may be different conclusions to emerge from a reading of other critical discourses, [such as] the criticism of the novel...or forms of non-fictional prose."²⁴

Focused on the non-fiction prose of such figures as Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Walter Bagehot, Matthew Arnold, and John Morley, there is no denying that the key

²³ John Woolford, "Periodicals and the Practice of Literary Criticism, 1855-64," in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, edited by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 109-42.

²⁴ Joanne Shattock, "Reviewing Generations: Professionalism and the Mid-Victorian Reviewer," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 384-400, at 387.

figures under scrutiny here are central figures in the Victorian canon of literature, and most already have a substantial body of scholarly studies devoted to them. It would be unwise to presume, however, that this should exclude such figures from continued revision and contextualization. Few, if any, have ever quibbled with at least one of Lytton Strachey's observations of the Victorians: "The history of the Victorian Age will never be written: we know too much about it."²⁵ These being the opening lines of that infamous work of historiographical destruction, *Eminent Victorians*, many Victorianists of a certain generation likely thought it was all downhill from there.²⁶ Regardless, the thrust of Strachey's initial suggestion remains as true as when it first took the English literary world by storm.

Further justification for continued attention to "eminent Victorians" like Carlyle, Macaulay, or Arnold appears in light of suggestive evidence that the political and journalistic context of these individuals remain relatively underexplored. For instance, as one Arnold scholar argued in 2013, once Matthew Arnold's essays are "read as a political undertaking, [he] may be seen afresh."²⁷ Stefan Collini stated as much twenty years earlier, though apparently with few

²⁵ Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians: Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, General Gordon* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1918), vii. For a more recent view that suggests the "major" Victorian authors who comprise the canon should continue to be studied, so as to be part of Victorian Studies's evolution as a field, Joanne Shattock, "Where Next in Victorian Literary Studies? – Revising the Canon, Extending Cultural Boundaries, and the Challenge of Interdisciplinarity," *Literature Compass* 4, no. 4 (July 2007): 1280-91.

²⁶ See, for example, Richard D. Altick, "Eminent Victorianism: What Lytton Strachey Hath Wrought," *American Scholar* 64, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 81-9. Altick was a member of the advisory board that guided the publication of the first issues of *Victorian Studies*. His groundbreaking study, *The English Common Reader* (1957) was advertised in the very first number of that journal. See *Victorian Studies* 1, no. 1 (September 1957): 108. A more sympathetic reading of Strachey that doubles as an exemplar of the scholarly detachment of *Victorian Studies* from very early on is found in John Clive, "More or Less Eminent Victorians: Some Trends in Recent Victorian Biography," *Victorian Studies* 2, no. 1 (September 1958): 4-28. Especially noteworthy is Clive's postulation that "the pendulum [may] perhaps [be] beginning to swing too far the other way" (8).

²⁷ Kate Campbell, "Culture, Politics and Arnold Revisited: The Government Inspector, Disinterestedness, and 'The Function of Criticism,'" *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18, no. 2 (June 2013): 230-45, at 245. See also, her "Matthew Arnold and Publicity: A Modern Critic as Journalist," in *Journalism, Literature, and Modernity: From Hazlitt to Modernism*, edited by Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 91-120; and Campbell,

heeding his advice until recently.²⁸ To be sure, Arnold's famous 1864 essay on "The Function of Criticism" is usually treated as a seminal contribution to "literary criticism,"²⁹ and the essay itself does open with a consideration of British Romantic literature. Still, the majority of its pages are, in fact, a cogent critique of the *political* functions of British periodical writing as it stood in the mid-1860s. Moreover, as Collini recalls, the 1869 first edition of *Culture and Anarchy* (whose piecemeal composition grew out of a series of essays published in *Cornhill Magazine* between July 1867 and August 1868) was tellingly subtitled "An Essay in Political and Social Criticism."³⁰ This is crucial, for it was an *essay* which emerged in a very specific *political* and *social* context.³¹ Arnold recognized the Victorians were nothing if not a politically-minded people. "Our nation," he once told an audience at Eton, "is above all things a political nation," so much so that its people were even "apt to make too much of politics."³² Generally speaking (and for whatever reasons), the exact opposite may now be said of the field of Victorian Studies—far too little has been said of politics in recent decades. Thus, the political context driving the works of Arnold, Carlyle³³ and many other well-known figures discussed in this dissertation still in

"W.E. Gladstone, W.T. Stead, Matthew Arnold, and a New Journalism: Cultural Politics in the 1880s," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 20-4.

²⁸ Stefan Collini, "Introduction," in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, by Matthew Arnold, edited by Collini, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), ix-xxvi, esp. xv.

²⁹ See especially Woolford's insightful "Periodicals and the Practice of Literary Criticism, 1855-64."

³⁰ Collini, "Introduction," in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ix. See Matthew Arnold. *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (London: Smith, Elder, 1869).

³¹ For a representative failure to appreciate that politics took precedence for Arnold as well as Carlyle, see Michael Wolff, "The Uses of Context: Aspects of the 1860's," *Victorian Studies* 9, Supplement (September 1965): 47-63, at 47, where *Culture and Anarchy* and *Shooting Niagara* are both termed a "literary works." See also Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), esp. page 26, where Baldick discerns three "recognizable phases" of Arnold's prose, none of which are deemed "political."

³² Matthew Arnold, "A Speech at Eton," *Cornhill Magazine* 39, no. 233 (May 1879): 538-49, at 548.

³³ See, for example, Paul E. Kerry and Maylu Hill, "Introduction," in *Thomas Carlyle Resartus: Reappraising Carlyle's Contribution to the Philosophy of History, Political Theory, and Cultural Criticism*, edited by Kerry and Hill (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 13-29, at 15: "More work needs to be done in addressing [Carlyle's] political ideas." See also, Tom Toremans, "'One Step From Politics': 'Sartor

many ways calls out for scholarly attention. Presenting a representative sampling of how such writers dealt with the question of effective communication (especially as it related to writing for the periodical press), this study emphasizes the enormous extent to which political anxieties interacted with anxieties of style.

One last bit of historiographical housekeeping has to do with the geographical scope of Victorian anxieties examined below. As will become clear throughout, these anxieties stemmed mainly from the looming prospect of democracy in Britain.³⁴ On occasion, affairs on the European continent (particularly those in France and Germany) would infringe upon the peace of mind back in Britain. Only rarely does the British Empire appear as a main source of anxiety, at least insofar as the years covered in this dissertation are concerned. With a chronological focus on the period from the mid-to-late-1820s (when both Carlyle and Macaulay embarked on careers in higher journalism) through the early-1880s (when John Morley left journalism to begin a new career in politics), this dissertation treads onto some rather contentious historiographical ground, namely the extent to which the Victorian domestic scene was influenced by the affairs of Britain's vast colonial possessions. Not only is this a topic which has featured rather prominently in recent British imperial historiography, one may very well, in fact, place its origins at the start of British imperial history as a defined academic field worthy of historical inquiry. Thanks to his landmark 1883 book, *The Expansion of England*, John Robert Seeley is now recognized as "the founder of [British] imperial history."³⁵ In its pages, Seeley pointed out that, "There is

Resartus' and Aesthetic Ideology," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 23-41, at 23, where Toremans opens by observing that "For all the critical and theoretical attention directed at its complex structure and rhetoric, *Sartor Resartus* has rarely been read as a political work."

³⁴ For the various democratic reform acts and their respective impact on the spread of the franchise, see note 7 above.

³⁵ Ronald Hyam, "Introduction: Perspectives, Policies, and People," in *Understanding the British Empire*, by Hyam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-68, at 48. For more on Seeley's influence on the field,

something very characteristic in the indifference which we show towards this mighty phenomenon of the diffusion of our race and the expansion of our state. We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind.”³⁶ It was not the first time that Britons had been charged with imperial absent-mindedness.

No less a figure than Macaulay had opened with his famous 1840 essay on “Clive” with the lament that “while the history of the Spanish empire in America is familiarly known to all the nations of Europe, the great actions of our countrymen in the East should, even among ourselves, excite little interest.”³⁷ In 1866, in one of his first essays for the *Fortnightly Review*, John Morley repeated this admonishment, declaring, “It is no cynical exaggeration to say that the amount of active political sympathy in England with the affairs of her colonies, and of the great Indian Empire, is, comparatively speaking, very small.”³⁸ Indeed, years later, while reviewing *The Expansion of England* for *Macmillan’s Magazine*, Morley took exception to Seeley’s claims of novelty, questioning his “assumption that the century which the most popular writer of the day [Macaulay] has treated in his most glowing, vivid, picturesque, and varied style, is regarded by the majority of us as destitute of interest, as containing neither memorable men nor memorable affairs, and as overspread with an ignoble pall of all that is flat, stagnant, and common.”³⁹ All of this is true. But timing often has as much say over an author’s influence as the power of his or

see Peter Burroughs, “John Robert Seeley and British Imperial History,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 1, no. 2 (January 1973): 191-211; and J.G. Greenlee, “‘A Succession of Seeleys’: The ‘Old School’ Re-Examined,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 4, no. 3 (May 1976): 266-82.

³⁶ J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 8.

³⁷ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Sir John Malcolm’s ‘Life of Lord Clive,’” *Edinburgh Review* 70, no. 142 (January 1840): 295-362, at 295.

³⁸ John Morley, “England and the Annexation of Mysore,” *Fortnightly Review*, 6, no. 33 (September 15, 1866): 257-71, at 258.

³⁹ John Morley, “The Expansion of England,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 49, no. 292 (February 1884): 241-58, at 243.

her pen or the intrinsic merit of his or her ideas. As Walter Bagehot once quoted Charles James Fox saying of Burke: “Burke is a wise man; but he is wise too soon.” The point being that public opinion, as the realm of the “average man,” will only accept novelty and originality insofar as it intersects with their own perceived interests and what was already germinating in their collective mind. They were, as Bagehot said, waiting for some figure of “uncommon abilities” to express in lucid form those “common opinions.”⁴⁰

It is, therefore, worth recalling that Macaulay, for all his “middlebrow” popularity, was writing on Clive just as the Chartists were gaining steam and the “Condition of England Question” was taking root in the thoughts of the “average man.” Macaulay’s essays enjoyed widespread popularity, to be sure. And, no doubt, he laid a foundation of basic historical background knowledge from which Seeley later took advantage. But a complacent mindset regarding British India seemed justifiable from 1840, when the Sepoys were still nearly a full generation away from reminding domestic Britain that the Crown Jewel was not quite as secure as they presumed it to be. As for Morley, his call for attention to India suffered from its own lack of prospects at causing a real shift in public opinion, not least of which were his own varied and ever-changing interests. As far as timing goes, the essay had appeared in September 1866, only a couple of months after Prussia’s shockingly easy defeat of the Austrians. Nonetheless, Koniggratz (or Sadowa, as Victorians commonly referred to it) proved far less impactful to Britain’s sense of its global standing than it, perhaps, should have been in hindsight. The truly revolutionary shock was to occur after Prussia’s astonishingly easy defeat of France just a few

⁴⁰ [Walter Bagehot], “The Character of Sir Robert Peel,” *National Review* 3, no. 5 (July 1856): 146-74, at 147.

years later, creating in the process a new Great Power in the united German Reich and a Third Republic in France less than a century after the Great Terror wrought by the Guillotine.⁴¹

By the time Seeley was delivering the lectures which became *The Expansion of England*, all prior notions of certainty regarding Britain's international preeminence were being questioned. At home, however, a generation of various reforms had made it possible for the "Condition of England Question" to be superseded by a new question: the "Condition of Empire Question." Seeley's siren call for his countrymen to turn their attention to their imperial possessions in the East could scarcely have met a more receptive audience, a point Morley later acknowledged in his memoirs by labeling *The Expansion of England* "one of the cardinal books of the time."⁴² Thus, it was Seeley who laid down an historiographical orthodoxy that reigned essentially unchallenged until the mid-1980s, when John M. MacKenzie's *Propaganda and Empire*⁴³ opened the door to a slew of connected monographs under the aegis of the still-ongoing "Studies In Imperialism" series, edited by MacKenzie and now well over one hundred volumes.

The achievements of what may be called "the MacKenzie school" are too vast to do any justice here. Suffice to say that its principal historiographical impact has been to completely overturn Seeley's claim about lack of imperial interest at home. In 2004, however, Bernard

⁴¹ Even Morley would look back and draw the line at Sedan, See his *Recollections*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1917), II, 365-6: "Whatever we may say of Europe between Waterloo and Sedan, in our country at least it was an epoch of hearts uplifted with hope, and brains active with sober and manly reason for the common good. Some ages are marked as sentimental, others stand conspicuous as rational. The Victorian age was happier than most in the flow of both these currents into a common stream of vigorous and effective talent. New truths were welcomed in free minds, and free minds make brave men. Old prejudices were disarmed. Fresh principles were set afloat, and supported by the right reasons. The standards of ambition rose higher and purer. Men learned to care more for one another. Sense of proportion among the claims of leading questions to the world's attention became more wisely tempered. The rational prevented the sentimental from falling into pure emotional" (my emphasis)

⁴² Morely, *Recollections*, II, 79.

⁴³ John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*, Studies in Imperialism Series (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

Porter's provocatively titled *Absent-Minded Imperialists* made a detailed rebuttal against the MacKenzie school.⁴⁴ Porter's main point was that the idea that domestic Britain was awash with imperial propaganda and sentiment has been vastly overstated, especially in light of the MacKenzie school's chronological limitations. The overwhelming focus of such studies has been on the years following 1880, when even Porter admits that a change was in the air.⁴⁵ It would be grossly inaccurate to say that the early-to-mid Victorians simply ignored the Empire, but it is noteworthy that the source of phenomena inspiring "Condition of England" treatises was overwhelmingly domestic (as the genre's name suggests). Moreover, if one takes the topics which occupied the organs of higher journalism as a reasonable gage of the interests of the intellectual and governing elites,⁴⁶ it is difficult not to conclude that imperial issues remained a peripheral concern at least until the late 1870s. On this point, the coverage of the 1857-58 Sepoy Mutiny is noteworthy. From its outbreak in June 1857 through the end of 1858, the *Edinburgh Review* devoted a mere four articles to Indian affairs; the three which appeared in 1858 were the only essays devoted to empire in that year.⁴⁷ In a bibliography of *The British Empire in the Victorian Press, 1832-1867*, the compiler, E.M. Palmegiano, attributes to the *Edinburgh Review*

⁴⁴ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). As far as Porter's detail and abundance of sources he has examined, see the one-hundred eight pages of endnotes, 322-429.

⁴⁵ See their 2008 debate, beginning with Bernard Porter, "Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 1 (March 2008): 101-17; and then John M. MacKenzie's response, "'Comfort' and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 4 (December 2008): 659-68. For an expert opinion from a third party, it is noteworthy that Ronald Hyam aligns himself with Porter, "Introduction: Perspectives, Policies, and People," 57n55. On a personal note, I did not begin to agree with Porter's stance until first-hand experience with the contents of the major organs of Victorian opinion (the quarterly and monthly reviews) revealed that, at least in the case of the intellectual and governing elite, the anxieties of democracy were a tremendous preoccupation before, at least, the 1870s.

⁴⁶ Basil Willey, "Introduction," *Twentieth Century* 151, no. 901, special issue: [The 'Nineteenth Century,' 1877-1901] (March 1952): 194-204, at 195.

⁴⁷ [J.W. Kaye], "India," *Edinburgh Review* (October 1857); [Henry Reeve], "Prospects of the Indian Empire" (January 1858); [Kaye], "The Conquest of Oude" (April 1858); [George Cornwall Lewis], "The Second Derby Ministry" (April 1858).

126 articles on imperial topics in these three and a half decades—that’s 3.5 a year, or less than one per quarterly issue. Palmegiano attributes 114 (roughly 3 a year) to the quarterly *Westminster*. In the *Quarterly Review* 96 such essays (a little more than 2.5 a year) appeared between 1832 and 1867. That same period, by comparison, saw 191 empire-themed essays in the monthly, *Fraser’s* (about 5 per year, spread over 12 monthly issues).⁴⁸ In short, the evidence seems to suggest that Porter’s “absent-minded” thesis should not be dismissed out of hand.

III. Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 1 attempts to familiarize readers with the milieu of Victorian periodicals and their general importance as a source for nineteenth century Britain. In addition to providing historical background on the origins and development of Victorian higher journalism, this chapter highlights the novelty of the system whose origins are universally traced to the *Edinburgh Review’s* 1802 foundation. A supplemental table of information (years of operation, prices, circulation figures, and other notable features) for some of the most prominent periodicals of the era may be found at the end of this chapter. In Chapters 2 and 3, we turn to the careers of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Babington Macaulay, paying special attention to their contributions for the *Edinburgh Review* and a comparison of the dramatically different political and stylistic

⁴⁸ For these attributions, see E.M. Palmegiano, *The British Empire in the Victorian Press, 1832-1867: A Bibliography*, Themes in European Expansion: Exploration, Colonization, and the Impact of Empire Series (New York: Garland, 1987), 127-34 (for the *Edinburgh*), 207-13 (the *Westminster*), 190-95 (the *Quarterly*), and 137-47 (*Fraser’s*). For a rare case study dealing with the *Edinburgh’s* international content prior to the timeframe of Palmegiano’s noted here, see William Christie, “‘Prejudice against Prejudices’: China and the Limits of Whig Liberalism,” *European Romantic Review* 24, no. 5 (2013): 509-29. Though we should also note that Palmegiano’s chronology only partly includes the forty year career of John Barrow (1764-1849), who, as J.M.R. Cameron has pointed out, contributed over two hundred essays for the *Quarterly Review*, many of them dealing with Britain’s international imperial role. See J.M.R. Cameron, “John Barrow, the ‘Quarterly’s Imperial Reviewer,’” in *Conservatism and the “Quarterly Review”: A Critical Analysis*, edited by Jonathan Cutmore (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), 133-49. For a study of Barrow’s particular interest in the Arctic, especially in regards to his advocating the search for a Northwest Passage, see Kim Wheatley, “The Arctic in the ‘Quarterly Review,’” *European Romantic Review* 20, no. 4 (October 2009): 465-90.

qualities of their respective writings. By embedding the “Condition of England Question” within the minds of his contemporaries, Carlyle became the quintessential Victorian sage-writer. From the appearance of his 1829 *Edinburgh Review* essay, “Signs of the Times,” through the 1840s, Carlyle’s works were a bullhorn, alerting Victorians to the troubling sense that Britain’s international and industrial gains were not without certain costs. Ominously, he warned that “if something be not done, something will do itself one day, and in a fashion that will please nobody.”⁴⁹ However grateful his contemporaries were for waking the Victorians from their complacent slumber, Carlyle’s reputation eventually began to suffer. While his racist rants about the “Nigger Question” and endorsement of authoritarian strongmen have gained much attention from scholars, this dissertation highlights other factors that played a more immediate role in Carlyle’s decline. First, there was his purposefully opaque prose style—a reflection of his early desire to “Germanize the public,”⁵⁰ stubbornly refusing to conform to Francis Jeffrey’s advice to “write *to* your countrymen *and* for them.”⁵¹ The second source of the decline of Carlyle’s reputation was his rejection of any “practical” answer to the “Condition of England Question” he had so forcefully put before his nation. Labeling any and all political nostrums as mere “Morrison’s Pills,” Carlyle beat an unwelcome path during an era in which various political reforms were employed as solutions to all societal ills, including slavery, child labor, Catholic emancipation, and suffrage. Of the two deficiencies, it was the stylistic failings that Carlyle’s

⁴⁹ Thomas Carlyle, “Condition-of-England Question,” chap. 1 in *Chartism*, by Carlyle (London: James Fraser, 1840), 1-8, at 1.

⁵⁰ In chronological order: [Thomas Carlyle], “Jean Paul F. Richter” (June 1827); “State of German Literature” (October 1827); “Burns” (December 1828); and “Taylor’s ‘Historic Survey of German Poetry,’” (March 1831). The first two essays mark the commencement of Carlyle’s efforts towards “Germanizing the public.” See Thomas Carlyle to John A. Carlyle, June 4, 1827, in *The Carlyle Letters Online* [henceforth *CLO*], edited by Brent E. Kinser (Duke University Press, 2007), <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

⁵¹ Francis Jeffrey to Thomas Carlyle, September 23, 1828, in *The Letters of Francis Jeffrey to Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, edited by William Christie, Pickering Masters Series (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), 21-2, at 22 (emphasis in original).

Victorian critics found most unforgiving. He had, after all, provided a great service in calling attention to the “Condition of England Question.” But for writing in a manner that was deemed inaccessible to the middle class reading public (the chief audience of Victorian periodicals), Carlyle was relegated to the status of “artist” or “poet,” ignoring the overtly political purpose of his works. For Carlyle, as one historian has surmised, this “would have been for him the worst of all imaginable fates.”⁵²

The trajectory of Thomas Babington Macaulay’s reputation mirrored that of Carlyle’s. Having become famous with his 1825 *Edinburgh Review* essay on “Milton,” the engaging clarity of Macaulay’s style was the backbone of his esteem and a model for all Victorian prose writers, especially those who made a living through publishing in the Victorian periodical press. Macaulay’s political gleanings, on the other hand, left much to be desired for those still searching for definitive answers to Carlyle’s “Condition of England Question.” As the preeminent advocate of the view that the history of England was “emphatically the history of progress,”⁵³ Macaulay’s politics embodied a sort of complacency of which Carlyle could never be charged. As attested by the popularity of his collected *Essays* and *History of England*, Macaulay was a master of reaching an increasingly busy and increasingly distracted audience who expected both information and entertainment from their literature. The Whiggish optimism of his message, however, was unhelpful in the eyes of a succeeding generation of critics, one of whom dismissed Macaulay as “the great apostle of the Philistines.”⁵⁴ Yes, he was a master of

⁵² George Levine, “The Use and Abuse of Carlylese,” in *The Art of Victorian Prose*, edited by Levine and William A. Madden (New York: Oxford, 1968), 101-26, at 101.

⁵³ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Sir James Mackintosh’s ‘History of the Revolution,’” *Edinburgh Review* 41, no. 124 (July 1835): 265-322, at 287.

⁵⁴ Matthew Arnold, “Joubert: Or, A French Coleridge,” *National Review* 18, no. 35 (January 1864): 168-90, at 190.

writing in that middle class style so valued in the periodicals of higher journalism. But too often he told his readers what they *wanted* to hear, not what they *needed* to hear. The goal for succeeding generations was to combine the political urgency of Carlyle with the stylistic clarity of Macaulay. We may call this “The Goldilocks Principle” of Victorian periodical writing, a widespread endeavor to achieve a blend Carlyle’s political substance and Macaulay’s intellectual entertainment that was “just right”—politically astute but stylistically engaging and uncomplicated; accessible to the non-specialist general reader but not to the point of being marred by oversimplifications.

Unsurprisingly however, both ingredients of the “Goldilocks” recipe presented challenges: the former, in terms of presenting practical political solutions to the so-called Condition-of-England-Question—and later in the century, what we may call the Condition-of-Empire-Question—that could withstand public scrutiny; the latter, in regards to the fact that an essayist’s printed wings were as likely to melt as they were to glide when aspiring to Macaulay’s lofty style—usually by forgetting that, while Macaulay’s prose often took on a shade of purple, this was a deliberate part of his strategy as a periodical writer.⁵⁵ He never allowed it to thwart his main goal of being perfectly clear in everything he wished to say to his readers.⁵⁶ “The first rule

⁵⁵ In response some cuts recommended by Napier for the October 1829 *Edinburgh*, Macaulay respectfully laments to the editor that the omitted passages were “the most pointed and ornamental sentences” of the essay. For “high and grave works,” he explained, this would be understandable. Periodical literature, on the other hand, did not meet such lofty standards in Macaulay’s opinion. To have any impact at all, periodical works employ prose as if they were bait, hoping to lure a fish. For “unless they strike at the first reading,” he reasoned, they “are not likely to strike at all.” Under such circumstances, the writer should, in Macaulay’s view, “be allowed to be sometimes even viciously florid.” Thomas Babington Macaulay to Macvey Napier, January 25, 1830, in *Selection From the Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier* [henceforth *CMN*], edited by his son, Macvey Napier (d. 1893) (London: Macmillan, 1879), 76-77. As Macaulay told Napier in a letter years later, “A bold, dashing, scene-painting manner, is that which always succeeds best in periodical writing.” Macaulay to Napier, July 20, 1838, in *CMN*, 262.

⁵⁶ Macaulay, journal entry dated January 18, 1850, in *JTBM*, II, 197-8. This passage wonderfully reveals not only Macaulay’s own opinion on the question of style and substance in his own writing, but also one side of the very conscious rivalry that that existed between Macaulay and Carlyle, even though they never duelled in print. The passage is as follows: “How little the all-important art of making meaning *pellucid* is studied now! Hardly any popular author except myself thinks of it. Many seem to aim at being obscure. Indeed, they may be right in one

of all writing,” Macaulay declared, “that rule to which every other rule is subordinate, is that the words used by the writer shall be such as most fully and precisely convey his meaning to the great body of his readers. All considerations about the purity and dignity of style ought to bend to this consideration.”⁵⁷

Ultimately, it is not unfair to say that most efforts to replicate the respective strengths of Victorian non-fiction prose’s two most peerless writers—all while attempting to avoid their corresponding weaknesses—proved futile.⁵⁸ This should surprise no one, however. After all, achieving a consensus on the perfect intermingling of political substance, stylistic clarity, and entertainment is a fool’s errand when one really considers it, not entirely unlike searching for the Holy Grail or the Fountain of Youth. In short, there is no such thing as the “perfect” periodical essay—although, in the Victorian context, one can scarcely expect higher praise than that which influential weekly, the *Spectator*, lavished on Matthew Arnold for his 1880 essay on “Copyright”⁵⁹: “Mr. Matthew Arnold has achieved a great feat in the *Fortnightly*. He has made an article on copyright in books exceedingly entertaining. We do not agree with him, but we

sense. *Too many readers give credit for profundity to whatever is obscure, and will call what is perspicuous shallow.* But Corraggio— and think of A.D. 2850. *Where will your Carlyles and Emersons be then?* But Herodotus will still be read with delight. We must do our best to be read too” (my emphases). In his *Autobiography*, the novelist (and noted critic of Carlyle’s style), Anthony Trollope, echoes Macaulay’s sentiment, saying: “Any writer who has read even a little will know what is meant by the word intelligible...What Macaulay says should be remembered by all writers: ‘How little the all-important art of making meaning pellucid is studied now! Hardly any popular author except myself thinks of it.’” Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), 211.

⁵⁷ Thomas Babington Macaulay to Macvey Napier, April 18, 1842, in *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay* [henceforth *LTBM*], edited by Thomas Pinney, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974-81), IV, 28.

⁵⁸ See [Leslie Stephen], “Macaulay,” *Cornhill Magazine* 33, no. 197 (May 1876): 563-81, at 576-7: “It is significant again that imitations of Macaulay are almost as offensive as imitations of Carlyle. Every great writer has his parasites. Macaulay’s false glitter and jingle, his frequent flippancy and superficiality of thought are more easily caught than his virtues; but so are all faults. Would-be followers of Mr. Carlyle catch the strained gestures, without the rapture of his inspiration.”

⁵⁹ Anon., “Some of the Magazines,” *Spectator* 53, no. 2697 (March 6, 1880): 309-10, at 309. For the essay, see Matthew Arnold, “Copyright,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 27, no. 159 (March 1880): 319-34.

should be very sorry to excise any one paragraph of his article.”⁶⁰ That Arnold came so close achieving the ideal mix of style and substance was not just a testament to his abilities as an essayist, but it was also the result of a career-long conscious effort to mix the substance of Carlyle with the stylistic lucidity of Macaulay without falling into their perceived weaknesses (Carlyle for style; Macaulay for ideas). When he reprinted his August 1864 essay, “The Literary Influence of Academies,” in his *Essays in Criticism* (1865), Arnold added a footnote that makes the positive and negative examples of the two giants of the previous generation abundantly clear. Explaining the “note of provinciality” he detected in British intellectual life in general, Arnold blames the state of higher journalism as it then stood—a field in which Carlyle and Macaulay had become the twin pillars against which all others were measured. The problem, as Arnold saw it, was that the flaws of Carlyle’s and Macaulay’s journalistic prose were allowed to flourish as lesser beings tried to mimic their strengths. The “atmosphere” Arnold describes “tells unfavorably...either upon style or else upon ideas; tends to make even a man of great ability either a Mr. Carlyle or else a Lord Macaulay.”⁶¹ It was no accident that Arnold structured the order of the criticisms in this sentence in such a way that equates Carlyle’s weakness with style and Macaulay’s with ideas.⁶²

⁶⁰ Anon., “Some of the Magazines,” *Spectator* 53, no. 2697 (March 6, 1880): 309-10, at 309..

⁶¹ See Matthew Arnold, “The Literary Influence of Academies,” reprinted in his *Essays in Criticism* (London: Macmillan, 1865), 42-78, at 63n.

⁶² That Arnold was ultimately to achieve some success in beating against the current in his assessment of Carlyle and Macaulay is shown in Andrew Lang’s assessment of Arnold’s career seventeen years after his reproachful footnote. “This [Arnold’s claim] was flat blasphemy fifteen years ago; but now there are but few readers but will acknowledge that the pleasure and instruction they derive from Mr. Carlyle’s and Lord Macaulay’s works are marred by their want of repose, by their obtrusion of eccentricities and personal peculiarities of style.” Andrew Lang, “Matthew Arnold,” *Century Magazine* 23, no. 6 (April 1882): 849-864, at 860. [Note: Lang apparently did not have Arnold’s grasp of order in sentences, making it seem in his rendering as if the deficiencies of Carlyle and Macaulay were reversed.]

Chapter 4 turns Arnold and Walter Bagehot, who together led the mid-Victorian generation of higher journalism which came to the fore in the 1850s and 1860s. Bagehot and Arnold shared an appreciation for higher journalism's educative function, especially among the middle class multitudes who were, after all, the principle audience of such periodicals and the principal beneficiaries of the expansion of the franchise. As Bagehot and Arnold had come to see it, the fate of the nation was intimately bound with the ability of the middle class to reform itself. In different ways, modern studies of both Bagehot and Arnold have tended to ignore certain aspects of their role as crucial players in the Victorian tradition of discussion. For Bagehot, the constitutional insights from his classic work, *The English Constitution* (first serialized in the *Fortnightly Review*), has dominated modern scholarly interest. Arnold, on the other hand, has suffered a similar fate to Carlyle—the enmeshing of himself in the politics of his day taking a backseat to his place in the exclusive domain of literature. In this chapter, we underscore the careers of Bagehot and Arnold as practitioners of higher journalism to demonstrate just how intimately entwined politics and literary style were for both. Together, they represent a critical period of transition for Victorian periodicals of higher journalism, when the prestige of the old quarterly reviews was on the wane and the characteristic features of the monthly periodicals that would eventually supplant them were in their embryonic stage.

Chapter 5 focuses on the years 1867 to 1882, when John Morley edited the *Fortnightly Review*. Despite the title serving as an awkward reminder of its initial bi-monthly publication, the *Fortnightly* (which became a monthly about a year after its 1865 founding) was the first of the serious-minded monthly reviews that, in the last third of the century, succeeded the quarterly periodical's anonymous, essay-like reviews as the dominant format in Victorian higher journalism. In addition to tying the *Fortnightly* to the changes in tone, style, and substance that

Bagehot and Arnold were calling for in regards to Victorian higher journalism (both wrote for the *Fortnightly*), we will also bring Morley's illustrious career as editor and chief contributor under the microscope and examine it in parallel with that of James Knowles. As founder, editor, and sole proprietor of the *Nineteenth Century*, Knowles mastered the art of "big-name hunting" that arose as anonymous contributions were superseded by the practice of signature. Through a comparison of Morley and Knowles, we find two very different paths to editorial distinction in the century's final decades. From there, we return our gaze to Morley on an individual basis. In Morley, we examine the nature of one of the most vexing of quandaries for the Victorian higher journalist. He consistently agonized over the question of effective communication, especially when it came to driving meaningful change in the face of political questions. As we shall see, Morley's career represents the struggle many eminent higher journalists grappled with. That is, if managing change through politics was the ultimate function of higher journalism, then would it not be more effective for a man of letters to become a man of action? Ultimately deciding in favor of the latter, Morley left the *Fortnightly* in 1882 to begin a political career that lasted until 1914.⁶³ The final section of this chapter will touch upon Morley's time as Secretary of State for India between 1905 and 1910. Here, we home in on yet another instance of Victorian higher journalism's impact on ideas in transition: the shift from the Condition-of-England-Question to the Condition-of-Empire-Question. Finally, after summarizing the key points of continuity and change between the Age of the Quarterlies and the Age of the Monthlies, the Conclusion ends by underscoring some of Victorian higher journalism's reverberations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

⁶³ When Morley resigned his Cabinet position in protest of Britain's entry into the First World War.

In offering a few preliminary conclusions, it is worth pointing to the interplay of change and continuity during the period under scrutiny in the pages below. As described in the opening of the next chapter, it was the omniscience of change that most struck Victorians when thinking of their own era—hence, the popularity of the epithet which labeled theirs “an age of transition.” Most conspicuous of all were the industrial and scientific advancements which had caused both commercial and urban expansion, as well as widespread deep reflection on man’s place in the universe. However, among the intellectual community who wrote for the periodicals under review here, it was the gradual expansion of the electorate that gave most immediate pause for consideration. In 1832, 1867, and 1884, three reform acts dramatically increased the number of Britons with the right to vote. Before 1832, just half a million citizens in a nation of 24 million had the franchise. After 1884, 5.6 million of the nearly 35 million Britons could vote.⁶⁴

From the perspective of Victorian higher journalism, the expansion of the franchise provided an important source for both continuity and change: continuity in the sense that the need to engage the increasingly politically powerful masses was recognized throughout the period; change in that the sense of responsibility when it came to informing and persuading such readers became more and more urgent. Victorian higher journalism always had a didactic function, and that didactic function had both political and stylistic implications that lay at the heart of the transition from the Age of the Quarterlies to the Age of the Monthlies. While an editor in the Age of the Quarterlies, like Francis Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*, always placed great emphasis on the accessibility of his periodical to educated laymen, by the middle decades of the century, the quarterly’s rate of publication and relative length of essays was deemed ill-

⁶⁴ For the various democratic reform acts and their respective impact on the spread of the franchise, see note 7 above.

suited by a new generation of higher journalists. Led by Bagehot and Arnold, this younger cohort accepted democracy's expansion as inevitable, but not without qualification. They believed the average new voter was not likely to have been prepared for the enormous responsibility of the vote. They wondered who now had the time to read a lengthy treatise on the day's most pressing questions. And could such pressing questions stand to wait thoughtful consideration just once every four months? In answer to such internal criticisms of higher journalism's dereliction of its self-anointed duty to teach, the Age of the Quarterlies gave way to an Age of the Monthlies. In the latter period, the onus of tackling social, cultural, and political issues in an accessible style took on greater significance than had been the case of the former. Shorter essays and more timely rates of publication were the new rules of the day.

It is important to stress that these changes occurred in an evolutionary (rather than revolutionary) manner. The shift from quarterly dominance to monthly dominance was not sudden, but gradual—a pace of change in the Victorian periodicals market that rather appropriately reflects one of the Victorian era's landmark ideas: Darwinian natural selection. This is worth bearing in mind when one reads the chapters that follow; for it is not describing an extinct species of writing or journalism. Though not quite as illustrious as its Victorian heyday, higher journalism has continued to evolve beyond the more than one hundred years since this dissertation's endpoint. It remains an important voice in public discourse throughout the English-speaking world.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ See the Conclusion to this dissertation for more on higher journalism's continuing relevance.

Chapter 1

Victorian Higher Journalism: An Historical Overview

Undoubtedly in some ways the present day is not merely favorable to essay-writing but a very paradise for essayists. Our magazines and journals are full of excellent performances. But their character is radically changed. They are serious discussions of important questions, where a man puts a whole system of philosophy into a dozen pages.¹

I. An Age of Periodicals in an Age of Transition

Though it is now common knowledge that the long nineteenth century was Britain's "imperial century," this was not necessarily the feature Victorian contemporaries singled out when searching for epithets for their own time. It was John Stuart Mill who seems to have first labeled his an "age of transition,"² and the phrase soon gained traction.³ One writer in 1858 wondered by what epithet will "the remarkable period in which our own lot is cast" be labeled—no doubt voicing a question shared among many of his countrymen. What is the chief characteristic that distinguished his age "from any that have ever gone before"? What, in essence, was "the Spirit of the Age"? The answer, "which we cannot doubt that our own posterity will adopt, is, that we are living in an *age of transition*;—a period when changes, deeply and permanently affecting the whole condition of mankind, are occurring more rapidly, as well as extensively, than at any prior time in human history."⁴ This keen awareness of pervasive change is, according to Walter Houghton, "the basic and almost universal conception of the period. And it is peculiarly

¹ [Leslie Stephen], "The Essayists," *Cornhill Magazine* 44, no. 261 (September 1881): 278-97, at 291.

² John Stuart Mill, "The Spirit of the Age, I," in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, edited by John M. Robson, et al., 33 vols., [1963-91] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986 [essay orig. pub. January 9, 1831]), XXII, 227-34, at 230.

³ See Walter E. Houghton. *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 1n2.

⁴ [Henry Holland], "The Progress and Spirit of Physical Science," *Edinburgh Review* 108, no. 219 (July 1858): 71-104, at 71 (emphasis in original).

Victorian. For although all ages are ages of transition, never before had men thought of their own time as an era of change *from* the past *to* the future.”⁵

In other words, the Victorians were obsessed with the changes perceived in their own time and the implications of such changes for the British people and the nation as a whole. Such a fixation is indicative of an ironic but, nonetheless, fundamental tension in nineteenth century British society. On the one hand, developments such as industrialization, political reform, scientific advancement, and imperial expansion had made nineteenth century Britain one of the most successful states in world history, thus fostering an understandable sense of optimism and belief in “progress.” On the other hand, these same developments made nineteenth century Britons the guinea pigs for what Matthew Arnold called “this strange disease of modern life,”⁶ in which rapid, unending change became the norm and no tradition seemed immune from transformation or even oblivion. In these uncharted waters, uneasy questions were going to be raised about where this current of so-called progress was taking Britain. Would the growth of industry and urbanization overthrow the British class system? Would it lead not to political *reform*, but *revolution*? These were not the only questions to be confronted. In a tract with the revealing title *Problems of Life and Mind*, G.H. Lewes observed, “Science is penetrating everywhere, and slowly changing man's conception of the world and of man's destiny.”⁷ How would society (quite literally) adapt in the face of discoveries in the new sciences of geology and evolutionary biology? Had “progress” been a Faustian bargain?

⁵ Houghton. *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, 1 (emphasis in original).

⁶ Matthew Arnold, “The Scholar Gypsy,” in *Poems: A New Edition*, by Matthew Arnold (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853), 199-216, at 213.

⁷ G.H. Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series: The Foundations of a Creed* (London: Trubner, 1874), 1.

For other Victorians, it was the forum in which transitions were discussed that was the defining feature of the era. For Thomas Escott, it was “the enormous development of periodical literature of one sort or another which is the great feature of our time.”⁸ E.S. Dallas asserted that, “The rise of the periodical press is the great event of modern history.”⁹ Simply put, as Wilkie Collins described it, this was an “age of periodicals.”¹⁰ George Saintsbury, the “supreme arbiter of literary tastes”¹¹ at the turn of the century (though, perhaps, best known today amongst wine connoisseurs for his *Notes on a Cellar-Book*) looked back on the previous century’s literature and declared, “Perhaps there is no single feature of the English literary history of the nineteenth century, not even the enormous popularization and multiplication of the novel, which is so distinctive and characteristic as the development in it of periodical literature.” In fact, as Saintsbury pointed out:

Very large numbers of the best as well as of the worst novels themselves have originally appeared in periodicals; not a very small proportion of the most noteworthy nineteenth century poetry has had the same origin; it may almost be said that all the best work in essay, whether critical, meditative, or miscellaneous, has thus been ushered into the world...it is quite certain that, had such reprints not taken place, more than half the most valuable books of the age in some departments, and a considerable minority of the most valuable in others, would never have appeared as books at all.¹²

To bear out this point, Walter Houghton put forward the following list of contributors to Victorian higher journalism: “Gladstone and Disraeli, J.H. Newman and Cardinal Manning, both

⁸ T.H.S. Escott, *England: Her People, Polity and Pursuits* (New York: Henry Holt, 1880), 573.

⁹ [E.S. Dallas], “Popular Literature - The Periodical Press [1],” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 85, no. 519 (January 1859): 96-112, at 100. Dallas defines a periodical as ““a daily paper, a weekly journal, a monthly magazine, or a quarterly review” (101).

¹⁰ [Wilkie Collins], “The Unknown Public,” *Household Words* 18, no. 439 (August 21, 1853): 217-22, at 222.

¹¹ Steven Shapin, “Review Article: Against the Pussyfoots,” *London Review of Books* 31 no. 17 (September 10, 2009): 32-33, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n17/steven-shapin/against-the-pussyfoots>.

¹² Saintsbury, *History of Nineteenth Century Literature (1780-1895)* (New York: Macmillan, 1896), 166.

the Mills, Sir Charles Lyell and T. H. Huxley, historians like Macaulay and Lord Acton, the economists [John Ramsay] McCulloch, [William] Jevons, and Nassau Senior, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Leslie Stephen, and Walter Pater, all the major novelists, generals and captains in the army and navy, diplomats, judges, bishops, travelers – [Sir Austen Henry] Layard, Richard Burton, and the African explorers Samuel Baker and John Speke.” As Houghton rightly suggests, “To imagine a similar array of our own outstanding contemporaries writing for our few general periodicals is laughable.”¹³ Indeed, apart from the sovereign who gave her name to the period, the only “eminent” Victorian who does *not* appear as an author in Houghton’s great reference project, the five volume *Wellesley Index of Victorian Periodicals*, is Charles Darwin—although, through writers like the pugnacious T.H. Huxley (hence his moniker, “Darwin’s Bulldog”) the great naturalist’s theories certainly had their day in the court of public opinion.

Thus, if the “age of transition” seems a bit toothless,¹⁴ few can fault the idea that the nineteenth century was “uniquely the age of the periodical,”¹⁵ just as the eighteenth century had been the great age of the political pamphlet and the twentieth, the age of the daily newspaper, radio, and, finally, television. According to one estimate, the number of periodicals that appeared between 1824 and 1900 (the chronology used in the *Wellesley Index*, the standard work of

¹³ Walter E. Houghton, “Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes,” in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, edited by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 3-27, at 3. Houghton’s essay was originally published in *Victorian Studies* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1979): 389-412. The 1982 version was an expansion on the original 1979 essay. All subsequent references are to the 1982 version of Houghton’s seminal essay.

¹⁴ Indeed, The Victorian idea of living in an “age of transition” seems remarkably unimaginative today and would be ridiculed by at least one critic who, at the height of Strachey and the Bloomsbury Group’s anti-Victorian reaction, wittily remarked that “When our first parents were driven out of Paradise, Adam is believed to have remarked to Eve: ‘My dear, we live in an age of transition.’” William Ralph Inge, *Assessments and Anticipations* (London: Cassell, 1929), 261. The twentieth century historian, John Clive, defends the notion that the Victorian era was especially an “age of transition.” See John Clive, “The Use of the Past,” in *Not by Fact Alone: Essays on the Writing and Reading of History*, by Clive (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 3-12), at 6.

¹⁵ J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, “Introduction,” in *Periodicals of Queen Victoria’s Empire: An Exploration*, edited by Vann and VanArsdel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 3-16, at 3.

reference for the subject) exceeds fifty thousand.¹⁶ It might be said that such an abundance of periodicals was itself the byproduct of Victorian anxieties, reflecting a conscious desire to remain informed of the ever-quickenning pace of changes apparent in seemingly every facet of life.¹⁷ At the very least, historians of Victorian political thought must shudder at the thought of being deprived of classics that first appeared as articles in periodicals, including works like John Morley's *On Compromise*, Walter Bagehot's *English Constitution* and *Physics and Politics* (all in the *Fortnightly*), Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (the *Cornhill*), Henry Maine's *Popular Government* (*Quarterly Review*), John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* and Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (in *Fraser's*). Such spaces provided an ideal atmosphere for "creative quarrelling"¹⁸ amongst those individuals who comprised the Victorian "clerisy," the intellectual aristocracy which Samuel Taylor Coleridge defined as a sort of secular National Church made up of all "the sages and professors of law and jurisprudence; of medicine and physiology; of music; of military and civil architecture; of the physical sciences; with mathematical as the common organ of the preceding; in short, all the so called liberal arts and sciences, the possession and application of which constitute the civilization of a country."¹⁹ In higher journalism, we find the Victorian clerisy engaging with the historic changes taking place in their midst, not merely reflecting, but shaping public opinion.

¹⁶ John S. North, "The Rationale - Why Read Victorian Periodicals?" in *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research*, edited by J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, 2 vols. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1978-89), I, 3-20, at 3-4.

¹⁷ See Patrick Parrinder, *Authors and Authority: English and American Criticism, 1750-1990* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 65.

¹⁸ See F.R. Leavis, *Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on Pluralism, Compassion, and Social Hope* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), 204-5.

¹⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State, According to the Idea of Each: With Aids toward a Right Judgment on the Late Catholic Bill* (London: Hurst, Chance, 1830), 47.

This extremely public and intentionally didactic purpose for the essay was something of a Victorian innovation, or at least a nineteenth century one (to put it more broadly).²⁰ Consider, for instance, that when Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), the inventor of the essay as we have come to know it, published his *Essais* in 1580 he warned readers that “my sole purpose in writing [these essays] has been a private and domestic one. I have had no thought of serving you or of my own fame...So reader, I am myself the substance of my book, and there is no reason why you should waste your leisure on so frivolous and unrewarding a subject.”²¹ This perception of frivolity towards the essay as a genre carried forward in its own way through the eighteenth century, as witnessed in Samuel Johnson’s great *Dictionary*, which defined an essay as “A loose sally of the mind; an irregular indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition.” To illustrate its usage, he quotes Francis Bacon’s comment that “My essays, of all my other works, have been most current.”²² And yet, it is precisely *this* feature of the essay—its contemporaneousness, its topicality—that gets at the heart of the essays strength as an historical source, especially when it comes to the Victorians. That many of the great Victorian essayists

²⁰ See Gertrude Himmelfarb, “Introduction, II: The Essay as Genre,” in *The Spirit of the Age: Victorian Essays*, edited by Himmelfarb (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 18-28, at 18: “The Victorians did not invent the essay form, but they did master and perfect it.” If Himmelfarb’s declaration seems too hyperbolic to accept, then see to John Gross, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Book of Essays*, edited by Gross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xix-xxiii, at xxi: “An anthology that was limited to a single decade of the Victorian age, perhaps even a single year, would still be able to draw on work of outstanding scope and quality.”

²¹ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, translated by J.M. Cohen, Penguin Classics Series (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1958), 23.

²² Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In which the Words are Deduced from Their Originals, and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers, to which are Prefixed, a History of the Language, and an English Grammar*. 2 vols. (London: Printed by W. Strahan, for J. and P. Knaptor; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755), I, n.p.

published collections of their essays suggests the end result was less a shapeless jumble than “fragments of a great confession,” as Goethe once said of his own works.²³

II. “Higher Journalism” and “Periodicals”: Usefully Nebulous Terms

*Criticism remains the most miscellaneous, the most ill-defined of occupations.*²⁴

But what is “higher journalism”? And what do we mean here by a “periodical”? These are questions which any study such as this must confront. And yet, there is no denying the observation of one team of researchers that “few tangible objects are as elusive of precise definition as the periodical magazine.”²⁵ In his 1891 contribution on “Periodicals” to the new edition of *Chamber’s Encyclopedia*, W.T. Stead began by noting that, “Everything is a periodical that is published periodically. Every publication that is published more than once is necessarily published periodically. Therefore, every publication, excepting a book complete in itself, may, strictly speaking, be described as a periodical.” As founder and editor of the *Review of Reviews*, a monthly compendium of periodical literature throughout the world, Stead was one of the era’s preeminent advocates for the importance of periodicals as a medium for discussion on the most important issues of the day. His definition as to what constitutes a “periodical” for the period under examination is, therefore, a sensible enough guide to be adopted for the present study. “The use of the term is,” Stead writes, “restricted in ordinary conversation to magazines and reviews appearing not less frequently than once a quarter, and not more frequently than twice a month. Weeklies, at least in Great Britain, have with a few exceptions ceased to be regarded as

²³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Auto-Biography of Goethe: Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life*, translated by John Oxenford, 2 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848-49), I, 240.

²⁴ John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, 319.

²⁵ N. Merrill Distad, with Linda M. Distad, “Canada,” in *Periodicals of Queen Victoria’s Empire*, edited by Vann and VanArsdel, 61-174, at 71.

periodicals. As we have no fortnightlies, our periodicals may be said to be practically reduced to monthlies and quarterlies.”²⁶

Even if we accept Stead’s (by no means perfect) definition of “periodicals” for our purposes here, we are still left with the question, what does one mean by “higher journalism”? Here, we face an even more daunting challenge. Anyone expecting an exact definition of “higher journalism” is bound to be disappointed. It is tempting to fall back on the words of US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart who, upon deliberating what qualified as “hardcore pornography,” famously declared, “I know it when I see it.”²⁷ Recognizing the need to give expression to “one of the most characteristic cultural manifestations of nineteenth century Britain,” Christopher Kent helped popularize the term “higher journalism” in academic circles, which he defined as “the journalism of the more dignified organs of opinion, the reviews, the superior magazines, and the quality newspapers.”²⁸

Even here, we are still left with subjective qualities like “dignified,” “superior,” and “quality.” For those who maintain a lesser degree of reverence for such mediums, without denying their ability to shape public discourse, Gene Demby’s 2014 label for the *Atlantic* as “a think piece factory” might seem a tempting alternative.²⁹ We avoid its usage here in order to avoid conflating modern derision for “think pieces” (aptly captured by John Semley as code for

²⁶ W.T. Stead, “Periodicals,” in *Chamber’s Encyclopedia: A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge*, new edn., 10 vols. (London: Wiliam and Robert Chambers, 1888-92), VIII, 51-4, at 51.

²⁷ This was said in a concurring opinion on the 1964 case, *Jacobellis v. Ohio*. For an informative contextualization and analysis of Stewart’s opinion, see Paul Gewirtz, “On ‘I Know It When I See It’.” *Yale Law Journal* 105, no. 4 (January 1996): 1023-47.

²⁸ Christopher Kent, “Higher Journalism and the Mid-Victorian Clerisy,” *Victorian Studies* 13, no. 2 (December 1969): 181-98, at 181.

²⁹ Gene Demby, “How to Tell Who Hasn’t Read the New ‘Atlantic’ Cover Story,” *Code Switch: NPR*, May 22, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/05/22/314881767/how-to-tell-if-someones-actually-read-ta-nehisi-coates-essay>.

“a substitute for something more serious”³⁰) with the Victorian essayists under consideration in this dissertation. As for “higher journalism,” recent scholars have only added to the notion that what qualifies as such lay in the eye of the beholder. What seems “middlebrow”³¹ for one scholar may just as easily be deemed “highbrow”³² or “upmarket”³³ by another. But such imprecision is basically the point. Higher journalism is a fundamentally and unavoidably qualitative genre. Rather than a fruitless search for exactness, it would be better to explore the nuances of higher journalism as it was understood by the Victorians themselves.

We may return to Stead for one of the more revealing contemporary anecdotes of higher journalism as a distinct category within Victorian periodicals. In the spring of 1890, less than six months into the production of the *Review of Reviews*, Stead and his partner, George Newnes, decided to amicably part ways.³⁴ Ultimately, Newnes (the proprietor of *Tit-Bits*, a “popular” weekly with little to no “higher” aspirations) and Stead (the seasoned Victorian journalist) had fundamentally opposing views on how to run a review. After Newnes agreed to accept £10,000

³⁰ John Semley, “Did Virtue and the Think Piece Ruin Criticism? Criticism in the Shadow of Cultural Poptimism.” *Literary Review of Canada* 26, no. 3 (April 2018): <https://reviewcanada.ca/magazine/2018/04/did-virtue-and-the-think-piece-ruin-criticism/>.

³¹ Julie F. Codell, “Artistic,” in *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, edited by Henry F. Tucker (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 284-98, at 291

³² Gowan Dawson, Richard Noakes, and Jonathan R. Topham, “Introduction,” in *Science in the Nineteenth Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature*, by Dawson, Noakes, Topham, Geoffrey Cantor, Graeme Gooday and Sally Shuttleworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-34, at 20; and Andrew Blake, *Reading Victorian Fiction: The Cultural Context and Ideological Content of the Nineteenth Century Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 65.

³³ Graeme Gooday, “Profit and Prophecy: Electricity in the Late-Victorian Periodical,” chap. 10 in *Science in the Nineteenth Century Periodical*, 238-54, at 240.

³⁴ For the background to the founding of the *Review of Reviews*, see Joseph O. Baylen, “Review of Reviews, The,” in *British Literary Magazines, Vol. 3: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, edited by Alvin Sullivan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984,) 351-60.

for his share in the young venture and Stead quietly procured the sum from friends, Newnes wrote a letter to Stead, assuring him that their differences were not personal, but professional:

There is one kind of journalism which directs the affairs of nations; it makes and unmakes cabinets; it upsets governments, builds up Navies and does many other great things. It is magnificent. This is your journalism. There is another kind of journalism which has no such great ambitions. It is content to plod on, year after year, giving wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hardworking people, craving for a little fun and amusement. It is quite humble and unpretentious. This is my journalism.³⁵

In hindsight, it is ironic to see Stead being held up as a representative figure of higher journalism. After all, it was Stead who Matthew Arnold had in mind when, in 1887, he condemned the recent development of a “new journalism.” Better known across the Atlantic as “yellow journalism,” the term “new journalism” was to stick among the British as a catch-all phrase for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century journalistic developments that Arnold acidly described as “*feather-brained*.”³⁶ It is worth noting, however, that Arnold was referring to Stead in his capacity as editor at the influential evening newspaper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*.³⁷ Whatever may be said of Stead’s time at the *Pall Mall*, he had an almost hyperbolic esteem for

³⁵ Quoted in Kate Jackson, “The ‘Tit-Bits’ Phenomenon: George Newnes, New Journalism, and the Periodical Texts,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 30, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 201-26, at 201.

³⁶ Matthew Arnold, “Up To Easter,” *Nineteenth Century* 21, no. 123 (May 1887): 629-43, at 638 (emphasis in original). Though sometimes thought to have coined the term, Arnold was actually borrowing it here from W.T. Stead’s essay, “The Future of Journalism,” *Contemporary Review* 50 (November 1886): 663-79, where Stead twice uses the phrase (on pages 677, 678). As R.H. Super points out, however, Stead was apparently unaware of having used the phrase, with the obituary notice of Arnold in Stead’s *Pall Mall Gazette* suggesting that credit for its coinage belongs with Arnold. See R.H. Super, “Critical and Explanatory Notes,” in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* [henceforth *CPWMA*], edited by R.H. Super, 11 vols. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77, XI, 385-505), at 444.

³⁷ In 1883, after serving as John Morley’s assistant editor at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Stead succeeded to the post he had, in truth, held in all but name under Morley, who was spread thin by other duties as an MP and editor of two other periodicals (*Macmillan’s* and the *Fortnightly*). Within a year, Arnold can be found telling Morley that “Under your friend Stead, the *PMG* whatever may be its merits, is fast ceasing to be *literature*.” Little doubt these are the seeds of the “feather-brained” comment. See Matthew Arnold to John Morley, April 8, 1884, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold* [henceforth *TLMA*, Lang] edited by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996-2001), V, 416 (emphasis in original).

the role of higher journalism and did not personally include mere newspapers as such. According to Stead, higher journalism was “the forum of civilization,”³⁸ and it is indicative of the medium’s authoritative weight as well as its more reflective opportunities that Stead consciously opted to publish his two most intellectually substantial articles (“Government by Journalism” and “The Future of Journalism”³⁹) in the prestigious monthly, the *Contemporary Review*—not the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

In the end, Stead’s view of higher journalism was not entirely out of step with that of Arnold, who (as will be seen below) did so much to shape its Victorian function. In the “Programme” for his *Review of Reviews*, Stead even cites Arnold as a direct inspiration for his new venture: “Culture, according to Matthew Arnold, consists in knowing the best thoughts of the best men upon the subjects that come before us. The aim of this magazine will be to make the best thoughts of the best writers in our periodicals universally accessible.”⁴⁰ Where Stead and Arnold differed was mainly in terms of degree rather than pure substance. Whereas the former may have accepted Newnes’s description of higher journalism as a “kind of journalism which directs the affairs of nations; it makes and unmakes cabinets; it upsets governments, builds up Navies and does many other great things,” the latter would have been annoyed beyond measure by the rather glib acknowledgment of “*many other things*.” Politics was, by no means, a secondary issue to Arnold’s conception of higher journalism. Indeed, he defined his own career

³⁸ W.T. Stead, “Preface,” in *The Annual Index of Periodicals and Photographs For 1890* (London: W. Burgess, 1891), iii-iv, at iii. By Stead’s day, the monthly had, by all accounts, superseded the quarterly as the dominant form of higher journalism. Thus, when Stead says “the monthly review has become the forum of civilization,” he is clearly implying an understanding that before the monthly’s predominance, the quarterlies held sway as the “forum of civilization.”

³⁹ W.T. Stead, “Government by Journalism,” *Contemporary Review* 49 (May 1886): 653-74; and Stead, “The Future of Journalism.”

⁴⁰ W.T. Stead, “Programme,” *Review of Reviews* 1, no. 1 (January 1890): 14.

as being dedicated to keeping Britain from “declining into a sort of greater Holland.”⁴¹ But politics was an end result for Arnold. Fearful of the consequences of democratic expansion in a nation where “current public opinion,” was simply “not intelligent,”⁴² Arnold viewed higher journalism as a tool for combatting the “bad civilization of the English middle class.”⁴³ The means to achieve his ultimate political goal of maintaining British preeminence was much less simple than making and unmaking cabinets and building up navies.

Similarly, it would be only partially correct to describe higher journalism’s intended audience as a homogenous elite. It is said that Moncure Conway (an American abolitionist, man of letters, and contributor to the first issue of the *Fortnightly Review*⁴⁴) once described an “English magazine” as “a circular letter addressed by a scholarly man to a few hundred friends.”⁴⁵ The “multitude” who were “taught to think rightly”⁴⁶ through such periodicals was a

⁴¹ Matthew Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whateley Arnold, c. November [11], 1865, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888* [henceforth *LMA*, Russell], edited by George W.E. Russell, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1895), I, 359, 360. Also in *TLMA*, Lang, II, 472. See also, Matthew Arnold, “My Countrymen,” *Cornhill Magazine* 13, no. 74 (February 1866): 153-72, at 169: “Unless you change, unless your middle class grows more intelligent, you will tell upon the world less and less, and end by being a *second Holland* (my emphasis). Interestingly enough, Stead also believed one of his roles was to stave off British decline. See W.T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World: Or, the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (London: Review of Reviews, 1902), Preface, n.p.: “Unless I am altogether I mistaken, we have an opportunity probably the last which is to be offered us of retaining our place as the first of world-Powers. If we neglect it, we shall descend slowly but irresistibly to the position of Holland and of Belgium.” For his part, Arnold was considerably less sanguine than Stead about “Americanization,” whether in Britain or abroad. See Matthew Arnold, “Introduction,” in *The Popular Education of France, with Notices of that of Holland and Switzerland*, by Arnold (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), xi-1, at xxix-xxx. Essay reprinted as “Democracy,” in *Mixed Essays*, by Arnold (London: Smith, Elder, 1879), 1-47.

⁴² Arnold, “My Countrymen,” 167.

⁴³ Matthew Arnold, “The Future of Liberalism,” *Nineteenth Century* 8, no. 41 (July 1880): 1-18, at 2. This was, as Arnold put it, “The master-thought by which my politics are governed.” “Unless you change, unless your middle class grows more intelligent, you will tell upon the world less and less, and end by being a *second Holland*.”

⁴⁴ See Moncure D. Conway, “Personal Recollections of President Lincoln,” *Fortnightly Review* 1, no. 1 (May 15, 1865): 56-65, written on the occasion of the president’s assassination.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Harry T. Baker, “Periodicals and Permanent Literature,” *North American Review* 212, no. 781 (December 1920): 777-87, at 782.

⁴⁶ [Walter Bagehot], “The First Edinburgh Reviewers,” *National Review* 1, no. 2 (October 1855): 253-84, at 255.

minority to be sure; “small, but important—and confused,” in the words of the pioneering scholar of Victorian periodicals, Walter Houghton.⁴⁷ Stefan Collini, another scholar whose work has significantly influenced the pages below, offers a useful way to think of the intended audience of the essays that form the backbone of this dissertation: “imagine the closely packed columns of the type on the original servant-ironed page as held in the hands of a conventionally educated, comfortably situated, male reader sitting in his club, at the social political heart of the most important city in the world.”⁴⁸

The impact of these organs of “higher journalism” is, thus, difficult to grasp when judged by circulation figures alone.⁴⁹ In 1872, the *Fortnightly* seems only to have reached 2,500 subscribers, whereas the *Nineteenth Century* boasted a circulation of 20,000 by 1884 (see Table 1 below). And yet, when accounting for all the clubs,⁵⁰ reading rooms,⁵¹ circulating libraries,⁵²

⁴⁷ Houghton, “Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes,” 7.

⁴⁸ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 57.

⁴⁹ For readership of Victorian periodicals, the best guide remains the pioneering work of Alvar Ellegard. See his, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*. Gothenburg: [Distr. Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm], 1957; and Ellegard, “The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain: II. Directory,” *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, no. 13 (September 1971): 3-22. More broadly, see Richard D. Altick’s groundbreaking *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, [1957], 2nd edn. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ The study of London clubs is only recently gaining the attention of modern scholars. See Philip Waller, “Social Prestige and Clubbability,” chap. 13 in *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain, 1870-1918*, by Waller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 490-522; and Gregory C.G. Moore, *Leslie Stephen and the Clubbable Men of Radical London: An Essay in Honor of John King’s Retirement*. e-book (Rounded Globe, 2016), <https://roundedglobe.com/html/28a5fad8-1c4a-428b-b520-565b416f42e8/en/Leslie%20Stephen%20and%20the%20Clubbable%20Men%20of%20Radical%20London:%20An%20Essay%20in%20Honour%20of%20John%20King’s%20Retirement/#bib>. More generally, see Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Barbara J. Black, *A Room of His Own: A Literary-Cultural Study of Victorian Clubland* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012).

⁵¹ For which, see Chris Baggs’s very informative article, “‘In the Separate Reading Rooms for Ladies Are Provided Those Publications Specially Interesting to Them’: Ladies’ Reading Rooms and British Public Libraries, 1850-1914,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 38, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 280-306.

⁵² Like reading rooms, circulating libraries, like Mudie’s (founded 1842), were commonly associated with female middle class readers. See Simon Eliot, “Circulating Libraries in the Victorian Age and After,” in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Vol. 3: 1850-2000*, edited by Alistair Black and Peter Hoare

and country houses his monthly found its way into, John Morley estimated the *actual* readership of the *Fortnightly Review* was nearer 30,000 members of “the influential class.”⁵³ A similar method places James Knowles’s *Nineteenth Century* numbers up to at least 100,000.⁵⁴ Morley recognized that such “influence” was very difficult to explain (“[it was] very slow, very impalpable, very easy to sneer at, [and] *very hard to define, but still influence—that’s what I mean by success*”).⁵⁵ Nonetheless, editors of higher journalism had long been accounting for the sharing habits of subscribers to account for *actual* readership. In September 1814, for instance, Francis Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review* told one reviewer: “It is something to think that at least fifty thousand people will read what you write in less than a month. We print now nearly 13,000 copies and may reckon, I suppose, modestly on three or four readers of the popular articles in each copy: no prose preachers, I believe, have so large an audience.”⁵⁶

Such descriptions well lend themselves to the long-held (and not altogether misguided) idea of higher journalism being aimed at an audience of the privileged and powerful few. “There is a set of persons in your city [Edinburgh],” remarks a character in Thomas Peacock’s 1831 social satire, *Crotchet Castle*, “who concoct every three or four months, a thing which they call a

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 125-46; and Philip Waller, “Pricking Censorship,” chap. 27 in *Writers, Readers, and Reputations*, 975-1001.

⁵³ John Morley to Frederic Harrison, September 9, 1873, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 288.

⁵⁴ Meredith Luyten, “The Nineteenth Century, 1877-1900: Introduction,” in *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900* [henceforth *WIVP*], edited by Walter E. Houghton, 5 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966-89), II, 621-6, at 624. Note: Luyten estimates a readership of 50,000 based on the 10,000 subscribers of the *Nineteenth Century*’s early years.

⁵⁵ Morley to Harrison, September 9, 1873, in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 288 (my emphasis)

⁵⁶ Francis Jeffrey to Thomas Moore, September 14, 1814, in *Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, edited by John Russell, 8 vols. (London, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853-56), II, 40.

review: a sort of sugar-plum manufacturers to the Whig aristocracy.”⁵⁷ But the notion of clearly defining the presumed audience of higher journalism as “elite” is somewhat problematic. For example, the *Edinburgh* (like its successors) often claimed to cater just as much to the “middling classes” or multitudes, which Jeffrey defined as “those who are below the sphere of what is called fashionable or public life, and who do not aim at distinction or notoriety beyond the circle of their equals in fortune or situation.”⁵⁸ Moreover, as we shall see when we turn to Arnold in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, Victorian higher journalism was far from merely the practice of preaching to the converted.⁵⁹ Persuasion was almost always a goal for the Victorian higher journalist.

Rarely would a Victorian higher journalist have confined his or her interests to a single subject, whether it be, say, politics, history, philosophy, or literature. Their role was broader, more *general*. It was a common Victorian sentiment that, “Minds of the first rank are generalizers; of the second, specialists.”⁶⁰ Arnold articulated this view in one of his earliest essays, staking a claim for higher journalism’s essential purpose in modern society; that is, as a forum in which the great questions and controversies of the day may be considered in a manner aimed at a general, non-specialist audience. Ostensibly a disapproving review of a recent theological study which had inspired heated debate amongst biblical scholars, “The Bishop and

⁵⁷ Thomas Peacock, *Crotchet Castle* (London: Hookham, 1831), 73.

⁵⁸ [Francis Jeffrey], “Crabbe’s Tales,” *Edinburgh Review* 20, no. 40 (November 1812): 277-305, at 280.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Collini, “Introduction,” *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, esp. xxiii. See also, Peter Keating’s excellent “Introduction,” in *Matthew Arnold: Selected Prose*, edited by Peter Keating, Penguin English Library Series (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 9-36, esp. 15. Also noteworthy in recognizing Arnold’s desire to preach to the unconverted is Donald Stone, *Communications with the Future: Matthew Arnold in Dialogue* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), esp. 1-10.

⁶⁰ William Allingham [Eastern Hermit, pseud.], “Ivy-Leaves: From the Hermitage, Epping Forest [No. 2],” *Fraser’s Magazine* new series, vol. 17, no. 98 (January 1878): 259-68, 267

the Philosopher” stresses the need for such works to be discussed in “another tribunal”⁶¹ that is more concerned with their general import than the scholarly minutiae of specialists. The “most important function” of general critics like himself is “to try books as to the influence which they are calculated to have upon the general culture of single nations or of the world at large...All these works have a special professional criticism to undergo: theological works that of theologians, historical works that of historians, philosophical works that of philosophers, and in this case each kind of work is tried by a separate standard.” But such works, Arnold maintained, must also be judged by their impact on “general culture.” As he explains, “Everyone is not a theologian, a historian, or a philosopher, but everyone is interested in the advance of the general culture of his nation or mankind.” By “abandoning a thousand special questions” and, thereby, bringing an idea “within the sphere of everyone's interest,” general critics have exercised immense intellectual authority in recent history. As noteworthy examples, he points out that:

The chief sources of intellectual influence in Europe, during the last century and a half, have been its three chief critics—Voltaire, Lessing, Goethe. The chief sources of intellectual influence in England, during the same period, have been its chief organs of criticism—[Joseph] Addison, [Samuel] Johnson, the first Edinburgh Reviewers.⁶²

Bearing in mind the subjective nature of Arnold’s selection, it is still noteworthy that the genre of the essay played an important role in the influence of the six “chief sources” (European and “English”). But whereas the periodical essay was a dominant forum in the dissemination of the

⁶¹ In light of his later drawing the ire of Arnold’s criticism, it is noteworthy that Macaulay also referred to the reviews of higher journalism as “tribunals.” See [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Machiavelli,” *Edinburgh Review* 45, no. 90 (March 1827): 259-95, at 259.

⁶² Matthew Arnold, “The Bishop and the Philosopher,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 7, no. 39 (January 1863): 241-56, at 241.

essays of Addison (whom Macaulay reckoned “the greatest of English Essayists”⁶³), Johnson, and (of course) the Edinburgh Reviewers, only Lessing was a regular periodical contributor among the European critics.

The modern successors to the Victorian periodicals of higher journalism operate “at the intersection of academe and culture at large,” in the words of one modern commentator.⁶⁴ But that intersection has undergone some important changes since Arnold’s time. In a perceptive review of the second volume of the *Wellesley Index of Victorian Periodicals*, Brian Harrison remarks on the “double fragmentation” which has occurred in both intellectual and periodical life since the days of the great Victorian reviews—especially in the years prior to the founding of specialized, more explicitly “learned journals,” such as the *English Historical Review* (1886), *History* (1912), and the *Economic History Review* (1927). Today, Harrison writes, “the modern clerisy, if indeed it exists, shares neither problems nor periodicals.”⁶⁵ To illustrate his point, Harrison points to the impossibility of replicating the November 1871 issue of the *Fortnightly Review*, a number that would strike us as remarkable today for the scope of subjects broached, as well as the fame and brilliance of its individual contributors. Of its six contributions, Harrison posits that John Stuart Mill’s twenty-page essay on Berkeley (the lead essay) would be consigned to a specialized philosophical journal if it were printed today. T.H. Huxley’s nineteen pages of “Administrative Nihilism,” Henry Fawcett’s fifteen pages on “The Present Position of the Government,” and Jules Andrieu’s twenty-eight page chapter on “The Paris Commune” might,

⁶³ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Life and Writings of Addison,” *Edinburgh Review* 78, no. 157 (July 1843): 193-260, at 237.

⁶⁴ Mark Oppenheimer, “Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone?” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 53, no. 5 (September 22, 2006): B14.

⁶⁵ Brian Harrison, “Review Article: The ‘Wellesley Index’ and the Historian,” *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 6, no. 3-4 (December 1973): 52-9, at 54.

Harrison thinks, be found in a publication like the *New Statesman*,⁶⁶ though only in abbreviated form. On the other hand, Walter Pater's essay on "The Poetry of Michelangelo" would probably appear in a purely literary journal, and the chapters of Trollope's "The Eustace Diamonds" would probably not be serialized at all.⁶⁷

As early as 1857, Walter Bagehot perceived an increasing tendency towards professionalization and specialization, denouncing the "timidity of mind" which attended such a development. "Each subject is given up to men who cultivate it, and it only; who are familiar with its niceties, and absorbed in its details. There is no one who dares to look at the whole."⁶⁸ This certainly represented a threat for the Victorian periodical of general culture, "whose constitutive principle," Collini reminds us, "was the repudiation of specialism."⁶⁹ For his part, Bagehot (like Arnold) recognizes the First Edinburgh Reviewers for having the courage to write on a variety of subjects, regardless of their level of expertise. Certainly the occasional error in fact will arise, but such broad-minded endeavors are crucial to the task of relating a given topic's "connection with reality and affairs" to the interested layman.⁷⁰ Though she eschewed the didactic purpose of Victorian essayists like Bagehot, Virginia Woolf carried this tradition that stressed accessibility and style into the twentieth century. A "good essay," she said, must have

⁶⁶ Edited by the esteemed Paul Johnson between 1965 and 1970, the *New Statesman* was still enjoying the after effects of its Johnsonian heyday (and its highest circulation) when Harrison made this suggestion.

⁶⁷ Harrison, "Review Article: The 'Wellesley Index' and the Historian," 54.

⁶⁸ [Walter Bagehot], "Lord Brougham," *National Review* 5, no. 9 (July 1857): 164-96, at 180.

⁶⁹ Stefan Collini, "From 'Non-Fiction Prose' to 'Cultural Criticism': Genre and Disciplinarity in Victorian Studies," in *Rethinking Victorian Culture*, edited by Juliet John and Alice Jenkins (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 13-28, at 25.

⁷⁰ [Bagehot], "Lord Brougham," 181.

this permanent quality about it; it must draw its curtain round us, but it must be a curtain that shuts us in, not out.”⁷¹

It is significant that Woolf made this claim in an essay entitled “The Modern Essay.” There is no question that, in general sense, the Victorian essays of higher journalism were recognizably “modern.” Still, as many of the most eminent Victorian essayists were supremely aware, they were descended from the previous century, when the “periodical essay” first emerged as a distinct subgenre of Montaigne’s sixteenth century innovation. Among the numerous instances demonstrating consciousness of this lineage, one of the most prominent comes from Leslie Stephen, who in addition to being an esteemed man of letters and the founding editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* also happened to be Woolf’s father.⁷² Nearing the end of his life, Stephen decided to focus his 1903 Ford Lectures on *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*. There, he paid tribute to the origins of the periodical essay, which Stephen thinks was “the most successful innovation of the day...because it represents the mode by which the most cultivated writer could be brought into effective relation with the genuine interests of the largest audience.”⁷³

⁷¹ Woolf, “The Modern Essay,” 307.

⁷² Of her father, Woolf would say: “To write in the fewest possible words, as clearly as possible, exactly what one meant—that was his only lesson in the art of writing.” Virginia Woolf, “Leslie Stephen: The Philosopher at Home; A Daughter’s Memories.” *The Times*, November 28, 1932: 15-16, at 16. Reprinted as “Leslie Stephen,” in *The Captain’s Death Bed and Other Essays*, by Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), 69-75.

⁷³ Leslie Stephen, *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, The Ford Lectures, 1903 (London: Duckworth, 1904), 76. Although Woolf claims that an appreciation for brevity and clarity was his “only lesson in the art of writing” her father imparted to her, it seems he also (directly or indirectly) conferred upon her a shared appreciation for their eighteenth century predecessors. After all, the title of Woolf’s famous 1925 collection of essays, *The Common Reader* (and its sequel, *The Second Common Reader* [1932]) is derived from Samuel Johnson’s Life of Thomas Gray. After levying some rather unfavorable opinions of Gray’s writing, Johnson ultimately “rejoice[s] to concur with the common reader... [those who are] uncorrupted by literary prejudices, [and whom] after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honors.” Samuel Johnson, “Gray,” in *The Six Chief Lives from Johnson’s “Lives of the Poets,” with*

The great twentieth century economist, Robert Solow, once noted that all attempts to explain historical trajectories using culture “end up in a blaze of amateur sociology.”⁷⁴ No doubt the label “amateur” was intended here as an insult, but the practitioner of Victorian higher journalism embraced the title. Aware that a doctoral dissertation like the present work does not enjoy the same luxury as its subject-matter, the fact of the matter is that if one is to truly understand how the periodical essays of higher journalism became the dominant medium for public discussion in nineteenth century Britain, one must also appreciate the eighteenth century professionalization of authorship. Thus, in the following section, we find it necessary to risk running afoul of Solow’s warning.

III. The Rise of the Professional Writer

Thomas Babington Macaulay (in)famously believed that the history of England was “emphatically the history of progress.”⁷⁵ In a manner that would later make itself ripe for parody,⁷⁶ he offers the following succession of events as testament to his thesis of progress:

[T]he England of Domesday Book,—the England of the Curfew and the Forest Laws,—the England of crusaders, monks, schoolmen, astrologers, serfs, outlaws, —became the England which we know and love,—the classic ground of liberty and philosophy, the school of all knowledge, the mart of all trade. The Charter of Henry Beauclerk [King Henry I],—the Great Charter,—the first assembling of the House of Commons,—the extinction of personal slavery,—the separation from the See of Rome,—the Petition of Right,—the Habeas Corpus Act,—the [1688] Revolution,—the establishment of the liberty of unlicensed

Macaulay’s “Life of Johnson”, edited by Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1878), 455-66, at 466. See also Virginia Woolf, “The Common Reader,” in *The Common Reader*, 11-12.

⁷⁴ Robert M. Solow, “Science and Ideology in Economics,” *Public Interest*, no. 21 (Autumn 1970): 94-107, at 103.

⁷⁵ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Sir James Mackintosh’s ‘History of the Revolution,’” *Edinburgh Review* 41, no. 124 (July 1835): 265-322, at 287.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Walter C. Sellar and Robert J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That: A Memorable History of England, Comprising All the Parts You Can Remember, Including 103 Good Things, 5 Bad Kings, and 2 Genuine Dates* (London: Methuen, 1930).

printing,—the abolition of religious disabilities,—the reform of the representative system,—all these seem to us to be the successive stages of one great revolution.⁷⁷

Among all the momentous changes listed above, “the establishment of the liberty of unlicensed printing” might stand out as odd or, at the very least, dull to the modern reader, perhaps lacking the dramatic revolutionary flair of some of the others it finds itself amongst. But none of the other changes was of such direct import in the creation of the thriving periodical industry to which Macaulay and most every other British man of letters contributed, from Samuel Johnson through George Orwell and beyond.⁷⁸ Britain’s literary nationalists and Anglophiles everywhere would surely flinch at the prospect of a world in which freedom of the press and copyright protections for authors had never been enacted. Consider the combined implications of Samuel Johnson’s claim that, “The chief glory of every people arises from its authors,”⁷⁹ and Anthony Trollope’s warning, “Take away from English authors their copyrights, and you would very soon take away from England her authors.”⁸⁰

It was in the eighteenth century that the foundations for a free press began to be laid in Britain.⁸¹ In previous centuries, the print market had been limited by a host of legal statutes.

⁷⁷ [Macaulay], “Sir James Mackintosh’s ‘History of the Revolution,’” 287-8.

⁷⁸ Even the poet Robert Browning, who sincerely desired to never publish in any periodical, in fact compromised this position on various occasions throughout his career—occasionally, he even signed such contributions. See Linda K. Hughes, “‘Between Politics and Deer-Stalking’: Browning’s Periodical Poetry,” *Victorian Poetry* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 161-82, esp. the Appendix on 181-2 listing Browning’s periodical poetry. As Hughes’s title suggests, Browning’s apprehension was founded on a distaste for poetry being “sandwiched between [essays] on politics and deer-stalking.” For a notable occasion of Browning’s appearance in a review of the “higher journalism” variety, see his signed poem, “Herve Riel,” *Cornhill Magazine* 23, no. 135 (July 1871): 257-60. Hughes explains on page 172 of her article that the exception was made on the condition that £100 payment for the poem went to Parisians then struggling in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War and its aftermath. As it happens, the poem led-off that particular issue, thus avoiding the fate of being “sandwiched”—it was followed by a portion of Charles Lever’s *Lord Kilgobbin*, then being serialized in the *Cornhill*.

⁷⁹ Samuel Johnson, “Preface,” in *A Dictionary of the English Language*, I, n.p.

⁸⁰ Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), 96.

⁸¹ In his lecture on “The Hero as Man of Letters,” Carlyle recognized that such a figure was “altogether a product of these new ages,” whose modernity was based on the ability to earn a living solely from ones writings: “Never, till about a hundred years ago, was there seen any figure of a Great Soul living apart in that anomalous

Henry VIII introduced press licensing, granting the sovereign or appointed agents the right to determine who or what could be published. In 1557, Queen Mary granted a charter to the Stationers' Company, effectively creating a monopoly in the book trade, responsible for overseeing all of its commercial aspects. Each and every publication was (in theory, of course) to be registered with the Stationers' Company, who was also able to determine whether or not an individual could be apprenticed among the kingdom's master twenty printers (a fixed number implemented during Elizabeth I's reign). The political and religious tumult of the seventeenth century ensured that these measures remained in place. Under such conditions, coffeehouses emerged as the primary setting for serious discussion. But as the questions which had vexed previous generations gradually abated in the years after the Revolution Macaulay so famously later detailed in his *History*, restrictions on the freedom of the press were correspondingly loosened. The Licensing Act was permitted to lapse in 1695, allowing for a surge in the establishment of new presses. The Copyright Act of 1709 gave statutory protection to authors, granting twenty-one years copyright on existing works and fourteen for new imprints. However, some booksellers (who were predominant in the Stationers' Company) continued to claim that English *common law* granted perpetual copyright. This contradiction was finally resolved by the House of Lords in a decision against perpetual copyright handed down in 1774, thus ending the

manner; endeavoring to speak forth the inspiration that was in him by Printed Books, and find place and subsistence by what the world would please to give him for doing that. Much had been sold and bought, and left to make its own bargain in the marketplace; but the inspired wisdom of a Heroic Soul never till then, in that naked manner." Thomas Carlyle, "Lecture 5: The Hero as Man of Letters: Johnson, Rousseau, Burns," in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History. Six Lectures: Reported, with Emendations and Additions*, by Carlyle (London: James Fraser, 1841 [delivered May 19, 1840]), 249-315, at 249-50.

monopoly of the booksellers. While they retained tremendous influence, their monopoly was lost without any legal claim to copyright.⁸²

From these legal foundations arose both the beginnings of the periodical press and the advent of the professional writer, two interrelated developments that utterly transformed not just British printing, but British culture more generally. The market was now the sole arbiter in the print trade, turning the written word into a product that may be bought and sold as if it were coffee, sugar, slaves, or any other commodity of the day. In accordance with this more open situation, the coffeehouses soon lost their status as the major forum for conversation and debate. This function was dispersed among various newspapers, magazines, and journals that comprised the agora of the nineteenth century: the periodical press.⁸³ Newspapers came first to the scene, but by the 1730s, there was such an overabundance of them that Edward Cave was inspired to create the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Founded in 1731, the significance of Cave's monthly periodical⁸⁴ is evident in the fact that it literally redefined the meaning of the word "magazine." In Johnson's *Dictionary* of 1755, for instance, the first definition for "magazine" described it as, "A storehouse, commonly an arsenal or armory, or repository of provisions." A secondary definition, however, takes into account that, "Of late this word has signified a miscellaneous pamphlet, from a periodical

⁸² Much of the above paragraph is greatly indebted to John Brewer, "Authors, Publishers, and the Making of Literary Culture," chap. 3 in *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, by Brewer (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997), 125-66.

⁸³ Between the 1760s and the end of the century, the number of London periodicals had risen from no more than thirty to more than eighty. See Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 142.

⁸⁴ Which, despite its name, attracted readers from both sexes. Manushag N. Powell, *Performing Authorship in Eighteenth Century English Periodicals*, Transits: Literature, Thought, and Culture Series (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012), 58.

miscellany named the *Gentleman's Magazine*, by Edward Cave.”⁸⁵ The appropriation by Cave was intended to reflect the nature of his new venture. As he explained in the first issue of *Gentleman's Magazine*, his aim was: “To give monthly a view of all the pieces of wit, humor, or intelligence, daily offered to the public in the Newspapers (which of late are so multiplied, as to render it impossible, unless a man make it his business, to consult them all), and in the next place we shall join therewith some other matters of use or amusement that will be communicated to us.”⁸⁶ On opposite sides of each new issue of *Gentleman's Magazine*, Cave placed two mottos which corresponded with its twin founding principles. The motto on the right, *E Pluribus Unum* reflected Cave's intention for his magazine to make the cacophony of periodical information discernible by presenting its material in a single publication. Ultimately, of course, this dictum captured the imagination of some of Cave's many readers across the Atlantic.⁸⁷ And, in 1776, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, recommended it become the motto for the nation which had just declared its independence from Britain.⁸⁸ Equally pertinent, insofar as

⁸⁵ Samuel Johnson, “Magazine,” *A Dictionary of the English Language*, II, n.p.

⁸⁶ Edward Cave [Sylvanus Urban of Aldermanbury, Gent., pseud.], “Introduction,” *Gentleman's Magazine* 1, no. 1 (January 1731): n.p. The “Introduction” continues as follows: “Upon calculating the numbers of Newspapers, 'tis found that (besides divers written Accounts) no less than 200 Half-sheets per Month are thrown from the press only in London, and about as many printed elsewhere in the three Kingdoms; a considerable part of which constantly exhibit Essays on various subjects for entertainment; and all the rest occasionally oblige their Readers with Matters of Public Concern, communicated to the World by persons of capacity thro' their means: so that they are become the chief Channels of Amusement and Intelligence. But then being only loose papers, uncertainly scatter'd about, it often happens that many things deserving attention, contained in them, are only seen by accident, and others not sufficiently publish'd or preserved for universal benefit and information. This consideration has induced several Gentlemen to promote a Monthly Collection, to treasure up, as in a Magazine, the most remarkable pieces on the subjects above-mentioned.”

⁸⁷ See Cave [Sylvanus Urban of Aldermanbury, Gent., pseud.], “Preface,” *Gentleman's Magazine* 11 (1741): n.p.: “[*Gentleman's Magazine*] is read as far as the English Language extends, and we see it reprinted from several Presses in Great Britain, Ireland, and the Plantations.”

⁸⁸ See Patricia Okker, *The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth Century America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 1-2.

its continuity with Victorian periodicals, is the other motto, *Prodesse et Delectare*: “to be useful and to entertain.”

In order to succeed in this second purpose, Cave drew upon the professional writers whose numbers had risen concurrently with the eighteenth century reforms in authors’ rights. “In the reigns of William III [1688/9-1702], of Anne [1702-14], and of George I [1714-27], even such men as [William] Congreve and [Joseph] Addison would scarcely have been able to live like gentlemen by the mere sale of their writings,” wrote Macaulay in his review of a new edition of Boswell’s celebrated *Life* of Samuel Johnson. For it was Johnson who was, perhaps, the greatest representative from this new class of individuals who could now attempt to make a living solely through the sale of their literary property. Or was he the last of the Grub Street hacks, as Macaulay suggests? “Johnson came up to London precisely at the time when the condition of a man of letters was most miserable and degraded. It was a dark night between two sunny days...The [current] age of general curiosity and intelligence had not arrived. The number of readers is at present so great, that a popular author [like Macaulay, himself] may subsist in comfort and opulence on the profits of his works.” At the other side of the spectrum was the collapse of the great age of patronage, which had, at the close of the seventeenth and start of the eighteenth century, provided certain men of intellectual and literary achievement with a degree of independence through the appointment of lucrative public offices.⁸⁹ Johnson was not so

⁸⁹ See [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Croker’s Edition of Boswell’s ‘Life of Johnson,’” *Edinburgh Review* 54, no. 107 (September 1831): 1-38, at 21-2: “The chiefs of both the great parties into which the kingdom was divided patronized literature with emulous munificence. [William] Congreve [1670-1729], when he had scarcely attained his majority, was rewarded for his first comedy with places which made him independent for life. [Edmund] Smith [1672-1710], though his *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra* failed, would have been consoled with £300 a-year but for his own folly. [Nicholas] Rowe [1674-1718] was not only poet-laureate, but land-surveyor of the customs in the port of London, clerk of the council to the Prince of Wales, and secretary of the Presentations to the Lord Chancellor. [John] Hughes [1677-1720] was secretary to the Commissions of the Peace. Ambrose Philips [1674-1749] was judge of the Prerogative Court in Ireland. [John] Locke [1632-1704] was Commissioner of Appeals, and of the Board of Trade. [Isaac] Newton [1643-1727] was Master of the Mint. [George] Stepney [1663-

fortunate, living in a time when a writer's independence could be found neither through powerful patrons nor public sales. Macaulay poignantly illustrates the result of this unfortunate timing: "Johnson, [William] Collins [1721-59], [Henry] Fielding [1707-54], and [James] Thomson [1700-48], were certainly four of the most distinguished persons that England produced during the eighteenth century. It is well known that they were all four arrested for debt."⁹⁰

Born the son of a Lichfield bookseller in the same year as the Copyright Act (1709), Samuel Johnson was among the first generation who could grow up aspiring to join the ranks of those literary "hacks" for hire found on Grub Street. At the very least, it could serve as a sanctuary for literate provincials seeking a fresh start and steady employment. Under circumstances closer to the latter, Johnson made his way to London in 1737, accompanied by the actor, David Garrick. Soon enough, his large, lumbering presence could be seen trudging along that byway whose namesake became a metaphor for the commercial production of printed material. As Boswell reminds us in his *Life of Johnson*, it was Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* that "for many years was his principal resource for employment and support."⁹¹ Though Cave's magazine had been founded as a mere compendium of newspaper extracts, accusations of literary

1707] and [Matthew] Prior [1664-1721] were employed in embassies of high dignity and importance. [John] Gay [1685-1732], who commenced life as apprentice to a silk-mercator, became a secretary of legation at five-and-twenty. It was to a poem on the Death of Charles II., and to the City and Country Mouse that [Charles] Montague [1661-1715] owed his introduction into public life, his earldom, his garter, and his auditorship of the Exchequer. [Jonathan] Swift [1667-1745], but for the unconquerable prejudice of the queen, would have been a bishop. [Robert Harley, earl of] Oxford, with his white staff in his hand, passed through the crowd of his suitors to welcome [Thomas] Parnell [1679-1718], when that ingenious writer deserted the Whigs. [Richard] Steele [bap.1672-d.1729] was a commissioner of stamps and a Member of Parliament. Arthur Mainwaring [1668-1712] was a commissioner of the customs, and auditor of the impost. [Thomas] Tickell [1685-1740] was secretary to the Lords Justices of Ireland. [Joseph] Addison [1672-1719] was secretary of state." While the *Edinburgh Review* continued this tradition of finding political appointments for its most talented contributors (like Macaulay), the rival *Quarterly Review* was decidedly less effective in this regard. See Charles Pebody, "The 'Edinburgh Review' and Its Contributors," *Gentleman's Magazine* 246, no. 1791 (March 1880): 355-69, at 360-64.

⁹⁰ [Macaulay], "Croker's Edition of Boswell's 'Life of Johnson,'" 21, 27, 25.

⁹¹ James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, [1791], edited by R.W. Chapman, with an Introduction by C.B. Tinker, Oxford Standard Authors Series (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 82.

piracy from the proprietors of those papers had forced the *Gentleman's Magazine* to widen the scope of its contents. By far the most significant of these new features were the "Senate of Lilliput Debates," satirical reports that cleverly subverted the prohibition of publishing parliamentary debates, an act that remained illegal throughout the eighteenth century.⁹² Between 1740 and 1744, the "Lilliput Debates" were in the skilled hands of Johnson.⁹³ In Thomas Carlyle's later estimation, it was from Johnson's "Lilliput Debates" the very idea of "that stupendous Fourth Estate" in Britain came into being.⁹⁴

The case of Johnson hammers home the broader significance of the advent of the professional writer. "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money," the good Doctor tells us.⁹⁵ In this new literary milieu, the partnership of author and publisher paid dividends well beyond Johnson's pocketbook. It is difficult to conceive that any of his major achievements (the *Dictionary*, the *Lives of the Poets*, and the resurgence of interest in the nation's greatest author with his Shakespeare editions) would have come about without the freedom to profit from such works. Moreover, when Johnson famously refused the belated support of a lord who hoped to attach his patronage to the *Dictionary* at the last minute, the days of the courtly patron were

⁹² Though by the last decades of the 1700s, parliamentary reporting was tolerated, if the task was done discreetly. See Arthur Aspinall, "Reporting and Publishing of the House of Commons' Debates, 1771-1834," in *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, edited by Richard Pares and A.J.P. Taylor (London: Macmillan, 1956), 27-31; and Peter D.G. Thomas, "The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting in Newspapers, 1768-1774," *English Historical Review* 74, no. 293 (October 1959): 623-36. See also, the entertaining history found in Michael MacDonagh, *The Reporters' Gallery* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913). More recently, but still rich in anecdotes, Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), esp. 71-8. For a more official account, there is now John Vice and Stephen Farrell, *The History of Hansard* (London: House of Lords Hansard and the House of Lords Library, 2017).

⁹³ The standard modern study on this aspect of Johnson's career is Benjamin Beard Hoover, *Samuel Johnson's Parliamentary Reporting: Debates in the Senate of Lilliput* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953).

⁹⁴ [Thomas Carlyle], "Boswell's Life of Johnson [Part II]," *Fraser's Magazine* 5, no. 28 (May 1832): 379-413, at 402.

⁹⁵ Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 731.

effectively ended—calling the modern author into existence. “Listen, once again,” Carlyle beckoned readers eight decades hence, “to that far-famed Blast of Doom, proclaiming into the ear of Lord Chesterfield, and, through him, of the listening world, that Patronage should be no more!”⁹⁶ The *Dictionary* had done little to improve Johnson’s personal finances, however. Twice in the year after its publication, he found himself confined to sponging-houses (one step from debtors’ prison).⁹⁷ Relief from his monetary struggles finally came in 1762, when the young King George III and his new prime minister (the Earl of Bute) awarded him an annual pension of £300 which allowed Johnson to live in modest comfort until his death twenty-two years later. Thus, while wealth remained perpetually out of reach for Johnson, his declaration of authorial independence made it possible for another popular man of letters, David Hume, to note in the 1770s that through the sale of his own works he had become “not only independent, but opulent.”⁹⁸

As for Macaulay, it is true that he had used some remnant of the old patronage system to attain a lucrative stint in the East India Company (1834-38), whose £10,000 annual salary ensured lifelong financial comfort for him and his family.⁹⁹ Then again, it is noteworthy that

⁹⁶ [Carlyle], Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* [Part II],” 398. Johnson’s letter to Chesterfield is reproduced here on the same page.

⁹⁷ See Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Johnson, Samuel,” in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Or Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, 8th edn., 22 vols. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1853-60), XII, 793-803, at 798. Other prominent English writers who were famously arrested for debt in the eighteenth century include William Collins (1721-59), Henry Fielding (1707-54), and James Thomson (1700-48). See [Macaulay], “Croker’s Edition of Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*,” 25.

⁹⁸ David Hume, *The Life of David Hume, Esq. Written by Himself* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1777), 25. Personally immune to the eccentric charms of Johnson, Hume was, perhaps, not as appreciative of Johnson’s contribution to their profession than he might have been. For Hume’s dislike and avoidance of Johnson, see John Robertson, “Hume, David (1711-1776),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [henceforth *ODNB*], edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, [2004], online edn., edited by Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, January 2009), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/14141>. Note: All subsequent *ODNB* references are to the online edition.

⁹⁹ Not all East India Company employees were paid quite so handsomely, of course. As a senior legal appointee to the Supreme Council of India, Macaulay’s salary was several times more than that of, say, a Chief

Macaulay felt compelled to remain an *Edinburgh* reviewer during his stay in India, even writing his staggering one-hundred-five pages on Francis Bacon during his time there.¹⁰⁰ True, as he told Macvey Napier (editor of the *Edinburgh* from October 1829 through his February 1847 death), Macaulay was aware that his name was “of some importance to the *Edinburgh Review*.”¹⁰¹ Yet Macaulay was, nonetheless, equally aware that this this was a mutually beneficial relationship, telling Napier in the same letter that “a connection with the Review will be of some considerable importance to me.” As he explained: “I know well how dangerous it is for a public man to wholly withdraw from the public eye. During an absence of six years, I run some risk of losing most of the distinction, literary and political, which I have acquired. As a means of keeping myself in the recollection of my countrymen during my sojourn abroad, the Review will be invaluable to me.”¹⁰² In this, Macaulay provides an important qualification to Johnson’s dictum on “blockheads” being the only types silly enough to write for anything beyond the lure of

Examiner like John Stuart Mill, who was earning the still quite comfortable sum of £2000 a year by the time he “retired” in 1858. See Collini, *Public Moralists*, 38.

¹⁰⁰ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Lord Bacon,” *Edinburgh Review* 66, no. 132 (July 1837): 1-104. That the Bacon essay was a review of a sixteen volume edition of Bacon’s work may somewhat mitigate accusations of excessiveness. Anyhow, it is a significant comment on Victorian reading culture that an Indian Civil Servant (as Macaulay was at the time) should find the time to undertake such a momentous; the same goes for the fact that a general periodical like the *Edinburgh* should actually commission and present for its readers such an essay (the subject alone would likely be consider far too dense for any of the *Edinburgh*’s modern successors to brave publishing). To grasp the distance between the Victorian reading expectations and our own, consider the fact that J.A. Froude was not showing off when he later described Macaulay’s Bacon essay as one of his “lighter compositions.” J.A. Froude, “Lord Macaulay,” *Fraser’s Magazine* new series, vol. 13, no. 78 (June 1876): 675-94, at 688.

¹⁰¹ Indeed, it Macaulay seems to be understating his importance at this time. See Thomas Babington Macaulay to Hannah Macaulay, June 3, 1833, *LTBM*, II, 149: “Napier is in London, and has called on me several times. He has been with the publishers who complain that the sale is falling off, and in many private parties, where he hears sad complaints, and the universal cry is that *the long dull articles — particularly Empson’s, - are the ruin of the review*. As to myself he tells me that everybody agrees that my articles are the only things which keep the work up at all. *Longman and his partners correspond with about five hundred booksellers in different parts of the kingdom. All these booksellers, I find, tell them that the Review sells or does not sell according as there are or are not articles by Mr. Macaulay* (my emphases).”

¹⁰² Macaulay to Napier, December 5, 1833, in *CMN*, 140.

money. Success in higher journalism carried with it the potential for prestige and advancement in not just a literary sense, but in the political realm as well.

Even still, it was Macaulay's ability to flourish as an independent author that made him a positively wealthy man.¹⁰³ In the month of his death in December 1859, Macaulay records his annual income as in excess of £5,000, with a total fortune he puts at £80,000.¹⁰⁴ With understandable pride, he recalls that, "Twenty-five years ago I was worth exactly and literally nothing. I had paid my debts, and had not a penny. My whole fortune – except about £8,000 from my uncle Colin – is of my own acquisition."¹⁰⁵ From Macaulay's personal standpoint, history was indeed one of progress. But he was not alone among his fellow Victorian men of letters to appreciate the novelty and uniqueness of their professional situation.

One noteworthy example of this feature may be found in an 1847 essay by G.H. Lewes, in which he declares that, "Literature has become a profession. It is a means of subsistence, almost as certain as the bar or the church. The number of aspirants increases daily, and daily the circle of readers grows wider." Whether such a development merits praise or condemnation was of less interest to Lewes than the need to stress its existence. This was the new "great fact" of British national life. It was, moreover, "to periodical literature [that] we owe the possibility of authorship as a profession. Dr. Johnson, who first founded that profession, was enabled to do so

¹⁰³ In March 1856, when sales in the first ten weeks of the third and fourth volumes of Macaulay's *History* left his publisher, Longman, with too much money on hand, they sent their prized author a check for £20,000. For some sense of scale, consider that, according to one of Macaulay's most recent biographers, the check from Longman was a sum equal to £1.297 million in 2007. See Robert E. Sullivan, *Macaulay: The Tragedy of Power* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 410.

¹⁰⁴ Though his will puts his wealth at death at 70,000—still a substantial amount at the time. See William Thomas, "Macaulay, Thomas Babington, Baron Macaulay (1800-1859)," in *ODNB* (May 2015), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/17349>.

¹⁰⁵ Journal entry dated December 3, 1859, quoted in *LTBM*, V, viii-ix.

mainly by means of periodical literature.” In France and Germany, the professional writer who lived and died by the pen was not yet a flourishing prospect. Whereas, in Britain, the abundance of opportunities to publish in the ever-increasing number of periodicals had made it commonplace for a writer of ordinary talents to earn enough income to support a family (variously between £200 and £1,000 a year, in Lewes’s estimate), the print market in France was such that an author would have to possess “somewhat more than the ordinary ability” just to subsist solely on their writings.¹⁰⁶

For example, while the *Edinburgh Review* and its great quarterly rivals, the *Quarterly Review* and the *Westminster Review*, were paying minimum rates of sixteen to twenty guineas a sheet (sixteen pages)—as high as twenty-five for more illustrious contributors, like Macaulay¹⁰⁷—the most prestigious French equivalent, the bi-monthly *Revue des Deux Mondes*, paid a maximum of 250 francs (£10) per sheet to its most renowned contributors, Sainte-Beuve, Thierry, Girardin, Balzac, and Dumas. First-time contributors to the *Revue* were not paid at all. But this was a sunnier situation than Germany, where even a writer of that level of talent “has not a chance” for survival.¹⁰⁸ Twenty years prior, a young novelist with a bright political future had expressed a similar view of the German periodical press. In *Vivian Grey*, Benjamin Disraeli described a German periodical “edited by an eloquent scholar; all its contributors were, at the same time, brilliant and profound. It numbered among its writers some of the most celebrated

¹⁰⁶ [G.H. Lewes], “The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France,” *Fraser’s Magazine* 35, no. 207 (March 1847): 285-95, at 285, 290, 288.

¹⁰⁷ See Cyprian Blagden, “‘Edinburgh Review’ Authors, 1830-49,” *The Library* 5th series, vol. 7, no. 3 (September 1952): 212-4, esp.212.

¹⁰⁸ [Lewes], “The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France,” 286, 288.

names in Germany; its critiques and articles were as impartial as they were able—as sincere as they were sound; [and yet] it never paid the expense of the first number.”¹⁰⁹

IV. The *Edinburgh Review*: Beginning the System

According to James Boswell’s 1777 assertion, the periodical essay “of instruction and entertainment is truly of British origin.”¹¹⁰ Referring to Richard Steele’s April 1709 introduction of *The Tatler*,¹¹¹ one twentieth century scholar declares, “It is not often that the appearance of a new literary form can be dated as precisely as that of the periodical essay.”¹¹² From the very first number of *The Tatler* (appearing Tuesday, April 12, 1709), the purpose of the periodical essay was differentiated from that of newspapers. Though newspapers “are laudable in their particular kinds,” Steele aims not merely to report, but to advise the “worthy and well-affected” people of England, explicitly declaring that “the end and purpose” of his new endeavor is to tell such individuals “*what to think*.”¹¹³ No doubt, this didactic purpose remained a key source of

¹⁰⁹ [Benjamin Disraeli], *Vivian Grey*, 5 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1826-27), IV, 352-3. While the novel was published anonymously, like most secrets of the Victorian literary world, the author’s name was soon found out.

¹¹⁰ James Boswell [The Hypochondriack, pseud.], “[Number 1],” *London Magazine* 46 (October 1777): 491-3, at 492. The essay is reprinted in *Boswell’s Column: Being His Seventy Contributions to the “London Magazine” under the Pseudonym “The Hypochondriack” from 1777 to 1783, here First Printed in Book Form in England*. Edited by Margery Bailey (London: William Kimber, 1951), 21-6.

¹¹¹ *The Tatler*, edited by Richard Steele, 271 numbers (April 12, 1709 through January 2, 1711). Three issues per week. Steele wrote 181 of the 271 issues, Joseph Addison wrote 47, while the two collaborated on a further 22. See Harold Routh, “Steele and Addison,” in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. 9: From Steele and Addison to Pope and Swift*, edited by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 26-65, at 33, where it is noted that: “He [Steele], probably, never lived within his income and, after losing, in 1708, his position of gentleman-waiter to prince George of Denmark and failing to obtain two other posts, he returned to literature in order to meet his debts. Since the censorship had been removed from the press, journalism had become a profitable enterprise, and Steele’s chief motive in starting *The Tatler* on 12 April 1709, was, undoubtedly, the fear of bankruptcy.”

¹¹² Jane H. Jack, “The Periodical Essayists,” in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol. 4: From Dryden to Johnson*, edited by Boris Ford, [1957], revised edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 217-29, at 217.

¹¹³ Richard Steele, “[No. 1, April 12, 1709],” in *The Tatler*, edited, with an introduction and notes by George A. Aitken, 4 vols. (London: Duckworth, 1898-99), I, 11 (my emphasis).

continuity with its nineteenth century successors. But when it came time for mid-Victorian practitioners of higher journalism to pinpoint the more immediate origins of their thriving profession, it was the 1802 founding of the *Edinburgh Review* that came to the forefront. As Walter Bagehot explained in 1855, “the *Spectator*¹¹⁴ and *Tatler*, and such-like writings, had opened a similar vein, but their size was too small. They could only deal with small fragments, or the extreme essence of a subject. They could not give a view of what was complicated, or analyze what was involved.” Guided by its editor, Francis Jeffrey, it was the *Edinburgh* “which began the system,” described by Bagehot as “the commencement on large topics of suitable views for sensible persons.”¹¹⁵ And it was the Whig-affiliated *Edinburgh* and its two chief rivals, the Tory *Quarterly Review* (f.1809) and Benthamite *Westminster Review* (f.1824), which comprised the triumvirate that dominated Victorian higher journalism until the middle of the century—hence, we label these years “The Age of the Quarterlies.”

There are three principle characteristics that may be said to have defined “the system” inaugurated by the *Edinburgh*. First, the practice of anonymous contributions. Second, the relative lengthiness of its contents compared to both its predecessors as well as successors. We will discuss these two aspects in greater detail in a later chapter, when considering the demise of “the system” beginning around the 1850s. For now, we might note that anonymity was never, in practice, as absolute as it might suggest. Those in certain circles could almost always learn the

¹¹⁴ *The Spectator* was written and edited by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison from March 1, 1711 through December 6, 1712 (555 numbers); second series (June 18-December 6, 1714) was edited alone by Joseph Addison, who wrote 25 of the 80 essays that made up the second series—generally considered to be inferior to the original run of 1711-12)—comprised numbers 556-635.

¹¹⁵ [Bagehot], “The First Edinburgh Reviewers,” 257.

author of a particular essay if they really wished to know.¹¹⁶ Moreover, thanks to the monumental efforts of the *Wellesley Index*, most of the authors who wrote under such circumstances have been identified in this most valuable work of reference. The third and final feature of “the system” has to do with the particular form in which the essays found in the great quarterlies were presented, what Bagehot described as the “review-like essay” and the “essay-like review.” This was the practice of using the book[s] supposedly under “review” as a mere starting point for “reviewers” to present their own opinions on a given topic. Oftentimes, the pretense of actually reviewing a work was dropped almost immediately. Henry Brougham’s confession at the head of a January 1834 contribution was not entirely uncommon:

We place the titles of these pamphlets at the head of this article without any design of entering upon the discussion of their contents, or going into the subjects to which they are directed; but in order to make some observations upon the present condition of the Party which still holds out against all reform—all change of any kind—all liberal opinions—all the principles suited to the age we live in, abroad and at home;—we mean those who used to be called Tories, and have lately taken the name of Conservatives.¹¹⁷

In his celebrated 1841 essay on “Warren Hastings,” Macaulay at least spent the better part of a page deriding the book’s Tory author before deciding that the remaining *ninety-five pages* would be better spent providing his own view of Hastings. Preternaturally attuned to the desires of his audience, Macaulay prudently thought such an approach would “best meet the wishes of our

¹¹⁶ For the perpetual effort to subvert the tradition of anonymous reviewing by “author-spotting,” see John Mullan, “Reviewing,” chap. 6 in *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature*, by Mullan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 181-216.

¹¹⁷ [Henry Brougham], “Tory Views and Machinations,” *Edinburgh Review* 58, no. 118 (January 1834): 457-68, at 457-8. See also, [Nassau Senior], “The Continent in 1854,” *North British Review* 22, no. 44 (February 1855): 289-342, at 289. Here, Senior begins a fifty-six page essay-like review on “The Continent in 1854” by admitting, “The first of the two works, of which we prefix the titles to this Article, is of little value. We adopt it merely as a name, and, having made this use of it, dismiss it.”

readers.”¹¹⁸ He and many of his contemporaries at the *Edinburgh* understood that a persuasive polemic requires an awareness of one’s audience. “[I]t is not by his own taste, but by the taste of the fish, that the angler is determined in his choice of bait,” Macaulay once explained.¹¹⁹

As one scholar puts it, “If a single characteristic accounts for the supremacy of [the *Edinburgh*], it is arrogance.”¹²⁰ This is true enough. But a perusal of just about any Prospectus or Mission Statement for every periodical of higher journalism founded between 1802 and the present-day will reveal “arrogance” to be a central (perhaps necessary) condition of the genre. The “Advertisement” for the first number of the *Edinburgh* explains that the editors’ have no desire “to take notice of every production that issues from the Press.” In carrying out this more exclusive “principle of selection,” they declare the intention “to confine their notice, in a great degree, to works that either have attained, or deserve, a certain portion of celebrity.” The “Advertisement” concludes by explaining that “or the full discussion of important subjects, it may, sometimes, be found necessary to extend these articles to a greater length, than is usual in works of this nature.”¹²¹ The first number of the *Edinburgh Review* reflected these principles, containing twenty-nine reviews spread over more than two-hundred-fifty pages. Though the quantity of articles in the inaugural issue appears excessive compared to the usual ten to twelve reviews that became the norm for Jeffrey’s review by the end of the decade,¹²² it pales in comparison to the corresponding numbers of its immediate rivals. For example, the *Monthly*

¹¹⁸ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Warren Hastings,” *Edinburgh Review* 74, no. 149 (October 1841): 160-255, at 160.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Babington Macaulay to Macvey Napier, January 25, 1830, in *LTBM*, I, 261.

¹²⁰ See Marilyn Butler, “Culture’s Medium: The Role of the Review,” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, edited by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 120-47, at 131.

¹²¹ “Advertisement,” *Edinburgh Review* 1, no. 1 (October 1802): n.p.

¹²² Butler, “Culture’s Medium,” 131.

Review (f.1749) contained forty-three reviews in October 1802, while the *Critical Review* (also a monthly, f.1756) included sixty—both of them coming in at less than half the number of pages the *Edinburgh* offered.¹²³ The object of these earlier reviews was to notice “within certain editorial categories” every book that appeared in the British bookselling market.¹²⁴

A more selective approach to reviewing was hardly the only innovation of the *Edinburgh*. Along with introducing the practice of using book-reviews as a stepping stone to broader discussions (the review-like essay and essay-like review) came a more concerted effort to instruct and persuade readers on controversial topics of the day, all while doing so in an accessible, entertaining manner. As such, the *Edinburgh* was also selective in terms of current events as well as books. Only the “most important” developments were to be discussed in its pages. It was conceived as a loftier endeavor than the mere “reviewing” of books or “reporting” of news. In this sense of self-righteousness, higher journalism to earned its name from the very start.

In his memoirs, the Scottish writer, R.P. Gillies, scoffed, “Up to 1802 what pitiful abortions were our so-styled reviews! The object of their authors was to ‘give an account of the books;’ and the notion that upon every occasion there should be a special drift to contend for, an opportunity caught and improved for benefiting the cause of literature, politics, or morals, or science, by placing the subject in a new light, seemed never once to have entered into the calculations of our complacent editors.”¹²⁵ The arrival in October 1802 of the *Edinburgh Review*

¹²³ John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers: The “Edinburgh Review,” 1802-1815* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 34, 35.

¹²⁴ David V. Erdman, “Coleridge and the ‘Review Business’: An Account of His Adventures with the ‘Edinburgh,’ the ‘Quarterly,’ and ‘Maga,’” *Wordsworth Circle* 6, no. 1 (Winter 1975): 3-50, at 4.

¹²⁵ R.P. Gillies, *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran; Including Sketches and Anecdotes of the Most Distinguished Literary Characters from 1794 to 1849*, 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley 1851), I, 304. The best

was, therefore, “electrical,” according to Jeffrey’s biographer, Henry Cockburn. “The old periodical opiates were extinguished at once.”¹²⁶ By mid-century, the significance of the founding of the *Edinburgh Review* was acknowledged even in the pages of the rival *Westminster* as a fact of general public knowledge: “[A]s all the world knows, [the establishment of the *Edinburgh*] was the beginning of a new era in the history, not only of Scottish, but also of British politics. For a while, indeed, it was rather as a power in the general thought and literature of the country, than as a direct force in politics, that the new organ made itself felt.”¹²⁷

Writing a year before political differences inspired him to found the Tory *Quarterly Review*, Sir Walter Scott confessed of the *Edinburgh* that “no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it.”¹²⁸ In the classic modern study of the *Edinburgh*’s early years up to 1815, John Clive describes its sensational impact as the byproduct of “a method of presentation combining cleverness, wit, and an impression of omniscience with an aptitude for literary demolition.”¹²⁹ To be sure, “literary demolition” was not an entirely unheard of feature in older reviews, like the *Monthly Review*, *Critical Review*, and *British Critic*. Such criticism, however, was usually

history of the periodical literature preceding the advent of the *Edinburgh Review* is Derek Roper. *Reviewing before the “Edinburgh,” 1788-1802* (London: Methuen, 1978). Though Roper’s book adds a much more nuanced appreciation of reviewing prior to 1802, it remains justifiable to appreciate the novelty of the period beginning with the *Edinburgh*’s founding. See John Clive, “Review Article: Reviewing B.E.,” *American Scholar* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 414-7, at 417: “With selectivity came other innovations: books used as pegs on which to hang long general essays; a desire to amuse and entertain as well as to instruct sometimes at the cost of objectivity the attempt to imbue sensible people with sensible views on controversial subjects.”

¹²⁶ Henry Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey, with a Selection From His Correspondence*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1852), I, 131.

¹²⁷ [David Masson], “Edinburgh Fifty Years Ago,” *Westminster Review* new series, vol. 10, no. 2 (October 1856): 407-42, at 439.

¹²⁸ Walter Scott to George Ellis, November 2, 1808, in John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1837-38), II, 203 (emphasis in original).

¹²⁹ John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, 37.

reserved for books from rival publishers. More typical, according to Clive, was the following passage from the *Monthly Review*, published the same month as the *Edinburgh's* first number:

We have thus resumed and concluded our examination of this highly and useful and interesting work, noting such passages and observations as seemed necessary to convey some suitable ideas of its extent, variety, and merits.¹³⁰

Now here is Jeffrey's assessment of the Lake School poets:

A splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society, seems to be at the bottom of all their serious and peculiar sentiments. Instead of contemplating the wonders and the pleasures which civilization has created for mankind, they are perpetually brooding over the disorders by which its progress has been attended. They are filled with horror and compassion at the sight of poor men spending their blood in the quarrels of princes, and brutifying their sublime capabilities in the drudgery of unremitting labor. For all sorts of vice and profligacy in the lower orders of society, they have the same virtuous horror, and the same tender compassion. While the existence of these offences overpowers them with grief and confusion, they never permit themselves to feel the smallest indignation or dislike towards the offenders.¹³¹

When the banality of the first passage is contrasted with the acidic verve of the second, we begin to appreciate just how "electrical" the *Edinburgh's* arrival must have been to contemporaries.¹³²

But this was not all, as another scholar reminds us, "The one innovation of the *Edinburgh Review* that is beyond dispute is its financial generosity."¹³³ From its founding, the editor (until 1829, Francis Jeffrey) of the *Edinburgh* was to receive £200 a year from its publisher, while contributors initially earned ten guineas a "sheet" (or, every sixteen pages), before long rising to

¹³⁰ Anon., "Shaw's 'Zoology,' Vol. III," *Monthly Review* 39 (October 1802): 113-26, at 126. Quoted in John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, 39.

¹³¹ [Francis Jeffrey], "Southey's 'Thalaba,'" *Edinburgh Review* 1, no. 1 (October 1802): 63-83, at 71. Quoted in Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, 38. Clive, in fact, offers several other demonstrative excerpts from the *Edinburgh's* first issue in this section.

¹³² According to Clive, it "blew into this rather tepid [reviewing] atmosphere like a gust of fresh air." Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, 39.

¹³³ William Christie, *The "Edinburgh Review" in the Literary Culture of Romantic Britain: Mammoth and Megalonyx*, The Enlightenment World Series: Political and Intellectual History of the Long Eighteenth Century (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), 35

a sixteen guinea minimum with as much as twenty-five a sheet for outstanding contributors like Macaulay¹³⁴ (A “guinea” being one pound plus one shilling, or £1 1s). According to one modern historian, the *Edinburgh* would have to sell 4,700 hundred copies just to break even, a sales figure not reached until 1807.¹³⁵ In 1809, Jeffrey and the other original contributors (Henry Brougham, Sydney Smith, and Francis Horner) were able to negotiate a percentage of the profits with the publishers. With sales increasing each year thereafter (peaking at 13,500 around 1818¹³⁶), Jeffrey alone was able to earn an income of over £3,000 a year from the *Edinburgh*.¹³⁷

One way of thinking about the role of higher journalism is the agora where “all the second speeches in the national debate were made.”¹³⁸ Books, pamphlets, and speeches in parliament gave a statement, and it was in the great reviews of higher journalism that the initial comment appeared. As a forum for discussion of national issues, the opinions found in these pages weighed heavier in the minds of Britain’s increasingly educated public mind than could ever be expected of Hansard’s columns. At the other end of the spectrum, as one recent study notes, these reviews “provided an important platform for more detailed exposition of views and debate than the newspapers.”¹³⁹ In 1803, when considering whether or not to take on the editorial

¹³⁴ In fact, Jeffrey would claim that fully two-thirds of the contributions under his editorship were paid 25 guineas a sheet. See Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, I, 136. For later payments in the post-Jeffrey era, see the very interesting statistics in Blagden, “‘Edinburgh Review’ Authors, 1830-49,” esp.212.

¹³⁵ Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 78.

¹³⁶ [Arthur R.D. Elliot], “The ‘Edinburgh Review’ (1802-1902),” *Edinburgh Review* 196, no. 402 (October 1902): 275-318, at 289.

¹³⁷ Christie, *The “Edinburgh Review” in the Literary Culture of Romantic Britain*, 35.

¹³⁸ Michael Wolff. “Victorian Reviewers and Cultural Responsibility.” In *1859: Entering an Age of Crisis*, edited by Wolff, Philip Appleman and William A. Madden (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1959, 269-89, at 270.

¹³⁹ Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness, and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011): 18.

duties of the *Edinburgh Review* full-time, Jeffrey feared “[t]he risk of sinking in the general estimation, and being considered as fairly articulated to a trade that is not perhaps most respectable.” Ultimately, he proved prescient in “thinking that there are some peculiarities in our publication that should remove a part of these scruples.”¹⁴⁰

For those associated with quarterlies, there was a clear hierarchy in the early Victorian world of periodicals. William Hazlitt claimed that, “To be an Edinburgh Reviewer is, I suspect, the highest rank in modern literary society.”¹⁴¹ By contrast, “our daily and weekly writers are the lowest hacks of literature,” wrote John Stuart Mill in 1829.¹⁴² Though his relationship with the quarterly (and higher journalism in general) would later sour (as will be seen below), early on Carlyle agreed that “there can be no more respectable vehicle for any British man's speculations” than the *Edinburgh Review*.¹⁴³ Such perceptions distinguished quarterly reviews like the *Edinburgh*, *Quarterly*, and *Westminster* from other types of periodical writing. Though (as we shall see at the end of Chapter 3) the distinction would begin to break down in the 1850s and 1860s, a quarterly “review” carried gravitas, whereas mere monthly “magazines” like *Blackwood's* (f.1817) or *Fraser's* (1830) were trivial by comparison. In her excellent 1989 study of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* in the 1830s, Joanne Shattock explains that such “magazines” were understood by contemporaries to offer “at best rollicking high spirits, literary pranks, and generally ‘light’ articles, and at worst, acerbic satire, and splenetic personal attacks.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Francis Jeffrey to Francis Horner, May 11, 1803, in Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, I, 145.

¹⁴¹ William Hazlitt [signed A.Z.], “On Respectable People,” *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* 3 (August 1818): 117-20, at 120.

¹⁴² Mill to Gustave d’Eichthal, November 27, 1829, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, XII, 39.

¹⁴³ Carlyle to Macvey Napier, November 23, 1830, in *CMN*, 96.

¹⁴⁴ Joanne Shattock. *Politics and Reviewers: The “Edinburgh” and the “Quarterly” in the Early Victorian Age* (London: Leicester University Press, 1989), 6.

Highlighting a distinction between those organs of the press that originated public opinion—as opposed to those that merely represented it—Edward Bulwer Lytton reserves special mention for those pursuing the former, “nobler prerogative” in his social analysis of *England and the English*.¹⁴⁵ As for newspapers, “it is in very rare instances that a daily paper has done more than represent political opinion; it is the Reviews, quarterly or monthly (and, in two instances,¹⁴⁶ weekly journals) which have aspired to *create* it.” This is not to deny the day-to-day significance of newspapers; nor to suggest that the Victorian man of letters did the same. Indeed some of the more famous among them marveled at the newspapers industry. “Is there a more splendid monument of talent and industry than *The Times*?” Walter Bagehot once asked in an essay, before going on to offer a quote from Carlyle saying much the same thing: “Let the highest intellect able to write epics try to write such a leader for the morning newspapers, it cannot do it; the highest intellect will fail.” But, Bagehot continues, “did you ever see anything there you had never seen before?”

Out of the million articles that everybody has read, can any one person trace a single marked idea to a single article? Where are the deep theories, and the wise axioms, and the everlasting sentiments which the writers of the most influential publication in the world have been the first to communicate to an ignorant species? Such writers are far too shrewd. The two million, or whatever number of copies it may be, they publish, are not purchased because the buyers wish to know new truth. The purchaser desires an article which he can appreciate at sight; which he can lay down and say, “An excellent article, very excellent; exactly my own sentiments.” Original theories give trouble; besides, a grave man on the Coal Exchange does not desire to be an apostle of novelties among the contemporaneous dealers in fuel;—he wants to be provided with remarks he can

¹⁴⁵ Edward Bulwer Lytton, *England and the English*, 2 vols in 1 edn. (Paris: Galignani, 1833), 250 (emphasis in original).

¹⁴⁶ Almost certainly he is referring to the *Athenaeum* and *Spectator*—though a third, the *Saturday Review* (founded 1855), would equal and, arguably, surpass both in this quality of “originating opinion.”

make on the topics of the day which will not be known not to be his; that are not too profound; which he can fancy the paper only reminded him of.¹⁴⁷

This was not something to be lamented and changed. For Bagehot, it was a fact of life in a constitutional government, where “public opinion is the opinion of the average man” and “the most popular political paper is not that which is abstractedly the best or most instructive, but that which most exactly takes up the minds of men where it finds them, catches the floating sentiment of society.”¹⁴⁸ We should, therefore, bear in mind the fact that during the lengthy editorship of J.T. Delane (1841-77), it was the policy of *The Times* to follow the line of the party in power.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the most powerful daily newspaper of the day willingly swayed to whichever direction the political winds were blowing. The reasons for this situation are “obvious,” as Lytton explains:

[T]he daily paper looks only to sale form influence; the capital risked is so enormous, the fame acquired by contributions to it so small and evanescent, that it is mostly regarded as a mere mercantile speculation. Now new opinions are not popular ones; to swim with the tide, is the necessary motto of opinions that desire to sell: while the majority can see in your journal the daily mirror of themselves, their prejudices and their passions, as well as their sober sense and their true interests, they will run to look upon the reflection. Hence it follows, that the journal which most represents, least originates opinion; that the two tasks are performed by two separate agents, and that the more new doctrines a journal promulgates, the less promiscuously it circulates among the public.¹⁵⁰

The mission of higher journalism was, according to John Stuart Mill, to be “an enlightener and improver of [current sentiments],” not “a mere reflection [of them].”¹⁵¹ If such aims were to be achieved, however, considerations of audience and presentation were often just as significant as

¹⁴⁷ [Bagehot], “The Character of Sir Robert Peel,” 148.

¹⁴⁸ [Bagehot], “The Character of Sir Robert Peel,” 147, 148..

¹⁴⁹ Hirst. *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 84.

¹⁵⁰ Lytton, *England and the English*, 250-51.

¹⁵¹ [John Stuart Mill], “Civilization,” *London and Westminster Review* 25, no. 1 (April 1836): 1-28, at 17.

considerations of substance and merit. Francis Jeffrey once explained to a prospective *Edinburgh* reviewer the anxieties of communication that accompanied the lofty ambitions of his periodical:

[I]t is rather the object and the ambition of our review to step occasionally beyond the limits of technical details and to mingle as much general speculation with our critiques as the subject will easily admit of. To be learned and right is no doubt the first requisite—but to be ingenious and original and discursive is perhaps something more than the second in a publication which can only do good by remaining popular—and cannot be popular without other attractions than those of mere truth and correctness.¹⁵²

V. Style in Higher Journalism

*[T]he knack in style is to write like a human being. Some think they must be wise, some elaborate, some concise; Tacitus wrote like a pair of stays; some startle as Thomas Carlyle, or a comet, inscribing with his tail. But legibility is given to those who neglect these notions, and are willing to be themselves, to write their own thoughts in their own words, in the simplest words, in the words wherein they were thought.*¹⁵³

Jeffrey's friend and fellow founder of the *Edinburgh*, Sydney Smith, once told the editor of their great review, "You take politics to heart more than any man I know; I do not mean questions of party, but questions of national existence."¹⁵⁴ While the succeeding generation would disdain the political partisanship of their predecessors (as we will see in Chapter 4), in this way too Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review* "began the system" that Bagehot deemed "the commencement on large topics of suitable views for sensible persons."¹⁵⁵ The focus on "questions of national existence" remains to this very day a hallmark of higher journalism, as evidenced by the *Economist*, the *Atlantic*, and *Foreign Affairs*. Of such "sensible persons," it needs to be said that

¹⁵² Francis Jeffrey to Charles Koenig, January 20, 1806, quoted in Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, 54.

¹⁵³ [Walter Bagehot], "Lives of the Northern Worthies," *Prospective Review* 8, no. 32 (October 1852): 514-44. Quote is from the essay's reprinted version, entitled "Hartley Coleridge," in Bagehot's *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen, A Series of Articles Reprinted by Permission Principally from the "National Review"* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), 330-66, at 349.

¹⁵⁴ Sydney Smith to Francis Jeffrey, October 1807, in his daughter, Saba Holland's, *A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith, with a Selection from His Letters*, edited by Sarah Austin, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), II, 27.

¹⁵⁵ [Bagehot], "The First Edinburgh Reviewers," 257.

this was by no means exclusive to the middle and upper classes. As demonstrated by the Chartist movement, the working classes were not only skilled at social mobilization but increasingly literate in their own right. Some of the most effective masters of Victorian non-fiction prose embraced reaching such an audience, even if their main concern lay in the middle class reader.¹⁵⁶

Nonetheless, it was the rising middle classes for whom higher journalism increasingly aspired to write. Throughout the nineteenth century, literacy rates in the United Kingdom rose steadily. Keeping in mind that Scotland regularly maintained a higher percentage of readers than its counterparts, consider that, in 1800, roughly 60% of all males and 45% of all females were literate in England and Wales. These figures had risen to 67% and 51% by 1841; 81% and 73% by 1871; and 94% and 93% in 1891. Crucial for the purposes of higher journalism, from 1800 onwards, it was always a safe assumption that just about everyone who could be described as “middle class” and above could read.¹⁵⁷ In the periodicals of Victorian higher journalism, we find a near constant concern with how best to communicate with what Bagehot labeled “the bald-

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, Matthew Arnold’s speech to the Ipswich Working Men’s College, published as Matthew Arnold, “Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 35, no. 146 (February 1879): 238-52. See also, Amy Cruse, *The Victorians and Their Books* [published in US as *The Victorians and Their Reading*] (London: Allen and Unwin, 1935), 127-8. Here, Cruse points to two anecdotes of Macaulay’s and Carlyle’s popularity with the working classes. The first comes from Trevelyan’s *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, (vol. II, 235), telling of a wealthier man at Dunkinfield (near Manchester) who invited his poorer neighbors to attend readings of the *History* in the evenings. After reaching the end of the last volume, the audience moved to send a note of thanks to be sent to Macaulay “for having written a history which working men can understand.” (“I really prize this vote,” Macaulay says in his *Journal*.) The second anecdote recounted by Cruse concerns a “poor Paisley weaver” who wrote Carlyle to thank him for the enlightenment gleaned from his *French Revolution*. See also Thomas Carlyle to his mother, Margaret Aitken Carlyle, March 5, 1840, *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>. In this letter, Carlyle speaks of being “greatly struck” by the “piety and earnestness” of the weaver’s letter. However, the egalitarianism is somewhat qualified by Carlyle’s concluding that the weaver’s poor spelling made it “one of the most helpless-looking of letters.” For a recent collection of scholarly investigations that greatly complicate Carlyle’s apparently bifurcated view of the working classes as distinct from the rest of society, see Aruna Krishnamurthy, ed. *The Working Class Intellectual in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁵⁷ For literacy statistics, see Simon Eliot, “From Few and Expensive to Many and Cheap: The British Book Market, 1800-1890,” in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, edited by Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 291-302, at 293.

headed man at the back of the omnibus.” To achieve its didactic function in preparing the middle classes for rule, it was widely believed that higher journalism must maintain the attention of its readers with a style and manner worthy of imposing itself upon their increasingly busy daily lives. This has implications for what J. Middleton Murry described in *The Problem of Style* (1922). Murry rejected the notion that *good* style was simply “fine writing, a miserable procession of knock-kneed, broken-winded metaphors with a cruel cartload of ponderous, unmeaning polysyllables dragging behind them.” This “most popular delusions about style” neglects the intimate relationship that *substance* has in the equation.¹⁵⁸

As a prelude to understanding the difficulty of such a standard, we might once again turn to Dr. Johnson. Though he was the unquestioned monarch in the eighteenth century kingdom of English letters (just as Carlyle and Macaulay would be in the nineteenth century), even the mighty Johnson was not beyond reproach in the judgment of his nineteenth century successors—especially when it came to the need for an author to express his or her words with clarity. To be sure, Boswell put his subject’s gift for table-talk on full display. Clothing his wit, erudition, and common sense in a natural, everyday manner, Johnson the Conversationalist was impressive (soon to be legendary) figure—the ideal companion for a pleasant evening of enlightenment among friends. When his pen hit the paper, however, that man seemed to have vanished. Or, at least, the characteristics that made Johnson’s learnedness such an easy cross to bear had taken hiatus. As a writer, Johnson’s style was “systematically vicious,” Macaulay said in his 1831 review of Croker’s edition of Boswell. “All his books are written in a learned language, in a language which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse, in a language in which nobody ever

¹⁵⁸ J. Middleton Murry, *The Problem of Style* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1922), 11. A half century later, Peter Gay would reinforce Murry’s conclusion. See Peter Gay, *Style in History* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), esp. 4-6.

quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love, in a language in which nobody ever thinks.”¹⁵⁹ In short, Johnson the writer did not write like a human being, thus putting him in direct violation of the Walter Bagehot’s deeply “Victorian” maxim on style which serves as the epigraph to this section. Consider the following passage from Johnson at the beginning of the opening number of his famous *Rambler* essays (which appeared bi-weekly from March 1750 to March 1752):

The difficulty of the first address on any new occasion, is felt by every man in his transactions with the world, and confessed by the settled and regular forms of salutation which necessity has introduced into all languages. Judgment was wearied with the perplexity of being forced upon choice, where there was no motive to preference; and it was found convenient that some easy method of introduction should be established, which, if it wanted the allurements of novelty, might enjoy the security of prescription.¹⁶⁰

Upon reading this wordy, preposition-laden extract, we begin to get a sense of the author’s polysyllabic fondness (which gave rise to the term “Johnsonese”) and, perhaps, why some contemporaries judged him “a pompous pedant,” who, as Macaulay later put it, “would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six.”¹⁶¹ It is true that Johnson, like Carlyle (and, perhaps, any author of a certain standing), did have a collection of ardent defenders ready to point out the weightiness of Johnson’s thought and the grandeur of his expression.¹⁶² In a moment of mature even-handedness for the arch-Whig, Macaulay, acknowledges that Johnson

¹⁵⁹ [Macaulay], “Croker’s Edition of Boswell’s ‘Life of Johnson,’” 36.

¹⁶⁰ Samuel Johnson, “No. 1 [Tuesday, March 20, 1750],” in *The Rambler*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for J. Payne, 1753), I, 1-6, at 1.

¹⁶¹ Macaulay, “Johnson, Samuel,” in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 798. For an excellent brief discussion of the evolution of views on Johnson’s prose style, see Steven Lynn, “Johnson, Samuel,” in *Encyclopedia of the Essay*, edited by Tracy Chevalier, [1997], e-book edn. (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2006), 912-8.

¹⁶² Such “heavy reading,” Leslie Stephen explained, “is often strangely popular in England.” Leslie Stephen, *Samuel Johnson*, English Men of Letters Series (London: Macmillan, 1878), 40.

(despite his Toryism¹⁶³) merits both the criticism and acclaim he has been accorded.¹⁶⁴

Nonetheless, the Victorian consensus on Johnson was captured by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who echoed Burke's opinion that Johnson was a better talker than writer¹⁶⁵—though Coleridge thought Gibbon's style was “worst of all.”¹⁶⁶

Interestingly enough, the dichotomy between Johnson the affable conversationalist and Johnson the wooden writer seems to have been the exact reverse in the case of Joseph Addison (1672-1719). Awkward and timid in conversation, Addison's prose (as expressed in his *Tatler* and *Spectator* essays) was “the model of the middle style,” in Johnson's own estimation. Deemed “familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious,” per Johnson's advice, aspiring writers hoping to achieve a particularly “English style” of essay-writing need look no further than Addison.¹⁶⁷ As for Johnson himself, even an admiring Johnson scholar from the twentieth century acknowledges his prose could be “tedious.”¹⁶⁸ Ultimately, the consensus view

¹⁶³ Though not quite the “bigoted Tory” Macaulay had described him as in 1831. See [Macaulay], “Croker's Edition of Boswell's ‘Life of Johnson,’” 10.

¹⁶⁴ Macaulay, “Johnson, Samuel,” in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 798.

¹⁶⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1835), II, 217-8: “Burke said and wrote more than once that he thought Johnson greater in talking than writing.”

¹⁶⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Lecture 14: On Style,” in *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge. 4 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1836-39 [lecture delivered March 13, 1818]), I, 230-41, at 239.

¹⁶⁷ Samuel Johnson, “Addison,” in *The Six Chief Lives from Johnson's “Lives Of The Poets,” with Macaulay's “Life Of Johnson,”* edited by Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1878), 273-326, at 299 (for Addison's deficiency in conversation) and 326 (for his model of the middle style). On the latter point, the great twentieth century man of letters, John Gross, concurs in his “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Book of Essays*, xx: “if any one man has claim to be the father of the English essay, it is surely Addison.”

¹⁶⁸ A.R. Humphreys, “Johnson,” in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol. 4: From Dryden to Johnson*, edited by Boris Ford, [1957], revised edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 399-419, at 409. For the charge of Johnson's tediousness in its context, see Humphreys's full explanation on the same page: “Johnson at his best is so superior to Addison at his best (the ‘best’ being admittedly in very different kinds of work) as to render insignificant the question whether average Addison is better than average Johnson; average Johnson may be tedious, but the best Johnson adds nobility to life. That *The Rambler*, after a cool initial reception, came by Johnson's death to achieve ten editions in its collected form is a tribute to late Augustan taste.”

of any comparison between Addison and Johnson was expressed very early, in Arthur Murphy's 1792 biography of the latter. "Addison lends grace and ornament to truth; Johnson gives it force and accuracy."¹⁶⁹ Macaulay (himself the master of the "middle style" in his own day) reckoned Addison "the greatest of English Essayists."¹⁷⁰ Matthew Arnold agreed that Addison's style is "perfect in lucidity, measure, and propriety." However, Arnold also finds the substance of Addison's ideas "commonplace," "trite" "barren," and, thus, steeped in "provinciality." As we shall see in the chapter discussing the generation of higher journalists led by Arnold and Bagehot, the underlying thought of Arnold's critique of Addison was crucial to mid-Victorian considerations of the delicate balance between style and substance. "It is comparatively a small matter to express oneself well, if one will be content with not expressing much, with expressing only trite ideas; the problem is to express new and profound ideas in a perfectly sound and classical style."¹⁷¹ Style *must* be accompanied by substance, and vice versa.

It was largely for its ability to blend style with substance—in a manner accessible to the increasingly influential middle class reader—which gave the periodical essay a distinct advantage over other literary genres. Throughout the nineteenth century, poets and poetry maintained a prominent place in Victorian periodical culture.¹⁷² And while it would be a mistake

¹⁶⁹ Arthur Murphy, *An Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson, LL.D* (London: T. Longman, et al., 1792), 160.

¹⁷⁰ [Macaulay], "Life and Writings of Addison," 237.

¹⁷¹ Matthew Arnold, "The Literary Influence of Academies," *Cornhill Magazine* 10, no. 56 (August 1864): 154-72, at 164, 165.

¹⁷² Though Walter Houghton's decision not to include poetry in the *WIVP* was understandably criticized by some, the genre has received no small amount of excellent attention through the years from scholars of Victorian periodicals. See especially, Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies*; Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993); David Bromwich, "Romantic Poetry and the 'Edinburgh' Ordinances," *Yearbook of English Studies* 16, special issue: Literary Periodicals (1986): 1-16; Rosemary Scott, "Poetry in the 'Athenaeum': 1851 and 1881," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 19-32; Linda K. Hughes, "What the 'Wellesley Index' Left Out: Why Poetry Matters to Periodical Studies," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 91-125, esp. 121n4 [for a list of other recent works on the subject]; and Hughes, "Poetry," in

to dismiss poetry as merely an elite literary genre, the essay does seem to have certain advantages in attracting readers from a curious, increasingly literate, though not necessarily erudite middle class. As the American essayist, Katharine Fullerton Gerould, explained in the mid-1930s:

[M]ost of us need a different training in critical thinking than that which is offered to us by the poets. A vast amount of the detail of life, detail which preoccupies and concerns us all, is left out of great poetry. We do not spend all our time on the heights, or in the depths, and if we are to live we must reflect on many matters rather temporal than eternal. *The essayist says, "Come, let us reason together." That is an invitation—whether given by word of mouth or on the printed page—that civilized people must encourage and, as often as possible in their burdened lives, accept.*¹⁷³

The Utilitarians who formed the core of the *Westminster Review*'s early years were especially disdainful of poetry as a distraction from the more practical aims that could be achieved in earnest prose—an appropriate position for the intellectual disciples of Jeremy Bentham, who was fond of saying that "all poetry is misrepresentation."¹⁷⁴ Any work that gave pride of place to the powers of the imagination was unlikely to find sympathy in the *Westminster Review*.

"Literature," according to one its earliest contributions, was "the disease of the age." Yes, beautiful poetry should be appreciated. But it was unhelpful in solving the "difficulties in governing states," which "are best conquered in prose."¹⁷⁵ In "sober and utilitarian sadness," the reviewer continues:

The Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth Century British Periodicals and Newspapers, edited by Andrew King, Alexis Easley and John Morton. London: Routledge, 2016), 124-37.

¹⁷³ Katharine Fullerton Gerould, "An Essay on Essays," *North American Review* 240, no. 3 (December 1935): 409-18, at 418 (my emphasis).

¹⁷⁴ See John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1873), 112.

¹⁷⁵ [T. Southwood Smith?], "Present System of Education," *Westminster Review* 4, no. 7 (July 1825): 147-76, at 165, 166. This attribution to Dr. Southwood Smith comes from a Cambridge Seminar Reading List on "The

[W]e should be extremely glad to be informed, how the universal pursuit of literature and poetry, poetry and literature, is to conduce towards cotton spinning; or abolishing the poor-laws; or removing stupid commercial restrictions; or restraining the holy alliance; or convincing the other half of England that a Catholic is a Christian; or re-casting the Court of Chancery and exterminating the half of our laws, and two-thirds of our lawyers. States have been governed here and there, heaven knows how; but not by poetry, it is certain. Literature is a seducer; we had almost said a harlot. She may do to trifle with; but woe be to the state whose statesmen write verses, and whose lawyers read more in Tom Moore than in Bracton.¹⁷⁶

While such a dismissive view of poetry was more extreme than most other organs of Victorian higher journalism, it does reflect the general stance held by many as the decades went on.

Though dismissed as a “poet” by critics later in the century, Carlyle was intent on tackling the Condition-of-England Question through his prose. Poetry was insufficient for such a cause, declaring that: “It is not pleasant singing that we want,” but wise and earnest speaking:—‘Art,’ ‘High Art’ &c. are very fine and ornamental, but only to persons sitting at their ease: to persons still wrestling with deadly chaos, and still fighting for dubious existence, they are a mockery rather.”¹⁷⁷ On this front, Carlyle found himself in the rare state of being in agreement with Macaulay, who said in his name-making 1825 essay on “Milton” that, “We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labor, and long meditation, employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.”¹⁷⁸

Idea of a University in the 19th Century” convened by Ruth Abbott.
<https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/reading/Universities%20Seminar%20Reading%20List.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ [Southwood Smith?], “Present System of Education,” 166.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Shooting Niagara: And After?* Reprinted from “Macmillan’s Magazine” for August 1867, with some Additions and Corrections (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867), 25. Earlier, in his final contribution for the *Edinburgh Review*, had asked, “Poetry having ceased to be read, or published, or written, how can it continue to be reviewed?” [Carlyle], “Corn-Law Rhymes,” *Edinburgh Review* 55, no. 110 (July 1832): 338-61, at 338.

¹⁷⁸ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Milton,” *Edinburgh Review* 42, no. 84 (August 1825): 304-46, at 310.

Carlyle, as evidenced in his efforts towards “Germanizing the [British] public,”¹⁷⁹ had recognized the utility of being open to outside influences and the need to combat the parochialism of his own day, when Britain regarded “its own modes as so many laws of nature, and reject[ed] all that is different as unworthy even of examination.”¹⁸⁰ Yet, as we will also see, Carlyle ultimately undermined such efforts by stubbornly refusing to conform to Francis Jeffrey’s advice to “write *to* your countrymen *and* for them.”¹⁸¹ In the end, what most set the Victorian “system” apart from predecessors is seen in the conscious and consistent effort to pair the strengths of its most venerated predecessors: Addison and Johnson for the eighteenth century; Macaulay and Carlyle for later generations of the nineteenth century. The ideal Victorian essay was to couple the accessible “middle class” grace of Addison/Macaulay with the weighty authority of Johnson/Carlyle. It tackled serious topics without taking for granted that that was all a reader’s attention required. This was to be achieved by what one of the most ingenious of Victorian essayists labeled a “familiar style.”

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) was very much a professional writer in the Johnsonian sense.¹⁸² He had no civil servant career (like Arnold, John Stuart Mill, or Anthony Trollope), nor thriving legal practice (like Jeffrey). He made his living in an industry that remained perilous, despite the fact that there was more opportunity than ever to publish. For in the rough-and-tumble years of the early nineteenth century, a negative review in the *Edinburgh* or the *Quarterly* could bring book sales to a standstill. That these two main organs of criticism were divided along

¹⁷⁹ See Thomas Carlyle to John A. Carlyle, June 4, 1827, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

¹⁸⁰ [Carlyle], “State of German Literature,” 307.

¹⁸¹ Jeffrey to Carlyle, September 23, 1828, in *Letters of Francis Jeffrey to Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 22 (emphasis in original).

¹⁸² In the *Rambler*, no. 208, Johnson had described journalism as “the anxious employment of a periodical writer.” See Johnson, “No. 208 [Saturday, March 17, 1752],” in *The Rambler*, II, 1239-44

Tory-Whig lines only added to the hazardous existence of a professional writer like Hazlitt. Indeed, it is only through the rivalry of party politics that one can make sense of the *Quarterly*'s savage review of Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*, which were labeled "completely unintelligible", an "incoherent jumble of gaudy words."¹⁸³ Such a charge seems almost comically misguided if based on the actual substance of Hazlitt's prose; for whatever else may be said of his work,¹⁸⁴ he remains a model of clarity. Indeed, in his essay "On Familiar Style" (1821-22), Hazlitt offers what one modern scholar labels "a credo for what many have before and since taken to be a defining characteristic of the essay: a precise conversational style free from pomp and flourish but also free from cant and low language."¹⁸⁵ Hazlitt opens "On Familiar Style" by explaining that, "It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may so say, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of." Hazlitt then describes the "familiar style" as follows:

It utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine familiar or truly English style, is to write as anyone would speak in common conversation, who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ [Eaton Stannard Barrett], "Hazlitt's 'Lectures on the English Poets,'" *Quarterly Review* 19, no. 38 (July 1818): 424-34, at 434. Around the same time, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (also a Tory publication) had attacked Hazlitt to the extent that the author sued for libel (eventually, the case was settled out of court). See Jonathan Bate, "Hazlitt, William (1778-1830)," in *ODNB* (September 2015), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/12805>.

¹⁸⁴ Hazlitt occasionally overextended himself and the quality of his work could suffer as a result.

¹⁸⁵ Douglas Hesse, "British Essay," in *Encyclopedia of the Essay*, edited by Tracy Chevalier, e-book edn. (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2006), 220-39, at 226.

¹⁸⁶ William Hazlitt, "On Familiar Style," in *Table-Talk: Or, Original Essays*, by Hazlitt, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1821-22), II, 185-97, at 185 (emphasis in original).

Nonetheless, the *Quarterly Review*'s authority was such that sales of Hazlitt's *Lectures* could not recover, forcing him to publishing an open *Letter to William Gifford*, the editor of the *Quarterly*. In this *Letter*, Hazlitt defends himself, writing: "As to my style, I thought little about it. I only used the word which seemed to me to signify the idea I wanted to convey, and I did not rest till I had got it. In seeking for truth I sometimes found beauty."¹⁸⁷ This passage bears a remarkable similarity with George Orwell's later declaration that, "What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art."¹⁸⁸ In striving for this goal, Orwell was making common cause with Victorian predecessors like Bagehot and Arnold, both of whom were quite explicit in their desire to combine both entertaining prose with persuasive argumentation in an entertaining. It was the very essence of the Victorian periodical essay's function.

¹⁸⁷ Hazlitt, *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq., from William Hazlitt, Esq.* (London: John Miller, 1819), 35.

¹⁸⁸ George Orwell, "Why I Write," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. 4 vols. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968 [essay orig. pub. Summer 1946]), I, 1-7, at 6.

Table 1: Victorian Periodicals of Higher Journalism¹

Title	Price	Circulation Figures (in thousands)	Frequency	Notable Features
Edinburgh Review (1802-1929)	6s (after 1809)	Peak: 13.5 (c.1818) ² 1830s-40s: est. 7.5-8.5 ³ 1860-70: 7	Quarterly	Whig; the first of the great Victorian reviews; anonymous
Quarterly Review (1809-1967 ⁴)	6s	Peak: 14 (c.1818) ⁵ 1830s-40s: 8.5-9.5 ⁶ 1860-70: 8	Quarterly	Tory rival of the <i>Edinburgh</i> ; anonymous
Westminster Review (1824-1914)	6s	1840: 1.2 ⁷ 1860-70: 4	Quarterly Monthly (from April 1887)	Organ of the “radical” Benthamites; anonymous
Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine (1817-1980 ⁸)	2s6d	1860: 10 1865: 8 1870: 7	Monthly	Aristocratic Tory rival of the <i>Edinburgh</i> ; notable fiction serializations later in the century (for example, Conrad)
Fraser’s Magazine (1830-1882)	2s6d	1831: 8.7 ⁹ 1860: 8 1865: 8 ¹⁰ 1870: 6 1879: 5 ¹¹	Monthly	Invariably Tory—notably supported Disraeli under Froude’s editorship (1860-74); Mostly anonymous ¹²
North British Review (1844-1871)	6s	1860: 2 1865: 3 1870: 2	Quarterly	Free Church of Scotland; anonymous
British Quarterly Review (1845-1886)	6s	1860-70: 2	Quarterly	Nonconformist; anonymous
National Review I (1855-1864)	6s	1860-64: 1	Quarterly	Grew out of Unitarian <i>Prospective Review</i> (1845-55); edited by Walter Bagehot; last issue (1864) featured signed articles
Macmillan’s Magazine (1859-1907)	1s	1860-65: 20 1870: 8	Monthly	“Family” publication; emphasis on fiction after 1885; predominantly signed articles
Cornhill Magazine (1860-1975)	1s ¹³	1860: 80 1865: 30 1870: 18 1882: 12 ¹⁴	Monthly	“Family” publication; emphasis on fiction, but with some notable non-fiction contributions by Arnold and Ruskin
Fortnightly Review (1865-1954 ¹⁵)	2s 2s6d (from 1867)	1867: 1.4 1872: 2.5 ¹⁶ c.1886-94: est. 5 ¹⁷	Monthly (from November 1866)	First to adopt explicit general policy of signed articles; liberal political affiliation; mostly non-fiction, but some serialized fiction and poetry

Table 1 (Cont.)

Title	Price	Circulation Figures (in thousands)	Frequency	Notable Features
Contemporary Review (1866-2012 ¹⁸)	2s6d	1870: 4 1876: 8 ¹⁹	Monthly	Liberal in politics; Evangelical in religion and tone; no fiction; some signature
Saint Pauls (1867-1874)	1s	Peak: 10 ²⁰	Monthly	“Trollope’s Monthly”; unsuccessfully sought to occupy middle ground between “serious” reviews (like the <i>Contemporary</i> and <i>Fortnightly</i>) and “lighter” magazines (like <i>Cornhill</i> and <i>Macmillan’s</i>); some signatures, though mostly anonymous ²¹
Nineteenth Century (1877-1972 ²²)	2s6d	c.1877: est. 10 ²³ c.1884: 20 ²⁴	Monthly	Signed; affiliated with the Metaphysical Society; no advertising; no fiction; some poetry; leading monthly review in later decades of the century
National Review II (1883-1960 ²⁵)	2s6d	1883-93: est. 5 1893-1914: est. 10 ²⁶	Monthly	Tory; from 1890s, some fiction and poetry
Athenaeum (1828-1921 ²⁷)	4d (1855-60) 3d (1865-70)	1855: 20 1860-70: 15	Weekly	Anonymous; the dominant weekly under Charles Wentworth Dilke’s editorship (1830-46); thereafter lost ground to the <i>Spectator</i> and <i>Saturday Review</i> ; very little on politics directly; mostly art, science, and literature
Spectator (1828-Present)	9d (c.1855) 6d (c.1860-70)	1855: 2.6 1860: 3 1865: 2 1870: 4	Weekly	Anonymous; though liberal in politics, known for conservative literary tastes; reached pinnacle of influence under R.H. Hutton’s long editorship (1861-97)
Economist (1843-Present)	9d (c.1855) 8d (after c.1860)	1843: 1.73 1873: 3.69 ²⁸	Weekly	Anonymous; from 1860-77, edited by Walter Bagehot; politically moderate; with an international readership in excess of 1 million today, arguably the most influential organ of higher journalism in the twenty-first century
Saturday Review (1855-1938)	6d	1860: 10 1865: 18 1870: 20	Weekly	Strenuous adherence to anonymity, despite giving many eminent Men of Letters their start (such as both Stephens brother, as well as John Morley); politically conservative ²⁹

Table 1 (Cont.)

¹ Note: Unless otherwise stated, all dates and figures are derived from Alvar Ellegard, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Gothenburg: [Distr. Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm], 1957).

² [Elliot], "The 'Edinburgh Review' (1802-1902)," 289.

³ The ledgers for the *Edinburgh's* publisher, Longman, have been lost for these years. The sales figures here are based on the corresponding numbers for its close rival, the *Quarterly*, whose sales had run "slightly" ahead of the *Edinburgh* from some time by this point. Thus, whereas the *Quarterly* seems to have hovered between 9000 and 9500 for most of the 1830s, before it finally fell below 9000 in the mid-1840, it seems reasonable to estimate the *Edinburgh* followed a similar trajectory, though always lagging by some 500 to 1000 issues. See Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers*, 97-100.

⁴ Collini, "Always Dying: The Ideal of the General Periodical," 228. Here, Collini also provides the above dates for closures of the *Quarterly Review*, *Fortnightly Review*, as well as *Cornhill Magazine*.

⁵ Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the House, 1768-1843*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1891), II, 39.

⁶ Briefly in 1832, the *Quarterly* passed 10,000 in sales, thereafter it wavered between 9000 and 9500 throughout the 1830s. By the end of 1844, it had fallen below 9000, and down to 8549 in July 1846 (the last date of its publisher, Murray's, ledgers). See Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers*, 97-100.

⁷ Claudia Nelson, *Invisible Men: Fatherhood in Victorian Periodicals, 1850-1910*, by Nelson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 215. The *Westminster* was the exemplar of a Victorian periodical whose financial struggles and relatively small circulation ran directly inverse to the apparent prestige in which it was held among certain highly intellectual circles.

⁸ Barbara Mary Onslow, "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine," in *Encyclopedia of the Essay*, 194-6.

⁹ Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 393.

¹⁰ But see Walter E. Houghton's, "Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country, 1830-1882: Introduction," in *WIVP*, II, 303-19, at 314n37, where Houghton explains that Ellegard's estimation of 8,000 is likely too high.

¹¹ Nelson, *Invisible Men*, 213.

¹² Out of about 6,560 essays that it published during its more than half-century existence, before 1865, only 243 essays were signed. After 1865, 845 were signed. Houghton, "Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country, 1830-1882: Introduction," 317.

¹³ But see Sara Ferrell "The Cornhill Magazine, 1860-1900: Introduction," in *WIVP*, I, 321-4, at 323. Here Ferrell notes that in July 1883, the *Cornhill* reduced its price to 6d as a reflection of its inability to keep up with its shilling monthly competitors. By July 1896, however, this strategy had proven ineffective, and the *Cornhill* returned to the ranks of the shilling monthlies.

¹⁴ Ferrell, "The Cornhill Magazine, 1860-1900: Introduction," 323.

¹⁵ Subsequently merged with the *Contemporary Review*. Nelson, *Invisible Men*, 213.

¹⁶ Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 84. It is also from Hirst that the figure of 1,400 in 1867 is taken, as Ellegard's estimate of 3,000 for 1865 appears dubious in light of the fact that the *Fortnightly Review's* well-known early financial struggles were reversed under Morley's editorship (1867-1882).

Table 1 (Cont.)

¹⁷ Editor from 1886-94, Frank Harris claimed that the *Fortnightly*'s circulation had doubled under his watch. Frank Harris, "The 'Fortnightly Review,'" chap. 12 of vol. 3 in *My Life and Loves: Five Volumes in One/Complete and Unexpurgated*, by Harris, [orig. pub. c.1925], edited by John F. Gallagher (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 632-44, at 635. But Harris was a notorious rogue and, Richard Davenport-Hines warns in his *ODNB* entry for Harris, "Nothing in these volumes [*My Life and Loves*] is to be trusted without independent corroboration; but when such corroboration is available Harris proves a sharp and sometimes accurate observer." It is, therefore, with due caution that we offer Harris's estimation for the *Fortnightly*'s circulation in the years of his editorship. See Richard Davenport-Hines, "Harris, James Thomas [Frank] (1856?-1931)," in *ODNB* (January 2008), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/33727>.

¹⁸ See Bridgit McCafferty and Arianne Hartsell-Gundy, *Literary Research and British Postmodernism: Strategies and Sources*, Literary Research: Strategies and Sources Series (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 100-1, where the authors note that while the *Contemporary* ceased publication in 2012, its publisher was considering online alternatives as of 2013.

¹⁹ Nelson, *Invisible Men*, 212. We should also note that Nelson gives a lower estimate for readership than Ellegard for 1870 (2,000).

²⁰ See Mark W. Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 142, where it is noted that the sales never exceeded this number. Thus, Ellegard's numbers are again unreliable (he offers 20-25 thousand as estimated circulation figures for the ill-fated shilling monthly).

²¹ See John Sutherland, "Trollope and 'St. Paul's,' 1866-70," in *Anthony Trollope*, edited by Tony Bareham (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1980), 116-37, at 127, where Sutherland posits four reasons for *Saint Pauls* general practice of anonymity.

²² Changing its name in 1901 to the *Nineteenth Century and After* and, in 1951, the *Twentieth Century*, Knowles had initially failed to secure the rights to his first choice in 1901, thus forcing the rather awkward appendage "and after" to remain until the matter's resolution in 1951—by which time Knowles had long been deceased (1908). See Michael Goodwin, "Preface," in *Nineteenth Century Opinion: An Anthology of Extracts from the First Fifty Volumes of "The Nineteenth Century," 1877-1901*, edited by Goodwin (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951), 9-16, at 15.

²³ This is the figure given in general for that periodical's "early years" in Luyten, "The Nineteenth Century, 1877-1900: Introduction," in *WIVP*, II, 624.

²⁴ Priscilla Metcalf, *James Knowles: Victorian Editor and Architect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 285.

²⁵ Nelson, *Invisible Men*, at 213.

²⁶ Nelson, *Invisible Men*, at 213-4.

²⁷ In 1921, incorporated into the *Nation*, becoming the *New Nation and Athenaeum*. In 1931, merged with the *New Statesman*, becoming the *New Statesman and Nation*, dropping the separate note "Incorporating the *Athenaeum*" from the title after January 13, 1934. Dickie A. Spurgeon, "Athenaeum, The," in *British Literary Magazines, Vol. 2: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836*, edited by Alvin Sullivan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 21-4, at 24.

²⁸ Ruth Dudley Edwards, "Appendices," in *The Pursuit of Reason: "The Economist," 1843-1993*, by Edwards (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1993), 949-51, at 951. These more reliable figures are slightly lower than those provided by Ellegard (who estimates a readership of 4,200 in 1855, and one of 4,000 from 1860-1870).

²⁹ J.D. Jump, "Weekly Reviewing in the Eighteen-Fifties," *Review of English Studies* 24, no. 93 (January 1948): 42-57; and Jump, "Weekly Reviewing in the Eighteen-Sixties," *Review of English Studies* 3, no. 11 (July 1952): 244-62.

Chapter 2

Carlyle and Macaulay: Quarterly Reviewing's Exemplary Dyad

It is hard to conceive a stronger contrast to the rugged and imposing figure of Carlyle than is presented by the other brilliant prose writer whose fame was already becoming known far and wide at Her Majesty's accession, chiefly through his political work. In appearance, as in mind, in thought, purpose and style they are as far apart as the two poles...Not that Macaulay was disinclined to hero-worship of a kind, though the characters he would have selected for that cult would scarcely have been Carlyle's favorites, but in every other respect their methods of thought were as different as Macaulay's polished sentences are opposed to the dithyrambic utterances of the prophet of Chelsea. Metaphysics Macaulay loathed: and, though there might be some sympathy between him and Carlyle in their common delight in history, their predilection was prompted by entirely different aims and worked out entirely different effects.¹

By 1826, when the *Edinburgh Review* was taken over by the London publisher Longmans, it had spawned two important rivals: the Tory *Quarterly Review*, founded by Sir Walter Scott in 1809, and the Radical Benthamite *Westminster Review*, founded by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill in 1824. By that time, however, Francis Jeffrey was beginning to sense that the best days of the *Edinburgh's* founding generation were behind them. In search of new blood, he wrote a friend in January 1825, asking, "Can you not lay your hands on some clever young man who would write

¹ Margaret Oliphant and Francis R. Oliphant, *The Victorian Age of English Literature*. 2 vols. (London: Percival, 1892), I, 162. Presumably, this passage belongs to Margaret, who collaborated with her son in these volumes. For other contemporary and later nineteenth century views that treat Carlyle and Macaulay more or less in tandem, see George Gilfillan, *A Third Gallery of Portraits* (Edinburgh: James Hogg, 1854), esp. "Modern Critics, No. VI: Thomas Babington Macaulay," 278-312, and "Miscellaneous Sketches, No. 1: Carlyle and Sterling," 313-27; John Morley, "Carlyle," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 8, no. 43 (July 1870): 1-22; Morley, "Macaulay," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 19, no. 112 (April 1876): 494-513. See also Frederic Harrison, "Carlyle's Place in Literature," *Forum* 17 (July 1894): 537-50; Harrison, "Macaulay's Place in Literature," *Forum* 18 (September 1894): 80-94. For later comparisons between Carlyle and Macaulay, see Richmond Croom Beatty, "Macaulay and Carlyle," *Philological Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (January 1939): 25-34; E.L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815-1870*, [1938], 2nd edn, The Oxford History of England Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) 542-3; A.J.P. Taylor, "Macaulay and Carlyle," chap. 4 in *Englishmen and Others*, by Taylor (London: Hamilton, 1956), 19-25; Michael Goldberg, "'Demigods and Philistines': Macaulay and Carlyle - A Study in Contrasts," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 24, no. 1 (1989): 116-28; David R. Sorenson, "Carlyle, Macaulay, and the 'Dignity of History,'" *Carlyle Studies Annual* 11 (1990): 41-52; and Owen Dudley Edwards, "Carlyle Versus Macaulay? A Study in History," *Carlyle Studies Annual* 27 (2011): 177-206. See also, George Levine, *The Boundaries of Fiction: Carlyle, Macaulay, Newman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), esp. chaps. 1 and 2, "'Sartor Resartus' and the Balance of Fiction," 19-78, and "Macaulay: Progress and Retreat," 79-163.

for us?” He explained that, “The original supporters are getting old, and either too busy, or stupid, to go on comfortably; and here [in Edinburgh] the young men are mostly Tories.”² Little did he know, but two star recruits were soon to emerge not merely to lead Jeffrey’s review into a stellar second generation,³ but eventually gain general ascent as being “the two chief prose writers of the mid-nineteenth century.”⁴ These are, of course, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59).

Today, both men are far better known (and by no means fondly) for other facets of their careers. Even if one finds a modern critic willing to forgive either Carlyle’s history of *The French Revolution* (1837) or Macaulay’s *History of England* (1848-61) for having the temerity to fall out of fashion with twenty-first century academic standards, there are still the troubling matters with which to contend, namely Carlyle’s racism (extreme even for a Victorian) and association with fascist authoritarianism, as well as Macaulay’s role as an imperial administrator. In this chapter, we make *no excuses* and *no defense* for these unsavory aspects of both Carlyle and Macaulay. Rather, we wish to consider them here through the prism of their respective connections to and influence upon Victorian higher journalism. We begin by taking careful issue with the opinion expressed by John Morley in 1876, in what more than one critic has judged the best of Morley’s many outstanding essays.⁵ The subject of the essay in question was Macaulay,

² Francis Jeffrey to John Allen, January 3, 1825, quoted in Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, I, 279.

³See Shattock, “Reviewing Generations: Professionalism and the Mid-Victorian Reviewer,” 385. Shattock adds a third name (William Empson [1789-1852]) to the list of leading figures of the *Edinburgh*’s second generation. Empson would eventually become editor of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1847, succeeding Macvey Napier and, subsequently, moving the *Edinburgh*’s headquarters to London, where he was based.

⁴ George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 364.

⁵ See, for example, Frances S. Knickerbocker, *Free Minds: John Morley and His Friends* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943), 198; Warren Staebler, *The Liberal Mind of John Morley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 164; Basil Willey, “John Morley,” chap. 6 in *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest Doubters*, by Willey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 248-301, at 295.

whom Morley reckoned to be one of the two men who had most “thoroughly impressed the journalists of our time.”⁶ While the choice of John Stuart Mill (1809-73) as the other member of Morley’s influential pairing is certainly not without merit,⁷ we should take note of Stefan Collini’s point that Mill’s deification as a secular saint of British intellectual life was of relatively recent origin, only really gaining popular acclaim in the last decade of his life and (even more so) posthumously.⁸ Moreover, Collini—in no way a detractor of Mill—acknowledges that Mill’s prose could often prove less than ideal in the forum of Victorian higher journalism, a medium constantly in search of a sort of Goldilocks ideal, where style and substance blended to an extent that was “just right.” Certainly, John Stuart Mill was never accused of a lack of substance. His style of expressing those weighty opinions, on the other hand, “never quite hits off the ideal tone for such writing,” says Collini.⁹ Indeed, Mill’s prose had an inconvenient tendency to be “sawdustish,” as Carlyle once accused his conversation of being.¹⁰

⁶ Morley, “Macaulay,” 495.

⁷ And unsurprising, given Morley’s reputation among contemporaries as “Mill’s representative on Earth,” as noted by Eugenio F. Biagini, “John Stuart Mill and the Liberal Party.” *Journal of Liberal History*, no. 70 (Spring 2011): 4-9, at 6. Though Mill’s posthumously published *Three Essays on Religion* (1874) caught the unfaithful Morley offguard, disturbing him for Mill’s apparent religious orthodoxy. See John Morley, “Mr. Mill’s Three Essays on Religion [Part I],” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 16, no. 95 (November 1874): 634-51; and Morley, “Mr. Mill’s Three Essays on Religion [Part II],” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 17, no. 97 (January 1875): 103-31. For a scholarly perspective on this aspect of the Mill-Morley relationship, see Jeff Lipkes, “Mystifying Morley: Developments in Mill’s Religious Beliefs,” chap. 4 in *Politics, Religion, and Classical Political Economy in Britain: John Stuart Mill and His Followers*, by Lipkes (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 34-43.

⁸ See Stefan Collini’s essay, “From Sectarian Radical to National Possession: John Stuart Mill in English Culture, 1873-1945,” in *A Cultivated Mind: Essays on J.S. Mill Presented to John M. Robson*, edited by Michael Laine (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 242-72.

⁹ Stefan Collini, “Introduction,” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, XXI, vii-lvi, at xv.

¹⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, edited by J.A. Froude, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1881), II, 177. The twentieth century Victorian scholar, Basil Willey, follows this harsh assessment, noting “spinstersh dryness of [Mill’s] thought and style.” Basil Willey, “John Stuart Mill,” chap. 6 in *Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold*, by Willey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 141-86, at 141.

In other words, Mill wrote to instruct his readers, not to entertain them. The ideal practitioner of higher journalism did—and still does—both.

Nonetheless, if it is too much to deny Mill's place in Morley's pantheon of Victorian higher journalism, then perhaps it is more sensible to argue for the inclusion of Carlyle. Morley himself admits as much when he explains his decision to exclude Carlyle's influence as a journalist from that of Macaulay and Mill. This, Morley says, was owed to the fact "[Carlyle] is, as the Germans call Jean Paul, *der Einzige* [unique]. And he is a poet, while the other two are in their degrees serious and argumentative writers, dealing in different ways with the great topics that constitute the matter and business of daily discussion."¹¹

I. Carlyle: "The Despotic Sovereign of Thought"

Pace Morley, it seems insufficient to dismiss Carlyle's influence as a political journalist on such grounds alone. Nor should it distract from what Morley had said of Carlyle in an essay six years prior: "[W]hatever later teachers may have done in definitely shaping opinion, in giving specific form to sentiment, and in subjecting impulse to rational discipline, here was the friendly fire-bearer who first conveyed the Promethean spark, here the prophet who first smote the rock."¹² For if the distinguished Carlyle scholar, G.B. Tennyson, exaggerates by claiming that Carlyle was "*the* pioneer in non-fiction prose as the vehicle for carrying ideas to a mass audience," he does so only by degree.¹³ Certainly, Carlyle's style ("Carlylese"¹⁴) was distinct unto himself, but

¹¹ Morley, "Macaulay," 495.

¹² Morley, "Carlyle," 1.

¹³ G.B. Tennyson, "The Carlyles," in *Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research*, edited by David J. DeLaura (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1973), 31-111, at 34 (my emphasis).

¹⁴ By at least 1833, the term "Carlylese" has entered the English lexicon. See William Maginn, "Gallery of Literary Characters, No. XXXVII: Thomas Carlyle, Esq.," *Fraser's Magazine* 7, no. 42 (June 1833): 706.

Tennyson is absolutely correct to stress his subject's influence: "Carlyle affected almost everyone positively *and* negatively at one time or another; the point is he affected them."¹⁵

Moreover, his choice of the essay (and non-fiction prose in general) as the preferred vehicle for expressing ideas in print was demonstrably a *Victorian* practice and has much less in common with the Romantics (of which he was certainly one of the last).¹⁶

To those who had grown up under his influence, Carlyle was "commonly accepted as the despotic sovereign of thought," as the Irish politician and Home Rule advocate, Justin McCarthy, retrospectively put it in his memoir on the 1860s. "Even those who remained in an attitude of uncompromising resistance to his sovereign authority could not deny the extent of his domination." Those of McCarthy's generation who sought to undermine Carlyle's authority were as "Russians who will not recognize the authority of the Czar, but do not pretend to deny or ignore the fact that the Czar is a mighty monarch."¹⁷ Implicitly referencing Mill, or perhaps Comte, McCarthy notes that it is commonly understood that "leaders of certain schools of thought do not extend their influence outside the limits of their avowed and acknowledged pupils. The followers of the one school accept to the full the doctrines of their teacher and do not trouble themselves about the doctrines or the teacher of any other school." This was not the case with Carlyle. "We all discussed him, followers and rebels alike."¹⁸

¹⁵ Tennyson, "The Carlyles," in *Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research*, 33 (emphasis in original).

¹⁶ For Carlyle's connection to Romanticism, see Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics, and the Question of "Culture"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, esp. his "Introduction: The Condition of England," 1-12.

¹⁷ Justin McCarthy. "Thomas Carlyle - Alfred Tennyson," chap. 4 in *Portraits of the Sixties*, by McCarthy (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), 49-64, at 49.

¹⁸ McCarthy. "Thomas Carlyle - Alfred Tennyson," 50.

“There is,” wrote George Eliot in 1855, “hardly a superior active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle’s writings; there has hardly been an English book written for the last ten or twelve years that would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived.”¹⁹ Yet to Leslie Stephen, writing at the end of 1881, Carlyle (who had died earlier that year) “belonged essentially to a past generation” whose opinions had, like those of Burke and Milton, “passed into the domain of history.”²⁰ But *which* “past generation”? In a political sense, Carlyle never truly embraced *his own* generation. For instance, in May of 1832, with the passage of the First Reform Bill looming, one finds the relatively young sage expressing a skepticism of political reform that certainly many of his colleagues at the *Edinburgh* would have found anachronistic:

The only Reform is in thyself. Know this O Politician, and be moderately political.

For me I have never yet done any one political act; not so much as the signing of a petition. My case is this: I comport myself wholly like an alien; like a man who is not in his own country; whose own country lies perhaps a century or two distant.²¹

In the coming decades (as will be seen in the next chapter), critics would seize on the paradoxical fact that the man who so capably identified the “Signs of the Times” could also seem so out of touch in his refusal to endorse reform as a practical way to confront the dilemmas of modernity. Carlyle’s nebulosity is certainly one of his most defining characteristics. But for this dissertation, he serves a very distinct purpose. Through his formulation of the “Condition of England Question” first as an essayist and then as a pamphleteer and historian, Carlyle called attention to the paradoxical fruits of “progress” for nineteenth century Britain, aptly captured in the opening

¹⁹ Unsigned review from the October 27, 1855 issue of the *Leader*, reprinted in Jules Paul Seigel ed., *Thomas Carlyle: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1971), 409-11, at 409-10.

²⁰ [Leslie Stephen], “Carlyle’s Ethics,” *Cornhill Magazine* 44, no. 264 (December 1881): 664-83, at 665.

²¹ Thomas Carlyle. *Two Notebooks of Thomas Carlyle: From 23rd March 1822 to 16th May 1832*, edited by Charles Eliot Norton (New York: The Grolier Club, 1898), 274-5.

lines of *Past and Present* (1843): “The condition of England...is justly regarded as one of the most ominous, and withal one of the strangest ever seen in this world. England is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition.”²²

Carlyle’s work and its considerable influence on contemporaries demonstrates that, at a time when there was general confidence at home regarding Britain’s international position, the principle source of anxiety lay in domestic matters resulting from social, political and, indeed, psychological changes wrought by what he called “the Mechanical Age.” The quotes above from McCarthy and Eliot testify to the fact that the forceful, prophetic language with which the Sage of Chelsea wrote incomparably captured the attention of the generation who was introduced to his writings in their youth. As will be seen below, although his relationship with the periodical press in these years was far from harmonious (few things ever were when it came to Carlyle), he was—along with Macaulay—the most influential essayist of the 1830s and 1840s.

As the years passed, however, there arose a number of significant stylistic and functional criticisms of Carlyle that would both influence and reflect generational shifts in the political discourse of the Victorian era. These critiques follow two general lines of thought. First, they reveal a growing dissatisfaction with his style of writing, especially insofar as it came to be seen as out of step with what Walter Bagehot termed an “age of discussion.”²³ “The whole fabric of English society,” Bagehot said, “is based upon discussion—all our affairs are decided, after the

²² Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843),1.

²³ Walter Bagehot. “Physics and Politics, No. V: Conclusion - The Age of Discussion,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 11, no. 61 (January 1872): 46-70.

giving of reasons, by the compromise of opinions.”²⁴ Whatever their merit, Carlyle’s secular sermons were not geared towards compromise. Second, there was increasing frustration with Carlyle’s unwillingness to offer solutions (“Morrison’s Pills,” as he called them²⁵) to the problems he so powerfully exposed. Thus, as George Levine once observed, “When the generation that Carlyle had inspired decided he was not to be trusted, they tended to make the division between the substance and the style almost absolute...Imagination and personal insight are fine for singing, but have nothing to do with the resolution or even formulation of practical problems.”²⁶ But before exploring the growth and implications this generational shift in views towards Carlyle, we must first understand his rather strained relationship with higher journalism, the medium in which he first made his impact.

Carlyle and the Higher Journalism

Joanne Shattock has highlighted the irony that “the most original mind associated with periodical literature in the 1830s, whose association helped to dignify the profession of journalism, should have resented his entanglement, and endeavored to escape from it, and that the one periodical respected by him [the *Edinburgh Review*], and for which he would willingly continued to write, so seriously undervalued him.”²⁷ While Carlyle had, indeed, once flattered Macvey Napier (Francis Jeffrey’s successor) in telling him “there can be no more respectable vehicle for any British man’s speculations” than the *Edinburgh Review*, in truth his enthusiasm for periodical-

²⁴ [Walter Bagehot], “Average Government,” *Saturday Review* 1, no. 22 (March 29, 1856): 428-9, at 428.

²⁵ Thomas Carlyle, “Morrison’s Pill,” chap. 1.4 in *Past and Present*, by Carlyle (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), 20-3.

²⁶ George Levine. “The Use and Abuse of Carlylese,” in *The Art of Victorian Prose*, edited by Levine and William A. Madden (New York: Oxford, 1968, 101-26), at 102.

²⁷ Shattock. *Politics and Reviewers*, 117.

writing was of resigned acceptance at best.²⁸ “Living here by Literature is either serving the Devil, or fighting against him at fearful odds.”²⁹ But his message was too important. A Faustian bargain had to be made if society was to be warned that it was “utterly condemned to destruction.”³⁰ As he once told John Stuart Mill: “I had hoped that by and by I might get out of Periodicals altogether, and write Books: but the light I got in London last winter showed me that this was as good as over. My Editors of Periodicals are my Booksellers, who (under certain new and singular conditions) purchase and publish my Books for me; a monstrous method, yet still a method.”³¹ In short, higher journalism was a central institution in what was probably then the most print-oriented culture in the world at the time. The Victorian Man of Letters had little choice but to function as an essayist—a conundrum not entirely unlike the one faced by Lytton Strachey, who was forced to contribute in his early career to eminent mainstays of Victorian culture (like the *Spectator*, the *Athenaeum*, and even the *Edinburgh Review*) before finding fame as the most prominent critic of the Victorians with his *Eminent Victorians* (1918).³²

In direct contrast to Macaulay—the only *Edinburgh* reviewer who matched him in the esteem of contemporaries—Carlyle was neither an avowed Whig in his politics nor a master in the middle class prose style the *Edinburgh* aspired to cultivate. Concerns about his political affiliation seem to have been allayed by his assurance not to “run amuck against any set of men

²⁸ Carlyle to Macvey Napier, November 23, 1830, in *CMN*, 96.

²⁹ Thomas Carlyle to John A. Carlyle, December 20, 1831, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>. In “Characteristics,” Carlyle even lamented that “By and by it will be found that all Literature has become one boundless self-devouring Review.” “Characteristics,” *Edinburgh Review* 54, no. 108 (December 1831): 351-83, at 370.

³⁰ Thomas Carlyle to John A. Carlyle, January 10, 1832, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

³¹ Thomas Carlyle to John Stuart Mill, October 16, 1832, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

³² See Anne Skabarnicki, “Strachey, Lytton,” in *Encyclopedia of the Essay*, 1731-4.

or opinions; but only to put forth certain truths that I feel in me, with all sincerity.”³³ Moreover, Carlyle’s first three essays for the *Edinburgh* leaned more heavily on literature than politics.³⁴ Apprehensions regarding Carlyle’s notoriously idiosyncratic style proved more enduring. After receiving an early draft for Carlyle’s essay on “Burns,” his third contribution to the *Edinburgh*,³⁵ Jeffrey tells the future sage he finds the manuscript “distressingly long” and “diffuse.” Informing Carlyle that he will not “venture to print sixty pages of such matter,” Jeffrey adds that “the article would be far better - more striking - more indicative of genius, and more effectual for your purpose, if it were condensed to half the size.”³⁶ As for Carlyle’s style, while noting “much beauty and felicity of diction,” the editor expressed his “wish there had been less mysticism about it - at least less mystical jargon - less talk and repetition about entireness, and simplicity, and equipments - and such matters.” Of his “delusive hope of converting our English intellects to the creed of Germany,” Jeffrey “wish[ed] to God [he] could persuade [Carlyle] to fling away these affectations,” pointedly advising the young writer to “write *to* your countrymen *and* for them.”³⁷ That Carlyle refused to heed this advice is borne out by Fitzjames Stephen’s observation three decades later that, “The only way in which it is possible to criticize Mr. Carlyle’s political writings favorably is by looking on them as addressed to an imaginary

³³ Thomas Carlyle to Macvey Napier, November 23, 1830, in *CMN*, 96.

³⁴ In chronological order: [Carlyle], “Jean Paul F. Richter” (June 1827); “State of German Literature” (October 1827); and “Burns” (December 1828).

³⁵ See [Thomas Carlyle], “Burns,” *Edinburgh Review*, 48, no. 96 (December 1828) 267-312.

³⁶ Francis Jeffrey to Thomas Carlyle, September 23, 1828, in *Letters of Francis Jeffrey to Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 21.

³⁷ Francis Jeffrey to Thomas Carlyle, September 23, 1828, in *Letters of Francis Jeffrey to Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 22 (emphasis in original).

audience.”³⁸ Carlyle’s response to Jeffrey is recorded in a letter to his brother, John, in October 1828:

My first feeling was of indignation, and to demand the whole back again, that it might lie in my drawer and worm-eat, rather than come before the world in that horrid souterkin shape...However, I determined to do nothing for three days; and now by replacing and readjusting many parts of the first sixteen pages (there are three sheets in all; and the last two were not meddled with) I have once more put the thing into a kind of publishable state; and mean to send it back, with a private persuasion that probably I shall not soon write another for that quarter.³⁹

Undoubtedly offended by Jeffrey’s comments, Carlyle nevertheless resolved to “keep friends with the man; for he really has extraordinary worth, and likes me, at least heartily wishes me well.” In fact, Jeffrey had done more than simply extend “best wishes” to Carlyle, assuring the latter in one of their earliest correspondences that “I feel at once that you are a man of Genius.”⁴⁰ It was perhaps the first time Carlyle had been recognized as such, but it would not be the last. In fact, with the possible exceptions of Goethe and Tennyson, one would be hard-pressed to find another nineteenth century inhabitant to whom the label “genius” was so often applied by contemporaries—both admirers and critics alike.⁴¹ Many would, perhaps, agree that the “man of Genius” Jeffrey hoped for finally appeared in Carlyle’s fourth contribution to the *Edinburgh*, published in the June 1829 issue—the last number edited by Jeffrey. In this essay, entitled “Signs of the Times,” Carlyle departs from his previous concentration on literary criticism in favor of a

³⁸ [J. Fitzjames Stephen], “Mr. Carlyle,” *Saturday Review* 5, no. 138 (June 19, 1858): 638-40, at 639.

³⁹ Thomas Carlyle to John A. Carlyle, October 10, 1828, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

⁴⁰ Francis Jeffrey to Thomas Carlyle, July [?] 1827, in *The Letters of Francis Jeffrey to Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 2 (my emphasis). Jeffrey’s criticism was sincerely constructive and would be heard again in the coming decades.

⁴¹ For a representative sampling, see the contemporary reviews and assessments reprinted in Seigel ed., *Thomas Carlyle: The Critical Heritage*, where the word “genius” is used on over 130 occasions.

sharp sociopolitical analysis.⁴² Here we find the earliest incarnation of the “Condition of England Question” that Carlyle would later develop in *Chartism* (1840) and *Past and Present* (1843).

“Signs of the Times” opens with the acknowledgment that many in Britain are gripped with fears of a looming crisis, brought on by the repeal of the Test Acts and Catholic Emancipation. “At such a period,” Carlyle argues, “it was to be expected that the rage of prophecy should be more than usually excited. Accordingly, the Millennarians have come forth on the right hand, and the Millites on the left. The Fifth-monarchy men prophesy from the Bible, and the Utilitarians from Bentham.” Offering to “discern truly the signs of our own time,” he says that: “Were we required to characterize this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word; the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches and practices the great art of adapting means to ends.”⁴³ Near the end of the essay, he offers a pithy assessment of “the Mechanical Age” that indicates the principle theme which would run through nearly all of Carlyle’s subsequent work: “the time is sick and out of joint.”⁴⁴ It was a highly resonant phrase for a society grappling with change on such a variety of levels (industrial, political, social, religious, etc.). “Signs of the Times” introduced and set the tone for a particular pattern of “sage writing,” which the scholar of Victorian literature and culture, George P. Landow, describes as a four step process: first, the author identifies a contemporary phenomenon; second, the phenomenon is interpreted as a sign that something has gone awry; third, the author foretells of

⁴² [Thomas Carlyle], “Signs of the Times,” *Edinburgh Review* 59, no. 98 (June 1829): 439-59.

⁴³ [Carlyle], “Signs of the Times,” 441, 441-2.

⁴⁴ [Carlyle], “Signs of the Times,” 458.

imminent disaster should the present phenomenon remain unaddressed; and fourth, a solution or path to reform is offered with assurances that it will forestall said imminent disaster.⁴⁵

In the December 1831 *Edinburgh*, Carlyle returned to and expanded upon his interpretation of “the Condition of England” in “Characteristics,” the sequel to “Signs of the Times,” in which he perceived that never in history was there so “intensely self-conscious a Society” as there now was.⁴⁶ Likening society to a diseased human body (a theme he returns to in *Past and Present* [1843]), Carlyle diagnosed this very state of heightened consciousness as a symptom of a body politic plagued by a crisis of faith and general unease. The cure for this condition was not to be found in scientific and utilitarian prescriptions like “Co-operative Societies, Universal Suffrage, Cottage-and-Cow Systems, Repression of Population, [or] Vote by Ballot.” Then again, neither was “the disease of Metaphysics” to provide any solution, according to Carlyle. Perennial “questions of Death and Immortality, Origin of Evil, Freedom and Necessity, must, under new forms, anew make their appearance; ever, from time to time, must the attempt to shape for ourselves some Theorem of the Universe be repeated. And ever unsuccessfully: for what Theorem of the Infinite can the Finite render complete?” Accordingly, “there is no more fruitless endeavor than [that] which the Metaphysician proper toils in: to educe

⁴⁵ George P. Landow, “The Genre of Sage-Writing (or Secular Prophecy),” *The Victorian Web* (January 2009): <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/sage.html>. See also, Landow, *Elegant Jeremiahs: The Sage from Carlyle to Mailer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); John Holloway, *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1953); and Linda H. Peterson. “Sage Writing,” in *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, edited by Herbert F. Tucker (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 399-413.

⁴⁶ [Thomas Carlyle], “Characteristics,” *Edinburgh Review* 54, no. 108 (December 1831): 351-83, at 366. For his part, Jeffrey expressed his disappointment with the essay, telling Napier—in a manner recalling his earlier criticism of Wordsworth: “Carlyle will not do, that is, if you do not take the liberties and the pains with him that I did, by striking out freely, and writing in occasionally. The misfortune is, that he is very obstinate and, I am afraid, conceited, and unluckily in a place like this, he finds people enough to abet and applaud him, to intercept the operation of the otherwise infallible remedy of general avoidance and neglect. It is a great pity, for he is a man of genius and industry with the capacity of being an elegant and impressive writer.” Francis Jeffrey to Macvey Napier, May 2, 1832, in *CMN*, 126.

Conviction out of Negation. How, by merely testing and rejecting what is not, shall we ever attain knowledge of what is? Metaphysical Speculation, as it begins in No or Nothingness, so it must needs end in Nothingness.”⁴⁷ Carlyle regarded it as an “indubitable misfortune” that this was also “the age of Metaphysics.” Abstract inquiries had only succeeded in adding to the “boundless chaos, self-devouring, engenders monstrosities, phantasms, fire-breathing chimeras,” of the times. The real question of the day was *not* “Why art thou here?” (“[D]oubt as we will, man is actually Here”). “*What is to be done; and How is it to be done?*” This was “Profitable Speculation,”⁴⁸ but Carlyle’s answer epitomizes what one late Victorian biographer described as “his love of contradicting himself.”⁴⁹ Man is, indeed, “Here,” but “not to question, but [rather] to work.”⁵⁰ As yet, this was the only solution (“work”) Carlyle was willing to offer for the condition he had so powerfully conveyed to his readers.⁵¹ In time, its essence would find popular endorsement in Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help* (1859). Nonetheless, the perception that Carlyle failed to offer more tangible solutions to the “Condition of England Question” was to severely qualify the merits of his work in the eyes of later critics.⁵²

In the meantime, unable to tolerate Napier’s constructive criticism as well as he had Jeffrey’s, Carlyle’s association with the *Edinburgh* was drawing to a close soon after the

⁴⁷ [Carlyle], “Characteristics,” 366, 370, 371.

⁴⁸ [Carlyle], “Characteristics,” 372 (my emphasis).

⁴⁹ John Nichol, *Thomas Carlyle*, English Men of Letters Series (London: Macmillan, 1892), 190.

⁵⁰ [Carlyle], “Characteristics,” 370.

⁵¹ In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle again offers the doctrine of work as a cure for the Condition of England Question: “Produce, produce! Were it but the pitifulest, infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God’s name. ‘Tis the utmost thou hast in thee? Out with it then! Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might.” [Thomas Carlyle], “Sartor Resartus [Book II, Chapters 8-10],” *Fraser’s Magazine* 9, no. 52 (April 1834): 443-55, at 452.

⁵² This will be discussed in detail below, but see also Lawrence Stuart Wright, “Carlyle and the Condition-of-England: Myth versus Mechanism,” *Theoria*, no. 65 (October 1985): 65-74.

appearance of “Characteristics.”⁵³ In fact, he had already begun to publish elsewhere, taking to the pages of *Fraser’s Magazine* to lament “times so stupid and prosaic as these; times of monotony and safety, and matter of fact, when affections are measured by the tale of guineas, where people’s fortunes are exalted, and their purpose achieved by the force, not of the arm or of the heart; but by the spinning-jenny and the steam-engine.”⁵⁴ Carlyle’s opinion of *Fraser’s* was that “a chaotic, fermenting, dunghill heap of compost,” its ugly, double-columned pages of a small-type reflecting the lack prestige that accompanied being found between the buff and blue cover of the *Edinburgh Review*.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, “it had a dash of flavor, and was fearlessly independent, if a trifle vulgar and more than a trifle cruel.”⁵⁶ So it was that it was *Fraser’s* that serialized (between November 1833 and August 1834) what became Carlyle’s first great book: *Sartor Resartus*.⁵⁷ Still, his eclectic political and social characteristics would continue to defy an age in which the leading journals generally adhered to party principles, whether liberal, conservative, or radical. “By what fatality was it,” wondered an anonymous reviewer of *Sartor Resartus*, “that the most *radically* Radical speculation upon men and things, which has appeared for many years, should have first come abroad in a violent Tory periodical [*Fraser’s*]?”⁵⁸ The

⁵³ His last article for the *Edinburgh* appeared in the July 1832 issue. See [Carlyle], “Corn-Law Rhymes.”

⁵⁴ [Thomas Carlyle], “Cruthers and Jonson; or, the Outskirts of Life. A True Story,” *Fraser’s Magazine* 2, no. 10 (January 1831): 691-705, at 691.

⁵⁵ Carlyle. *Two Notebooks*, 259. For the “buff and blue,” see the article celebrating the *Edinburgh’s* centenary, by [Elliot], “The ‘Edinburgh Review’ (1802-1902),” 280: “Buff and blue, it is needless to say, had long been the colors of the Whig party, supposed to have been adopted by them out of sympathetic admiration for Washington and his army who wore buff and blue uniforms during the War of Independence.” The *Edinburgh* founders were Foxite Whigs, whose namesake, Charles James Fox, “once attended the Commons wearing the American uniform of buff and blue.” Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England, 1783-1846*, The New Oxford History of England Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 41.

⁵⁶ Emery Neff, *Carlyle* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932), 115.

⁵⁷ Serialized in eight parts between November 1833 and August 1834.

⁵⁸ Unsigned notice in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (September 1838): 611-12, reprinted in in Seigel ed., *Thomas Carlyle: The Critical Heritage*, 44.

simple fact was that Carlyle had a knack for being difficult to label when it came to politics, even within a single work. Yes, the reviewer is correct to label the *Sartor*'s fictional protagonist, Herr Teufelsdröckh, a "Radical," but the anonymous editor who tells the story is more closely aligned with "a violent Tory periodical like" like *Fraser's*.

When it came time to publish *Chartism*, the experience revealed just how difficult it had become to place Carlyle's individualism within the periodical environment that reigned in the Age of the Quarterlies. In a May 1839 letter to his brother, Alexander ("Alick"), Carlyle explains that the manuscript was originally offered to John Stuart Mill and the *London and Westminster Review*.⁵⁹ But Carlyle refused to comply with Mill's request that he conclude that the condition of the working classes "was gradually improving." To compromise on that front would dilute the immediacy of his message that, "A feeling very generally exists that the condition of the working classes is a rather ominous matter at present; that something ought to be said, something ought to be done, in regard to it," and that "if something be not done, something will do itself one day, and in a fashion that will please nobody." Turning then to John Gibson Lockhart, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, Carlyle discerned the possibility of finding in that organ of the Tories "far more fellow-feeling [for the] Poor, than among [Mill's] rubbish of Radicalism."⁶⁰ But by the time the essay was complete that November, Carlyle rightly predicted Lockhart's rejection. To his friend, John Sterling, Carlyle writes:

Only last week I finished an astonishing piece of work, a long review article, thick pamphlet or little volume, entitled "Chartism." Lockhart has it, for it was partly promised to him, at least the refusal of it was; and that, I conjecture, will be all he enjoy of it. Such an Article, equally astonishing to Girondin

⁵⁹ For this periodical, see Mary Ruth Hiller, "The London and Westminster Review, 1836-1840: Introduction," in *WIVP*, III, 537-40

⁶⁰ Carlyle to Alexander Carlyle, May 27, 1839, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/> (emphasis in original).

Radicals, Donothing Aristocrat Conservatives, and Unbelieving Dilettante Whigs, can hope for no harbor in any review.⁶¹

Though Mill ultimately offered to publish it in the *Westminster Review*, Carlyle now felt “the thing is too good for that purpose. I have had nothing to do with their hide-bound *Westminster Review*, that I should sink along with it. I offered them this very thing two years ago, the blockheads; and they durst not let me write it then. If they had taken more of my counsel, they need not perhaps have been in a sinking state at present. But they went their own way; and now their ‘Review’ is to cease with the Next Number, as a thing that will not pay; and their whole beggarly Unbelieving Radicalism may cease too, if it like, and let us see whether there be not a Believing Radicalism possible!” Thus, Carlyle decided upon publishing the piece “as a little separate Book, with [James] Fraser, on my own independent footing. Fraser will print it; “halving” the profits. It may be out, probably, by the end of this month. I shall perhaps get less money by it from Fraser, but its effect on the public will have a chance to be much more immediate.”⁶² Carlyle’s politics may not have been the only source of trouble in finding a periodical willing to publish *Chartism*. Though in many ways his most reader-friendly effort, in the judgment of one anonymous reviewer, “we do not at all times quite understand Mr. Carlyle, and we are far from being satisfied that he perfectly understands himself. So, when he mutters like an oracle, and gesticulates like a conjuror, drawing his airy or earthy circles, and waving his magical wand, we just wink, and let it pass.”⁶³

⁶¹ Carlyle to John Sterling, November 25, 1839, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

⁶² Thomas Carlyle to Margaret A. Carlyle, December 5, 1839, *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

⁶³ Anon., “Carlyle’s Chartism,” *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* 7, no. 74 (February 1840): 115-20, at 116.

II. Macaulay: “That Style”

*Macaulay has conferred most memorable services on the readers of English throughout the world. He stands between philosophic historians and the public very much as journals and periodicals stand between the masses and great libraries. Macaulay is a glorified journalist and reviewer, who brings the matured results of scholars to the man in the street in a form that he can remember and enjoy, when he could not make use of a learned book. He performs the office of the ballad-maker or story-teller in an age before books were known or were common. And it is largely due to his influence that the best journals and periodicals of our day are written in a style so clear, so direct, so resonant.*⁶⁴

Whereas Carlyle struggled to conform to the political and stylistic expectations of higher journalism in the era dominated by the great quarterly reviews, few were as well-suited to thrive in that very same atmosphere as Thomas Babington Macaulay. Better known today for the Whig interpretation of history put forward in his bestselling *History of England* (1848-61) or, perhaps in some circles, for his “Minute on Indian Education” (1835), Macaulay was nothing short of the *Edinburgh* reviewer *par excellence*. “As a Reviewer, he has left behind him specimens of unapproachable excellence,” *The Times* said as it noticed his 1859 death. “As an Essayist, he probably has no rival in the whole course of English literature.”⁶⁵ Among the Victorians, there is reason to suspect that Macaulay’s collected *Essays* were even more widely read than his *History*. As John Morley once put it, “From Eton and Harrow down to an elementary school in St. Giles’s or Bethnal Green, Macaulay’s *Essays* are a textbook.” They are equally present both “at home and in the colonies...on every shelf between Shakespeare and the Bible.”⁶⁶ Morley was far from hyperbolic in making such a comparison. If anything, by the 1880s, it had become something of

⁶⁴ Harrison, “Macaulay’s Place in Literature,” 92.

⁶⁵ Anon., “London, Saturday, December 31, 1859,” *The Times* (December 31, 1859): 6.

⁶⁶ Morley, “The Expansion of England,” 243.

a cliché to highlight the distinct popularity of Macaulay's *Essays* and equate their prevalence with that of Shakespeare and the Bible in the wider British world.⁶⁷

The potency of Macaulay on stage as an *Edinburgh* reviewer is revealed in his public flagellation of Robert Montgomery in the April 1830 number.⁶⁸ A middling poet masquerading in pretensions that he was something more, Montgomery had gained a certain level of popularity among Evangelicals for his religious poems, and Macaulay (having been raised in such circles) deemed it necessary to expose his mediocrity under the scrutiny of *true* greatness. J.A. Froude later described the upshot of what followed: "An ordinary Review article is read for a few weeks; it does its work, and is then forgotten. Mr. Montgomery found himself, to his horror, bound fast to the triumphal chariot of the most celebrated writer of his age, trailing in the dust like the body of Hector behind the horses of Achilles. Even Hector's body was given back to Priam. There must have been some special reason why so small a mercy was refused to Montgomery."⁶⁹ And yet, though Montgomery's reputation has never recovered, the sales of his poems appear unaffected in the immediate context—for it seems even the sway of "the great apostle of the Philistines"⁷⁰ had limitations, as Montgomery remained "one of the two or three best-selling poets of the second quarter of the nineteenth century," according to his entry in the *Oxford*

⁶⁷ See [Matthew Arnold], "A French Critic on Milton," *Quarterly Review* 143, no. 285 (January 1877): 186-204, at 190; and Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1873), I, 310-11. For other contemporary testaments, see Augustine Birrell, *Seven Lectures on the Law and History of Copyright in Books* (London: Cassell, 1899), 212; and R.E.N. Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia* (London: Elliot Stock, 1883), 221.

⁶⁸ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], "Mr. Robert Montgomery's Poems, and the Modern Practice of Puffing," *Edinburgh Review* 51, no. 101 (April 1830): 193-210.

⁶⁹ Froude, "Lord Macaulay," 690.

⁷⁰ Matthew Arnold, "Joubert: Or, A French Coleridge," *National Review* 18, no. 35 (January 1864): 168-90, at 190.

Dictionary of National Biography.⁷¹ Then again, we should recall that Macaulay, famous as he was by 1830, was nowhere near the national institution he had become in the 1840s and 1850s, when his *Essays* and *History* raced off the shelves of booksellers at breakneck speeds. By the time a new edition of the *Essays* was set to appear in 1850, Montgomery was despairing at the prospect, writing a letter to Macaulay, “begging, in fact, that [he] will let him [Montgomery] out of the pillory.” Though he was “plagued to know what to do about...that poor creature,” Macaulay ultimately refused to offer mercy, for he and Montgomery wrote for a similar type of reader.⁷² Macaulay remained as adamant as he was in 1830, when he proposed tackling Montgomery for the *Edinburgh*. A mediocrity like Montgomery must never again be allowed the opportunity to “degrade the literary character and to deprave the public taste in a frightful degree.”⁷³

Having made his *Edinburgh* debut in January 1825 with a piece on West Indian slavery, it was the publication of his forty-two page essay on “Milton” that August which would truly signal the presence of a new prodigy in the world of Victorian higher journalism. “Like Lord Byron,” says his nephew and biographer, G.O. Trevelyan, “[Macaulay] awoke one morning and found himself famous.”⁷⁴ (The son of a prominent abolitionist, it is worth noting that the most recent instance of a truly star-making turn in higher journalism occurred with Ta-Nehisi Coates’s June 2014 *Atlantic* cover story, “The Case for Reparations.”⁷⁵) Understanding the reason for the

⁷¹ Robert Dingley, “Montgomery, Robert (1807-1855),” in *ODNB* (May 2008), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/19074>.

⁷² Journal entry, March 21, 1850, in *JTBM*, II, 226. Also quoted in G.O. Trevelyan’s *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1876), II, 276.

⁷³ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, March 22, 1830, in *LTBM*, I, 268.

⁷⁴ Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, I, 117.

⁷⁵ Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *Atlantic Monthly* 313, no. 5 (June 2014): 54-71. See Manuel Roig-Franzia, Manuel, “With ‘Atlantic’ Article on Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates Sees Payoff for Years of

success of the Milton article is as easy as pointing to Jeffrey's own reaction upon receipt of the young essayist's manuscript: "The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style."⁷⁶ *That style* made Macaulay "the saving genius of the *Edinburgh Review*."⁷⁷ *That style*, "heavily caparisoned with learning and paradox, yet at the same time relentlessly clear and vigorous," in the words of one of Macaulay's most respected biographers, was to be the hallmark of his success as an essayist, historian, as well as Whig politician.⁷⁸ It was *that style* that made Macaulay an ideal conduit of information to the increasingly influential middle classes of his day. Recognizing the middle class reader's attraction to Macaulay's gift for conveying his own vast stores of knowledge in such an appealing manner, Morley correctly identifies good-timing as at least a partial explanation for Macaulay's success:

Macaulay came upon the world of letters, just as the middle classes were expanding into enormous prosperity, were vastly increasing in numbers, and were becoming more alive than they had ever been before to literary interests. His Essays are as good as a library; they make an incomparable manual and

Struggle," *Washington Post*, June 18, 2014: https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/with-atlantic-article-on-reparations-ta-nehisi-coates-sees-payoff-for-years-of-struggle/2014/06/18/6a2bd10e-f636-11e3-a3a5-42be35962a52_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.541f1e43f6c2.

⁷⁶ Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, I, 118

⁷⁷ According to Harriet Martineau in an otherwise extremely critical obituary published for the *Daily News*. See Martineau, "Lord Macaulay: Died December 28th, 1859," in *Biographical Sketches*, by Martineau (New York: Leypoldt and Holt, 1869), 102-13.

⁷⁸ John Clive, "The 'Edinburgh Review': The Life and Death of a Periodical," in *Essays in the History of Publishing in Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the House of Longman, 1724-1974*, edited by Asa Briggs (London: Longman, 1974), 113-40, at 124. See also, Clive, "'Edinburgh' Reviewer," chap. 5 in *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian*, by Clive (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 96-141. Analyses of Macaulay's style has unsurprisingly spawned a vast literature. For nineteenth century commentaries, Gilfillan, "Modern Critics, No. VI: Thomas Babington Macaulay," 278-312; [Walter Bagehot], "Lord Macaulay," *Economist* 17, no. 853 (December 31, 1859): 1455-6; [J. Fitzjames Stephen], "Lord Macaulay," *Saturday Review* 9, no. 219 (January 7, 1860): 9-10; Morley, "Macaulay," 494-513; [W.E. Gladstone], "Lord Macaulay," *Quarterly Review* 142, no. 283 (July 1876): 1-50; Oliphant and Oliphant. "Of Thomas Babington Macaulay, and of Other Historians and Biographers in the Early Part of the Reign," chap. 4 in *The Victorian Age of English Literature*, I, 162-211; Harrison, "Macaulay's Place in Literature," 80-94; and Saintsbury, *A History of English Prose Rhythm*, 364. For later assessments of Macaulay's style, see especially G.S. Fraser, "Macaulay's Style as an Essayist," *Review of English Literature* 1, no. 4 (October 1960): 9-19; William A. Madden, "Macaulay's Style," in *The Art of Victorian Prose*, edited by Madden and George Levine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 127-53; Levine, "Macaulay: Progress and Retreat," 79-163; and John Clive and Thomas Pinney, "Thomas Babington Macaulay," in *Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research*, edited by David J. DeLaura (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1973), 17-30.

vademecum for a busy uneducated man who has curiosity and enlightenment enough to wish to know a little about the great lives and great thoughts, the shining words and many-colored complexities of action, that have marked the journey of man through the ages.⁷⁹

In his essays, Macaulay preferred to tackle literary and historical subjects over contemporary political matters. But this should not be mistaken for political aloofness. Unlike most other Victorian men of letters, Macaulay actually had a career in active politics. Trevelyan notes: “From a marvelously early date in Macaulay’s life, public affairs divided his thoughts with literature, and, as he grew to manhood, began more and more to divide his aspirations.”⁸⁰ This divide seems evident in the chronology of Macaulay’s career as an *Edinburgh* reviewer. For example, his forty *Edinburgh* contributions (written between January 1825 and October 1844) might be divided into three topical categories: literary, historical/biographical, and current (political) affairs. Of these, ten deal explicitly with current affairs.⁸¹ However, with the possible exception of the three attacks on the Utilitarians, these would hardly rank among the best known of Macaulay’s essays. Moreover, it is noteworthy that after the January 1831 refutation of Sadler, all but one of Macaulay’s twenty-three subsequent *Edinburgh* essays dealt with subjects of a

⁷⁹ Morley, “Macaulay,” 499. See also, Woodward, *The Age of Reform*, 542: “Macaulay accepted his age, admired its care for liberty, order, and improvement, assumed that the future as well as the past belonged to the Whigs. His unusual memory, strong pictorial imagination, and quick mind fitted him for the writing of history. Even his faults turned to his advantage. He was not troubled by subtleties of thought, or disturbed by the heroic and mystical. He never doubted the truth of his own standards of criticism. He was interested in detail but not minutiae, and content to widen rather than to deepen human knowledge. *Such a man was ideally fitted for the prosperous middle class public of his time*” (my emphasis).

⁸⁰ Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, I, 67.

⁸¹ In chronological order, [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “The West Indies” (January 1825); “The London University” (February 1826); “Major Moody’s Reports: Social and Industrial Capacities of Negroes” (March 1827); “The Present Administration” (June 1827); “Mill’s Essay on Government: Utilitarian Logic and Politics” (March 1829); “Bentham’s Defence of Mill: Utilitarian System of Philosophy” (June [sic] 1829); “Utilitarian Theory and the ‘Greatest Happiness Principle’” (October 1829); “Sadler’s ‘Law of Population, and Disproof of Human Superfecundity’” (July 1830); “Civil Disabilities of the Jews” (January 1831); and “Sadler’s ‘Refutation,’ Refuted” (January 1831).

literary and/or historical nature.⁸² This was a deliberate choice on the part of Macaulay,⁸³ especially in the years following the Indian sojourn, upon returning from which he informed Napier that, “All my tastes and wishes lead me to prefer literature to politics.”⁸⁴ Though he returned to Parliament in June 1839 (rising to War Secretary that September), Macaulay was increasingly preoccupied with his work on the *History*. His career as an essayist drawing to a close, Macaulay declined all subsequent offers from Napier to enter the political fray with his journalism. In a letter declining Napier’s request that he write on education (a topic on which he had recently spoken in Parliament) or any other “pending political questions,” Macaulay explained, “I have two fears, one that I may commit myself- the other that I may repeat myself. I shall keep to history, general literature, and the merely speculative part of politics, in what I write for the Review.”⁸⁵

And yet, as we shall now see, in dealing with the “merely speculative part of politics,” Macaulay made some of his most enduring contributions to the Victorian political conscious—especially when it came to the conception of Britain’s place in the world. His essays, in other

⁸² The sole exception being a brief biographical treatment of the recently deceased Lord Holland for the July 1841 edition.

⁸³ See Joanne Shattock, “Politics and Literature: Macaulay, Brougham, and the ‘Edinburgh Review’ under Napier,” *Yearbook of English Studie* 16, special issue: Literary Periodicals (1986): 32-50, at 35, 37. Here, Shattock suggests that Henry Brougham’s ability to persuade Napier that he (not Macaulay) should write a proposed 1830 essay on the July Revolution in France of that year strengthened Macaulay resolve to turn away from essays on current political matters. Macaulay’s intense dislike of Brougham never abated. When, upon Jeffrey’s death, a meeting to discuss the erection of a monument to the departed editor and statesman was held at Brougham’s house, Macaulay (who “loved [Jeffrey] as much as it is easy to love a man who belongs to an older generation”) refused to attend. “I will never enter B[rougham]’s house.” See Macaulay, journal entry dated February 16, 1850, in *JTBM*, II, 209. For the quote about Jeffrey, see January 28, 1850, *JTBM*, II, 202. Macaulay’s ability to hold a grudge was recognized by those closest to him. His sister once recalled: “He says his college friends used to tell him that his leading qualities were generosity and vindictiveness. I do not quite agree with that, but I told him that I thought his revenge, whether in imagination or reality, was always out of proportion with the offence.” Quoted in William Thomas, “Introduction,” in *JTBM*, I, ix-xxix, at xxii.

⁸⁴ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, June 14, 1838, in *LTBM*, III, 243.

⁸⁵ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, July 4, 1839, in *LTBM*, III, 293.

words, defy simple categorization according to the subject he is ostensibly discussing. Even when eschewing analysis of current affairs in favor of narrative descriptions of history and literature, Macaulay had a rare gift for penetrating grand political questions.⁸⁶ For now, let us turn to consider the essays on Clive and Ranke as two instances that bear powerful witness to this fact.

Macaulay as Intellectual Entertainer

In the January 1840 essay on John Clive (the East India Company commander whose 1763 triumph at the Battle of Plassey laid the foundation for what became the Crown Jewel of the British Empire) Macaulay famously admonished his countrymen's lack of attention to the history of their empire in the East:

[W]hile the history of the Spanish empire in America is familiarly known to all the nations of Europe, the great actions of our countrymen in the East should, even among ourselves, excite little interest. Every schoolboy knows who imprisoned Montezuma, and who strangled Atabalipa. But we doubt whether one in ten, even among English gentlemen of highly cultivated minds, can tell who won the battle of Buxar, who perpetrated the massacre of Patna, whether Surajah Dowlah ruled in Oude or in Travancore, or whether Holkar was a Hindoo or a Mussulman.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ See John Clive and Thomas Pinney, "Editors' Introduction," in *Selected Writings*, by Thomas Babington Macaulay, edited by Clive and Pinney, Classics of British Historical Literature Series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), ix-xxx, esp. xv. Here two of Macaulay's most eminent modern scholars note the difficulty of categorizing Macaulay's essays. Preferring a division based upon "the controversial" and "the descriptive" to one divided according to subject (i.e. historical and literary), the editors note that even this division is "misleading, for Macaulay is everywhere argumentative, having always his own special view of the subject he chooses to set forth." Cotter Morison's 1882 biography of Macaulay for his dear friend, John Morley's, English Men of Letters Series also recognized the historian's struggle with categorizing the *Essays* in any meaningful divisions. Nonetheless, he found it convenient to discuss the *Essays* by separating them into four groups: (1) English History [including the works on Burleigh, Hallam, Hampden, Milton Temple, Mackintosh, Walpole, Pitt-Chatham, Clive, and Warren Hastings]; (2) Foreign History [Machiavelli, Mirabeau, Ranke, Frederic, Barere]; (3) Controversial [Mill, Sadler, Southey, Gladstone]; and (4) Critical and Miscellaneous [Dryden, Montgomery, Byron, Bunyan, Johnson, Bacon, Hunt, Addison]. See J. Cotter Morison, "The 'Essays,'" chap. 3 in *Macaulay*, by Morison, English Men of Letters Series (London: Macmillan, 1882), 66-105.

⁸⁷ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], "Sir John Malcolm's 'Life of Lord Clive,'" *Edinburgh Review* 70, no. 142 (January 1840): 295-362, at 295.

It seemed a jarring paradox to Macaulay, who thought that “every Englishman who takes any interest in any part of history would be curious to know how a handful of his countrymen, separated from their home by an immense ocean, subjugated, in the course of a few years, one of the greatest empires in the world.” And yet, “to most readers,” this development was “not only insipid, but positively distasteful.” Macaulay thinks that one reason for this strange deficiency in general knowledge is that the few noteworthy histories of British India up to 1840 were insufficient not so much in terms of historical substance but, rather, the “animated and picturesque” style so crucial to attracting an audience “who read[s] for amusement.”⁸⁸

As we shall see in the next chapter, while Macaulay had no shortage of critics among those who followed him into a career in higher journalism, his uncanny ability to communicate with the middle class multitudes commanded the respect of any writer who aspired to shape public opinion through the written word. Among those in the generation immediately succeeding Macaulay’s, Walter Bagehot was especially appreciative of what he described as Macaulay’s uncommon ability to provide a kind of “*intellectual entertainment*,” which made the reading experience both pleasurable as well as beneficial.⁸⁹ This particular quality is distinguished from the effects of “common light works” that regale without any requisite mental activity on the part of the reader.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ [Macaulay], “Sir John Malcolm’s ‘Life of Lord Clive,’” 295, 296. This is the general criticism Macaulay levies towards James Mill’s “undoubtedly great and rare merit,” *The History of British India*, 3 vols. (1817). It was John Malcolm’s *Life of Lord Clive* (1836) that was ostensibly under review by Macaulay here—though he goes on (in keeping with the essay-like review) to spend the remaining sixty-plus pages rectifying the dearth of a powerful narrative in British India’s historiography with one of his signal tour de forces. For more on this essay, see Jack Harrington, “Macaulay, ‘Lord Clive,’ and the Imperial Tradition,” *Nineteenth Century Prose* 33, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 124-49.

⁸⁹ [Walter Bagehot], “Mr. Macaulay,” *National Review* 2, no. 4 (April 1856): 357-87, at 380 (emphasis in original).

⁹⁰ Despite the implicit suggestion here that it was best to avoid such works, Bagehot personally enjoyed retreating to these lighter pleasures—especially when illness began to take its toll in his final decade. See Emilie

For a fine example of Macaulay's capacity for "intellectual entertainment," we might stay with the opening lines of the Clive essay. "We have always thought it strange," Macaulay says, "that while the history of the Spanish empire in America is familiarly known to all the nations of Europe, the great actions of our countrymen in the East should, even among ourselves, excite little interest. Every schoolboy knows who imprisoned Montezuma, and who strangled Atabalipa [Atahualpa]." Certainly not every reader had enough prior knowledge to understand their author's allusions. But Macaulay makes it abundantly clear that it was a Spanish conquistador in the New World who did the deeds in question. And with that sleight of hand, without running the risk of bogging them down in the differences between Cortes and Pizarro, the reader learns something without, perhaps, even realizing it. This was intellectual entertainment of the first class variety. Most readers might have counted in the majority of those "one in ten" whom Macaulay suspected "even among English gentlemen of highly cultivated minds, [could not] tell who won the battle of Buxar, who perpetrated the massacre of Patna, whether Surajah Dowlah ruled in Oude or in Travancore, or whether Holkar was a Hindoo or a Mussulman."⁹¹ Those unschooled in these details could take comfort in Macaulay's learned assurances that the blame for such ignorance lay elsewhere, namely in the poor state of historical writing on British India up to then—again, poor not so much in regards to substance, but poor in that such histories lacked the "animated and picturesque" style so crucial to attracting an audience "who read[s] for amusement." By the time they closed the cover of an issue of the *Edinburgh* or returned Macaulay's *Essays* to the shelf, the "bad civilization of the English

Isabel Barrington (née Wilson), *The Life of Walter Bagehot* (London: Longmans, Green, 1914), 414. Here, Bagehot's sister-in-law describes how he would often ask she and her sister to retrieve from the local library some "easy novel, Miss Braddon or the like, not George Eliot, *that was work*" (emphasis in original). "Miss Braddon" was Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915), best known for *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862).

⁹¹ [Macaulay], "Sir John Malcolm's 'Life of Lord Clive,'" 295.

middle class”⁹² that Matthew Arnold (ironically) later laid at Macaulay’s feet had been relieved, if only ever so slightly.

In the October 1840 issue of the *Edinburgh*, Macaulay reviewed a new translation of Leopold von Ranke’s *History of the Popes*.⁹³ Within a single passage, tucked away in the third paragraph of his Ranke review, Macaulay puts on full display his powers as an essayist capable of conjuring up the most vivid of images for his readers. Here, he begins by marveling at the astounding longevity of the Catholic Church. Still “full of life and youthful vigor,” Macaulay saw no reason to expect the papacy’s reach to recede any time soon. Thanks to her zealous missionaries sent to the farthest reaches of the Earth, the geographical scope and numerical scale of the Roman Catholicism was actually more impressive than ever, and future prospects were even more promising. “Her acquisitions in the New World have more than compensated her for what she has lost in the Old. Her spiritual ascendancy extends over the vast countries which lie between the plains of the Missouri and Cape Horn—countries which, a century hence, may not improbably contain a population as large as that which now inhabits Europe.” If the picture presented thus far had captured the attention of the *Edinburgh*’s overwhelmingly Protestant audience in the way all deeply unsettling news tends to do,⁹⁴ Macaulay closes the passage by describing an image so graphically poignant that it would haunt the collective British psyche through the coming decades. It appears as follows, with Macaulay describing a scene from the distant future, one in which the Vatican still remained a viable institution, while Britain’s

⁹² Matthew Arnold, “The Future of Liberalism,” *Nineteenth Century* 8, no. 41 (July 1880): 1-18, at 2.

⁹³ [Thomas Babington Macaulay], “Ranke’s ‘History of the Popes,’” *Edinburgh Review* 72, no. 145 (October 1840): 227-58.

⁹⁴ In 1840, Britain was just eleven years removed from the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829), granting full civil and political rights to members of the Catholic Church—the majority of whom were, of course, Irish.

greatness had ultimately proven as transient as that of its ancient imperial predecessors. A time when, as Macaulay describes it, “some traveler from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul’s [Cathedral].”⁹⁵ Thus was born the figure thereafter known as “Macaulay’s New Zealander.”

It is rather appropriate that Macaulay (who delighted in peppering his own work with paradoxes⁹⁶) should at once be both the most forceful proponent of the optimistic view Whig interpretation that English history was one and the same with “progress,” while also being the creator of the most commonly referred to symbol of her imminent demise. For in the years that followed, Macaulay’s New Zealander would take on a life of its own. “Amputated from its context,” explains a recent scholar, the metaphorical arrival of this future visitor was “endlessly invoked as an apocalyptic bogeyman, or as a jokey *memento mori*, or simply as a part of that common vocabulary of allusion which can facilitate relations between writer and reader.”⁹⁷ By

⁹⁵ [Macaulay], “Ranke’s ‘History of the Popes,’” 228.

⁹⁶ Perhaps the best-known example of this being the (now universally derided) notion that James Boswell had written the greatest biography in the English language (his *Life of Johnson*) precisely *because* “he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb.” See [Macaulay], “Croker’s Edition of Boswell’s ‘Life of Johnson,’” 18.

⁹⁷ Robert Dingley. “The Ruins of the Future: Macaulay’s New Zealander and the Spirit of the Age,” In *Histories of the Future: Studies in Fact, Fantasy, and Science Fiction*, edited by Dingley and Alan Sandison (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 15-33, at 16. For more on the meaning and usage of Macaulay’s New Zealander, see Michael Bright. “Macaulay’s New Zealander,” *The Arnoldian* 10 (Winter 1982): 8-27; David Skilton. “Contemplating the Ruins of London: Macaulay’s New Zealander and Others,” *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 2, no. 1 (March 2004): <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2004/skilton.html>; Skilton, “Ruin and the Loss of Empire: From Venice and New Zealand to the Thames,” in *Sites of Exchange: European Crossroads and Faultlines*, edited by Maurizio Ascari and Adriana Corrado (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 131-40; Skilton, “Tourists at the Ruins of London: The Metropolis and the Struggle for Empire,” *Cercles* 17 (2007): 93-119; Skilton, “Gustave Dore’s ‘London/Londres’: Empire and Post-Imperial Ruin,” *Word and Image* 30, no. 3 (July-September 2014): 225-37; Owen Dudley Edwards, “The Ranks of Tuscany: Macaulay on Ranke’s ‘Die Romischen Papste,’” *Nineteenth Century Prose* 33, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 49-81; Andrew Sanders, “The Victorians and History,” *Studies in Victorian Culture* (Victorian Studies Society of Japan), no. 5 (November 2007): 3-22; Virginia Zimmerman, “‘The Weird Message from the Past’: Material Epistemologies of Past, Present, and Future in the ‘Nineteenth Century,’” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 114-35; Kelly J. Mays, “Looking Backward, Looking Forward: The Victorians in the Rearview Mirror of Future History,” *Victorian Studies* 53, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 445-56; Jenny McDonnell, “Brave New Worlds: Samuel Butler’s ‘Erewhon,’ Settler Colonialism, and New Zealand Mean Time,” in *Victorian Time: Technologies, Standardizations, Catastrophes*, edited by Trish Ferguson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 95-111; and Simon Dentith. “Reading with Hindsight: The Nineteenth Century and the Twenty-First,” chap. 2 in

1860, the editor of Macaulay's *Miscellaneous Writings* remarked that the "New Zealander" had been "the subject of allusion, two or three times a week, in speeches and leading articles."⁹⁸ In the mid-1850s, an ambitious young writer named Anthony Trollope tried (unsuccessfully) to publish a work of social criticism entitled *The New Zealander*.⁹⁹ In 1864, the future prime minister, Lord Salisbury, made use of him in an essay on the new technology of photography published in the *Quarterly Review*.¹⁰⁰

Not everyone welcomed the ubiquity of such references, however. By the mid-1860s, the *New Zealander* was beginning to find derision in some circles. He was dismissed as "an irrepressible bore" by one commentator,¹⁰¹ while the master of parody, Mr. Punch, deemed the act of referring to him so "used up, exhausted, threadbare, stale and hackneyed" that the *New Zealander* was to be placed at the very top of a list of terms or phrases which ought to be "withdrawn from public circulation."¹⁰² And yet, much to the chagrin of Mr. Punch, the *New Zealander* was to remain a public nuisance, impeding the traffic over London Bridge for years to

Nineteenth Century British Literature Then and Now: Reading with Hindsight, by Dentith (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 21-40.

⁹⁸ Thomas Flower Ellis, "Preface," in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), I, vii-xiv, at ix.

⁹⁹ Rejected by Trollope's publisher, the manuscript remained unpublished until 1972. See Anthony Trollope, *The New Zealander*, edited by N. John Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

¹⁰⁰ [Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury], "Photography," *Quarterly Review* 116, no. 232 (October 1864): 482-519, at 483: "Supposing that photographs are preserved with reasonable care, the philosophic dream may be a reality to our remote posterity. Lord Macaulay's *New Zealander*, when he goes home from his perilous exploration of Great Britain, may gaze in some Antipodean Museum upon a picture of the entry of the Princess Alexandra into London, traced not by some careless or courtly human hand, but by the very rays of light which were reflected from her face, and from the various persons and objects around her."

¹⁰¹ Francis Jacox, "About the Coming Man from New Zealand: A Forecast Shadow (and Irrepressible Bore)," *New Monthly Magazine* 138, no. 551 (November 1866): 282-8.

¹⁰² Anon., "A Proclamation," *Punch* 48 (January 7, 1865): 9. As Mr. Punch explained: "The retirement of this veteran is indispensable. He can no longer be suffered to impede the traffic over London Bridge. Much wanted at the present time in his own country. May return when London is in ruins."

come,¹⁰³ a fact most forcefully witnessed by the 1872 appearance of Gustave Dore's illustration of the scene as described in the Ranke essay, which featured in a popular volume describing the many scenes of London (see Figure 1 below). In the mid-1890s, the British positivist and man of letters, Frederic Harrison, testifies that Macaulay's "fascinating literary artifice" was still "repeated daily by men who never heard of Macaulay, much less of Von Ranke."¹⁰⁴



Figure 1: Gustave Dore, "The New Zealander," in *London: A Pilgrimage*, by Blanchard Jerrold and Dore (London: Grant, 1872), image appearing opposite page 188.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Edward A Nolan, "Lord Macaulay's Schoolboy: A Biography," *Macmillan's Magazine* 22, no. 129 (July 1870): 196-200; Goldwin Smith, "The Policy of Aggrandizement," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 22, no. 129 (September 1877): 303-24, at 307; William Colenso, "A Few Remarks on the Hackneyed Quotation of 'Macaulay's New Zealander,'" in *Three Literary Papers Read Before the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, During the Session of 1882*, by Colenso (Napier, NZ: Daily Telegraph Office, 1883), 36-41; J.A. Froude, *Oceana: Or, England and Her Colonies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 274; Frederic Harrison, "Apologia Pro Fide Nostra," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 44, no 263 (November 1888): 665-83, at 680; C.C. Penrose-Fitzgerald, "Are We Worthy of Our Empire?" *National Review* 9, no. 54 (August 1887): 781-92, at 791; Joseph Chamberlain, "The True Conception of Empire: At the Annual Colonial Institute Dinner, Hotel Metropole, March 31, 1897," in *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, edited by Charles W. Boyd, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1914), II, 1-6, at 5; Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London: Smith, Elder, 1900), 306; Frank S. Russell, "Is Invasion Possible?" *Nineteenth Century and After* 65, no. 383 (January 1909): 1-10, at 10; and Spencer Campbell, "The Peril Afloat," *Fortnightly Review*, new series, vol. 91, no. 544 (April 1912): 747-57, at 753.

¹⁰⁴ Harrison, "Macaulay's Place in Literature," 86.

The ubiquity of allusions to Macaulay's *New Zealander* returns us to the subject of Victorian anxieties, upon which both Carlyle and Macaulay (as demonstrated by the *New Zealander*) exercised immense influence. In the case of Carlyle, the most immediate influence lay in his giving expression to the so-called Condition-of-England-Question—"so called" because there was never any intimation that the circumstances of "the question" were confined to a single realm of the United Kingdom. It was, after all, a "condition" described by a Scotsman in an Edinburgh-based periodical. Moreover, in essays like "Signs of the Times" and "Characteristics," Carlyle was affirming the centrality of periodicals of higher journalism as a forum for the discussion of "questions of national existence."¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, as we will see in the next chapter, while Carlyle and Macaulay certainly provided certain traits other practitioners of higher journalism hoped to replicate, neither was immune to criticism. For that matter, nor did the "electrical" impact of "the system" ushered in by the *Edinburgh* and its principal rivals (the *Quarterly* and the *Westminster*) prove everlasting. With that in mind, we now turn our attention to the critical reaction against Carlyle and Macaulay, as well as the diminishing esteem in which the "old" quarterly reviews were held.

¹⁰⁵ Sydney Smith to Francis Jeffrey, October 1807, in *Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*, II, 27.

Chapter 3

Rethinking Reputations: Criticism of Carlyle and Macaulay up to c.1855

*How rapidly in this crowded and hurrying age do reputations pass away!*¹

Very early in the history of the *Edinburgh Review*, Sydney Smith took his friend, Francis Jeffrey, to task for neglecting the constructive element in higher journalism. In a private letter, Smith exhorted the editor (and fellow *Edinburgh* founder) to “restrain the violent tendency of your [Jeffrey’s] nature for analysis, and to cultivate synthetical propensities...The whole effort of your mind is to destroy,” Smith continued. “Because others build slightly and eagerly, you employ yourself in kicking down their houses, and contract a sort of aversion for the more honorable, useful and difficult task of building well yourself.”² That Jeffrey resisted such appeals from his friend is reflected in the (in)famous opening line in Jeffrey’s 1814 review of Wordsworth’s *The Excursion*: “This will never do.”³ Editing even himself late in life, when Jeffrey published a selection of his *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* in 1844, he saw fit to add an exclamation point to reaffirm his judgment that, three decades later, it *still* “will never do!”⁴ So strident was the *Edinburgh* editor’s penchant for destructive criticism that Smith playfully joked that, given the chance to review the solar system, Jeffrey would say of it: “Damn the solar system! Bad light—planets too distant—pestered with comets—feeble contrivance—; could make a better with great ease.”⁵ It was all in good fun, but Smith had a point. Ultimately, an audience becomes somewhat immune to the charms of destructive criticism, no matter how

¹ [M.E. Grant-Duff], “Henry Reeve.” *Spectator* 81, no. 3669 (October 22, 1898): 561-3, at 561.

² Sydney Smith to Francis Jeffrey, [April-May] 1804, in *Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*, II, 10-11.

³ [Jeffrey], “Wordsworth’s ‘Excursion,’” *Edinburgh Review* 24, no. 47 (November 1814): 1-30, at 1.

⁴ Jeffrey, *Contributions to the “Edinburgh Review,”* 4 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), III, 233-68, at 233..

⁵ Sydney Smith to Francis Jeffrey, [February 25, 1807], in *Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*, II, 22.

acerbic and witty it may be. By the middle decades of the century, Jeffrey's brand of destructive criticism—taken to new heights by Carlyle and Macaulay—began to take on the odor of those most unacceptable of traits in Victorian higher journalism: ordinary and dull. No longer was it fresh or insightful to poke holes in literature and society. Readers now cried out for *solutions*, especially when it came to public discussion on “questions of national existence.”⁶ The “mental anarchy” of living in a so-called age of transition was producing a climate of opinion wrought with “a strange fascination to anything that promises to end it [the ‘anarchy’].”⁷

In this chapter, we explore the various challenges to Carlyle's and Macaulay's reputations as authoritative figures in British literary and sociopolitical life. After which, this chapter concludes by noticing a concurrent demise in the esteem of the first generation of great quarterly reviews like the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, and the *Westminster*. By detailing these airings of grievances, we set the stage for the following chapter, in which the search for alternatives (to Carlyle, Macaulay, and the quarterly system in general) comes to a head in the works of Walter Bagehot and Matthew Arnold. Perhaps the closest thing to successors that Carlyle and Macaulay had in the Victorian periodical industry, Bagehot and Arnold laid the groundwork for a new essayistic ideal, one that embraced the respective strengths of Carlyle (political urgency) and Macaulay (stylistic grace and clarity) while avoiding the pitfalls of their individual shortcomings (detailed below). This new standard, which we may call “The

⁶ Smith to Jeffrey, October 1807, in *Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*, II, 27. See also G.H. Lewes, “The Principles of Success in Literature, Chapter III: Of Vision in Art,” *Fortnightly Review* 1, no. 5. (July 15, 1865): 572-89, at 588. As the first editor of one of the periodicals that emerged to fill the void many believed the traditional quarterlies had left unfilled, Lewes (of the *Fortnightly Review*) detected a general shift in public literary tastes: “Of late years there has been a reaction against conventionalism which called itself Idealism, in favor of *detailism* which calls itself Realism.” This desire for “detailism” and “Realism” certainly extended into the political realm as well.

⁷ Frederic Harrison, “The Positivist Problem,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 6, no. 35 (November 1869): 469-93, at 471.

Goldilocks Principle,” developed hand-in-hand with alterations to the periodical industry itself, culminating in the 1865 foundation of the *Fortnightly Review*. Despite its strange title, the *Fortnightly* actually became the first standard-bearer of a new breed of periodical—the serious-minded monthly review. Within a decade or so of the *Fortnightly*’s founding, the serious-minded monthly review system would completely supplant to old quarterly system as the dominant format in higher journalism. Let’s now explore this snowball-to-avalanche process.

I. Latter-Day Carlyle

First appearing in eighteen double-columned pages of the August 1867 edition of *Macmillan’s Magazine*, “Shooting Niagara” witnesses a Carlyle completely out of step with the Spirit of the Age, declaiming against two of the Victorians’ most cherished institutions: change through political reform (as opposed to revolution⁸); and discussion. Writing of the Second Reform Act which had become law that same month, he says that, “The intellect of a man who believes in the possibility of ‘improvement’ by such a method is to me a finished off and shut up intellect, with which I would not argue: mere waste of wind between us to exchange words on that class of topics.”⁹ One could hardly imagine a more profound break from the faith in public debate which had marked Victorian higher journalism since the *Edinburgh*’s 1802 founding. Indeed, as Carlyle saw it, the *Edinburgh* was directly responsible for paving the way for 1867’s (potentially disastrous) expansion of the franchise. And most historians would generally agree with the view that it had, in fact, played a not insignificant (if not entirely “direct”) role in this development, although the vast majority would (if pressed to set aside their scholarly objectivity) likely see this

⁸ That sort of behavior was best left to the French. For Victorian intellectuals’ views of the French, see Georgios Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

⁹ Thomas Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara: And After?” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 16, no. 94 (August 1867): 319-31, at 323.

as a source of “praise” (rather than “blame”) for the *Edinburgh*. Not only had the *Edinburgh* been the chief print advocate for the First Reform Bill in 1832, some of its contributors were even more hands-on, taking active roles in the political passage and implementation of that bill. In addition to Macaulay’s famed pro-reform speeches in the House of Commons, Jeffrey was Lord Advocate (and, thus, one of the key players in the Scottish counterpart to the 1832 Reform Act), while Henry Brougham was a member of Earl Grey’s Cabinet.¹⁰ Yet for Carlyle, this was all further evidence for the prosecution in his case against the *Edinburgh*’s legacy. Carlyle’s closing statement on the matter came in his *Reminiscences*, published just a few months after his death in February 1881:

Democracy, the gradual uprising and rule in all things of roaring million-headed unreflecting, darkly suffering darkly sinning “Demos,” come to call its old superiors to account at its maddest of tribunals; nothing in my time has so forwarded all this as Jeffrey and his once famous *Edinburgh Review*.¹¹

It is noteworthy that Carlyle, writing in last third of the century, describes the *Edinburgh* as a “once famous” periodical, hinting at a demise that will be the subject of later analysis below, beginning at the end of the current chapter and carrying through to the next. But for now, we should like to stay with Carlyle and his rather un-Victorian views expressed above. At first glance, it might be tempting to dismiss such howls of disdain as the product of a cantankerous prophet’s turn to pessimism in his twilight years. But this would entail neglecting the simple fact that Carlyle’s gloomy assessment of democracy’s projected impact in Britain was decades in the making. In one of the many summary assessments of Carlyle’s career put forward in the years after his passing, Augustine Birrell discerned that in the “matter of politics there were two

¹⁰ For more on these connections, see Biancamaria Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: The “Edinburgh Review,” 1802-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), esp. 147-60.

¹¹ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, II, 64.

Carlyles; and, as generally happens, his last state was worse than his first.”¹² This seems to be the judgment of just about every Carlyle critic (modern as well as contemporary). G.M. Trevelyan also discerned “two Carlyles,” and, also like Birrell, Trevelyan’s admiration was primarily reserved for the “first Carlyle,” while abhorring the “second Carlyle” who “appeared about 1850,” with the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* and thereafter “wrote in praise of Negro Slavery, the gospel of force, and Frederick the Great.”¹³ The decline in Carlyle’s reputation, however, was not *just* the result of his increasingly racist and authoritarian declarations. Any account of the Sage of Chelsea’s loss of prestige (especially among his peers and that of the succeeding generation of Victorian reviewers) must also take account of the perception that Carlyle was an insufficient guide out of the disorders he had identified in the Condition-of-England-Question. Yes, the style of his prose was hypnotic and occasionally downright beautiful. But it too often lacked clarity and, thus, accessibility. Yes, he was right to be tormented about the current and future state of the nation. But where were the *practical* solutions? And, no, trusting in another Cromwell or Frederick the Great was not “practical” for a people who had come to accept the growth of democracy (however dangerous its potential) was an inevitable fact of life. With Carlyle, admiration went hand-in-hand with annoyance.

Concerning the question of precisely when the first Carlyle gave way to the second, Carlyle’s first major biographer, J.A. Froude, points to the December 1849 publication in

¹² Augustine Birrell, “Carlyle,” in *Obiter Dicta*, by Birrell, 2 vols. (London: Elliott Stock, 1884-87), I, 1-54, at 34. Nonetheless, the notion of merely two Carlyles may be a bit misleading in terms of his literary career, as it tends to overlook what was, in this sense, his true *first* phase as a key conduit between German and English literature and philosophy. See, for example, George Gilfillan, “Thomas Carlyle,” in *A Gallery of Literary Portraits*, by Gilfillan (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1845), 124-54, esp. 124, where the author speaks of “two different phases” in Carlyle’s career a few years before the emergence of the “second Carlyle” to which Birrell and Trevelyan are referring.

¹³ G.M. Trevelyan, “The Two Carlyles,” in *The Recreations of an Historian*, by G.M. Trevelyan (London: Nelson, 1919), 192-212, at 195.

Fraser's of the "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question,"¹⁴ saying "[m]any of his old admirers drew back after this," while it also marked the final break in his friendship with John Stuart Mill.¹⁵ The modern scholar, Catherine Hall, also stresses the "Occasional Discourse" as a "watershed," altering the "discursive terrain" of racial thinking on a level equal to Enoch Powell's 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech.¹⁶ But this seems a bridge too far. The shift away from Carlyle as a useful guide in navigating the modern condition had been under way even before that essay and the equally incendiary (in the eyes of contemporaries) follow-up publication, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850).¹⁷ More traditionally, the year 1843 has been identified as "the decisive locus of transition from promise to decline."¹⁸ This was the year of *Past and Present's* publication. Yet there is very little agreement as to whether *Past and Present* marks the final work of Carlyle the promising sage or the first sign of Carlyle in decline. Asserting that "up to 1843, he not unfairly might be called a Liberal," Birrell still finds hope in the Carlyle of *Past and Present*.¹⁹ Raymond Williams begs to differ, though, in his celebrated 1958 study, *Culture and Society*. Williams interprets *Past and Present* as an early indicator of Carlyle's "steady withdrawal from genuinely social thinking into the preoccupations with personal power." Whereas *Chartism* (1840), according to Williams, "contains the greater part of what is best in

¹⁴ Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," *Fraser's Magazine* 40, no. 240 (December 1849): 670-9, published as a pamphlet in 1853 with the more offensive title, *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question* (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853). See also Mill's reply in the following issue of *Fraser's*, John Stuart Mill, "The Negro Question," *Fraser's Magazine* 41, no. 241 (January 1850): 25-31.

¹⁵ J.A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), II, 22.

¹⁶ Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 378-9.

¹⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850).

¹⁸ Tom Toremans. "Perpetual Remnant: 'Sartor Resartus' and 'the Necessary Kind of Reading,'" in *Thomas Carlyle Resartus*, 204-25, at 204.

¹⁹ Augustine Birrell, "Carlyle," I, 34, 38-40.

Carlyle's social thinking," plausible political remedies to industrial society begin to disappear in Carlyle's later analyses of the Condition of England. In the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, the shift has been completed, laying the groundwork for *Shooting Niagara* and the promotion of a "contemptuous absolutism, while the elements which made the former criticism humane have virtually disappeared."²⁰ Nonetheless, it is in *Past and Present* that we begin to see contemporary frustrations with Carlyle truly come to the forefront, paving the way for later conclusions that, as a political writer, Carlyle proved "shallow and unsound."²¹ For it was in this work that Carlyle disparaged *all* political reforms ("Not Emigration, Education, Corn-Law Abrogation, Sanitary Regulation, Land Property-Tax; not these alone, nor a thousand times as much as these") as mere "Morrison's Pills."²²

"Morrison's Pills"

Carlyle's use of the term "Morrison's Pills" derives from James Morison (1770-1840)—to whose name Carlyle adds an extra *r*—manufacturer of a pill that claimed to cure any ailment by causing the expulsion of blood-borne impurity through the bowels.²³ Morison's "vegetable pills" (and other instances of quackery) had been a source of some controversy throughout the 1830s (see

²⁰ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*, [1958], (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), 90, 89, 89-90.

²¹ [William E. Aytoun], "Latter-Day Pamphlets," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 67, no. 416 (June 1850) 641-58, at 658.

²² Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 21.

²³ See T.A.B. Corley, "Morison, James (1770-1840)," in *ODNB* (January 2010), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/192692004>; John Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture in the Romantic Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 77-82; and William H. Helfland, "James Morison and His Pills: A Study of the Nineteenth Century Pharmaceutical Market," *Transactions of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy* 1, no 3 (1974): 101-35; Michael Brown, "Medicine, Quackery, and the Free Market: The 'War' against Morison's Pills and the Construction of the Medical Profession, c.1830-c.1850," in *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, c.1450-c.1850*, edited by Mark S.R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 238-61; and, more generally, Logie Barrow, "Why Were Most Medical Heretics at Their Most Confident around the 1840s? (the Other Side of Mid-Victorian Medicine)," in *British Medicine in an Age of Reform*, edited by Roger French and Andrew Wear (London: Routledge, 1991), 164-88.

Figure 2 below). Carlyle’s reference to Morison in *Past and Present* is a classic example of his abilities as an essayist, using topical allusions (as well as recently coined neologisms such as “red tape” and “Puseyism”) to enhance the connection with readers.



Figure 2: Universal Pills No. 3. Anonymous colored lithograph, c.1835. An obese man exhibiting a placard of himself looking extremely thin, demonstrating the effectiveness of James Morison’s vegetable pills. The caption reads: “This here Board is a hexact [sic] representation of me as I was afore I took to Morrison s pills and only took 480 boxes!! I lived on nothink [sic] else for a vortnight [sic].” Wellcome Collection, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/hxqfwh4e>.

As the caption in Figure 2 shows, it was not uncommon for Morison's name to be "misspelled" as "Morrison" even before *Past and Present*. Idiosyncrasy is a hallmark of Carlyle's stylistic legacy, but the method of deploying illustrative references within that style was often quite vivid and not necessarily incomprehensible to contemporaries.²⁴ Even still, while *Past and Present* decries "Donothingism in Practice and Saysomethingism in Speech,"²⁵ critics were growing frustrated with the Sage of Chelsea's refusal to offer a solution to the "Condition of England." Indeed, as much as any other single factor, it was Carlyle's disdain for practical political solutions that soured contemporary opinions of him as a political and social critic; for it was one thing to highlight the shortcomings of various "Morrison's Pills," but at least such panaceas were an effort at "Dosomethingism."

In the reviews of *Past and Present*, we see the first indications of what would become a booming chorus of denunciations on this matter. The first to take Carlyle to task for his sins of omission was the popular sentimental novelist, Lady Sydney Morgan. In her review for the respected weekly, the *Athenaeum*, Morgan prefaces her criticism (as many would) by noting her agreement with Carlyle "in his view of the political and economic position and prospects of the country," at least insofar "as far as he succeeds in giving them intelligible utterance." She agrees "that there is a formidable rottenness in the political, moral, and social condition of all classes of our countrymen." She agrees "that great and immediate reforms are necessary to the very permanence of the nation." She follows him "to the full extent of believing that abolition of the Corn Laws would relieve the existing pressure but for a limited period" and that failure to

²⁴ See Richard D. Altick, "'Past and Present': Topicality as Technique," in *Carlyle and His Contemporaries: Essays in Honor of Charles Richard Sanders*, edited by John Clubbe (Durham: Duke University Press, 1976), 112-28.

²⁵ Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 188.

provide “a moral existence for the laboring classes” would have dire consequences for the nation. And yet, in Carlyle’s hands, such points of agreement “lead to nothing.” There is nothing that can be achieved he will not move beyond “vague declamations” by “individualizing and analyzing, to arrive at particular and practicable results.”²⁶ To solve the Condition of England Question, Morgan concludes, requires no abstraction, but “a practical application of specific means to specific ends.”²⁷

Lady Morgan was by no means alone. In the *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* review of that same work, William Henry Smith writes: “[T]urn which way you will, to philosophy, to politics, to religion, you find Mr. Carlyle objecting, denouncing, scoffing, rending all to pieces in his bold, reckless, ironical, manner—but *teaching* nothing. The most docile pupil, when he opens his tablets to put down the precious sum of wisdom he has learned, pauses—finds his pencil motionless, and leaves his tablet still a blank.”²⁸ To highlight the shortcomings of various “Morrison’s Pills” was one thing, but even *they* were an effort at “Dosomethingism.” If “Journalists, Political Economists, Politicians, Pamphleteers” were, indeed, the “modern guides of nations,” as Carlyle claimed, then why should his readers not expect *some guidance*?²⁹ Labeling *Past and Present* Carlyle’s “most characteristic work,” *The Times* notice finds him “as far as ever” from practical solutions:

If the world has gone wrong, what is the best way of setting it right again?
Above all, what is the statesman’s business in the matter? How is he to meet,

²⁶ [Lady Sydney Morgan], “‘Past and Present,’ by Thomas Carlyle,” *Athenaeum*, no. 811 (May 13, 1843): 453-4, at 453.

²⁷ [Morgan], “‘Past and Present,’ by Thomas Carlyle. [Second Notice],” *Athenaeum*, no. 812 (May 20, 1843): 480-81, at 481.

²⁸ [William Henry Smith], “‘Past and Present,’ by Carlyle,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 54, no. 333 (July 1843): 121-38, at 122.

²⁹ Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 34.

counteract, and overthrow the evils of which philosophers tell him? [The statesman] is to act with the materials that are given him, not speculate about the laws of the universe, about which he can know but little...Philosophy is but a lamp, which, however useful, and necessary itself, will never supply a man with either hands or materials to work with.³⁰

During his exile in London, the great Italian nationalist, Giuseppe Mazzini, became a friend and frequent guest of the Carlyle home on Cheyne Row. But this did not stop Mazzini from censuring Carlyle in print for the “perpetual antagonism [which] prevails throughout all that he does,” as he wrote in an unsigned 1844 review for the *British and Foreign Quarterly Review*.³¹ Carlyle’s knack for highlighting a great problem of the day (such as the Condition of England) was heartening, but his dismissal of seemingly any solution as merely one of “Morrison’s Pills” was as maddening for Mazzini as it was for many others:

Faith and discouragement alternate in his works, as they must in his soul. He weaves and unweaves his web, like Penelope: he preaches by turns life and nothingness: he destroys the powers of his readers, by continually carrying them from heaven to hell, from hell to heaven. Ardent, and almost menacing, upon the ground of idea, he becomes timid and skeptical as soon as he is engaged on that of its application. We may agree with him with respect to the aim—we cannot respecting the means; he rejects them all, but he proposes no³² others. He desires progress, but dislikes progressives: he foresees, he announces as inevitable, great changes or revolutions in the religious, social, political order; but it is on condition that the revolutionists take no part in them: he has written many admirable pages on Knox and Cromwell; but the chances are that he would have written as admirably, although less truly, against them, had he lived at the commencement of their struggles. Give him the past—give him a power, an idea, something which has triumphed and borne its fruits—so that, placed thus at a distance, he can examine and comprehend it under all its points of view, calmly, at his ease, without fear of being troubled by it, or drawn into the sphere of its action—and he will see in it all that there is to see, more than others are able to

³⁰ Anon. “‘Past and Present,’ by Thomas Carlyle,” *The Times*, October 6, 1843: 3.

³¹ [Giuseppe Mazzini], “The Works of Thomas Carlyle,” *British and Foreign Quarterly Review* 16, no. 31 (January 1844): 262-93, at 284.

³² [Mazzini], “The Works of Thomas Carlyle,” 284.

see. Bring the object near to him, and as with Dante's souls in the 'Inferno,' his vision, his faculty of penetration is clouded.³³

It is, perhaps, a testament to the strength of the Mazzini/Carlyle friendship that when the public learned a few months later the Home Office had been opening the Italian patriot's mail to gather intelligence on him,³⁴ Carlyle wrote a vigorous letter of protest to *The Times*; "whatever I may think of his practical insight and skill in worldly affairs, I can with great freedom testify to all men that he, if I have ever seen one such, is a man of genius and virtue, a man of sterling veracity, humanity, and nobleness of mind, one of those rare men, numerable unfortunately but as unites in this world, who are worthy to be called martyr-souls."³⁵

Another early leveler of the charge that Carlyle refused to offer practical solutions was George Gilfillan. A fellow Scot, Gilfillan is now largely forgotten. If mentioned at all, it is usually dismissively, as when John Gross devotes a few pages to the man he calls "the McGonagall of criticism"³⁶ in his justly acclaimed modern classic, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*.³⁷ By the time Matthew Arnold had inaugurated his revolution in criticism in the 1860s

³³ [Mazzini], "The Works of Thomas Carlyle," 285.

³⁴ For more on this episode, see Kathy Chamberlain, "The Political and Personal Drama of 1844: Jane Welsh Carlyle, Giuseppe Mazzini, and the British Government's Secret Opening of His Mail," *Carlyle Society Occasional Papers* 24 (2011-12): 31-58; as well as Marjorie Stone, "Joseph Mazzini, English Writers, and the Post Office Espionage Scandal: Politics, Privacy, and Twenty-First Century Parallels," *BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and Nineteenth Century History*, edited by Dino Franco Felluga (n.d.) http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=marjorie-stone-on-the-post-office-espionage-scandal-1844; and Kate Lawson, "Personal Privacy, Letter Mail, and the Post Office Espionage Scandal, 1844," *BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and Nineteenth Century History*, edited by Dino Franco Felluga (n.d.) http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=kate-lawson-personal-privacy-letter-mail-and-the-post-office-espionage-scandal-1844.

³⁵ Thomas Carlyle, "To the Editor of the 'Times,'" *The Times*, June 19, 1844: 6.

³⁶ A reference to the notoriously bad poet, William McGonagall (1825-1902), who shared Gilfillan's penchant for writing in an excessively florid style.

³⁷ John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, 207. For a brave (if not altogether convincing) dissent from Gross's damning account of Gross, see Glyn Pursglove, "George Gilfillan," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 144: Nineteenth Century British Literary Biographers*, edited by Steven Serafin (Detroit: Gale, 1994), 117-26.

(see Chapter 4 below), some contemporaries pointed to Gilfillan by name as the exemplar of English literary taste's poor condition.³⁸ If this is a bit extreme in its unfairness to Gilfillan, there is no denying that he was prone to sprout some ridiculously bombastic judgments made in embarrassingly purple prose; like when he declares that Jeffrey's decision to publish his *Edinburgh* contributions had "reared a monument which shall only perish when the steam engine, which he has eulogized, has ceased its Titanic play,—ceased to 'pick up a pin and rend an oak, cut steel into ribbons, and propel a vessel against the fury of the winds and waves;' and when that principle of beauty, which he has so finely analyzed, has withered from the grass and the flower, and the deep soul of man itself."³⁹

Nonetheless, there was a brief period in the late 1840s and early 1850s when Gilfillan's reputation was such that Ralph Waldo Emerson and Frederick Douglass found time to call upon him at his Dundee residence during their British travels.⁴⁰ The source of this esteem was a three volume *Gallery of Literary Portraits* published between 1845 and 1854. Gilfillan's *Literary Portraits* of great contemporaries like Francis Jeffrey, Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Macaulay were reprinted essays from the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier*, a provincial newspaper that counted Carlyle among its subscribers. So impressed was Carlyle with the Gilfillan's portrait of himself that he wrote John Gibson Lockhart, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, vouching for the "poor

³⁸ See [Henry Hill Lancaster], "Essays in Criticism," *North British Review* 42, no. 83 (March 1865): 158-82, at 163: "[O]ur critics do more than negative mischief. They are strenuous in the propagation of evil. One critic like Mr. George Gilfillan can do infinitely more harm to literature than any number of spasmodic poets. For he is the prime source of mischief."

³⁹ George Gilfillan, "Lord Jeffrey," in *A Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1-15, at 7.

⁴⁰ See Raymond N. MacKenzie, "Gilfillan, George (1813-1878)" in *ODNB* (2004), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/10725>. See also W. Robertson Nicoll, "Introduction," in *Gilfillan's Literary Portraits*, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, Everyman's Library Series. (London: J.M. Dent, 1909), vii-xix, esp. vii: "For about five years (1849-1854) George Gilfillan's position as a critic was one of very great influence. It may be doubted whether even Carlyle had more power over young minds."

meritorious Scotchman” as a potential contributor for his review.⁴¹ Lockhart was unpersuaded by the proposition and Gilfillan never wrote for the *Quarterly*.

As for Carlyle’s positive reception of his assessment in Gilfillan’s first *Gallery of Portraits*, while there are kernels of the ornate prose and sycophantic tone that would eventually be the ruin of Gilfillan’s reputation,⁴² there are also a few observations of Carlyle that would prove prescient in the coming years and decades. For instance, while praising the value of *Chartism* and *Past and Present* for “revealing many of the darker symptoms of our political and social disease,” Gilfillan notes that “[t]he remedy is nowhere to be found within them.” It is, moreover, a hallmark of Carlyle’s expositions on the Condition of England that “he not unfrequently tantalizes his reader by glimpses, rather than satisfies him by distinct masses of thought. Does a difficulty occur: He shows every ordinary mode of solution to be false, but does not supply the true.” Is Carlyle “only endowed with an energy of destruction, and is rather a tornado to overturn, than an architect to build?” asks Gilfillan.⁴³ Perhaps Carlyle was amenable to such constructive criticism because, as yet, the chorus of such commentary had yet to reach a crescendo. By the time it had, in the early 1850s, the Sage had broken all contacts with Gilfillan,⁴⁴ though in an 1851 correspondence with Francois Buloz, owner and editor of France’s *Revue des Deux Mondes*, an increasingly gruff Carlyle does recommend Gilfillan’s *Portraits* as

⁴¹ Carlyle to John Gibson Lockhart, November 20, 1845, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

⁴² The source of which is traced directly to William E. Aytoun, the editor of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. Aytoun’s *Firmilian* (1854) made Gilfillan the subject of a devastatingly effective satire, from which his reputation never recovered. The satire originated in a mock-review of Gilfillan’s aforementioned book. See [William E. Aytoun], “Firmilian: A Tragedy,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 75, no. 463 (May 1854): 533-51.

⁴³ Gilfillan, “Thomas Carlyle,” in *A Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 137.

⁴⁴ The break seems to have occurred over Gilfillan’s criticisms of Carlyle in the former’s book *The Bards of the Bible* (1851). See MacKenzie, “Gilfillan, George (1813-1878)” in *ODNB* (2004), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/10725>.

the best of a poor lot to choose from for biographical treatments of himself.⁴⁵ By 1855, all he will say of his former disciple is “I know nothing of the mad *nowt*⁴⁶ Gilfillan, have done nothing, said nothing, thought nothing, about him, these many years.⁴⁷ However true this may have been, the progressively hostile reviews Carlyle faced in these years echoed much of the substance found in the much derided *Literary Portraits*. In this way, despite his widely acknowledged faults as a critic, Gilfillan is, perhaps, too easily dismissed by Carlyle as a mere *nowt*.

In four short articles on Ireland published respectively in the *Examiner* and the *Spectator* between April 29 and May 13, 1848, Carlyle once again exasperated contemporaries with his inability to put forward any solution to a political problem.⁴⁸ Warning of Britain’s demise should the Irish question go unsolved, Carlyle only pinpointed the inadequacy of solutions proposed by others. Repeal of the Union? An Irish voter registration bill? Extension of the franchise? No, no, and no. Political remedies were never the answer, he had said before. Thus, in a witty critique the May 1848 *North British Review*, Thomas De Quincey wrote: “Mr. Carlyle offended us all (or all of us that were interested in social philosophy) by enlarging on a social affliction, which few indeed needed to see exposed, but most men would have rejoiced to see remedied, if it were but on paper, and by way of tentative suggestion. Precisely at that point, however, where his aid was invoked, Mr. Carlyle halted.” Well, De Quincey concludes in mocking fashion, “you’ve made another hole in the tin-kettle of society; how do you propose to tinker it?”⁴⁹ That same month,

⁴⁵ See Carlyle to Francois Buloz, November 17, 1851, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

⁴⁶ Northern English for “nothing”

⁴⁷ Carlyle to Jean Carlyle Aitken, January 12, 1855, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

⁴⁸ These four essays are reprinted in Richard Herne, ed., *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Carlyle, with Personal Reminiscences and Selections from his Private Letters*, 2 vols. (London: W.H. Allen, 1881), II, 370-404.

⁴⁹ [Thomas De Quincey], “Forster’s ‘Life of Goldsmith,’” *North British Review* 9, no. 17 (May 1848): 187-212, at 196.

Carlyle's friend, Edward FitzGerald, would write Frederick Tennyson (Alfred's brother), telling him that Carlyle "raves and foams, but has nothing to say."⁵⁰ Bidding farewell to Ralph Waldo Emerson as he journeyed back to America in July 1848, Arthur Hugh Clough sadly remarked, "What shall we do without you? Think where we are. Carlyle has led us all out into the desert, and he has left us there." Emerson, we are told, added that he heard this same lament many times during his stay across the Atlantic, particularly from young intellectuals such as Clough.⁵¹

The feeling was beginning to be expressed among Emerson's countrymen as well. Edgar Allan Poe had declared before his 1849 death that, "I have not the slightest faith in Carlyle. In ten years —possibly in five—he will be remembered only as a butt for sarcasm. His linguistic Euphuisms might very well have been taken as prima facie evidence of his philosophic ones; they were the froth which indicated, first, the shallowness, and secondly, the confusion of the waters. I would blame no man of sense for leaving the works of Carlyle unread."⁵² Even Froude criticized Carlyle in this vein, having the protagonist of his 1849 autobiographical novel, *The Nemesis of Faith*, complain that "Carlyle only raises questions he cannot answer, and seems best contented if he can make the rest of us as discontented as himself."⁵³ The Irish articles also appear to have caused a shift in Matthew Arnold's estimation of Carlyle.⁵⁴ Though he had found Carlyle's writings "deeply *restful*" in March 1848 (just before the Irish articles),⁵⁵ by the

⁵⁰ Edward FitzGerald to Frederick Tennyson, May 4, 1848, in *Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald*, edited by William Aldis Wright, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1889), I, 189.

⁵¹ Quoted in Edward Everett Hale, "James Russell Lowell and His Friends, Chapter 9: Harvard Revisited," *The Outlook* 59, no. 5 (June 4, 1898): 315-26, at 321.

⁵² Undated marginalia, in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by James A. Harrison, 17 vols. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1902), XVI, 99.

⁵³ J.A. Froude, *The Nemesis of Faith* (London: Chapman, 1849), 35. But see also page 156, where Froude writes "I shall not in this place attempt to acknowledge all I owe to this very great man."

⁵⁴ See Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, September 23, 1849, in *TLMA*, Lang, I, 156.

⁵⁵ Arnold to Arthur Clough, March 8, 1848, in *TLMA*, Lang, I, 93 (emphasis in original).

following September (that is, a few months before the “Occasional Discourse”), Arnold was telling his friend, Clough that “moral desperadoes like Carlyle” were unhelpful in these “damned times.”⁵⁶ He was simply “too willful...too turbid, too vehement,” as Arnold said decades later.⁵⁷ To lose the ear of men like Arnold and Clough was no small turn of events. As David DeLaura once noted in a study of Carlyle’s influence on Arnold, “Nowhere was [Carlyle] more intensely read than among the Arnold-Clough circle at Oxford.”⁵⁸

Before settling on a Cromwellian reincarnate as his own “Morrison’s Pill,”⁵⁹ Carlyle had offered the doctrine of work as a cure for the Condition-of-England-Question in *Sartor Resartus*.⁶⁰ In *Chartism* (1840), he was even more specific, offering up two proposals: first, universal education; and second, planned emigration to the Empire.⁶¹ Believing Britain “the

⁵⁶ Arnold to Clough, September 23, 1849, in *TLMA*, Lang, I, 156 (emphasis in original)

⁵⁷ Matthew Arnold, “Emerson,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 50, no. 295 (May 1884): 1-13, at 6. It is worth noting that this piece spends nearly as much time discussing Carlyle as it does Emerson.

⁵⁸ David J. DeLaura, “Carlyle and Arnold: The Religious Issue,” in *Carlyle Past and Present: A Collection of New Essays*, edited by K.J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976), 127-54, at 128.

⁵⁹ Carlyle seems to have believed for a time that Peel was an attractive candidate to meet his criteria for a man of action. See Jules Paul Seigel, “Carlyle and Peel: The Prophet’s Search for a Heroic Politician and an Unpublished Fragment,” *Victorian Studies* 26, no. 2 (Winter 1983): 181-95; and John Morrow, “The Paradox of Peel as Carlylean Hero,” *Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (March 1997): 97-110.

⁶⁰ See [Carlyle], “Sartor Resartus [Book II, Chapters 8-10],” 452: “Produce, produce! Were it but the pitifulest, infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God’s name. ‘Tis the utmost thou hast in thee? Out with it then! Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might.”

⁶¹ Carlyle, “Impossible,” Chap. 10 in *Chartism*, by Carlyle (London: James Fraser, 1840), 96-113. Though some later advocates of similar proposals would single out Carlyle for praise [See, for example, Richard Burton, *Two Trips to Gorilla Land, and the Cataracts of the Congo*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1876), I, 218: “When will the poor man realize the fact that his comfort and happiness will result not from workhouses and alms houses, hospitals and private charities, but from that organized and efficient emigration, so long advocated by the seer Carlyle?”], neither education nor emigration originated with Carlyle, as both had been brought forward by various social reformers since the early 1830s. See Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 58: “[A]s early as the 1830s a flood of promotional literature poured forth.” Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 89: “In practical effect—as in the proposals for popular education and planned emigration—[*Chartism*] is not really very different from Utilitarianism; and in its call for more government it is a move in the same direction as that which the second phase of radical Utilitarianism was to take.” For an important precursor to state-planned emigration, see Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s, *A Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australasia. Together with the Outline of a System of Colonization*, edited by Robert Gouger (London: Joseph Cross, 1829). For more on Wakefield’s advocacy of “systematic colonization,” see Tony Ballantyne, “Remaking the Empire from Newgate:

worst-educated nation in Europe,”⁶² Carlyle blamed this sad state of affairs on the lack of state intervention. It was, as he put it, “That self-cancelling Donothingism and Laissez-faire should have got so ingrained into our Practice, is the source of all these miseries.” The very first duty of a government was “[t]o impart the gift of thinking to those who cannot think, and yet who could in that case think: this, one would imagine, was the first function a government had to set about discharging.”⁶³ In *Past and Present*, Carlyle returned to the subject of education, articulating a vision that sounds remarkably in step with what Matthew Arnold would later advocate as a remedy for the plague of middle class Philistinism:

Bills enough, were the Corn-Law Abrogation Bill once passed, and a Legislature willing! Nay this one Bill, which lies yet unenacted, a right Education Bill, is not this of itself the sure parent of innumerable wise Bills,—wise regulations, practical methods and proposals, gradually ripening towards the state of Bills? To irradiate with intelligence, that is to say, with order, arrangement and all blessedness, the Chaotic, Unintelligent: how, except by educating, *can* you accomplish this?⁶⁴

Wakefield’s ‘A Letter from Sydney,’” in *Ten Books that Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons*, edited by Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 29-49. Even earlier, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham had supported similar remedies. For Smith, see Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, [1776], edited by Edward Cannan. 2 vols. London: Methuen, 1904), II, 272-3: “The state, however, derives no inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people, besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one.” For Bentham, see Jeremy Bentham, *Jeremy Bentham’s Economic Writings*, edited by Werner Stark, 3 vols. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952-54), III, 301: “If capital and hands must emigrate—and emigrate ere long the hands must do or be starved—better to spots within the empire, at least so as provided our expense in governing and defending them does not increase with their population, better to our own colonies—for happily removal to Ireland is no longer emigration—than anywhere else.” Bentham’s ideas on such matters found popular expression in the pages of the *Westminster Review*. Especially in the *Westminster’s* first decade. See, for example, [Peregrine Bingham], “On Emigration,” *Westminster Review* 3, no. 6 (April 1825): 448-87; [Southwood Smith], “Present System of Education”; [James Mill], “State of the Nation,” *Westminster Review* 6, no. 12 (October 1826): 249-78, esp. 269-70; and [Arthur Symonds], “National Education,” *Westminster Review* 20, no. 40 (April 1834): 296-323.

⁶² Carlyle to Macvey Napier, January 27, 1830, in *CMN*, 78.

⁶³ Carlyle, *Chartism*, 64, 98.

⁶⁴ Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 327 (emphasis in original)

The cogency of this passage—which would seem a compelling refutation of the charge that Carlyle lacked for practical political solutions—is undermined by the author’s fundamentally slippery nature. This was, after all, *Past and Present*, in which Carlyle also decries *all political reforms* as nothing more than “Morrison’s Pills.”⁶⁵ As one modern scholar has written, “what Carlyle is calling for with one voice, is what with another voice he proclaims to be impossible.”⁶⁶ In another recent study, Ian Campbell pays special attention to “Carlyle and Education, warning that, “To try to talk about Carlyle and education is to stumble on the difficulty which anyone teaching his work faces, the sheer length of his writing career, the phases of his century’s public and intellectual life, and his own changing responses to his age as the decades succeed one another.”⁶⁷ Campbell’s point is undeniably correct, but charting Carlyle’s “changing responses” in terms of “decades” is, perhaps, too broad; “too broad” in that it fails to capture the Sage’s capacity to change not merely from one work to the next, from one year to the next, but also from one page to the next. To be sure, it is certainly possible that problem here lay not so much in Carlyle, but in his readers’ inability to keep up amidst the combined onslaught of satire and sincerity. If this is, indeed, the case, then the judgment must remain harsh by the standards of Victorian non-fiction prose. Always entertaining, Carlyle is never guilty of that capital crime of being “boring.” Nonetheless, a lack of clarity is a felonious offence which is unlikely to receive a light sentence from a jury that possessed an equally high regard for a lucidity. Inundated by a sense of chaos and confusion, the consensus opinion among Victorian leaders of the “age of discussion” was that it was their duty to make intelligible that which was previous unintelligible. Much as twentieth-century critics derided Carlyle for his racism and authoritarianism, his

⁶⁵ Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 21.

⁶⁶ David Morse, *High Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 101.

⁶⁷ Ian Campbell, “Carlyle and Education,” in *Thomas Carlyle Resartus*, 249-61, at 259.

downfall with the Victorians seems to originate from his perceived shortcomings as a reformer who eschewed political nostrums and as a prose stylist who refused to debase himself by speaking in the common tongue. And so we repeat Thomas De Quincey's question of Carlyle: "Well...you've made another hole in the tin-kettle of society; how do you propose to tinker it?"⁶⁸ In answer, it is difficult not to side with A.N. Wilson's 2003 assessment that Carlyle was "one of those thinkers who was strongest when he was accentuating the negative, and weakest when proposing his alternatives."⁶⁹

Within Victorian literary circles, it was a well-known fact that Carlyle and Macaulay did not care for one another. Carlyle once said Macaulay's "notions differ from mine as ice from fire,"⁷⁰ and this was one of the few things on which both of them would have agreed. Nonetheless, they were still two of the most perceptive critics of the day, and their opinions of each other should not be completely discounted for reasons of interpersonal bias. While they never did battle in print, both made several references to the other in their respective personal letters. Within these mentions, we find that a few insightful criticisms that seem to anticipate charges that would later dog the individual reputations of the two men. For example, in a September 1851 letter to his niece, Margaret Trevelyan, Macaulay explained away Carlyle's

⁶⁸ [De Quincey], "Forster's 'Life of Goldsmith,'" 196.

⁶⁹ A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 17-18. Thus, when John Ruskin began what some thought was a poor imitation of Carlyle in the 1860s, the frustration of some reviews boiled over. "We always come back to the decisive point—Tell us distinctly what is wrong, Mr. Carlyle or Mr. Ruskin, and we will try to mend it. But when you abuse us as hastening to perdition, and as throwing away the bounty of God, and can specify no deeper ground of offence than building bridges over waterfalls, then we reject you as false teachers and false censors alike, and return to our common-place but satisfactory belief in the general happiness and advancement of the present generation." [Henry Hill Lancaster], "The Writings of John Ruskin," *North British Review* 36, no. 71 (February 1862): 1-36, at 34. For agreement that Ruskin's effort in the 1860s and 1870s to carry the torch for Carlyle in both style as well as substance was a practice in anachronism, see E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, [1955] (Oakland: PM Press, 2011), 201, where the author refers to "the pitiful impracticability of Ruskin's latter-day Crusade."

⁷⁰ Carlyle to James Aitken, August 2, 1840, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>.

popularity as a byproduct of youthful rebellion: “There is an age at which we are disposed to think that whatever is odd and extravagant is great. At that age we are liable to be taken in by such essayists as Carlyle, such orators as Irving, such painters as Fuseli, such plays as the *Robbers*, such romances as *Sintram*.”⁷¹ To this, there may be more than a grain of truth. Like many who were born in the 1820s and 1830s, John Morley (b.1838) was enthralled with Carlyle as an Oxford youth.⁷² But after meeting his former idol in 1872, Morley finally realized his love for Carlyle did not last long after university⁷³: “There is nothing precise or definite about him—and after [age] twenty one wants that.”⁷⁴ For the mature adult Morley had become, Carlyle was “all heat and no light.”⁷⁵ As the opening quote in the section below suggests, the turn against Macaulay may also be understood as, at least partially, the result of a generational revolt.

⁷¹ Macaulay to Margaret Trevelyan, September 18, 1851, in *LTBM*, V, 194. Near the end of his life, Macaulay decried Carlyle’s influence on the style of the day. “Every writer seems to aim at doing something odd, at defying all rules and canons of criticism. The metre must be queer; the diction queer. So great is the taste for oddity that a man who has no recommendation but oddity, Carlisle [sic], hold a high place in vulgar estimation. Thomas Babington Macaulay, journal entry dated February 8, 1859, in *JTBM*, V, 264.

⁷² But see W.L. Courtney, “Carlyle’s Political Doctrines,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 26, no. 156 (December 1879): 817-28, at 818, where the editor of the *Fortnightly* says that, “the fact remains that the young men, for instance, in our universities, are not in the habit of reading Carlyle in the present day with a tithe of the same fervour which he excited among the generation which preceded them.”

⁷³ See Morley, “Carlyle,” 8. Here, we find Morley (in his early thirties) saying of Carlyle: “He has increased the fervor of the country, but without materially changing its objects; there is all the less disguise among us as a result of his teaching, but no radical modification of the sentiments which people are sincere in. The most stirring general appeal to the benevolent emotions to be effective for more than negative purposes, must lead up to definite maxims and specific precepts.”

⁷⁴ John Morley to Frederic Harrison, December 8, 1872, in Hirst. *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 227. Morley’s full account of the encounter with Carlyle (on the same page to which we have just referred) underscores the generational gap which had developed between Carlyle and those Oxbridge boys who had been weened on his fiery milk: “By evil chance I saw Chapman, who said the Old Prophet wanted to see me (which was wholly untrue). On this I drove down to the old man, with whom I had never had a word before. On the whole my impression after three-quarters of an hour was not pleasant; so different from Mill, or Lafitte, or even Congreve. He said to me just what he said to you—everything was to be flung up in favor of a man Goethe, and another man called Schiller, and then there was a man called Jean Paul, who clung to the eternal fact in this hideous welter, etc., etc., in the vein you know. Of instruction, or hint, or inspiration of any kind—not a jot or a tittle. The *Fortnightly*—‘*Wha-at a na-est of cackatreeces!*’ I was silent and discipular—and came away much as I expected I should, very moderately pleased with the disposal of my time. There is nothing precise or definite about him—and after twenty one wants that” (my emphasis).

⁷⁵ John Morley, “The Man of Letters as Hero,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 51, no. 301 (November 1884): 62-70, at 68. As Morley explains on the same page: “His work “emancipated men from the spirit of convention, but did

II. The Complacency of “Macaulayese”

And hardly was Macaulay dead when a reaction set in. The mood of the intellectual public in the sixties and seventies was certainly not yet dominated by doubt, but doubt was now at least admitted. A tendency made itself felt to make subtler distinctions, to reach out towards a more comprehensive understanding, to try the bridging of all to schematic antithesis. The finest spirits of that generation, Matthew Arnold, and Cotter Morison, and Leslie Stephen, and John Morley, all pointed out the lack of profundity, the philistinism, the over-confidence, of the most popular writer of history the world had ever seen.⁷⁶

If Carlyle’s inadequacy lay in the solution(s) or lack thereof to the vexing questions he called attention to in his earlier writings, Macaulay’s failing was that his optimistic view of the present precluded any serious consideration of potential dangers, let alone offering solutions for relieving them. In the words of one especially acerbic critic, “Macaulay loved his age as a good boy might love an indulgent mother.”⁷⁷ His eloquence (never in question) was to be appreciated. His complacency abhorred; and, in this respect, Carlyle was much to be preferred in the succeeding generation. By championing the theme of “progress” in British history, Macaulay implicitly downplayed the urgency of confronting the Condition of England Question and its successors. Consider the following passage on the triumph of Baconian philosophy:

It has lengthened life; it has mitigated pain; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it

not furnish them with a new leading; was a glorious appeal to the individual to look into his own soul, but gave him no practical key by which he might read what he found there. For that we have all had to look elsewhere, and some have found it in one source and others in another.”

⁷⁶ Pieter Geyl, “Macaulay in His Essays,” chap. 2 in *Debates with Historians*, by Geyl (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [essay orig. pub. 1952]), 19-34, at 33.

⁷⁷ Edward Dowden, “Victorian Literature,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 41, no. 246 (June 1887): 835-67, at 840. Dowden continues: “how generous she was! —who gave no end of cakes and pocket-money, and was jolly to all the other fellows as well as to himself. And the mother was justly proud of her vigorous, kindly, cheerful, clever son.” For a later espousal of this view, see Woodward, *The Age of Reform*, 542: “Macaulay accepted his age, admired its care for liberty, order, and improvement, assumed that the future as well as the past belonged to the Whigs. His unusual memory, strong pictorial imagination, and quick mind fitted him for the writing of history. Even his faults turned to his advantage. He was not troubled by subtleties of thought, or disturbed by the heroic and mystical. He never doubted the truth of his own standards of criticism. He was interested in detail but not minutiae, and content to widen rather than to deepen human knowledge. *Such a man was ideally fitted for the prosperous middle class public of his time*” (my emphasis).

has furnished new arms to the warrior; it has spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth; it has lighted up the night with the splendor of the day; it has extended the range of the human vision; it has multiplied the power of the human muscles; it has accelerated motion; it has annihilated distance; it has facilitated intercourse, correspondence, all friendly offices, all dispatch of business; it has enabled man to descend to the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into the noxious recesses of the earth, to traverse the land in cars which whirl along without horses, and the ocean in ships which run ten knots an hour against the wind. These are but a part of its fruits, and of its first fruits. For it is a philosophy which never rests, which has never attained, which is never perfect. Its law is progress. A point which yesterday was invisible is its goal today, and will be its starting post tomorrow.⁷⁸

The mid- and late-Victorian reaction against Macaulay stemmed from another, more ironic, source: his strength of narration. All admitted that no one could weave a narrative like Macaulay. In his biography for the English Men of Letters Series, Cotter Morison (ironically, the son of the same Dr. Morison who had inspired Carlyle's "Morrison's Pill") observed that, "Macaulay's great quality is that of being one of the best storytellers that ever lived; and if we limit the competition to his only proper rivals—the historians— he may be pronounced *the* best storyteller."⁷⁹ However, Macaulay's reliance on narrative seemed to result in a dearth of analysis. Macaulay was a first rate reporter (prone to "a kind of infinitely glorified newspaper-reporting," according to Morley⁸⁰), but that was not the task of the *higher* journalism. The *higher* journalism required commentary and discussion. And that discussion was more and more geared towards solving the great political questions of the day.

One of the countless amusing anecdotes passed down in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is the time a woman confronted Dr. Johnson with the question of how a certain erroneous definition

⁷⁸ [Macaulay], "Lord Bacon," 82-3.

⁷⁹ Morison, *Macaulay*, 40.

⁸⁰ Morley, "Macaulay," 508.

found its way into his *Dictionary*. “Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance,” came the reply.⁸¹ Such an admission would have been entirely out of the question for Macaulay, whose tendency to convey an almost comical degree of certitude was far from a mere quirk of his style as a writer. It was a deeply ingrained feature of his personality. As Lord Melbourne is believed to have once said, “I wish I was as cocksure of anything as Tom Macaulay is of everything.”⁸² Nowhere was Macaulay more “cocksure” than in his grasp of historical facts. In his “singularly constant contemplation of posterity,”⁸³ however, Walter Bagehot discerns one of Macaulay’s most serious deficiencies; namely, that he found the dead “more fascinating” than the living. As evidence, Bagehot quotes Macaulay’s essay on “Lord Bacon,” where he professes a preference for dead authors:

These friendships are exposed to no danger from the occurrences by which other attachments are weakened or dissolved. Time glides by; fortune is inconstant; tempers are soured; bonds which seemed indissoluble are daily sundered by interest, by emulation, or by caprice. But no such cause can affect the silent converse which we hold with the highest of human intellects. That placid intercourse is disturbed by no jealousies or resentments. These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry. In the dead there is no change. Plato is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet.⁸⁴

Bagehot maintains that the underlying spirit of these lines “is characteristic of such a man that he should think literature more instructive than life.”⁸⁵ He continues:

⁸¹ Boswell, *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, 211.

⁸² Quoted in Francis Cowper, 7th Earl Cowper, “Preface,” in *Lord Melbourne’s Papers*, edited by Lloyd C. Sanders (London: Longmans, Green, 1889), v-xvi, at xii.

⁸³ [Bagehot], “Mr. Macaulay,” 363.

⁸⁴ [Macaulay], “Lord Bacon,” 3. Quoted in [Bagehot], “Mr. Macaulay,” 361.

⁸⁵ [Bagehot], “Mr. Macaulay,” 361.

Only a mind impassive to our daily life, unalive to bores and evil, to joys and sorrows, with head in literature and heart in boards, incapable of the deepest sympathies, a prey to books, could imagine it. The mass of men have stronger ties and warmer hopes. The exclusive devotion to books tires. We require to love and hate, to act and live.⁸⁶

Even Napier, Jeffrey's successor as editor of the *Edinburgh*, was not immune to balking at Macaulay's prose, specifically the latter's use of colloquialisms ("bore"; "awkward squad"; "shirk") in his 1842 essay on Frederick the Great.⁸⁷ But Macaulay won out, on the grounds that such words may on occasion "most fully and precisely convey [the writer's] meaning to the great body of his readers." Such levities, moreover, "are not out of place in Shakespeare." Unlike his *History*, Macaulay never intended his essays to be "uniformly serious and earnest."⁸⁸ Some measure of levity was precisely what he intended; for "this turn of mind," he believed, was "by no means ill-suited to the business of reviewing."⁸⁹ If that is what it took to engage readers on worthy subjects, so be it.

Some contemporaries understood what Macaulay meant by this. In an 1842 letter to Napier, James Stephen observed that there was "scarcely a single book which retains much hold on the public mind, after any considerable lapse of time, except such as are recommended by some peculiar attractions of style and execution, and those attractions are generally of the lighter cast." From this situation, Stephen drew the moral that "the inimitable Sydney Smith, and (though in a different way) the scarcely less inimitable pen of our friend Macaulay, should be employed, if it were possible, as you employ gas in a balloon, to give a long flight to materials of

⁸⁶ [Bagehot], "Mr. Macaulay," 362.

⁸⁷ [Macaulay], "Frederic the Great," *Edinburgh Review* 75, no. 151 (April 1842): 218-81.

⁸⁸ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, April 18, 1842, in *CMN*, 384, 383, 382.

⁸⁹ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, July 22, 1839, in *CMN*, 291.

greater inherent weight and value.”⁹⁰ Almost exactly eighteen years after offering this praise, the elder Stephen’s two famous sons, Fitzjames,⁹¹ said of Macaulay “There are probably no finer compositions of their kind in the language than the Essays on Lord Clive and Warren Hastings.”⁹²

One of the most significant hits to Macaulay’s reputation amongst his immediate successors was when he came under the scrutiny of Matthew Arnold, the nearest thing to a replacement for Macaulay and Carlyle produced in the second half of the nineteenth century. Dominated by thoughts of the “bad civilization of the English middle class,”⁹³ Arnold feared the consequences of democracy in a nation where “current public opinion,” was simply “not intelligent,” especially in regards to the middle class, whom he called “Philistines.”⁹⁴ His grand mission to make Britain safe for democracy by “civilizing” the newly enfranchised middle class multitudes. In this task, Arnold viewed Macaulay as the enemy, labelling him “the great apostle of the Philistines”⁹⁵ and deploring the prevalence of what he termed “middle-class Macaulayese.” According to Arnold, “Macaulayese” contained “the same internal and external characteristics as Macaulay’s style; the external characteristic being a hard metallic movement with nothing of the soft play of life, and the internal characteristic being a perpetual semblance of hitting the right nail on the head without the reality. And I call it middle-class Macaulayese,

⁹⁰ James Stephen to Macvey Napier, February 2, 1842, in *CMN*, 379.

⁹¹ The youngest son was Leslie (see p. 45 above), The Stephens were prominent members of what Noel Annan labeled the “intellectual aristocracy.” See Annan, “The Intellectual Aristocracy,” in *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G.M. Trevelyan*, edited by J.H. Plumb (London: Longmans, Green, 1955), 241-87, esp. 274-7.

⁹² [Fitzjames Stephen], “Lord Macaulay,” 10.

⁹³ Matthew Arnold, “The Future of Liberalism,” 2.

⁹⁴ Arnold, “My Countrymen,” 167.

⁹⁵ Arnold, “Joubert: Or, A French Coleridge,” 190.

because it has these faults without the compensation of great studies and of conversance with great affairs, by which Macaulay partly redeemed them.”⁹⁶ In a rather damning summation of his views on Macaulay, Arnold concludes as follows:

[A] born rhetorician; a splendid rhetorician doubtless, and beyond that an *English* rhetorician also, an *honest* rhetorician; still, beyond the apparent rhetorical truth, for what the French call *vraie verite*, he had absolutely no organ; therefore his reputation, brilliant as it is, is not secure. Rhetoric so good as his excites and gives pleasure; but by pleasure alone you cannot bind men’s spirits to you. Truth illuminates and gives joy, and it is by the bond of joy, not of pleasure, that men’s spirits are indissolubly held. As Lord Macaulay’s own generation dies out, as a new generation arrives, without those ideas and tendencies of its predecessor which Lord Macaulay so deeply shared and so happily satisfied, will he give the same pleasure? [A]nd, if he ceases to give this, has he enough of light in him to make him safe? Pleasure the new generation will get from its own novel ideas and tendencies; but light is another and rarer thing, and must be treasured wherever it can be found. Will Macaulay be saved, in the sweep and pressure of time, for his light’s sake...? We think it very doubtful.⁹⁷

Arnold ultimately finds Macaulay “uninteresting” based on his perpetual “intellectual vulgarity.”⁹⁸ He was not alone in levelling such charges against Macaulay.⁹⁹ However, it is surely a weakness in Arnold himself to declare such a feature worthy of making Macaulay “uninteresting.”¹⁰⁰ Still, Arnold’s main point was echoed even across the Atlantic. In a posthumously published essay, Edgar Allan Poe warns from beyond the grave that, “We must

⁹⁶ Matthew Arnold, “Letter 8: Under a Playful Signature, My Friend Leo, of the ‘Daily Telegraph’ Advocates an Important Liberal Measure, and, In So Doing, Gives News of Arminius,” in *Friendship’s Garland: Being the Conversations, Letters, And Opinions of the Late Arminius, Baron Von Thunder-Ten-Tronckh. Collected and Edited, with a Dedicatory Letter to Adolescens Leo, Esq., of “The Daily Telegraph”* (London: Smith, Elder, 1871 [essay orig. pub. June 8, 1869]), 65-74, at 71.

⁹⁷ Arnold, “Joubert: Or, A French Coleridge,” 190.

⁹⁸ Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whateley Arnold, ?July 20, 1876, in *TLMA*, Lang, IV, 335.

⁹⁹ See Morley, “Macaulay,” 512.

¹⁰⁰ Stefan Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait*, [1988], paperback edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 66-7. This is a revised edition of Collini’s contribution on Arnold for the “Past Masters” series.

not fall into the error of fancying that he is *perfect* merely because he excels (in point of style) all his British cotemporaries.”¹⁰¹

In addition to the lack of discussion inherent in Macaulay’s “cocksure” narrative style, we should also note that his preference to write on literary and historical topics over contemporary political matters did not reflect the predominant interests of succeeding generations of Victorian higher journalism. This stems, ironically enough, from the very fact that—unlike Carlyle, Bagehot, Arnold, and most other Victorian men of letters—Macaulay actually had a career in active politics. As his nephew and first serious biographer, G.O. Trevelyan, writes: “From a marvelously early date in Macaulay’s life, public affairs divided his thoughts with literature, and, as he grew to manhood, began more and more to divide his aspirations.”¹⁰² This is evident in the chronology of Macaulay’s career as an *Edinburgh* reviewer.

For example, as noted in the previous chapter, Macaulay’s forty *Edinburgh* essays reflect a deliberate preference for literary and historical subjects over current events. Only ten of his essays deal with contemporary political matters, and notwithstanding Macaulay’s three attacks on the Utilitarians, these are generally not considered some of his best showings in the *Edinburgh* buff and blue. Though Bagehot perhaps goes too far in alleging “an abstinence from practical action” in Macaulay, it is still reasonable to conclude that he did generally abstain from politics in his higher journalism. When his essays did venture into politics, Macaulay’s bias of

¹⁰¹ Edgar Allan Poe, “About Critics and Criticism,” *Graham’s Magazine* 36, no. 1 (January 1850): 49-51, at 50 (emphasis in original). The essay was republished in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, XIII, 193-202. See also, Poe’s review of Macaulay’s *Essays* in Poe’s *Complete Works*, X, 156-60 [originally published as an unsigned review in June 1841 for *Graham’s Magazine*].

¹⁰² Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, I, 67.

“party spirit” was often an impediment to an honest discussion of practical facts.¹⁰³ John Wilson Croker, his Tory rival in the *Quarterly Review*, once poignantly noted that before Macaulay passes judgment on any individual, he pauses to ask if that person be a Whig or a Tory.¹⁰⁴

Macaulay as Reader of Periodicals

Until the very end of his life, Macaulay remained a devoted reader of periodical literature. When he passed away in his library on December 28, 1859, it is said that the very first number of a new monthly periodical, the *Cornhill Magazine*,¹⁰⁵ was laying by his side, open to the first page of the serial, “Lovel the Widower,” by the new magazine’s editor, William Makepeace Thackeray.¹⁰⁶ Macaulay was a great fan of Thackeray, much preferring him to the likes of Dickens.¹⁰⁷ As for Dickens, Macaulay’s opinion of him was actually quite high, describing him as “both a man of genius and a good-hearted man, in spite of some faults of taste.”¹⁰⁸ Macaulay had even planned

¹⁰³ [Bagehot], “Mr. Macaulay,” 384, 386.

¹⁰⁴ [John Wilson Croker], “Mr. Macaulay’s ‘History of England,’” *Quarterly Review* 84, no. 168 (March 1849): 549-630, at 561.

¹⁰⁵ The *Cornhill* debut sold a staggering 109,274 issues, before settling down to a still respectable circulation of about 25,000. See Sutherland, “Cornhill’s Sales and Payments: The First Decade,” 106.

¹⁰⁶ Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, II, 478.

¹⁰⁷ Macaulay’s *Journals* make several positive mentions of Thackeray’s writing. But see especially, Macaulay, journal entry dated December 4, 1859, in *JTBM*, V, 389: “I do not like Dickens’s manner so well as Thackeray’s. Thackeray writes a better style, and is more of a gentleman and a scholar.” In the second issue of the *Cornhill*, Thackeray penned a glowing memorial essay to mark the passing of one his greatest contemporaries. See [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Nil Nisi Bonum,” *Cornhill Magazine* 1, no. 2 (February 1860): 129-34. Thackeray’s praise was partly meant as a response to Harriet Martineau’s more critical notice of Macaulay’s death. See Martineau, “Lord Macaulay: Died December 28th, 1859,” in her *Biographical Sketches*, 102-13. For an informative contextualization of the two author’s treatment of Macaulay, see Iain Crawford, “Harriet Martineau: Women, Work, and Mid-Victorian Journalism,” in *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth Century Britain*, edited by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 317-27. As for Dickens, Macaulay’s opinion of him was actually quite high. Macaulay had even planned to review Dickens’s *American Notes* in 1842. These plans were nixed on account of Macaulay’s underwhelming reaction to the book, explaining for to Napier: “I will not praise it. Neither will I attack it, first because I have eaten salt with Dickens; secondly because he is a good man and a man of real talent, thirdly because he hates slavery as heartily as I do, and fourthly because I wish to see him enrolled in our blue and yellow corps, where he may do excellent service as a skirmisher and sharp-shooter. describing him as “both a man of genius and a good-hearted man, in spite of some faults of taste.” Macaulay to Macvey Napier, July 25 and October 19, 1842, in *LTBM*, IV, 48, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, July 25, 1842, in *LTBM*, IV, 48.

to review Dickens's *American Notes* in 1842. Once having read the book, however, Macaulay found it underwhelming and decided against attacking Dickens in the pages of the *Edinburgh*. The rationale for doing Dickens this courtesy was at once personal, literary, as well as political. As he told Napier: "first because I have eaten salt with Dickens; secondly because he is a good man and a man of real talent, thirdly because he hates slavery as heartily as I do, and fourthly because I wish to see him [e]nrolled in our blue and yellow corps, where he may do excellent service as a skirmisher and sharp-shooter."¹⁰⁹

For a man who initially protested the republication of his *Edinburgh* essays on grounds that he believed the "natural life" of such works to be a mere six weeks,¹¹⁰ Macaulay seems to have spent an inordinate amount of time reading past issues of reviews. Equally noteworthy is the fact that when he did turn to old numbers, they were often those of the *Edinburgh*'s great rival, the *Quarterly Review*.¹¹¹ As he noted in his journal in June 1850, "I have been reading old Quarterly Reviews of late, and have found some good things,"¹¹² singling out, a few days later, Southey's October 1813 review of David Bogue and Jane Bennett's *History of Dissenters* as "as good as anything of his." While he does not recall having read it before, Macaulay notes that "I have myself repeatedly fallen in the same line of thought, particularly in my paper on Von Ranke"¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, October 19, 1842, in *LTBM*, IV, 61. For a brief, useful account, see Philip Collins, "Dickens and the 'Edinburgh Review,'" *Review of English Studies* 14, no. 54 (May 1963): 167-72.

¹¹⁰ See Thomas Babington Macaulay to Macvey Napier, June 24, 1842, in *LTBM*, IV, 40-41.

¹¹¹ Though he did, on occasion, read old numbers of the *Edinburgh*. See Macaulay, journal entry dated January 23, 1851, in *JTBM*, III, 65.

¹¹² Macaulay, journal entry dated June 12, 1850, in *JTBM*, II, 256.

¹¹³ Macaulay, journal entry dated June 14, 1850, in *JTBM*, II, 258.

Between November 22 and December 6, 1857, Macaulay records reading the *Quarterly* on thirteen different occasions.¹¹⁴ Although he offers no further commentary in most entries,¹¹⁵ the entry for November 29 reveals that these are old issues of the *Quarterly*. And unlike his experience with past *Quarterly Reviews* in 1850, Macaulay was unimpressed with the findings. “Astonished by the poorness and badness of most of the articles,” he declares that the “political papers of 1830, 1831, and 1832 are really beneath contempt.”¹¹⁶ As he explains: “I do not think that is either personal or political prejudice in me, though I certainly did not like Southey, and though I had a strong antipathy to Croker, who were the two chief writers.”¹¹⁷ He could also look past personal and political differences to “see the merit” of work by other *Quarterly* contributors, like Theodore Hook and Samuel Warren. Believing his estimate of “these QRs is a fair one,” Macaulay dismisses them as “mere trash, absurd perversions of history, parallels of which show no ingenuity and from which no instruction can be derived, predictions which the event has singularly falsified, abuse substituted for argument – not one paragraph of wit or eloquence. It is all forgotten, all gone to the dogs.”¹¹⁸ Though he ultimately judges Southey superior to Croker (“Southey had a good style; and Croker had nothing but Italics and Capitals as substitutes for eloquence and reason.”), Macaulay elaborates on (or, rather rehearses¹¹⁹) his poor opinion of the

¹¹⁴ See the various journal entries between November 22 and December 6, 1850, in *JTBM*, V, 101-6.

¹¹⁵ See the journal entries for March 17-18, 1854, in *JTBM*, IV, 140.

¹¹⁶ Macaulay, journal entry dated November 29, 1857, in *JTBM*, V, 103.

¹¹⁷ See William Thomas’s editorial note in *JTBM*, V, 103n2, where he notes that Southey was, at the time, fighting with the *Quarterly* and, thus, wrote no *political* essays for it during the reform crisis of the early 1830s. Pace Thomas, we should remember that politics could easily sneak into a review of even the most ostensibly apolitical subject. Croker, on the other hand, appears obsessed with establishing parallels with the French Revolution.

¹¹⁸ Macaulay, journal entry dated November 29, 1857, in *JTBM*, V, 103.

¹¹⁹ See [Macaulay], “Southey’s ‘Colloquies on Society,’” *Edinburgh Review* 50, no. 99 (January 1830): 528-65; and [Macaulay], “Southey’s Edition of the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’” *Edinburgh Review* 54, no. 108 (December 1831): 450-61. See also, W.A. Speck, “Robert Southey, Lord Macaulay, and the Standard of Living Controversy,” *History* 86, no. 284 (October 2001): 467-77.

former's treatment of politics: "The nonsense which Southey talks about political economy is enough to settle my opinion of his understanding."¹²⁰

While it is uncertain precisely why Macaulay took to reading old *Quarterly*'s, one possibility is that it was an act of nostalgia. We know, for instance, that he also read (or, rather, re-read) editions of the *Morning Chronicle* from his teenage years (in the 1810s), taking special pleasure in the boyhood memories they recalled.¹²¹ It should be noted that Macaulay was converted to Whigs politics only after going to Trinity College, Cambridge (in 1818). Thus, it is not difficult to imagine the notoriously precocious young Macaulay devouring the early numbers of the *Quarterly* in real-time, turning to them in his later years as if they were an old friend—for apart from his sisters and Thomas Flower Ellis, Macaulay had very few (if any) "real" friends who lived as contemporaries. It was the printed page, much more so than British society, which provided Macaulay with the vast majority of his deepest lifelong relationships.

Macaulay also appears to have kept current with the *Edinburgh* in the years after he ceased being a contributor.¹²² He was evidently in agreement with the general thinking in the 1850s that its best days were in the past. "I think the poetical criticisms of the ER are now the most deplorable that I know," he writes in an 1858 journal entry.¹²³ More damning, perhaps, is Macaulay's accusing the *Edinburgh* of dullness—"Not much amiss; but nothing striking," he

¹²⁰ Macaulay, journal entry dated November 29, 1857, in *JTBM*, V, 103.

¹²¹ See Macaulay, journal entry dated July 29, 1849, in *JTBM*, II, 116: "How many minute circumstances from my boyhood they brought to my mind!"

¹²² See, for example, the journal entry dated October 16, 1857, in *JTBM*, V, 87, where Macaulay notes "a fierce article on [Charles] Napier" and a "pretty good paper on the Indian mutiny", but "not much else that I cared for." Both essays were by J.W. Kaye, the Sepoy Mutiny's first historian. See [Kaye], "India" (October 1857); [Kaye], "Conquest of Oude" (April 1858). For the Napier essay, see [Kaye], "Napier," *Edinburgh Review* 106, no. 216 (October 1857): 322-55. Of Kaye, it is worth noting that Macaulay had long since found him a "pompous bad writer." Macaulay, journal entry dated August 30, 1854, in *JTBM*, IV, 185.

¹²³ Macaulay, journal entry dated January 14, 1858, in *JTBM*, V, 119.

said of the October 1856 issue.¹²⁴ How had it come to pass that the once “electrical” impact of turning the pages of the great quarterly reviews was now such an underwhelming affair?

III. Conclusion: The Demise of the Quarterlies

In a previous chapter, we noted that for those associated with quarterlies, there was a clear hierarchy in the early Victorian world of periodicals. Hazlitt once claimed that, “To be an Edinburgh Reviewer is, I suspect, the highest rank in modern literary society.”¹²⁵ By contrast, “our daily and weekly writers are the lowest hacks of literature,” wrote John Stuart Mill in 1829.¹²⁶ Such perceptions distinguished quarterly reviews like the *Edinburgh, Quarterly*, and *Westminster* from other types of periodical writing. Whereas a quarterly “review” carried gravitas, a mere monthly “magazine” like *Blackwood’s* or *Fraser’s* was trivial by comparison. However, by the 1850s and 1860s, these distinctions began to break down.

In late 1825, just before James Gibson Lockhart became editor of the *Quarterly* (a position he was to hold from 1826-1853), the review’s publisher, John Murray, gauged his interest in heading a newspaper he was seeking to establish. On account of his belief that acceptance would involve a suicidal “loss of caste in society,” Lockhart declined the offer.¹²⁷ Still looking to get his man, Murray responded with the much more appealing proposal that Lockhart take over the *Quarterly* instead. William Wright (a mutual acquaintance advising both Murray and Lockhart at the time) reassured Lockhart he was correct to view newspapers as an

¹²⁴ Macaulay, journal entry dated October 12, 1856, in *JTBM*, IV, 342.

¹²⁵ Hazlitt, “On Respectable People,” 120.

¹²⁶ John Stuart Mill to Gustave d’Eichthal, November 27, 1829, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, XII, 39.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Andrew Lang, *The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart*, 2 vols. (London: John C. Nimmo, 1897), I, 365.

industry unbecoming a man such as he: “[Y]our accepting the editorship of a newspaper would be *infra dig.*, and a losing of caste; but not so, as I think, the accepting of the editorship of the Quarterly Review.” To be the “editor of a Review like the Quarterly,” Wright explained, is to occupy “the office of a scholar and a gentleman; but that of a newspaper is not, for a newspaper is merely stock-in trade, to be used as it can be turned to most profit.” To make newspapers one’s principle trade “is repugnant to the feelings of a gentleman.”¹²⁸

In 1829, Lockhart was once again approached with the prospect of tying himself to a newspaper, only now the proprietor was no less eminent a (Tory) figure than the Duke of Wellington. Lockhart’s feelings on the sharp distinction between reviews and newspapers had not changed, however. He replied, “I will not, even to serve the Duke, mix myself up with newspapers.”¹²⁹ The refusal provoked an approving letter from Lockhart’s father-in-law (and later subject of his magisterial seven-volume biographical study¹³⁰), Sir Walter Scott, who wrote, “Nothing could meet my ideas and wishes so perfectly as your conduct on the late proposal.” The basis of Scott’s opinion was similar to that of Wright’s four years prior, but expressed with the frank liveliness one might expect from a Romantic stylist speaking to his daughter’s husband: “Your connection with any newspaper would be a disgrace and a degradation. I would rather sell gin to the poor people and poison them that way.”¹³¹

Fast-forward to 1855, and the divisions between higher journalism and newspapers have blurred to the extent that the *Edinburgh* is found hiring as its new editor Henry Reeve, who had,

¹²⁸ Quoted in Lang, *Life and Letters of Lockhart*, I, 367-8.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Lang, *Life and Letters of Lockhart*, II, 51.

¹³⁰ See Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*.

¹³¹ Scott to Lockhart, April 3, 1829, in Lang, *Life and Letters of Lockhart*, II, 51, 51-2.

since 1840, made his writing for the *Times*. Certainly, Reeve regarded the move to the editor's post of a great quarterly as the pinnacle of a distinguished career in journalism,¹³² but such reviews were no longer held in the esteem they once were. Just months after Reeve succeeded to his new post, his former employers at the *Times* published a leading article criticizing "The ponderous and antiquated character, both in style, tone, and form, of the essays to be found in our quarterly reviews."¹³³ It had even become something of a cliché to ridicule the state of the formerly great quarterlies. In *Barchester Towers* (1857), Anthony Trollope parodies a country gentleman whose outdated pretensions made him look quite the fool when he dared venture into London society: "He possessed complete sets of the *Idler*, the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, the *Guardian*, and the *Rambler*; and would discourse by hours together on the superiority of such publications to anything which has since been produced in our *Edinburghs* and *Quarterlies*."¹³⁴

With the quality of the great quarterlies no longer accepted as an unquestionable truism, the hierarchy of prestige in higher journalism was ripe for a shakeup in the early years of the century's second half. The rise of the "serious" monthly reviews in the 1860s would soon settle the ensuing struggle to fill the void. According to John Morley, the editor of one such monthly review: "The success of [Monthly] Reviews [like his]...marks a very considerable revolution in the intellectual habits of the time. They have brought abstract discussion down from the library to the parlor, and from the serious student down to the first man in the street."¹³⁵ In the next chapter, we turn to Morley's claim that the onset of what we label here "The Age of the

¹³² Berry, *Articles of Faith*, 39.

¹³³ *The Times*, October 19, 1855, p. 6. The first *Edinburgh* number edited by Reeve had appeared in July.

¹³⁴ Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, [1857], edited by Michael Sadlier and Frederick Page, and an introduction by John Sutherland, Oxford World's Classics Series, 2 vols. in 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), I, 211. See the editor's explanatory note at II, 312.

¹³⁵ Morley, "Valedictory," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 32, no. 190 (October 1882): 511-21, at 517.

Monthlies” was a “revolution.” By describing the period between the quarterly system’s demise in reputation and the ascension of the serious-minded monthlies, it will become clear that Morley’s *revolution* was, in fact, an *evolution*—the culmination of a years-long process of natural selection experienced by the Victorian periodical market.

Chapter 4

Leading the Transition: Walter Bagehot and Matthew Arnold

The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of then-time; who have labored to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the best knowledge and thought of the time.¹

We live in the realm of the half educated. The number of readers grows daily, but the quality of readers does not improve rapidly. The middle class is scattered, headless; it is well-meaning but aimless; wishing to be wise, but ignorant how to be wise... Without guidance young men, and tired men are thrown amongst a mass of books; they have to choose which they like; many of them would much like to improve their culture, to chasten their taste, if they knew how.²

As we have just seen, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, not only were the reputations of Victorian higher journalism's most eminent practitioners (up to that point, at least) beginning to wane with respect to their peers and emerging successors, but the prestige of the great quarterly reviews in general was coming into serious question for the first time since the *Edinburgh* founded the system in 1802. With their respective strengths combined, Carlyle and Macaulay had set Victorian higher journalists in search of attaining what we have earlier identified as "The Goldilocks Principle" in periodical writing. This Goldilocks ideal sought an ever-elusive blend of Carlyle's political substance and Macaulay's intellectual entertainment that was, as the story goes, "just right." Though in some ways a ridiculously lofty ideal, it was (and is) in the *striving* for this "Goldilocks Essay" that the real purpose of so high a standard is found. It remains the usefully unattainable standard of higher journalism right up to the present-day.

¹ Matthew Arnold, "Culture and Its Enemies," *Cornhill Magazine* 16, no. 91 (July 1867): 36-53, at 53.

² Walter Bagehot, "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry," *National Review* new series, vol. 1 [old series, vol. 19], no. 1 (November 1864): 27-67, at 66.

Indeed, it remains central to any non-fiction prose that aims for a general audience—that malleable collection of “common readers” to which any democratic society entrusts its fate.

For the remainder of this dissertation, the main task will be to detail and explore the ideas and actions behind the gradual replacement of the quarterly system of reviews at the apex of Victorian higher journalism with a modified system led by monthly periodicals—a situation and a system which remains largely unchanged right up to the modern-day, though leading lights of today’s genre (like the *Atlantic*, *New Yorker*, and *Foreign Affairs*) are reflective of a general, though not absolute, transatlantic migration of prestige. In this chapter, following a brief examination highlighting what exactly distinguished the “Age of the Monthlies” from its predecessor, the “Age of the Quarterlies,” we bring into focus the two most important figures in paving the way for the supremacy of the monthly reviews in Victorian higher journalism: Walter Bagehot (1826-77) and Matthew Arnold (1822-88). Like most of their contemporaries in higher journalism, both Bagehot and Arnold were obsessed (it is not too strong to say) with the “signs of the times,” or, as Arnold put it “the way the world is going.”³ In his first work of political prose, Arnold makes clear his opinion that, for the Western world at least, all signs pointed to democracy. It was, he said, “a time when the masses of the European populations begin more and more to make their voices heard respecting their country’s affairs...a time when sovereigns and statesmen must more and more listen to this voice, [and] can less and less act without taking it into account.”⁴

³ See Arnold, “My Countrymen,” 161, 164, 167.

⁴ Matthew Arnold, “England and the Italian Question,” in *CPWMA*, I, 65-96, at 81.

While Bagehot and Arnold accepted the spread of democracy as an inescapable fact whose rise was a “natural and inevitable” occurrence,⁵ neither could be described as enthusiastic democrats.⁶ What concerned them most about democracy was its potential to “vulgarize” the tone of British politics by way of appealing to the “half-educated” masses.⁷ What they *were* enthusiastic about was the potential for open, informative debate (by way of higher journalism) to prepare British society (the middle class, in particular) for the responsibilities of “government by discussion.” Bagehot believed that, “The whole fabric of English society is based upon discussion—all our affairs are decided, after the giving of reasons, by the compromise of opinions.”⁸ For *any* fruitful discussion to take place, the participants must possess a mindset which is able to “go out of itself and enter into the conceptions and modes of thought of a different world.”⁹ For Arnold, the greatest example of this sort of open-mindedness came in 1791, when he and Bagehot’s mutual hero, Edmund Burke,¹⁰ exercised what Arnold calls a

⁵ Arnold, “Introduction,” in *The Popular Education of France*, xvii.

⁶ Bagehot wished, as one biographer explains, “to put 1885 ahead of 1867, to tackle the redistribution of seats before contemplating a marked extension of the franchise.” Once passed, however, Bagehot accepted the new political reality. Alastair Buchan, *The Spare Chancellor: The Life of Walter Bagehot* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), 173.

⁷ See [Bagehot], “Parliamentary Reform.” *National Review* 8, no. 15 (January 1859): 228-73, at 245. For an argument from Arnold along these lines, see his “Introduction,” in *The Popular Education of France*, xxxii-xxxiii.

⁸ Bagehot, “Physics and Politics, No. V,” 68; [Bagehot], “Average Government,” 428.

⁹ [Walter Bagehot], “The Conservative Incapacity for Dealing with a Composite Empire,” *Economist* 27, no. 1335 (March 27, 1869): 350-51.

¹⁰ See Matthew Arnold, “The Incompatibles [Part I],” *Nineteenth Century* 9, no. 50 (April 1881): 709-26, at 715, where Arnold explains why Burke is “the greatest of English statesmen.” For Bagehot’s views on Burke, see [Bagehot], “Mr. Macaulay,” 375-6; and [Bagehot], “The Character of Sir Robert Peel,” 147. For an excellent analysis of Bagehot’s opinion of Burke, see Daniel E. Ritchie, “Burke’s Influence on the Imagination of Walter Bagehot,” *Modern Age* 32, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 324-8. See also, Frances L. Davis, “Walter Bagehot: Follower of Edmund Burke,” *CLA Journal*, no. 21 (December 1977): 292-303. Admiration for Burke was hardly a unique sentiment among Victorian men of letters. Macaulay thought Burke “The greatest man since Milton.” See Thomas Babington Macaulay, journal entry dated January 22, 1853, in *JTBM*, IV, 17. Other noteworthy admirers of Burke included Morley, W.E.H. Lecky, Gladstone, and both Leslie and Fitzjames Stephen. See H.S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, British History in Perspective Series (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000), 68: “Burke was the universal hero of the Victorian political mind, cherished by Whigs, conservatives, and modern-minded liberals alike.” See too, Emily Jones, “Conservatism, Edmund Burke, and the Invention of a Political Tradition, c.1885-1914,” *Historical Journal* 58, no. 4 (December 2015): 1115-39, esp. 117, where Jones notes the irony before 1885, many admirers of Burke

“return upon himself” near the end of his *Thoughts on French Affairs*.¹¹ In demonstrating a willingness to accept as irreversible the great changes in human affairs brought about by the French Revolution he had expended so much energy in deprecating, Burke’s “return” was a model for Arnoldian self-criticism. Deeming it “one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed, in any literature,” Arnold could think of nothing more necessary for the multitudes of middle class Philistines (“so little noble in spirit, so under-cultured, so hard, so rich, so strong, and so perfectly self-satisfied”¹²) than a dose of Burkean self-reflection:

This is what I call living by ideas; when one side of a question has long had your earnest support, when all your feelings are engaged, when you hear round you no language but one, when your party talks this like a steam-engine and can imagine no other,—still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything *but what the Lord has put in your mouth*. I know nothing more striking, and I must add that I know nothing more un-English.¹³

As champions of higher journalism’s central role in an increasingly democratic Britain, Bagehot and Arnold provided crucial inspiration and momentum for the movement away from the ever more cumbersome length and tone of the formerly great quarterly reviews and towards a new

(subsequently seen as the founder of modern “Conservatism”) were “liberals,” like those mentioned above. For a fuller treatment, see Jones’s excellent *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830-1914: A British Intellectual History*, Oxford Historical Monographs Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹¹ See Matthew Arnold, “The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time,” *National Review* new series, vol. 1 [old series, vol. 19], no. 1 (November 1864): 230-51, at 237-8. Here, Arnold tells how Burke, “at the very end of his fierce struggle with the French Revolution, after all his invectives against its false pretensions, hollowness, and madness, with his sincere conviction of its mischievousness, he can close a memorandum on the best means of combating it—some of the last pages he ever wrote—the *Thoughts on French Affairs*, in 1791,—with these striking words: “The evil is stated, in my opinion, as it exists. The remedy must be where power, wisdom, and information, I hope, are more united with good intentions than they can be with me. I have done with this subject, I believe, forever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. *If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate* (Arnold’s emphasis).”

¹² Matthew Arnold to Herbert Hill, Jr., July 6, 1864, in *TLMA*, Lang, II, 322.

¹³ Arnold, “The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time,” 238 (emphasis in original).

breed of review. This is exemplified in the 1865 founding of the *Fortnightly Review*. Before underscoring Bagehot's and Arnold's respective contributions in that regard, however, we might better understand their impact by offering a more broad-brush explanation of the similarities and differences between the Age of the Quarterlies and the Age of the Monthlies.

I. Novelty and Continuity in the Age of the Monthlies

*Every generation is unjust to the preceding generation; it respects its distant ancestors, but it thinks its fathers were "quite wrong."*¹⁴

In describing the transition from an industry led by quarterlies to a market with monthlies at the forefront, the 1865 arrival of the *Fortnightly Review* is singled out for significance. Despite the perverse reminder of its initial bi-monthly rate of publication, the *Fortnightly* was, in fact, the first of the great *monthly* periodicals of Victorian higher journalism. Its explicit aim was to supplant the quarterly reviews as the nation's most prestigious forum for general debate and discussion. Apart from its more frequent appearance than its quarterly predecessors, the *Fortnightly* sought to differentiate itself in (what we will see was) an increasingly crowded market. This was accomplished by operating on the twin principles of independence from party politics (a standard which, in the end, proved too difficult) and the signed article (as opposed to the anonymous treatises of earlier eras). In addition, the pretense of book-reviewing became rarer and rarer, giving way to essays (or articles) which no longer felt the need to justify their existence on another publication—the inspiration behind the act at hand was now understood to be enough in and of itself. If a contributor wished to discuss a topic or event, one no longer needed to go through the charade of “reviewing.”

¹⁴ Walter Bagehot, “Matthew Arnold on the London University,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 3, no. 18 (June 1868): 639-47, at 641.

Combined with its more frequent rate of publication, the overall abandonment of reviewing books had the result of making higher journalism much more news-oriented.¹⁵ Consider, for instance, the comparative handling of the 1865 assassination of Abraham Lincoln, which occurred just weeks before the appearance of the first issue of the *Fortnightly Review*. It is not until the fourth article on page 56 (of that issue's 127 pages) that readers of the *Fortnightly's* first number will encounter any reference to the event of Lincoln's death,¹⁶ but the fact that Lincoln's death remained unmentioned in the *Edinburgh Review* until April 1866 is striking by comparison.¹⁷ Moreover, the *Fortnightly's* eleven pages of testimony is more in-depth than any daily newspaper could reasonably be expected to deliver. Herein lay an important key to the monthly review's eventual success: it could provide more immediate coverage of current events than the quarterly reviews, while also providing enough time and space for a more substantial analysis than the dailies.¹⁸

We shall deal with the circumstances and motivations that gave rise to the *Fortnightly* in another section below, highlighting the changes in tone, style, and substance exemplified by

¹⁵ Laurel Brake offers up the term "news-oriented review" for the *Fortnightly*, but we should be cautious not to conflate *all* higher journalism as "news-oriented." Brake's term is certainly applicable to its leaders in the Age of the Monthlies, namely the *Contemporary* and the *Nineteenth Century*, as well as the "'new" *National Review*, founded in 1883. But the designation "news-oriented" seems less appropriate for the earlier era, dominated by periodicals that appeared on just four occasions per annum. See Laurel Brake, "Culture Wars? Arnold's 'Essays in Criticism' and the Rise of Journalism, 1865-1895," in *Conflict and Difference in Nineteenth Century Literature*, edited by Dinah Birch and Mark Llewellyn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 201-12, at 201.

¹⁶ See Conway, "Personal Recollections of President Lincoln."

¹⁷ [P.W. Clayden], "The Reconstruction of the American Union," *Edinburgh Review* 123, no. 252 (April 1866): 524-56. Even then, the reference to Lincoln was merely in passing in a thirty-plus page review (see pages 528-9). The *Quarterly* responded with a good deal more alacrity, but still six weeks beyond the *Fortnightly*. See [James Spence], "The Close of the American War," *Quarterly Review* 118, no. 235 (July 1865): 106-36.

¹⁸ See W.T. Stead, "To All English-Speaking Folk," *Review of Reviews* 1, no. 1 (January 1890): 15-20, at 15: "A daily newspaper is practically unreadable beyond twenty-four hours' distance by rail of its printing office. Even a weekly, although capable of wider distribution, is of little use as a circulating medium of thought in all the continents. If anything published in London is to be read throughout the English-speaking world, it must be a monthly."

Walter Bagehot and Matthew Arnold. Because this periodical was the first to unite *all*¹⁹ of the above-mentioned characteristics (abandoning the prior system's practices of quarterly publication, "anonymous" contributions, political partisanship, and a focus on "reviews"), scholars commonly present the advent of the *Fortnightly* as nothing less than the beginning of "a new era in periodical literature."²⁰ However, without downplaying the *Fortnightly*'s impact on Victorian higher journalism, we should also appreciate the context that fostered its creation as well as its most innovative features. By drawing attention to the milieu of higher journalism in which the *Fortnightly* eventually emerged, this chapter fills a gap in Victorian periodicals studies that has hitherto been neglected. For example, as discussed above in the Introduction of this dissertation, Neil Berry's otherwise very useful series of biographical sketches, *Articles of Faith* (2002; 2nd edition 2008), takes a chronological approach to the two-hundred year history of British higher journalism through some of its most distinguished editors. There is nothing inherently wrong with this approach, but Berry's decision to follow-up his opening chapters on Francis Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh* with an analysis of John Morley of the *Fortnightly* gives the

¹⁹ To be sure, most of the *Fortnightly*'s innovations had been introduced earlier in other periodicals. For example, the shilling monthly, *Macmillan's Magazine* (f.1859) was the first to regularly offer signed contributions, although it still occasionally printed anonymous pieces, as well as contributions signed only with the author's initials. Moreover, *Macmillan's* never openly adopted signature as a deliberate policy (as the *Fortnightly* would). The standard introduction to the debates surrounding the use of signature in Victorian periodicals remains Oscar Maurer, Jr., "Anonymity vs. Signature in Victorian Reviewing," *Studies in English* 27, no. 1 (June 1948): 1-27. The *Fortnightly*'s principle novelty was in combining a number of innovations which had been bubbling on the surface of the British periodical industry in the preceding years. To this combination of features, the *Fortnightly*'s founders added the aim of garnering the same sort of prestige among the so-called "influential classes" that the *Edinburgh* maintained in the first half of the century.

²⁰ "John Mason, "Monthly and Quarterly Reviews, 1865-1914," in *Newspaper History: From the Seventeenth Century To the Present Day*, edited by D. George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate (London: Constable, 1978), 281-93, at 281.

impression that the transition from the Age of the Quarterlies to the Age of the Monthlies was much more abrupt than it was in actuality.²¹

As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, the so-called “new era” ushered in by the *Fortnightly* was no bolt from the blue that may be simply demarcated by the appearance of that periodical’s May 15, 1865 inaugural issue, nor by its transformation into a monthly publication in November of the following year. Rather, it was the culmination of a process which had been gaining steam over the past decade, signifying both a generational passing of the torch as well as a transition in higher journalism’s approach to maintaining its place at the forefront of national discourse. While the quarterly review by no means disappeared as a genre of periodical literature, it is beyond question that in the last two or three decades of the century it had ceded its place at the pinnacle of higher journalism to the monthly review. By 1877, Mark Pattison, the Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, could claim without controversy that “the active warfare of opinion” was being conducted in the serious-minded monthlies, namely the *Fortnightly* and its principle competitors, the *Contemporary Review* (f. January 1866) and the *Nineteenth Century* (f. March 1877).²² This triumvirate of prestigious monthlies was joined by a fourth with the April 1883 introduction of the *National Review*—not to be confused with the quarterly periodical of the same name that ran from 1855 through 1864, which is the subject of some discussion below in this chapter.

²¹ See Berry, “Part 1: Francis Jeffery and the Birth of the ‘Higher Journalism,’” chaps. 1-3 in *Articles of Faith*, 25-72. For Berry’s treatment of Morley, see chap. 4, “Blackburn’s Diderot,” 75-87.

²² Mark Pattison, “Books and Critics,” *Fortnightly Review*, new series, vol. 22, no. 131 (November 1877): 659-79, at 663: “Those venerable old wooden three-deckers, the *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review*, still put out to sea under the command, I believe, of the Ancient Mariner, but the active warfare of opinion is conducted by the three new iron monitors, the *Fortnightly*, the *Contemporary*, and the *Nineteenth Century*. In these monthlies, the best writers of the day vie with each other in soliciting our jaded appetites on every conceivable subject. Indeed, the monthly periodical seems destined to supersede books altogether.”

In the century's final decade, the monopoly in the formation of "well-informed" opinion held by the leading monthly periodicals was such that one of the genre's most prominent champions, W.T. Stead, proclaimed that "the monthly review has become the forum of civilization."²³ So adamant was Stead in his belief in the mass utility of the contents of the monthly review press that in 1890 he founded the *Review of Reviews*. Stead's periodical looked to supply "a readable compendium of all the best articles in the *magazines and reviews*."²⁴ Though focused mainly periodicals produced within Britain, the breadth of Stead's *Review of Reviews* coverage extended well beyond the English-speaking world. In the January 1899 issue, we find the *Review of Reviews* summarizing a recent article from *Russkoie Bogastvo* [Russian Wealth]. Here, a pseudonymous writer called "Dioneo" is found offering "A Russian View of English Reviews." Among "Dioneo's" general observations of British higher journalism as it stood at the end of the century, one of the most astute is the notion that, "The English are of the opinion that any question can be thoroughly dealt with in the space of not more than sixteen pages."²⁵ It was a playful suggestion, to be sure, but not too far removed from reality; for an adherence to the virtues of brevity was one of the defining features that set the Age of the Monthlies apart from its quarterly predecessor.

Ironically enough, this distinction in essay length emerged from a continuity of concern that spanned both the era dominated by the quarterlies and the succeeding generation dominated by monthlies. Indeed, throughout the whole of the nineteenth century (and arguably beyond), the essential function of higher journalism was to accomplish what Francis Jeffrey had once, in the

²³ Stead, "Preface," in *Annual Index For 1890*, iii.

²⁴ Stead, "Programme," 14 (my emphasis).

²⁵ [M.A.], "A Russian View of English Reviews," *Review of Reviews* 19 (January 1899): 62-3, at 62.

October 1806 *Edinburgh*, praised the Scottish philosopher, John Millar, for doing. That is, “to break down the old and unfortunate distinction between the wisdom of the academician and the wisdom of the man of the world.”²⁶ Such a task required a constant concern for the question of how to better communicate such wisdom. In addition to matters of style, the question of communication eventually had to confront the thorny issue of length. Just how many pages could the proverbial man on the street tolerate before losing interest or, perhaps even more commonly, time?

As early as 1812, Sydney Smith recognized that the great length of the *Edinburgh Review* might pose future problems if that review was to maintain its audience. He told Jeffrey, “[I]t is the great fault of our Review that our wisdom is too long; it did well at first, because it was new to find so much understanding in a journal. But every man takes up a Review with a lazy spirit, and wishes to get wise at a cheap rate.”²⁷ In 1819, Jeffrey presciently predicted that “if we continue to write and rhyme at the present rate for 200 years longer, there must be some new art of short-hand reading invented—or all reading will be given up in despair.”²⁸ By the 1820s, it was increasingly recognized that something would have to be done about the occasionally interminable length of the essays in the great quarterlies. Predicting that “This cursed system of writing dissertations will be the death of us,” John Wilson Croker, one of the *Quarterly Review*’s leading contributors, said that if he were an editor he would limit individual essays to a maximum of sixteen pages.²⁹ Upon assuming the editorship of the *Edinburgh* from Jeffrey in

²⁶ [Francis Jeffrey], “Craig’s ‘Life of Millar,’” *Edinburgh Review* 9, no. 17 (October 1806): 83-92, at 87.

²⁷ Smith to Jeffrey, January 1812, in *Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*, II, 93.

²⁸ [Jeffrey], “Campbell’s ‘British Poetry,’” *Edinburgh Review* 31, no. 62 (March 1819): 462-97, at 472.

²⁹ John Wilson Croker to John Murray, March 29, 1823, in Smiles, *A Publisher and his Friends*, II, 57.

1829³⁰ Macvey Napier was resolved to shorten the length of the reviews by doing just that. Lockhart, his counterpart at the *Quarterly* endeavored to do the same. Both attempts proved utterly fruitless, however, as editors continued to surrender to the objections of their contributors.³¹ Asked to cut half a page from one particular review, Carlyle responded that not a single passage could be removed “without considerable loss of blood.”³² And despite his earlier pronouncements on the virtues of brevity, the Tory Croker could not resist penning an eighty-eight page review of his Whig nemesis, Macaulay’s *History*.³³

In other words, the failure of the quarterly reviews to change was not for lack of awareness. Perhaps it stemmed from the difficulty of reigning in an increasingly celebrated stable of essayists, certain that their work merited special exemption status. “I was but a *Feudal* monarch,” claimed Francis Jeffrey, “who had but a slender control over his greater Barons.”³⁴ Whether the brunt of the blame lay with the editors or their contributors, that no serious changes were enacted in these years would ultimately have dire consequences for the future of the

³⁰ His first number appearing that October; his last in January 1847.

³¹ See Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers*, 25, 85-6. See also, Macaulay to Macvey Napier, December 15, 1829, in *LTBM* I, 258. Here, Macaulay warned Napier: “I think it really essential to the success of the Review that, where a subject is treated which branches out into many heads and admits of very various illustration, those who write should not have any fears of exceeding a particular number of pages... There would however be considerable difficulties and objections to get over. - Believe me.”

³² Thomas Carlyle to Macvey Napier, June 22, 1832, in *CLO*, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>. For the article in question, see [Carlyle], “Corn-Law Rhymes.” The tone of Carlyle’s reply was later echoed by Henry James, who was once asked to cut a one and a half sentences (about three lines) from a five-thousand word review in one and a half sentences (about three lines) from a five-thousand word review in one and a half sentences (about three lines) from a five-thousand word review in the *Times Literary Supplement*. “Here’s the bleeding corpse,” he wrote the editor upon making the requested revisions. “Yours is a butcher’s trade.” See Adolf Wood, “The Lure of the ‘TLS,’” in *In Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics, and Culture in Britain*, edited by Wm. Roger Louis (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 135-44, at 137.

³³ [Croker], “Mr. Macaulay’s ‘History of England.’” For the personal animosity between Macaulay and Croker, see William Thomas, *The Quarrel of Macaulay and Croker: Politics and History in the Age of Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁴ Jeffrey, *Contributions to the “Edinburgh Review,”* I, xv (emphasis in original).

quarterlies.³⁵ But we are getting a little ahead of ourselves here. For it is important to understand that the Age of the Quarterlies died a slow death.

What's more, in the 1840s and 1850s—at precisely the moment when the quarterly publication (or, at least, its most prominent examples, the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*) seemed to be falling out of favor—the periodical market was becoming saturated with the launch of several new quarterlies.³⁶ Upon learning that yet another quarterly (the *North British Review*) was being founded in 1844, John Lockhart, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, wrote John Wilson, wondering aloud, “How many Reviews are we to have? Is not it odd that the old ones keep afloat at all?”³⁷ Wilson was himself an editor, but of the monthly *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, making it likely that he failed to empathize with Lockhart to the extent that Abraham Hayward (a regular contributor to both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*) did. In reaction to the news of the *North British Review's* imminent arrival, Hayward told Macvey Napier that, “No new review, (quarterly at least), will ever succeed. The tendency of the time is against the quarterlies.”³⁸ And though none of those new quarterlies founded at mid-century succeeded in replacing the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* at the top of the higher journalism food chain, some of them did provide important contributions in laying the groundwork for the more successful bid for

³⁵ On this point, see Joanne Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers*, 25, 86.

³⁶ See Joanne Shattock, “Spheres of Influence: The Quarterlies and Their Readers,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 10 (1980): 95-104, at 95, where Shattock presents a far from exhaustive list of quarterlies founded from the late 1820s to the early 1860s: “the *Foreign Quarterly* (1827); the *British Critic* (1827); the *British and Foreign Review* (1835); the *London Review* (1835); the *Dublin Review* (1836); the *Church of England Quarterly* (1837); the *Foreign and Colonial Quarterly* (1837); the *English Review* (1844); the *North British Review* (1844); the *British Quarterly* (1845); the *Prospective Review* (1845) and its successor the *National* (1855); the *Irish Quarterly* (1851); the *Scottish Review* (1853); the *London Quarterly* (1853); the *Home and Foreign Review* (1862).”

³⁷ John Lockhart to John Wilson, March 28, 1844, in Mary Wilson Gordon, “*Christopher North*”: *A Memoir of John Wilson, Late Professor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1862), II, 285.

³⁸ Abraham Hayward to Macvey Napier, April 29, 1844, quoted in Shattock, “Spheres of Influence,” 96.

supremacy launched by the “serious” monthlies in the 1860s and 1870s. On this point, the *National Review* (1855-64)—particularly its co-editor and leading contributor, Walter Bagehot—merits particular attention.

II. Walter Bagehot’s “Animated Moderation”

In 1856, Matthew Arnold declined co-editor, R.H. Hutton’s, offer to contribute to the *National Review*. The refusal was with “unusual reluctance,” according to Arnold. He had admired the *National Review* since its founding the year before, telling Hutton that just a couple of days prior he had read the most recent issue and was greatly impressed by an essay on Shelley.³⁹ While the piece on Shelley was anonymous (in keeping with the practice still in place at the time), Arnold’s judgment proved impeccable, as was usually the case when it came to such matters of taste. For he had just become one of the first to recognize the talents of Walter Bagehot.

Decades later, on the centenary of Victoria’s ascension to the throne, G.M. Young went to the pages of the *Spectator* to make the case that for all the remarkable individuals who flourished in the years of her reign (Darwin, Brunel, Tennyson, Eliot, Gladstone, Disraeli, Dickens, to name but a few), it was Walter Bagehot who was most deserving of the title “The Greatest Victorian.” Young’s rationale was based on the premise that he was not looking for the figure of most historical significance or world-renown, but rather:

[F]or a man [sic] who was in and of his age, and who could have been of no other: a man with sympathy to share, and genius to judge, its sentiments and movements: a man not too illustrious or too consummate to be companionable, but one, nevertheless, whose ideas took root and are still bearing; whose influence, passing from one fit mind to another, could transmit, and can still

³⁹ See Arnold to R.H. Hutton, October 27, 1856, in *TLMA*, Lang, I, 344 (emphasis in original).

impart, the most precious element in Victorian civilization, its robust and masculine sanity.⁴⁰

To be sure, there is no correct answer to such a subjective question. And though Young makes a strong defense for his choice, he was hardly trying to stake his reputation on what amounts to an intellectual parlor game. Nonetheless, the title gained a certain amount of traction through the years,⁴¹ thanks in no small part to the fact that Young has since come to be regarded as “the father of Victorian studies,”⁴² perhaps even “the most influential twentieth-century interpreter of the Victorians.”⁴³

Still, we should be careful to not exaggerate Bagehot’s celebrity. Today, if he is discussed at all, it is likely with reference to his now classic political treatise, *The English Constitution*—an often neglected fact of which is that its 1867 appearance in book form was preceded by a series of nine serial installments in the *Fortnightly Review* between May 1865 and January 1867.⁴⁴ But, as we shall see more fully below, to label Bagehot’s work “serious” is by no means an excuse to presume its being “dull.” Yes, it began as the lead article for an ambitious

⁴⁰ G.M. Young, “The Greatest Victorian,” in Young’s *Today and Yesterday: Collected Essays and Addresses* (London: Hart-Davis, 1948), 237-43, at 126. This version is of Young’s essay combined the two aforementioned *Spectator* essays.

⁴¹ Indeed, it seems to be something of a requirement to bring up whenever Bagehot is discussed in modern periodicals of higher journalism. See, for instance, Gertrude Himmelfarb, “Review Article: Revaluations: ‘The Greatest Victorian,’” *New York Review of Books* 4, no. 7 (May 6, 1965): <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1965/05/06/revaluations-the-greatest-victorian/>; Himmelfarb, “Meet Mr. Bagehot: How ‘The Greatest Victorian’ Speaks to Us.” *Weekly Standard* 19, no. 1 (September 9, 2013): 28-33; and Roger Kimball, “The Greatest Victorian,” *New Criterion* 17, no. 2 (October 1998): 23-28, <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/bagehot-kimball-2990>. See also Frank Prochaska, Frank. *The Memoirs of Walter Bagehot* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), x. Here Prochaska shared his opinion that “If [Bagehot] is not the ‘Greatest Victorian’, he is the Victorian with whom you would most want to have dinner.”

⁴² Miles Taylor, “G.M. Young and the Early Victorian Revival,” in *The Victorians Since 1901: Histories, Representations, and Revisions*, edited by Taylor and Michael Wolff (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 77-89, at 77.

⁴³ Martin Hewitt, “Introduction: Victorian Milestones,” in *The Victorian World*, 1-53, at 3.

⁴⁴ Bagehot’s other “great work,” *Physics and Politics* (1872) was also first serialized in the *Fortnightly* (over five rather lengthy intervals between November 1867 and January 1872).

new review, but that ambition was to avoid publications written as if they were “grave constitutional event[s].”⁴⁵ It was a topical analysis, written for immediate, bi-monthly consumption by the curious reader seeking useful and accessible guidance (it was a “wise chat,” as the *Spectator* noted⁴⁶) on one of the most pressing issues of the day—namely the prospect of another parliamentary reform bill that would further expand the franchise. Hence, many of Bagehot’s arguments in favor of caution towards a wider franchise are buttressed not only by historical context, but by current events, as well. It is revealing that the contemporary developments employed by Bagehot in his essays are international as well as domestic. Much of his anxieties regarding democracy at home are connected to Britain’s global and, thus, very complex interests abroad. As Bagehot made clear in the 1872 Introduction to *The English Constitution*, the years since its initial appearance[s] in both serialized and book form had only deepened his skepticism that Britons were, as a whole, prepared for the immense responsibility of the vote. Frankly, extending the franchise frightened Bagehot,⁴⁷ placing as it did the nation’s complicated web of interests in the hands of the ill-equipped masses without the time for the “distracting routine” of imperial governance:

The British Empire is a miscellaneous aggregate, and each bit of the aggregate brings its bit of business to the House of Commons. It is India one day and Jamaica the next: then again China, and then Schleswig-Holstein. Our legislation touches on all subjects, because our country contains all ingredients.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ [Bagehot], “The First Edinburgh Reviewers,” 253.

⁴⁶ Anon. “The House of Commons,” *Spectator*, no. 1969 (March 24, 1866), 328-9, at 328.

⁴⁷ Walter Bagehot, “Introduction to the Second Edition,” in *The English Constitution*, by Bagehot (London: Henry S. King, 1872), v-lxxi, at xxvii.

⁴⁸ Bagehot, “The English Constitution, No. 5: The House of Lords,” *Fortnightly Review* 3, no. 18 (February 1, 1866): 657-78, at 668. See also, John Morley, “The Political Prelude,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 4, no. 19 (July 1868): 103-14, at 111: “The British Empire is going to be handed over to the tender mercies of iron-masters, brewers, bankers, landlords, and ship-owners.”

Throughout his career, Walter Bagehot was one of the great advocates of higher journalism's educational function. It was "the *teaching apparatus*" that was responsible for "the effectual inculcation of important thought upon the mass of mankind."⁴⁹ He understood that writing in essay-form had unique advantages for penetrating a wider audience in his day than even a book. As Bagehot explains, the essay allowed writers to avoid "analyzing all difficulties, discussing all doubts," a necessary quality for a readership increasingly looking for clarity and solutions, rather than nuance and further confusion. He knew that in an age in which the rapidity of information is as likely to confuse as it is to enlighten, "The modern man must be told what to think—shortly, no doubt, but he must be told it."⁵⁰ Crucially, he came to appreciate that people needed something timelier and less capacious than the short dissertations on offer in the (formerly) great quarterlies, as well as being of weightier substance than the analyses of the daily and weekly newspapers.

Overall, Bagehot's writings (almost always originally appearing as higher journalism) show a near constant concern with how best to communicate with what he labeled "the bald-headed man at the back of the omnibus."⁵¹ A forerunner for the now ubiquitous "man on the street," it is not too difficult to imagine that, but for the improvement of transportation technology since 1865, Bagehot's "bald-headed man at the back of the omnibus" might have

⁴⁹ [Walter Bagehot], "Caesarism as It Now Exists," *Economist* 23, no. 1123 (March 4, 1865): 249-50, at 250 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁰ [Bagehot], "The First Edinburgh Reviewers," 256, 257.

⁵¹ The phrase is yet another from Bagehot. See his, "The English Constitution, No. 2: The Prerequisites of Cabinet Government, and the Peculiar Form Which They Have Assumed in England," *Fortnightly Review* 1, no. 3 (June 15, 1865): 313-31, at 325.

joined Macaulay's *New Zealander* as an exemplary figure of Victorian anxieties.⁵² It was, after all, into the hands of this archetypal middle class figure that power fell as Britain became more and more democratic in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In both politics and style, Bagehot's higher journalism reveals a man in constant search for the middle—an approach he once labeled “animated moderation.”⁵³ Politically, he was a great advocate for reform, which he justified as being a superior alternative to two extremes: revolutionary change at one end of the spectrum and “unthinking conservatism” at the other.⁵⁴ For the purpose of “preventing hasty action, and ensuring elaborate consideration,” Bagehot believed there was no more useful there tool than public discussion.⁵⁵ This bled into his journalism because, if higher journalism was to play an important part in the maintenance of a democracy's public discourse, then considerations of how best to communicate with those in power was a necessity. And, as Bagehot understood, the gradual extension of the franchise in the nineteenth century meant power increasingly rested with the multitudes of people who had the vote. Believing the daily newspapers too frivolous and the vast majority of quarterly reviews too serious and too dull, Bagehot again found a solution in the center, promoting a sort of higher journalism that tackled serious issues in a style that still managed to engage the reader.

⁵² Though “man on the omnibus” did achieve some wider use in its day. Moreover, the phrase does seem to anticipate the hypothetical “man on the street. See James Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of “Public Opinion,” 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 35-6.

⁵³ Bagehot, “Physics and Politics, No. V,” 68.

⁵⁴ See [Walter Bagehot], “Intellectual Conservatism,” *Saturday Review* 1, no. 26 (April 26, 1856): 513-4.

⁵⁵ Bagehot, “Physics and Politics, No. V,” 68.

“The First Edinburgh Reviewers”: Bagehot’s Call for a Middle Path

Bagehot’s earliest writings appeared in Unitarian⁵⁶ publications like the weekly *Inquirer* and quarterly *Prospective Review* (f. 1845), both of which derived from connections made while attending University College, London. At UCL, he made fast friends with R.H. Hutton, with whom he founded a debating society and, in 1855, agreed to co-edit the *National Review*, a new quarterly which was to take the place of the failing *Prospective*. Bagehot was not yet thirty years old. In the second issue of the *National Review* (October 1855), Bagehot penned an essay that easily ranks as one of the most important contemporary reflections on the nature of Victorian higher journalism as a whole. Brought about by the relatively simultaneous publication of the memoirs, letters, and collected works of the *Edinburgh Review*’s founding contributors,⁵⁷ “The First Edinburgh Reviewers” was both an appreciation for what the *Edinburgh* (and quarterlies, more generally) had done for the national discourse. More importantly, this essay offered an incisive exposition of what were by then considered the *Edinburgh Review*’s increasingly anachronistic features. In particular, Bagehot stressed the cumbersome length and style of the formerly “electrical” quarterly.

Among modern historians, the consensus has been that Bagehot was spot-on in his assessment of the *Edinburgh*’s increasing dullness by mid-century, particularly after 1847, when the loss of Macaulay to his *History* earlier in the decade was compounded by the death of Napier

⁵⁶ Apart from every other Protestant denominations, Unitarians rejected the doctrine of the Trinity—the doctrine that defined God’s existence in three parts (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). By contrast, Unitarians believed God was a single *unitary* being. The upshot of this conviction was that Jesus was understood to be a teacher and a prophet of immense importance, but nonetheless *not* divine. For a brief treatment of the various religious communities of Victorian society, see Norman Lowe, *Mastering Modern British History*. 4th edn. Palgrave Masters Series. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 202-6, esp. 205-6 (for the Unitarians and their fellow Dissenters).

⁵⁷ In particular, a new edition of Sydney Smith’s *Miscellaneous Works: Including his Contributions to the “Edinburgh Review”*; his daughter, Saba Holland’s [née Smith] *Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*; a one-volume reissue of Francis Jeffrey’s *Contributions to the “Edinburgh Review”*; and the first three volumes of the *Works of Henry, Lord Brougham*.

and the departure from Edinburgh for new offices in London.⁵⁸ In addition to these internal shifts in the *Edinburgh's* operations, there were also the kaleidoscopic changes Britain had more broadly undergone since 1802—the most relevant result of which being that the nation's reading habits had been altered in important ways. As Bagehot explained, “People take their literature in morsels, as they take sandwiches on a journey.”⁵⁹ Britons had no time to put their world on hold and ingest the seven courses offered in the once great quarterlies. Even if they did, who could be compelled to read something with as much dash of style as an Act of Parliament?

For higher journalism to succeed in the fast-paced modernity of 1855, Bagehot advocated a style of writing that was akin to “the talk of a man of the world,” which he explains as follows:

[G]lancing lightly from topic to topic, suggesting deep things in a jest, unfolding unanswerable arguments in an absurd illustration, expounding nothing, completing nothing, yet really suggesting the lessons of a wider experience, embodying the results of a more finely tested philosophy, passing with a more Shakespearian transition, connecting topics with a more subtle link, refining on them with an acuter perception, and what is more to the purpose, pleasing all that hear him, charming high and low, in season and out of season, with a word of illustration for each and a touch of humor intelligible to all, fragmentary yet imparting what he says, allusive yet explaining what he intends, disconnected yet impressing what he maintains.⁶⁰

By embracing the imperfect but, nonetheless, engaging manner of a “man of the world,” Bagehot is telling his fellow practitioners of higher journalism to return to their roots and embrace (as the

⁵⁸ John Clive, “The ‘Edinburgh Review’: The Life and Death of a Periodical,” 125, 126.

⁵⁹ [Bagehot], “The First Edinburgh Reviewers,” 254. Some writers, like Anthony Trollope, were even known to do a bit of writing on a train. When he told Thomas Carlyle of this occasional method, Carlyle's response was that people should neither read nor write on trains, but “sit still and label [their] thoughts.” It was an attitude that in some ways reflects a general shift taking place as the quarterlies ceded their status as the apex of higher journalism to the monthlies. See Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 93. The quote comes from the very first meeting between Trollope and Carlyle on July 4, 1861, when the former joined George Henry Lewes and George Eliot for tea at Cheyne Row, Chelsea. See Trollope to Lewes, July 3, 1861, in *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, edited by N. John Hall, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), I, 154.

⁶⁰ [Bagehot], “The First Edinburgh Reviewers,” 256.

Edinburgh Review had, in prior generations) the advantages found in the very limits of the essay as a genre. The “review-like essays” and “essay-like reviews” of the *Edinburgh*’s first generation possessed general qualities worthy of imitation: “Their small bulk [relative to the era], their slight pretension to completeness, their avowal, it might be said, of necessary incompleteness, the facility of changing the subject, of selecting points to attack, of exposing the best corner for defense, are great temptations.”⁶¹

Yet, Bagehot was greatly concerned that the social strength of the *Edinburgh* (and the quarterly system of reviewing in general) had, of late, been diminished by its taxing length and somber tone. For this had also served to elevate the role of daily newspapers in Britain, the danger of which Bagehot later articulated by placing newspaper on the opposite end of the sandwich metaphor: “We have so many little discussions, that we get no full discussion; we eat so many sandwiches, that we spoil our dinner.”⁶² Such poor reading habits were nothing short of a matter of national concern for Bagehot, especially as Britain become more and more democratic. He understood that “parliamentary government lives by discussion, a free press has its life in argument and dissertation.”⁶³

In his call for higher journalism to provide a common ground between extremes—one more consciously devoted to seriousness than the monthlies (as they stood in 1855) yet more

⁶¹ [Bagehot], “The First Edinburgh Reviewers,” 256.

⁶² [Bagehot], “Caesarism as It Now Exists,” 250. Matthew Arnold expressed a similar view, bemoaning the fact that the arch-philistine publication, the *Daily Telegraph*, boasted the highest newspaper circulation in the world. See Matthew Arnold, “The Study of Celtic Literature, Part IV: Conclusion.” *Cornhill Magazine* 14, no. 79 (July 1866): 110-28, at 128. For readership figures, see Ellegard, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, 17. Ellegard puts the newspaper’s circulation at 150,000 in 1865, 190,000 in 1870, and according to the paper itself, 217,000 in 1881. The *Times*, by contrast, has readership figures of 61,000 in 1855, 55,000 in 1860, 65,000 in 1865, and 63,000 in 1870.

⁶³ [Walter Bagehot], “France or England,” *Economist* 21 (September 5, 1863): 982-3.

engaging than the solemn quarterlies—Bagehot was laying the groundwork for a new style of periodical: the serious-minded monthly review. Such a periodical was to serve the crucial function as a “teaching apparatus,” opening the minds of the previously unimaginative masses without completely replacing the British appreciation for moderation with a chaotic Jacobinism. Through such teaching, Bagehot and other effective practitioners of higher journalism “beat the ideas of the few into the minds of the many.”⁶⁴

III. Matthew Arnold’s Civilizing Mission

*We in England have come to that point when the continued advance and greatness of our nation is threatened by one cause, and one cause above all. Far more than by the helplessness of an aristocracy whose day is fast coming to an end, far more than by the rawness of a lower class whose day is only just beginning, we are imperiled by what I call the “Philistinism” of our middle class. On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence—this is Philistinism.*⁶⁵

In the second half of the nineteenth century, by far the most prominent of those who “beat the ideas of the few into the minds of the many” was Matthew Arnold.⁶⁶ In over two decades as a higher journalist, Arnold railed against the “hap-hazard[ness], crudeness, provincialism,

⁶⁴ [Bagehot], “Caesarism as It Now Exists,” 250.

⁶⁵ Matthew Arnold to Hugh Owen, c. September 3, 1866, in *TLMA*, Lang, III, 70.

⁶⁶ For a notable expression of this opinion, see Noel Annan, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Selected Writings in British Intellectual History*, by Leslie Stephen, edited by Noel Annan, Classics of British Historical Literature Series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), xi-xxx, at xi. Here Leslie Stephen’s best biographer makes the case that his subject is the second most important man of letters after c.1850, conceding the top-spot to Arnold as if it were a verifiable fact. In his 1953 Clark Lectures, G.M. Trevelyan agreed with the opinion of Arnold that George Meredith once conveyed to him; that “if we take his poetry and prose together, [Matthew Arnold] was the most considerable writer of his age.” G.M. Trevelyan, *A Layman’s Love of Letters: Being the Clark Lectures Delivered at Cambridge, October-November 1953* (London: Longmans, Green, 1954), 22. More recently, see James Ley, *The Critic in the Modern World: Public Criticism from Samuel Johnson to James Wood* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 7, where the author declares Arnold is *the* Victorian critic (emphasis in original). Ultimately, it is certainly a strange twist of historiographical fate that T.S. Eliot’s memorable assessment of Arnold—that he “was rather a propagandist for criticism than a critic, a popularizer rather than a creator of ideas”—should be turned on its head, justifying Arnold’s preeminent status. T.S. Eliot, “The Perfect Critic,” in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, by Eliot (London: Methuen, 1920), 1-14, at 1. In fairness to Eliot, he was by no means dismissing Arnold *tout court*, as the very next sentence makes clear: “So long as this island remains an island (and we are no nearer the Continent than were Arnold’s contemporaries) the work of Arnold will be important; it is still a bridge across the Channel, and it will always have been good sense.”

eccentricity, violence, [and] blundering” of British intellectual life and public discourse.⁶⁷ All of his more particular calls for the reform of middle class education were bound into remedying these more general shortcomings. This broader project was geared towards a Burkean “return upon oneself,” a general societal willingness for Britons to face their imperfections. Faced with challenges from within (democracy) and without (the prospective rise of nations like Prussia and the United States), Arnold delivered a message of tough love to his “countrymen.” He told them it was no longer justifiable to rest on the laurels of triumph in 1815, when “[e]very nation must have wished to be England.”⁶⁸ The solution was clear to Arnold: “[W]e should try, so far as we can, to make up our shortcomings, and that to this end, instead of always fixing our thoughts upon the points in which our literature and our intellectual life generally are strong, we should, from time to time, fix them upon those in which they are weak, and so learn to perceive clearly what we have to amend.”⁶⁹

Around the same time Bagehot was getting the *National Review* off the ground, Arnold was demonstrating a similarly keen recognition of the importance in making one’s message more accessible to the intended audience. Upon his election in May of 1857 as the Professor of Poetry at Oxford (an essentially honorary position), Arnold was the first holder of the post to deliver his triennial lectures in English, not in the Latin oratory he was more than capable of performing. Also like Bagehot, Arnold possessed an unwavering belief that main function of men of letters like themselves was that of a general educator; to prepare the multitudes for their own function as masters in an increasingly democratic society. In their capacity as teachers, Bagehot and

⁶⁷ Arnold, “The Literary Influence of Academies,” 160.

⁶⁸ Arnold, “My Countrymen,” 168..

⁶⁹ Arnold, “The Literary Influence of Academies,” 160.

Arnold put just as much stock into *how* the day's lesson was communicated as they did the actual lesson itself. In the case of Arnold, his "day job" as a school inspector played a key role in shaping his public role as the nation's most important man of letters in the second half of the century. Like John Stuart Mill at the India House and Anthony Trollope at the Post Office, Arnold's workday as a Victorian public servant allowed ample time to pursue outside scholarly and literary inclinations.⁷⁰ It was actually Arnold's duties as a school inspector that awakened him to the urgent need of "civilizing" Britain's middle class ("Philistines," as he called them), lest Britain become "a second Holland."⁷¹ Below, it will become clear that (just as was the case with Bagehot) Arnold's politics influenced the style of presentation. To separate the politics from the style (and vice versa) would only undermine an accurate depiction of his career as a higher journalist.

However lofty the ultimate results which stemmed from Arnold's employment as a school inspector, the decision to join the civil service ranks in 1851 was strictly pecuniary. The year before, he had met and fallen in love with Frances Lucy Wightman, the daughter of a prominent judge, whom Arnold lovingly and pragmatically (he also had a sister named Frances) called "Flu." With a reputation for being a bit of a dandy⁷² and nothing but a small stipend and a single volume of poetry to his name, Arnold needed an income respectable enough to get married and (the newlyweds hoped) one day retire to Italy on the £200 a year pension. These were the

⁷⁰ In an early draft of his *Autobiography* (1873), Mill said of his duties at the India House: "While they precluded all uneasiness about the means of subsistence, they occupied fewer hours of the day than almost any business or profession, they had nothing in them to produce anxiety, or to keep the mind intent on them at any time but when directly engaged in them." *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, I, 84n

⁷¹ Arnold, "My Countrymen," 169.

⁷² Much of which may be ascribed as youthful eccentricities, though Trilling tells us that his long brown hair (so diligently parted down the middle in portraits) remained a lifelong vanity of Arnold's. See Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold*, [1939], 2nd edn. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 34n.

impulses that began the three-decade career of the most famous and influential of Victorian school inspectors. “I think I shall get interested in the schools after a little while,” he tells Flu in an early letter, perhaps trying to convince himself as much as anything else. He understood that the schools’ “effects on the children are so immense, and their future in civilizing the next generation of the [middle classes] who, as things are going, will have most of the political power of the country in their hands may be so important.” As yet, however, Arnold saw nothing to give him serious cause for concern as to the quality of the schools he had observed. “In arithmetic, geography, and history the excellence of the schools is quite wonderful.”⁷³ However, such naiveté would soon fade⁷⁴ and the resulting anxieties would give focus to all of Arnold’s subsequent work as a social critic in the Victorian periodicals of higher journalism.

We find the first inklings of Arnold’s turn to social criticism in a letter to his mother, written in June of 1859, when a thirty-seven year old Arnold found himself in Strasbourg on a five-month fact-finding mission for the Education Department. The experience of this venture would prove a decisive turning point in Arnold’s life and, by extension, the trajectory of Victorian higher journalism. To his mother, he writes of his intention to “put together for a pamphlet, or for Fraser, a sort of resume of the present question as the result of what I have thought, read, and observed here about it.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Matthew Arnold to Frances Lucy Wightman Arnold, October 15, 1851, in *TLMA*, Lang, I, 227.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Arnold, “My Countrymen,” 164: “[Britain’s] middle class is educated... in the worst schools of [the] country.” See also, Arnold, “Porro Unum est Necessarium,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 24, no. 143 (November 1878): 589-604, at 590: “Our middle classes are among the worst educated in the world”; and Arnold, “Irish Grammar Schools,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 30, no. 176 (August 1881): 137-48, at 138: “The middle class in England and Ireland is the worst schooled middle class in Western Europe.”

⁷⁵ Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, June 25, 1859, in *LMA*, Russell, I, 110-11.

At this point in his life, Arnold had achieved a measure of acclaim for some successful poems he had published in his twenties.⁷⁶ But he was still best known for being the son of Thomas Arnold, the legendary headmaster whose successful reforms at Rugby School had transformed the public school system.⁷⁷ In fact, the seeds of Matthew Arnold finally escaping his father's shadow are on display in the same letter, when Arnold announces his desire to "put together for a pamphlet, or for Fraser [of *Fraser's Magazine*]." It marks the effective start of one of the most influential careers in Victorian political writing.⁷⁸ Though published in late July/early August 1859 as a forty-five page one shilling pamphlet, entitled *England and the Italian Question*,⁷⁹ it was Arnold the essayist who would, within a few years, become famous in his own right. In the pages of higher journalism, his creative energy found an outlet to achieve the personal and professional satisfaction which had thus far eluded him. Less than a decade after Arnold's letter from Strasbourg to his mother, we find the Victorian philosopher and occasional higher journalist, Henry Sidgwick, crediting him (albeit, not in an entirely complimentary manner) for having already disproved most of the concerns that stemmed from the increasingly

⁷⁶ It should be noted that there exists a school of thought among Arnold scholars that regards his decision to focus on prose was a misguided career choice, representing a great loss to English poetry—a view encapsulated by W.H. Auden's dismissal (in a poem, of course) that he "thrust his gift in prison till it died." W.H. Auden, "Matthew Arnold," in *Another Time: Poems* (New York: Random House, 1940), 58. Representative of this interpretation of Arnold is Ian Hamilton, *A Gift Imprisoned: The Poetic Life of Matthew Arnold* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998).

⁷⁷ For Thomas Arnold, see A.J.H. Reeve, "Arnold, Thomas (1795-1842)," in *ODNB* (May 2014), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/686>. Of course, the elder Arnold would later gain a place as one of Lytton Strachey's four *Eminent Victorians*. See Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, 181-214. Strachey's chapter on Arnold is, however, "the poorest of the essays in *Eminent Victorians*," according to an even-handed estimation from John Clive, written at the height of anti-Strachey sentiment amongs Victorian scholars. Clive, "More or Less Eminent Victorians," 9.

⁷⁸ Stefan Collini, "Review Article: An Abiding Sense of the Demonic," *London Review of Books* 22 no. 2 (January 20, 2000): 32-34, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v22/n02/stefan-collini/an-abiding-sense-of-the-demonic>.

⁷⁹ Matthew Arnold, *England and the Italian Question* (London: Longmans, Green, 1859). Difficult to find in print (even in the age of the internet), this work is much more easily accessed in *CPWMA*, I, 65-96.

common movement within higher journalism of the 1860s to replace anonymous writing with signed contributions. What were these concerns? As Sidgwick explains:

It was thought we should miss the freedom, the boldness, the reckless vivacity with which one talented writer after another had discharged his missiles from behind the common shield of a coterie of unknown extent, or at least half veiled by a pseudonym. It was thought that periodical literature would gain in carefulness, in earnestness, in sincerity, in real moral influence: but that possibly it might become just a trifle dull.

But these worries were quickly laid to rest, Sidgwick says, in large part due to unforeseen developments in the British periodical industry:

We did not foresee that the dashing insolences of ‘we-dom’ that we should lose would be more than compensated by the delicate impertinences of egotism that we should gain. We did not imagine the new and exquisite literary enjoyment that would be created when a man of genius and ripe thought, perhaps even elevated by a position of academic dignity, should deliver profound truths and subtle observations with all the dogmatic authority and self-confidence of a prophet: at the sometime titillating the public by something like the airs and graces, the playful affectations of a favorite comedian. *We did not, in short, foresee a Matthew Arnold.*⁸⁰

Arnold did not completely eschew writing for periodicals that retained a policy of “anonymous” contributions. Such occasions were rare, however, and came only in the instance of his very first periodical essay and well after he had established himself as Britain’s most influential higher journalist.⁸¹ In truth, obscurity was never a likely fate for Arnold’s periodical essays, regardless of whether they were signed or not. His career was but further proof that anonymity was never really an enforceable policy in Victorian higher journalism. Even the editor of one of the signed

⁸⁰ Henry Sidgwick, “The Prophet of Culture,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 16, no. 94 (August 1867): 271-80, at 271 (my emphasis).

⁸¹ For Arnold’s first periodical essay, see [Arnold], “The Twice-Revised Code,” *Fraser’s Magazine* 65, no. 387 (March 1862): 347-65. In the late-1870s, he wrote three unsigned essays for the *Quarterly Review*, appearing in January 1877, January 1878, and October 1879, respectively. See *WIVP*, V, 32.

article's most prominent innovators (John Morley of the *Fortnightly*) admitted as much, noting that, in practice, "it is impossible for a writer of real distinction to remain anonymous. If a writer in a periodical interests the public, they are sure to find out who he is." Indeed, "The writer on Goethe in the last number of the *Quarterly Review* is as well-known as the writer on Equality in the last number of the *Fortnightly Review*," writes Morley, confident his readers will grasp the reference to two recent essays by Arnold.⁸² Ultimately, in lending the signed article a sense of legitimacy, it is perhaps fair to say Arnold did more for the signed article than the signed article ever did for him.

Earlier, in the Introduction to this dissertation, we took note of the fact that scholarly studies of Arnold have overwhelmingly focused on the literary aspect of Arnold's work, while the political and social context remains relatively neglected.⁸³ It is also something of a commonplace to divide Arnold's prose career into a neat thematic chronology,⁸⁴ whereby the social criticism of the 1860s (which receives the bulk of the attention) is followed by religious criticism in the 1870s, and his final years in the 1880s witness a more overtly "political" Arnold. If we take his essay titles at face value, this division is somewhat justified. Even still, there was always more than a thread of continuity in Arnold's work, which he acknowledged in 1882:

⁸² John Morley, "Memorials of a Man of Letters," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 23, no. 136 (April 1878): 596-610, at 605. See [Arnold], "A French Critic on Goethe," *Quarterly Review* 145, no. 289 (January 1878): 143-63; and Arnold, "Equality," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 23, no. 135 (March 1878): 313-34.

⁸³ As noted in the Introduction, the respective work of Stefan Collini and (more recently) Kate Campbell has been geared towards correcting the neglect of Arnold's political and social criticism. Peter Keating also deserves admirable mention here. See Keating, "Introduction," in *Matthew Arnold: Selected Prose*; and Keating, "Arnold's Social and Political Thought," in *Matthew Arnold*, edited by Kenneth Allott, Writers and Their Background Series (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), 207-35.

⁸⁴ Even Stefan Collini, one of Arnold's most astute modern students, implicitly endorses this approach. In part, we may excuse this as a convenience of biographical organization. Nonetheless, for Collini, Arnold work of the 1860s is given an overwhelming sense of priority. See Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait*; and Collini, "Arnold, Matthew (1822-1888)," in *ODNB* (January 2008), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/679>.

I wish I could promise to change my old phrases for new ones, and to pass from my one practical suggestion to some other. I wish I saw a prospect, that, within the term of life which can yet remain to me, phrases such as “sweetness and light,” “seeing things as they really are,” were likely to cease to sum up, to my mind, crying needs for our nation. I wish that the persistent call for public schools for the middle classes might, within the same limits of time, become unnecessary and impertinent. But I fear there is no chance of this happening. What has been the burden of my song hitherto, will probably have, so far as I can at present see, to be the burden of it till the end.⁸⁵

As a result of the general inattention paid towards Arnold as a political and social critic, his career as an essayist for higher journalism has gone by relatively underappreciated. To be sure, there is no shortage of footnotes referencing his best-known books, like *Essays in Criticism* (1865) and *Culture and Anarchy* (1867). In most cases, however, one would be lucky to find at least a passing acknowledgment of the fact that these (and, in fact, nearly all) of Arnold’s books were collections of essays that first appeared in the Victorian periodicals of higher journalism. To ignore this attribute in Arnold’s oeuvre is to ignore its contemporaneity, its topicality. In light of this, perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised by the dearth of attention paid to Arnold’s political undertones. Although the modern scholar should be careful not to go too far in overemphasizing one aspect of Arnold’s multifaceted nature—he was first and foremost a *general* critic—it nonetheless becomes clear that, when tethered to the periodical culture of his day, Arnold’s essays were never completely void of a political element.

It is true that even Arnold’s contemporaries often (mistakenly) accused of him of advocating a policy of “cultivated inaction.”⁸⁶ Indeed, the view of Arnold as cultivator of

⁸⁵ Arnold, “A Liverpool Address.” *Nineteenth Century* 12, no. 69 (November 1882): 710-20, 710-11.

⁸⁶ As J. Fitzjames Stephen put it. See [Fitzjames Stephen], “Culture and Action.” *Saturday Review* 24, no. 628 (November 9, 1867): 591-3, at 592. For Arnold’s use of the phrase, and explicit rebuttals, see Matthew Arnold, “Anarchy and Authority [I],” *Cornhill Magazine* 17, no. 97 (January 1868): 30-47, at 30; “Anarchy and Authority [IV],” *Cornhill Magazine* 18, no. 103 (July 1868): 91-107, at 97; and “Anarchy and Authority [V],” *Cornhill Magazine* 18, no. 104 (August 1868): 239-56, at 249.

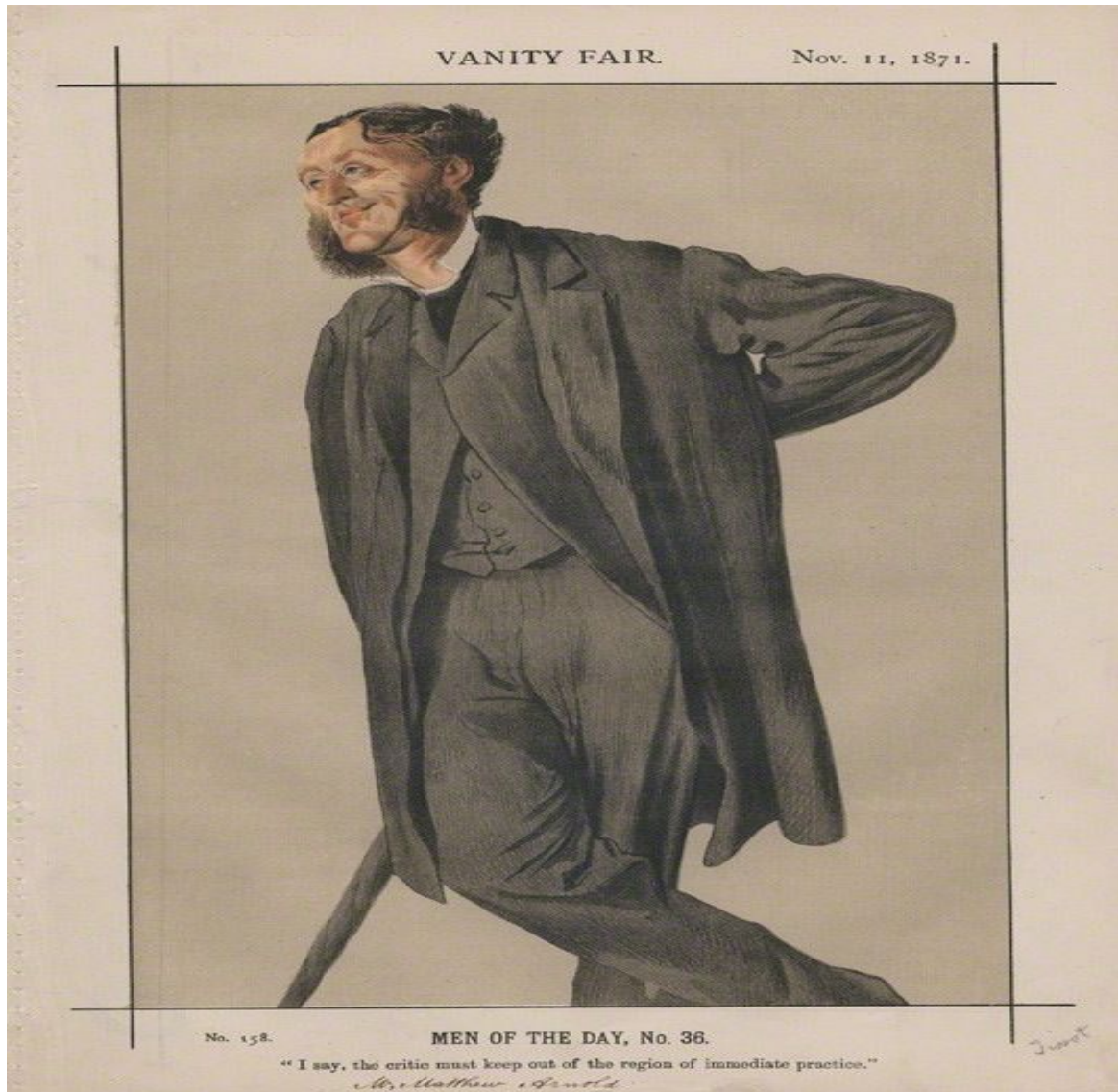


Figure 3: [J.J. Tissot], “Men of the Day, No. 36,” *Vanity Fair* 6 (November 11, 1871): 155.

inaction literally took on the proportion of caricature, as witnessed in one of James Tissot’s famous chromolithographs for the satirical British weekly, *Vanity Fair*. Not to be confused with the modern American monthly of the same name, this version of *Vanity Fair* ran from 1868 to 1914. The image (seen above in Figure 3) is that of a carefree dandy, amused at the ruckus his light-hearted provocations have elicited. An accompanying caption takes a good-natured jibe at Arnold’s alleged indifference to practical matters: “I say, the critic must keep out of the medium

of immediate practice.” In actuality, there was nothing dandy about Arnold’s “main business,” which was, he explained, “to create a frame of mind out of which really fruitful reforms may with time grow.”⁸⁷ No mere fop would brave telling the British establishment to depart from the cherished doctrine of laissez-faire, which Arnold consistently did in his advocacy of state intervention to remedy the deficiencies of middle class education. As Lionel Trilling has said of this endeavor, Arnold “might as well have told the English middle class that only Popery or Mohammedanism could save the national life from meanness as that in the State lay spiritual salvation.”⁸⁸

Nonetheless, part of the blame for this misleading view of Arnold as cultivating inaction lay with the author himself. It was he who put forward the notion that “the critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere.”⁸⁹ And it was Arnold who seems to be channeling Carlyle’s antipathy for “Morrison’s Pills” when he declares that:

Faith in machinery is, I said, our besetting danger; often in machinery most absurdly disproportioned to the end which this machinery, if it is to do any good at all, is to serve; but always in machinery, as if it had a value in and for itself. What is freedom but machinery? What is population but machinery? What is coal but machinery? What are railroads but machinery? What is wealth but machinery? What are religious organizations but machinery? Now almost every voice in England is accustomed to speak of these things as if they were precious ends in themselves.⁹⁰

It is characteristic of Arnold’s essentially elusive nature that the author of such declarations should also offer a number of quite specific reforms—especially with regard to his essays on

⁸⁷ Arnold, “Anarchy and Authority [IV],” 107.

⁸⁸ Trilling, *Matthew Arnold*, 179.

⁸⁹ Arnold, “The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time,” 244.

⁹⁰ Arnold, “Culture and Its Enemies,” 41.

education and Ireland.⁹¹ For example, he condemned the Real Estate Intestacy Bill as a great source of social inequality and, thus, discontent, in Britain;⁹² he supported the enfranchisement of agricultural laborers in 1884 on the grounds that one class is better able to speak for itself than others would be;⁹³ he supported the establishment of Catholic schools and universities in Ireland;⁹⁴ and he advocated the confiscation of land from bad Irish landlords.⁹⁵

Alien amongst the Philistines

It was the delicate task of combatting the “bad civilization of the English middle class” that formed what Arnold called “[t]he master-thought by which my politics are governed.”⁹⁶ Henry James, one of his earliest admirers,⁹⁷ appreciated the value of Arnold’s task and the subtlety with which he handled his social criticism. James understood that “for few writers have English affairs, the English character, the future, the development, the happiness, of England, been matters of such constant and explicit concern.”⁹⁸ As one of his age’s self-appointed “intellectual deliverers,” Arnold believed it was his duty to make the bewildering confusions of the modern era intelligible.⁹⁹ In one sense, this was an instance of reform from within. Having famously dubbed Britain’s three classes “Barbarians” (for the aristocracy), “Philistines” (the middle class),

⁹¹ See Keating, “Arnold’s Social and Political Thought,” esp. 208.

⁹² See Arnold, “Equality.” See also, Arnold, “Anarchy and Authority [V].”

⁹³ Arnold, “The Future of Liberalism,” 4.

⁹⁴ Matthew Arnold, “Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 24, no. 139 (July 1878): 26-45.

⁹⁵ Matthew Arnold, “The Incompatibles [Part I],” esp. 718-20.

⁹⁶ Arnold, “The Future of Liberalism,” 2.

⁹⁷ See [Henry James], “Arnold’s ‘Essays in Criticism,’” *North American Review* 101, no. 208 (July 1865): 206-13.

⁹⁸ Henry James, “Matthew Arnold,” *English Illustrated Magazine* 1, no. 4 (January 1884): 241-6, at 242.

⁹⁹ Matthew Arnold, “On the Modern Element in Literature,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 19, no. 112 (February 1869): 304-14, at 305.

and “Populace” (the working class), Arnold freely characterized himself as “properly a Philistine” and “the son of a Philistine,” no less.¹⁰⁰ “No one admires them more than I do,” he claimed.¹⁰¹

Perhaps some of Arnold’s residual Philistinism is owed to his choice of the *Cornhill Magazine* as the periodical in which to publish some of his most influential pieces, chief among them the essays that eventually became *Culture and Anarchy*.¹⁰² Along with *Macmillan’s Magazine* (for which, Arnold also wrote, as part of a deal with Macmillan as Arnold’s book publisher), the *Cornhill* was one of the first of the “shilling monthlies.” These were a new breed of magazine that emerged in the years following the repeal of the tax on advertisements in 1853 and of newspaper stamp duty in 1855 (collectively known as the last of the so-called “taxes on knowledge”). Founded just a few months after *Macmillan’s* (November 1859), the *Cornhill* debuted in January 1860 to staggering success, selling the 109,274 issues of its first number. Though its circulation had come down to the more earthly realm of around 40,000 by the time it first published one of Arnold’s essays (“Eugenie de Guerin”) in June 1863,¹⁰³ it still provided a more than attractive option for an author seeking optimal rewards in the size of both payment and audience. When Arnold chose to publish his lecture on Heinrich Heine in the August 1863 *Cornhill*, he explained that this was because “it both pays best and has much the largest circle of

¹⁰⁰ Matthew Arnold, “Anarchy and Authority [II].” *Cornhill Magazine* 17, no. 98 (February 1868): 239-56, at 244. See also the claim on page 240 of the same essay: “Almost all my attention has naturally been concentrated on my own class, the middle class, with which I am in closest sympathy, and which has been, besides, the great power of our day.” For the standard work on Arnold’s analyses of the British social classes, see Patrick J. McCarthy, *Matthew Arnold and the Three Classes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964)

¹⁰¹ Matthew Arnold, “Introduction,” in *The Popular Education of France*, xli-xlii.

¹⁰² Published in six parts between July 1867 and August 1868.

¹⁰³ See Sutherland, “Cornhill’s Sales and Payments,” 106, 107, which puts *Cornhill’s* circulation at 48,000 for January 1863 and 41,250 for December of 1863.

readers.”¹⁰⁴ To our more currency-inflated times, the shilling monthlies must sound like a marvelous bargain, but we would do well to remember that even a cost of one shilling amounts to about £10 an issue at today’s exchange rates, a price further put in perspective when one considers the modern-day newsstand price of £3.95 for an issue of the *London Review of Books*.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, as Arnold attests, such rates also serve as reminders of the handsome compensation that could be allotted for contributions.

To return to Arnold’s self-professed Philistinism, it should be said that this association with the class whose imperfections represented “the great failure in our actual national life” was not made without leaving generous conceptual wiggle room.¹⁰⁶ To accompany generalized divisions like Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, Arnold suggested that there were certain persons within all three classes “who are mainly led, not by class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection,” whom he labels “aliens.”¹⁰⁷ While the main thrust of the idea remains present in Arnold’s later essays, the “alien” label was never again reintroduced.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Arnold to his Mary Penrose Arnold, June 16, 1863, in *LMA*, Russell, I, 226. As Patricia Thomas Srebnik points out, Arnold could expect about 20s a page from *Macmillan’s Magazine*, while the *Cornhill* offered around 28s per page. See Patricia Thomas Srebnik, “Trollope, James Virtue, and ‘Saint Pauls Magazine.’” *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 37, no. 3 (December 1982): 443-63, at 453 and 453n28, where she adds that Arnold received the following payments from Macmillan’s: £16 for “The Bishop and the Philosopher,” which filled sixteen pages in January 1863; £10 for “Dr. Stanley’s Lectures on the Jewish Church,” ten pages, February 1863; seven guineas for “A Word More About Spinoza,” seven pages, December 1863. From the *Cornhill* he received £21 for “Eugenie de Guerin,” seventeen pages, June 1863; £21 for “Heinrich Heine,” seventeen pages, August 1863; and the exceptionally high payment of £20 for “Pagan and Christian Religious Sentiment,” fourteen pages, April 1864. These details may be found in the relevant notes to *CPWMA*, III, 415, 423, 428, 433, 445, 458, 517, 519, 522, 526.

¹⁰⁵ Collini, “Always Dying: The Ideal of the General Periodical,” 226.

¹⁰⁶ Arnold, “Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism,” 27.

¹⁰⁷ Arnold, “Anarchy and Authority [II],” 245.

¹⁰⁸ For later descriptions that bear a resemblance to Arnold’s “aliens,” see Arnold, “The Incompatibles [Part I],” 711, where he mentions “insignificant people, detached from classes and parties and their great movements, unclassed and unconsidered, but who are lovers of their country, of the humane life and of civilization.” And see Arnold, “Numbers; or, the Majority and the Remnant,” *Nineteenth Century* 15, no. 85 (April 1884): 669-85, where such individuals comprise the titular “remnant.” And finally, see Arnold, “Up To Easter,” 630: “There are happily thousands of such people in this country, and they are the greater force here in England because to their plain

Arnold's abandonment of the "alien" signals a rare misfire in one of the most effective tools as an essayist: the coining and/or popularizing of catchphrases that captured the public's imagination to such an extent that they became common reference points for contemporaries. By the early 1880s, we find Arnold gleefully recounting that, while on a walk with Benjamin Disraeli, the former prime minister had declared Arnold "the only living Englishman who had become a classic in his own lifetime."¹⁰⁹ As gratifying as the compliment must have been to an author like Arnold, who was generally happy to eschew a sort of Dickensian popularity in return for reaching "influential people"¹¹⁰ like Disraeli, it was also very much by design. "The fact is," he explained, "what I have done in establishing a number of current phrases—such as Philistinism, sweetness and light, and all that—is just the sort of thing to strike [Disraeli]."¹¹¹ But such phrases not only gave Arnold a great deal of personal cachet amongst Britain's intellectual and governing elites, they also lent a potency to his ideas as a social critic.

The Function of Arnold's Criticism

We have already noted above (in the introductory section on Bagehot) that Arnold turned down an 1856 invitation to write for Bagehot's *National Review*. And yet, as a more "serious-minded" periodical of decidedly *higher* journalism than the family-oriented shilling monthlies, *Cornhill* and *Macmillan's*,¹¹² it is unsurprising that Arnold should eventually grace the pages of the

reasonableness, which is a thing common enough where men have not interest to blind them, they add courage. They want nothing for themselves in politics, they only demand that the politician shall not bring the country into danger and disaster. To them, as one to whom some of them are not ill-disposed to listen, I speak; as one of themselves." For identifying these descendants of Arnold's aliens, I am indebted to Keating, "Arnold's Social and Political Thought," 228.

¹⁰⁹ Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whateley Arnold, February 21, 1881, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 135.

¹¹⁰ Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, February 19, 1862, in *TLMA*, Lang, II, 122.

¹¹¹ Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whateley Arnold, February 21, 1881, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 135.

¹¹² Serious-minded work from family magazines were not always welcome. See Anon., "The Magazines," *Illustrated London News* 53, no. 1490 (July 4, 1868): 3: "If any reading can be endurable in the present hot weather, it must be such light and palatable intellectual fare as the *Cornhill* provides for its readers. Only two of the numerous

National Review. His long-awaited contribution for that periodical came in the form of two important essays, “Joubert; or, a French Coleridge” and “The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time,” both appearing in 1864—the *National*’s final year.

In his essay on the French writer, Joseph Joubert (1754-1824),¹¹³ Arnold stresses the importance of “clearness” as a tool for any man of letters who strives to make an “immediate appreciable effect; an effect not only upon the young and enthusiastic, to whom the future belongs, but upon formed and important personages, to whom the present belongs, and who are actually moving society.”¹¹⁴ But clarity’s usefulness extends beyond the obvious goal of making one’s prose intelligible. It was and, indeed, remains at the heart of persuasive argumentation. Has anyone ever truly been converted by an author whose argument they did not understand? A relative simplicity of style, however, was not an invitation to diminish the intellectual substance behind the case being made. In “Joubert,” Arnold quotes a number of passages from the Frenchman that decry the use of metaphysical abstractions and ivory tower jargon.¹¹⁵ Arnold’s use of these quotations served his broader purpose of combatting the provincialism of Britain’s middle classes, whose favor for the concrete over the abstract was already an accepted commonplace. But the British distrust for abstraction lay, in part, with its association with the

contributions make any considerable demands upon the understanding or the attention.” One of those two lamentably serious essays was Matthew Arnold on “Anarchy and Authority,” published the following year as a chapter in Arnold’s seminal book, *Culture and Anarchy*.

¹¹³ One contemporary later described this essay as “a literary event, in that it made not a few people, by no means ignorant of Continental literature, familiar for the first time with the name and merits of one who has been to some of them, ever since, a beloved companion.” M.E. Grant-Duff, “Matthew Arnold’s Writings,” *Murray’s Magazine* 7, no. 39 (March 1890): 289-308, at 299.

¹¹⁴ Arnold, “Joubert: Or, A French Coleridge,” 176-7.

¹¹⁵ See especially, Arnold, “Joubert: Or, A French Coleridge,” 177.

historic enemy who lay across the Channel. How convenient, then, for Arnold to show a French writer making common cause with the Philistines?

Arnold continued to challenge British intellectual life in his second essay for the *National Review*, “The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time.”¹¹⁶ Despite being under so able an editorial team as Bagehot and Hutton,¹¹⁷ the American Civil War had effectively cutoff the *National Review* from its significant number of subscriptions across the Atlantic. While the loss of this market would prove fatal to that periodical, no one can deny that she didn’t go out with a bang—and, in the process, giving a great deal of impetus to the impending Age of the Monthlies. In a last ditch effort to save the *National*, Bagehot and the proprietors decided to transform the quarterly publication into a “half yearly” endeavor and adopted a new policy of encouraging signed articles, beginning with the November 1864 issue in which five of the ten contributions carried signatures, including those of E.A. Freeman, Bagehot, W.R. Greg, and Arnold.¹¹⁸ Though it proved insufficient to save the *National Review* (it closed after only one offering under the new format), that final issue included one of the most influential essays of all nineteenth century British journalism, and “perhaps the single most important essay of its kind in Victorian literature,” according to one recent estimation.¹¹⁹ In its more immediate context, the significance of Arnold’s “The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time” lay in the passage where Arnold summarizes how he perceives the current state of the British periodical industry. It is worth

¹¹⁶ In later reprints of the essay, the plural “functions” was altered to the singular “function.”

¹¹⁷ Like Bagehot, Hutton pulled double-duty as editor of an influential weekly—in his case, *The Spectator*.

¹¹⁸ See Advertisement, “*National Review*. New Series,” *Saturday Review* 17, no. 452 (June 25, 1864): 801.

¹¹⁹ Clinton Machann, “Matthew Arnold (1822-1888),” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Vol. 6: The Nineteenth Century, c.1830-1914*, edited by M.A.R. Habib (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 419-39, at 425.

quoting in full, as it provides a snapshot of British higher journalism as it was seen by an influential contemporary on the eve of the Age of the Monthlies:

For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of mind the second; so much play of mind as is compatible with the prosecution of those practical ends is all that is wanted. An organ like the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world, existing, it may be said, as just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not. But we have the *Edinburgh Review*, existing as an organ of the old Whigs, and for as much play of the mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the Tories, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *British Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the political Dissenters, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Times*, existing as an organ of the common, satisfied, well-to-do Englishman, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that. And so on through all the various fractions, political and religious, of our society; every fraction has, as such, its organ of criticism, but the notion of combining all fractions in the common pleasure of a free disinterested play of mind meets with no favor. Directly this play of mind wants to have more scope, and to forget the pressure of practical considerations a little, it is checked, it is made to feel the chain. We saw this the other day in the extinction, so much to be regretted, of the *Home and Foreign Review*. Perhaps in no organ of criticism in this country was there so much knowledge, so much play of mind; but these could not save it. The *Dublin Review* subordinates play of mind to the practical business of English and Irish Catholicism, and lives. It must needs be that men should act in sects and parties, that each of these sects and parties should have its organ, and should make this organ subserve the interests of its action; but it would be well, too, that there should be a criticism, not the minister of these interests, not their enemy, but absolutely and entirely independent of them. No other criticism will ever attain any real authority or make any real way towards its end,—the creating a current of true and fresh ideas.¹²⁰

As a portrait of the British periodical industry as it was perceived by one of its dominant practitioners (arguable *the* dominant practitioner at the time), Arnold's "The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time," proved a crucial guide at the intersection between the Age of the

¹²⁰ Arnold, "The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time," 240. Arnold goes on (page 246) to lambast the provincialism of other reviews, like the *Church and State Review* ("the High Church rhinoceros") and the *Record* ("the Evangelical hyaena").

Quarterlies and the Age of the Monthlies, particularly as it “served to give focus to the conversations of a group of men who were meeting in the autumn of 1864 to discuss the founding of a new periodical.”¹²¹ That periodical became the *Fortnightly Review*, whose 1865 founding, as noted above, hindsight has credited for having “opened a new era in periodical journalism,”¹²² one based on the principles of independence from party politics (a standard which ultimately proved too difficult) and the signed article (as opposed to the anonymous treatises of earlier eras).

The ideal of political independence remained influential in the Age of the Monthlies, as evidenced in the March 1883 inaugural issue of a “new” *National Review*. There, the title of co-editor (and future Poet Laureate) Alfred Austin’s article, “Above All, No Programme” declares implicit fealty to Arnold’s “disinterestedness,” just as the *Fortnightly Review*’s “Prospectus” had done eighteen years before.¹²³ Both periodicals, however, quickly demonstrated that political agendas proved impossible to avoid—the *Fortnightly* became associated with the Liberals under Morley and the new *National* with the Conservatives. In truth, however, Arnold’s call for disinterestedness was not necessarily advocating an apolitical stance for Victorian higher journalism. Rather, it decried an explicit party identification that could be used by partisans to dismiss out of hand. “It was written in the *Edinburgh*” might be all a Tory sympathizer needed to know, and vice versa. A more nebulous party affiliation had the potential to reach more than just the like-minded. In this, Arnold’s call for disinterestedness proved longstanding, as the Age of

¹²¹ R.H. Super, *The Chronicler of Barsetshire: A Life of Anthony Trollope* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 189.

¹²² Mason, “Monthly and Quarterly Reviews, 1865-1914,” 281.

¹²³ Alfred Austin, “‘Above All, No Programme,’” *National Review* 1, no. 1 (March 1883): 24-39

the Monthlies witnessed nothing on the scale of the easy political divisions found when the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* held sway.

THE
FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.

It has often been regretted that England has no journal similar to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, treating of subjects which interest cultivated and thoughtful readers, and published at intervals which are neither too distant for influence on the passing questions, nor too brief for deliberation.

The FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW will be established to meet this demand. It will address the cultivated readers of all classes by its treatment of topics specially interesting to each; and it is hoped that the latitude which will be given to the expression of individual opinion may render it acceptable to a very various public. As one means of securing the best aid of the best writers on questions of LITERATURE, ART, SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, FINANCE, and POLITICS generally, we propose to remove all those restrictions of party and of editorial "consistency" which in other journals hamper the full and free expression of opinion; and we shall ask each writer to express his own views and sentiments with all the force of sincerity. He will never be required to express the views of an Editor or of a Party. He will not be asked to repress opinions or sentiments because they are distasteful to an Editor, or inconsistent with what may have formerly appeared in the REVIEW. He will be asked to say what he really thinks and really feels; to say it on his own responsibility, and to leave its appreciation to the public.

In discussing questions that have an agitating influence, and admit diversity of aspects—questions upon which men feel deeply and think variously—two courses are open to an effective journal: either to become the organ of a Party, and to maintain a vigilant consistency which will secure the intensive force gained by limitation; or to withdraw itself from all such limitations, and rely on the extensive force to be gained from a wide and liberal range. The latter course will be ours. Every Party has its organ. The FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW will seek its public amid all parties.

It must not be understood from this that the REVIEW is without its purpose, or without a consistency of its own; but the consistency will be one of tendency, not of doctrine; and the purpose will be that of aiding Progress in all directions. The REVIEW will be liberal, and its liberalism so thorough as to include great diversity of individual opinion within its catholic unity of purpose. This is avowedly an experiment. National culture and public improvement really take place through very various means, and under very different guidance. Men never altogether think alike, even when they act in unison. In the FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW we shall endeavour to further the cause of Progress by illumination from many minds. We shall encourage, rather than repress, diversity of opinion, satisfied if we can secure the higher uniformity which results from the constant presence of sincerity and talent.

We do not disguise from ourselves the difficulties of our task. Even with the best aid from contributors, we shall at first have to contend against the impatience of readers at the advocacy of opinions which they disapprove. Some will complain that our liberalism is too lax; others that it is too stringent. And, indeed, to adjust the limits beyond which even our desire for the free expression of opinion will not permit our contributors to pass, will be a serious difficulty. We must rely on the tact and sympathy of our contributors, and on the candid construction of our readers. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* has proved with what admirable success a Journal may admit the utmost diversity of opinion. Nor can we doubt that an English public would be tolerant of equal diversity, justified by equal talent.

The FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW will be published on the 1st and 15th of every Month. Price Two SHILLINGS.

OFFICE: 193, PICCADILLY.

Figure 4: Advertisement, "The Fortnightly Review," *Athenaeum*, no. 1952 (March 25, 1865): 436.

Nowhere are Arnold's fingerprints on the *Fortnightly Review* than in that periodical's Prospectus (see Figure 4 above). For starters, the Prospectus opens with an explicit call to follow Arnold's endorsement of the French bi-monthly review, the *Revue des Deux Mondes*: "It has often been regretted that England has no journal similar to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, treating of subjects which interest cultivated and thoughtful readers, and published at intervals which are neither too distant for influence on the passing questions, nor too brief for deliberation... The FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW will be established to meet this demand"¹²⁴ It was even on the model of the *Revue* that the *Fortnightly* owed its ultimately ill-fated debut as a bi-monthly periodical—it became a monthly in November 1866.¹²⁵

As with his use of Joubert, Arnold's reference to the *Revue* reflected a profound Francophilia.¹²⁶ As might be expected, not everyone welcomed Arnold's fondness for importing French ideas and practices. On occasion, this provided ammunition for critics who wished to highlight the foreign influences on Arnold's solutions to "English" questions. Even the *Fortnightly* found his regard for the *Revue* "nothing short of pathetic,"¹²⁷ and Bagehot took

¹²⁴ "The Fortnightly Review," *Athenaeum*, no. 1952 (March 25, 1865): 436. The Prospectus also appeared on the same day in the *Saturday Review* 19, no. 491 (March 25, 1865): 362.

¹²⁵ The situation is ironically mirrored by the early experience the *Revue Des Deux Mondes*. Though founded in 1829 as a monthly, in July 1831 it was converted to a fortnightly publication. See Juliette Atkinson, "Colonial Currents: Paris and London," in *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth Century Britain*, 224-44, at 226n11. As W.T. Stead was to later write, "The refusal of the English-speaking world to tolerate fortnightly publications is as remarkable as it is unmistakable." Stead, "Periodicals," 51.

¹²⁶ Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-69) once described Arnold as 'un critique ami, un étranger qui nous connaît mieux que personne' [a critic-friend, a foreigner who knows us better than anyone]. Quoted in Charles Prendergast, *The Classic: Sainte-Beuve and the Nineteenth Century Culture Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46n82. See also *TLMA*, Lang, I, 94n5: "*La Revue des Deux Mondes*, founded in 1829, is cited in *The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold* more than any other periodical, including *The Times*." Although the immediate context of its usage owes to an essay by Ernest Renan in the May 1, 1864 issue of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the "disinterestedness" Arnold was calling for had been a favorite concept of Sainte-Beuve's; who later returned the compliment when who borrowed Arnold's use of "function" as it related to the purpose of journalism and criticism.

¹²⁷ A.C. Swinburne, "Mr. Arnold's 'New Poems'." *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 2, no. 10 (October 1867): 414-45, at 441.

Arnold to task too, saying “he wants to put a yoke upon us—and worse than a political yoke, an academic yoke, a yoke upon our minds and our styles. He, too, asks us to imitate France.”¹²⁸ Yet, as Arnold explained in *Friendship’s Garland*, “what makes me look at France and the French with such inexhaustible curiosity and indulgence is this,—their faults are not ours, so we are not likely to catch them; their merits are not ours, so we are not likely to become idle and self-sufficient from studying them.”¹²⁹ Arnold’s intended audience was comprised of his “countrymen.” By drawing their attention to the merits of non-British thinkers and ideas (and consciously doing so in an attractive and accessible style), Arnold was combatting what he perceived to be the intellectual insularity of the British middle classes. He was, therefore, doing precisely what Carlyle and Macaulay had been respectively criticized for *not* doing. In contrast to Macaulay, Arnold recognized the urgency of the Condition-of-England-Question. In contrast to Carlyle, Arnold offered a practical (if not entirely tangible) solution to that most troubling of contemporary questions.

Despite the call in its Prospectus to remain free from party influence, seeking its public “amid all parties” to further Arnoldian goals of cultural enlightenment and public education through the dissemination of intelligent discussion, the robustness of Arnold’s influence on the *Fortnightly* has not always been appreciated. According to the author of the fullest book-length treatment of the early years of the *Fortnightly*, Arnold’s appeal to the leading lights of that review was “only superficial.”¹³⁰ But that study concludes its analysis in 1873—the year of,

¹²⁸ Bagehot, “Physics and Politics, No. II: The Age of Conflict,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 3, no. 16 (April 1868): 452-71, at 461.

¹²⁹ Matthew Arnold, “A Courteous Explanation,” in *Friendship’s Garland*, 164-71, at 167.

¹³⁰ Edwin Mallard Everett, *The Party of Humanity: The “Fortnightly Review” and Its Contributors, 1865-1874* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 257.

Morley's hero, John Stuart Mill's, death and Joseph Chamberlain's arrival (for the latter, see the next chapter). By choosing this as his endpoint, the study's author, Edwin Mallard Everett, fails to account for the fact that between June 1877 and June 1882, Arnold contributed eight essays to Morley's *Fortnightly*.¹³¹ The substance of these essays reflect the praise Morley later (in his memoirs) showered upon "the man of letters" he "place[ed] in the front line of my [Morley's] generation in serious drift, influence, importance, and social insight."¹³² In particular, by stressing the need for improved education of the middle classes, Arnold had "had put his finger on one of our most urgent needs." Moreover, "his insight into the roots of the Irish case, and the strong persistence with which he pressed that case upon unwilling ears, were in some ways the most remarkable instance of his many-sided and penetrating vision."¹³³ In short, in addition to his obvious influence in shaping the *Fortnightly*'s founding, Arnold's essays for that periodical (and others) reveal a social and political thinker very much in line with the *Fortnightly*'s goal of offering both *practical* and *specific* reforms on matters of national significance. Even still, as we shall see in the next section, it would be a mistake to associate Arnold too closely with any single periodical.

IV. Publication Factors: A Case Study of Arnold in Action

Any bibliographic listing of Arnold's periodical essays will show that he published in a variety of organs of higher journalism—though, with a few rare exceptions, the vast majority of his essays appeared in monthly, rather than quarterly, reviews. This was only befitting for an essayist whose ideas had so profoundly shaped the transition from an industry dominated by

¹³¹ See *WIVP*, V, 31. In the December 1887 issue, Arnold added a ninth contribution to the *Fortnightly*.

¹³² Morley, *Recollections*, I, 125. Born December 24, 1838, Morley was sixteen years to the day Arnold's (December 24, 1822).

¹³³ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 129.

anonymous, lengthy quarterlies to one dominated by signed monthlies that emphasized brevity and a healthy blend of political substance with style. Unlike the Age of the Quarterlies, where it was common for a prominent reviewer (like Macaulay, for example) to be tied to a single periodical for the entirety of his or her career, the Age of the Monthlies introduced an era of greater mobility for essayists. In this regard, the diversity of periodicals in which Arnold chose to publish warrants some attention. Below, we will use the entwined publication background behind two of Arnold's lesser-known essays—"A Guide to English Literature" (December 1877) and "Johnson's Lives" (June 1878)—as a pathway for exploring some of the various factors behind the decision-making process when it came to the question of deciding in which periodical certain essays would appear. But first, some brief background information is necessary.

After the passage of the 1870 Elementary Education Act, the tension between erudition and education became more prominent in Victorian public life. Laying down a framework for the schooling of all children between the ages of five and twelve, the Education Act is sometimes called the Forster Act, after William Forster, the Liberal MP who, in addition to introducing the Act, was married to Arnold's favorite sister, Jane. Though not without his own reservations about the 1870 Education Act, Arnold soon reconciled himself to his brother-in-law's political accomplishment and its principal implication: the spread of literacy. This would not require any dramatic shift on his part; for if an increase in the number of readers was a foregone conclusion, then that was all the more reason to spread the gospel of "the best that is known and thought in the world."¹³⁴ Arnold's book publisher, Macmillan, agreed, as evidenced by that publishing house's decision in the 1870s to begin a series of "primers" on scientific, literary, and historical

¹³⁴ Arnold, "The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time," 240.

subjects so as to guide the newly literate masses on civilization's greatest minds and achievements. Soon enough, other publishing houses mimicked Macmillan and began offering primers too.¹³⁵

Given his profession as a school inspector and public stance calling for the civilizing of the Philistines, Arnold was naturally fascinated with the substance of these primers as attempts to introduce some notion of culture to the uninitiated.¹³⁶ His "great desire in education" was, he told one of his sisters, "to get a few good books universally taught and read."¹³⁷ Arnold even promised Stopford Brooke that he would review his Macmillan primer on *English Literature*, and herein lay the start of a revealing case study for the numerous factors at play in the Age of the Monthlies when it came to the issue of finding the right periodical for certain essays. We should remember that by the 1870s, the essay-like review was not the omniscient presence in periodical literature that it once was. Yes, the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* still practiced anonymity and used the pretense of a book review for the discussion of broader topics. By then, however, "the active warfare of opinion" was being conducted in the serious-minded monthlies, like the *Fortnightly*, the *Contemporary*, and the *Nineteenth Century*.¹³⁸ Such periodicals were "reviews"

¹³⁵ See Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 392. See also, Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 185: "Between 1871 and 1887 the number of such books in the publishers' lists grew from about fifteen to forty-four. Editions of English classics, containing all the exegetical material the pupil was likely to be examined upon, were published by the hundreds."

¹³⁶ See Super's "Critical and Explanatory Notes," in *CPWMA*, VIII, 440, where Super notes that Arnold's diary records reading several of Macmillan's primers throughout 1876 and 1877.

¹³⁷ Matthew Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whateley, December 1877, in *LMA*, Russell, II, 164.

¹³⁸ Pattison, "Books and Critics," *Fortnightly Review*, 663.

in name only, filling their pages with signed essays that were proper “articles” in modern parlance, with no desire to masquerade as a book notice.¹³⁹

These altered circumstances presented two problems when it came to Arnold’s review of Brooke’s primer (ultimately published under the title “A Guide to English Literature”). First, Arnold had hoped to keep his name out of the review. He was slightly annoyed by Brooke’s having asked in the first place and did not wish to be bombarded by similar requests.¹⁴⁰ The *Cornhill* might have seemed a logical solution. It had published his seminal essays in the 1860s, and he was on friendly terms with both its publisher (George Smith, who also published the *Pall Mall*) and Leslie Stephen (who succeeded Thackeray as editor in 1871). But Arnold’s connection with the *Cornhill* was drawing to a close as the 1870s progressed, and he wrote little more for the *Cornhill* after 1871, when Smith ordered Stephen not to publish the third installment of *Literature and Dogma*, fearing it was a step too far against the magazine’s image as a “family” publication.”¹⁴¹ Afterwards, Arnold found the more overtly high-minded monthlies a more congenial platform to express himself—though he did occasionally return to mere “magazines” when other factors entered the picture (as discussed later in this section).

Ultimately, it was to one of the leading serious-minded monthlies that Arnold turned for his review of Brooke’s primer. He asked the editor of the *Contemporary Review*, James Knowles, if “a short notice...not more than eight or ten pages” would be possible for the January or February 1877 number of his review. This presented a second problem. As Arnold had now

¹³⁹ See Houghton, “Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes,” especially the table on page 19.

¹⁴⁰ See Arnold to James Knowles, September 14, 1876, in *TLMA*, Lang, IV, 342.

¹⁴¹ See R.H. Super, “Matthew Arnold’s ‘Literature and Dogma,’ the ‘Cornhill Magazine,’ and Censorship,” *Notes and Queries* 36, no. 2 (June 1989): 187-88.

resigned himself to publishing in a periodical that demanded an author sign his or her name, he was also aware that “this sort of book-reviewing” was not exactly in line with the new monthlies who had supplanted the prestige of the older quarterlies.¹⁴² It so happened, though, that this was no obstacle at all for Knowles, who was happy to make an exception on simple matters of format if it meant the opportunity to put “Mathew Arnold” on the contents page. For Knowles was the day’s most successful hunter of “big names” (a topic we will explore more fully in the next chapter). It was Knowles to whom Arnold turned during these years when his writings dealt mostly with religious matters.¹⁴³ In addition, Knowles had good reason to think a “book review” from Arnold could adapt to the editorial standards of the *Contemporary*. His periodical also had a policy not to print lectures or speeches, but when Arnold sent a copy of his two lectures on “Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist” (February and March 1876), Knowles replied with a plea to leave the lectures as they were. When it came to the publication of Arnold’s review of Brooke’s primer, Knowles was happy to grant one of the industry’s biggest names yet another exception.

But the matter was soon complicated by Knowles’s decision in January 1877 to leave the *Contemporary* and found his own review, the *Nineteenth Century*. While the nature of Knowles’s editorship of that periodical is discussed in more detail below in the next chapter, it is worth mentioning here that Arnold had described his November 1876 essay, “A Psychological Parallel,” as his “last theological paper.” Upon which, he explained to Knowles his intentions “to return to literature proper and to [his] old place the *Cornhill*.” He then thanked the ambitious editor for allowing him to use the *Contemporary* as a “valuable stage...to strut and fret my little

¹⁴² Arnold to James Knowles, August 29, 1876, in *TLMA*, Lang, IV, 340.

¹⁴³ As noted above, the *Cornhill* had refused to publish the final installment of *Literature and Dogma*. Knowles on the other hand, was glad to have the *Contemporary Review* publish, between October 1874 and September 1875, the seven installments that became *God and the Bible* (1875).

theological hour upon.”¹⁴⁴ But Knowles, ever the lion-hunter, was not about to concede a trophy like Arnold, persuading him to add his name to a distinguished list of contributors to the inaugural issue of his new review.¹⁴⁵ Though his “Falkland” essay for the first issue of the *Nineteenth Century* paid the rather meager sum of £15, Knowles was very early on assured of his new venture’s success. Determined to make up for the earlier bargain, he gave Arnold £40 for “A Guide to English Literature”—far and away the largest sum he had ever received for an essay.¹⁴⁶ While Knowles’s powers of persuasion extended beyond monetary generosity, we might also recall that Arnold had preferred the *Cornhill* in the 1860s because “it both pays best and has much the largest circle of readers.”¹⁴⁷ The six essays that eventually became *Culture and Anarchy* netted him £25 per installment, and Arnold thought such payment was well in keeping with the amount of effort that he put into them.¹⁴⁸ In the 1880s, he was earning £50 for every fifteen-to-twenty pages contributed to Knowles’s *Nineteenth Century*,¹⁴⁹ which soon established itself as the most prestigious periodical of its kind for the last two decades of the century.

Returning now to Arnold’s essay on Brooke’s *English Literature* primer, he begins the review by laying down the hallmarks of what he believed the author of a successful primer should possess, stressing clarity, brevity, and an absence of hyperbolic judgment. None of these, Arnold believed, was an excuse for lapsing into dullness. “For dry he must not be, but we should

¹⁴⁴ Arnold to James T. Knowles, March 10, 1876, in *TLMA*, Lang, IV, 317.

¹⁴⁵ After a Prefatory Poem from Tennyson, the first number includes contributions from Gladstone, Fitzjames Stephen, and Cardinal Manning. There are also noteworthy articles on foreign affairs by M.E. Grant-Duff (Russia) and John Lubbock (“On the Imperial Policy of Great Britain”).

¹⁴⁶ “Critical and Explanatory Notes,” in *CPWMA*, VIII, 426, 440,

¹⁴⁷ Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, June 16, 1863, in *TLMA*, Lang, II, 213.

¹⁴⁸ See Super’s “Critical and Explanatory Notes,” in *CPWMA*, V, 411.

¹⁴⁹ See Arnold to Percy William Bunting, October 9, 1884, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 455.

be made to feel, in listening to him, as much as possible of the power and charm of the literature to which he introduces us.”¹⁵⁰ These were, of course, the essential qualities of what the Victorians had defined as the ideal contribution to the periodicals of higher journalism. While Arnold is generally favorable in his treatment of Brooke, he does think the primer might be improved in future editions if it became both shorter and more lucid.

By then, Arnold’s mind had been possessed with the idea of producing a primer of his own, and this leads to yet another factor that could play a part in an essay’s publication in a certain periodical: the author/publisher relationship. As early as November 1876, he was in talks with Macmillan about an abridged selection of Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*.¹⁵¹ It was agreed that he would write the Preface, which was to precede the actual volume by appearing as an essay in *Macmillan’s Magazine* in June 1878. There, Arnold reiterated his passionate belief that such works should be careful not to overburden new students with annotations and explanations. At the introductory level, it was enough merely to have them reading civilization’s great works. As he saw it, most educationists at the time were “too ambitious” in their aims. “Our improvers of education are almost always for proceeding by way of *augmentation and complication*.” Instead, what was needed at this stage of education was “*reduction and simplification*.”¹⁵² Thus, when Arnold’s edition Johnson’s *Lives* appeared later that September,¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Matthew Arnold, “A Guide to English Literature,” *Nineteenth Century* 2, no. 10 (December 1877): 843-53, at 844.

¹⁵¹ See William E. Buckler, *Matthew Arnold’s Books: Toward a Publishing Diary*, by Buckler (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1958), esp. 126-31.

¹⁵² Matthew Arnold, “Johnson’s Lives,” *Macmillan’s Magazine* 38, no. 224 (June 1878): 153-60, at 155 (my emphasis).

¹⁵³ The essay, “Johnson’s Lives,” paid £20 from Macmillan. The rate of pay and pre-book publication in *Macmillan’s* continued for Arnold’s Primers on Wordsworth (1879) and Byron (1881). See “Critical and Explanatory Notes,” in *CPWMA*, VIII, 460; IX, 338, 397.

the only additional information it provided was a Preface by Arnold himself, a single footnote, and a reprint from the eighth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*—an entry for Johnson by none other than that old apostle of the Philistines, Macaulay.

The inclusion of a piece by Macaulay provides tremendous insight regarding the nature of Arnold's "civilizing" project and the obvious continuing relevance of Macaulay's particular brand of what Bagehot labeled "intellectual entertainment." Its inclusion was a shrewd editorial decision by Arnold. As we have also seen in this section, Arnold could be equally canny in regards to where a particular essay first appeared. In light of the sheer variety of factors that went in to specific essay's publication for one periodical over another, we would conclude this chapter by issuing a word of caution not to place too much emphasis on monetary gain. Certainly it was a key component in the process, but it was just one of many factors at play for Arnold and his essays. He had, in fact, turned down sums greater than £50 from editor's hoping to get his name (and, presumably, ideas and opinions) to grace the pages of their periodical.¹⁵⁴ In October 1886, Arnold even refused an offer of "£250 a year for four articles on subjects of my own choice," instead preferring to write a political essay for Knowles to be printed around Christmas, with the goal of "keeping people's eyes fixed on main issues, and preventing their going off on side ones."¹⁵⁵ Arnold's rationale to publish in the *Nineteenth Century* supports the view later expressed by one of Knowles's fellow editors that: "For those who had a wish and right to claim a hearing from the public no rostrum commanded so wide an audience, except a letter to the

¹⁵⁴ See Matthew Arnold to Percy William Bunting, October 9, 1884, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 454. Here, Arnold turns down one such offer from Bunting, the new editor of Knowles's old periodical, the *Contemporary Review*.

¹⁵⁵ Matthew Arnold to Jane Martha Forster (nee Arnold), October 21, 1886, in *Selected Letters of Matthew Arnold*, edited by Clinton Machann and Forrest D. Burt (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 288. For the essay in question, see Matthew Arnold, "The Zenith of Conservatism," *Nineteenth Century* 21, no. 119 (January 1887): 148-64. Knowles paid the usual £50 for the essay. "Critical and Explanatory Notes," in *CPWMA*, XI, 420.

Times, as the *Nineteenth Century*. And letters to the *Times* were ever necessarily strictly conditioned as to length and subject, while the range of the *Nineteenth Century* was very wide.”¹⁵⁶

Moreover, as he was primarily concerned with *British* current events, Arnold was biased towards publishing in periodicals geared towards his fellow countrymen. For example, when approached by the wealthy new patron of a respected American monthly, the *North American Review*, Arnold turned down the opportunity for a potentially handsome payday.¹⁵⁷ While Arnold admired the *North American Review* (reading it regularly at the Athenaeum Club), he believed that “an Englishman’s lucubrations” were “more naturally expressed in an English vehicle than in an American one.” William Gladstone had no such qualms, and gladly wrote for the *North American*, eventually receiving the staggering sum of £315 from that periodical for a *ten page* piece for the October 1892—a rate that likely reflected the fact that Gladstone was, at the time, prime minister of the most powerful country in the world. But Arnold disagreed with such practices, thinking that Gladstone’s *North American* contributions in particular “would have been much better said in the *Nineteenth Century* than in the *North American Review*.”¹⁵⁸ In other words, for Arnold, money only came into consideration once he had determined that the payment came from a periodical that could adequately serve his primary interest in disseminating his own ideas on the omniscient Condition-of-England-Question. In our next chapter, we will turn to more instances related to the Age of the Monthlies as it was in practice.

¹⁵⁶ Wilfrid Ward, “Three Notable Editors,” *Dublin Review* 143, no. 287 (October 1908): 170-81, at 175.

¹⁵⁷ Arnold to Alexander Macmillan, February 7, 1879, quoted in Buckler, *Matthew Arnold’s Books*, 133

¹⁵⁸ See Arnold to Richard Watson Gilder, October 26, 1879; and Arnold to Charles Frederick Wagner, February 18, 1868, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 63.

Chapter 5

The Age of the Monthlies in Practice

The Fortnightly Review and the Nineteenth Century have strong claims to be considered the two journals which did most to provide late-Victorian intelligentsia with open forums for debate on science, literature, politics and religion.¹

Having traced the shift from the Age of the Quarterlies to the Age of the Monthlies, the central focus of this chapter is an examination of the career of John Morley (1838-1923). In Morley, we find one of the two editors of a distinguished monthly who came to serve as two rather distinct models of the “ideal” late-Victorian editor in higher journalism. By contrasting Morley’s time at the *Fortnightly Review* with that of the *Nineteenth Century*’s founding editor, James Knowles (1831-1908), we may begin to appreciate some of the nuances of the Age of the Monthlies in practice. As we shall see in Section III of this chapter, the replacement of anonymous “reviewing” with that of signed articles led to an editorial “arms race” between Morley and Knowles for well-known contributors. Knowles unquestionably proved a greater success in this endeavor and, in the process, his *Nineteenth Century* became the greatest financial success of all the serious-minded monthlies that dominated British political and intellectual discourse at the end of the Victorian era. In the realm of perceived influence, the *Nineteenth Century* was widely acknowledged as the class of its field in the Age of the Monthlies. Though still a significant organ of opinion, the *Fortnightly* was a clear second in the eyes of most observers.

In light of this, it is reasonable to ask why Knowles (rather than Morley) is a secondary focus in this chapter. In response, two rationales are offered here that justify a focus on Morley

¹ Helen Small, “Liberal Editing in the ‘Fortnightly Review’ and the ‘Nineteenth Century,’” in *Authorship in Context: From the Theoretical to the Material*, edited by Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Polina Mackay (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 56-71, at 56. Reprinted from *Publishing History* 53 (2003): 75-96. References here are to the 2007 edition of the essay.

in the pages below. First, there is the fact that, in contrast to Morley, Knowles was *not* a regular contributor to his periodical. In fact, Knowles's essayistic output was virtually nonexistent in comparison to that of Morley, who was, for his part, one of the most prolific and highly respected practitioners of higher journalism in the whole Victorian era. This leads to a second justification for the choice to place Morley at the center of this chapter. Arguably the most conscientious higher journalist in the Age of the Monthlies, Morley provides an ideal avenue for several case studies relevant to the purposes of this dissertation. For instance, he exemplifies one of the main arguments of this dissertation: that the positive and negative examples of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Babington Macaulay were crucial touchstones for higher journalists in the second half of the nineteenth century. It has already been noted (in Chapter 2) that Morley counted Macaulay (along with Mill) as one of the two foremost journalistic influences of the century, so in the first two sections of this chapter, we highlight Carlyle's influence on Morley, first (in Section I) as a negative example and then (in Section II) as a somewhat ironic positive example.

Morley provides further grist for the mill as an archetypal figure of one of higher journalism's great internal debates. This is the question that, if a man of letters like Morley viewed the ultimate function of a higher journalist as the management of change through politics, then wouldn't it be a more effective use of time to take a more direct role in such political matters? In short, was it better to be a "man of action" rather than a "man of letters"? Thus, as outlined in Section IV of this chapter, the trajectory of Morley's career will show this fairly prevalent internal debate come to the forefront. According to one scholar, Morley exemplifies the French

adage that “journalism can lead you anywhere—provided you leave it.”² In the final section of this chapter, we will see that Morley’s 1882 decision to leave the *Fortnightly* in order to begin a political career was hardly the end of his influence as a man of letters. In a brief discussion of his time as Secretary of State of India (1905-10), it will be shown that, by the turn of the century, the ideas espoused in the periodicals of higher journalism had taken a global turn, gaining an audience of colonial readers who were increasingly looking to enjoy some of the virtues of the British liberalism they had read so much about. As a Liberal statesman representing Britain’s imperial interests at the India Office, Morley would find himself in a difficult situation—one in which his writings as a liberal (small “l”) journalist had played no small part in creating. As such, he proves a fascinating lens through which we may see the Condition-of-England-Question as it evolved into the Condition-of-Empire-Question.

To understand Morley’s career in higher journalism, we must begin in 1860, with a young man of twenty-two, having just made his way down from Lincoln College, Oxford to London. The recipient of an open scholarship four years prior, Morley explained the professional options then available to an Oxbridge product like himself: “The young graduate, born with a political frame of mind, who towards 1860 found himself transported from Oxford in pursuit of a literary calling, had little choice but journalism.”³ And so Morley struck out for London, looking to support himself through periodical writings. Among the various journalistic undertakings by Morley in these early years were stints as the editor for a short-lived weekly called the *Literary Gazette* and an association with another ill-fated weekly, *The Leader*. Through the latter, he

² Christopher Kent, “Morley, John (1838-1923),” in *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, edited by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (Gent: Academia Press, 2009), 426.

³ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 31.

came into contact with its editor, George Henry Lewes (later the first editor of the *Fortnightly*), and Lewes's partner, Marian Evans (better known by her pen name, George Eliot). In 1863, Morley joined the staff of the *Saturday Review*, the most influential weekly of the day. Founded in 1855, the *Saturday*'s editor, John Douglas Cook, was a notoriously uncultured man, reputed by some to have never even opened a book. Cook, nevertheless, was a man in possession of considerable managerial skill. As "a lowbrow who knew how to pick the right highbrows,"⁴ Cook assembled "as distinguished a set of contributors as has ever been attracted to an English newspaper."⁵ It was a stable of talent that included Walter Bagehot, both Stephen brothers (Fitzjames and Leslie), the aforementioned Lewes, Mark Pattison, E.A. Freeman, J.R. Green, Henry Maine, and Lord Robert Cecil (the future prime minister, the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury). Now Morley could be counted among its number, albeit anonymously, in keeping with the *Saturday*'s adherence to that generally ineffective tradition.

As a result of the *Saturday*'s conservative politics, Morley (who made no secret of his liberalism) was mainly confined to the task of writing "middles," known as such for the fact that their miscellaneous content fell between that of a proper review and an editorial. Between 1863 and 1867, Morley contributed about seventy of these "middles," one of which, entitled "New Ideas,"⁶ caught the eye of John Stuart Mill, thus sparking one of Morley's most treasured friendships. But Morley's most immediately beneficial friendship in these years came from an old Lincoln schoolmate named James Cotter Morison—sole surviving son from the second marriage of the same "Morrison" whose pill Carlyle had forever tied to quackery in *Past and*

⁴ In John Gross's colorful description. See his *Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, 75.

⁵ Leslie Stephen, *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, Bart, K.C.S.I.: A Judge of the High Court of Justice* (London: Smith, Elder, 1895), 150.

⁶ [John Morley], "New Ideas," *Saturday Review* 20, no. 521 (October 21, 1865): 508-9.

Present. In addition to being a fellow *Saturday* contributor, the younger Morison had put some of the considerable inheritance from his father's infamous cure-all towards the 1865 founding of a new periodical,⁷ modelled on the French *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which Matthew Arnold had singled out for admiration in his instrumental essay on "The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time." From March 1865 through December 1866, the *Fortnightly* was under the able guidance of Lewes. But when poor health forced Lewes to step aside, it was, as Morley later recalled, due to "the influence of [Cotter] Morison, I was appointed to succeed George Henry Lewes, that wonder of versatile talents, as editor of the *Fortnightly*."⁸ Thus began a fifteen year period (1867-1882) that has been justly described as "as distinguished an editorial term of office as any in the nineteenth century."⁹

I. "Light More than Heat": Morley's Stewardship of Tone

Morley's appointment to lead the *Fortnightly* upon the recommendation of the son of "Dr." James Morison is wrought with irony. First, there is the fact that the younger Morison was actually an avid admirer of Carlyle, the man who made his father synonymous with quackery. As Morley notes in his *Recollections*, it was during their time together at Lincoln College that Cotter Morison first brought Morley "into vivid and edifying contact with the forces of Carlyle."¹⁰ Moreover, Morison seems to have called upon Carlyle on at least a couple of occasions, the first

⁷ While the precise makeup of the *Fortnightly*'s founding committee has yet to be identified with any definitive certainty, Morison is found in just about all listings as a founding member, along with Anthony Trollope, Frederic and Edward Chapman, and E.S. Beesly. The initial capital investment is put at about £8,000 or £9,000. Based on Trollope's recollection that he put in £1,250 for his share, it is presumed that there was a total of seven investors. Among those already mentioned, variously included in such lists are Walter Bagehot, G.H. Lewes, George Eliot, E.A. Freeman, Frederic Harrison, T.H. Huxley, R.M. Milnes, Danby Seymour, and Charles Waring. See Esther Rhoads Houghton, "The Fortnightly Review, 1865-1900: Introduction," in *WIVP*, II, 173-83, at 182.

⁸ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 85.

⁹ Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, 112.

¹⁰ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 11.

in 1862, to gain Carlyle's ascent to have Morison's first book dedicated to him. Yet, however much an admirer of Carlyle the younger Morison was, his nomination of Morley to edit the *Fortnightly* ultimately empowered one of the late nineteenth century's most astute critics of Carlyle. Under Morley, the *Fortnightly* ran directly counter to two of Carlyle's most prominent characteristics as a writer. First, in contrast to Carlyle's dismissal as "Morrison's Pills" any and all political measures for alleviating the modern maladies inherent in the Condition-of-England-Question, Morley's *Fortnightly* was always on the lookout for political reforms to advocate for or endorse. Labeling Morley's particular strategy in this regard "Focalizing," we will explore this aspect of his editorship in the next section below, noting that while Carlyle provided a negative example through his intransigence to reform, his impact on Morley's approach to political reform in the pages of the *Fortnightly* was not completely without more positive insights. This gave credence to John Nichol's conclusion in his 1892 contribution on *Carlyle* for the English Men of Letters Series (a series Morley himself edited) that it was "[Carlyle's] critical readers, not his disciples, [who] have learnt most from him."¹¹

The second feature in which Morley's *Fortnightly* actively challenged Carlyle was in its emphasis on a more congenial tone. Like Bagehot and Arnold, Morley believed that the central purpose of the Victorian political essayist was to prepare the multitudes as best they could for ever-accelerating change in an age of transition, especially when it came to the spread of democracy through the enfranchisement of the masses. Morley said that one requires "definite maxims and purposes" for the "most stirring general appeal to the benevolent emotions to be effective for more than negative purposes." According to him, what was needed was "light more

¹¹ Nichol, *Thomas Carlyle*, 244.

than heat.”¹² For Carlyle, “All is bad,” as Morley put it elsewhere. “Without disparaging some sides of Carlyle as a spiritual force, we see in him as a directing practical force only distraction in his own efforts, and too often ignorant and presumptuous detraction of the efforts of others.” To Carlyle, “It was all anathema.” And if he failed to adhere to his own teachings, this was because his teachings were “all heat and no light.” Carlyle had: “emancipated men from the spirit of convention, but did not furnish them with a new leading; [his lesson] was a glorious appeal to the individual to look into his own soul, but gave him no practical key by which he might read what he found there. For that we have all had to look elsewhere.”¹³

Following Arnold’s prescript “to create a frame of mind out of which really fruitful reforms may with time grow,”¹⁴ Morley sought “the modification and instruction of the current feelings and judgements of our countrymen” under the belief that “[t]his is the only way to ripen them for change.”¹⁵ We see this principle of gradual persuasion in practice when Morley counsels his friend and frequent *Fortnightly* contributor, Frederic Harrison, on the wisdom of a measured tone at the height of the French Commune in early 1871. Morley was concerned that Harrison’s anti-German sympathies¹⁶ had produced an article on “Bismarckism”¹⁷ that was filled with an unbridled fervor akin to Carlyle’s most fire-breathing exercises. Such a tone risked being a barrier to fruitful discussion.

¹² Morley, “Carlyle,” 8, 9.

¹³ Morley, “The Man of Letters as Hero,” 66, 67, 68.

¹⁴ Arnold, “Anarchy and Authority [IV],” 107.

¹⁵ Morley to Harrison, April 25, 1871, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 188.

¹⁶ As a disciple of August Comte’s philosophy of Positivism, Harrison was, like many of his generation (including Morley), a Francophile. The standard biography of Harrison is Martha S. Vogeler, *Frederic Harrison: The Vocations of a Positivist* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

¹⁷ Harrison, “Bismarckism,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 8, no. 48 (December 1870): 631-49.

From Carlyle's negative example, Morley had learned that the key to persuasion was to be careful not to "put too much pepper and salt for the amount of meat in your broth."¹⁸ "Stroke your public for fifteen pages," he told Harrison in the wake of his Bismarck philippic. "[T]hen, having got fair hold of them, lay the flail on in the final five."¹⁹ Morley's own essay on Byron would seem to meet such a standard. Upon reading the December 1870 *Fortnightly*, in which Harrison's "Bismarckism" and Morley's "Byron" both appeared, a twenty-something Henry James wrote a letter, describing both essays as "red=radical and intemperate," but still in possession of "a great tone." But it was Morley's article that was "really remarkable" in James's estimation. "It's a view of Byron from the quasi-political standpoint and reveals in [Morley]... a broad critical genius and a most admirable style."²⁰ In February of 1874, the stridency of Harrison's comments on Bismarck's anti-Catholic legislation known as the Falk Laws once again failed to meet with his editor's recipe for fruitful discussion. Like a patient parent, Morley reiterated his earlier incantations of a measured tone. "You can't settle a discussion like this by passionate declamation like yours."²¹ With Harrison still unwilling to bend over the appropriate way to approach the German Question, Morley made his rebuke public by offering his own "tempering considerations" in a rare editorial footnote accompanying Harrison's diatribe.²²

¹⁸ Morley to Harrison, April 26, 1871, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 188-9.

¹⁹ Morley to Harrison, April 14, 1871, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 185.

²⁰ Henry James to Charles Eliot Norton, January 16, 1871, in *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1855-1872*, edited by Pierre A. Walker and Greg W. Zacharias, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), II, 392.

²¹ Morley to Harrison, February 11, 1874, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 297.

²² Frederic Harrison, [Editorial Footnote by John Morley], "Public Affairs," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 15, no. 86 (February 1874): 282-96 [Editorial Footnote, 293-4].

II. “Focalizing” at Morley’s *Fortnightly*

In an age of discussion, politics and periodicals were natural allies. This, Morley believed, was especially the case in Britain. A review like the *Fortnightly* was a cog in the very British process of “peaceful and orderly solution[s]” to the great questions of the day. Other national factors, however, were standing in the way, namely an overabundance of faith in “do-less legislature, a worn-out aristocracy, a rich middle class without courage or true sagacity, without a social faith, without a policy, [and] an absolutely uninstructed mass.”²³ Central to the periodicals of higher journalism achieving the “momentous task of forming national opinion”²⁴ that Morley ascribed to them was the cultivation of “a *national*, not a class tone to English politics.”²⁵ Rather than class rhetoric, the whole of Britain should be “concentrating all its energies, organizing all its practical resources, under the direction of a strong executive, for national objects.” The press should help in this aim to “generate a collective national impulse.”²⁶

As we have already seen, Morley found Carlyle’s tone and abhorrence for political reforms unhelpful in his quest to cultivate a “collective national impulse.” On the other hand, Carlyle seemed to offer Morley a useful methodology, while still allowing him to bypass his more problematic teachings. Morley long-held the view that Carlyle’s *Past and Present* was a “[v]ery just denunciation: Carlyle’s praise of work, another way of expressing Mill’s exaltation of the active type of character. But Carlyle is moral exhortation, Mill’s is rational exposition and

²³ Morley, “The Political Prelude,” 114.

²⁴ John Morley, “Anonymous Journalism,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 2, no. 9 (September 1867): 287-92, at 292.

²⁵ Morley to Harrison, May 6, 1874, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 300 (emphasis in original). There are clear influences from Arnold here. See, for example, Arnold, “Culture and Its Enemies,” 52, where he calls for “a *national* glow of life and thought” (emphasis in original).

²⁶ John Morley, “The Liberal Programme,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 2, no. 9 (September 1867): 359-69, at 363, 364.

examination. Each good in its way.”²⁷ This appreciation for Carlyle’s “gospel of work”²⁸ might, perhaps, help explain the great productivity of many Victorian men of letters and why many undoubtedly fought through days like the one where Matthew Arnold tells his mother, “My hand is so tired I can hardly write.”²⁹ It might even be said that the abundance of periodicals themselves were a byproduct of contemporary British anxieties, reflecting a conscious desire to remain informed of the ever-quickening pace of changes apparent in seemingly every facet of life.³⁰ And yet, the fact that the “age of discussion” went hand in hand with the “age of transition” only seemed to add to the confusion.

Ironically enough, for Morley, it was none other than Carlyle’s advice to “leave the region of things unknowable, and hold fast to the duty that lies nearest” that brought a particular kind of deliverance from the anxieties of intellectual chaos.³¹ In the standard biography of Morley,³² David Hamer stresses the influence of this Carlylean devotion to “the duty that lies nearest” in Morley’s career. Its significance lay in Morley’s decision to approach the “great

²⁷ Diary entry, summer [August 6], 1891, printed in Morley, *Recollections*, I, 281.

²⁸ Perhaps most famously expressed in *Sartor Resartus*. See [Carlyle], “Sartor Resartus [Book II, Chapters 8-10],” 452: “Produce, produce! Were it but the pitifulest, infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God’s name. ‘Tis the utmost thou hast in thee? Out with it then! Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might.”

²⁹ Matthew Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, February 19, 1862, in *TLMA*, Lang, II, 122.

³⁰ See Parrinder, *Authors and Authority*, 65.

³¹ Morley, “Carlyle,” 14. And see page 12, where Morley declares that “there is in Carlylism a deliverance from it all; indeed, the only deliverance possible.” See [Carlyle], “Sartor Resartus [Book II, Chapters 8-10],” 452: “‘Do the Duty which lies nearest thee,’ which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer” (emphasis in original).

³² Though a very useful study in its own right, Patrick Jackson’s *Morley of Blackburn: A Literary and Political Biography of John Morley* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), does not seem likely to supplant Hamer—at least this is the impression based on reviewers’ reactions.

questions of national existence”³³ in a piecemeal fashion, which Hamer labels “focalizing”³⁴—a term borrowed from Morley, who in his 1872 study of *Voltaire*, described a new writing style that had emerged since the days of the great philosophe (a style aiming for “simplicity and directness” in increasingly complex times, using “focalizing words and turns of composition” to concentrate “the rays of many side lights” into “some single phrase.”³⁵) In Morley’s “focalizing” method, Hamer discerns three principle features:

(I) Each question embodied the principle of freedom and represented within itself the free play of forces. Thus disestablishment, for which according to Morley, he “who is most earnest for the free play of social forces, is bound before all other men to press,”³⁶ was founded on opposition to “the interference of the State”—“with the religious concerns of the people.”³⁷ In his land policy he opposed artificial restrictions. He opposed coercing the Irish and advocated leaving them alone to manage their own affairs in their own way. He condemned imperialism as intervention in the natural development of other peoples.

(II) As each question was not a system but only part of a situation, it also gave scope to the continuing free play of forces and evolution of order outside of itself.

(III) Each question was presented by Morley as a “national” issue; that is, it was alleged to raise an issue within which the interests of the whole nation were concentrated and on which the attention of the whole nation should be focused. It was seen as checking the tendency towards politics based on class division.³⁸

The sensibility of such an approach was grounded in Morley’s historical understanding of “the English mind,” a chief characteristic of which (he argued in his study of Burke) being “that we

³³As Sydney Smith once described them. See Smith to Francis Jeffrey, October 1807, in *A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*, II, 27.

³⁴ See D.A. Hamer, *John Morley: Liberal Intellectual in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 90-95.

³⁵ John Morley, *Voltaire* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), 115.

³⁶ John Morley, “The Liberal Eclipse,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 17, no. 98 (February 1875): 295-304, at 298-9.

³⁷ Morley at a November 1874 meeting of the Liberation Society, quoted in Anon., “Home News,” *Pall Mall Budget: Being a Weekly Collection of Articles Printed in the Pall Mall Gazette from Day to Day, with a Summary of News* 13 (November 6, 1874): 29-32, at 31.

³⁸ Hamer, *John Morley*, 91-2.

hardly know how to reconcile ourselves to accept more than one general principle at a time, and then it must be exhibited in its practical application to a special case then and there before us.”³⁹ As proof, Morley need only point to the great reforms in recent British history. Abolition of the slave trade (then slavery itself),⁴⁰ Catholic emancipation, the Reform Act of 1832, and (as he would later argue in his *Life of Cobden*⁴¹) the repeal of the Corn Laws—all showed the wisdom and effectiveness of concentrating on a single great issue, one step at a time. Thus, Morley looked back with envy on the previous generation of reviewers, praising the founders of the *Edinburgh* and the *Westminster* for their respective ability to adhere to “a set of common principles...a common program of practical applications, and set[ting] to work in earnest and with due order and distribution of parts to advocate the common cause.” In his own day, Morley lamented, “there is no similar agreement either among the younger men in parliament, or among a sufficiently numerous group of writers outside of parliament.” Morley believed that the elevation of a single issue above all else was the most effective method of achieving an organ like the *Fortnightly*’s intended purpose “to lead public opinion towards certain changes, or to hold it steadfast against wayward gusts of passion.”⁴² Ultimately, in his career both as a journalist and, later, a politician, Morley devoted himself to the “duty” of “focalizing” on a series of “single great questions” in temporary isolation, but always understood as part of the broader effort to remedy the national condition.

³⁹ John Morley, “Edmund Burke, Part I,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1867): 129-45, at 139.

⁴⁰ See the recent study by Paula E. Dumas, “The ‘Edinburgh Review,’ the ‘Quarterly Review,’ and the Contributions of the Periodical to the Slavery Debates,” *Slavery and Abolition* 38, no. 3 (2017): 559-76.

⁴¹ See John Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1881), I, 203.

⁴² Morley, “Memorials of a Man of Letters,” 603.

Morley's first "single great question" was to be National Education, an interest which led to his (and the *Fortnightly's*) association with the young mayor of Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain. At their introduction during an 1873 meeting of the National Education League (formed in opposition to Forster's 1870 Education Act), Morley was immediately impressed not so much by the originality of Chamberlain's ideas as the sheer force of his personality. Such a "character of vivid and resolute energy, fearless tenacity of will, vehement confidence both in the merits and the triumph of any cause with which he was induced to concern himself," could be a powerful force in the pages of the right periodical.⁴³ Seizing the opportunity, Morley soon invited Chamberlain to "take the *Fortnightly* as your platform as Lord Salisbury takes the *Quarterly* for his."⁴⁴ "Under their influence," writes one Morley biographer, "the *Fortnightly* became less academic and more concerned with the personal side of politics."⁴⁵ In reading the proofs of Chamberlain's September 1873 *Fortnightly* debut on "The Liberal Party and Its Leaders," Morley first signaled his new approach to circumventing the variety of "special questions" plaguing the Liberals in the 1870s. Chamberlain offered a new platform founded on four tenets ("Free Church, Free Land, Free Schools, and Free Labor"⁴⁶). Morley, on the other hand, suggested striking three of them from the program, believing that the Nonconformists who supported "Free Church" would be alienated by the more radical agendas of "Free Land" and "Free Labor." Chamberlain did not agree.⁴⁷ But Morley, bent on proving his point, embarked on

⁴³ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 147.

⁴⁴ Morley to Chamberlain, August 11, 1873, quoted in Hamer, *John Morley*, 99. Between April 1860 and October 1883, the future Tory prime minister penned thirty-three essays for the *Quarterly Review*—all of them anonymous. See *WIVP*, V, 144.

⁴⁵ Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, II, 17.

⁴⁶ Joseph Chamberlain, "The Liberal Party and Its Leaders," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 14, no. 81 (September 1873): 287-302, at 294.

⁴⁷ John Morley to Joseph Chamberlain, August 18, 1873, quoted in Hamer, *John Morley*, 94; and Chamberlain to Morley, August 19, 23, 1873, quoted in Hamer, *John Morley*, 104n1.

a series of three relatively lengthy essays on “The Struggle for National Education,” published in the *Fortnightly* between August and October 1873.⁴⁸ Almost as soon as he had done so, however, Morley became convinced that “National Education” was, in fact, more appropriately tackled in connection with the broader question of Disestablishment of the State Church.⁴⁹ But this too was soon abandoned as Morley’s single great national issue. Between 1875 and 1878 (and then again, in 1882), a succession of international crises in the East brought the question of Ottoman legitimacy in the Balkans and Egypt (and that of Britain’s responsibilities in those areas) to the forefront of the British political life. As expected, the nation’s intellectual and governing elite took to the pages of the monthly reviews to discuss the so-called Eastern Question under the general heading of new single great issue: imperialism.⁵⁰

III. Lion-Hunting: Morley vs Knowles

The *Fortnightly* certainly garnered its fair share of famous contributors under Morley’s watch. In the debate on empire in the late 1870s, for example, he was able to attain contributions from both sides of the aisle. The Liberal statesman, Robert Lowe (Viscount Sherbrooke), and the 4th Earl of Carnarvon (who had recently resigned as Disraeli’s Colonial Secretary) both wrote essays for the *Fortnightly* that have proven influential reflections on the late-Victorian’s understanding of “imperialism.”⁵¹ Nonetheless, one of the most active pens and most (if not *the* most) prestigious

⁴⁸ “Lengthy” relative to the Age of the Monthlies. Each of the three essays were between twenty and twenty-three pages in length, at a time when fifteen to sixteen pages was now the norm. Later that same year, the three essays were published in book form as *The Struggle for National Education* (1873).

⁴⁹ See Morley, “The Liberal Eclipse,” 298-9.

⁵⁰ In his biography of Gladstone, Morley offers a definition of the Eastern Question that captures its remarkable complexity, describing it as “that shifting, intractable, and interwoven tangle of conflicting interests, rival peoples, and antagonistic faiths, that is veiled under the easy name of the Eastern Question.” John Morley. *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1903), I, 476-7.

⁵¹ Up to this point, the word “imperialism” had been applied in an ancient historical context (usually to the Rome of the emperors) and, more recently, as a derogatory term to Napoleon and his less capable nephew. For Robert Lowe, it was “the apotheosis of violence,” and its introduction a “new and most unacceptable addition to our

names of the day completely eluded the *Fortnightly*'s table of contents. Morley had certainly tried to secure the services of William Gladstone,⁵² with whom he first became personally acquainted at an 1876 meeting of the Metaphysical Club. In a November 27, 1877 letter, the editor began pressing the case for his review. "I shall count it a singular honor and distinction if you will choose to answer Mr. [Robert] Lowe⁵³ in the lists of the *Fortnightly*. I have not presumed to ask you to write in my poor pages before," Morley reminds Gladstone, while also reassuring him that the editorial portion of his review "has remained staunch to what you have persuaded the best part of England to regard as the true cause."⁵⁴ When Gladstone declined, Morley's reply is subservient in the extreme, "If some day it occurs that there are many crumbs from your table after those older guests are satisfied, I will hope that the *Fortnightly Review* will have the benefit of them."⁵⁵ Morley would complain to Joseph Chamberlain the next year that "the *FR* is the only magazine in which he does not write—the voluminous animal. Still, he's a

vocabulary." Robert Lowe, "Imperialism," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 24, no. 142 (October 1878): 453-65, at 459, 460. Carnarvon distinguished between a "false" imperialism (associated, like Lowe, with continental militarism) and a "true" imperialism (characterized by a "united English-speaking community overseas" [Greater Britain] and the spread of "civilization" to the less privileged peoples of the world). Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, 4th Earl of Carnarvon, "Imperial Administration," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 24, no. 144 (December 1878): 751-64. For more general treatments of the theoretical debates on empire in these years, see Richard Koebner, and Helmut Dan Schmidt. *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964); P.J. Cain, ed., *Empire and Imperialism: The Debate of the 1870s*, Key Issues Series, no. 20 (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), esp Cain's "Introduction" on 1-19; and Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁵² Unlike his great rival, Disraeli's career in higher journalism was rather meager, with the last of the seventeen contributions accredited to him in the *Wellesley Index* appearing in the October 1836 issue of *Fraser's*. For a list of these writings, see *WIVP*, V, 223. The bulk of Disraeli's periodical essays appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine*—the last of which appeared in the November 1834 issue of that magazine.

⁵³ See Robert Lowe, "The Value to the United Kingdom of the Foreign Dominions of the Crown." *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 22, no. 131 (November 1877): 618-30.

⁵⁴ Morley to Gladstone, November 27, 1877, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, II, 60.

⁵⁵ Morley to Gladstone, November 30, 1877, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, II, 60.

famous mortal.”⁵⁶ Eventually, in 1880, Gladstone would contribute a highly regarded essay on the General Election of that year,⁵⁷ but even then only on the condition of anonymity (using the pseudonym, “Index”) and the editor’s assurance that the authorship would remain secret.⁵⁸

Why was Morley—a personal friend of Gladstone’s who would become much more in the years to come⁵⁹—only able to secure a single anonymous essay from the Grand Old Man? For that, we need look elsewhere, to James Knowles, editor of the *Contemporary Review* from April 1870 until January 1877, when he left to found a new monthly, the *Nineteenth Century*, which he edited until his death in 1908. During his tenure at the *Contemporary*, Knowles had made headway in making the race for prestige in the new serious-minded monthlies a two-horse race for all intents and purposes.

This state of affairs from the essayists’ perspective is nicely captured in an 1874 letter from T.H. Huxley to John Morley. “I am always very glad to have anything of mine in the *Fortnightly*, as it is sure to be in good company; but I am becoming as spoiled as a maiden with many wooers. However, as far as the *Fortnightly* which is my old love, and the *Contemporary* which is my new, are concerned, I hope to remain as constant as a persistent bigamist can be said to be.”⁶⁰ As an editor, Morley was more than willing to look the other way on the periodic

⁵⁶ John Morley to Joseph Chamberlain, September 30, 1878, quoted in Stephen Koss, *John Morley at the India Office, 1905-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) 15n8.

⁵⁷ W.E. Gladstone [Index, pseud.], “The Conservative Collapse: Considered in a Letter from a Liberal to an Old Conservative,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 27, no. 161 (May 1880): 607-24. Following Gladstone’s 1898 death, the *Fortnightly* (by then edited by W.L. Courtney) published some “stray letters” Gladstone had written to Henry St. John Raikes (1863-1943). See W.E. Gladstone [edited by Henry St. John Raikes], “Some Stray Letters of Mr. Gladstone,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 64, no. 379 (July 1898): 11-6.

⁵⁸ Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, II, 91; Everett, *The Party of Humanity*, 315-6.

⁵⁹ That is to say, Morley became a personal friend, a loyal advocate in parliament for Gladstone’s agenda, as well as his most respected early biographer. See Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*.

⁶⁰ T.H. Huxley to John Morley, November 15, 1874, in Leonard Huxley, *Life And Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*. 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1900), I, 424.

infidelities of “Darwin’s Bulldog.” After all, as Morley later recalled, “No article that has appeared in any periodical for a generation back...excited so profound a sensation as Huxley’s memorable paper [for the February 1869 *Fortnightly*], ‘On the Physical Basis of Life.’”⁶¹ When Knowles founded the *Nineteenth Century* a few years later, however, Morley found himself in much more serious competition for the likes of Huxley.

Unlike Morley, Knowles was not a thinker of any particular distinction.⁶² Though his wide-ranging intellectual pursuits would make any comparison between Knowles and Mr. Cook of the *Saturday Review* come out in favor of the former, Knowles’s enthusiasm for periodicals led to a rather extreme antipathy for books. “I am not a book-buyer,” he told Huxley’s wife, Henrietta. According to his thinking, the rapidity of information and change made books an anachronism that should be (and eventually would be) entirely replaced by the periodical.⁶³ In fact, Knowles was not alone in holding this opinion. In 1877 (the same year Knowles started the *Nineteenth Century*), Mark Pattison suggested in the *Fortnightly* that “the monthly periodical seems destined to supersede books altogether.”⁶⁴ If such prognostications seem ridiculous even today in an age of greater and greater brevity, Knowles’s suggestion to an unnamed Vice-Chancellor that universities should endow Chairs of Periodical Literature seems more

⁶¹ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 90.

⁶² Nor did Knowles have any pretension that he was on par with a Morley in intellectual matters. For example, whereas Morley wrote extensively for his periodical, Knowles rarely contributed to his reviews. Hamer, estimates that during his tenure as editor, Morley wrote some 200 articles (about 1 in every 8 of all *Fortnightly* contributions during the span). D.A. Hamer, “Morley, John, Viscount Morley of Blackburn (1838-1923),” in *ODNB* (January 2008), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/35110>.

⁶³ Knowles to Henrietta Anne Huxley, March 28, 1896, quoted in Metcalf, *James Knowles*, 362.

⁶⁴ Pattison, “Books and Critics,” 663.

prescient—or, at least, one hopes it would be met with more welcome than the “sphinxlike smile” that was the Vice-Chancellor’s reaction.⁶⁵

An architect by training, Knowles’s greatest skill as an editor lay in his unmatched ability to bring together some of late nineteenth century Britain’s most eminent figures from all walks of life to debate the most serious and pressing matters of the day. This social acumen was first put on display in Knowles’s founding of the Metaphysical Society in 1869. Until its last meeting in November 1880, some sixty-two leading Victorian minds would gather once a month between November and July at the Grosvenor Hotel⁶⁶ in London for “full discussion of the largest range of topics from all points of view.”⁶⁷

To say that the connection between the Metaphysical Society and the periodical press was intimate is something of an understatement. Of the ninety-five pre-circulated papers that formed the impetus of each meeting’s debate, forty-two of them were republished in the reviews of higher journalism (the vast majority of which were monthlies).⁶⁸ Moreover, no less than ten of the Society’s sixty-two members were editors of influential reviews, magazines, or weeklies. But, as one historian of the Metaphysical Society notes, “All except [George] Grove [of

⁶⁵ Knowles to Henrietta Anne Huxley, March 28, 1896, quoted in Metcalf, *James Knowles*, 362.

⁶⁶ Of which Knowles had assisted his father, also an architect, in designing. For a list of buildings designed by Knowles (as well as his father), see Metcalf, *James Knowles*, 364-7.

⁶⁷ R.H. Hutton, “The Metaphysical Society: A Reminiscence,” *Nineteenth Century* 18, no 102 (August 1885): 177-96, at 177.

⁶⁸ Of those that were republished, the overwhelming majority (thirty) occurred in Knowles’s *Contemporary Review*. When Knowles left the *Contemporary* and founded the *Nineteenth Century* (1877), six more Metaphysical Society papers found their way into that periodical before the Society disbanded. The remaining republished Society papers appeared in the following periodicals: a quarterly review titled, *Mind* (three); *Fortnightly Review* (two); *Macmillan’s Magazine* (one). In 2015, Oxford University Press published all ninety-five of the Metaphysical Society’s papers in a handsome, three volume set, with each paper accompanied by an editorial headnote. See Catherine Marshall, Bernard Lightman, and Richard England, eds., *The Papers of the Metaphysical Society, 1869-1880: A Critical Edition*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Macmillan's] and Morley were among the most active members of the Metaphysical Society.”⁶⁹ This suggestion of Morley’s self-imposed social isolation among his colleagues, perhaps played a role in Morley’s inability to match Knowles in the hunt for “big names” that emerged in Victorian higher journalism as the trend for signed articles replaced the anonymous practice of yesteryear.⁷⁰ Indeed, it was Knowles who garnered the vast majority of Gladstone’s prodigious output of periodical essays. Knowles’s biographer, Priscilla Metcalf, calculates that from the end of his first premiership in February 1874 through October 1896, Gladstone wrote for one of Knowles’s periodicals a staggering *eighty* times, thirteen for the *Contemporary Review* and sixty-seven for the *Nineteenth Century*.⁷¹ The output was sporadic, ebbing in the years of his premierships and flowing when the Liberals were in opposition. Thirty-seven articles were published by Knowles between 1874 and 1880, while just four between his second (1880-85) and third ministries (1886). Twenty-three more came in 1887-98 (ten alone in 1889) before the now octogenarian Gladstone settled into the mortal rate of two to four per year.⁷²

In light of this output, one might understandably labor under the impression that Knowles would publish anything Gladstone submitted to him. Yet, on at least one occasion it seems that Gladstone was unable to meet Knowles’s editorial expectations. In 1889, Gladstone hoped to anonymously publish a critique of Italy’s role in the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. But Knowles would not make an exception to his policy of having all articles signed.

⁶⁹ Alan Willard Brown, *The Metaphysical Society: Victorian Minds in Crisis, 1869-1880* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 169-70.

⁷⁰ See Frederick Pollock, *For My Grandson: Remembrances of an Ancient Victorian* (London: John Murray, 1933) 93, where Pollock says that “Knowles was not an editor at all, but a literary showman, a lion-hunter.”

⁷¹ In fact, it was Gladstone who contributed the lead article of the very first issue of the *Nineteenth Century*. W.E. Gladstone, “On the Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion,” *Nineteenth Century* 1, no. 1 (March 1877): 2-22.

⁷² Metcalf. *James Knowles*, 262.

The article was published in Knowles's old periodical, the *Contemporary*, under the pseudonym "Outidanos," a partly tongue-in-cheek Homeric reference to an adjective meaning "powerless."⁷³ In other words, despite generally adhering to his more noble declarations of being "utterly impartial" and that "full and fair and free discussion is the best way for arriving at and disseminating Truth,"⁷⁴ Knowles prized nothing more than parading famous names before his audience.

When he left the *Contemporary* to start the *Nineteenth Century*, the advertisement announcing his new venture included a list of around one hundred prominent names (comprising Gladstone, Cardinal Manning, Bagehot, and Matthew Arnold, among others) whose promise to contribute to future issues

Knowles hopes "will be accepted as justification" for the new review (see Figure 5 above). In

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY :
A Monthly Review.
EDITED BY JAMES KNOWLES,
LATE OF "THE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW."

The management of "The Contemporary Review" has recently passed into the hands of a Limited Company, consisting of Mr. Samuel Morley, Mr. Francis Peck, the Rev. Mr. Palou (of the Independent College at Nottingham), and others, and formed for the purpose of editing, managing, and publishing "The Contemporary Review," "The Day Rest," "Good Things for the Young," and "Peepshow." A separation has taken place between the Review and Mr. Knowles, whose editorial connection with it dated from the resignation in 1870 of Dean Alford, its first editor.

The change made, after Mr. Knowles joined it, in the conduct of "The Contemporary," by enlarging the comparatively limited "platform" of the Dean, and converting it into an entirely free and open field, where all forms of honest opinion (represented by men of sufficient weight) should be not only tolerated, but equally welcome, met with the marked approval of the public.

The results of that policy were such as now encourage Mr. Knowles in establishing, by the help of his friends, a new Review, under the title of "THE NINETEENTH CENTURY," which will be conducted on the absolutely impartial and unsectarian principles which governed "The Contemporary" during his connection with it.

He trusts that the following list of those who, amongst others, have promised their support to "The Nineteenth Century" will be accepted as a justification of his undertaking, and of the title he has ventured to choose for it,—a title which he hopes may become, in due course of time, "The Twentieth Century":—

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mr. Tennison | Mr. Arthur Arnold |
| Professor Huxley | Mr. W. Spottiswoode |
| Cardinal Manning | " " MacCull |
| Rev. Dr. Newman | " " W. Minto |
| The Duke of Argyll | " " Poynter, B.A. |
| The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol | " " Norman Lockyer |
| Professor Tyndall | " " Clements Markham |
| The Bishop of Peterborough | " " James Spedding |
| The Dean of Westminster | Bart. M.P. |
| Sir James Fitzjames Stephen | Dr. Gladstone |
| Mr. Matthew Arnold | General Strachey |
| Lord Bishoford | Major Donnelly |
| The Rev. H. Dale | Mr. R. Bowditch Smith |
| Sir John Lubbock, M.P. | Professor Chomery |
| Mr. Grant Duff, M.P. | Dr. Andrew Clark |
| Lord Arthur Russell, M.P. | Mr. E. Keble |
| St. Hon. Lyon Playfair, M.P. | " " James Sully |
| Lord Houghton | " " William Black |
| Canon Barry | " " William Gilbert |
| " " Farrer | " " Nevil S. Mackenzie |
| Rev. Dr. Martineau | " " Meredith Townsend |
| " " J. Baldwin Brown | " " W. B. O. Ralston |
| " " J. Guinness Rogers | " " E. H. Barry, B.A. |
| " " Dr. Evans | " " J. Sparkes |
| Mr. Frederick Harrison | " " H. Schatz-Wilson |
| Dr. Carpenter | " " Joseph Arch |
| Mr. G. H. Lewes | Professor Hunter |
| Sir Frederic Pollock | Mr. James Hopwood |
| Mr. George Potter | " " T. W. Elys Davids |
| " " George Howell | " " George Darwin |
| Miss Helen Taylor | " " G. A. Simcox |
| Lady Pollock | " " J. G. Fitch |
| Rev. Mark Pattison | " " Frederick Pollock |
| " " Henry Whitehead | " " Lewis Morris |
| " " John Oakley | Prof. Henry Morley |
| " " A. W. Church | Mr. G. H. Roberts |
| " " B. R. Girdlestone | " " Spedan Smith |
| Sir George Bowyer | " " Alfred Willis, Q.C. |
| Monalogue Patterson | " " E. D. J. Wilson |
| Professor St. George Mivart | " " Henry Broadhurst |
| Mr. E. H. Hutson | " " F. W. Baiter |
| " " W. B. Greg | " " T. J. Parker |
| " " Walter Bagehot | " " G. W. Eoid |
| " " Hallam Tennison | " " C. F. Keary |
| " " Frederic Myers | " " A. J. Murray |
| Sir Henry Thompson | Mrs. Owen |
| Mr. O. T. Newton | Mr. H. G. Hewlett |
| Professor Croome Robertson | " " Ed. F. O. Piggott |
| " " Clifford | " " Bernard Crocroft |
| | " " Walker Edwards |
| | " " O. A. Fyfe, Q.C. |

The First Number of THE NINETEENTH CENTURY will be published (price 6d) on the 1st of March next, by Messrs. HENRY S. KING and CO., of 65 Cornhill. Contributions to the first number are promised by Mr. Alfred Tennison, the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., Sir John Lubbock, M.P., Mr. Grant Duff, B.A., the Rev. J. Baldwin Brown, the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. W. B. O. Ralston, and Cardinal Manning.

Periodical notices of Recent Science, under the superintendence of Professor Huxley, will also be commenced in the first number. Full particulars of the contents will be duly announced.

The April number of the Review will contain contributions from Sir James Stephen, Lord Selborne, Rev. Dr. Martineau, Professor Clifford, Mr. Arthur Bagehot, and others.

Articles by the Right Hon. James Stansfeld, the Rev. J. G. Rogers, Miss Helen Taylor, Mr. O. T. Newton, Mr. George Howell, Sir George Bowyer, and others, are expected to appear in early numbers.

Applications for advertisements in THE NINETEENTH CENTURY should be made to Messrs. SPOTTISWOODE and CO., 35 Royal Exchange.

Published by HENRY S. KING and CO., 65 Cornhill.

Figure 5: Advertisement, "The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review," *Spectator* 50, no. 2537 (February 10, 1877): 191.

⁷³ Gladstone [Outidanos, pseud.], "The Triple Alliance, and Italy's Place in It," *Contemporary Review* 56 (October 1889): 469-88. See Norbert Lucene Fullington, "James Thomas Knowles and the 'Nineteenth Century': A Victorian Editor and His Periodical," PhD diss., Harvard University, (1966), 95-6. Knowles's reverence for the signed article was such that throughout the entirety of his stewardship of the *Nineteenth Century* only four pseudonyms made their way into the review. Of these, only one (William Sharpe's masquerading as "Fiona Macleod" in 1900) seems genuinely to have fooled him.

⁷⁴ Knowles to Gladstone, November 2, 1878, quoted in Metcalf, *James Knowles*, 273.

more than three decades at the helm of the *Nineteenth Century*, Knowles never deviated from his efforts to publish essays from the most renowned figures of the day. In a retrospective on his editorship, Frederic Harrison (another eminent name of Knowles's 1877 advertisement) recalled only half-jokingly that he believed only two prominent foreign notables had failed to contribute to the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*: Bismarck and the pope.⁷⁵ Further testimony to Knowles's indefatigable search for well-known contributors comes from a joke (attributed to Huxley, according to the Knowles family) that Priscilla Metcalf recounts in her extremely useful 1980 biography of the editor. It entails Knowles dying and going to Heaven, whereupon others are queuing to meet the Holy Trinity's Father and Son. Meanwhile, Knowles (ever the hunter) has quickly discerned the unlikelihood of a fruitful encounter with those two and opts to corner the Holy Ghost to request that he write for the *Nineteenth Century*.⁷⁶

Bolstered by his list of famous regular contributors, the *Nineteenth Century* became—for both contemporaries and scholars alike—the leading monthly periodical of higher journalism by century's end.⁷⁷ It was the only one of the monthly reviews priced at 2s6d (2 ½ shillings or a half-crown) that boasted more than 12,000 subscribers.⁷⁸ In fact, its reported peak at 20,000 in 1884 dwarfs the 2,500 peak of Morley's *Fortnightly* (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). Thus, when Morley's estimate that the *actual* readership his periodical is closer to 30,000 members of the

⁷⁵ Frederic Harrison, "The Nineteenth Century, No. D: A Retrospect," *Nineteenth Century and After* 84, no. 500 (October 1918): 785-96, at 795.

⁷⁶ Metcalf. *James Knowles*, 288.

⁷⁷ For contemporaries, see Arthur Waugh, "The English Reviews: A Sketch of the History and Principles," *The Critic* 40, no. 1 (January 1902): 26-37, at 36, where Waugh asserts that Knowles's *Nineteenth Century* "is now certainly the most popular of the monthly reviews, and probably enjoys the most weight." For the scholarly view, see Noel Annan's *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 69, where Annan states his belief that the *Nineteenth Century* was "the best of the late Victorian Periodicals."

⁷⁸ See Stead, "Periodicals," 51. As Table 1 in Chapter 1 of this dissertation shows, the half-crown monthlies were the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Contemporary Review*, and the second *National Review* (founded in 1883).

“influential class” when all the clubs, reading rooms, and country houses are taken into account, the *actual* readership of that same audience for Knowles’s monthly was (according to Morley’s own fuzzy math) somewhere around 100,000!⁷⁹ Whether or not there were, in fact, 100,000 members of the “influential class” is, of course, another question entirely, but it is true that, in the years following the Second Reform Act of 1867 and the Education Act of 1870, readers and voters were more abundant than they had been before.⁸⁰

It is important to stress that Knowles’s monthly by no means spelled doom for the *Fortnightly*. In the summer of 1881 (four years after the *Nineteenth Century*’s immediately successful appearance) the novelist, George Meredith, advised his son to seek publication in the *Fortnightly*, where his work would find “the choicest circle of readers.”⁸¹ There were more than enough readers from “the influential class” to go around—or, rather, their voracious appetite for intelligent discussion in print could never be satiated by a single periodical. Nonetheless, the days when Frederic Harrison could exclaim to Morley that he was “struck by the fact that with entire unanimity and regularity the whole Press of every shade prints the *F.R.* first among the Reviews” were soon a thing of the past once the *Nineteenth Century* came on the scene.⁸²

⁷⁹ See Morley to Harrison, September 9, 1873, in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 288.

⁸⁰ Berry, *Articles of Faith*, 76.

⁸¹ George Meredith to Arthur G. Meredith, July 27, 1881, in *Letters of George Meredith*, edited by William Maxse Meredith. 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1912), I, 323. The younger Meredith seems to have been working on the subject of what scholars would label “English national character.” As for the elder Meredith’s claim to the *Fortnightly* as having the “choicest” readers, it is true that we should take this declaration with a touch of salt in light of the fact that Meredith and Morley were very dear friends. But the point stands in that no one (neither an objective contemporary nor a modern scholar) would find Meredith’s claim an outright fabrication of the truth.

⁸² Harrison to Morley, January 1873, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 87.

How was it that Knowles could so clearly surpass Morley in the effort to have “all kinds of potentates pressing to speak in his Review”?⁸³ To answer this question we must understand that Morley was at a considerable disadvantage when it came to his freedoms as an editor. As Trollope later recalled, while the *Fortnightly* made an immediate impact as a model for the new, serious-minded monthly format, “Financially, as a Company, we failed altogether.”⁸⁴ Following Lewes’s resignation, the original founders of the *Fortnightly* sold their interests in the review to Chapman and Hall. Under Morley, the *Fortnightly*’s dire financial situation was reversed. Within five years, its circulation had increased from 1,400 to 2,500 (or, as already noted, some 30,000 members of “the influential class”).

Thus, when the editor offered Frederic Chapman, the head partner of Chapman and Hall, three times the firm’s initial investment, he refused. Here we encounter an irony in the *Fortnightly*’s existence, for Chapman was, in Morley’s words, “a thorough Philistine, hating all our views.”⁸⁵ No doubt, he would have gladly accepted Morley’s offer if the review wasn’t turning a handsome profit. This was, perhaps, why Morley and Co. were given free rein to espouse what must have been a contemptible set of views to Chapman—he had voted against Mill (Morley’s intellectual hero) in his campaigns for Westminster MP. Regardless, *ultimate* authority over the *Fortnightly Review*—founded on the principles of Arnold, middle class Philistinism’s chief opponent—lay in the hands of a man who viewed it not as an organ of disinterested opinion and discussion, but an asset on a balance sheet.

⁸³ Arnold, “The Incompatibles [Part I],” 726.

⁸⁴ Anthony Trollope, “George Henry Lewes,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 25, no. 145 (January 1879): 15-24, at 21.

⁸⁵ Quoted Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, I, 84.

Knowles, on the other hand, placed himself in a situation of much greater flexibility in that he was not just the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* but also its sole proprietor.⁸⁶ Indeed, the case of Knowles offers strong evidence in support of Trollope's contention that "that publishers themselves have been the best editors of magazines, when they have been able to give time and intelligence to the work."⁸⁷ A proprietors, he says, "knows what he wants and what he can afford, and is not so frequently tempted to fall into that worst of literary quicksand, the publishing of matter not for the sake of the readers, but for that of the writer...The object of the proprietor is to produce a periodical that shall satisfy the public, which he may probably best do by securing the services of writers of acknowledged ability."⁸⁸

In a wonderfully informative essay comparing the editorships of Morley at the *Fortnightly* and Knowles at the *Nineteenth Century*, Helen Small points out that the profit-seeking penny-pinching of Chapman limited Morley's ability to attract well-known names as contributors, as well as the material layout of the *Fortnightly* itself. Loaded with distracting advertisements and printed on cheap paper that has, over time, aged into a yellow hue, the *Fortnightly* "cut a sober appearance" compared to its competitors, especially the *Nineteenth*

⁸⁶ Knowles's father had provided £2,000 for the initial backing of his son's new venture in 1877. As Metcalf notes, "It was a matter of pride [for the younger Knowles] not to have to [ever] touch it." Metcalf, *James Knowles*, 275.

⁸⁷ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 259-60. On such matters, Trollope's opinion should bear some weight, as his "knowledge of the economics of literature was extensive and peculiar." Oscar Maurer, Jr. "My Squeamish Public": Some Problems of Victorian Magazine Publishers and Editors," *Studies in Bibliography* 12 (1959): 21-40 at 22.

⁸⁸ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 260. Francis Jeffrey gave an account of his own relative lack of control over the *Edinburgh* that supports Trollope's point. See Jeffrey, *Contributions to the "Edinburgh Review,"* I, xiv-xv (emphasis in original, unless otherwise noted): "I most certainly *had no power* to come under any such engagement, without the consent of the original and leading Contributors, — from whom no such consent could then have been expected. *I was not the Proprietor of the work—nor the representative, in any sense, of the proprietors* (my emphasis)—but merely the chosen (and removable) manager for the leading contributors; the greater part of whom certainly then looked upon the *Political* influence of the Review, as that which gave it its chief value and importance...I was but a *Feudal* monarch, who had but a slender control over his greater Barons— and really could not prevent them from occasionally waging a little private war, upon griefs or resentments of their own"

Century. The contents of the *Fortnightly* were sewn into an unadorned beige cover that straightforwardly listed the date, editor's name, table of contents, publisher's address, copyrights to translation, and the price—which Chapman and Hall immediately raised from 2s to 2s6d upon its attainment of ownership. By contrast, Knowles's *Nineteenth Century* appeared in a distinct pale green cover, within which were bound essays printed on noticeably higher quality paper.⁸⁹ With respect to the ability to attract famous contributors, as opposed to the "little or sometimes no, fee" provided by the *Fortnightly*,⁹⁰ contributors to the *Nineteenth Century* generally earned £2 per page, and more distinguished contributors were even more generously compensated. Gladstone, for example, regularly earned £4 or more per page. For his five-page poem, "De Profundis," (appearing in the May 1880 issue) Tennyson got £150 (or £30 per page).⁹¹ As already noted, Arnold was paid a customary sum of £45-£50 for every fifteen-to-twenty page contribution to Knowles's periodical. The most Morley was ever able to pay Arnold—Chapman often took payments out of Morley's salary—was £40 for his March 1878 essay on "Equality." Almost certainly this was an effort to keep up with the *Nineteenth Century*, which had recently paid the same sum for "A Guide to English Literature," an essay half the length of "Equality."⁹²

⁸⁹ Small, "Liberal Editing in the 'Fortnightly Review' and the 'Nineteenth Century,'" 61, 68.

⁹⁰ Small, "Liberal Editing in the 'Fortnightly Review' and the 'Nineteenth Century,'" 68.

⁹¹ Metcalf, *James Knowles*, 284-5.

⁹² See R.H. Super's "Critical and Explanatory Notes," in *CPWMA*, VIII, 451. Arnold's December 1887 essay on "Tolstoi" garnered £50 from the *Fortnightly*, no edited longer edited by Morley, but by Frank Harris, who was himself greatly assisted by his "sub-editor," John Stuart Verschoyle [see Esther Rhoads Houghton, "John Verschoyle and the 'Fortnightly Review,'" *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 1, no. 3 (November 1968): 17-21]. Editor from 1886-1894, Harris later claimed in his memoirs that he took pride in paying contributors more than his predecessors, largely from his own pocket it seems. Harris, *My Life and Loves*, 635. But as Harris's *ODNB* entry warned, "Nothing in [*My Life and Loves*] is to be trusted without independent corroboration." This seems to be one of those cases for caution, as Harris claims (*My Life and Loves*, 635) to have paid Arnold £25 a page—not £25 a sheet, but £25 a page! Still, the £50 for "Tolstoi" was indeed considerable for industry standards at the time. See Davenport-Hines, "Harris, James Thomas [Frank] (1856?-1931)," in *ODNB* (January 2008), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/article/33727>.

The £25-£30 range was usually the most that Morley could muster for the preeminent social critic of the day.⁹³

Beyond the ability to attract famous names like Gladstone and Arnold, it should also be noted that Knowles differed from Morley in another significant respect as an editor. Knowles seemed unwavering in the belief that his role as an editor of higher journalism gave him a substantial amount of political influence. It is generally believed that Morley was referring to Knowles when, in the 1882 “Valedictory” on his editorship at the *Fortnightly Review*, the former recounted that a fellow editor of “a Review of great eminence” had said that “he regarded himself as equal in importance to twenty-five members of parliament.”⁹⁴ It was not a terribly outlandish view among Victorian journalists and editors, who widely accepted that Carlyle was correct in declaring, “Journalists are now the true Kings and Clergy.”⁹⁵ Goldwin Smith professed in the lead essay for the September 1877 *Fortnightly* that it was the Press which was “now more truly than Parliament, the great council of the nation.”⁹⁶ But Morley took a more ambivalent view. Believing a “man of letters” should maintain an “active interest in public affairs,” he anguished over the question of “influence” much more than most (if not all) of his contemporaries.⁹⁷ In this regard, Morley provides a most interesting avenue for exploring the

⁹³ Other payments for Arnold’s essays for the *Fortnightly* under Morley are as follows: “George Sand” (June 1877) £25; “Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism” (June 1878) £25; “Porro Unum est Necessarium” (November 1878) £30; “Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes” (February 1879) £25; and “Irish Grammar Schools” (August 1881) £25. See “Critical and Explanatory Notes,” in *CPWMA*, VIII, 434, 464, 473; IX, 328, 421.

⁹⁴ Morley, “Valedictory,” 516.

⁹⁵ Carlyle [unsigned], “Sartor Resartus [Book I, Chapters 5-11],” 672.

⁹⁶ Smith, “The Policy of Aggrandizement,” 323. Writing in 1897, Frederick Greenwood (first editor of the evening newspaper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*) estimated that a respected journalist could claim “a place of power at least equal to half-a-dozen seats in Parliament: at least half-a-dozen. Frederick Greenwood, “The Newspaper Press: Half a Century’s Survey,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 161, no. 979 (May 1897): 704-20, at 704.

⁹⁷ John Morley, “Voltaire at Berlin: A Chapter from a Forthcoming Monograph,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 10, no. 58 (October 1871): 450-77, at 471.

nuances of that (ultimately) unanswerable question of higher journalism's "influence" on Victorian politics.

IV. From Man of Letters to Man of Action

*Deeds are greater than Words.*⁹⁸

*The man of culture is in politics one of the poorest mortals alive.*⁹⁹

Writing his sister, Grace, in February 1879, Morley said that while she and "many other people" inquire about his standing for Parliament, he had neither the time, money, nor health to enter politics. Even if he had, it would be a superfluous endeavor in light of the influence already in his possession through the *Fortnightly*: "If I want to say anything, I can say it with quite as much certainty of being listened to as if I were in Parliament."¹⁰⁰ Just a few years later, however, Morley left the periodical he had guided for a decade and a half to embark on a political career. Morley's forsaking higher journalism for politics reflects a personal inner struggle with the question of whether one could be more useful as a man of letters or as a politician.¹⁰¹ This was "the bane of my life," he once told Balfour (who shared the same affliction, though perhaps not to the same extent).¹⁰² Indeed, it is not terribly difficult to imagine Morley experiencing the same vexations recounted by Augustine Birrell in the following anecdote:

Most authors who write books in their libraries cherish at the bottom of their hearts, if not a dislike, at least, a gloomy suspicion, of books and bookishness; they hanker after life...I once took a very considerable author into a police-court; I thought it might chance to amuse him. He stood entranced whilst

⁹⁸ Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 201.

⁹⁹ Frederic Harrison, "Our Venetian Constitution," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 1, no. 3 (March 1867): 261-83, at 276.

¹⁰⁰ Morley to Grace Morley, February 1879, quoted in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, II, 75.

¹⁰¹ Hamer's handling of this facet of Morley's life is one of the highlights of his biography of Morley. See especially, chap. 4, "An Intellectual in Politics," in *John Morley*, 53-63.

¹⁰² Morley, *Recollections*, I, 228.

some poor ragamuffin's misdemeanors and improprieties were brought home to him, a short sentence passed, and the prisoner led away to a too familiar doom. Then we went out, and no sooner were we in the street than my author smote his staff upon the pavement and bitterly bewailed the hard fate that had prevented his being called to the Bar and becoming a "Beak." I gently reminded him of his books, quite a comely row upon the shelf. "Hang my books!" he cried, waving his stick in the direction of the magistrate's chair. "When that fellow sends a poor devil to prison for six weeks, to prison he goes; but when I publish a book, nothing happens."¹⁰³

Morley had hoped that the 1867 Reform Act would signal the beginning of an alliance between "brains [those like himself] and numbers [the newly enfranchised masses]" that would end the political influence of "wealth, rank, [and] vested interests" once and for all.¹⁰⁴ The election of 1868—namely Mill's defeat in the polls at Westminster (and Morley's own failure to attain nomination for the seat at Preston)—suggested otherwise, however. For Morley, this offered "unmistakable proof...that people do not recognize the necessity of giving supreme political power to supreme political intelligence."¹⁰⁵ In 1869, he made a forlorn attempt to win the seat in his hometown of Blackburn. Throughout the 1870s, Morley bided his time, editing the *Fortnightly*, "thinking all the while of [his] own subterranean revolution"¹⁰⁶ that would mark "the destruction of the old parties,"¹⁰⁷ whose differences were "merely personal and

¹⁰³ Augustine Birrell, "Walter Bagehot: An Address Delivered at Leighton House, 5th March, 1901," in *Miscellanies*, by Birrell (London: Elliot Stock, 1901), 117-56, at 129-30.

¹⁰⁴ John Morley, "Young England and the Political Future," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 7, no. 4 (April 1867): 491-6, at 492. Morley's phrasing of this particular ideal has proven catchy for scholars. See Christopher Harvie, "Brains and Numbers," chap. 1 in *The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy, 1860-86*, by Harvie (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 11-18; and, more especially, Christopher Kent, *Brains and Numbers. Elitism, Comtism, and Democracy in Mid-Victorian England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

¹⁰⁵ John Morley, "Old Parties and New Policy," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 4, no. 21 (September 1868): 320-36, at 330.

¹⁰⁶ John Morley, "England and the War," *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 8, no. 46 (October 1870): 479-88, at 480.

¹⁰⁷ Morley, "Old Parties and New Policy," 336.

superficial.”¹⁰⁸ True change would have to wait until the expanded electorate would welcome those “who have the highest conception of a national life, the most elevated vision into what is desirable and what is possible, the least care for themselves, and the most care for the multitude of the people.” Until such a time, Britain’s vast interests and vexing questions were in the hands of a “Chamber of Mediocrities,”¹⁰⁹ opposed only by “the party of active humanity, of political initiative, of the republic in its true sense.”¹¹⁰

By the time of the 1880 general election, Morley had grown impatient awaiting the public’s readiness for handing real political power to intellectuals like himself. His desire for a life of “action” once again drove him to stand unsuccessfully for Parliament, this time in Westminster (Mill’s old constituency¹¹¹). This was all for the best, in Arnold’s opinion; “his temper and his health are too delicate” for Parliament.¹¹² When Morley again failed to gain the Liberal nomination for Nottingham in the by-election later that same year, Goldwin Smith also breathed a sigh of relief, agreeing with his friend, the advocate for female education, Fanny Hertz, that the result was “a blessing in disguise.” In Smith’s opinion, Morley had “ten times more influence in his present position” than he would as a Member of Parliament, an institution on which “Power is quitting” and increasingly “passing to the leaders of opinion.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Morley, “England and the War,” 480

¹⁰⁹ John Morley, “The Chamber of Mediocrity,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 4, no. 24 (December 1868): 681-94, at 694.

¹¹⁰ Morley, “England and the War,” 480.

¹¹¹ Incidentally, Leslie Stephen believed “it is at least a plausible opinion, that he [Mill] exercised a greater and more valuable influence when he was not a member of the House.” See Leslie Stephen, “The Value of Political Machinery,” *Fortnightly Review* new series, vol. 28, no. 108 (December 1875): 836-52, at 848.

¹¹² Matthew Arnold to James Bryce, April 6, 1880, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 87.

¹¹³ Goldwin Smith to Fanny Hertz, August 8, 1880, in *A Selection from Goldwin Smith’s Correspondence: Comprising Letters Chiefly to and from his English Friends, Written Between the Years 1846 and 1910*, edited by Arnold Haultain (New York: Duffield, 1913), 91.

As for Morley's "present position," in May 1880, he added to his already considerable workload (editing the *Fortnightly*, Macmillan's "English Men of Letters" series, and composing a two-volume biography of Cobden [1881]) by accepting, on Matthew Arnold's advice,¹¹⁴ yet another editorial post at the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Though his burden at the *Pall Mall* was lessened by entrusting many responsibilities to his energetic assistant editor, W.T. Stead,¹¹⁵ the early 1880s must have taken their toll on Morley's enthusiasm for his chosen profession. Witness the letter to his sister, Grace, on March 6, 1881:

It is nearing twelve, and all the family have gone to bed, after helping me tidy up my room, which was in sore need of that process. There is now a small mountain of manuscripts neatly packed up on the cabinet with pleasant billet-doux to match, "regrets"—"cannot avail"—"kind enough to send"—and all the rest of it. If I could only get the Cobden MSS cleared out in the same way, I should feel myself tolerably free and happy. But that is not yet...¹¹⁶

Thus, as David Baxter Arnett has persuasively suggested in his 1972 dissertation on Morley's later years at the *Fortnightly*, we should not overlook the potential impact of overwork when explaining Morley's decision to begin his second life in politics just a couple of years after the above letter was written. Nonetheless, as Arnett also notes, Morley's decision to enter politics had long-term provenance, as well.¹¹⁷ He acknowledged in his *Recollections* that, "A transition from books, study, and the publicist's pen to the vicissitudes of political action is not much favored by happy precedents." Regardless, the desire to "be somebody else" was a constant in

¹¹⁴ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 187.

¹¹⁵ Stead succeeded Morley as editor in 1883, after the latter decided that his burdens as editor and MP were too much. See Matthew Arnold to George Smith, April 28?, 1883, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 266. Within a year, Arnold can be found telling Morley that "Under your friend Stead, the *PMG* whatever may be its merits, is fast ceasing to be *literature*. Matthew Arnold to John Morley, April 8, 1884, in *TLMA*, Lang, V, 416 (emphasis in original)

¹¹⁶ Morley to Grace Morley, February 1879, in Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, II, 104-5.

¹¹⁷ David Baxter Arnett, "John Morley and the 'Fortnightly Review' from 1874 to 1882," PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1987, 226-7.

Morley's life as a man of letters. "Most of the men I have known would rather have written the *Decline and Fall* than have been Mr. Pitt." Removed from such fanciful parlor-game questions, however, Morley admits that his "choice was the more modest selection between an outdoor publicist on the one hand, and member of the House of Commons on the other, with all the advantages of a wider and closer field of political observation, and all the chances of influence that this position carries with it."¹¹⁸

Morley was not the only "literary politician"¹¹⁹ to be stricken with the occasional desire to be more explicitly involved in politics. Carlyle admitted to Froude that he had considered a career in Parliament around the time of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*: "I felt that nothing could prevent me from getting up in the House and saying all that." His biographer correctly thinks it wise he never attempted to do so: "He was powerful, but he was not powerful enough to have discharged with his single voice the vast volume of conventional electricity with which the collective wisdom of the nation was, and remains, charged. It is better that his thoughts should have been committed to enduring print, where they remain to be reviewed hereafter by the light of fact."¹²⁰ As for Macaulay, Trevelyan writes that, "From a marvelously early date in Macaulay's life, public affairs divided his thoughts with literature, and, as he grew to manhood, began more and more to divide his aspirations."¹²¹ In 1868, Trollope stood unsuccessfully as a Liberal for the Beverley constituency. And Bagehot had, in fact, tried and failed on four separate occasions (1860, 1865, 1866, and 1867) to win a seat in Parliament. Even Arnold, who was not a jealous

¹¹⁸ Morley, *Recollections*, I, 185, 187.

¹¹⁹ The term Woodrow Wilson (then a Princeton professor and occasional practitioner of higher journalism) admirably applied to Bagehot. See Woodrow Wilson, "A Literary Politician," *Atlantic Monthly* 76, no. 457 (November 1895): 668-80

¹²⁰ Froude, *Thomas Carlyle*, II, 22

¹²¹ Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, I, 67.

man by nature, found it difficult not to resent the political accomplishments of his brother-in-law, William Forster (especially in the field of education reform).¹²²

The idea of Morley the politician took some getting used to for his contemporaries. Thomas Hardy found Morley especially out of place when he visited the House of Commons in 1886, writing, “Morley kept trying to look used to it all, and not as if he were a consummate man of letters there by mistake.”¹²³ He was “not by nature a man of affairs,” according to Haldane.¹²⁴ Gladstone agreed, attempting to persuade Morley “not to return to political life,” after he lost his seat in 1895, as he thought Morley “was not naturally fitted” for such a career.¹²⁵ As T.P. O’Connor observed in his *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian*, “This inner conflict between the man of letters and the man of politics in Morley pursued and paralyzed him all through his life.”¹²⁶ Throughout his thirty-one year career in politics, Morley would every so often declare his intention to return to his old profession. In 1887, he told Gladstone, “It would cost me no pang to throw parliament and the platform into the second place. Writing comes much more easily to me.” Again, in October 1905—two months before accepting the post of Secretary of State for India, he told his friend, John Spencer that “I have another calling that I do better and like better” than life in politics.¹²⁷

¹²² See Park Honan, *Matthew Arnold: A Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 341-3.

¹²³ Quoted in Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 234.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Hamer, *John Morley*, 58.

¹²⁵ As reported by Algernon West in the *Private Diaries of the Rt. Hon. Sir Algernon West, G.C.B.*, edited by Horace G. Hutchinson (London: John Murray, 1922), 334.

¹²⁶ T.P. O’Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian*, 2 vols. (London: Ernest Benn, 1929), I, 294.

¹²⁷ Morley to William Gladstone, April 10, 1887, quoted in Hamer, *John Morley*, 58; Morley to John Spencer, October 11, 1905, also quoted in Hamer, *John Morley*, 58-9.

Why was Morley, “a consummate man of letters,”¹²⁸ who was “not by nature a man of affairs,”¹²⁹ so inclined to pursue a career for which he “was not naturally fitted”?¹³⁰ Reading his work before entering into a life of politics, we find numerous suggestions that Morley had an ironic disregard for “the mere literary life,” as he called it in *Voltaire*.¹³¹ Of that great philosophe, Morley estimated that:

To have really contributed in the humblest degree, for instance, to a peace between Prussia and her enemies in 1759, would have been an immeasurably greater performance for mankind than any given book which Voltaire could have written. And, what is still better worth observing, Voltaire’s books would not have been the powers they were, but for this constant desire in him to come into the closest contact with the practical affairs of the world.¹³²

In the spring of 1883, yearning for closer contact in the world of practical affairs, Morley stood once more as a candidate for parliament, this time winning the Liberal seat for Newcastle. This marked the beginning of a political career that would span three decades and place Morley in some of the most consequential posts in the British world-system. Among the most noteworthy of Morley’s political appointments was his service as Secretary of State for India from 1905 to 1910 (and again, briefly, in 1911). In this post, Morley the man of action found the liberalism he had espoused earlier as a man of letters put to, perhaps, its greatest test. It was a situation not unlike the one facing the British Empire as a whole in a period when its self-conceived notion of being a “liberal” power was also being put to the test.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, 234.

¹²⁹ Haldane, quoted in Hamer, *John Morley*, 58.

¹³⁰ Gladstone, 1895, quoted in the *Private Diaries of Algernon West*, 334.

¹³¹ Morley, *Voltaire*, 16.

¹³² Morley, *Voltaire*, 16-17

V: An Edwardian Afterword on Morley and the Age of the Monthlies

By the time Morley arrived at the India Office in 1905, colonial nationalism was beginning to rumble throughout the British Empire. The principles of Britain's great liberal thinkers, from Locke through Mill, were beginning to be quoted by French Canadians, Afrikaners, and Indian nationalists.¹³³ As the first "humble man of letters [to be] made a Secretary of State of India since Addison,"¹³⁴ Morley faced the peculiar situation of having to face English-educated Indians who were well-versed in his advocacy of liberal principles in his career as a man of letters. Among this class of individuals, Morley was "the reverent student of Burke, the disciple of Mill, the friend and biographer of Gladstone."¹³⁵

Upon learning of Morley's appointment, Surendrenath Banerjea (an Indian politician who had been among the first generation of natives admitted the Indian Civil Service) declared that: "As regards Mr. John Morley, we are all more or less his disciples." Educated Indians like himself "have sat at his [Morley's] feet; our intellectual and moral natures have been fed, stimulated and ennobled by the great lessons which he enforced with such consummate eloquence." Morley's Indian disciples thusly "hailed [their] political Guru as the controller of the destinies of our motherland."¹³⁶ At least partly inspired to national consciousness my men of letters such as Morley, Banerjea wonders aloud to his fellow members of the Indian National

¹³³ A.F. Madden, "Changing Attitudes and Widening Responsibilities, 1895-1914," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. 3: The Empire-Commonwealth, 1870-1919*, edited by E.A. Benians, James Butler, and C.E. Carrington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 339-405, at 380.

¹³⁴ John Morley to Sidney Lee, quoted in Jackson, *Morley of Blackburn*, 367.

¹³⁵ G.K. Gokhale, *Speeches of the Honorable Mr. G.K. Gokhale* (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1908), 24.

¹³⁶ Surendranath Banerjea, *Speeches by Babu Surendranath Banerjea*, 6 vols. (Calcutta: S.K. Lahiri, 1894-1908), VI, 405, 433.

Congress at Benares, “May we not ask him to apply his own principles to the solution of the [Bengal] Partition problem¹³⁷ and the solution of other Indian problems?”¹³⁸

In short, by 1905, the goal of Macaulay’s now infamous 1835 “Minute on Indian Education” had become an undeniable reality. Setting forth the goal of British rule in India, Macaulay had called for the formation of “a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”¹³⁹ With regard to its relation to Morley, there is perhaps no more striking evidence of the creation of an Indian interpreter class than Mohamed Ali, a Muslim man of letters who had, in fact, attended Lincoln College, Oxford—Morley’s alma mater. Ali welcomed Morley’s presence on the scene of Indian politics as though he were greeting an illustrious like-minded colleague: “We have for a Secretary of State not, thank heavens, a *‘practical politician,’* which usually means one who can see just a few paces further than his nose, but what Mr. Morley would himself call, ‘that abject being, a philosopher.’”¹⁴⁰

But Ali was wrong about Morley—as were others in this respect. Morley *was* a practical politician. Contrary to an 1897 claim in the *Spectator*, Morley *did* indeed possess “the English

¹³⁷ In July 1905, then Indian Viceroy, Lord Curzon, had decreed the partition of the Bengal province, separating the largely Muslim eastern areas of the province (roughly corresponding to modern-day Bangladesh) from its mostly Hindu western areas. Despite native outrage and Curzon’s “divide and rule” tactic, the partition went forward in October 1905. Unfortunately (as will be seen below) for Indian moderates like Banerjea, hopes that Morley’s arrival signaled an imminent reversal of the partition were soon dashed. As one modern historian notes, “Morley maintained the partition of Bengal as ‘a settled fact,’ the reversal of which would be seen as inconstancy of purpose.” R.J. Moore, “Imperial India, 1858-1914,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. 3: The Nineteenth Century*, edited by Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 422-46, at 440.

¹³⁸ Banerjea, *Speeches by Babu Surendranath Banerjea*, VI, 405-6.

¹³⁹ Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Minute [on Indian Education] of the 2nd of February, 1835,” in *Speeches by Lord Macaulay, with His Minute on Indian Education*, edited by G.M. Young, The World’s Classics Series (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 345-61, at 359.

¹⁴⁰ Mohamed Ali, *Thoughts on the Present Discontent: Reprinted from the “Times of India” and the “Indian Spectator”* (Bombay: Bombay Gazette Steam Press, 1907), xi-xii.

dread of going too far.”¹⁴¹ In his higher journalism, Morley (like most in the Age of the Monthlies) showed a near constant regard for achieving *practical* results, as evidenced by the various issues upon which he “focalized” in his years at the *Fortnightly*. It was, after all, at least partly in an effort to play a more active (or, perhaps, “successful”) role in achieving practical results which had, as the previous section suggests, driven him from journalism to politics in the first place.

Soon after his appointment, it became apparent that Morley’s approach to Indian affairs would be an intensely practical one, charting a middle path between hasty reform and blunt intransigence that was akin to what Bagehot had called “animated moderation.”¹⁴² Of course, the question of just how “animated” an approach may or may not be is subject to interpretation. To twenty-first century perspectives, Morley surely disappoints in his views towards India. Though he was the farthest thing from a jingoist and had shown a conscientious perspective on Britain’s right to rule India in particular,¹⁴³ Morley had serious reservations about Indians’ readiness for self-government. In the House of Lords, he quoted approvingly from the same 1833 speech in which Macaulay had claimed that should Indians “one day” desire European institutions, he would do nothing “to avert or to retard it.”¹⁴⁴ To the great disappointment of many English-educated Indians, Morley and the vast majority of British statesman at the time shared the

¹⁴¹ Anon., “Literary Statesmen,” *Spectator* 78, no. 3580 (February 6, 1897): 197-9, at 198.

¹⁴² Walter Bagehot, “Physics and Politics, No. V,” 68. In his *Recollections* (I, 56), Morley says that John Stuart Mill (again, Morley intellectual hero), used to tell him that “The future of mankind will be gravely imperiled if great questions are left to be fought out between ignorant change and ignorant opposition to change.”

¹⁴³ In fact, Morley’s very first contribution for the *Fortnightly* had dealt with India. See Morley, “England and the Annexation of Mysore.”

¹⁴⁴ See Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Government of India: A Speech Delivered in the House of Commons on the 10th of July, 1833,” in *Speeches by Lord Macaulay*, 114-55, at 155. For Morley’s speech, see John Morley, “The Reform Proposals [Speech Delivered in the House of Lords on December 17, 1908]” in *Speeches on Indian Affairs*, by Morley, 3rd edn. (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1920), 149-63.

architect of the famed New Zealander on London Bridge's conception that such a day lay in the far distant future.

By the Edwardian Era (1901-10), it was axiomatic that the Condition-of-England-Question had transformed into a Condition-of-Empire-Question. Writing in his 1908 collection of essays on *National and Social Problems*, Frederic Harrison describes a situation in which the former question has been subsumed within a new set of questions that were of much greater geographical scope: "The entire balance of power the whole European State system has been entirely revolutionized during the reign of the late Queen. It is a material, intellectual, and moral change that has come over our kingdom. The home interests of England, Scotland, and Ireland have become secondary. Cosmopolitan adventures, interests, ideals, have become primary."¹⁴⁵ The note of disillusion is clear in his friend Morley, who, while addressing Parliament as Indian Secretary in June 1907, condemned the intellectual influence of "that literary prostitute, that rhyming clown—Rudyard Kipling." It is a strikingly symbolic demonstration of the continuities and transformations which had occurred in British national life and periodical culture that Morley's speech was reprinted as a lead essay in that "ancient mariner," the *Edinburgh Review*, under the title, "Signs of the Times in India."¹⁴⁶ As witnessed by Morley's time in India, the spread of ideas first put forth in Victorian periodicals of higher journalism had taken a global turn. If "that rhyming clown" was correct in speculating the British Empire's destiny to become "one with Ninevah and Tyre,"¹⁴⁷ the continuing relevance of higher journalism throughout the

¹⁴⁵ Frederic Harrison, "Introduction," in *National and Social Problems*, by Harrison (London: Macmillan, 1908), ix-xxxi, at xxii-xxiii.

¹⁴⁶ John Morley, "Signs of the Times in India," *Edinburgh Review* 206, no. 422 (October 1907 [speech delivered in the House of Commons, June 6, 1907]): 265-305. For the quote on Kipling, see 280-81.

¹⁴⁷ Rudyard Kipling, "Recessional," in *The Collected Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, edited by R.T. Jones (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Poetry Library, 2001 [poem orig. pub. 1897]), 340.

English-speaking world demonstrates that this is one holdover from Britain's era of preeminence that is in no danger of disappearing.

But perhaps the most compelling Edwardian postscript on higher journalism's inherent dynamism comes from the April 25, 1908 issue of the *New Age*, an influential new weekly founded a year earlier in 1907. Under the fifteen year editorship of A.R. Orage (1907-22), the *New Age* carried on the Arnoldian attack on British provincialism by serving as "an important conduit of 'advanced' continental ideas," like those of Nietzsche, Benedetto Croce, and Georges Sorel.¹⁴⁸ However, as is often the case in generational succession, the *New Age* was less interested in seeing itself as part of the continuum of Victorian higher journalism's didactic tradition and more attentive to the task of setting itself apart from its predecessors. In this vein, we find Arnold Bennett (writing under the pseudonym "Jacob Tonson") declaring in the newborn periodical that:

[The British public] doesn't want ideas once a month. It has definitely decided (at any rate editors say so) that it will not have ideas once a month, I have no hesitation in saying that our monthly periodicals are, as a whole, the most stupid and infantile of any "world-Power," the United States not excepted. The British Public reads the *Fortnightly* because the *Fortnightly* is a good habit inherited from an earlier age; it keeps the *Nineteenth Century and After* on its drawing-room table, because the list of contributors is ornamental. And then what?...Don't tell me that I have forgotten the *Cornhill*. In my view, the *Cornhill* stands for all that is worst in the British temperament. It has the smoothness and the vacuity of a minor official retired from the F[oreign].O[ffice]. Look through a number; in the whole of it there is not a split infinitive nor an idea.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Tom Villis, "New Age Circle (act. 1907-1922)," in *ODNB* (January 2016), <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.uark.edu/view/theme/96361>. The only book-length treatment on the *New Age* under Orage is Wallace Martin, "*The New Age*" *Under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967). But see also, Ann Ardis, "Democracy and Modernism: 'The New Age' under A.R. Orage (1907-22)," in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol. 1: Britain and Ireland, 1880-1955*, edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 205-25.

¹⁴⁹ Arnold Bennett [Jacob Tonson, pseud.], "Books and Persons (An Occasional Causerie)," *New Age* 2, no. 26 (April 25, 1908): 516.

Later, Bennett would go on to write that the *Nineteenth Century and After* “ought to call itself the Middle Ages.”¹⁵⁰ Bearing in mind that Bennett was one of the most popular writers in the twentieth century’s early years, it is worth mentioning that his contributions for Orage’s *New Age* were both absent of his real name and remuneration. Moreover, like Carlyle, it seems there were two Bennetts. Aside from being the conquered adversary of Virginia Woolf, the “dominant image of Bennett” is, in the words of one historian, that of “the self-satisfied provincial Philistine who would write on any subject for two shillings a word, and who kept a yacht and a mistress on the proceeds.” As that same historian points out, this Bennett has long overshadowed the insightful early criticism found in the *New Age*.¹⁵¹ For our purposes, Bennett provides an intriguing snapshot of higher journalism in the midst of yet another transitional period. Through his labeling those same periodicals which had seemed so electric in the 1860s and 1870s as old-fashioned in 1908, we have come full circle in this dissertation. Bennett’s criticism calls to mind Bagehot’s confession in “The First Edinburgh Reviewers” that, “Every generation is unjust to the preceding generation; it respects its distant ancestors, but it thinks its fathers were ‘quite wrong.’”¹⁵²

Even still, Bennett had a point, especially in consideration of another notion put forward by Bagehot in that seminal 1855 essay. Just as Bagehot’s generation viewed the *Edinburgh* as having become too elitist and too close to the halls of power (Bagehot joked that its

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, 79.

¹⁵¹ Samuel Hynes, “The Whole Contention between Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Woolf,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1967): 34-44, at 34. Hynes provides an illuminating account of Bennett’s feud with Virginia Woolf, whose famous denunciation of Bennett in her essay, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” has overshadowed most other aspects of Bennett’s career. Woolf’s essay may be found in Virginia Woolf, *The Captain’s Death Bed and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), 94-119.

¹⁵² Bagehot, “Matthew Arnold on the London University,” 641.

“composition [was] entrusted [only] to Privy Councilors”¹⁵³), it is easy to understand Bennett’s hostility towards periodicals like the *Fortnightly* and the *Nineteenth Century* in light of the incessant “lion-hunting” of their editors. Somewhat ironically (considering it was Knowles, and not he, who was the ultimate “big name hunter”), it is John Morley who most embodies the idea that the great periodicals of the previous generation had become too close to the halls of power by the 1900s. Since leaving the *Fortnightly* to pursue a life in politics, Morley had continued to write for periodicals of higher journalism, all the while serving as Gladstone’s Chief Secretary for Ireland (1886, 1892-95) and then as Secretary of State for India for the Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith ministries, respectively. Dubbed Viscount Morley of Blackburn in May 1908, Morley completed the roundabout from Bagehot circa 1855 to Bennett circa 1908 when he became, in 1910, Lord President of the Privy Council. It was in that capacity that he contributed his views on “British Democracy and Indian Government” for the February 1911 issue of the *Nineteenth Century and After*.¹⁵⁴ And so the first generation of the serious-minded monthlies came to repeat the same sins of success which had been levied against its most esteemed quarterly successor, the *Edinburgh Review*.

It was, perhaps, an inevitable development given the circumstances. Founded by the *Edinburgh* in 1802, the modern system of higher journalism had staked its original claim to relevance on the basis of its immediate predecessors’ shortcomings. Buoyed by its success, the *Edinburgh* had, in the eyes of its successors, become too linked with the ideas of the establishment—a dangerous affiliation in an industry founded on the principles of navigating

¹⁵³ The quote first appears in the essay’s reprinted form. See Bagehot’s *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, 1-45, at 1.

¹⁵⁴ John Morley, “British Democracy and Indian Government,” *Nineteenth Century and After* 69, no. 408 (February 1911): 189-209

change. By the first decade of the twentieth century, it was the monthly reviews that were seen as interminably stuffy and out of touch with the pulse of a new generation. In a way, this was a testament to their success, just as Bagehot's above-mentioned "Privy Councilors" charge against the *Edinburgh* had been fifty years prior. Though the dominance of the Age of the Quarterlies came to an end at mid-century, the broad pattern of the system it created was never entirely erased. Even in the Age of the Monthlies, the fundamental passion for open discussion and debate over critical elements of British national life remained a hallmark of higher journalism. The Conclusion to this dissertation will summarize the ground we have covered in the previous chapters and discuss some of the continuities between the Age of the Monthlies and present-day higher journalism. In the spirit of one of these surviving features, our closing statement will be brief.

Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century, periodicals of higher journalism occupied a distinct space in British public discourse, cultivating a collective role as arbiter of informed opinion on all matters relating to literature, culture, science, and politics. In this capacity, higher journalism took a leading role in helping Victorians navigate the uncharted waters of industrial modernity. A characteristic feature of this modern condition was an acceptance of transformative change as a normal part of British national life. Scholars have long recognized that the periodicals of higher journalism were not immune to change. Only rarely, though, has the nature of change experienced by Victorian periodicals been subject to in-depth investigation. Even when it has been looked into, the intermingling of issues related to politics and style remains an underappreciated factor.

It has been the goal of the five preceding chapters to chart Victorian higher journalism's most broadly striking transformation: the shift from the "Age of the Quarterlies" to the "Age of the Monthlies." In this process, Victorian higher journalism went from being an industry led by the lengthy unsigned review essays found in the *Edinburgh Review* and its quarterly rivals, to an industry dominated by monthly reviews that generally eschewed the anonymous contributions as well as the prohibitive length of their predecessors. To illuminate the accompanying features of change and continuity witnessed in the transition from the Age of the Quarterlies to the Age of the Monthlies, this dissertation has emphasized the role played by several prominent practitioners of Victorian higher journalism.

I. Summarizing the Transition

Chapter 1 provided some necessary background information on the origins, significance, and general character of “higher journalism.” As a sort of intermediary genre, higher journalism straddles the bounds between the news-oriented journalism of the newspapers and (as the decades wore on) the specialization of academic journals. In chapters 2 and 3, the respective careers of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Babington Macaulay as *Edinburgh* reviewers were presented as the Age of the Quarterlies at its apex. These two chapters laid the foundation for understanding the succeeding generation’s reaction against quarterlies like the *Edinburgh*, especially as it pertains to the argument that Carlyle and Macaulay remained central figures even as the Age of the Quarterlies transition to the Age of the Monthlies. As the two greatest higher journalists of the first half of the nineteenth century, Carlyle and Macaulay became models of both “what to do” and “what not to do.”

Chapter 2 emphasized Carlyle and Macaulay as the standard-bearers for two crucial Victorian ideals when it came to the practice of higher journalism. By formulating the Condition-of-England-Question as a catch-all phrase for the kaleidoscopic anxieties of his fellow Britons, Carlyle epitomized higher journalism’s central role in shaping Victorian political discourse. On the other hand, the “intellectual entertainment” of Macaulay’s *Edinburgh* essays provided Victorian higher journalism with a standard for stylistic grace and clarity that was appreciated by both contemporaries and successors alike.

In Chapter 3, however, it was demonstrated that Carlyle and Macaulay were not without their own respective weaknesses. In the eyes of critics, Carlyle was an unhelpful guide through the myriad of troubles so ably captured in his grand “Question.” This perceived dereliction of duty was on its blatant display in Carlyle’s 1843 tract, *Past and Present*. In that work, any and all

political solutions to the Condition-of-England-Question are dismissed outright by the very same writer who had coined it as a phrase. As for Macaulay's shortcomings, these mainly had to do with the fact that his Whiggish narratives of "progress" were equated with a complacent denial that there was any Condition-of-England-Question to begin with. At the end of Chapter 3, these criticisms of Carlyle and Macaulay were contextualized as part of a broader reaction against the dominance of the great quarterly reviews that was taking hold at mid-century.

Chapter 4 turned to the actual shift from the Age of the Quarterlies to the Age of the Monthlies, singling out the roles played by Walter Bagehot and Matthew Arnold. Usually dated from the 1865 inaugural issue of the *Fortnightly Review* (which, in 1866, became a monthly publication), this chapter emphasized the transition to the Age of the Monthlies as a more gradual process than is usually recognized, presenting it as less a *revolutionary* change than an *evolutionary* development within the Victorian periodical industry. It was Bagehot's 1855 essay, "The First Edinburgh Reviewers," that gave serious momentum to the eventual replacement of the quarterly reviews by monthly reviews like the *Fortnightly* as the dominant medium of informed Victorian discourse. In that essay, Bagehot accepted the *Edinburgh Review* as having established higher journalism's position of prominence within British public debate, teaching the proverbial "man on the street" what to think with regard to pressing issues of national concern. But conditions for fruitful public discussion had altered since the *Edinburgh's* 1802 founding. According to Bagehot, the "common reader" of 1855 required shorter, timelier advice than formerly great quarterlies (like the *Edinburgh* and its main rivals, the *Quarterly* and the *Westminster*) were providing.

Matthew Arnold shared Bagehot's belief that periodicals of higher journalism served a critical didactic function in Victorian society, especially as Britain's middle classes were gaining

a greater share of the vote. For Arnold, the preeminent practitioner of higher journalism in the second half of the century, the teaching element of his essays served his grand mission for higher journalism: civilizing the “Philistine” middle classes and, thus, better ensuring that Britain’s future was in sure hands. The urgency of the need for higher journalism to meet these conditions was the subject of Arnold’s seminal 1864 essay, “The Functions of Criticism at the Present Time.” Just months after its publication, the principles outlined in that essay provided direct stimulus to the foundation of the *Fortnightly Review* (and, therefore, the Age of the Monthlies as a whole). By at least the late-1870s, serious-minded monthlies like the *Fortnightly* had completely supplanted the quarterlies as the dominant periodicals of Victorian higher journalism. Apart from the more frequent rate of publication, the Age of the Monthlies differed from the preceding era by eschewing the overt political partisanship of the *Edinburgh* and its competitors, as well as its adoption of the signed article (as opposed to the anonymous treatises of earlier eras). In addition, the pretense of book-reviewing became a rarity in the Age of the Monthlies. This last innovation had the result of making higher journalism much more news-oriented than was previously the case. Nonetheless, the continued faith in open debate through print and the central role of Carlyle and Macaulay as both negative and positive examples reveal important continuities between the Age of the Quarterlies and the Age of the Monthlies.

In the final substantive chapter of this dissertation, the focus turned to John Morley, editor of the *Fortnightly* from 1867 to 1882. Morley’s career was offered as a path to explore some defining features of the Age of the Monthlies. Like other higher journalists, for example, he employed both Carlyle and Macaulay as key touchstones. And in his rivalry with James Knowles of the *Nineteenth Century*, we find two distinct approaches to editorial success in the Age of the Monthlies. Morley was also perpetually grappling with the question of whether his

talents would be put to better use as a politician, an internal debate that confronted many other politically-minded higher journalists. Ultimately deciding to pursue a life in politics, Morley left the *Fortnightly* in 1882 to begin three decades as a “man of action.” In dealing with one of the many important posts held by Morley as a politician, the final section of Chapter 5 demonstrates how Morley’s experiences as Secretary of State for India (1905-10) reveal the ideas espoused in Victorian higher journalism had taken on an increasingly global scope by the Edwardian era. As this turn of events suggests, the Condition-of-England-Question had been transformed into the Condition-of-Empire-Question.

II. When (If Ever) Did the Age of the Victorian Periodical End?

It is sometimes thought that the forum of general discussion put forward in the great Victorian periodicals barely lasted into the twentieth century.¹ But the *Edinburgh Review* lasted until 1929, while its main rival in the first generation of the great reviews, the *Quarterly Review*, lasted until 1967. The *Fortnightly Review* only closed its doors in 1954. The *Nineteenth Century* (renamed the *Nineteenth Century and After* in 1901, then the *Twentieth Century* in 1951) ended its run in 1972. The *Cornhill Magazine* closed a few years later in 1975. The last issue of the *Contemporary Review* arrived only in the winter of 2013.² But it is too crude to measure the legacy of Victorian higher journalism merely by the longevity of its original representatives.

¹ See, for example, Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small. “The British ‘Man of Letters’ and the Rise of the Professional,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 7: Modernism and the New Criticism*, edited by A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 377-88, at 380: “The days of the sage who could write on any serious subject for a generally educated audience had, by 1900, virtually disappeared. But so too had his medium. The generalist periodicals, such as the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Cornhill Magazine*, which in the middle of the nineteenth century carried articles on a wide range of subjects from science and politics to fiction and geography, were in the process of being superseded as forums for intellectual debate by the advent of the specialised professional academic journal, such as *Mind* (begun in 1870 by the academic psychologist Alexander Bain).”

² See Collini, “Always Dying.” For a discussion of the continuing relevance of the political commentary found in some of these periodicals in the interwar years of the twentieth century, see Gary Love, “The Periodical

In truth, the legacy of Victorian higher journalism may be found in the twentieth century, when a US diplomat's anonymous eight thousand word telegram ultimately became American strategy for the Cold War.³ It is on display when a Harvard political scientist's essay on a purported "clash of civilizations" sparks years of public debate.⁴ In the twenty-first century, it lives on when the President of the United States presents his underpinning worldview in an interview for the *Atlantic*.⁵ It lives on when *The Economist* takes the unusual step (in its case) of inviting that same President to contribute an essay on the eve of his leaving office.⁶ It lives on when the day's foremost popularizer of science publishes a collection of essays on *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry*.⁷ Even "Trumpism" seems to have inspired a periodical with "intellectual" pretensions, despite its being attached to a populist (though, ostensibly conservative) movement centered around an individual who overtly eschews truth, freedom of discussion, and intellectual

Press and the Intellectual Culture of Conservatism in Interwar Britain," *Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (December 2014): 1027-56.

³ See George F. Kennan [pseud. X], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1947): 566-82. This is, of course, the famous "X" essay that rather unintentionally became the basis for US containment strategy during the Cold War.

⁴ See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49; and Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). Huntington's phrase was borrowed from its own genre, so to speak. See Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly* 226, no. 3 (September 1990): 47-60, see esp. 55-60, which includes a section under the heading "A Clash of Civilizations."

⁵ See Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine: The President Explains His Hardest Decisions," *Atlantic Monthly* 317, no. 3 (April 2016): 70-90.

⁶ Barack Obama, "The Way Ahead," *Economist* 421, no. 9010 (October 8, 2016): <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21708216-americas-president-writes-us-about-four-crucial-areas-unfinished-business-economic>. See also, the *Economist*'s press release, "US President Barack Obama Writes a Guest Essay in 'The Economist'." *Economist.com*. October 6, 2016. <http://press.economist.com/stories/10375-us-president-barack-obama-writes-a-guest-essay-in-the-economist>, where the editor-in-chief, Zanny Minton Beddoes explains the reasoning behind this break in precedence: "We made an exception today because we think that Mr Obama's essay on the economic problems underpinning voter anger is something that will be of great interest to our readers around the world. The president also gives a fairly frank assessment of some things that his administration has left undone." The article itself might serve an interesting comparison for an essay Obama penned before his election to the presidency. See Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (July-August 2007): 2-16.

⁷ Neil deGrasse Tyson. *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017). The book's chapters originally appeared in the magazine, *Natural History*, between 1997 and 2007.

inquiry—that is, all the principle continuities found throughout the Victorian era of higher journalism. And it, perhaps, says more about the continuation of a belief in high-minded political discussion that Julius Krein, the founder of *American Affairs*, was compelled to renounce Trump within seven months of his presidency and just five months after that journal’s first issue.⁸ And finally, as indicated by Ta-Nehisi Coates’s June 2014 *Atlantic* cover story, “The Case for Reparations,”⁹ it is still possible for a higher journalist to wake up one morning and find himself or herself famous, just as Macaulay did following the appearance of his 1825 essay on “Milton.” All of this suggests that, even if much diminished from its nineteenth century status as the center for informed public discussion, the Victorian review of higher journalism has been able to modify itself as a medium to meet the demands of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It seems reasonable to presume that this tradition of adapting to changed circumstances in order meet the demands of the present will continue well into the foreseeable future. Perhaps we might even find some future version of higher journalism in the satchel of Macaulay’s New Zealander.

⁸ See Julius Krein, “I Voted for Trump. And I Sorely Regret It,” *New York Times*, August 17, 2017: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/17/opinion/sunday/i-voted-for-trump-and-i-sorely-regret-it.html?mcubz=0>. Krein’s abandonment of Trump came in the wake of the latter’s widely condemned reaction to the events in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017. For the “Mission Statement” Krein’s periodical, see Julius Krein, and Gladdin Pappin [signed The Editors], “Why a New Policy Journal? Our Mission Statement,” *American Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 3-6, <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/02/new-policy-journal/>. For early reactions to *American Affairs*, see Jennifer Schuessler, “Talking Trumpism: A New Political Journal Enters the Fray,” *New York Times*, March 8, 2017: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/arts/american-affairs-journal-donald-trump.html?r=0> (published in print as “Trumpist Talk, Wrapped in Tweed,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2017: C1); Kelefa Sanneh, “A New Trumpist Magazine Debuts at the Harvard Club,” *New Yorker*, February 25, 2017: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/a-new-trumpist-magazine-debuts-at-the-harvard-club>; Jeet Heer, “The Failure of Pro-Trump Intellectualism,” *New Republic*, February 28, 2017: <https://newrepublic.com/article/140933/failure-pro-trump-intellectualism>; and “Notes and Comments: Welcoming Two Newcomers,” *New Criterion* 35, no. 7 (March 2017): 2-3.

⁹ Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *Atlantic Monthly* 313, no. 5 (June 2014): 54-71. See Manuel Roig-Franzia, Manuel, “With ‘Atlantic’ Article on Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates Sees Payoff for Years of Struggle,” *Washington Post*, June 18, 2014: https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/with-atlantic-article-on-reparations-ta-nehisi-coates-sees-payoff-for-years-of-struggle/2014/06/18/6a2bd10e-f636-11e3-a3a5-42be35962a52_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.541f1e43f6c2.

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