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The Law of Progress and the Ironies of Individualism in the Nineteenth Century

Regenia Gagnier

“America is here and now—here, or nowhere”
Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885)¹

IN *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society*, I analyzed a shift in the history of economic thought from a labor theory of value concerned with the social relations of production, reproduction, and distribution to a theory of consumption that made the individual's taste, choice, and preference its theoretical base.² I also showed a simultaneous shift from the sociology of high Victorian literature to the individualism, psychologism, and subjectivism characterizing much literature of the fin de siècle. With the so-called “Marginal Revolution” in economic thought that began in the 1870s, the figure of Economic Man became more consumer than producer or Malthusian reproducer, and economic theory became more methodologically, causally, and politically individualist. Given that current critiques of Marginal or “neoclassical” economics, now the dominant disciplinary paradigm globally, often resolve into critiques of methodological individualism, this essay looks more closely at different models of Individualism as they developed in the course of the nineteenth century. The relation of the Individual to the State or collective has been a problem at least since Plato and exacerbated in the West since the seventeenth century.³ I focus on some cultural manifestations of that problem in nineteenth-century Britain when fears of competitive individualism in market society began to be articulated and analyzed, occasionally in some sophisticated “Third Way” formulations. Herbert Spencer's influential idea that all Progress was progress toward individualism implied at the broadest cultural levels fears of anomie, isolation, and egoism that had gone well beyond Adam Smith's idea of self-interest leading to the social good. Today the issue is whether economics is in any sense a science of social relations of production, consumption, and distribution, or whether it takes as its domain merely the “choices” of individuals as revealed in consumption patterns.

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I

Recall that what was essential to the story told in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) was the manifold irony that yoked Hobbesian self-interested rationality and the altruism of the civic humanists to a theory of social Progress: the irony that selfish individuals could make an altruistic society; that the pursuit of profit could be an ethical failing in an individual but lead to the wealth of all; that saving could be good for the individual but bad for society; that the Individual was the basis for social understanding. In the course of the nineteenth century, this ironized theory of social Progress was enhanced by theories of individual development across the spectrum of knowledge. Individuation provided many “little narratives” of perfection that contributed to general flourishing, including but by no means limited to political economy’s division of labor, Darwin’s origins of different species, and the increasingly democratic polyphony of the novel, its increasing perspectivalism, and competing streams of consciousness.

To begin with political economy, in Smith the division of labor is the source of differences between people: “When [the philosopher and the street porter] came into the world, and for the first six or eight years of their existence, they were, perhaps, very much alike, and neither their parents nor playfellows could perceive any remarkable difference. About that age, or soon after, they come to be employed in very different occupations. The difference of talents comes then to be taken notice of, and widens by degrees, till at last the vanity of the philosopher is willing to acknowledge scarce any resemblance.”⁴ Smith is clear that the distinctive “trucking” disposition, made possible by human language, gives rise to human differences: “without the disposition to truck, barter, and exchange. . . . all must have had the same duties to perform, and the same work to do, and there could have been no such difference of employment as could alone give occasion to great difference of talent” (WN 16). Although nonhuman animals evolve according to different “geniuses,” they do not trade or truck with one another and therefore are doomed to repeat the same low-level tasks in perpetuity: “The strength of the mastiff is not in the least supported either by the swiftness of the greyhound, or by the sagacity of the spaniel, or by the docility of the shepherd’s dog. The effects of those different geniuses and talents, for want of the power or disposition to barter and exchange, cannot be brought into a common stock, and do not in the least contribute to the better accommodation and conveniency of the species” (WN 16). Thus individualism through the division of labor in Smith allows for interdependence and productivity where there would have

been just continuous undifferentiated effort for all without it. This cooperative individualism through trade constituted the Progress of the wealth of nations.

In the course of the nineteenth century, the Smithian or political economic account of Progress as deriving from the division of labor and advances in technology was transformed by the influence of evolutionary biology.⁵ The philosopher of Individualism in the nineteenth century was Herbert Spencer. Drawing explicitly on political economic models, Spencer biologized the division of labor, calling it the law of organic progress—consisting in the change from the homogeneous or simple to the heterogeneous, complex, unique, or individuated. All Progress is progress toward individuation:

The investigations of Wolff, Goethe, and von Baer, have established the truth that the series of changes gone through during the development of a seed into a tree, or an ovum into an animal, constitute an advance from homogeneity of structure to heterogeneity of structure. In its primary stage, every germ consists of a substance that is uniform throughout, both in texture and chemical composition. The first step is the appearance of a difference between two parts of this substance; or, as the phenomenon is called in physiological language, a differentiation. Each of these differentiated divisions presently begins itself to exhibit some contrast of parts: and by and by these secondary differentiations become as definite as the original one.⁶

Spencer conjectures that the scope of the process is literally universal, that all things participate in a grand division of labor that differentiates and individuates: “If the nebular hypothesis be true, the genesis of the solar system supplies one illustration of this law. . . . Whether it be in the development of the earth, in the development of life upon its surface, in the development of society, of government, of manufactures, of commerce, of language, literature, science, art, this same evolution of the simple into the complex, through successive differentiations, holds throughout” (3–4). His examples of increasing complexity include the global market, languages, human physiology, and transnational ethnic types—the European is more heterogeneous or individual than the Australian, the Anglo-American the most heterogeneous, complex, or individual, and therefore the most advanced, of all. Spencer’s explanation of this universal transformation of sameness into difference or the homogeneous into the heterogeneous is the history of multiple effects from single causes: “Every active force produces more than one change—every cause produces more than one effect. . . . From the law . . . it is an inevitable corollary that during the past there has been an ever-growing complication of things” (32–33).

Individuation according to function or division of labor leads to many “little narratives” of perfection:

As surely as a blacksmith’s arm grows large, and the skin of a laborer’s hand thick; as surely as the eye tends to become long-sighted in the sailor, and short-sighted in the student; as surely as the blind attain a more delicate sense of touch; as surely as a clerk acquires rapidity in writing and calculation; as surely as the musician learns to detect an error of a semi-tone amidst what seems to others a very babel of sounds; as surely as a passion grows by indulgence and diminishes when restrained; as surely as a disregarded conscience becomes inert, and one that is obeyed active; as surely as there is any efficacy in educational culture, or any meaning in such terms as habit, custom, practice; so surely must the human faculties be moulded into complete fitness for the social state; so surely must the things we call evil and immorality disappear; so surely must man become perfect. (58)

Under the influence of Darwinian biology and armchair anthropology, Spencer had biologized the division of labor, making differences between people evolutionary, or organically purposive.⁷ The logic of his system with respect to what he called the “higher races” was toward increasing individualism, voluntary cooperation, and mutual aid in a division of labor and markets. The culmination of the “higher races” was the “civilised” Man of Taste with certain “character” developments that will be discussed below.⁸

With respect to the lowest races, as he called them in *Descriptive Sociology* (1874), the logic of Spencer’s system converged with evangelical conceptions, in which, for example, savages and barbarians acted upon impulse for immediate gratification, whereas civilized Man’s instincts were modified by Reason. Thus unlike the savage or barbarian, modern Economic Man offset his instinctive aversion to labor by his desire for wealth; or, in his sexual economy, his instinct for immediate gratification was offset by the sublimation of his sexual appetite (“saving” rather than “spending”). This evolutionary cultural determinism was mutually reinforcing with political economy’s notions of restraint, abstinence, or saving.⁹

For Spencer, human evolution had entailed the transition from a “militant” social type to an “industrial” or cooperative type. In the militant mode, the State dominates every aspect of the individual’s existence. Rights of the individual are not recognized, the economic system is under the direction of the ruling elite, and property is held in common by the community.¹⁰ The industrial type is made possible by an improvement in individual moral “character,” which is the work of many generations (*The Man Versus the State*, 1884). Thus for Spencer socialism, even in 1884, belonged to the past, an earlier form of development.

Spencer's reputation was at its height in the 1880s, and his followers were called "Individualists." The linchpin of their system was the concept of "character," which included both a descriptive and a normative element. The descriptive element was simply the idea of a settled disposition; the normative concept of character included specific habits of action of a desirable kind, inflected by gender, and associated with self-restraint, perseverance, effort, courage, self-reliance, thrift, sense of personal responsibility, duty, and so forth. In Spencer, the moral qualities that formed "character" were similar to physical powers to the extent that each required exercise to develop. With character, the State became unnecessary. The threat that State action posed to character—that a paternalistic State might undermine the development of individual will—was their persistent argument against the State. However, for the neo-Hegelians, or "philosophical organicists" like D. G. Ritchie and Bernard Bosanquet, Spencer's organic processes of social evolution could become "conscious" via an active State and shaped to humankind's own ends. For other moderate Individualists, Spencer's moral improvement became a matter of reforming the environment within which the individual functioned, a view not incompatible with socialism.

In "From Freedom to Bondage" (1891), Spencer uses character to discredit socialism: "My opposition to socialism results from the belief that it would stop the progress to a higher state and bring back a lower state. Nothing but the slow modification of human nature by the discipline of social life, can produce permanently advantageous changes" (22). As it is, he points out, "we feel more pains than we have evolved to assuage; there will be a lagtime for our will to catch up with our senses," but this "lagtime" cannot be hastened by State interventions, only by individual evolution. One of his followers, Wordsworth Donisthorpe, contended in *Individualism: A System of Politics* (1889) that "grandmotherly government" would enervate self-rule or will: "It is the ability to make such rules, to obey them, and to enforce them, which make the Anglo-Saxon race what it is, a colonising people, a people fit for self-government. And it is the weakening and supplanting of these contractual rules in all departments of activity by rules emanating from a central legislature, which will some day, if persisted in, reduce the Englishman to the level of his continental neighbours" (35). For Thomas MacKay ("Empiricism in Politics," 1895), too, "attempts to improve the delicate mechanism of the harmonious progression inherent in a free society by the forceful action of the State, must result in reaction and hinder the growth of the social instincts" (53). The Spencerian Individualists insisted on the advances of character that would render a State unnecessary. The individual would be self-, not State-regulated.

As mentioned above, the moderate Individualists like Ritchie and

Bosanquet proposed that a State could provide the conditions for equal access to “character” development; while critical of Spencer’s extreme Individualism, like him they upheld the place of “character” in a progressive temporality. In “The Constant Evolution of Society” (1891), Sidney Webb sounded like Pater in his Heraclitean mood: “Whatever may be the advantages and conveniences of the present state of society, we are . . . now sure of one thing—that it cannot last. . . . It is the constant flux of things which underlies all the ‘difficulties’ of Individualism” (145). Webb considered that “the lesson of evolution in social development is modern Socialism, or self-conscious regulation” (148). He deplored the “degradation of character” caused by the demoralization of excessive wealth. Speaking to the Fabian Society in 1890, Bosanquet proposed the “socialisation of the will” (198), defending the State as but “machinery that will assist morality” (188). He concluded that “in dealing with the social organism, [the Socialist] is dealing with a structure whose units are the characters of men and women; and that in so far as he neglects to base his arrangements on the essence of character—that is, on the social or moral will—so far he is not dealing with the social organism as an organism” (202). The debate between the Individualist Auberon Herbert and the socialist economist J. A. Hobson anticipated Margaret Thatcher’s famous phrase; Hobson wrote, “To Mr. Herbert there is no such thing as Society, he does not even use the term. . . . The thing called Society is to him merely an aggregate of individuals” (241).

II

In addition to the Socialists and philosophical organicists who thought that a State was needed to provide the conditions for individual “character” to flourish, were the culturalists, who were also not so sanguine as Spencer that human perfection was biologically inevitable. Many of these feared that individualism itself had derailed them. By the mid-nineteenth century, the dominant political State that repressed individual initiative attacked by Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* was appealed to as a cultural force to unify atomistic Economic Men each maximizing his self-interest. It was precisely this fear of selfish or competitive individualism—as opposed to the more benign, mechanistic self-interestedness mutually benefiting all in Smith¹¹—that led to Matthew Arnold’s *Friendship’s Garland* (1866–71) and the more important *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), which offered aesthetics or “Culture” as a solution to anomie, anarchy, and class conflict (*Culture and Anarchy* was subtitled *An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*). At stake was the future

of individualism itself: the Enlightenment's individual progressively regulating herself for the social good or the self-interested, self-maximizing individual of competitive "hedonic" consumer society, as people came to fear it in the course of the nineteenth century.¹² As Spencer and his critics shared assumptions about the ultimate importance of individual character development, without or with State support, Arnold argued for the State to counteract the excesses of individualism, only to deplore the diminishment of the individual when it was threatened. We shall now consider these steps in his critique.

"Perfection, as culture conceives it," wrote Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*, "is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required . . . to carry others along with him. . . . [This is] at variance with our strong individualism and materialistic civilization."¹³ In the chapter called "Doing as One Likes," Arnold first introduces the idea of anarchy and, with anarchy, the State: "The central idea of English life and politics is *the assertion of personal liberty . . . but as feudalism dies out . . . we are in danger of drifting toward anarchy*" (117). A State is needed "to control individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals" (117). Freedom without what Arnold calls "right reason" equals anarchy. And Arnold knows that for the British, as for Kant and Hegel, freedom is at present available only to those at the forefront of Progress: "It never was any part of our creed that the great right . . . of an Irishman, or, indeed, of anybody on earth except an Englishman, is to do as he likes; and we can have no scruple at all about abridging, if necessary, a non-Englishman's assertion of personal liberty" (121).

Arnold's "principle" of the relation of the individual and social group to the State is developed in this section—"Doing as One Likes"—and the next, on class conflict, "Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace"; for class egoism is as destructive to Culture as individual egoism. Arnold's "principle" must distinguish the self-regulating bourgeois subsuming desires to the "right reason" of the State from the maximizing self-interested individual or class of political economy: "Now, if culture, which simply means trying to perfect oneself and one's mind as part of oneself, brings light, and light shows us that there is nothing so very blessed in merely doing as one likes, that the really blessed thing is to like what right reason ordains. . . . We have got a much wanted principle, a principle of authority, to counteract the tendency to anarchy. But how to organise this authority? . . . How to get your *State*, summing up the right reason of the community?" (123–24). As the individual's warring passions must be harmonized by the regulating will, so the State's social groups must harmonize according to their "best selves" for the good of the whole. Like many Victorian social critics, Arnold admired the Germans for their commitment to duty, unity, and the State against

Anglo-American individualism (161 and throughout). Yet through the peculiarities of the British class system, he figures his State as an individual whose different capacities had to be harmonized. Thus a “hard middle class” that tended toward machinery (work and money) and fanaticism (“the one thing needful”) needed the complementary Aesthetic virtues of the aristocracy—“beautiful” ease, serenity, and politeness and their more “sublime” “high spirits, defiant courage, and pride of resistance” (125–34). For its part, the aristocracy needed the complement of ideas, lest its serenity degenerate, as it had under current conditions, to futility and sterility. Similarly, the idea of “country” or nation was a *sentiment* that needed a State’s complementary “muscle” or “working power.” The role of supporters of Culture is to “hinder the unchecked predominance of that class-life which is the affirmation of our ordinary self and seasonably disconcert mankind in their worship of machinery” (146).

Given that the problem is selfish individualism, it is perhaps ironic that Arnold figures the social body as an individual relying on distinct capacities: the middle class provides muscle, the aristocracy provides external refinement, and the working class emotes. The term *Philistine*, representing the self-satisfied pursuit of wealth, “gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children; and therein it specially suits our middle class, who not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but who even prefer to them that sort of machinery of business, chapels, tea-meetings, and addresses from Mr. Murphy, which make up the dismal and illiberal life on which I have so often touched” (140). For their part, the aristocratic Barbarians’ culture “was an exterior culture mainly . . . consisting principally in outward gifts and graces, in looks, manners, accomplishments, prowess” (141).

Yet beneath these “divisions” in English society “is a common basis of human nature” (148): this universalism grounds both Arnold’s ideas that (1) individual interests can be harmonized and (2) the State can operate like a self-harmonizing individual. Although Arnold himself has “for the most part, broken with the ideas and the tea-meetings of [his] own [middle] class,” he feels a common humanity with the aristocracy whenever he hunts and with the working classes whenever he acts impulsively, without restraint, or irrationally: “I never take a gun or fishing-rod in my hands without feeling that I have in the ground of my nature the self-same seeds which, fostered by circumstances, do so much to make the Barbarian”; “Who, whether he be Barbarian or Philistine, can look at [the working classes] without sympathy, when he remembers how often . . . he has found in his own person the eternal spirit of the Populace, and that there needs only a little help from circumstances to

make it triumph in him untamably" (144–45). Just as all classes share some commonality in human nature, each class provides a few who do not conform to its "Ordinary Self" but pursue perfection, "and this number is capable of being diminished or augmented . . . in proportion both to the force of the original instinct within them, and to the hindrance or encouragement which it meets from without" (146).

It is at this point that Arnold introduces the idea of a universal authority to which each class will yield its self-interest in the service of its "best," or social, "self": the authority of the State, the Academy, a State Church, a national press, or the other forms of culture that might unify and control a society increasingly atomized or factionalized by competitive individualism. If we want individual freedom, Arnold concludes, in which individual freedom means enlightened self-interest rather than selfishness, "the State must act for many years to come" (162). Arnold's efforts were continuously to elevate self-interest above the selfishness associated with competitive individualism, even though—because he subscribed to a universal human nature—he could not but figure individuals, classes, and society as a whole as an individual "self."

In *Friendship's Garland*, in which Arnold employed Europeans, especially Germans, to criticize British competitive individualism, he also used America to represent the democratic spirit of the age, the *Geist* behind which Britain lagged. The Americans showed "a feeling for ideas, a vivacity and play of mind, which our middle class has not, and which comes to the Americans probably from their democratic life with its ardent hope, its forward stride, its gaze fixed on the future" (30). "Arminius," Arnold's European mouthpiece in *Friendship's Garland* (and ancient Teutonic hero beloved in *Volk* mythology), warns the British that the Americans "have got the lead" in equality and democracy as well as trade: "After 1815, we [Europeans] believed in [Britain] as nowadays we are coming to believe in America . . . 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" (27).¹⁴

Yet in just three years' time, when Arnold wrote the last addition to *Culture and Anarchy*, the Preface, he had come to fear democracy as much as selfishness. America's spirit of democracy or *Geist* had degenerated to massification. America now represented "that chosen home of newspapers and politics . . . without a general intelligence" (243), only "partiality of interestedness," not the "totality" of vision that Culture now had to stand in for (252). "The best which has been thought and said in the world"—the hierarchical, evaluative idea of Culture and aesthetics that Arnold's name has come to evoke—was explicitly introduced in the Preface to oppose the "fanaticism" of religious sects. Under conditions of mass education, Arnold has been taken as representative of narrow

and elite notions of culture; yet *Culture and Anarchy* is an extended polemic against the selfish interestedness of competing individuals, classes, and religions.

In the last essay he ever wrote, “Civilisation in the United States” (1888), Arnold uncannily said that he had waited long enough to pronounce on the much publicized American “character”: “I found myself inclined to follow the example of the Greek moralist Theophrastus, who waited, before composing his famous *Characters*, until he was ninety-nine years old. I thought I had perhaps better wait until I was about that age, before I discussed the success of the Americans in solving the human problem.”¹⁵ By the human problem Arnold meant what he called the problem of “civilisation”: “conduct, intellect and knowledge, beauty, social life and manners” (491). Granting that the US seemed to have solved “the political and social problem” of “freedom and equality, power, energy, and wealth” (489), Arnold praises US institutions at the forefront of modernity and democracy, particularly in contrast to British class and hierarchy; he praises the US for providing access to more of the comforts and conveniences of life; he praises them for dispensing with invidious titles like Esquire, whose only function is to distinguish gentlemen from working men; he praises American women for their freedom and self-confidence that make them a source of pleasure to “almost everyone” (494). But he rejects wealth and wider access to a rising standard of living—that is, he rejects purely economic notions of progress—as the measures of “Civilisation”: “Do not tell me only, says human nature, of the magnitude of your industry and commerce, of the beneficence of your institutions, your freedom, your equality; of the great and growing number of your churches and schools, libraries and newspapers; tell me also if your civilisation—which is the grand name you give to all this development—tell me if your civilisation is *interesting*” (495). Now it turns out that “interestingness” will be the door that allows individualism to slip back in; an individualism that is not necessarily competitive or materialistic, but psychological. Arnold proceeds to define the sources of interestingness as distinction and beauty, “that which is elevated and that which is beautiful”—both of which are associated precisely with the kinds of hierarchy and distinction that the greatest happiness of the greatest number in America had ostensibly compromised. Thanks to its constitutional ethos “glorifying the average man” and to an irreverent Press, America to Arnold lacked a sense for distinction, for awe, and for respect—for, in short, individualism.

Arnold concludes his last published work with a stark contrast pointing out that America’s genius—its democracy and equality—was also its tragedy. Calling the British malady its social distinctions, its “upper class materialised, middle class vulgarised, and lower class

brutalised" (503–4), he concludes that the American "predominance of the common and ignoble, born of the predominance of the average man," is a malady, too. Reifying and polarizing British hierarchy and US equality, Arnold rejected them both in favor of German Idealism.¹⁶ Following Arnold up to a point, in "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (1891) Oscar Wilde tried to solve the problem of individualism versus equality by proposing a State that provided access to all, so that each could develop individual distinction and beauty. Wilde drew heavily on Arnold's ideas on the role of the State in promoting Culture in "The Soul of Man" when he proposed a welfare and industrial State as precondition of a "New Individualism" characterized not by machinery or wealth but by Christlike inwardness.¹⁷

A final note on the transatlantic debate comes from the Spencerian Individualist G. J. Goschen's "Laissez-Faire and Government Interference" (1883), which includes a long passage on why the State is expanding in the UK and not in the US or the colonies. Goschen elucidates the "individualist" character of the old country as if it were a consciousness with psychological depth and complexity, self-inspected and self-regulating, versus a Rabelaisian unconsciousness at large in the Americas: "The philanthropic and sensitive element is always infinitely stronger in the old country; its civilisation is more complex, more crowded, more honeycombed with anomalies, more running into extremes. The colonies have more breathing space. There individual energy can expand with less encroachments [*sic*] on neighbours' interests. The first instinct of man for untrammelled liberty, confidence in himself, has not yielded to the acquired taste for that regulation, control, interference, and inspection."¹⁸

III

Thus we have seen three individualisms developing by the mid-nineteenth century: (1) Spencer's self-regulating individual whose development is undermined by the State; (2) Arnold's competitive individuals who require a State to integrate and harmonize them; and (3) an individual of distinction and Beauty or Taste, cultivated and enabled or undermined by a State, but certainly threatened by massification in the Americas. Obviously each of these models is related to historical economic conceptions: (1) the Progressive Enlightenment "Civilizing" model; (2) the crudely self-maximizing Economic Man abstracted from Political Economy; and (3) the economics of choice, preference, and Taste, as it developed after the Marginal Revolution in economic thought and the wider access to consumer goods that characterized

both sides of the transatlantic marketplace. The rational, disciplined citizen subsumed private desires to social needs; the competitive individual, for whom rationality meant only individual self-maximization, had (in Hume's terms)¹⁹ only to do with the means to achieve his particular ends, not with the worthiness of those ends in themselves; and the hedonic modern consumer pursued a flourishing fantasy-life. Readers of Victorian literature will think of countless instantiations of each model.

The first two of these economic models have been explored extensively by Ian Watt in his analysis of the Robinson Crusoe myth and by Alain Renaut in his distinctions between Kantian autonomy and modern independence. In *Myths of Modern Individualism*, Watt focussed on the problems of individualism in the modern period, including solitude, narcissism, and the claims of self over the claims of society. Citing James Joyce's 1912 lecture on Defoe, he summarized the "character" of Crusoe, a character frequently evoked by political economists themselves, as a national character of "the stiff upper lip. It is not a collective lip; it is, for the most part, uncritically egocentric, and it flourishes exceptionally well on a desert island."²⁰ Watt follows Joyce in the claim that Crusoe embodies "the whole Anglo-Saxon spirit: the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical . . . religiousness; the calculating taciturnity" (171). In *The Era of the Individual*, Renaut focused on distinctions between a masculinist independence eliminating all values but affirmation of the self, and thus giving rise to irreducible differences, and a relational autonomy compatible with submission to a common law or State.²¹ Modern individualism as independence often inclines toward competitive individualism, consumer culture, and the kind of isolation that Renaut calls "monadology," or mind closed in on itself and separated from others.²²

I have discussed in *The Insatiability of Human Wants* a particular manifestation of "monadology" in neoclassical economic theory and some literature of the fin de siècle; more on the subjectivist culture of taste, choice, and preference can be found in the rich sociological analyses of Colin Campbell's *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Campbell distinguishes classical hedonism as pleasures directly responding to specific external stimuli from modern imaginative hedonism as states, dispositions, or "characters" that are only in part a response to external stimuli. The modern hedonist possesses the very special power to conjure up stimuli in the absence of any externally generated. Campbell describes "the central insight" into modern consumer culture: "that individuals do not so much seek satisfaction from products, as pleasure from the self-illusory experiences which they

construct from their associated meanings.”²³ Campbell calls this modern, independent, imaginative hedonism—that others have associated with “lifestyle”—“self-illusory hedonism”:

The spirit of modern consumerism . . . labelled self-illusory hedonism, is characterized by a longing to experience in reality those pleasures created and enjoyed in imagination, a longing which results in the ceaseless consumption of novelty. Such an outlook, with its characteristic dissatisfaction with real life and an eagerness for new experiences, lies at the heart of much conduct that is most typical of modern life, and underpins such central institutions as fashion and romantic love. The romantic ethic can be seen to possess a basic congruence, or “elective affinity,” with this spirit, and to have given rise to a character type and ethical conduct highly conducive to the adoption of such attitudes. (205)

Illusory enjoyment is necessarily covert and individualistic and cannot, by its very nature, be communal. This does not mean that individuals may not sit side-by-side while lost in private worlds of their own, as may be the case with audiences at concerts, plays, films, or fashion catwalks, but modern hedonism is essentially monadological.

Campbell traces a lineage from Calvinism’s profound emotional receptivity to inner signs of election to Romanticism’s self-conscious and self-reflexive emotion. He concludes that the Protestant ethic gave rise to two distinct models of the individual: one adhering to rationality, instrumentality, industry, and achievement, and another to an emotionalist doctrine of signs. Campbell contrasts these indigenous or endogenous middle- and working-class ethics—often highly gendered, we might add—with an aristocratic ethic, which as we have seen in Arnold’s portrayal was external rather than internal, mannered rather than impassioned or emotive. The aristocrat, like the dandy, only existed in the eyes of others (162); the self-illusory hedonist—or the modern imaginative consumer—lives largely in his own fantasies. Interestingly, Campbell sees Aestheticism, the treatment of life as art, as precisely not indulging Romantic emotions or creating the restless longing of the Romantic, but reverting to an aristocratic ethic rather than an emotive one, citing Wilde’s “all bad poetry springs from genuine feeling” (199). That Romanticism grounded consumerism shows what Weber called the irony of social action and others have called “the cunning of reason” (209).

IV

These models of individualism may clarify some obscurities of late Victorian Aestheticism. Walter Pater’s “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*

has often been taken as the height of solipsistic individualism: “each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.”²⁴ While Pater himself consistently resisted this interpretation of his words in the “Conclusion,”²⁵ it is well known that his influence fell fatally on the side of an Aestheticism that seemed to occlude moral reasoning with monadology. The members of the Rhymers Club influenced by him “looked to an inner vision, not out toward the world around them, and drifted ever deeper into their private worlds of rarefied emotions,” dying, as one critic observed, as soon as their respective constitutions would decently permit (161). W. B. Yeats recalled feeling “alone amid the obscure impressions of the senses” (164). According to Gerald Monsman, “both Hopkins and Pater struggled to describe in what precise way the solipsistic prison of the self could be opened to the higher life” (172).

Pater dramatically extended his meditation on the precise way the solipsistic prison of the self could be opened to the higher life in *Marius the Epicurean*.²⁶ While his contemporaries almost unanimously saw the novel as the product of an elite mind above the concerns of ordinary readers, they also saw *Marius* as essentially about the relation of Self to Other. Mary Augusta (“Mrs. Humphry”) Ward saw the epicurean protagonist “bent on claiming an entire personal liberty” and isolating himself from the human stream.²⁷ A reviewer in the American *Harper's* (May 1885) equated *Marius* with Decadent self-absorption and claimed with quintessential heterosexual banality that “had Marius only fallen in love he would have been much less absorbed in himself . . . there would not have been this long tale of a subjective and contemplative life to tell” (138–40). More sophisticated, the Emersonian philosopher George Edward Woodberry admitted that “though [Marius] is said to have got much from companionship, one sees love operative in him very seldom, and then it is a very silent and unexpressed love” (150). Woodberry concluded that “the exclusive reliance on [Marius’s] own impressions, the fact that in metaphysical belief the world is only his world and in actual living the experience is individual—all this holds in it a basis of ultimate incertitude” (149). Today, the philosopher Richard Wollheim attributes Pater’s failure as a critic not to his skepticism, nor to his empiricist metaphysics, but to *not* allowing himself to pursue or will his own vision: drawn to the visual, Pater discerned in it temptation and illicit pleasure.²⁸ Like Marius, he failed in romantic love.

Yet as Woodberry wrote, “it is only by love, as [Marius] perceives, that any reconciliation between the lover of beauty and the multitudinous pitiful pain which is so large a part of the objective universe can be obtained” (149). This reference to the universality of pain returns us to the methodological individualism of late Victorian economics. The

object of classical political economy as Adam Smith perceived it in *The Wealth of Nations* was to fulfill “the needs and desires of the people” (WN 397 and throughout). The object of neoclassical economics under the Marginal Revolution after 1870 was to maximize individual choice and preference without comparing or ranking needs intersubjectively. It is a maxim of Stanley Jevons’s utility theory that intersubjective comparisons are impossible; as Jevons says, we cannot “compare the amount of feeling in one mind with that in another . . . Every mind is thus inscrutable to every other mind, and no common denominator of feeling seems to be possible.”²⁹ Here, as in comparable passages in Carl Menger’s *Principles of Economics* (1871), are the origins of Vilfredo Pareto’s theory of optimality (1906), the linchpin of modern welfare economics: since intersubjective comparisons of value are impossible, each mind keeps as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world, the criterion of optimality is met when no possible redistribution is such that at least one party gains utility (subjectively defined) and no one loses any. There is no common metric that allows comparison between individuals. If there are no grounds for assessing inequalities in utility, there can be no grounds—no *economic* grounds—for advocating redistribution, as Lionel Robbins argued against Pigou’s welfare economics in the 1930s.³⁰ This abandonment of intersubjective comparisons of value shows the decline of universal conceptions of human nature that, we recall, had grounded Arnold’s and other Victorians’ belief in the more positive aspects of individualism, and in a State that could harmonize its warring factions into an individual-like totality.³¹

This world, as particularly theorized in late Victorian economics, in which we cannot compare the amount of feeling in one mind with that in another and where every mind is thus inscrutable to every other, is Pater’s as well as Pareto’s. It is the world that Pater and other writers of the fin de siècle struggled with, simultaneously attracted by its pleasures, taste, and choice, and repelled by its asociality, its exclusion of relative considerations of, say, need or pain. *Marius the Epicurean* is a classic psychodrama in every sense, agonistically acting out maternal benevolence against paternal indifference. As Pater’s critics have pointed out, in *Marius* world-historical ideas—Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Christianity—are represented as characters in relation to Marius. I would call them characters representing alternative (alternative here because Marius has freedom) models of Individualism: the empiricist’s—and neoclassical economist’s—prison of unshareable sense and experience; the independent ego impervious to Others’ pain; the autonomous but protective maternal. As a child raised by a widow, Marius learned maternity as “the central type of all love . . . unflinching in pity and protectiveness” (ME 14). With his friend Flavian, he learns Epicureanism:

“the desirableness of refining all the instruments of inward and outward intuition, of developing all their capacities, of testing and exercising one’s self in them, till one’s whole nature became one complex medium of reception towards the vision . . . of our actual experience in the world” (*ME* 82). The consequence of Marius’s youthful epicureanism is (a traditional Western philosophical crux) an empiricism that shades into solipsism: “He was ready now to conclude . . . that the individual is to himself the measure of all things, and to rely on the exclusive certainty to himself of his own impressions. To move afterwards in that outer world of other people, as though taking it at their estimate, would be possible henceforth only as a kind of irony” (*ME* 76). At one point, Marius had “almost come to doubt of other men’s reality” (*ME* 97).

A third model of Individualism is personified in the Stoic “character” (in both senses) of emperor Marcus Aurelius, who denies the senses altogether in his well known doctrine of the “Imperceptibility of pain,” as in his preoccupation with papers of State while seated at the horrors of the Roman amphitheatre. (On other occasions, Marcus Aurelius equally denies his own pain.) “There was something in a tolerance such as this, in the bare fact that he could sit patiently through a scene like this, which seemed to Marius to mark Aurelius as his inferior now and forever” (*ME* 158). Identifying in Stoicism a morbidity, an aesthetic deadening, Marius ultimately determines that perception of another’s pain is the ultimate refinement or *aesthesia* that will differentiate the highest form of Civilized Man: “The practical and effective difference between men will lie in their power of insight into those conditions [of suffering], their power of sympathy” (*ME* 244), which returns Marius to “the sentiment of maternity” (*ME* 246) and then, by way of St. Cecilia, to Christianity. Spencer had written that there would be a lagtime for our will to catch up with our senses, that modern humankind could feel more pain than we had power to assuage. Marius’s aesthetic development to feel others’ pain and then to act to assuage it illustrated the finest evolution of “character.”

It is Marius’s habit throughout his life to “review” “loss and gain” in “the commerce of life” (*ME* 149, 264, and throughout). In his “final account” (*ME* 264) at the point of death, the ethical is also the aesthetic: Christian sympathy consists not in the morbid self-scrutiny of Protestant signs but in the refined Catholic sensibility to others’ pain. This interpretation can explain the convergence of otherwise discordant elements of Pater’s aesthetic: its sensationism, elitism, diffidence, ethics, and economies of taste. Thus Marius has, as Pater himself said, nothing immoral about him. He used refined senses (epicureanism) to feel the pain of others (Christianity)—not as an illusory hedonist but as an ethical epicurean. Compared to this, erotic or romantic love was crude.

A second illustration of the scope and limits of Individualism is from the same era as *Marius*, the paradox of Edward Burne-Jones's painting *The Golden Stairs* (1880). The painting at the Tate Gallery shows a wealth of virgins with delicate musical instruments disappearing down a spiral staircase into a curtained interior closed off to the spectator. Most critics of the Victorian Pre-Raphaelites concur that their images reveal the painters' psyches rather than the models. Rossetti said as much in the PRB's manifesto "Hand and Soul" and Christina Rossetti memorialized her brother's model forever, "Not as she is, but as she fills his dream" ("In an Artist's Studio").³²

In 1879, when Burne-Jones's painting was almost complete, the artist decided to add portrait heads on to the model's repeated body—the heads of his closest female family and friends. But although these were some of the best known beauties in London—Margaret Burne-Jones, the artist's daughter; May Morris, the daughter of William; Mary Gladstone, daughter and secretary to William; Mary Stuart Wortley, patron, collector, and painter; and Frances Horner, called "high priestess of the Souls"—their portraits were not recognized by the viewing public. None of the original portrait "heads" was aware that she had been selected by the artist; nor did the women, any more than the public, apparently, recognize themselves when the painting was shown.³³

To the contrary, the painting was criticized for its repetitious faces, lack of emotion, and blandness—its lack of individuality—and contrasted unfavorably with the early Italian masters. Burne-Jones defended his aims as solely "the expression of character and moral quality, not anything temporary, fleeting, accidental." He wrote that he had no time for the individual's feelings, passions, or emotions: "Of course my faces have no expression in the sense in which people use the word. How should they have any? They are not portraits of people in paroxysms of terror, hatred, benevolence, desire, avarice, veneration, and all the passions and emotions. . . . It is Winckelmann, isn't it, who says that when you come to the age of expression in Greek art you have come to the age of decadence? In fact you only want types, symbols, suggestions. The moment you give what people call expression, you destroy the typical character of heads and degrade them into portraits which stand for nothing."³⁴ He wanted the portrait heads—recapitated onto the body of the one, now decapitated, model Antonia Caiva—to look like classic coins. The individuals, with all their "passions and emotions" were, to his mind, "nothing."

His fellow Pre-Raphaelite G. F. Watts also considered the individual to be too common in the Age of Individualism: "I have purposely abstained from any attempt to make the figures seem real . . . knowing that familiarity produces a sense of the commonplace."³⁵ And Whistler

himself said that he “tried to eliminate the possibility of reading an emotional reaction of any sort into the model’s countenance.”³⁶ Yet as Anne Anderson shows, these particular women, de-individualized on the Golden Stairs of male fantasy, were actually some of the most active and avant-garde women of the day. The paradox is that the Victorian allegory of the most conventional beauty, guaranteed to comfort the male psyche, in real life constituted the most threateningly individualist women.

Building an analytic frame of differently nuanced individualisms, one might go on to look at other instances of “character.” My hypothesis is that “character” in the novel is like the individual in the State, to different degrees controlled by larger structures or plot, whether unregulated within a free-market stream of consciousness or centrally planned by authorial hand. Spencer thought that with the full development of character, the State would wither away. It could be argued that with the full development of psychologism and subjectivism after the fin de siècle, the high Victorian plot of social relations also withered away. Whereas the classic Victorian novel gave us models of Renaut’s “autonomy,” fin-de-siècle characters often represented the tensions of Renaut’s relational “independence.” We might analyze Browning’s dramatic monologues in a similar fashion, specifying how much their psychic life illustrates Campbell’s self-illusory hedonism and how much a work like *The Ring and the Book* (1868) tries to integrate and harmonize the dreaming, competitive, needy voices into a social and formal whole. Literary history shows sustained critique of the scope and limits of individualism: as competitive, as progressively cooperative, as arrested in America by the cult of the common man, as fetishized in Britain as the distinctive mark of the Man of Taste, or as hedonic consumer, often figured as a dreaming woman. The difficulty for the Aesthetes, from Rossetti to Wilde to the New Women to Virginia Woolf, was to find a third way between the competitive egoisms (including competition between the sexes—see especially John Lane’s Keynotes series),³⁷ the isolated solipsisms, the illusory hedonism, and other forms that Individualism took in the second half of the nineteenth century, while remaining true to their own notions of society and Progress.

In 1920 the American poet in London Ezra Pound reflected on British Aestheticism (their magazine, founded in 1914, was called *The Egoist: An Individualist Review*): its impossible project in a mass commercial age lacking beauty and distinction, without heroes. He attributed to the failed poetic persona Hugh Selwyn Mauberley a “series of curious heads in medallion.”³⁸ Making “no immediate application of” the “relation of the State / to the individual” (74), only seeing “the month

more temperate / Because this beauty had been" (74), Mauberley's poetry had become entirely subjective:

Nothing, in brief, but maudlin confession,
 Irresponse to human aggression,
 Amid the precipitation, down-float
 Of insubstantial manna,
 Lifting the faint susurrus
 Of his subjective hosannah.

(75)

All that remains of the minor poet Mauberley is an oar on which is written:

"I was
 And I no more exist;
 Here drifted
 An hedonist."

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NOTES

- 1 The narrator citing Wilhelm Meister in Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* (London, 1968), p. 80; hereafter cited in text as *ME*.
- 2 Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago, 2000).
- 3 Obviously the bibliography on Individualism is enormous. I have found Martin Hollis, *The Cunning of Reason* (Cambridge, 1987) and Harold Kincaid, *Individualism and the Unity of Science* (London, 1997) particularly helpful in clarifying the issues relevant to economics and the history of economic thought. For the cultural implications of economic individualism, I have found most useful, and I discuss below, Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987); Alain Renaut, *The Era of the Individual: A Contribution to a History of Subjectivity* (Princeton, 1997); Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism* (Cambridge, 1996).
- 4 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York, 1937), pp. 15–16; hereafter cited in text as *WN*.
- 5 See *Natural Images in Economic Thought*, ed. Philip Mirowski (Cambridge, 1994) and Regenia Gagnier "Culture and Economics," *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 26 (1998), 477–84.
- 6 "Progress: Its Law and Cause" in Herbert Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political, Speculative*, vol. 1 (London, 1883), pp. 2–3; hereafter cited in text.
- 7 The economic historian David Mitch has discussed how under the influence of Francis Galton's eugenics, and utilizing the principle of noncompeting groups, economics similarly moved from definitions of homogeneous workers to inherently diverse species of workers. Mitch sees this as increasing elitism in his "Victorian Views of the Nature of Work and Its Influence on the Nature of the Worker" (paper presented at UC Santa Cruz,

August 1994). For detailed history of biologism in Victorian theories of Progress, see George Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987) and *After Tylor* (Madison, 1995); Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley, 1989); and Michael Ruse, *Monad to Man; the Concept of Progress in Evolutionary Biology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).

8 See chapter 3, "Modernity and Progress toward Individualism in Economics and Aesthetics," specifically on the economic aspects of the "civilized" Man of Taste, in my *The Insatiability of Human Wants*.

9 In "Progress and Freud's Theory of Instincts," Herbert Marcuse showed the extension of Spencerian sociology into psychoanalysis. In "the vicious circle of progress," "The rising productivity of social labor remains linked to rising repression, which itself in turn contributes to raising productivity. . . . But just as progress becomes automatic, so it cancels and negates itself, for it prohibits the enjoyment of its own fruits" (*Five Lectures* [Boston, 1970], p. 36).

10 *Herbert Spencer and the Limits of the State: The Late Nineteenth-Century Debate Between Individualism and Collectivism*, ed. Michael Taylor (Bristol, 1996), esp. pp. xvii–xviii; hereafter cited in text.

11 On the distinction between Smithian self-interest and mid-Victorian fears of selfishness, see Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain 1750–1834* (Cambridge, 1996), esp. p. 390.

12 Having largely disappeared since its classical history, the term "hedonic" re-emerged in the nineteenth century, representing the mathematical and psychological economy of pleasure and pain. See W. Stanley Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy*, 3rd ed. (1871; London, 1888). See also my *The Insatiability of Human Wants*, and the discussion of self-illusory hedonism in section III below.

13 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy with Friendship's Garland and Some Literary Essays*, vol. 5 of *The Complete Prose Works*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, 1965), pp. 94–95; hereafter cited in text.

14 See, remarkably, Immanuel Wallerstein on Dutch investment in British wars, calling Britain from Arnold's time to the Second World War a "second Holland": "this symbiotic arrangement between a formerly hegemonic power and the new rising star provided graceful retirement income for the one and a crucial push forward against the rival for the other. The pattern was repeated later in the period from 1873 to 1945, with Great Britain playing the Dutch role and the US in the English role" (Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II* [New York, 1980], p. 281).

15 "Civilisation in the United States," *Matthew Arnold*, ed. Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super (Oxford, 1986), pp. 489–504; hereafter cited in text.

16 For Arnold's tendency to form abstractions into competitive oppositions, see my *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Stanford, 1986), pp. 27–29. And see Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, commentary, pp. 415–17.

17 See my discussion of "The Soul of Man" in *Idylls*, pp. 29–34.

18 *Herbert Spencer*, ed. Taylor, p. 79.

19 See David Hume's famous dictum that "Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them," in which a minimal reason relates means to ends but makes no claims concerning the rightness of ends (*A Treatise of Human Nature* [Middlesex, 1969], p. 415).

20 Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 171; hereafter cited in text.

21 Alain Renaut, *The Era of the Individual* (Princeton, 1997). Although Renaut does not acknowledge them, he has been preceded in his critique of individualism by a long line of feminist theorists. The locus classicus is Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982). See also Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley, 1978)

and, specifically in relation to economic individualism, *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics*, ed. Marianne A. Ferber and Julie A. Nelson (Chicago, 1993).

22 Renaut illustrates by way of Nietzsche's "pure differentiation" (*Era*, 132) and denunciation "of the disappearance of the differentiated individual amidst the general levelling of the masses" (*Era*, 133). For Nietzsche, consciousness and language "accomplish a thorough corruption" from individuality and throw humankind onto the herd. Similarly the Hobbes scholar Jean Hampton stressed Hobbes's "privacy thesis": that our thoughts, beliefs, emotions are "cut off" from others and confined to the "cell walls" of our person (see Jean Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition* [Cambridge, 1986], pp. 9–10). For Hobbes as for Nietzsche, language is not constitutive of intersubjectivity, but is of instrumental value only. Words are needed only as "marks" to help us remember our thoughts, or as "signs" to help us communicate with others in order to pursue better the satisfaction of our innermost independent desires (Hampton, pp. 9–10). Renaut illustrates how easily such extreme, ontological Individualism can slide from independence to domination with Nietzsche's aphorism (paragraph 784) in *The Will to Power* (1888): "One desires freedom so long as one does not possess power. Once one does possess it, one desires to overpower" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufman, tr. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale [New York, 1968], p. 412). In contrast, feminist theorists have often distinguished "power to" or empowerment as autonomy from both independence and domination (or "power over").

23 Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987), p. 89; hereafter cited in text.

24 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. Donald Hill (Berkeley, 1980), p. 188. See my *The Insatiability of Human Wants*, chap. 1.

25 See Gerald Monsman, *Walter Pater* (Boston, 1977), p. 169; hereafter cited in text.

26 In the closest study to date of the novel, Carolyn Williams reads the climactic chapter 19, "The Will as Vision," as willed "relief from solitude," culminating in "an unflinching companion ever at [Marius's] side," which vision would resolve itself as Christian Hope. Williams reads the novel as "the modern dialogue of the mind with itself deplored by Arnold but represented by Pater . . . as the essential dialogue." See Carolyn Williams, "Historical Novelty and Marius the Epicurean," in *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca, 1989), esp. pp. 200–217.

27 In *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage*, ed. R. M. Seiler (London, 1980), p. 128; hereafter cited in text.

28 "In phantasy," Wollheim writes, "Pater was a homosexual necrophile" ("Walter Pater: From Philosophy to Art," in *Walter Pater and the Culture of the Fin-de-Siècle*, ed. E. S. Shaffer [Cambridge, 1995], pp. 37–38).

29 Stanley Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy* (London, 1888), p. 14.

30 See my *The Insatiability of Human Wants*, chap. 1.

31 Recent work suggests that by the mid-nineteenth century earlier forms of sympathy and toleration had begun to contract as biological, psychological, or anthropological forms of explanation extended their domains. Studying theories of race, Cora Kaplan sees pre-1850 recognition of likeness or universalism (as in the anti-slavery banner, "Am I not a Man and a Brother?") turning to intolerance of difference: economies of sympathy gave way to economies of instinctive repulsion between races just at the moment when races were technically emancipated to intermingle as equals (Cora Kaplan, "The Toyseller," Lecture presented at the University of Exeter, 17 May 1999). See also Kaplan's "Black Figures/English Landscape," *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27 (1999), 501–5. A sociological explanation would point to the uncertainty of roles after mid-century. Freed slaves, waged laborers, factory girls, and so forth: how would their growing presence affect traditional hierarchical social relations? One contributing factor suggested by this essay is

the increased emphasis on individuation in the second half of the century. The fear of difference that postcolonial critics have noted was in part fed by the perception of just how different—differentiated—people would become from one another, through the division of labor and multiplication of tastes that were essential to the modern economy. Also see Linda Dowling's excellent *The Vulgarization of Art: The Victorians and Aesthetic Democracy* (Charlottesville, 1996) for the decline of universalism in the course of the nineteenth century.

32 *The Germ*, 1 (January 1850), 23–33; *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London, 1904), p. 330.

33 This account of the girls on the Golden Stairs is from Anne Anderson, "Life into Art and Art into Life: Burne-Jones and the Golden Girls" ("The High-Art Maiden," Ph.D. diss., University of Exeter, in progress), p. 6. I am grateful to Anderson for allowing me to interpret her research preprint. See also Anne Anderson, "Soul's Beauty: Burne-Jones and Girls on the Golden Stairs," *Nineteenth Century: Magazine of the Victorian Society in America*, 18 (Spring 1998), 17–23.

34 From A. W. Baldwin, *The Macdonald Sisters* (London, 1960), pp. 142–43.

35 From G. F. Watts, "Thoughts on Art," quoted in Mary Watts, *The Annals of an Artist's Life*, vol. 3 (London, 1912), p. 36.

36 Richard Dormont and Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler* (New York, 1995), pp. 77–78, quoted in Anderson.

37 See, for example, George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894); Ella D'Arcy's *Monochromes* (1895); Netta Syrett's *Nobody's Fault* (1896); and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895).

38 Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York, 1957), p. 73; hereafter cited in text.