Oxford Men: Masculinity and Humour in Nineteenth-Century University Fiction

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Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection between masculinity and humour in nineteenth-century university fiction through a close analysis of five novels: *Reginald Dalton*, *Loss and Gain*, *Tom Brown at Oxford*, *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green,* and *Une Culotte*. Ranging from 1823-1894, this selection of novels set in correlation to Oxford University offers a pathway to investigate how understandings of masculinity are formulated and changed across the century, and how humour reflects and reveals these shifts. This thesis contends that the university setting offers a distinct space for investigating formations of masculine ideals and the norms, behaviours, expectations, and codes that vary and change in representation between these selected works. Each novel is analysed individually, and I also draw out the significance of their shared Oxford setting and undergraduate protagonists, as well as their stylistic, thematic, and tonal commonalities and differences. This approach to the conversation surrounding nineteenth-century masculinity considers how humour impacts the ways manhood and male homosocial bonds are presented in university literature. Through an intersectional examination of humour, gender, and university fiction, this analysis seeks to explore how distinct ideals of masculinity constructed through university homosociality are staged, explored, challenged, or reinforced through modes of humour. The male and female protagonists in each of the five novels grapple with conforming to an 'Oxford Man' ideal, which prompts questions regarding how Oxford offers its own expectations of manhood distinguished by wealth, religious beliefs, social class, behaviours, and appearance.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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From the depths of my being, these humble and insufficient words of gratitude overflow and fill the page:

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Jamie Bowman
York, September 2025

This thesis is dedicated to the city that stole my heart.

Thank you, Oxford, for inspiring me to dream.

This project is my love letter to you.

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Introduction

The undergraduate experience of the nineteenth century was a subject of fasciation for novelists of the time. Life within the walls of Oxford was the site of an exclusively male culture that operated under its own traditions and customs. The university functioned as a place of change for the men who were privileged enough to attend, yet this influence has gone unobserved relative to the public school, home, professional arena, battlefield, or Victorian empire. These fictions about life at Oxford took on a more recognisable shape across the century. Beginning in the 1820s, commonalities emerged in the narrative structure: a young, naïve male protagonist finds himself sent to university and faces the temptations and trials of college life. While shared characteristics are present across novels set at Oxford, to dismiss these texts as the same would be an oversimplification of a complex and varied collection of works. This thesis hopes to demonstrate that while these novels are identifiably intertwined because of their Oxford setting, there are significant variations within that shared experience that must be accounted for and investigated further. Most significantly, university fiction and its development across the nineteenth century offers a distinct space in which definitions of masculinity are explored. Each work of university fiction in its own way reflects a pressure from peers to conform to life as an 'Oxford Man' through the practices of university culture, including wine parties, town and gown fights, rowing, and hunting to name but a few. Much of what has been said about Oxford fiction in the past has centered around these customs, observing their uniqueness to university culture.

Creating a cohesive examination of novels set at Oxford, Cambridge, or both is still a relatively new attempt. Mortimer Proctor in his 1957 *The English University Novel* was the first to suggest that there is a fundamental connection worth speaking to. However, he does minimal work to define what qualifies as a university novel. In fact, he aptly notes within his introduction that 'it is not always easy to say what is and what is not a university novel' because of 'the tendency of the subject matter to slip entirely out of sight' (Proctor 2). This and other attempts have surveyed what works are present within this category of fiction and tend to catalogue them with a common thread built around the Oxford setting and undergraduate protagonist. These approaches have either grouped these novels as part of a subgenre and have surveyed widely, or they have studied these texts in separation, discussing them within the context of their authors or ideologies rather than

connecting them in any way.[1] The analysis here builds from these foundations. A need to examine these texts more directly lies at the heart of this thesis, and through close analysis, this project will attempt to identity points of cohesion while embracing distinctions.

Proctor offers a general definition of university novels as 'concerned with the peculiarities of life within two exclusive and inbred communities, and they constitute a narrowly specialized body of literature built around codes of behaviour and thought which at times appear artificial to the outside world' (11). This definition operates as a workable starting point from which to assess the characteristics of these texts. For the purposes of this project, I wish to define university fiction as novels set at Oxbridge – with a focus here solely on those set at Oxford – in which a protagonist attends university and directly engages with and is impacted by its culture. If this definition is broad, it is because the range of narrative style and development among novels that fall within these criteria is significant and a quality that this study seeks to highlight, not hide from.

Two key questions may emerge in response to these parameters: first, why Oxford and not Cambridge? The simple answer is that there is more material with the former than the latter. Of the roughly eighty university novels Judy Batson lists as published in the nineteenth century, Mortimer Proctor identifies that more than 85% of those are set at Oxford over Cambridge (Proctor 4). While there are strong examples of Cambridge fiction, including William Makeapeace Thackeray's *The History of Pendennis* (1850), the abundance of Oxford fiction, both within the nineteenth century and beyond, suggests that Oxford captured the literary imagination in a way that Cambridge has yet to equal. While they could be examined in unison, each university historically operated within its own traditions and with varying perceptions. Thus, solely examining Oxford fiction allows for a developed, focused understanding of the university without having to contend with comparisons to Cambridge. For the purposes of providing a useful shorthand, this analysis uses 'university fiction', 'university novel', 'Oxford fiction', and 'Oxford novel' interchangeably as flexible nomenclature to describe novels which incorporate Oxford, or both Oxford and Cambridge, as part of their settings and narrative development. A second question, in response to this nomenclature, may also arise: why 'university fiction' and not 'campus novel' or 'varsity novel'? Such vocabulary has been applied

[1] For overviews of Oxford fictions and Oxford in fiction, see Dougill, John. *Oxford in English Literature: The Making, and Undoing, of 'The English Athens'*. The University of Michigan Press, 1998; and Bogen, Anna. *Women's University Fiction, 1880-1945*. Routledge, 2014. For an annotated bibliography of Oxford fiction, see Batson, Judy G. *Oxford in Fiction: An Annotated Bibliography*. Garland Publishing, 1989.

liberally in the past.[2] However, there are notable issues of origin when considering nineteenth-century Oxford in particular. The term "campus" originated in America in the late eighteenth century, so while perhaps aptly applied to US university fiction, I do not find it as suitable here.[3] "Varsity" yields similar trouble, with its first use dating back to the 1840s to refer to sport-related university activities.[4] Henry Kingsley in his 1872 *Hornby Mills* states 'I have such faith in the old University (never use that horrid word 'varsity, my lad; don't vulgarise the old place)' (66). In an attempt to not "vulgarise" this analysis, "university" is the preferred term. This is not to impress a strict limitation of categories, but to operate as a pliable vocabulary to signify a collection of works with Oxford University as a common thread.

When assessing these novels more closely, two key areas of interest emerge: masculinity and humour. One may seem much more evident than the other, but it is the presence of both simultaneously that is of interest and provokes questions of how they operate in tandem. While not typically explored together, considering them side by side may offer greater insight into both. Though criticism has previously put attention toward gender studies in university fiction – to varying degrees of effectiveness – analyses have often focused on a singular work instead of generating a sustained inspection across texts. Tracing these shifts across the century aids in understanding how the university operates in conjunction with understandings of masculinity.

If we are to understand anything about masculinity, it is that there is no one definition, no ultimate way of being a man, no time in history in which a consensus is reached on what this means, no moment of inarguable cohesion of ideas. Gender and understandings of gender are ever-adapting delineations that mean very little and yet so much. Within the nineteenth century, masculinity and its associated terms, manhood and manliness, are one and yet distinct, different sides of the same united conception of a gender. The fluctuation between them betrays their malleability. In each iteration, there is a reconfiguration of what traits and meanings these terms signify, how they are instilled in the men of the time, and how they are applied. Studies of these masculinities are just as varied as the university fictions that reflect them. Many critical approaches have helpfully defined the shifts the we see for what being a man means. At the beginning of the century, the idea of the

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[2] For an example of how the term varsity is applied to *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, see Stinson, Rachelle. 'Mass-Market Spires: Varsity Paperbacks, Guidebooks, and Commodified Nostalgia.' *Victorian Review*, Johns Hopkins University Press, vol. 48, no. 2, 2022, pp. 271-91, https://doi.org/10.1353/vcr.2022.a900627.

[3] For origins and other definitions of "Campus," see 'Campus, N.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1114669381.

[4] For origins and other definitions of "Varsity," see 'Varsity, N.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2328972581.

gentleman was still pervasive and highly important to the Victorians. Robin Gilmour demonstrates that while the idea of a gentleman was an uncertain one, it was upheld as a cultural goal that conveyed a sense of rank and moral values (1-3). This sense of value in cultural, social, and moral characteristics as defining a man continues to inform the progression of meanings in manhood, manliness, and masculinity. John Tosh excellently offers foundational historical distinctions between each that showcase a fundamental instability. In considering manliness, he acknowledges an overlap with gentlemanliness as 'fundamentally a set of values by which men judged other men' (Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities* 5). The judgement of other men is key as he further specifies that 'manliness as a mundane standard of conduct was rooted in everyday social relations' and was primarily concerned 'with one's standing in the sight of men' (Tosh, 'Masculinities in an Industrializing Society' 335). In practice, 'manliness had little to do with personal authenticity or interiority' but rather was 'an external code of conduct, policed by one's peers' (Tosh, 'Masculinities in an Industrializing Society' 335).

The importance of peers in enforcing manliness is central to a consideration of life within the university. As university fiction demonstrates, an undergraduate's peers play a significant role in stipulating the actions and appearances that distinguish manliness. This understanding links to the conception of gender as performance developed by Judith Butler and further informed by Eve Kososfsky Sedgewick's formulation of homosocial bonds.[5] Tosh stipulates the same kind of peer influence with definitions of manhood, noting that it 'was not a birthright, but lay within the power of one's peers to confirm or deny' (*Manliness and Masculinities* 14). This suggests that manhood and manliness must be observable in some way, able to be recognized and critiqued. Because the engagement with fellow undergraduates defined the experience of the university, manliness is formulated and conveyed through homosocial bonding.

In turning to masculinity, Tosh defines it as 'all the attributes – physical, emotional and social – which define a masculine identity, and in highlighting "identity" it prioritizes the interiority of being, or feeling, a man' (*Manliness and Masculinities* 24). There is an important balance to be struck between the exterior and interior aspects of masculinity. Whereas Tosh emphasizes interiority, James Eli Adams examines how intellectual labour constitutes a self-fashioning of masculine identity as spectacle (11-12). These 'styles of masculinity' operate from the basis of Butler's observation that 'gender is always a doing' (Adams 2). Much like manliness, overseen through homosociality, the

[5] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* Routledge, 1990; Sedgwick, Eve Kosofksy. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia University Press, 1985.

performance of masculinity requires an audience (Adams 6). Joanne Begiato's more recent work builds from this previous scholarship to examine how manliness and its connection to emotion is seen through the body.[6] She notes the shift, observed through these other foundational studies as well, that occurs across the century from an emphasis on interiority to exteriority, the inner to the outer man. This trajectory will guide the analysis of university fiction conducted here. While the Oxford novels written in the first half of the century expressed a strong emphasis on the inner turmoil of masculinity, the second half, in stark juxtaposition, gives prominence to physical appearance. What must be remembered, however, when considering masculinity and trying to grasp its meaning, is that the factors which distinguish it do not come from one quarter - emotional, cerebral, physical, spiritual - but from all. Indeed, all will be explored here as each university novel offers a different emphasis on what defines a man. Ultimately, the conflicts felt by the Oxford novel protagonist over how to adapt and uphold the university's conceptions of the masculine emphasises the need to embrace an uncertainty and insecurity of definitions, distinctions, and any sense of stability. The university cannot contain the idea of masculinity in any secure way. What the progression of these works portrays is how masculinities are constantly being renegotiated and redefined. These constant changes echoed through the lives of Victorians as their society progressed rapidly. The attempt to find a sense of stability in what masculine means suggests a longing to cling to a static, stable understanding of men that was, at its core, inevitably dynamic.

The university grappled with these ideas of masculinity by cultivating its own. Because nineteenth century Oxford was an exclusively male space, the setting becomes a complex environment in which to pose questions of the institution's relationship with the masculine. At the core of university fiction lies a struggle for the young undergraduate to adapt and conform to an 'Oxford Man' ideal. The image and understanding of what this means and how it is defined changes with the ever-shifting definitions of masculinity across the century, yet the traditions of university life mean that some aspects remain constant. Within the university, the Oxford Man becomes the hegemonic ideal formulated in conjunction to a wider societal hegemonic masculinity. It is an idea specific to the university yet informed by societal pressures to become the 'right' kind of man.

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[6] Begiato, Joanne. *Manliness in Britain, 1760-1900: Bodies, Emotion, and Material Culture.* Manchester University Press, 2020. For more on the male Victorian body, see Heholt, Ruth and Joanna Ella Parsons. 'Introduction: Visible and Invisible Bodies.' *The Male Victorian Body*, edited by Ruth Heholt and Joanna Ella Parsons, Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 1-22.

Within the micro-climate of college life, peer relationships are the primary method by which the ideal is understood and instilled, policed and challenged. As the hegemonic masculine ideal shifts in society, the same is reflected in Oxford, yet there is tension felt between the university as adaptable while rooted in tradition. In this way, we see Oxford as changing yet stagnant, a site of cultural and social change it is slow to embrace. Change grinds rather than glides through the streets of Oxford. However, while we may assume to observe tradition upheld through university fiction, what we find instead are points of transition.

Oxford University is a useful setting in which to dissect understandings and interpretations of masculinity precisely because it functions as a liminal space. The university operates for these male undergraduates as a threshold between youth and adulthood. This view has instigated invocations of Bildungsroman in analyses of these texts. Whether these novels justifiably fall within that realm or not, the university is consistently portrayed as a stopping point between the public school and professionalism or marital domesticity.[7] This suggests that university fiction is more concerned not just with the university as a physical space that builds masculine identities but also a time during which masculinity is practiced and applied. While 'the Victorians did not explicitly divide the process of maturation into specific stages', adolescence was marked by 'a degree of independence from one's family of origin' and a move 'towards self-definition in relation to a new family of one's own' (Bossche 132). This idea of self-definition is shown as key through the protagonists of university fiction. Adolescence, the life stage during which these young adult men arrive at Oxford, 'was regarded as a complex social, psychological, and moral process that was intimately linked to the Victorian ideal of the independent, mature, and cultivated adult self. Arriving at adulthood meant not just coming of age, but developing a particular kind of self' (Bossche 132). Not only do we see these male protagonists grapple with a distinction between youth and adult, but also how specific ideas of masculinity inform the self. John Jervis observes that 'Becoming a self could be said to involve a "rehearsal" of identity, a taking-on and casting-off of roles, which are tried on, worn, almost like clothes; the self becomes a series of such identities, never really assimilated to

[7] For a study on professionalism as linked to the university, see Pionke, Albert. *The Ritual Culture of Victorian Professionals: Competing for Ceremonial Status, 1838-1877*. Routledge, 2016. For considerations of men and work, see Taylor-Brown, Emilie, et al. 'Structures of Confinement: Power and Problems of Male Identity.' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2019, pp. 137–45, https://doi.org/10.1093/jvcult/vcy074; and Danahay, Martin A. *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art and Masculinity*. Ashgate Publishing, 2005.

them, yet clearly marked by them' (21). University is a space and time in which to develop the interior and exterior self based on the understandings of masculinity instilled there. Oxford life guides these undergraduates toward particular conceptions of masculinity, and how the reader engages with these definitions is what makes humour important to consider.

Humour provides a useful lens through which to observe how these trends in masculinity are conveyed to the audience. To categorize Oxford fiction as broadly comedic, though, would be an inaccurate assessment. We must avoid making generalizations about the comic methods and forms used in these examples of university fiction, a move which is, as Robert Henkle notes, unhelpful and ultimately limiting (3-4). Indeed, such generalizations would be ineffective given the distinct comedic tone of each of these novels. However, humour undoubtedly has many significant purposes. It is used to question and influence, reflect and deflect, to push and prod. Humour is a tool, a magnifying glass, a scalpel, cutting and highlighting, in order to conduct investigation and interrogation. Matthew Bevis asserts that jokes are one way of inviting us to think about what we know – and what we think we know', and 'to reflect critically upon' ourselves, reaching a new beginning, a break from the status quo (4, 11). There is an urge within humour to dethrone, oust, and shake up (Bevis 9). It prompts questions and evokes both thought and feeling. In sum, humour functions as a destabilizing force, and when in conjunction with attempts to bring stability to gender reveals inconsistencies and only destabilizes these conceptions further.

Bevis observes, 'comedy is frequently born from the disparity between what a person is and what he affects to be' (39). In this space, humour questions performances of masculinity. Henkle adds that 'Comedy causes a culture to look at itself in a new way', functioning as a distinct way of seeing and observing (13). Likewise, Hazlitt observes that 'The essence of the laughable then is the incongruous, the disconnecting one idea from another, or the jostling of one feeling against another' (7). Humour has the ability to set the tone for the reader's understanding and interpretation of culture, and culture can be translated through comedic modes. Therefore, gender may also be translated and understood through humourous representations. Hyers argues that in comedy, 'the very distinctions that separate us into our various social, racial, ethnic, and religious battlements and our vain hierarchies of relative worth are moderated, suspended, or turned upside down. Valuational distinctions, likewise, are challenged: sacred and profane, important and unimportant, wise and foolish' (44).

Just as there were varying modes of masculinity across the nineteenth century, different methods and modes of humour likewise appear. John Bowen offers a useful overview of the comical

and satirical across the nineteenth century, noting its changes and shifts.[8] Robert Bernard Martin builds on the observations of Hazlitt that distinguish wit from humour, showcasing how the Victorians understood it as linked to emotion, a product of pathos (26). He states that 'All during the period there were occasional nods in the direction of the intellect as an integral part of comedy, but more often critics pressed the claims of humour as a warm suffusion of the loving, charitable emotions, in striking contrast to the arid sneers of wit' (Martin 29). Humour has a sustenance which 'nourishes both observed and observer' (Martin 35). I argue that humour has a deeper, longer-lasting effect, experienced temporally in the moment of response (through laughter or indignation, for example) but also felt upon reflection. Therefore, in considering how humour is utilized in university fiction, it is important to note where the comic modes take aim and how that effects our understanding of that object of humour. The simultaneous pursuits of this project – university fiction, masculinity, and humour – guide the following analysis to observe how these spaces, concepts, and reactions intersect and inform one another. Ultimately, what we see in university fiction is how Oxford informs definitions of 'man' and how humour calls these definitions into question. The university is a space where understandings of masculinity are confronted, questioned, and ever-changing through humour.

To cultivate a more focused approach into the mechanics of university fiction, each chapter focuses on prime examples of novels grounded in the Oxford experience. The novels chosen for the following analysis span the century, beginning in 1823 with John Gibson Lockhart's *Reginald Dalton* and ending in 1894 with Tivoli's (Horace William Bleackley) *Une Culotte*. In between these extremes lies a concentration of very different works published in the mid-century – John Henry Newman's *Loss and Gain*, Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown at Oxford*, and Cuthbert Bede's (Edward Bradley) *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*. These five novels, each of which will be examined through close analysis, have been selected based either on their recognizable status as highpoints of university fiction, as previous investigations have indicated, or their narrative qualities that distinguish them from the form. Given their historical range, they offer a broad scope from which to first, acknowledge the beginnings of what became recognizable as the nineteenth-century university novel, and second, to demonstrate the distinct shifts that occur for masculinity and humour within their own narratives. While connected through the university and representations of Oxford life, they are also singular, standing out for their own distinct styles, tones, and concerns.

[8] Bowen, John. 'Comic and Satirical.' *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, edited by Kate Flint, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 265-87, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521846257.014.

Chapter 1 – The Beginnings of a Tradition: *Reginald Dalton*

Ye sacred Nurseries of blooming Youth!
In whose collegiate shelter England's Flowers
Expand, enjoying through their vernal hours
The air of liberty, the light of truth;
Much have ye suffered from Time's gnawing tooth:
Yet, O ye spires of Oxford! domes and towers!
Gardens and groves! your presence overpowers
The soberness of reason

- 'Oxford, May 30, 1820', William Wordsworth

"Reginald, you must spend the winter at Oxford…It is high time you were preparing to look on yourself as a man" (vol. I, 101-2). This declaration made from father to son in John Gibson Lockhart's *Reginald Dalton* (1823) establishes a fundamental idea that progresses through nineteenth-century university fiction: the need to become a 'man'. What this means changes with the century and with each new fictional representation of university life. The central argument remains, though. Young men must go to university in order to become what they are not yet, to bridge the gap between youth and adult. *Reginald Dalton* is not the first work of fiction to focus on life at Oxford, but the three-decker novel sets in motion the development of university fiction in the nineteenth century. In practical terms, the novel is the one of the first texts set at Oxford University ever to be published. Judy Batson's annotated bibliography of Oxford in fiction lists nine works of fiction set at Oxford which were published prior to *Reginald Dalton*, including Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones* (1749) (*Oxford in Fiction*). Three other works preempt *Reginald Dalton* in the nineteenth century: *Fleetwood: Or, the Man of New Feeling* (1805) by William Godwin; *Frederick: Or, the Memoirs of My Youth* (1811) (no author named); and *Rhydisel; or, the Devil in Oxford* (1811) by Andrew Gregory Johnston.[9]

[9] Batson technically lists four novels as published in the nineteenth century prior to *Reginald Dalton*. She includes *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* by Thomas Holcroft and notes the publication date of the third edition, 1801. However, the first edition was published in 1794. Batson also does not include an author for *Rhydisel*. However, the British Library

Marion Lochhead, a biographer of Lockhart, states that 'There have been many novels about Oxford, with some sort of plot worked into the pattern of nostalgic memories. In this form also Lockhart was an innovator' (124). She identifies the three-volume work as 'probably the first Oxford novel to be written' and believes the work 'full of charm' with 'so many virtues that it is somewhat baffling to find that they do not add up to make a good novel' (12, 127). Andrew Lang, when writing in the 1890s, says of *Reginald Dalton* that 'Though still current at railway book stalls, it is, on the whole, a conventional novel' (310). Assessment of its quality aside, the novel evidently remained in circulation throughout the nineteenth century. John Dougill and Mortimer Proctor both also note the novel as the beginning of the university fiction in the period. Dougill states in his *Oxford in English Literature* that 'The book that launched the Oxford novel proper was J.G. Lockhart's popular *Reginald Dalton* (1823), a work which did much to establish the conventions of the genre, for around the character growth of a raw and promising youth are hung narrative digressions in praise of Oxford's beauty and past' (92-3). That the Oxford novel can be defined as a 'genre', as Dougill suggests, is highly contestable.[10] The 'conventions' that Dougill references are the plot points common among fiction set at a university – town and gown fights, rowing, hunting, drinking, missing lectures and chapel services, and, as he also notes, an admiration for the beauty of the university landscape. Indeed, Proctor comments on Lockhart's praise of Oxford as one of the factors that sets the novel apart from other university fiction. He suggests that while *De Clifford: or, The Constant Man* (1841), a novel written by Robert Plumer Ward, is like *Reginald Dalton* in terms of plot, 'Lockhart did the thing much more skillfully,' in terms of how he praises of Oxford (64). Proctor goes on to explain that 'The love of Oxford and its people was to emerge, after the middle of the century, as one of the most prominent characteristics of the university novel, but Lockhart gave its first effective expression in fiction, just as he did the cause of university reform' (64). Though Proctor focuses on a love for Oxford and call for reform as key accomplishments of *Reginald Dalton*, this assessment of the novel vastly oversimplifies the depiction of university culture and the intricacies of the plot. In general, past critical assessment of the text is minimal, yet Lockhart's work compels further and more considered exploration.

notes Johnston as the author. I could find no listing for *Frederick: Or, the Memoirs of My Youth* by the British Library or the Bodleian.

[10] It is worth noting that Proctor's *The English University Novel* also upholds the same questionable assertion that university fiction is a genre. Also, in Proctor's discussion of *Reginald Dalton*, he incorrectly assigns the title *Reginald Dalton* a subtitle – *A Story of English University Life* – which is not included in Lockhart's original text.

Reginald Dalton does not cultivate strict categorization as a novel. The text has the three-volume publication structure that became so popular by the middle of the nineteenth century, but as Dougill notes, the plot has 'all the melodrama of an eighteenth-century novel' (93). The style has roots in the romantic and melodramatic tropes of the previous century and yet contains humour that anticipates the comic novel of the mid-Victorian era. Lockhart's writing is largely descriptive, yet at times the structure shifts entirely to have dialogue appear as it would in a play, all description removed. The text is a hodgepodge of distinct authorial choices that tread the line between literary trends both new and old. That the novel has been noted as part of the 'genre' of Oxford fiction has kept the title alive; however, the previous ways in which the plot is described and summarised has done little to stimulate further conversation regarding the text. While the second and third volumes are, largely, set at Oxford, the first volume sets up a tale about patriarchal struggle and deep-seeded family conflict. Aside from university life, the following volumes also contain a story of young love and desire. This establishes a precedent for future fictional representations of Oxford life: while a novel may be set at the university, there are greater societal stakes that characterise and impact that experience. Overall, the main thrust of *Reginald Dalton* is familial expectation that directly defines how masculinity is presented and critiqued.

To complicate how ideas of manhood are presented here, the novel has what Palmeri calls 'satiric energies' ('Narrative Satire' 363). Andrew Lang, a biographer of Lockhart, states that 'the career of Reginald…is, no doubt, exaggerated' (310). Lockhart used satire in his critiques, caricature in his novels, and wit in his poetry. Jonathan Henry Christie, one of Lockhart's closest friends, noted his love 'wit and satire' and labelled him an 'incessant caricaturist' (Lochhead 17). He was a man who utilised the power of humour to his advantage. But his love of mockery and harsh critiques were a problem and earned him the nickname 'the Scorpion' (Lochhead 17-8). Though his satirical energies do not constitute the text being classified as a satire, they do work to cultivate comic and critical undertones. Romance and ideas of chivalry, for example, are called into question as Reginald falls in love and then must later defend his love's honour in a duel. The novel plays on the chivalric ideal, depicting the foibles of such romantic impulses. Indeed, the patriarchal struggle underlying the winding plot is rooted in John Dalton's ineptitude with romance. Thus, the novel critiques ideas of the heroic, presenting an exaggerated masculine struggle for control over both the internal and the external.

When considered in terms of gender performance, this disparity takes on greater complexity and raises questions about whether gender is defined from within or without. John Tosh argues that

for young men, the 'qualification for a man's life among men – in short for a role in the public sphere – depends on their masculinity being tested against the recognition of their peers during puberty, young adulthood and beyond' (*Manliness and Masculinities* 35). The idea of testing suggests a kind of educational process to gender, and thus, the university setting takes on a crucial role as part of bestowing this 'qualification'. That this testing is done through peers is a key point to be dissected further in this chapter. For now, what is important to consider is the link between university life, male development, and modes of humour. Bevis notes how 'comedy frequently involves a play between the physical and cognitive perspectives,' and such play is reflected here in the tension of comedic university antics and the heavily emotive language of Reginald's inner turmoil (27). The comic and satirical styles at work in the novel question both university culture and the ideals of manliness such a microcosm generates. Therefore, this chapter will seek to explore issues of control that define the male, patriarchal ideal.

Tosh further argues in his work on *Manliness and Masculinities* that 'In most societies the energy of young men who are physically mature but not yet in a position to assume the full duties or privileges of an adult is combustible, to say the least. Much of the offence that they give is because they precociously affect fully adult modes of masculine behaviour in exaggerated or distorted forms' (42-3). Questioning these exaggerated or distorted forms in *Reginald Dalton* offers greater insight to the male ideals at play here. For, as Tosh notes, this grey area between youth and maturity is combustible, and that volatility creates a useful space from which to question how manhood is defined.

Comedy of College Life

Reginald Dalton establishes that there is 'the sense of freedom from domestic authority' and 'all the joy and pride of independence' when coming to Oxford (vol. II, 237). Young men attending university have a greater liberty from home and school. This institutional change, the text suggests, sparks both celebration and self-satisfaction in facing a new social and intellectual environment alone. Moreover, these undergraduates 'fling far from them all dull remembrances of scenes where they have found themselves treated as boys, and see in every unrebuked bumper, and hear in every fearless jest, the assertion of liberty, and pledge of manhood' (vol. II, 237-8). The description here of 'fearless jest' indicates that this new masculine freedom is displayed in part through joking. If there can now be a sense of fearlessness in jesting, that suggests that there has been fear, or at least an

awareness, surrounding previous jests. Thus, manliness has more lenient comic structures and can be cultivated without constraint or 'fear'. This calls us to consider the nature of jokes and how they are part of gender performance. Bevis observes that 'jokes are one way of inviting us to think about what we know – and what we think we know' (4). Freedom in joking is identified as part of the 'pledge of manhood'; therefore, comedy may provide a way of rethinking assumptions about masculinity and how ideas of manliness define the university experience conveyed in fiction.

This new found freedom, particularly in jesting and enjoying oneself, is a definitive aspect of university life. There, as Frederick Chisney argues to Reginald, an undergraduate becomes 'a man of the world' (vol. I, 52). However, he also becomes a man of Oxford. Frederick Chisney identifies as an 'Oxonian', and what this means is defined through the customs and spaces of the university (vol. I, 41). Posed humourously and in an exaggerated manner, the habits of university life are called into question and complicated beyond the sense of fun and freedom they invoke. His father, the Rev John Dalton, warns that "Oxford was, and always must be, a place of great temptation, in more ways than one" (vol. I, 102). This ominous warning indeed foreshadows Reginald's experience of the university, despite innocently promising his father that he "will never spend a single sixpence I can help" (vol. I, 103). The stage is set to see if he will live up to this vow.

The drinking culture is the first questionable Oxford habit to be identified, and this discussion occurs before Reginald leaves home for the university. Richard Dalton, Reginald's uncle, tells Reginald and his friend Chisney, "O young devils, beware of wine and wantonness – beware of wine and wantonness, I say – but John, John, cousin John, your glass is empty, man" (vol. I, 121). The disparity between the emphatic warning and the desire to share more wine presents a comical contrast of word versus deed. Though here the enjoyments of drinking are depicted through an older gentleman, the novel emphasizes repeatedly that drinking is for the young or 'youth, glorious YOUTH' (vol. I, 338). Quickly, Reginald succumbs to the temptation to partake. The narrator describes that 'Steady hands filled the brimming glasses – light and happy hearts prompted toast and song – gaily, freely, carelessly, kindly did they talk, and Reginald said to himself, a thousand and a thousand times over, that he had at length found the terrestrial Elysium' (vol. I, 339). He enjoys alcohol as a kind of divine experience, or 'the majesty of the libation' (vol. I, 334). The narrator, in lamenting that youth have the ability 'to shake off the painful part of its immediate consequences', presents it as an enjoyable experience for those young enough to recover from it (vol. II, 10).

We are soon shown the consequences of Oxfordian wine parties, however. While drinking may constitute a method of male homosocial bonding, this is contrasted by the shame felt later.

Little detail is offered as the nature of the wine party Reginald hosts in his rooms, though we are told that 'The madness of youth and wine then soared high above every restraint' (vol. II, 5). After a glass of wine is thrown at one man, 'he returned the compliment with a decanter', and 'Chisney had been so extravagantly outrageous, that Reginald himself had been obliged to knock him down' (vol. II, 5). Reginald himself drinks 'quite sufficiently to render his recollection of what had passed very confused the next morning' (vol. II, 6). However, when he opens his door, he is met with the destruction, and 'with what horror did he shrink from the scene which met his view! – Tables overturned, chairs broken, gowns torn, and caps shattered – candlesticks prostrate in their own grease – bottles and glasses shivered to atoms – floods of wine soaking on the filthy floor – horrid heavy fumes polluting the atmosphere – utter confusion everywhere' (vol. II, 6-7). The style of listing here mimics the path of his eyes as they make their way around the room and take in the next object that lies in ruins. The continuous added detail makes this scene more satirical with each additional phrase until it ends in 'utter confusion everywhere'. Reginald is so appalled by the sight that he 'turned in sickness from the abomination, and clapping the door behind him, flung himself upon his bed in an agony of shame and remorse' (vol. II, 7). The dramatic description of the scene and the pathos as Reginald feels the 'agony of shame and remorse' emphasizes the hyperbole (vol. II, 7). The destroyed room takes on greater significance when considering how a young man's room was associated with his identity. Paul Deslandes explains that 'When an undergraduate welcomed others into his carefully decorated, and highly gendered, personal space, he was inviting guests to imbibe, and possibly embrace, particular masculine style' (79). College rooms are a continuation of an Oxford man's masculine self-fashioning. Dick Stukeley's rooms, for example, reflect his wealthy status, for 'being a young man of considerable fortune, he had furnished them in a style of rather more expensive elegance than is common in the place. There was no want of handsome sofas and hangings; a very pretty collection of classics occupied one end of the parlour' (vol. I, 336). The style of the room is an expression of his identity. The novel does not offer a description of Reginald's rooms when neatly constructed, only when demolished, asserting that Reginald's own self-presentation as an Oxford man is broken and stained. Thus, his shame and remorse speak beyond a lament over the mess to his demolished gender performance. That this destruction was caused through male socialization further suggests that ideas, and ideals, of masculinity are nuanced and layered through this wreckage. An Oxford man drinks, and yet alcohol consumption results in a disruption of a personal male space and a degradation of a masculine display. The two modes of masculinity, drinking and room arranging, converge on and complicate the other.

Town and gown fights are a common plot point within university fiction, perhaps because the phenomenon is entirely linked to university culture.[11] In no other setting or time of life would the disparity made between students and non-students, gownsmen and townsmen, result in physical altercations. In *Reginald Dalton*, Lockhart provides an overview of what these occasions entailed:

> Conceive several hundreds of young men in caps, or gowns, or both, but all of them, without exception, wearing some part of their academical insignia, retreating before a band rather more numerous, made up of apprentices, journeymen, labourers, bargemen – a motley mixture of every thing that, in the phrase of that classical region, passes under the generic name of *Raff*.[12] (vol. I, 276)

The description encompasses a broad overview of what characterised town and gown fighting, most significantly the division between university students and working-class men signified through dress. The academic gown is the distinguishing feature of any town and gown scene, and they were used in 'fashioning Oxford or Cambridge as specifically male spaces' (Deslandes 33). There is a gendered performance in wearing a gown that not only denotes the status of Oxbridge man but also marking the physical territory one inhabits as a male-dominated space. Deslandes observes that 'As a mark of distinction, the gown represented to freshmen their first taste of university manhood' (34). The gown becomes a signifier of an elite status, both as a member of a university and as a man. As the novel describes, 'In their gowns and tufted-caps, they reverence the robes and coronets of an inalienable and unapproachable *noblesse*' (vol. II, 268). They are separate in class, in academic status, and in appearance, set apart by the symbolic nature of the sartorial. Further, *Reginald Dalton* depicts a haggling over gowns when Reginald, Chisney, and other Oxford men find themselves caught in a town-gown row without the necessary attire to distinguish them. Chisney pleads with and threatens the tailor, Mr. Theed, saying, "The caps this instant, you old devil, or you're a dead man" (vol. I, 291). Theed allows them to choose from the available pile in his shop, and Chisney passes out the gowns of varying academic levels at random. Here there is a negotiation of masculinity, an urgency to put on the right attire, the correct mode of manliness, to appear in the world. James Eli Adams remarks that there is 'theatricality in all masculine self-fashioning', and this kind of gendered,

[11] Notably, John Henry Newman does not include a town and gown scuffle in his university novel, *Loss and Gain*.
[12] "3. a. People of the lowest social class considered collectively; disreputable or undesirable people". 'raff, n.3 and adj.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/157365.

exaggerated self-presentation is what yields humourous undertones to this kind of physical confrontation (11). The comedy is further enhanced by the behaviour of those participating in the altercation. A 'war-cry' is heard, and 'the clamour had penetrated walls, and overleapt battlements; from College to College the madness had spread and flown' (vol. I, 276-7). Oxford becomes a battle field, a setting for war with ramparts instead of college walls. This reimagining invokes a comparison to children playing in a garden, in which the ordinary, usual setting becomes to their minds a pretend world of their own creation. Town and gown positions Oxford as a fantastical space to the young men engaged in the scuffle, and they act with 'much eager, frantic, desperate zeal, as if every old monastic tower had been the scene of an unquenchable fire, every dim cloistered quadrangle of a yawning earthquake' (vol. I, 277). Lockhart consistently makes use of three adjectives instead of relying on one, and in these cases, the added emphasis has a comic effect through exaggeration. Here, the modifiers progress in intensity, from 'eager', to 'frantic', on to 'desperate', building the silliness with each additional descriptor. Images of 'unquenchable fire' and a 'yawning earthquake' in comparison emphasizes the ridiculous egotism of the gownsmen's behaviours. The dramatic wording and exaggerated comparisons paint the scene as a laughable farce of youthful bravado. Because the scene represents a masculine self-fashioning and yet is written to be satirical, the gown-wearing mode of masculinity becomes the subject of silliness. Reginald Dalton's actions during the fight further display an attempt at an ideal, heroic manhood that only plays as comedy. When Reginald sees Mr. Keith, a Catholic priest, cornered in the brawl, 'He seized the poker, got out upon the balcony, and dropt on the pavement in a twinkling' (vol. I, 260-1). He leaps dramatically down from an upper window, heroically brandishing the closest object to a sword. His behaviour is upheld as realistic by the inclusion of a footnote, which tells the story of a Hartford College man, Charles Fox, who leapt from a window during a town and gown fight (vol. I, 277). The footnote is one of Lockhart's only marginal additions across three volumes of narrative, and the connection between Reginald and a real-life student turns him into a parody. His language reveals what he believes a heroic, manly figure might say in such a moment of confrontation. When he lands from the balcony, he yells, poker in hand, "Cowards! Rascals! back, you scoundrels!" (vol. I, 261). Again, Lockhart utilizes three-part repetition to create comedic exaggeration and only make Reginald's, and Oxford's, perceptions of manhood appear ridiculous.

Attending high table dinners, drinking, raucous parties, and hunting trips are other aspects of university culture consistently portrayed in fiction and represent a newfound, male independence. Each stereotypical feature of Oxford life adds to the complicated depictions of masculinity through

the exaggerated portrayal of such events. The homosocial bonding expands beyond the walls of the university and takes on a more aggressive nature in scenes of hunting. Indeed, Reginald's peers hunt him down, as he continues to sulk over the state of his rooms, and convince him to join them. Hunting and riding are consistently depicted in university fiction as both a marker of male ability and an opportunity for farce as some aspect goes awry. These scenes can also beg questions of man's relationship to the animal, both physically and mentally. Here, the novel depicts Reginald with a wildness that reflects the connection between engaging with animals and indulging an animalistic nature. The sounds of the horn 'had maddened him. Utterly careless, utterly fearless, the boy dashed at everything, and was baulked by nothing' (vol. II, 16). That the word 'boy' is used to describe him in this moment distinguishes this maddened carelessness from manly behaviour. Hunting may be something men do, but how that masculine hobby is performed is significant and separates boy from man. How Reginald is exaggerated sets up the true punchline of the hunting expedition, the typical moment when the male protagonist fails to prove himself up to the male standard. As the scene progresses, 'Reginald, ignorant of the danger, spurred on, and his noble steed flung himself freely…and the fine animal, who had miscalculated his distance, snapped his spine in the cause' (vol. II, 17). Soon, a gun is brought to 'put the noble creature out of pain' (vol. II, 17). The brief and matter-of-fact language with which this horrific and disastrous occurrence is described creates the impact of the scene. Notably, whereas Reginald is designated in these pages as a boy and 'ignorant', the horse he rides is styled as 'noble' and 'fine'. The animal ridden is depicted more positively than the man who rode it. The attempt at homosocial bonding, much like with the college rooms, proves destructive. However, this is complicated by the effect of his actions on his peers. When Reginald recounts the story of his hunting expedition later, 'he, and the horse which had carried him, were equally the subjects of much applause' (vol. II, 20). So, 'after listening to them for a time in silence, [he] struck gaily into their tone, and…declared that he had never known what pleasure was until he had seen a fox-chace' (vol. II, 20-1). Their reactions to his tale completely shift his view on the narrative, and this ironic change creates the joke for the reader to appreciate. Reginald's perspective on himself and his actions transforms, and he loses perspective on who he is; he becomes the punchline because of what he affects to be. Overall, serious and lighthearted meld together in these common Oxford fiction tropes of drinking, fighting, and hunting to depict masculine behaviour as destructive but forgivable, easily looked over and laughable. Thus, comedy acts as a way to see past gender performance and yet dismiss the ramifications of such a presentation.

Perhaps one of the most significant temptations further faced by the male undergraduate is the Oxford credit system. The narrator states that 'whoever knows the place, is well aware that no limit is affixed by tradesmen to the credit which they grant', and 'such a system, so thoroughly established, is fraught with temptations very hard to be resisted, and, when not resisted, entailing consequences' (vol. II, 44). Indeed, Reginald, much like with other Oxford activities, 'yielded to temptations, the consequences of which he had had no previous opportunity of estimating' incurring 'a debt which he knew, on reflection, must be great, but which he had not the courage to calculate exactly' (vol. II; 44, 45). Because his peers are 'much more deeply in debt than himself' and treated the situation 'so perfectly in the light of a jest' with 'witticisms' and 'such total *nonchalance* in the air', Reginald does not worry about it (vol. II; 45, 46). It is only when considering his father that he begins to feel the weight of his decisions. After his rooms are in disarray from his first wine party, 'The image of his father rose before him – his father, far away in that virtuous solitude, robbing himself of what he could ill spare, that his son might not want the means of improvement' (vol. II, 7). This solitude is reflected in John Dalton's lonely state without his son at home and in Reginald feeling alone in his inner turmoil. Reginald ponders of his father, 'How little will he dream of frantic riot, mad debauchery, this idleness, this drunkenness, this degradation! His solitary pillow is visited with other dreams – dreams! dreams indeed! O why came I hither? – why was I flung thus upon myself, ere I had strength enough to know myself – to know if it were but my weakness?' (vol. II, 8). He questions why he ever came to Oxford at all, yet later recognizes that through his mistakes 'his mind had been forced upon itself, and that he followed no longer like a boy, but understood like a man' (vol. II, 201). This error in judgement creates a shift in him, catalysing personal growth while also revealing his character in new ways.

Though the novel depicts university men connecting through various social activities, these youthful antics are contrasted by the separation of male characters from other men and women. Reginald has a close relationship to his father, and he looks to replicate that connection with both Mr Keith, a Catholic priest and Mr Barton, his college tutor, but is unsuccessful in varying degrees. Frederick Chisney is one of Reginald's only peers, and he is quickly established as a rival, not a friend. This lack of friendship seen through the named male characters in this novel reflects the struggle for patriarchy so present in the text. Indeed, all of the adult male characters are isolated not only from one another but from society in some way, some to such a degree as to be considered ridiculous. John Dalton – and Reginald by association – confines himself to his parish, separating himself from his other male relatives, due a previous misunderstanding with his female cousin,

Barbara. He once proposed to her, and she rejected him. Yet, the narrator asserts that if he had only tried again, he would have been accepted. The text suggests that this is a failing of his isolated nature, stating that 'If he had known half as much of real young ladies, as he did of the Phaedras, Sapphos, Didos, *et hoc genus*, he would have been aware' of the ways of women and how they think (vol. I, 83). This inability to understand social norms regarding heterosexual relationships results in a compromise to his homosocial connections. He relinquishes close contact with other men, for 'he exerted all the force of his manhood in the struggle, to think no more of her…. In short, he became a perfect recluse within the bounds of his little parsonage at Lannwell' (vol. I, 85). His failure in creating a romantic partnership spurs him to the other extreme, and he uses 'all his manhood' to overcome his youthful, romantic impulses. His lack of self-control when young and naïve culminates in a lack of male ties.

In separating himself from his Oxford peers, Reginald finds new resolve to dedicate himself to his studies. The 'majesty' of a Christmas chapel service awakens a renewed sense of motivation within him, and he 'locked himself in his room, and…devoted the solitary hours of his morning to more serious study than he had for a long time been more acquainted with' (vol. II; 26, 27). Solitude, as presented here, has the benefit of removing 'temptations to idleness' (vol. II, 35). Thus, while homosocial bonding informs much about university life and how Oxford men behave, solitude forms character and discipline. Indeed, Chisney is labelled as 'the great tempter', a representation of all the negative enticements of Oxford life (vol. II, 40). However, we are told to 'Smile not, gentle reader, he was but a boy,' as if we understand the temporality of such disciplined study and sustained solitude (vol. II, 28).

Mr Daniel Barton embodies this solitude as a caricature of an Oxford tutor. He is a lone bachelor figure, choosing to keep to his Oxford study rather than interact with his colleagues and most students.[13] The text states that 'he had now for many years lived the life of a hermit – temperate to abstinence, studious to slavery, in utter solitude, without a friend or a companion' (vol. I, 300-1). The justification for this reclusive nature is both a lost love and an inability to find another profession after obtaining his degree. Like John Dalton, he is described as someone who reads rather than learns about real-life society. His 'irritated temper did not prevent him from seeking and finding occupation and consolation in his books' (vol. I, 300). Moreover, he has few pupils because

[13] Mr Barton is first referred to as 'Mr Burton' from vol I, pp. 225-8, then is changed to Barton from vol. I, p. 298, for the remainder of the novel's three volumes. His is not the only name that changes in spelling; Stukeley becomes Stukely, though this reverts back.

they do not want to join in his solitude. This unwillingness of other men to form homosocial bonds with Barton creates a sense of contagion, a state of being that could spread and must be avoided. This suggestion becomes more significant in considering homosocial bonds as a form of power. In that context, Barton's solitude weakens him as a man and also dilutes other masculinities that are connected to him. The nature of his isolation is exaggerated even further by descriptions of his physical appearance. His aged exterior is as 'one who had long forgotten the living, and conversed only with the dead, whose lamp had been to him more than the sun, whose world had been his chamber' (vol. I, 302). The full description of his physique takes up six printed pages of narration in the novel's first edition. Ironically, Barton warns Reginald against not having male friends. He says, "He that has made no friends in his youth, will scarcely find them in his manhood, and perhaps he may miss them sorely in his age" (vol. I, 309). Male homosocial bonds are formed in youth, then, not in manhood and become less achievable with age. Thus, the stakes are raised for university culture to supply and cultivate male bonding. If patriarchy hinges on these bonds, then the university becomes a space that establishes a male power dynamic. Chisney exemplifies this power in how he turns Mr Keith against Reginald. He plays on Keith's isolation and 'found means…to get into rather confidential conversation with the old man' (vol. II, 281).

The isolation of these male characters is not presented in tragic language, despite the pathos present in Barton's warning to Reginald. Indeed, Barton himself is arguably a satiric parody of an Oxford professor, longing for the company of his books more than his students. The isolation of university life is played for a joke by Mr Macdonald when he says, "Don't you know that the young gentlemen at Oxford live like so many monks in their colleges?" (vol. II, 215). There is a double irony within this quip. The novel portrays just how much the young men of Oxford socialize with one another, and yet at the same time, Reginald is depicted as a solitary character. He associates with Ellen and Mr Keith, but aside from brief excursions or conversations with Chisney, he keeps to himself in despair over his finances. Additionally, comparing undergraduates to monks implies a limit to sexual expression. Chisney's response emphasizes this further. He sarcastically remarks "Yes, like monks exactly. We wear long black gowns, ma'am, and attend matins and vespers, and say a Latin grace before dinner, and are up every night at nine o'clock, under lock and key; there's never a petticoat allowed to be seen among our quadrangles. We are a most monastic fraternity, you may depend on it" (vol. II, 216). His doubling down on the idea of them as a regimented, like-fashioned, self-disciplined collective of men insinuates just the opposite. The contrast the joke creates between perception and reality speaks to the gendered performance established through university culture.

The male homosocial space puts forth a sense of control through the traditions and regulations of college life, but the façade of such order is unveiled through humour.

Women and Patriarchy

The most consistently overlooked aspect of university fiction is the utilization of female characters. Scholarship on Oxford-based novels tends to focus attention toward texts written by men about men, or those written by women about women, with the occasional female-authored male protagonist. Though often integral to the plot, there is little to no examination afforded to representations of women in conjunction with Oxford life in the early and mid-nineteenth century. In this period, university fiction is male-focused, a logical reaction to a plethora of male protagonists. *Reginald Dalton*, however, is a novel replete with female archetypes staged in parallel to the range of male figures. These women, both embodied and not, play a significant role in the development of the plot, which again, is overlooked by scholars who widely focus on the second volume of the novel, set at Oxford. Considering this text as an 'Oxford novel' should not come at the price of overlooking the worthwhile complexities cultivated through moments set beyond the university's boundaries.

Nathaniel Whittock in his *Remarks on Reginald Dalton* aptly observes that 'Love-making, in Reginald's style, is any thing but a pleasant business' (52). This sentiment is applicable to most all of the male characters in the novel. John Dalton is estranged from his closest family because of his botched romantic attempt with Barbara. Mr Barton loses his love while living abroad before returning to his solitary Oxford rooms. Reginald's connection to Ellen results in a direct and violent conflict with Chisney. All of these relationships have a complexity that symbolizes the larger tensions in patriarchal structure. Because questions of patriarchal control are central to the novel's focus, crucial consideration must be given to the women within this power structure. On this point, Eve Sedgwick in *Between Men* offers a helpful note: "'patriarchy" is not a monolithic mechanism for subordinating "the female" to "the male"; it is a web of valences and significations that, while deeply tendentious, can historically through its articulations and divisions offer both material and ideological affordances to women as well as to men' (140). To consider patriarchy is not to examine how men seize control, setting the masculine in opposition to the feminine, but how power dynamics shift back and forth between genders and what effect this has in both directions. Thus, this analysis of how masculinity is informed and defined by interaction with women does not seek to

oversimplify issues to patriarchy, but to draw upon the complex entanglement of heterosexual relationships and gender dynamics and stereotypes that inform how manhood is conceived. The interiority that drives representations of manhood and homosocial bonding is complicated by heterosexuality. How men behave toward women and what that signifies in terms of manliness leads to questions of power and control in gender construction. What we find in the case of Lockhart's novel is a tug of war not based, as it may first appear, in patriarchal subjugation of women based in economic control, but rather male-centered rivalries rooted in revenge.

While the novel presents a variety of female figures, the three which arguably command the most focus – Barbara Dalton, Ellen Hesketh, and Barbara Catline – operate as three stereotypical archetypes: the spinster, the damsel in distress, and the coquette. That they can fall into such clear, well-established categories implies a low level of consideration given to them by the author. That two of the women mentioned in the text are named Elizabeth and another two are each named Barbara reinforces this thought. However, to leave them to their labels is to diminish the power they wield and the questions they provoke. Each of these women are largely defined by the heterosexual relationships they are in. Barbara Dalton, perhaps most significantly, is defined through the actions of John Dalton, her cousin and former love. The narrator states that 'from the day she heard of her cousin's marriage, her heart grew cold to every thing about her – to man – to life – to the world' (vol. I, 94). His dismissal of her for another woman 'filled her with a general contempt for MAN – for his levity, his inconstancy, and want of all serious passion' (vol. I, 95). Her identity becomes one based in bitterness and rejection. Because she was once rejected, she rejects even herself. The text states twice that 'Barbara had long hated herself' (vol. I, 95). Her bitterness is turned both outward and inward, and the overarching depiction of a scorned woman is a bleak image.

Tosh notes that an element of understanding nineteenth-century masculinity in terms of sexual difference is, for men, 'an intensified emphasis on rationality as against emotionality, energy rather than repose, constancy instead of variability, action instead of passivity, and taciturnity rather than talkativeness' (*Manliness and Masculinities* 69). However, between John and Barbara Dalton, there is a slight reversal of this stereotypical sexual difference. John is represented as passive for not fighting Barbara's refusal of his first proposal. His feelings toward her dwindle, and he becomes a recluse to stay away from her. Barbara, in contrast, is much more active, constant, and energetic, if not in her physical action, then in her emotions. Though a contrast based on their levels of rationality and emotionality, the gendered divide between man and woman is complicated by the same characteristics which have sought to separate them.

The stark descriptions of Barbara's pain and feelings toward humanity and herself do not romanticise or invoke compassion on her and her suffering. Instead, the exaggerated nature of her feelings calls into question romantic ideals. Her reflections are described as 'Strange, ill-assorted, wondering, perplexing, conflicting thoughts – how deep was the possession which they took of a spirit, strong in nothing but feeling, and *there* not only strong, but unable to strive against its own strength!' (vol. I, 96). The force of this pathos mirrors the power that Barbara wields in the text, both in terms of the plot and as an unmarried woman. Carolyn Dever observes that 'the powerful single woman, a spinster or widow whose awareness of her cultural capital, and whose resistance or failure to become conscripted in the marriage plot, poses a challenge to the sex/gender system of "patriarchal" power' (168). While Barbara clearly laments her failed marriage plot, she does maintain cultural capital. She has the power to determine which male family member inherits the coveted fortune. This raises the stakes of John Dalton's rejection. Dever argues that 'The spinster, like her counterpart the widow, wields a strange form of sexual power in Victorian novels' (166). Barbara has a power over John Dalton financially, and that power is directly linked to the history of romantic desire between them. She could deny him financially just as he denied her romantically and, consequently, physically. Dever speaks to this further by observing that 'Gayle Rubin views capitalism as the system of power that operates through the vigilant regulation of sex: it requires the association of maleness with activity and femaleness with passivity, and attempts to present these associations as the natural order of things' (160). Yet here, a woman is the more active and the more powerful based on her financial advantage. She is in the position to punish his male passivity. Barbara Dalton may not be very present on the page, but her financial power directly challenges ideas of patriarchal, masculine control.

The novel's central conflict hinges on the question of family inheritance. Yet, the vehicle for each character's choices and anxieties surrounding that distribution of wealth is not based in financial gain, but revenge. Both male and female characters in turn are motivated by past conflicts to try and claim the family fortune. Barbara's motivation for revenge comes directly from defining herself in terms of her failed heterosexual relationship to John Dalton. Because he did not follow through on changing her identity to that of his wife, she attempts to strip him of his identity as rightful heir to the Dalton fortune. Thus, her power comes from her familial status as inheritor from Richard Dalton but also as an unmarried woman. Or, indeed, in matriarchal control, for she chooses to pass the family fortune not to the next possible male heirs – her half-brother, Sir Charles Catline, or John Dalton – but to Sir Charles's eldest daughter. However, it is revealed in the end that she did

not specify a name on the will. When Sir Charles Catline learns that the estate is entailed, he offers that entailment to Reginald. Though Reginald is willing to honour Barbara's wishes and give the money to a female recipient, it is ultimately bestowed up him, restoring the family's patriarchal structure. Thus, Barbara's power, represented through the inheritance, is ultimately undermined and dissolved in her death.

The novel suggests a stark punishment for this maneuver in a lack of mourning. When Barbara dies and John Dalton attends her funeral, and the narrator describes his reflections on her:

> He had once loved Barbara Dalton. She had loved him too, and loved him long. She had drooped and pined because her love was unhappy. It was he, it was his juvenile love, and his juvenile rashness, that had cast a shade, never to be dispelled, over the whole after-surface of her earthly existence. What wonder that in his breast there was scanty room *now*, when he thought of *her*, for any emotions but those of gentlest compassion and regret, mingled, it may be, with some few lingering strings of self-reproach. (vol. III, 3-4)

John Dalton, reflecting on her, thinks, 'But for him, she might have been a wife, a mother – perhaps a living and a happy one' (vol. III, 13-4). Beyond this moment, however, her death is not lingered over in the narrative. The simplicity of the language replicates how the narrative presents Barbara, as simple. She is given no qualities other than that she loved and was then unhappy. More attention is given to John Dalton in this moment and his reflections on how he negatively impacted her life. His self-guilt is slight, the lack of emotion in the language revealing the lack of grief over this grave. The focus on the male perspective reflects the shifting of power dynamics back to the patriarchal structure, and the plot moves on to the mystery of which family member she entrusted the wealth.

Revenge is not an exclusively female pursuit, but is emphatically pursued by more than one of the male characters. Though money is the desired trophy in achieving self-defined justice, financial gain is not the root of the dispute in any situation. Moreover, the vengeance is aimed at other men, not at women. In acts of male retribution, women are tools rather than targets. Frederick Chisney, for example, seeks revenge on Reginald Dalton for their duel and the humiliation he suffered in apologizing for his actions. Chisney is described as 'a vain spirit' for whom the 'very thought of having stooped to solicit pardon at the hand of one who had detected such transgression, and inflicted such chastisement, was gall, worse than all the rest, and wormwood' (vol. III, 148-9).

The narration explains that 'He hated Dalton. He had injured Dalton; and therefore, had there been nothing more, he would have hated him. But Dalton had injured him too; and he hated him with the deliberate, settled rancour of a disappointed fiend' (vol. III, 150). The reciprocal nature of this harm is based on the shared power displayed in this male violence. Chisney commits to 'outwit [Reginald] in love, baffle him in ambition, and laugh at him and all his miseries beneath the roof of his ancestors' (vol. III, 151-2). This humorously exaggerated thought from Chisney foreshadows the failure that is to come from his attempts. Notably, though, all this hatred hinges on physical injury, damage to the body. Emotional value is placed, then, in inflicting physical injury, and this provokes a retaliation based in financial gain. However, this economic path to vengeance is embodied in a woman.

Miss Barbara Catline is the proposed inheritor of the Dalton family fortune; she is who Barbara attempts to the leave the money to in her, ultimately inconsequential, will. Miss Catline is described as a woman who 'had a mind of her own, and would probably, in the end, cut the knot after nobody's fancy but her own. There was something determined and even imperious in the young lady's eye; and there was infinite composure in her whole management of herself' (vol. III, 144). Unlike Barbara, who is posed as passive and defined by heartbreak, Miss Catline is conveyed as a woman of agency. However, this level of independence is portrayed as problematic. She has a 'sarcastic sneer that was any thing but ultra-filial' toward her mother or her father, and Reginald does not see her as 'very amiable or very graceful' but 'haughty' (vol. III, 145, 146). Thus, the women of the novel continue to described with unattractive qualities.

Ultimately, the novel depicts women as pawns in male violence, making them involuntary weapons wielded by men against other men. Chisney 'lays siege' to Miss Catline, theoretically stealing her away from Reginald, an act based on the false assumption that Reginald might court her to re-instate his family wealth under the Dalton name (vol. III, 151). Chisney attempts to acquire power through her, by possessing her, making her his own. Through marriage, he changes her identity and converts her financial power to his own cultural capital. He takes her to Oxford after they are married, 'and perhaps her lord was not sorry to have the opportunity of shewing off his pretty heiress and his handsome equipage to his old associates of the Cap and Gown' (vol. III, 264). As Mrs Chisney, Barbara Catline becomes an object to be paraded, but more importantly, she is used as a pawn in male vengeance. Thus, Frederick Chisney's marriage depicts women as unwitting weapons utilised by men. Barbara Catline is no different from the gun he loads and aims at Reginald. This time, though, the desired inflicted injury is emotional and financial rather than physical. Male

dominance reaching beyond the concrete into the abstract, from body into mind and heart, portrays an understanding of manhood as delineated by the interior self. Indeed, Ralph Macdonald tells his son, "ye're dreaming about your duelling again. Shall I never convince you, that this is a serious business, and none of your *rows* you fool! – None of your silly squabbles among boys, that boys are so ready to shed their bluid upon?" (vol. III, 250). Physical aggression is deemed a boyish avenue to revenge rather than a serious one. However, while it is dramatic that Chisney elopes with Miss Catline, there are comical elements to this scene. When the two are discovered to be missing from a party, Macdonald is upset to find that his son, Thomas, is still among them and, therefore, was not the one to escape with her. In the search to find the pair, Ward directs people to "run, run, search the shrubbery", which is both humourous in its phrasing and in the immediacy in thinking the two might have found a secluded spot to meet (vol. III, 187).

Significantly, the dynamics between fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, and male friendships are all in disorder while the financial power rests in female hands. While Barbara is the deciding force, Sir Charles Catline and John Dalton anxiously await one or the other receiving the estate. When both are bypassed in favour of "Sir Charles Catline's eldest daughter", and Miss Barbara Catline is thought to be the inheritor, Sir Charles, Ralph Macdonald, and Frederick Chisney each act desperately in reaction to the wealth being bestowed to her. The prospect of Ellen Hesketh inheriting as Catline's legitimate eldest daughter throws the men into further torment and chaotic behaviour. Sedgwick observes that 'in the presence of a woman who can be seen as pitiable or contemptible, men are able to exchange power and to confirm each other's value even in the context of the remaining inequalities in their power' (160). This is kind of bond is exemplified here as Ralph Macdonald tells Sir Charles Catline, "Thank Heaven, all is in our power – all – all – everything, if we only understand each other, and go hand in hand like men" (vol. III, 322). The shifting power dynamics back and forth at the end of the novel, only for the patriarchal power to restored to a male inheritor, suggests that while women may be able to hold some forms of temporary power, they are not capable of maintaining it.

Duelling and Male Violence

The most significant point of conflict, and one of the most striking features of *Reginald Dalton*, is duel between Reginald and Chisney. That Lockhart includes a duel seems incongruous to the reality of the time, by which point the duel had been a long-dying tradition. Nathaniel Whittock

clarifies that 'a transaction of the sort has never happened within the memory of the oldest inhabitant of Oxford. The statutes of the University so imperatively forbid such hostile meetings, and the certainty of the most disgraceful expulsion, should such an event take place, has most effectively prevented them' (8). The events may have been inspired by Lockhart's own life. In February 1821, his closest friend killed a man in a duel yet was acquitted in the subsequent trial (Lang 273-82). John Leigh notes the appeal of including duels in literature, observing that they 'are self-contained dramas with a beginning, a middle, and an end…Writers are drawn to duels, in the interests of discovering something fundamental about human beings and the way they variously organize and delude themselves, the way they face one another, their fears, and, ultimately, death' (7). They are moments of heightened drama that potentially function to reveal human character. Leigh further observes that many Romantic writers marginalized duels in their works, some focusing on the anticipation, others on the aftermath, making the event more about the emotions and ramifications leading up to and proceeding shots being fired (46). Here the scene is one that is less a reflection of university fiction and more an indication of the narrative's romantic tone and historical context. John Tosh claims that the practice of duelling 'is borne out by the vogue for medieval chivalry which, far from socializing men to military ways, displaced valour and danger into a safe haven of agreeable fantasy' (*Manliness and Masculinities* 65).[14] Both Tosh and John Archer note in their writings about masculinity and male violence in the nineteenth century that duelling had been consigned to history by 1850 ('Masculinities in an Industrializing Society' 334; 43). Robin Gilmour claims that this transition was in part due to the efforts of Prince Albert, who influenced a change to the Articles of War in 1844 (29). Thus, the duel is not a common feature of mid- to late-nineteenth-century fiction written about Oxford life. Instead, the physical prowess expressed through violent activities is channeled into other extracurricular pursuits, such as rowing, cricket, hunting, and town and gown scuffles. The closest comparison to Lockhart's depiction of male violence that will be examined in this study of Oxford fiction is the male student mob in *Une Culotte*. Not only is the culture of violence in Britain changed by the time in which this novel is written and set in the 1880s and 90s, the aggression of Horace William Bleackley's mob takes on more layered ramifications. The

[14] For other considerations of duelling in the nineteenth century, see Masterson, Margery. 'Dueling, Conflicting Masculinities, and the Victorian Gentleman.' *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2017, pp. 605-28, https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2017.63; and Shoemaker, Robert B. 'The Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800.' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2002, pp. 525-45, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X02002534.

two figures being pursued are actually two women disguised (unbeknownst to the hostile pack) as men.

Tosh further explains that by the mid-century 'Men of the respectable classes were expected to observe a code of behavior that minimized casual slights to others. Only in the "rough" working class did a culture of physical confrontation persist' ('Masculinities in an Industrializing Society' 334). Men of a higher class were to maintain a certain level of self-control that made them morally superior to a lesser social class, even if refusing to physically engage could be read as cowardice. Gilmour clarifies that to solve this issue of masculine passivity, nineteenth-century reformers argued 'that it takes *more* courage to refuse a duel than to fight one' (28). Thus, the manly act became one of taking the moral, self-disciplined, physically controlled high ground rather than to act in a violent manner.

The impetus for the duel in *Reginald Dalton* is crucial to note. Reginald's successes 'had kindled certain sparks of jealousy' in Chisney, including his relationship with Ellen (vol. II, 265). Chisney begins to pursue her in unwarranted retaliation, though he earlier referred to her as "some little half-German outlandish piece of goods" (vol. II, 197). Ellen is presented as nothing but an object to him, in direct contrast to how much Reginald cares for her. The narrator identifies Chisney's problem as one specific to Oxford men, noting that they have developed an idea of themselves as 'the true "*prima virorum*,"' the first of the men (vol. II, 26). He goes on to explain that 'they have taught themselves to regard every thing, and every body connected in any way with that town, and not connected with their university, as dust, absolute dust – men, women, and children, as all alike belonging to a separate, distinct, and unchangeable caste' (vol. II, 268). There is an assumed entitlement, rank, and authority about them, and 'in their gowns and tufted-caps, they reverence the robes and coronets of an inalienable and unapproachable *noblesse*' (vol. II, 268). Stephen Banks asserts that 'the ability to receive or to inflict certain forms of violence is a powerful mode of social delineation and a signifier of social status' (2). The ability to inflict pain makes assertions about identity for both the person who inflicts the violence and the person upon whom it is inflicted. In the case of Reginald's duel, it speaks not only to Chisney's assumed entitlement as an undergraduate, but also Ellen's value as a woman.

While events of the duel are focused on the men, Ellen should not be overlooked as a victim of jealousy between those two men. The narrative recognizes this in so far as to have Reginald duel in retaliation for Chisney's sexual aggression, but not beyond. It should be acknowledged that male violence was not merely about the men committing such acts, whether in acts of villainy or heroism,

but about who such violence was directed toward. Victimisation makes statements about who can be dominated and subjected to such violence. Here, Ellen is the victim of attempted sexual assault. Only Reginald's timely appearance on the scene saves her from such a violent and violating act. The scene is described with stark brevity, using enough detail to firmly insinuate Chisney's actions without putting attention on his physical force. Reginald finds them in a chapel, and suddenly, 'He saw Ellen – (she had twined her arms round a pillar) – her face deadly pale, her eyes open and aghast – and again she screamed. Close beside stood Chisney, his countenance was like fire, his dress disordered' (vol. II, 318). The emphasis here is on Ellen's physical reaction to his aggression, the focus not on the victimiser as much as the victim and the effect of physical, sexual, male violence on a female character. Such concentration sheds greater light on Chisney's actions than if his own movements and expression had been given greater detail. Banks notes that 'reference to the obligations of honour was rarely made save where the norms of gentlemanly behaviour had been so violated that no equable resolution was possible' (43). Reginald's agreement to duel with Chisney, then, emphasizes the extreme nature of this assault.

John Archer, in his chapter in *Everyday Violence in Britain*, discusses masculinity and the uses of violence. However, one reason for such violence that he fails to explore is male-on-male violence over or in defense of women. Other chapters in Shani D'Cruze's book explore women as victims of violence, much like Ellen is here a victim of sexual assault. But in being the target of male violence, she in turn becomes the catalyst for the violence which follows. Archer does explore 'the notion of the "real man" who is tough, capable of taking care of himself in a fight, defends his mates and protects his family through violence if need be' (46). Women could be grouped with 'family' as wives, sisters, mothers, daughters or other relatives, but family could easily include other, younger male members of a household as well. If this is the case, and women are only defended by members of their own family, that would make Reginald's actions in protecting Ellen even more extreme (or perhaps, simply more romantically satisfying to a reader). That Archer does not address women as a separate source of male violence is potentially both an oversight and a reflection of historical and cultural change. If within Archer's focused time period of the mid- to late-nineteenth century women are not in-and-of themselves factors in violence committed between men, then this indicates how much notions of gentlemanly chivalry diminished in the early part of the century. This also makes sense when considering *Reginald Dalton* was published in 1823.

Stephen Banks's examination of duelling, however, sheds light on how women were protected by such a confrontation. He notes that 'The protection of women, or, to put it less

generously, the extension of a proprietary interest over women, reoccurs as a theme throughout the history of English duelling' (58). He goes on observe that most duels were not fought over the honour of women, but when they were, 'The inconvenience was to the woman, but in consequence of his relationship to her at that time, the affront was to the man accompanying. It lay in the suggestion that he was unable to protect her interest' (58). This places emphasis back on the men engaging with one another, not the woman in question. Duels were centered around ideas of gentlemanliness, with any women involved merely reflections of that status.

Ultimately, there remains the problem of this duel over a woman and her honour. Archer quotes language from an 1861 publication, the *Porcupine*, that describes acts of male violence as 'the manly art of "self-defense"' (51). But what about the defense of women? The manly art of female defense? For that is what we see here, and that is what we must consider. Reginald defends Ellen from Chisney in the moment of the act, but this defense is taken a step further when moved to the duelling field. The necessity for pistols to be drawn implies that it is not enough for a man to defend a woman's body; he must also defend her honour. This responsibility Reginald seems to take on from a sense of manly duty, not because Ellen asks it of him. There is a 'man as protector' idea reflected in his action, but more so, a notion of man as the one in control. Ellen is not depicted as having any control over her situation. Instead, men control her, or at least attempt to. Chisney tries to express control over her physically, and Reginald, in retaliation, takes guard over her virtue. Both forms of power are linked back to Ellen's sexuality, men taking on the role of both predator to and defender of the female body. The chivalrous notion of a man being needed to preserve female honour, seizing a control over her in another form, is upheld. Thus, duelling becomes an action rooted in (and spurred by) sexuality and codes of gentlemanly behaviour. Sexual violence is policed through weaponised violence.

How a man takes on this protector role in relationship to women is key to understanding the ideas of masculinity at work here. Archer comments that the idea of 'man as protector' takes shape because 'evidently that is how men viewed themselves' (46). This emphasis on self-view reflects what John Dalton tells Reginald early in the novel as he argues for the importance of a university education. He states "It is high time you were preparing to look on yourself as a man" (vol. I, 102). Manhood, then, is about a view of the self, yet Archer and Lockhart communicate separate thoughts here. Archer asserts the idea of the collective, men viewing themselves corporately, socially, in a certain way that informs the whole. Lockhart's novel puts forth a more individualistic notion, that identifying yourself as a man is a view of the self. This is reflected in the differing ideas of manhood

that Chisney and Reginald express. Chisney enacts his masculinity in the physical violation of a woman, while Reginald's actions endorse a more gentlemanly character. Both paths lead to the duelling field, and both take their control over a woman's being in some form. Male violence, and indeed, masculine behaviour more broadly, is based on a male self-view that is formulated individually and yet informed and policed corporately. Reginald acts as peer policeman in both confrontations with Chisney, and his doing so reflects a broader cultural understanding, as Archer notes, of men as protectors. Particularly it seems, men assert their masculinity in the protection of women, both in the concrete and abstract.

Interestingly, the language regarding the duel, much like the description of Chisney's assault on Ellen, does not place the emphasis on the physical violence. The duel itself is described briefly. The narration simply states, 'The signal was given – both fired, and neither fell' (vol. II, 331). The account is factual and unemotional. They fire again, and 'Reginald's arm was touched just below the elbow – but almost ere he *felt* the blow, he was aware that his own ball had taken severer effect. He saw Chisney spring from the ground, and fall prostrate. There was a shouting and crying – some one leapt from behind a hedge – all was confusion – his eye became unsteady, and he could scarcely stagger a few paces forwards, ere he also fell' (vol. II, 331). The movement of one description to the next reflects the chaos of the moment as Chisney is hit in the right groin. However, the language of this duel is brief compared to the emotional escalation prior to Reginald's self-imposed duty. He feels the course of events deeply before the duel takes place:

> He knew that his life, if he preserved it, was changed, changed in every colour…He felt, however, that he could not do otherwise – than he was about to do. There was trouble, darkness, miserable darkness within; but there was burning ire too – indignation, and contempt, and steady scorn, and the hot thirst of blood; all these, strangely blended with the tender yearnings of a young and living love, and yet all shrouded and enveloped, more strangely still, in a profound feeling of weariness of life. (vol. II, 328)

The passage is evocative and speaks to the inner stirring the provokes the outward violent action of firing his pistol at Chisney. The language is primal and thus implies that the duel to follow is the result of an animalistic desire. Chisney, likewise, is described as stamping his foot, an animalistic, or perhaps childish, behaviour (vol. II; 318, 330). This imagery and its connection to the violence to

follow creates a depiction of duelling varied from that of a chivalrous 'meeting' (vol. II, 325). Instead, there is a sense of uncontrollable urges based in an aggressive 'thirst for blood' but also in a 'living love' that complicates the meanings and messages behind the duelling field. This lack of emotional control is compounded by violent attempts at physical dominance.

Reginald Dalton, however, threads the line between male violence being a significant issue that results in substantial consequences while also being an act staked in morality. Reginald's duel and subsequent punishment reflects a 'growing intolerance' for male violence in the nineteenth century (Archer 43). Reginald is apprehended after the confrontation, taken to Oxford Castle, and removed from the university. There is a clear punishment invoked for firing his pistol at Chisney, wounding him. His arrest is laden with pathos; Ellen rushes out of the house and screams as they lead him away. Reginald breaks free from those detaining him; 'He caught her in his arms, and pressed her to his beating breast – she folded herself round him – her white arms encircled him with wild and clinging energy – she sobbed out her love and her terror – she grew to him as if death could not divide them' (vol. II, 339). Not only is Reginald separated from Ellen because of this exchange; the punishment for Reginald in participating in dueling is also a loss of status as an Oxford man. He observes that 'He knew perfectly well, that if there be one offence for which the rules of academical discipline admit of no forgiveness, he was on the brink of committing it. He knew that he had virtually ceased to be a member of the university' (vol. II, 328). However, while the university as an institution might reject him, other men of the university do not. When arrested, he is 'surrendered by the city-officers into the hands of one of the Proctors, and forthwith conducted to the Castle, under the guidance of this academical magistrate, who treated him with every kind of politeness and sympathy' (vol. II, 340). The men of his college also come to visit him, and his cell becomes a succession of visits 'by almost all the gentlemen of his own college, with whom he had at any period lived on terms of the smallest intimacy. Their society, their purses, whatever these thoughtless young fellows could command, was offered with such heartiness and sincerity as if he had been the brother of each of them' (vol. III, 24). The bond between Oxford men is shown to be lasting despite any break in relationship with the university. Indeed, 'That very day the official notification of his having ceased to be a member of the University, was handed to him in his prison. He had expected it; - yet when it came it was still a blow' (vol. III, 27). When Mr Ward, a family friend, comes to visit, he reassures Reginald "you have done nothing but what is honourable to you, and Oxford is not the world" (vol. III, 32). Placing the university into perspective offers an important moment of recognition that not everything is defined by Oxford.

As a result of the duel and his subsequent arrest, Reginald's self-view is altered when a letter arrives from his father. He refuses to open it, arguing to himself, "'What right have I," he said to himself, "to receive language which *now* he could not address to me? It was not to *me* this letter was written. The touch of this bloody hand shall not pollute it'" (vol. III, 1). His declaration suggests that his identity has changed through this violent action, which further implies that identity follows and is influenced through action. His father instructed him to begin looking upon himself as a man, and here, Reginald cannot identify himself as his father's son. The attempt at control through male violence and gentlemanly chivalry results in an unsteadiness of identity as a Dalton and as an Oxford man. Thus, there is an ultimate lack of control that results from this kind of male-defined behaviour. Yet, the man who informs John Dalton of his son's action says, "'tis only a duel, sir – a duel about a girl, sir – Young men will be young men, sir" (vol. III, 17). In the end, this nonchalant attitude toward dueling is upheld as all is resolved. Chisney elopes with Miss Catline. Reginald marries Ellen and claims the family fortune. Though no longer an Oxford man, Reginald's heroic gentlemanliness is rewarded and reaffirmed.

The beginnings of university fiction demonstrated in *Reginald Dalton* formulate a complex relationship between student and Oxford. In the end, despite the care Reginald receives from his peers, he is disconnected from the university and the emotional turmoil faced there. Indeed, interior struggle defines Reginald's experience as an Oxford man, the depiction of university life driven by romantic sentimentalism. While the text sets up key tropes used in proceeding university fiction, more significantly, it showcases a deep tension between Oxford and the young man who comes to study there. The desire to conform to university culture, to participate in the homosocial bonding so prevalent in college life, and the struggle to maintain firm principles sets the tone for the fictions to follow.

Chapter 2 – An Oxford Man of Faith: *Loss and Gain*

But who shall dare
To measure loss and gain in this wise?
Defeat may be victory in disguise;
The lowest ebb is the turn of the tide.

- 'Loss and Gain', Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Most students of John Henry Newman's vast body of written work would not immediately associate the famous theologian and scholar with university fiction. However, *Loss and Gain*, his 1848 novel, positions Oxford University at the center of a conversion experience. Though the protagonist, Charles Reding, is in some ways a self-representation of the author, Newman's own conversion took place after his university years. The distinction between Newman's lived experience and the fictionalized version has led readers to question the purpose behind the novel's composition. Undoubtedly, the text is a first attempt at what he later achieved in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, his 1864 spiritual autobiography. The advertisement Newman composed for the novel's sixth edition clearly positions the work as a response, most likely to Elizabeth Harris's novel *From Oxford to Rome*, which told the story of a conversion turned reversion, thus suggesting that other converts, such as Newman, may experience a similar return to the Church of England (Hill x). The advertisement to the sixth edition claims that *Loss and Gain* was composed as a tale with 'stricter regard to truth and probability, and with at least some personal knowledge of Oxford' (Newman 3). In writing the novel, Newman wanted to produce a more skillful work in order to show that 'as in a specimen, that those who were smitten with the Catholic Church, were nevertheless as able to write common-sense prose as other men' (3). The first edition was 'completed within weeks', and nine subsequent editions of the novel were published during Newman's lifetime; he edited each, making adjustments with each new printing (Hill x, vii). It was a work that Newman cared about, continuously reconsidering and revising. Though initially published anonymously, the identity of the author was quickly surmised in the 1848 advertisement, although Newman disclaimed 'personal

allusion', claiming the story to be imaginary (Hill xvii).[15] To some degree, *Loss and Gain* is an argument fought through fiction. The novel form is utilized as method of 'defending his agonizing decision' of converting to Catholicism (Hill ix).[16] It is understandable, then, that what readers might expect from *Loss and Gain* is a more deliberate conversation between fiction and reality. Alan Hill suggests in his 1986 introduction to the novel that critics of the time hoped it would contribute more to the religious debates of the age (vii). In asking of the text what it was not offering, readers have potentially missed the contribution Newman's novel offered then and continues to offer now.

While fairly labelled as semi-autobiographical, *Loss and Gain* is neither true autobiography, nor memoir, nor novel of nostalgia. However, the similarities between the novel and Newman's own life provoke comparisons between protagonist and author. Robert Lee Wolff notes that 'Charles Reding's family background, his powerful intellectual interests, his failure to obtain a "first-class" in the examinations for his degree, his love of music, and his growing conviction that he must live a celibate life – all reflect Newman's own personal history'[17] (Wolff 45). Reding never receiving his Oxford degree may also be 'a thinly-veiled allusion to Newman's own resignation of the rectorate of St Mary's' (Bequette 142). There may be no avoiding the correlations drawn between the two, but any paralleling may limit a reader's capacity to ask fresh questions central to the novel itself. Moreover, there are key differences of time and setting worth taking into account. Newman alters the timeline of his 'own spiritual travels leading to his conversion, shortening the process – which actually took a dozen years or more – for art's sake into a mere six' (Wolff 44). The change allows the novel to consistently orbit the university setting, making Oxford life central to the conversion experience.

Given the multi-faceted characteristics of the novel, critics have varied widely in determining how to best approach it. The work's subtitle, 'The Story of a Convert', identifies this as the narrative's central concern. John Peck observes that '*Loss and Gain* is as much about the shaping and forming of Charles Reding's mind, heart and will, as it is about the outcome of that shaping: that is,

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[15] For more on the publication history of *Loss and Gain*, see Wolff, Robert Lee. *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*. John Murray, 1977, p. 44 and 47.

[16] Alan Hill notes in his introduction to the 1986 Oxford University Press edition of *Loss and Gain* that Newman loved novels, and like John Gibson Lockhart, was a staunch admirer of Sir Walter Scott (viii).

[17] Perhaps one the most surprising biographical details about Newman are his examination results from Oxford. Wolff notes that he 'collapsed and barely passed' (56). For more, see Ker, Ian. 'Newman, John Henry [St John Henry Newman] (1801-1890).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 24 Sept. 2004, https://www-oxforddnb-com.libproxy.york.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-20023.

his conversion to Catholicism' (46).[18] The Oxford University setting and its relationship to Charles Reding's conversion distinguishes the novel from Newman's own life and connects the narrative to other university-based fiction. Mortimer Proctor, however, contends that *Loss and Gain* 'reveals a good deal more about Newman than it does about Oxford' and 'qualifies as a university novel chiefly by default' (93).[19] This short-sighted assessment unhelpfully diminishes the significance of depicting religious exploration and conversion as a product of university life and culture. In contrast, Ed Block argues that Newman is celebrating the university through the text (44). Somewhere within the tension of these viewpoints lies the reality that the narrative has a great deal to say about Oxford, not all positive. There is an indictment within its pages of a university that is narrow-minded in its allegiances, questions, and traditions. For all the love Reding feels toward Oxford, he cannot resolve the conflict between the two institutions – the university and the Catholic Church. He is forced to choose. The central conflict of the narrative is, at its core, a battle of the heart and mind, a war with the self in a quest for truth. Joseph Ellis Baker notes that the novel does not focus on the politics of the Oxford Movement, as one might expect, but rather the personal, individual religious experience (57).[20] He argues that 'Newman in each of his novels gives us a plot based upon…a picture of a character acting in a certain way *in spite of* heredity, environment, and self-interest' (Baker 62). While this is a story of personal transformation, or gain, the narrative also conveys the loss experienced through conversion. Alan Hill concludes that 'Newman's theme is a characteristically Romantic one, a mental growth of an individual in the promise of youth with his life opening out before him, who has to choose between rival systems and loyalties which vie for his attention and support, as he develops through trials and tribulations' (xiii). That this is fundamentally a narrative of personal growth prompts questions of what Reding is becoming. His conversion to the Catholic Church is, I

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[18] For consideration of *Loss and Gain* as a Bildungsroman, see Block, Ed. 'Venture and Response: The Dialogic Strategy of John Henry Newman's *Loss and Gain*.' *Renascence*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1990, pp. 45–60, https://doi.org/10.5840/renascence1990/1991431/25; King, Joshua. "Print Culture." *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman*, edited by Frederick D Aquino and Benjamin J King, Oxford University Press, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198718284.013.5; Peck, John. 'Newman and the Victorian Self: From Loss and Gain to the Apologia.' *New Blackfriars*, vol. 78, no. 912, 1997, pp. 85–95, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1997.tb07575.x.

[19] In his paragraphs on *Loss and Gain*, Proctor misspells 'Reding' as 'Redding', which, like other observations or erroneous facts Proctor gives, says more about him than it does about Oxford fiction.

[20] For more on Newman and the Oxford Movement, see Baker, Joseph Ellis. *The Novel and the Oxford Movement*. Russell and Russell, 1965; Nockles, Peter B. "The Oxford Movement." *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman*, edited by Frederick D Aquino and Benjamin J King, Oxford University Press, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198718284.013.1.

argue, only part of what this transformation means. Underlying *Loss and Gain*'s questions of faith is also an exploration of manliness and its relationship to religious self-questioning.

To some degree, this mid-century novel maintains similar concerns to that of Lockhart's *Reginald Dalton* twenty-five years earlier. Charles Reding experiences the interior struggle of navigating university culture, particularly with his peers. His interactions with them, however, are not defined by the typical undergraduate activities demonstrated previously (wine parties, hunting, overspending), nor is there the same insecurity of patriarchal structure or displays of violence toward other men and women. The interior struggle Reding faces is not made up of the temptations of homosocial activities. Rather, his university life consists of a series of conversations. As Block argues, 'Newman's characters, it is said, lack depth and realism. Perhaps that is because, like the characters in Plato's dialogues, the characters of *Loss and Gain* represent not only the people in Charles Reding's life but "typical" attitudes, intellectual positions, and ways of life' (47). The novel's structure is dialectical, a reflection of Newman's belief that the primary form of education is through peers (Loughlin 231). The narrative arch is one of religious questioning, soul-searching, seeking to understand, and much of this is navigated through conversations with other men. Hill observes that Reding's 'progress as a hero is an ironic challenge to the expectations of ordinary readers. For his heart is not set on marriage and prosperity in this world, but a promised land beyond the flux of nature and time' (xiv). His development subverts cultural markers of manliness – marriage and career – yet this does not negate how conceptions of masculinity come into tension with questions of faith. Indeed, these tensions between manliness are representative of the duality between the exterior and interior self. In the novel's first paragraph, Rev Reding, Charles Reding's father, monologues to the reader, 'There is no telling what is in a boy's heart; he may look as open and happy as usual, and be as kind and attentive, when there is a great deal wrong going on within' (5). This observation establishes a distinction between the inner and outer characteristics of a boy, with education posed as the method by which the two are brought into harmony. Rev Reding continues, 'So he shall go to a public school. There he will get discipline at least…he will gain habits of self-command, manliness, and circumspection' (6). His statement identifies education as a methodology for a manliness defined by self-control and an attentiveness attuned to maintaining that control. Public school, then, is also posed as a space that shapes and defines understandings of masculinity. Operating in parallel to this idea of manliness, however, is Reding's exploration of faith, a journey which he finds much more difficult to navigate. He laments 'I wish I knew what to believe; no one will tell me what to believe; I am so left to myself' (67). Newman believed faith and reason to be

habits of mind and wanted the university to be a place where the mind could be cultivated (Norris 75; *Idea of the University* 10). Faith is not achieved by the same approaches as manly self-discipline. Manliness is positioned as a set of prescribed ideas and forms of behaviour, achieved through education, while faith is a much more solitary endeavour of the mind and heart. Though the communal, homosocial nature of the university attempts to stipulate a belief system, the novel demonstrates a progression that runs contrary to that effort. The novel is, as Newman's subtitle emphasizes, a story of conversion, and in many ways, a story of rejection, not simply of the Church of England, but of the power the university tries to enforce over ideas of faith and manliness. Rather than an acceptance of prescribed identities, there is choice. Within a process of choosing who to become, manliness and faith diverge and overlap, differentiate in how they are formed yet inform one another.

Reding's contrary perspective is reinforced through the novel's use of humour, particularly its satirical elements. Hill notes that the novel is both 'effective as satire' and has 'a vein of ironic humour' with 'entertaining caricatures' that demonstrate opposing views and a lack of understanding of their own (vii, xiii, xvi). Newman's 'dialogical structure deepens both the humor *and* the seriousness of the novel's play with ideas' (Block 47). The tone is neither categorically satirical or comic, yet '*Loss and Gain* has many comic passages (Newman laughed aloud from time to time as he wrote it); it gives the reader a vivid series of portraits, some of the caricatures of the protagonists of the various schools of religious opinion at Oxford in the thirties and forties' (Wolff 44). The characters here are a parade of opinions, all curated to ask the contemporary religion-based questions of the Anglican Church and to demonstrate lasting issues of how faith is conceived and defended. The invocations of humour operate as a method by which to ask more questions than the text verbalizes directly, and to demonstrate why asking such questions of the mind and heart behind religious belief matters.

The Mind and Heart of Faith

In *Loss and Gain*, and throughout Newman's canon of writing, the mind is central to the formation of the self. In *The Idea of the University*, he claims that the purpose of men's university education is 'to mould their characters, form their habits, educate their hearts through educating their minds' (Newman 9). This formation of mind is directly linked in thought to conceptions of gender. The idea of becoming a 'gentleman' operated as a 'cultivation of mind', with the goal to

tame a young man's intellect (Newman 10; Loughlin 226). That manly characteristics are linked to this cultivation is something Newman acknowledges, stating that 'I do not deny that the characteristic excellences of a gentleman are included in it' (10). Yet, he clarifies that this does not enforce strict ideas of what constitutes manliness; education is not about 'their formation on any narrow or fantastic type, as, for instance, that of an "English Gentleman" may be called, but their exercise and growth in certain habits, moral or intellectual' (Newman 6). Thus, the university, in Newman's view, is to be a place where habits of mind are cultivated, and these habits cannot help but inform gendered characteristics. This view of a university is applied to the Oxford portrayed in *Loss and Gain*. The orthodox Oxford view of the mind is expressed by Mr Vincent, a junior tutor of St Saviour's, who tells Reding, "there is a robust, masculine, noble independence in the English mind…some great and beautiful production of nature, – a tree, which is rich in foliage and fantastic in limb…which in careless magnificence sheds its fruits upon the free earth" (62). He metaphorically associates the mind with the idea of an English masculinity; the mind operates as a part of national and gendered identity. Reding later connects manliness with being able to reason. He asks Freeborn, "But how are we to arrive at truth at all…except by reason? It is the appointed method for our guidance. Brutes go by instinct, men by reason" (32). The ability to reason, to discern what is true, is a defining characteristic of being men. Further, when discussing the impetus of faith with Willis, Reding adds, "there must be some ground for faith; we do not believe without reason" (217). He later observes of himself that "Reason has gone first, faith is to follow" (251). The mind, then, is vital to faith for it is through reason that faith comes. If the university cultivates the mind, then the educational process it nurtures by extension becomes integral to arriving at faith. This significance of the university may justify Newman's decision to set his novel of conversion within the walls of Oxford. There, reason has the potential to develop and lead to truer belief.

The university creates a space in which there seems to be a conflict between cultivating the mind through interaction with peers or through solitary reflection. For much of the novel, Reding is listening to others more than speaking. He is characterised as 'naturally timid and retiring, over-sensitive, and, though lively and cheerful, yet not without a tinge of melancholy in his character, which sometimes degenerated into mawkishness' (6). This presentation may make him a somewhat romantic figure, and James Eli Adams observes that 'As in the poetry of Wordsworth, it is the evocation of solitary, even solipsistic, depths in the individual soul that most powerfully reached Newman's young audience' (81). Reding's solitude echoes a longing undergraduates felt for intimacy, for surrogate fathers and elder brothers in their tutors, and this same longing is expressed through

Newman's pedagogy and theology (Adams 78-9). Though other examples of university fiction showcase the homosocial bonding of college life, Reding 'had no one to talk to, or to sympathize with him under them. And it was completed by the necessity of carrying about with him a secret which he dared not tell to others, yet which he foreboded must be told one day' (175). Thus, it is his conversion, the struggle with his mind and his faith, that leads to this feeling of isolation. While Reding is rarely portrayed as externally alone, the novel's structure built on dialogue, the constant presence of others directly contrasts the overwhelming sense that he is spiritually, mentally, and emotionally isolated. David Bradshaw argues that the novel exemplifies 'a deliberate turning point toward prudent reserve that fosters individuation and spiritual growth…a conscious decision to acknowledge silence and secrecy as means through which a spiritual force can actualize the self' ('Secrecy and Reticence' 49). While conversation with his peers directs his spiritual journey, the contemplation of faith is one made privately, focused inward. As in Newman's own experience, 'Conversion for Charles Reding will come…largely as the result of regularly evolving ideas that over time have been given sustained private consideration in a tranquil and independent mind' (Bradshaw, 'Secrecy and Reticence' 51). The cultivation of the mind is simultaneously a contemplation of faith through reason.

Because of the power the mind has over identity and beliefs, it is seen as dangerous when conflicting with the cultural norms associated with either, progressing beyond the influence of others. When Carlton is trying to understand how Reding has become a Catholic, Reding tells him, "It has been entirely the working of my own mind" (255). As Reding's faith begins to align more and more to the Catholic Church, he is sent away from Oxford to prevent him from corrupting the minds of his peers. Rev Joshua Jennings, the Vice-Principal, tells him after questioning him on his beliefs, "I could not have a clearer proof that your mind has been perverted – I feel I must use a stronger term, debauched – by the sophistries and jesuistries which unhappily have found entrance among us" (168).[21] His concerns convey a view of Oxford as a pure space, clean of any ideas that might pervert a mind. That the mind is portrayed as something which can be perverted at all suggests clear distinctions between ideas which are acceptable versus unacceptable. The ability for the mind to stray from one to the other makes it dangerous, not merely to the individual, but to others. The mind, then, is presented as a contagious force with a vulnerable fragility. Reding is

[21] Wolff notes that Jennings is meant to represent Edward Hawkins, Provost of Oriel and opponent of the Tractarians (44).

'shocked at the language used about him', but when he argues that he will not do harm by remaining at Oxford, the Principal, Dr Bluett, replies "What! Remain here, sir, with all the young men about?" (168). Reding's mind is deemed a risk to others.

Though the narrative structure of *Loss and Gain* is built upon a series of religious discussions and debates, Reding's conversion experience is deeply informed by emotion. As he grapples with his faith, he cries, "Alas, I know where my heart is! but I must go by reason" (230). For Newman, faith is solidified by reason but anticipated in the heart. Moreover, the novel suggests that emotion is a part of becoming a man but poses this change in light of grief instead of joy. The death of Reding's father functions as a key turning point in his journey. The narrator states that, 'Elder sons, should their father die prematurely, are suddenly ripened into manhood, when they are almost boys. Charles had left Oxford a clever unformed youth; he returned a man' (113). The transition from youth to man hinges on a moment of grief and growth, a loss that yields a gain. In light of this loss, 'a leaf had been turned over in his life; he could not be what he had been' (113). The narrator emphasizes this by exclaiming 'O piercing change!' after Reding hears of his father's death (110). The event creates a before and after division of the plot. Prior to this, Reding questions the nature of faith, but does not seriously contemplate conversion, whereas the second half of the novel leads him to Rome. Carlton observes to his friend that 'A young man enters life with his own father's or tutor's views; he changes them for his own' (134). The death of his father allows this change to take place, for him to arrive at an acceptance of himself, at which point he can say "I know where my heart is!" (230). The heart can anticipate what reason finds, but as Reding warns, "enthusiasm is not truth" (230).

Faith and the Body

Loss and Gain demonstrates that while faith is a matter of deep thought and feeling, it is also experienced physically. An invocation of the senses is present throughout the narrative, coupling spirituality with a bodily experience, an interior reality expressed externally. An individual's spiritual nature, and even church allegiance, is conveyed as observable by sight. Edward White Benson, describing Newman as a preacher, writes that 'his appearance was exceedingly interesting' but that his face 'was awful – the terrible lines deeply ploughed all over his face, and the craft that sat upon his retreating forehead and sunken eyes' (Newsome 116). Benson biasedly links Newman's appearance to his Catholicism, yet he admits that 'his eye glistened and his whole face glowed …and when you observed what a thrill ran though the congregation, you must have said, "Surely if there be

a man whom God has raised up in this generation with more than common powers to glorify His Name, this man is he'" (Newsome 116). This physicality of faith is directly emulated in Willis, one of Reding's Oxford peers. After he converts to Catholicism, his friends can see that his 'face still glowed, and he looked as youthful and radiant as he had been two years before. There was nothing ungentle in his impetuosity; a smile, almost a laugh, was on his face, as if he was half ashamed of his own warmth; but this took nothing from its evident sincerity' (227). A divine glow is associated here with people of faith, making an inner transformation observable through an external expression of that change.

The same kind experience is conveyed through physical touch. Bateman, an Oxford man and Anglican clergyman, declares after shaking hands with Willis that "his touch has made my heart beat; how catching enthusiasm is!" (228). Here enthusiasm is not merely felt physically, but is transferrable emotionally. Reding experiences the same phenomenon when Willis kisses his cheek; 'It seemed as if the kiss of his friend had conveyed into his own soul the enthusiasm which his words had betokened' (229). This conveyance is not just momentary for Reding, but remains with him as he walks home, the heightened intimacy seemingly intensifying the emotional response. Reding 'felt himself possessed, he knew not how, by a high superhuman power, which seemed able to push through mountains, and to walk the sea. With winter around him, he felt within like the springtide, when all is new and bright' (229). The monumentalism of feeling is driven by an encounter with faith but also a sense of camaraderie, for he recognizes 'a soul sympathetic with his own' (229). Reding quickens his pace as he goes, and he manically walks almost two miles in this state of euphoria, repeating aloud 'O mighty Mother!' (229). Joshua King notes that 'Use of maternal imagery throughout *Loss and Gain* is loaded, as Tractarians and traditional High Churchmen often referred to the Anglican Church as their mother' (101). This maternal invocation extends as Reding cries, 'O mighty mother! I come, O mighty Mother! I come; but I am far from home. Spare me a little; I come with what speed I may, but I am slow of foot, and not as others, O mighty Mother!' (229). However, based on his previous questioning and this newfound connection to Willis, he appears to be invoking the Catholic Church. The spiritual nature of Willis's touch has not only stimulated a physical response from Reding, but a spiritual one of his own. Indeed, after this point in the narrative, Reding's conversion continues to progress, suggesting that the effect of Willis's faith is a lasting experience. However, Reding says upon calming slightly, "I must be on my guard against these wild ways," reminding himself that "enthusiasm is not truth" (229, 230). A physical or

emotional response is not a sufficient sign of true belief. What is experienced in the body must be worked out in the mind.

The relationship between faith and the body is most directly explored through Reding's views on celibacy. Significantly, as John Peck notes, there is no clear connection made between his desire to abstain from expressing sexuality and his psychological processes (89). The choice is not one that has to be worked through, debated, and arrived at, but is already decided. He tells his friend Carlton, 'It's no new notion taken up…I had it when a boy at school, and I have ever since fancied that I should never marry. Not that the feeling has never intermitted, but it is the habit of my mind. My general thoughts run in that one way, that I shall never marry' (136). He identifies this choice with an innateness of mind rather than identifying any lack of physical desire. Peck discusses the difficulty for the reader of keeping celibacy as an intellectual issue, arguing that because 'Newman offers no open discussion of a connection between the psychology of Charles and his commitment to celibacy, the reader is likely to judge it as an anxiety-driven preference, and to see much of the book as an unconscious exposure of secrecy and secret motives' (89-90). Indeed, there are moments where the reader might question what is being withheld. When Mr Malcolm tells Reding that he should marry, 'Charles slightly coloured, and his sister laughed as if there was some understanding between them' (72). What exactly this mutual understanding consists of is never directly addressed. Indeed, Mrs Reding tells her son, 'you will not be able to escape your destiny, when it comes', presenting marriage is an inevitability (73). James Eli Adams asserts that 'Newman from the outset understood his Christian discipline to be an affront to prevalent, broadly aristocratic norms of masculinity' (85). But Newman also did not exclusively apply the idea of celibacy to a male protagonist. In his 1856 novel *Callista*, another conversion story, this time set in 250 AD in Roman Africa, the titular female protagonist, a pagan turned Christian, also desires to remain celibate (Wolff 65). In *Loss and Gain*, however, we see the Tractarian view that 'the degree of reserve and resolve needed to maintain the celibate life ensures that celibacy is a crucial measure of masculinity. Nevertheless, this manly state of reserve does not demand the repression of desire. On the contrary, desire is necessary to the celibate who wishes to marry Christ' (Dau 78). Reding argues along the same line, asserting "surely the idea of an Apostle, unmarried, pure, in fast and nakedness, and at length a martyr, is a higher idea than that of one of the old Israelites sitting under his vine and fig-tree, full of temporal goods, and surrounded by sons and grandsons" (139). While he does not argue against desire, he claims instead the need for submission. He poses to Carlton, "What is faith but the submission of the intellect? and…so are we expressly told to bring the body into subjection too"

(140). Control over sexuality is expressly linked here to faith. Celibacy 'exemplifies and instils discipline and willpower' and is 'maintained through equally vigilant and assiduous exertion' (Dau 80, 81). When speaking to Carlton, Reding conveys his belief that the Christian body is in bondage to the Spirit through faith. He tries to work out whether celibacy is a perfection or a penance, suggesting that perhaps penance is perfection on Earth (141-2). Denying the body, then, becomes a form of atonement that can create a semblance of eternal perfection.

Subjugation of the body is further exemplified through a scene of self-flagellation that Reding encounters one evening. While walking home, he 'saw distinctly a man kneeling on the little mound out of which the Cross grew; nay, heard him, for his shoulders were bare, and he was using the discipline upon them, while he repeated what appeared to be some form of devotion' (201). Reding's reaction to this violent scene is one of great elation at a physical manifestation of faith. He exclaims, "O happy times … when faith was one!" (201). This man commits his self-discipline under the cover of darkness and runs away as soon as he is aware of Reding's presence. Indeed, both celibacy and self-discipline are portrayed as private acts that are not moderated homosocially. These external acts are products of an individual, internally-developed faith. Thus, the mind and heart bring the body into subjection as a sacrificial, courageous embodiment of faith.

Women and the Satirical

The pathos of this conversion narrative is contrasted by the humour, including the use of satire, woven into the text. Indeed, as Charles Reding moves closer and closer to Rome, the frequency of comedic moments increases. These instances work to separate him from the other characters of the text, implying that his views are to be taken seriously while the opinions of other faiths are to be laughed at. Making them seem humourous persuades the reader to Reding's viewpoint and ultimate decision to convert. The comedic and satirical elements distinguish the protagonist from other ideologies and religious beliefs, and are gendered in their target. Women, in particular, are portrayed as ridiculous without any self-awareness of their silliness. Though there are many female characters in the novel, they appear rarely, and their inclusion is striking in contrast to the male-centric dialogue that makes up the majority of the text. Wolff claims that Newman himself had a distaste for women, which may inform these harsh representations (46). Peck argues that readers might see Newman's Oxford 'as an environment that encourages a fear of women' (85). Whatever the author's true feelings toward the opposite sex, the novel conveys a lack of generosity

toward the female characters presented here. Unlike in the earlier example of *Reginald Dalton*, they have minimal impact on the overall plot and Reding's conversion. Mary, his sister – drawn from Newman's own favourite sister – listens to her brother contemplate and hint at his change in mind and heart, and she is the first to recognize this shift in him (Wolff 46). Reding dismisses this assertion from her, saying to himself, 'she thinks I am going to be a Roman Catholic. How absurd! but women will run on so; give an inch, and they take an ell' (182). This dismissal of Mary's astute insight shows a stereotypical assessment of women employed in order for a man to hide from his true thoughts and feelings. Reding diminishes Mary's observations in a generalized, grasping way to moderate and avoid his own insecurities and fears. Ultimately, her words throughout their multiple conversations impart little change in Reding, emphasizing her role as listening rather than influencing or aiding. Indeed, she sighs and confesses "I wish I could help you," she said; "but women can do so little" (176). She is resigned to her limitations and expresses no agency beyond listening and responding to her brother. She is never portrayed beyond the bounds of the family home, limiting her physically as well as relationally. She acknowledges that 'They were all of them women but he; he was their only stay, now that their father had been taken away. What was now to become of them? To be abandoned by their own brother!' (183). The cultural and societal limitations she, her mother, and her sisters have as women without a male representative of their household means that they will also feel the impact of Reding's conversion. The Miss Boltons and their mother are conveyed with a similar level of domestic limitation. Though the conversation held between the three of them is the only one in the text that fully excludes men, their religious concerns are represented as trivial. Mrs Bolton operates as a caricature of an overly-dramatic, complaining mother who insists that insignificant activities must be done in certain ways. She sits with a book but 'is occupied, if it may be so called, in waiting, more than in anything else' (45). Rather than an intellectual exercise, the book merely becomes an object to mark a period of passivity. She tells her daughters that they are late for church, and Charlotte Bolton suggests that they go at once. Her mother replies, "My dear child, how can you propose such a thing? … I would not do so for any consideration; it is so very disgraceful. Better not go at all"(46). The social performance and strategy of arriving to church at just the right time demonstrates a disinterest in the kind of inner faith that Reding has been working to cultivate and showcases the problematic inauthenticity he identifies within Anglicanism.

Women and their relationship to religion is further addressed within the context of marriage. Reding is revolted to hear that White, one of his Oxford peers, marries Louisa Bolton. When he is

told that White has become engaged "to some Oxford girl", he exclaims, "Engaged! … How absurd!" (133-4). This engagement, in the eyes of Reding, is a compromise of White's earlier endorsement of clerical celibacy. When Reding shares White's previous view, Sheffield and Carlton both laugh, and Carlton responds, "And do you think…that a youth of eighteen can have an opinion on such a subject, or knows himself well enough to make a resolution in his own case?" (134). Reding has consistently held his concerns about marriage since childhood, so he is at a loss for how White could betray his religion-based views on marriage and submit himself to the institution. Masculinity for Reding is defined throughout the novel by an eventual rejection of socially acceptable institutions, and thus, White's submission to the married state is incomprehensible.

This compromise of religious ideals in exchange for marriage is a choice Reding cannot stomach well, especially when he finally sees the reality in a scene that Wolff calls 'high comedy' (46). Reding is in an Oxford bookshop when 'a young clergyman, with a very pretty girl on his arm, whom her dress pronounced to be a bride' enters (241). He sees that 'love was in their eyes, joy in their voice, and affluence in their gait and bearing', which causes him to feel faint, 'somewhat such as might beset a man on hearing a call for pork-chops when he was sea-sick' (241). He immediately recognizes the man as White, though that is only revealed to the reader through the dialogue that unfolds between White and his new bride. The episode is brief yet striking as Reding hides between the shelves and observes the newlywed caricatures. This is no longer the White who is trying to teach Louisa and her sister, and also no longer the youth who thought of becoming a Cistercian monk (45). He is now the husband who yields to his wife's wants and wonderings, and accepts with resignation her disinterest in Anglican scholarship. In commenting on this passage, Wolff suggests that Newman is making fun here of this 'faint-hearted' man for being so in love with his wife (51). Their marital bond is portrayed as comical rather than sacred. Both of them appear ridiculous through their communication with one another. Their minds are focused on completely different aspects of church and society. They talk past one another, a comic exaggeration of how married couples communicate, or fail to. Reding has 'a severe text of scripture' rise to his mind during the encounter. Alyssa Bellows argues that this moment 'points up the text invoked by the novel's title: "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?"' (72). While the text does not outright suggest, as Bellows does, that this loss reaches to the depths of the soul, marriage does appear here to be a loss rather than a gain. When considering Reding's views of celibacy, the repulsiveness of the scene emphasizes and supports his choice to remain unmarried. White's

marriage, from Reding's perspective, appears as a kind of weakness, a state to avoid even making contact with. Moreover, Mrs White is conveyed as even having little interest in religion. When looking at a frontispiece of St John the Baptist, she asserts that it resembles "little Angelina Primrose" for "the hair is just hers", or like Angelina's aunt, Lady Constance (241-2). That she compares the faces of the apostles to people she knows is a humourous moment of complete indifference to religious significance. She cares nothing about the images beyond what they remind her of in her own life and does not seek any further knowledge about them. She also does not pay attention to the religious texts her husband is buying, though she does select a volume called 'Abbeys and Abbots', a "book full of designs" that she can use to help guide improvements to the rectory windows (242). Like her mother, previously concerned about arriving late to church, Louisa has become focused on appearances, interested in converting the exterior of the church building but apathetic to any sense of interior faith. This representation of marriage works to solidify and uphold Reding's own views, the humour working in support of the protagonist.

The only time we see Reding speak with a woman outside his own family is during the most satirical sequence in the novel. In a scene where 'intellectual query gives way to farce', representatives of various religious sects parade through Reding's door one after the other (Wolff 48). Only one of them is a woman who for a while 'did not speak, but sat, with her head on one side, looking at her parasol, the point of which she fixed on the carpet, while she slowly described a circumference with the handle' (272). Finally, she asks, 'without raising her eyes, whether it was true—and she spoke slowly, and in what is called a spiritual tone—whether it was true, the information had been given her, that Mr Reding, the gentleman she had the honour of addressing—whether it was true, that he was in search of a religion more congenial to his feelings than that of the Church of England? (272). The linguistic structure of her speech creates a stumbling quality. She is timid, unable to make eye contact, the lack of physical connection between her and Reding symbolizing the disconnect between their religious beliefs. Indeed, she and her female peers have no distinct ideas about their religion and beliefs at all. She is there to seek his counsel 'because as yet they had not any gentleman of University education among them' (272). They need a man to think for them. The intended religion these women hope to establish has no name and no doctrine. The woman seeking his counsel also has no name, as if this is another detail left to be decided. All of the other denominational representatives are male, and each of them has a specific, comic name that reflects their personalities and beliefs. By contrast, she is a blank slate with no identity to build from, so she comes seeking it from a man. She explains, "the tenets are not fixed either, that is, they are

but sketched; and we shall prize your suggestions much. Nay, you will of course have the opportunity as you would have the right, to nominate any doctrine to which you may be especially inclined" (273). Guidance in everything is required from a man here. Indeed, the name of the proposed religion is not the only point left open. While this satirical encounter takes aim at those who have no faith, that a female character signifies this view also comments on gender stereotypes. Reding refuses to participate in her endeavour because he 'had for an instant been amused, now became full of the one thought, how to get her out of the room' (273). When eventually another man steps in to supersede her conversation with Reding, 'so did she at once shrink and vanish', fading away into the nothingness of which she is defined.

Arthur Pollard comments that 'Satire is always acutely conscious of the difference between what things are and what they ought to be' (3). This encapsulates Reding's experience with each of the religious representatives who come to speak with him before he finalizes his conversion to the Catholic Church. They are an embodiment of what religion, as the novel has argued, ought not to be. The unnamed, indecisive woman is just part a long sequence of religious representatives that spans two concluding chapters. Thomas Varguish asserts that 'Mr. Batts and the others who visit Charles near the novel's end represent a kind of burlesque of the anti-dogmatic convictions and personalities which confront him at Oxford' (168). That they all arrive in consistent, sequential fashion exaggerates this parallel experience of his Oxford peers. One after the other comes Jack and Mr Highfly of the Irvingites, Zerubbabel the adoptive Jew, Mr Batts of the Truth Society, and Mr Kitchens, who at one point suggests that Reding develop his own new denomination and is eventually chased out the door by a crucifix. This scene is the satirical apex of the novel, with the singular, unspecified female visitor mixed in among this string of men. Thus, she becomes a figure of fun, a tool to heighten the comedy rather than a voice to be taken seriously. The rest of the men are the same in that way; however, each of them receives a distinct name and more developed and specified beliefs than their female counterpart. When taken as a collective, each becomes a caricature representing the extremes of religious belief and culture of the time. If the reader held any doubt about Reding's reasoning and logic in making his conversion to Catholicism, the intellectual capabilities he shows in comparison to his spontaneous visitors solidifies his growth and independence of thought, using comedy to strengthen the argument that Reding is making the right decision. Wolff observes that while this is a moment of comic relief, 'it is also a serious expression of Newman's intolerant disgust with the proliferating sects that were, in his view, sure to spring up like evil fungi so long as every man, no matter how illiterate or how crazy, indiscriminately exercised

his reason and his private judgment, acknowledging no higher authority than his own' (59). Despite the solitary nature of Reding's journey, this scene functions as a warning of remaining in that space. Thus, his longing for community and choice to seek one in Rome is proven to be the right course.

Oxford and the Church

Throughout the struggle Charles Reding has with his faith and what that means for himself as a man, there is an ever-present tension between the two institutions that he feels a connection to – the Catholic Church and Oxford University. The two do not co-exist for him; the first he imagines and theorizes before becoming part of it, and the other he lives within and constantly questions. The university, and the pressure he feels for his faith to conform with the Church of England, underlies the inner struggle of choosing one institution over the other. Reding is defined, in a sense, by the English, Oxfordian landscape. Wolff notes the 'strange world' Charles is moving to beyond Oxford after his conversion, a world made particularly foreign by the fact that he does not know any other Catholics except his friend Willis (57). Oxford is what he knows, and yet he feels he does fit in there. He confesses to his sister Mary that "I feel out of place", that "wherever I go, whomever I talk with, I feel him to be another sort of person from what I am…No one thinks or feels like me" (178). His internal journey is characterized by the struggle with the external, the inability to connect with society. The desire for ultimate belonging, driven by a yearning for truth, dogmatism, is a stability that Oxford cannot offer. The university is portrayed as both cemented in tradition, specifically in its entrenchment with the Church of England, while concurrently ever-changing. Mr Malcolm, a neighbour of the Reding family, describes Oxford as "a place of fashions; there have been many fashions in my times…There is no principle of stability in Oxford" (24). Within this dualistic view of the university – steeped in long-held customs yet changing with the times – is the sense that the understanding of the institution is formulated and shaped by the undergraduate experiencing it, re-fashioned again and again. Indeed, as Reding changes, his experience of Oxford does as well. As time passes and more peers complete their degrees, college life becomes 'not quite what it had been to him; the freshness of his admiration for it was over; he now saw defects where at first all was excellent and good; the romance of places and persons had passed away' (160). The novel's titular sense of loss is symbolically encapsulated through this disillusionment of the university. The shift Reding feels within himself is echoed through the shift in his connection to Oxford. As his mind transforms, so does the university in relationship to him, and he begins to identify its flaws. He

laments to Mary, "I cannot bear the pomp and pretence which I see everywhere…if you saw Oxford as it is! The Heads with such large incomes; they are indeed very liberal of their money" (179). As he continues to name the problematic pageantry discernible within Oxford, the accusation morphs into one of hypocrisy, melding the university and the Anglican Church into one pretense-driven unit. He observes that "Here are ministers of Christ with large incomes, living in finely furnished houses, with wives and families, and stately butlers and servants in livery, giving dinners all in the best style, condescending and gracious, waving their hands and mincing their words, as if they were the cream of the earth, but without anything to make them clergymen but a black coat and a white tie" (179). The prioritization of outward appearance over inward piety is at the heart of Reding's objections to both institutions. He also observes that "what Heads of houses, Fellows, and all of them evidently put before them as an end is, to enjoy the world in the first place, and to serve God in the second…their immediate object is to be comfortable, to marry, to have a fair income, station, and respectability, a convenient house, a pleasant country, a sociable neighbourhood" (179-80). This kind of self-gratification rather than a humble self-denial offends the young undergraduate who is denying the easy path of conformity for the sake of seeking truth and practicing his faith. Reding sees clearly that he and the university hold different values and cannot be reconciled.

In contrast to the disconnect that Reding feels to the university as an institution, he has a distinctly different relationship with the physical landscape of Oxford. Baker asserts that in the novel 'the social and physical world never emerges into convincing reality', and this may be true when considering the university culture and customs (63). However, Oxford as an environment is strikingly painted throughout the narrative. Reding observes the beauty of the land, stating "I think the University goes down just when Oxford begins to be most beautiful. The walks and meadows are so fragrant and bright now, the hay half carried, and the short new grass appearing" (57). Rather than a city bustling with undergraduates, attention is turned to the natural world beyond the college quadrangles. But even within St Saviour's, Reding admits to feeling a sense of homeliness. Upon returning to Oxford after a break, 'Much as Charles regretted home, he rejoiced to see old Oxford again. The porter had acknowledged him at the gate, and the scout had smiled and bowed, as he ran up the worn staircase and found a blazing fire to welcome him' (83). He later remembers 'with what awe and transport he had at first come to the University, as to some sacred shrine; and how from time to time hopes had come over him that some day or other he should have gained a title to residence on some of its ancient foundations' (244). The sentimentality, and even sacredness, of this connection is what constitutes so much of the inner turmoil he feels in contemplating conversion.

He believes that he owes a 'debt to the University and Church' as he nears his examinations and degree, bound by the commitment he previously made to both (152). Thus, he 'put aside his doubts about the Articles; but it was like putting off the payment of a bill – a respite, not a deliverance' (152). When this respite ends and he makes the choice to convert, the setting takes on greater emotional resonance. He returns there before leaving for Rome, and 'the spires and towers of the University came on his view, hallowed by how many tender associations, lost to him for two whole years, suddenly recovered – recovered to be lost forever!' (243). The hills and meadows are part of 'that beloved place', and the view stops him in his tracks; he is 'unable to proceed', caught up in the 'tender associations' he has to the sight (243). He takes the time to individually count 'each college, each church…by their pinnacles and turrets' (243). Each one is recognized distinctly for its significance as part of the collective whole. There is also a personal intimacy represented in the idea of possession. The university was 'lost to him', as if he previously owned it. Indeed, the sights around him 'might have been his, but his they were not', further suggesting an ownership, and even more so, an identity. The heightened emotions he feels toward leaving, with the 'silver Isis, the grey willows, the far-stretching plains, the dark groves', operates as a signifier of all that Reding is losing by converting. The disconnect to his former identity is felt through the loss of Oxford. The 'wood, water, stone, all so calm, so bright, they might have been his, but his they were not'; 'Oxford had been his place once, but his place knew him no more' (243, 244). The city and the self he knew there no longer belongs to him; he has sacrificed them both for his faith. He contemplates this sacrifice, processing as he looks out over the landscape that 'Whatever he was to gain by becoming a Catholic, this he had lost; whatever he was to gain higher and better, at least this and such as this he never could have again. He could not have another Oxford, he could not have the friends of his boyhood and youth in the choice of his manhood' (243). That he identifies this shift as a choice of manhood rather than of faith ties conversion to an understanding of masculinity. His conversion is a byproduct of his manhood, and that transformation is embodied in Oxford.

Reding's farewell to Oxford reflects not just an emotional connection to the university but a physical intimacy between him and the landscape. On his last day there, 'The morning was frosty, and there was a mist; the leaves flitted about; all was in unison with the state of his feelings' (257). The physical, exterior world mirrors his inner emotions. This connection is magnified by Reding's physical response to the sight. The narrator states, 'What thoughts came upon him! for the last time! There was no one to see him; he threw his arms round the willows so dear to him, and kissed them; he tore off some of their black leaves and put them in his bosom' (257). The moment is private,

with no one around, and in that space, he expresses a dramatic intimacy with nature. He is in an excited state, throwing his arms around the trees 'so dear to him'. He puts his lips to them in a kiss and tears off leaves, a violating and possessive act of removal. The moment reads as a desperate attempt to be as physically united with nature as possible, expressing an intimacy that cannot be reciprocated. As he tears leaves from the trees, he says to himself "I am like Undine…killing with a kiss" (257). The allusion to *Undine*, an 1807 German novella by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, invokes a purpose in this kiss, a sense of passion. In the medieval romance, Undine kills her husband, Huldbrand, when he chooses another woman over her. In the moment of death, Huldbrand, 'trembling with love and with the nearness of death, the knight bent towards her, and she kissed him with a holy kiss. But she did not again draw back, she pressed him to her ever closer and closer, and wept as if she would weep away her soul' (Fouqué 132). Rather than her kiss, Undine says "My tears have been his death" (Fouqué 132). Reding likens himself to a spurned lover, compelled to kill his connection to Oxford out of heartbreak. Just as Huldbrand chooses another over Undine, Reding draws the same conclusion of Oxford and Anglicanism. Both Undine and Reding are rejected by their loves. If tears are the cause of death, then Undine's act of passion more closely alludes to Reding's farewell with Carlton. The vulnerable, unashamed closeness Reding feels with the trees echoes the intimate nature of the friends' parting. Reding stands in Carlton's rooms, 'slowly rubbing his palms one on another' (256). The methodical, repeated movement intimates an attempt at physical and emotional restraint even as 'tears flowed down his cheeks' (256). At the close of the chapter, 'they embraced each other affectionately; and the next minute Charles was running down the staircase' (256). The tenderness of the moment culminates in a swift reaction of running away and into the natural space of Oxford, for 'he could not go without taking a last farewell of the place itself' (257). What Reding cannot fully express physically to Carlton he offers to the landscape instead. He intensely embraces the trees and presses the foliage to his breast. The emotional connection creates a physical desire for intimacy with both the person and the place.

The physical separation from Oxford is lamented, but necessary. Change in location results in change in thought and spiritual belief. Faith is developed through the habits of mind formed beyond university life. One of the ironies of *Loss and Gain* is that, though Oxford is lost and faith gained, that gain could not have been accomplished without first gaining Oxford. The novel suggests that if Reding had not gone to Oxford and begun to speaking with his peers, asking questions, and seeking answers, he would not have left the Church of England. The narrator asserts that 'The minds of young people are pliable and elastic, and easily accommodate themselves to any

one they fall in with' (7). Environment, then, and who is physically in that environment, stimulates the transformation of the mind. In this view, Reding, as young and pliable, should have been transformed into an Oxford man and Anglican clergyman, like his father before him. However, the university space also pushes him to grow, and in doing so, he moves beyond youth to maturity. In maturing, he develops his own ideas and identity. That identity allows him to move from one body, a student body, to another body, the spiritual body of the Catholic Church. The impact of physically moving from an intellectual body to a spiritual one shows the importance of place and how the physical body plays a role in spirituality. Though Reding leaves Oxford feeling that 'he was a stranger where he had hoped to have had a home', the novel ends with Reding in the Catholic Church 'so happy in the Present, that he had no thoughts either for the Past or the Future' (243, 297). He goes on 'kneeling, as if he were already in heaven, with the throne of God before him, and angels around, and as if to move were to lose his privilege' (296). In leaving Oxford and his former beliefs behind, he finds a divine sense of peace and contentment, a distance from the world entirely as he feels connected to God.

Though Reding loses Oxford in the course of his conversion, the university is the place that awakens his mind to the questions which lead to a greater faith. He may not be able to conform to the kind of manhood upheld by the university, particularly in terms of belief, but he retains a deep sense of connection to the landscape, place represented as a powerful part of one's formation. It is only in letting go of that place, in relinquishing Oxford, that he can discover himself. In relinquishing the university, he lets go of the masculine ideal presented to him there, specifically through his peers, which allows him to break away from the hegemonic and demonstrate agency in defining masculinity. Newman's use of extremes – dramatic and humorous – reflects the significance of Reding's conversion and the interior struggle to embrace gain by accepting loss.

Chapter 3 – Morality and Manliness: *Tom Brown at Oxford*

> He stands there, at seventeen or eighteen, on the verge of manhood, - a boy still at heart, full of enthusiasm and aspirations, but with an intellect and body patiently and carefully trained, looking hopefully to the next step in life, but unwilling to hurry it, - the best poised and most equally developed human creature, take him all round, that our life can show.
>
> - 'Festina Lente', Thomas Hughes

Tom Brown at Oxford, written by Thomas Hughes, has an uncommon role among nineteenth-century university fiction, as it is a sequel. Originally published in *Macmillan's Magazine* serially between October 1859 and November 1861, the text was reissued as a three-decker novel at the end of 1861 (C. Mitchell). Despite the fact that the plot picks up where *Tom Brown's School Days,* the 1857 public school novel, leaves off, *Tom Brown at Oxford* has not sustained the same level of audience attention as its predecessor and has disappeared from republication. When closer examination is awarded, the text is typically discussed alongside *School Days*, with direct comparisons drawn between them. Norman Vance contends that the sequel is 'an interesting and unjustly neglected novel', yet the disappointment he expresses toward the text and its 'audibly creaking plot' appears, at least in part, as a byproduct of comparison (151-2). While parallel analyses between the two parts of Tom Brown's story are inevitable, they have not aided the development of a more focused and productive conversation about *Tom Brown at Oxford*. Mortimer Proctor remarks that 'the novel of public-school life was the first of its kind, but so many had preceded Hughes in the field of university fiction that he found all his materials ready at hand' (105). What Proctor presents as a mild critique, merely following a literary trend rather than setting one, is perhaps better acknowledged as an opportunity. The association with university fiction allows for avenues to re-examine *Tom Brown at Oxford* as distinct from *School Days*. Proctor and John Dougill both consider the novel to be one of the best works of nineteenth-century university fiction (Proctor 112; Dougill 87). If this valuation is to believed, then greater analysis situated within the context of the university and the works written about Oxford life is required.

Hughes's third and final novel, *Tom Brown at Oxford* builds on the fundamental issues of gender, athleticism, and fraternity established in *School Days* and considers additional ideas of morality and 'manliness' (C. Mitchell). This time, however, Tom is older and encountering the world

beyond the insulated realm of Rugby. His views of himself and his understanding of manliness shift as his perspective broadens. In a sense, this sequel compels a re-examination of the still-young protagonist by the audience who considers him 'a model of boyish excellence' (Newsome 199). Maintaining an educational setting suggests that there is still much to be learned about the self, the world, and the men who occupy it. Thus, despite all he may have learned at his beloved Rugby, Tom begins his time at university as the typical, naïve undergraduate navigating the unknown lay of the Oxford landscape and experiencing the classic follies pre-established in university fiction. He goes rowing on his own and ends up swimming in the river. He rushes into a town and gown fight and almost gets sent down. He rows for the fictional St Ambrose College boat and battles his nerves to help them earn head of the river. He navigates conflict with friends, courtship, studying for exams, and discovering what work he wants to do in the world. Overall, his development is presented within the moral quandaries of social and economic divisions. The narrator explains early in the text that Tom 'had not been instructed at home to worship mere conventional distinctions of rank or wealth, and had gone to a school which was not frequented by persons of rank, and where no one knew whether a boy was heir to a principality or would have to fight his own way in the world' (38). Tom's upbringing leaves him with a naiveté of social hierarchies, which informs the severity of subsequent Oxford mishaps and missteps. He believes that education should be the great equalizer, that "Oxford ought to be *the* place in England where money should count for nothing" (46). This ideal is not what Tom experiences, though, and instead the novel wrestles with how the university society is defined by class privilege and how that, in turn, defines the formation of an 'Oxford man' ideal.

Though steeped in moral dilemmas, the sequel in many ways shares the lightheartedness of its predecessor. On the one hand, like other novelists of the era, Hughes intersperses the narrative with sermons (Newsome 213-4). The Christian moral code that underlies the text's themes is evident through the voice of the narrator, who, at times, functions as the preacher guiding the reader. On the other hand, the tone of this narration is at times ironic and light, suffusing the text with humour and wit that contrasts the seriousness of the moral quandaries at hand. The narrator justifies the episodic, moralistic mode of speech by explaining, 'Gladly, oh dear reader, would I write essays or sermons, seeing that they take less out of one than fiction – but would you read them? You know you wouldn't. And so, if I sometimes stray into the pulpit, I do hope you won't be so ungenerous as to skip my preachings' (53). The narrator presents himself as someone who understands the audience, what they will listen to and what they will tune out, but the rhetorical question also reads

as sarcastic. The jest becomes self-reflexive as the narrator describes 'straying' into a pulpit, a space typically occupied with much more purpose than the accidental connotation that straying implies. Indeed, the narrative's moral dilemmas mixed with moments of mirth mean that the reader is constantly assessing the seriousness or the triviality of Tom's conflicts and inner struggles. The shifting balance of tone reflects the fluctuating experience of masculinity and morality as interior character and exterior action, a duality encapsulated by a Muscular Christian ideology.

Tom Brown at Oxford in some ways upholds that morality is best maintained through the physical and religious discipline of Muscular Christianity, a concept long synonymous with Hughes's work. Indeed, as previous scholarship has shown, to evaluate Hughes's writing is to grapple with his conceptualisations of the Muscular Christian. Though his legacy has become intertwined with this nineteenth-century ideology, he cannot be credited with the term's origin, nor can his fellow Muscular Christian and writer, Charles Kingsley. David Newsome notes that 'F.W. Maitland, in his *Life of Leslie Stephen*, ascribed the origin of the term "muscular Christianity" to T.S. Sandars, the *Saturday* reviewer', who was reviewing Kingsley's *Two Years Ago* (198; Hall 7).[22] Thus began the lasting link between Hughes and Kingsley, the consistent, primary identifier and unifier of their names within critical discourse. Defining precisely what is meant by this ideology, however, is much more difficult. Notably, 'Kingsley himself found the expression "muscular Christianity" painful' and attempted to disassociate from the term (Newsome 210; Vance 2). However, he gave the terminology credence enough to attempt to broadly define it in an 1865 sermon as 'a healthful and manful Christianity; one which does not exalt the feminine virtues to the exclusion of the masculine' (Newsome 210). This broad characterization offers little clarity as to what qualities a Muscular Christian should possess and minimally enforces gendered boundaries between what it is and what it is not. Sandars, in his review of Kingsley, highlights 'an association between physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself' (Hall 7). This understanding suggests a physical and spiritual engagement that goes beyond a refining of the self as a man, singular, to a greater purpose of influencing the world, plural. Accordingly, the Muscular Christian has the potential to benefit more than the individual and can operate in support of the

[22] Newsome goes on to state that 'The *Oxford Dictionary*, in defining it as "a term applied (from about 1857) to the ideal of religious character exhibited in the writings of Charles Kingsley", fails to establish its origin, but cites an extract from an article in the *Edinburgh Review* of January 1858' (198). Currently, the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites an earlier example from 1853 from *National Magazine*. See 'Muscular, *Adj.*' *Oxford English Dictionary*, March 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8676830853.

social collective. But Hughes's understanding of Muscular Christianity and manliness differed from Kingsley's generalization and slightly from Sandars's assessment. Understanding this difference begins with recognizing who Hughes was as a man himself. As Newsome summarizes, 'Hughes was full-blooded patriot. He loved England, her lusty rural life, her ancient traditions and her toughness in adversity' and 'was a wholly lovable man; good-natured, transparently honest; ready to fight for what he believed to be right. And he always fought cleanly' (212). Such characteristics are transcribed onto Tom Brown, despite the author's claim in the 1861 preface to *Tom Brown at Oxford* that 'he is not I, either as boy or man – in fact, not to beat around the bush, is a much braver, and nobler, and purer fellow than I ever was' (5). Hughes devotes a chapter of the novel to this belief system, defining Muscular Christianity as 'the old chivalrous and Christian belief, that a man's body is given him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, and the advancement of all righteous courses and the subduing of the earth, which God has given to the children of men' (112). Being able to practice self-control of the body, overpowering it rather than being overpowered by it, is the difference between helping or hindering the rest of society. The invocation of chivalry, united with a Christian worldview of the physical self as subject to spiritual self-discipline and utilised for the good of mankind, is reflected in Tom's character development and provides the basis for the kind of 'manliness' that is portrayed in this version of Oxford.

In *The Manliness of Christ*, originally presented as a series of addresses given in 1876 before being published in *Good Words* in 1877, Hughes argues that manly character is defined by courage, self-restraint, and loyalty to truth (Newsome 195). By his assessment, perfection of character requires 'courage or manfulness, gained through conflict with evil' (*Manliness of Christ* 5). He poses the leading example of manliness as Jesus Christ, tracing the life of Jesus and re-evaluating his character in the context of a heroic ideal. Hughes presents Christ as the ultimate hero figure, constantly battling past temptation and standing firm in his faith. Courage and manhood are consistently associated with one another throughout the work, using military figures such as Nelson and Napier, alongside Jesus, as models of 'real manliness' (*Manliness of Christ* 21). Vance helpfully encapsulates that for Hughes, as well as other nineteenth-century writers, 'manliness' refers to 'physical manliness, ideas of chivalry and gentlemanliness, and moral manliness, all of which tend to incorporate something of the patriotic and military qualities which "manliness" may also connote' (10). While both Vance and Newsome clarify that there is no one definition for what manliness means to the Victorians, what Hughes asserts here is a heroic ideal built from both a secular and religious basis. Examples of military heroes and warfare appear repeatedly across Hughes's writings,

setting high standard for manliness. Indeed, by reflecting on Christ's manliness, Hughes presents the ideal of masculinity as the Son of God. While it is never suggested that Tom Brown must truly reach that same level of otherworldly, divine perfection, there remains a calling to pursue that example as far as one can. Further, he uses the language of 'real manliness' and 'true manliness', positing that there is a masculine ideal to be reached, while also implying there is an 'unreal' or 'untrue' version that is to be avoided (*Manliness of Christ* 21.) Based on the examples of Jesus and military figures, heroism involves physical engagement, a willingness to physically fight for, or sacrifice your body for, others alongside a dedication to moral beliefs. This combination of external action and internal steadfastness shapes the conception of manliness formulated through Hughes's work, including his Tom Brown stories. By defining Christ as the leading example of manliness, he ties a masculine ideal to that of Christian morality. Hughes explains further in *The Manliness of Christ* that one of the greatest trials of courage and manliness is not one of physical fortitude, but is 'when a man or woman is called to stand by what approves itself to their consciences as true, and to protest for it through evil report and good report, against all discouragement and opposition from those they love and respect' (30-1). Tests of character, then, are central to discerning the true from the untrue, the real from the unreal. This type of trial in maintaining belief in truth describes the central conflict in *Tom Brown at Oxford*, as Tom ultimately decides to remain true to his convictions instead of emulating the actions and beliefs of his Oxford peers. The novel explores, tests, and complicates these characteristics of manliness by assessing them in terms of the Oxford man. If chivalry, control of the body, courage, and moral fortitude is the ideal set for what manliness signifies, this complicates the idea of the male undergraduate established through the novel. We are left to question and discern the differences between the Muscular Christian and the Oxford Man and if the two can coincide.

This question of cohesion finds echoes within Muscular Christianity itself. Vance asserts that 'The trouble with the phrase "muscular Christianity" is that it draws attention more to muscularity than to Christianity', creating, inevitably, a 'synthesis' that 'is unstable and intellectually vulnerable' (2, 6, 7). Attempting to establish this kind of fusion readily creates opportunity for imbalance, leaving ample space for tensions to arise. Critical discourse on the Tom Brown stories has long been defined by a grappling with Muscular Christianity, its ideas, meanings, implications, and limitations. Donald E. Hall notes 'the broad divisions and broadly defined programs of the muscular Christians', observing that ultimately Muscular Christianity was a response 'to complex contemporary questions and issues of class, nationality, and gender' in 'an attempt to assert control over a world that had

seemingly gone mad' (8, 9). *Tom Brown at Oxford* encapsulates these tensions and questions through Tom's friendship with Hardy, Harry East's military service in India, and Tom's experiences with women. Within each context is a clear struggle for control, over the self and others, with much of the contention located in the body. Morality becomes a physical effort, requiring a manly strength to maintain (Hall 9). Yet, Hall and Dennis Allen each detect an issue in uniting the physical and the spiritual, the muscular and the Christian. Allen specifically argues that 'the tension between the muscular and the Christian becomes evident in the inability of any individual to embody simultaneously the radically different somatotypes allied to these ideals' (116, 117). Andy Harvey, in examining *School Days*, likewise asserts that the 'problem in representing a vision of "manliness" that encompasses the physical and the spiritual is played out in the difficulty [Hughes] faces in delineating precisely what masculinity should entail' (23). Vance, furthermore, surmises that the issue for 'Victorian manly Christians' is being 'caught on the fence between the church and the world while trying to deny that the fence existed' (28). I do not wish for the following analysis to deny the existence of the fence, the tensions that are present in Muscular Christianity and in the writings of Hughes. Rather, this focused re-examination of *Tom Brown at Oxford* seeks to embrace that the fence is present and acknowledge that perhaps instead of denying its presence, the novel works to remove the boundaries that that figurative fence denotes. Ultimately, this university novel does not try to rectify or resolve the tensions that exist, but instead leans into those identified within Muscular Christianity and others that arise when this ideology meets nineteenth-century Oxford culture.

In part, what this previous scholarship identifies is a tendency for Muscular Christianity to attempt to extinguish boundaries between secular and sacred, religion and the world, developing ideas of manliness that encapsulate both. That same kind of boundary blurring is seen within *Tom Brown at Oxford* in various ways. In particular, this chapter will highlight how wealth meets morality, male friendship upholds chivalry, and how women align themselves with men. Humour and wit are key methods the novel employs to question how stable and consequential the boundaries are between economic, social, and gender divisions. Moreover, unlike the patriarchal and religious extremes seen in *Reginald Dalton* and *Loss and Gain*, *Tom Brown at Oxford* demonstrates a manliness that treads boundaries, seeking to balance masculinity with morality, the interior life of a man with exterior action. While Tom Brown's character development reflects a refinement of inner character, there is a shift toward greater emphasis on the external, the physical body, and its engagement with the world. The novel takes on local, national, and global ideas, all connecting to questions of what men are supposed to do in the world. How, like Christ, as men, as Oxford undergraduates, are they

to sacrifice themselves for the world, to behave in it, to change it for the better? Addressing this question requires investigating how this idea of manliness interacts with and opposes Oxford culture, how the university becomes the space where horizons are opened, new insights are gained about the world, and previous assumptions challenged. In contrasting old ideals with progressive philosophies, *Tom Brown at Oxford* shows how the university becomes a space where morality might be explored, questioned, lost, and found.

Wealth and Humour

From the early chapters of *Tom Brown at Oxford*, the question of wealth in relation to manliness is represented as a moral issue. Oxford is depicted as a place where status is determined through economic capability. This is first demonstrated through a college breakfast scene, the satirical opulence of the meal highlighting divisions in social class. Suyin Olguin discusses the importance of food in relation to Victorian masculinity, noting when Tom first arrives to Rugby in *Tom Brown's School Days*, 'A succulent and hearty breakfast is served to commemorate his journey into English manhood' ('Feasting and Bonding Like a Man'). Here food is used to mark a starting point of a developmental experience linked to maturity, specifically to manhood. A similar scene occurs once Tom arrives at Oxford when invited to Drysdale's rooms for a meal. However, while Olguin concludes that sharing a meal 'provides Tom with the opportunity to learn about his local and school community and to adopt the moral and masculine values of his contemporaries', here the exaggerated nature of the breakfast provokes questions about those values ('Feasting and Bonding Like a Man').

Before food is presented, the social standing of the undergraduate guests is given, justifying their presence around the table. In the exclusive party of only four invitees, Tom included, two of the men, Farley and Chanter, 'were the sons of rich men who made their own fortunes, and sent their sons to St Ambrose's because it was very desirable that the young gentlemen should make good connections' (19). Both are classified as having new wealth, in contrast to the much more highly esteemed old wealth of Drysdale's family, perhaps hinting at the strategy behind their physical presence in Drysdale's rooms. Socialising within a particular socio-economic sphere asserts a stronger social identity. This is complicated, however, by the way the Honourable Piers St Cloud embodies this upper social sphere. While he is 'a very well-dressed, well-mannered, well-connected young man', the men of his standing 'seemed a little shy of him', for 'he managed in one way or

another to make his young friends pay well for the honour of his acquaintance' (20). He is good at cards and riding horses, and he liked to exploit his power over freshmen, using 'their wines, horses, and other movable property as his own' (20). Though 'those of them who came to the college to form eligible connections' might be satisfied by St Cloud's ancestral ties to William the Conqueror, his exploitation of his peers presents an issue of morals connected to that highly-regarded social standing (20). In contrast, Drysdale, a fellow gentleman-commoner, is described with more compassion. He 'had good manly stuff in him at the bottom, and, had he fallen into any but the fast set, would have made a fine fellow, and done credit to himself and his college' (19). There is a tone of regret and resignation in this description, an 'if only' suggestion of the 'man' that Drysdale has the potential to be but will not become because of his connection to the fast set of Oxford men. That Drysdale's peers are his reason for straying from 'good manly stuff' draws consideration to the stakes of what this breakfast meeting accomplishes, or, conversely, tarnishes. All the male undergraduates present themselves in their finest garb – Drysdale is 'gorgeously attired' – yet the tone reveals the concern for what is beneath and pushes the audience to question the exaggerated opulence (21).

Instead of the meal illustrating 'the union of English subjects as moral and gendered entities without permanently disrupting the class differences between them', the invitation to the table and lavishness of the menu clearly distinguishes social standing within the college (Olguin). Drysdale's tactics in 'real scientific gastronomy' formulate a satirical presentation of wealth that invites questions regarding the masculinity this display is attempting to establish. The narrator observes that 'it is wonderful…how you feel drawn to a man who feeds you well' (22). Food becomes a specific form of power through exclusivity in being invited to consume it and in having the wealth to offer it. The breakfast table described offers a sumptuous array of items, including freshly caught gudgeon, eel or trout, fresh watercresses, 'a spitchcocked chicken, or grilled turkey's leg,' eggs, omelettes, bread rolls, Yorkshire pie, preserves, and cider or ale (19). The excessive amount of food available for one meal makes this demonstration of wealth quite humourous. The narrator emphasises this by joking that 'they might have had potted hippopotamus for breakfast if they had chosen to order it, which I verily believe they would have done if they had thought of it' (19). The fullness of the menu is a social performance of Drysdale's ability to procure and provide a lavish meal to exclusive company. Yet, the comic tone of the described scene calls attention to the meaning behind such extravagance, the exaggerated overspending reflected in the use of satire. The satirizing of Oxford undergraduate eating habits is not original to the nineteenth century. Alicia

D'Anvers, in her 1691 poem *Academia, or, The humours of the University of Oxford in burlesque verse*, portrays student consumption of food as gluttonous. Her gentleman-commoner character, referred to as Soph., is described as having guts 'stuft with Sweet-meats plenty' while 'his Noodle's somewhat empty' (line 142, 141). Gluttonous gastronomy is associated with lack of intelligence and a lack of interest in study. His tutor 'thinks his over-dulness / Comes from his often over-fulness / And that his Brains become so muddy, / From having Pastys in his Study' (lines 227-30). Much like in *Tom Brown*, this kind of extravagance is linked back to the wealth required to maintain it. D'Anvers's gentleman-commoner questions 'Glutt'ony (thinks Soph,) who e're abhorr'd it, / That had wherewith, and could afford it? / Tho' like a Log he stands, he's thinking, / He lives by eating, and by drinking' (lines 177-80). Those who can afford to be gluttons, suggests Soph., have no qualms in embracing that way of living. Hughes's novel, though, furthers the question of exaggerated eating habits on a social scale. This early chapter establishes the significance these male characters place in being able to bond at university through sharing a rich, invitation-only meal. However, the comedic presentation questions the shallowness of and posturing behind this type of homosocial bonding. The core of the issue is both the innate character of the men, as seen through St Cloud and Drysdale, and the wealth that motivates particular types of appearances and actions, cultivating moral questions behind this collegiate, hierarchal expression of power.

In an 1861 review of *Tom Brown at Oxford* published in the *Atlantic Monthly Review*, one critic observes that 'Mr. Hughes has the true, wholesome English love of home, the English delight in rude physical sports, the English hatred of hypocrisy and cant, the English fidelity to facts, the English disbelief in all piety and morality which are not grounded in manliness' (383). There is an English identity being established through the Oxford space, particularly around the table. Olguin asserts that 'The gentry and upper class Victorians regarded food practices as an extension of moral values. What you ate not only situated you in the appropriate rank, as male and female, as child or adult, but it also defined you as English. The attention to diet as part of a child's moral, physiological, and psychological development intended to mold their identity to meet the nation's specific values' ('Feasting and Bonding Like a Man'). The undergraduate men are becoming part of Oxford, but also, to a greater extent, a part of the nation. Wealth is a problematic part of that identity for the moral questions it raises through over-extravagance exclusive to social-climbing, or socially elite, men. Yet, the ability to spend is posed as fundamental to how Oxford men live and socialize with one another. As Drysdale states, "the thing to be able to do here at Oxford is – to pay" (50). Being able to afford the double fees of a gentlemen-commoner grants a level of status

that is able to fully partake in all that Oxford can offer. A greater ability of indulgence, from the perspective of these undergraduates, is connected to a stronger identity as an 'Oxford man'. However, the novel questions this assumption through the tension of wealth and moral character, never fully allowing the two to exist in one man. Instead, strong morals are represented alongside greater athletic and intellectual ability, and lesser financial capability, in Jack Hardy.

If the comic nature of economic social status is established through Drysdale, then the seriousness of such class division is represented through Hardy. While Drysdale is a gentle-commoner who can endlessly spend, Hardy is servitor, an undergraduate working as a college servant to pay for his studies and accommodation. Indeed, Hardy is the most developed servitor character among nineteenth-century university fiction.[23] His lower economic status gives the reader an alternate perspective on university life. Newsome clarifies that within the nineteenth-century university, 'The greatest divergence in the way of life was between the gentlemen commoners and the scholars. The gentle-commoners went their own way – hunting, driving tandem, gambling, playing at billiards and whist, amassing creditors and mistresses, sometimes both' (205). This contrast is exemplified between Drysdale and Hardy first through the descriptions of their rooms. The narrator suggests that there is a lot to be learned from a man by his rooms, observing that 'I myself like to see what sort of a chair a man sits in, where he puts it, what books lie or stand on the shelves nearest his hand, what the objects are which he keeps most familiarly before him,…where he pulls off his coat, collar, and boots, and gets into an old easy shooting-jacket, and his broadest slippers' (31-2). How a space is kept, how a man arranges himself in his home, has the potential to signify something more fundamental about him. There is an honesty derived from how a person dwells in a space that implies not just how he lives, but who he is. Hardy's room is described as 'the worst, both in situation and furniture, which Tom had yet seen', located on the ground floor with only one window overlooking the backyard, in which college workers are going back and forth all day (39). The floor is uneven; the furniture is old, rickety, plain, and dingy, and Hardy readily admits that he "can't afford to have other than these" (40). He is not afraid to speak honestly about his financial limitations. However, after looking around for a moment, 'Tom instinctively left off taking notes, for fear of hurting the other's feelings (just as he would have gone on doing so, and making remarks on everything, had the rooms been models of taste and comfort.)' (40). Tom's reaction conveys a discomfort in acknowledging Hardy's lower college rank. If there's honesty reflected in a

[23] While Reginald Dalton does accept a position as a servitor after accumulating student debt, he is sent down from Oxford for duelling before he can begin his duties.

man's rooms, there is perhaps even greater honesty in another man's reaction to them. This level of vulnerability, an openness of identity echoed through the open door to enter the space, is too much for Tom to take in and induces a sense of shame, but whether this feeling is directed at Hardy or at himself is unclear. This layered reaction to the room highlights the levels of meaning represented in a man's domestic space. After many attempts to get to know Hardy, Tom invites himself into Hardy's rooms, pressing for a greater intimacy in getting to know Hardy through his own private physical space. Yet in doing so, Tom clings to an 'instinct' that 'was already teaching him that poverty is a disgrace to a Briton, and that, until you know a man thoroughly, you must always seem to assume that he is the owner of unlimited money' (40). Hardy's rooms, then, highlight an issue with the mindsets on poverty previously instilled in Tom. Hardy goes on to share that "my position in the college and my poverty naturally kept me out of many things which other men do" (43). This separation from what other men do, and what that means for Hardy as a man, creates a sense of embarassment for Tom. In this space, Tom 'felt more and more unequal to the situation', not only 'unequal' to the task of finding some way to politely respond to Hardy's situation, but also 'unequal' as a middle-class undergraduate to a servitor (40). Poverty is seen as un-British, so it should it remain unseen, yet Tom has the sensory experience of it firsthand. There is no space for assumptions of 'unlimited ready money' when the honest nature of Hardy's financial situation is so clearly exposed. Therefore, Tom, not Hardy, is confronted with what those assumptions represent and mean for Hardy as a man.

This level of exposure creates issues of intimacy in Tom's friendship with Hardy. He does not know him 'thoroughly', and entering his rooms is an attempt to know him better. Such insightful, revealing knowledge, provided through the physical space with such immediacy, without any apologizing or hiding on Hardy's part, instigates a significant reaction from Tom. At first, 'he began to feel embarrassed, and couldn't think of anything to say' (40). The raw presentation of the space leaves him speechless and ashamed, though again, this sense of shame is ambiguous in its direction. He then begins 'blushing for shame,' 'feeling very hot about the ears', and working hard to keep down his whisky, for which 'he would about as soon as have lost a little finger as let [his cough] out' (40, 41). The blushing and heat of his face reflects the inability to hide his feelings. Tom, as a young man who has never had to worry about money, fits the idea of English manhood more fully if that identity is subject to an economic perspective. When confronted on his previously held views of poverty, he struggles to fully digest the scene. Whereas Drysdale's breakfast was a pleasure to consume, Tom has trouble choking down Hardy's whisky. He has to work hard to maintain the

appearance of being able to handle consuming liqueur. This strengthens the association consuming food and drink have to ideas of manliness. There is also a sense of physical shame in Tom not knowing exactly how to treat Hardy or behave around him. Hardy cannot hide his poverty, and so he chooses to embrace it instead. Likewise, Tom cannot fully hide his bodily responses behind any polite words. This inability to hide those physical representations of their lives and thoughts reflects a heightened intimacy in their connection to one another, intensified further for its suddenness. Later, 'Tom flushed again at the ugly word [poverty], but not so much as at first' (43). That Tom is ashamed or embarrassed to listen to Hardy's assessment of his finances suggests wealth as something to be demonstrated rather than discussed. For Drysdale to display his wealth is acceptable, while Hardy's straightforward honesty provokes a sense of violation, a level of intimacy that requires looking away in shame. As the intimacy develops, Tom's body becomes more accustomed to the differences between them, and Hardy physically reacts in retrospect to this experience. The narrator describes that 'Hardy rose and took a turn or two up and down his room. He was astonished at finding himself talking so unreservedly to one of whom he knew so little, and half-wished the words recalled' (43). He paces up and down, unsure of how to physically respond to the situation. He does this again later, as 'he flung his cap and gown on the sofa, and began to walk up and down his room, at first hurriedly, but soon with his usual regular tramp' (47). He goes on thinking to himself and then speaking aloud: 'At any rate he had said and done nothing to tempt him; "if he pushes the acquaintance—and I think he will—it will be because he likes me for myself"' (47). Hardy is self-conscious here, not because of his wealth or status, but because of this greater physical and knowledgeable connection to Tom. He has exposed himself through an intimate, personal setting and is self-conscious of the experience and its layers of meaning. Physical space becomes a reflection of the self, of the man beyond the exterior representation through to an identity based in the interior self. By crossing the threshold of Hardy's rooms, Tom revises his assumptions, finding a more complex understanding of what defines a man.

The questions posed about wealth as a signifier of manliness are addressed through Hardy's physical and intellectual successes. According to Vance, mid-Victorian views held that 'Given the right opportunities and enough talent and determination, any man could succeed and do the state and his fellow men some service, irrespective of birth or rank' (25). Hardy is a direct embodiment of this belief. Though poor, he succeeds in achieving first class marks and accepting a fellowship at St Ambrose. He is also an accomplished rower who is offered a place in the college boat after helping the crew win a race by shouting directions from the riverbanks. The seat offered in the college eight

was originally held by Drysdale, but Vance argues that luxury has left him unfit, unlike Hardy whose role as a servitor and his training as a boxer has given him greater athletic ability (157). Thus, Hardy's lower status to Drysdale has been advantageous in developing more of the ineffable 'manly stuff' the narrator describes. This reverses the Oxford ideal of wealth and abundance established through Drysdale's breakfast and aligns more with Charles Kingsley's claim that there is an effeminate weakness in luxury (Adams 98). Moreover, a lack of financial restraint signaled a lack of control over other sins in conventional Victorian morality (Shannon, 'The Terrible Maelstrom of Debt' 399). Brent Shannon observes that, 'the fast man's drinking and carousing, the athlete's preoccupation with sport, and the aesthete's decorative excesses could be perceived as equally condemnable variations of the same moral weakness' ('The Terrible Maelstrom of Debt' 395). The elitism and waste seen through spending, then, leads to a problem of immorality, whether manifested in problematic masculinity or in financial ruin, particularly student debt.

The struggle of disassociating money from manliness was seen outside of fiction. Nineteenth-century judges and juries struggled with how to balance punishing offenders for not paying debts against what financial sacrifice was 'required' to maintain certain undergraduate lifestyle standards. Because 'conspicuous consumption' was positioned in university life as 'a prerequisite of masculine self-fashioning', the judicial system struggled with how to penalize debtors for their unpaid credit (Finn 275). Drysdale's spending in the novel is once again highlighted humorously to insinuate that a mountain of purchases is completely unwarranted. After his breakfast ends, many tradesmen arrive one after another at his door, the narrator declaring that 'It never rains but it pours' (27). One after another, a deliveryman deposits 'some article ordered, or supposed to have been ordered, or which ought in the judgment of the depositors to have been ordered', including, 'new hats, and ties, and gloves, and pins, jostled balsam of Neroli, and registered shaving-soap, and fancy letter paper, and Eau de Cologne,…coats, waistcoats, trousers, cigars, boots, and spurs' (27). This satirical scene, which even makes Drysdale eventually laugh as the number of tradesmen increases again, shows the ridiculous nature of wealth and frivolous spending in undergraduate life. A key detail of this absurd episode, though, is that Sanders, Drysdale's rival, is present to witness it. The narrator addresses the audience earlier by exclaiming, 'Reader! Had you not ever a friend a few years older than yourself, whose good opinions you were anxious to keep? … Sanders, at any rate, occupied this position towards our young friend Drysdale' (25). The narrator asks the reader to empathise with Drysdale, but not to excuse his spending. Rather, the moment sets up the laughable awkwardness of the impending rotation of deliveries. Indeed, Drysdale is embarrassed for Sanders

to see all the nonsense he buys. Thus, he too recognizes the ridiculousness of his spending, and for a rival to see firsthand the results of his pocketbook is exposing. This representation is paralleled by Tom accidentally picking up Hardy's college regalia, consisting of 'a third-year cap with the board broken into several pieces, and a fusty old gown which had been about college probably for ten generations' (38). The narrator explains that 'Most readers, I doubt not, will think our hero very green for being puzzled at so simple a matter' (38). Tom's naiveté to the significance of the styling of college rooms and gowns, lavishness and necessary frugality being found in the same space, exposes his assumptions of Oxford life and how masculinity can be represented there.

The moral questions surrounding wealth are further exhibited through the raucous actions of some of the Oxford undergraduates. Here too, though, these actions are underscored with humour. When the traditional town and gown fight occurs in the narrative, the narrator makes clear that 'I wish at the same time to disclaim, both in my sponsorial and individual character, all sympathy with town and gown rows, and with all other class rows and quarrels of every sort and kind, whether waged with sword, pen, tongue, fist or otherwise' (113). The scene unfolds despite this protest, with the speaker further claiming, 'in all such rows, so far as I have seen or read, from the time when the Roman plebs marched out to Mons Sacer, down to 1848, when the English chartists met on Kennington Common, the upper classes are most to blame' (113). Though the scene invokes the triviality of town and gown fighting, the reader is prompted to view the conflict through the perspective of a class struggle with a clear provocateur. Wealth is enacted as entitlement to not only higher status but more aggressive behaviours, and is pinpointed as an instigator of conflict, whether the argument has a financial basis or not. The novel exemplifies this problematic role in the events leading up to the conventional town and gown skirmish.

The scene begins with Tom, Drysdale, and other St Ambrose men deciding to visit Wombwell's Travelling Menagerie, a nonfictional animal exhibition with wide popularity in England by the 1840s. The animal-centric setting is paralleled by the animalistic nature of the undergraduates' conduct. Immediately, 'high jinks' ensue with 'the spirit of mischief' overtaking the spectacle (116). Drysdale, in particular, has a gleeful response to the melodrama. When the crowd gets rowdy, Drysdale steps forward, and 'rubbing his hands, and in high glee at the sight of so much misrule in so small a place', mimics the keeper's speaking style, borrowing his body language and 'installing himself as showman' (115). Putting on this role within this fairground microcosm ties to a similar role that Drysdale and other fast men maintain within the university space. His imitation of the animal keeper's authority is a comic moment that reflects the same ridiculous nature of Drysdale's

extravagant breakfasts over which he presides in his rooms. He is a showman who appreciates an audience. When a woman complains that the master of the menagerie should speak as the authority on the 'beasteses', Drysdale replies, 'in his softest voice, "I assure you he knows nothing about the beasteses. We…have eaten more beasteses than the keeper has ever seen"' (115). His elaborate feasting once again becomes a show of power; he can speak with great authority on the animals because he has consumed them. While a continued, comical exaggeration of the undergraduate diet, the sense of power represented in dominance over other living beings is emphasized and questioned when placed into a town and gown context, a space of physical violence.

Though established as an episode of innocent tomfoolery, the language used to represent the characteristics and actions of the undergraduates hints at critical comparisons being drawn between man and beast. As the antagonisation of the crowd and animals develops, the men naturally disseminate into different roles and 'in that short minute individual character came out, and the coward, the cautious man, the resolute prompt Englishman, each was there, and more than one species of each' (116). The invocation of a species classification for each type of undergraduate man there suggests an animalistic nature to them. They begin 'playing off all manner of practical jokes on birds and beasts, their keepers, and such of the public as had been rash enough to venture in' (114). The Oxford men are pinpointed as a distinct group from not only the animals but also other people. Differentiated as such, they devolve into violent antics, 'a set of men bent on burning the wretched monkeys' fingers with the lighted ends of their cigars, in which they seemed successful enough, to judge by the angry chatterings and shriekings of their victims' (114). What could be interpreted as playfully mischief becomes more predatory as they begin to harm the trapped animals, who themselves are not misbehaving. The entitlement of the men manifests in a predatory dominance over the entire scene. The townspeople begin to turn against them; they 'groped their way towards the steps and mounted the platform, where they held a council of war' (116). War becomes the primal, yet distinctly human, response to conflict. Though conveyed with animal qualities, their instinct to respond through battle is human. That qualities of animal and mankind are represented in tandem complicates what war itself means for man.

Attention is given to one undergraduate in particular, 'a long Irishman in cap and gown, who had clearly had as much wine as he could carry' (115). The inebriated man reaches into a panther cage 'through which he was earnestly endeavouring, with the help of a crooked stick, to draw the tail of whichever of the beasts stopped for a moment in its uneasy walk' (114). Unsurprisingly, once achieving his goal of grabbing a tail, this Irishman, Donovan, is dragged along behind the animal.

But as Vance notes, '[Hughes] is more amused than shocked by the warlike posturing of the drunken Donovan' (159). However, humour is not used to excuse the violent, poor character of any of the undergraduates. Instead, the dry wit only highlights the wildness reflected in their actions. Drysdale, in his circumvention of the keeper's role, describes the men rather than the animals. He observes to the crowd, "'This is the wild man of the woods, or whangee-tangee, the most untameable—good heavens, ma'am, take care!" and he seized hold on the unfortunate woman and pulled her away from the bars' (115). Drysdale perceives and classifies Donovan as if discovering and discussing an animal, supplying the multiple, and laughable, names. The framing puts the man on display as an animal himself. This is not lingered on too heavily, however, as Drysdale is comically interrupted by the wildness of the scene. Pulling the woman away from the bars demonstrates that Donovan is a thing to be avoided. In reaching beyond the boundaries of between man and animal, he becomes something comically other.

The wild otherness of this Irishman is paralleled in the novel by a later encounter with a different Irishman, Larry, who is serving Harry East in India. The epistolary chapter, with East writing to Tom from his army posting, is the darkest of the narrative, showcasing that war, as East succinctly concludes, is a 'a bloody business' (497). It is also shown to be a place where the same impulse to cross boundaries signals a lack of humanity. East recounts to Tom how he came close to death in one particular battle. While he is in and out of consciousness, described as 'the most serious painless mixture of dream and life, getting more dreamy every minute', he discovers that Larry, believing East is dead, is attempting to steal the boots from his feet. When East confronts this intimate violation, he describes that 'Larry's face of horror, which I just caught through my half-opened eyes, would have made me roar, if I had had strength for it' (498). This scavenging behaviour, a ruthless reflection of the realities of war, is met with a desire to give a roar of laughter in response. East's amusement at this entitlement, in the boundaries crossed when a man attempts to take what is not his, is doubly ironic given that this is a colonised Irish servant within a colonial Indian setting. Moreover, East's treading the boundaries of the conscious and unconscious, echoed by Larry crossing boundaries of decency and desire, emphasises the shifting boundaries of war. The lack of morality observed in this episode reveals an animalistic nature to Empire. East reflects in his letter that, 'You can't think a curious feeling it is, the life going out of you', a summation that speaks to the physical death he is experiencing and can also encapsulate the diminishing humanity seen in war (497). In adventuring too far into perilous territories, whether a zoo animal's cage or another nation's land, there is a danger for man to become less human.

This danger is reflected in the environment of Oxford. Hardy expresses great concern about the immorality becoming pervasive in university culture. He believes that the current Oxford men will "bring this noble old place down about their ears. Down it will come, down it must come, for down it ought to come, if it can find nothing better to worship than rank, money, and intellect" (68). In direct terms, the question at the heart of the novel is laid bare – if rank, money, and intellect do not ensure ethical conduct, then what does? If those qualities are kept as definitive of manliness, then what is lost? Hardy offers no response and instead punches his cupboard. The fierceness of his affections for Oxford, in the idea of what should be valuable in men, results in a violent action. In response 'Tom tried to look solemn and heroic, as befitted the occasion; but somehow, the sudden contrast flashed upon him, and sent him off, before he could think about it, into a roar of laughter… Hardy, after holding out for a moment, gave in to the humour of the thing' (68). The questions provoked by Hardy's critiques are defused with laughter, but the novelist's sympathy with the serious moral intent that underlies Hardy's anger is not in doubt. The reader is asked to admire both Tom's sympathy for Hardy's manly passion and his sense of the intermittently ludicrous nature of its expression in smashed tumblers and a broken sugar-basin.

Male Friendship and Chivalry

While the title *Tom Brown at Oxford* clearly names a protagonist, arguably, it does not identify the hero of the novel. Jack Hardy, the St Ambrose College servitor Tom Brown goes out of his way to befriend, possesses much more heroic depth and complexity than Tom himself. Hughes discusses in his preface to the novel how he wanted to give his protagonist a general, English name which did not have 'the least heroic, or aristocratic, or even respectable savour about it' (5). In contrast, Hardy's name invokes a rich heroic history, and he reveals to Tom, "My father is an old commander in the Royal Navy. He was a second cousin of Nelson's Hardy, and that, I believe, was what led him into the navy…It was a visit which Nelson's Hardy, then a young lieutenant, paid to his relative, my grandfather, which decided my father" (70). Jack Hardy is hereditarily linked to the heroic mythology and homosocial intimacy of Admiral Horatio Nelson and Captain Thomas Hardy. As Nelson lay dying with Hardy at this side, witnesses noted the 'moment of tenderness' between the two friends ('The death of Nelson'). William Beatty claimed Nelson's last words were "Kiss me, Hardy", and that the captain complied, bending down to kiss his friend's cheek and later his forehead before he drew his last breath ('The death of Nelson'). This showcase of male friendship

and affection is echoed through the connection between Tom and Hardy. Theirs is one of the more developed male friendships in the university fiction of the time and shows the significance of homosocial bonds in maintaining manly morality.

Jeffrey Richards, in his chapter on manly love in Victorian society, provides a foundational overview of male friendship in the nineteenth century and the 'manly love' reflected through those bonds (93). This kind of masculine affection constitutes a spiritual brotherhood and 'notions of service and sacrifice', including, at times, death on the other's behalf (Richards 93). These ideas reflected a nineteenth-century recall to chivalric traditions as Ancient Greece and the Middle Ages influenced the Victorians (Richards 93).[24] Michele Cohen notes that 'love was central to the chivalric system', and while she is referring here to heterosexual intimacy, the manly love that Richards identifies is evidence of the same fundamental tenet of chivalry (320). Chivalry became 'a moral ideal … filtered into the Victorian notion of the gentleman and the manly Christian', including the love men expressed for one another (Vance 21). It was a higher and different form of love than that for women, the difference being that 'the love of women is sexual and therefore inferior; the love of a man for a man is spiritual, transcendent and free from base desire' (Richards 93). Moreover, this love for other men was considered part of manliness and began to be instilled through public school education in the nineteenth century (Richards 102). The inculcation of manly love began at school – 'In their lessons, their reading, the sermons they heard, public schoolboys were prepared for close male friendship' (Richards 110). Unsurprisingly, then, this same kind of love is represented in university fiction through Tom and Hardy. However, while this foundation for understanding manly love takes into account the spiritual connection between men, Tom and Hardy's friendship demonstrates a significant physical component, showcasing chivalry as an outward act and inward posture (Vance 19). Their physical abilities and reactions to one another are central to how their camaraderie, and their individual characteristics, are developed. Considering the physical aspects of their friendship does not merely exemplify manly love but demonstrates what is achieved through this kind of homosocial bond.

Dennis Allen observes that in *Tom Brown's School Days*, the male body is a signifier of meaning beyond itself, which is why 'the body is both present and absent in the novel. … the stress falls finally on the meanings of the body rather than the body itself' (128-9). While Allen assesses

[24] For more on the influence of Ancient Greece and the Middle Ages on Victorian chivalry, see Cohen, Michele. '"Manners" Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830.' *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2005, pp. 312-29, https://doi.org/10.1086/427127.

that there is little physical description of the main characters in *Tom Brown's School Days*, the same is not true of *Tom Brown at Oxford*, particularly regarding Hardy (115).[25] The servitor is framed within historical and narrative traditions of heroism and chivalry both through his character and in his physique. He is indeed "hardy", physically robust, sturdy, and capable of enduring fatigue (OED). Tom's first impression of him notes that 'he was somewhere about five feet ten in height, very deep-chested, and with long powerful arms and hands', and he shows signs of maturity, as 'his figure was more set, and he had stronger whiskers than are generally grown at twenty' (13). He has a strong, mature masculine appearance, yet 'at the first glance he was an ugly man; he was marked with small-pox, had large features, high cheekbones, deeply set eyes, and a very long chin; and had got the trick which many underhung men have of compressing his upper lip' (13). While physically powerful, he is a muscular rather than classically attractive figure, but 'there was that in his face which hit Tom's fancy, and made him anxious to know [him] better. He had an instinct that he should get good out of him' (13-4). Hardy's physique is tied, for Tom, to an inner goodness which compels Tom to connect with him. The beginnings of male friendship are associated here with an outward embodiment of inward character. This strength and hardiness, coupled with his talent on the river, powers Hardy to acclaim as a rower. His family's naval history seems to draw him to the water in a way that his friend Grey 'wished he could understand what it was that moved him so' (143). Hardy's embodiment of his name and family history dictates his emotional and physical reaction, his investment in the college rowing undeniable and incomprehensible to his friend. However, though Grey's bond with Hardy is disrupted by their lack of mutual interest in rowing, Tom feels a greater connection to Hardy as he voluntarily assists the crew. As Tom and his peers are competing in a boat race, he is guided by Hardy's voice, for 'amid all the Babel of voices, and the dash and pulse of the stroke, and the laboring of his own breathing, he heard Hardy's voice coming to him again and again, and clear as if there had been no other sound in the air, "Steady, two! steady! well pulled! steady, steady!" The voice seemed to give him strength and keep him to his work' (146). Tom does not see Hardy physically following the boat, but he hears his disembodied voice and responds to its encouragement. There is a distinct sense of the power and comfort that Hardy's presence brings Tom, and such a force establishes the strength of their friendship, a connection that does not even

[25] The inclusion of 58 illustrations by Arthur Hughes and Sydney Prior in the 1869 edition of *Tom Brown's School Days* perhaps modified later readers' perceptions of how Tom Brown's physique is depicted in the text. In this edition, Tom is given visual rather than linguistic physical description. In contrast, *Tom Brown at Oxford* offers more description of the characters through the text, and only eight illustrations by Sydney P. Hall were later included in the 1871 edition.

require physical closeness to be felt. That he guides Tom with his voice foreshadows the influence he continues to have over Tom's actions later in the narrative.

While Hardy is posed as a robust figure with a heroic heritage, these manly features are coupled by a 'sensitiveness…as keen as a woman's', and a 'deeper and more sensitive nature' (284, 179). He is 'great' and 'strong' but with 'bursts of womanly tenderness', with other St Ambrose men judging that "he is a clever fellow, but a very queer one" (64, 18). His physicality contrasts his inner sensitivity, a combination his peers struggle to reconcile. However, Hardy's more 'feminine' characteristics create an interesting parallel to George Arthur, Tom's closest friend in *School Days*. Maureen Martin notes that Arthur appears as an 'angelic boy' and an 'embodiment of idealized femininity' (484). He is presented as a spiritual character, with Martin suggesting that he reflects an 'ideal' femininity with softer, gentler qualities. While Hardy shares high moral standards and goodness with Arthur, the primary homosocial bond Tom develops in this sequel is based much more in manliness. Whereas, as Maureen Martin argues, Arthur is 'the instrument through which the manliness of the hero can be realized', Hardy becomes the figure to help Tom maintain that manliness (484). Hardy functions as a kind of spiritual guide for Tom, and this aspect of their friendship echoes the spirituality of manly love. As he helps Tom navigate inner conflict and the physical temptations of Oxford life, Hardy operates as an anchor for the idea of how men are to behave. Ironically, then, what are presented as more 'womanly' characteristics in fact show the depth of passion behind his ideas of how men are to conduct themselves, particularly with one another. His 'queerness' and sensitivity are manifested in the same chivalrous nature that defines his manliness. Tom, when reflecting on Hardy, observes that he 'was consuming his heart over everything that seemed to him to be going wrong in himself and round about him – in the college, in Oxford, in England, in the ends of the earth, and never letting slip a chance of trying to set right here a thread, and there a thread' (134). His strong sense of right, honour, and gentlemanly decorum – principles he applies across social class divisions – are showcased with deep emotion as well as physical action. Moreover, that Hardy feels so passionately about the wrongs around him invokes the same feeling in other men. When some of his Oxford peers host a boxing match and request that he participate, he realizes that he has been invited not as a peer but purely as a fighter, an object of entertainment to gentle-commoners. He honours his commitment to the match, but after he wins and the men are delighted, he recounts to Tom "I tore off the gloves, flung them on the ground, and turned to my host. I could hardly speak, but I made an effort, and said quietly, 'You have brought a stranger to your rooms, and have tried to make him fight for your amusement; now I tell you it is a

blackguard act of yours—an act which no gentleman would have done'" (81). His aristocratic peers attempt to define Hardy by his physical ability, but the novel distinguishes him in a very different way. Hardy is positioned primarily here by his physical ability as a conduit of entertainment – not a man, but a spectacle – and his idea of gentlemanliness cannot overlook the injustice of the inequality and objectification. He embodies a conceptualisation of chivalry as permeating all classes of people (Vance 21). When his physical ability supplants his identity as an Oxford man, a fellow undergraduate and gentleman, he challenges the inequitable assessment of what defines him. His 'womanly' qualities, his sensitivity and tenderness, together with his assertion of a deeply felt manly code are manifested here in passionate rebuke, compelling the men to reconsider themselves, with one later coming to apologize to him. That Hardy simultaneously embodies seemingly contrasting, gendered characteristics catalyses a re-evaluation not of him and his understanding of manliness but of the other undergraduate men and theirs. He is presented as a heroic figure for confronting injustice, 'a self-questioning, much-enduring man; a slayer of dragons himself, and one with whom you could not live much without getting uncomfortably aware of the dragons which you also had to slay' (134). Recalling the traditions of a Romantic, chivalrous heroism, the desire to slay figurative dragons – which are implicitly located both within and without – conveys the goal of a manliness defined by both physical fortitude and inner passion.

Hardy embodies this knightly role by positioning himself as Tom's personal saviour. While Hardy may represent a manliness that is self-controlled and well-disciplined, both physically and morally, Tom's journey through Oxford is a progression toward this same understanding. He faces physical challenges on multiple fronts, Hardy inserting himself into each situation in order to guide and rescue his friend. Thus, male friendship, based in chivalrous manly love, is represented as a guardian over all aspects of manliness. This is first demonstrated through physical rescue on the river. Upon arriving at Oxford, Tom commits the archetypal naïve freshman folly and 'addressed himself manfully to his task' of rowing solo (10). The impulse to set out on the water conveys the same adventurous, and implicitly masculine, sense as that of exploration through empire. This choice proves perilous, as it commonly does for university fiction protagonists and imperialist pioneers, and he is soon caught in a current and loses control of the boat. Fortuitously, Hardy sees the entire catastrophe unfold and guides Tom and his boat back to shore. The scene is a symbolic representation of Tom's transition into Oxford life and to adulthood. There is a privileged assumption in this act, believing that he can 'manfully' handle situations with which he has no prior experience. Instead, he is saved by a servitor in a much less advantageous position as a male

undergraduate, yet Tom 'did not feel that the other was asserting any superiority over him' when Hardy offers to teach him to row (16). Their bond in this physical activity ignores any social divisions between them and instead highlights how manliness is not defined by socio-economic status. Hardy rescues Tom physically here, but much like for the Muscular Christian, the outer appearance and physique is merely the beginning point for maintaining the inner moral self.

In *The Manliness of Christ*, Hughes constructs 'manliness' to include such qualities as courage, tenderness, thoughtfulness for others, self-restraint, and loyalty to truth. In *Tom Brown at Oxford*, Hardy augments this list by asking Tom, "Can there be any true manliness without purity?" (236). Indeed, as Richards summarises, 'The chivalric code was reformulated to provide a living and meaningful code of behaviour for the nineteenth century gentleman, who was seen as the embodiment of bravery, loyalty, courtesy, modesty, purity and honour and endowed with a sense of *noblesse oblige* towards women, children and social inferiors' (113). For Tom, embodying these traits is particularly challenged within the context of heterosexual relationships. Traditional Christianity taught that 'sex interferes with the true vocation of man – the search for spiritual perfection' (Richards 93). Thus, celibacy, virginity, and more generally, sexual self-control, were exalted as aspects of manliness. Hardy reiterates "I have been taught, ever since I could speak, that the crown of all real manliness, of all Christian manliness, is purity" (273). Hughes represents this kind of 'moral energy as the supreme requirement' for a Muscular Christian hero (Vance 48). Hardy attempts to implement this view in Tom when he becomes involved with Patty, a local barmaid. When Tom clumsily toys with Patty's affections, Hardy confronts his friend about his ungentlemanly behaviour, warning of the consequences of such flirting. This advice is validated as the rest of the narrative builds from Tom's unscrupulous actions. The narrator does not describe what exactly happens between the pair, but rhetorically poses, 'Why need I tell you what followed?' and adds that Patty 'was setting her caps to rights' as Tom leaves; meanwhile, Hardy later confirms his suspicions that the two shared a kiss that evening (164, 169). Richards notes that 'Close noble friendships were encouraged until the 1880s as an antidote to "beastliness"', and this kind of antidote is personified in Tom and Hardy (117). Their homosocial bond is what saves Tom from compromising his manliness through his desire for Patty. Hardy sees saving Tom as 'a sacred duty', and confesses to himself "I think I could die for him" (172). This self-sacrificing compulsion links to the same qualities which define manly love and is also seen in Hardy's earlier physical rescue of Tom on the river. This time, however, Hardy recognises that Tom must ultimately save himself from this moral dilemma, insisting privately "He will, he must escape it" (172). The vague reference to 'it'

leaves potential multiple meanings of what Tom must be rescued from, potentially including the relationship with Patty, the physical temptation and impurity of that relationship, or merely an all-encompassing 'himself'. Whatever the exact nature of what Hardy believes Tom must escape, heterosexual temptation is presented here as a force to be overcome through homosocial bonds. However, romantic love is also demonstrated to be a disruption to manly love as Tom and Hardy become disconnected in light of this confrontation. If male friendship is a guardian of manliness, as Hardy's behaviour suggests, then a man's morality is at risk when heterosexual desire destabilizes homosociality. Moreover, in a note to Tom, Hardy invokes familial and spiritual bonds as reason to refrain from taking Patty as his mistress. He writes, 'in the name of the honour of your mother and sister, in the name of God, I warn you. May He help you through it' (180). The specificity in listing each of these connections creates the pleading and emotional tone of the brief note. Hardy asks himself, "But will he ever come back to me? I care not, so he escape" (172). This selfless longing encompasses the kind of chivalrous manly love that places the good of the other over the success of the self while also illustrating the intimate depth of male friendship.

Notably, the central concern for Hardy regarding Tom and Patty's relationship is Tom's ability to maintain his chivalric manliness. There is no concern expressed about the effect of Tom's actions on Patty's reputation. Indeed, the narrator suggests that 'Perhaps she may not have been altogether unconscious that every least motion and word of hers was noticed', placing at least some of the agency and accountability on her (137). Hardy begs Tom to "Think of your family", not of Patty (169). The respect afforded to women by men, and the self-control men maintained in relationship to women, were indictive of chivalry, of civilization and progress (Cohen 318, 319). The lack of consideration afforded to Patty raises the question of who Hardy is protecting and acting on behalf of, if he is purely defending the man and not the woman. The chivalric tradition upholds respect for women, yet Hardy is not interested or invested in Patty's well-being, but Tom's solely. Therefore, manliness and male purity are positioned as more important than a woman's honour, protection, and own purity. Cohen posits 'that the very ambiguities inherent in the representations of chivalry were most productive of meaning' (315). Hardy's intervention in Tom's connection to Patty suggests an ambiguity about who chivalry is for, men or women, the enactor or the recipient. The disregard for Patty suggests a manly ideal that is more interested in what it means for men than for women, despite the connotations of respect associated with these masculine values.

As this episode continues and Tom rebels against Hardy's instruction, ironically, a greater sense of physical and emotional intimacy emerges through their destabilised connection. Instead of

reconciling with Hardy, Tom 'began to loiter by the entrance of the passage which led to Hardy's rooms…he hardly knew whether he hoped to catch a glimpse of the owner, but he did hope that Hardy might hear his voice' (210). There is a longing for Hardy's physical presence which provokes Tom to linger near him. This desire for Hardy symbolizes not merely an intimacy in their friendship but also a longing in Tom to be chivalrous, to be like him. Thus, Tom is drawn to his presence in the same way as when they first met – he is attracted to the good in his friend. He watches for him 'furtively, but constantly, and was always fancying what he was doing and thinking about' (210). He ponders whether the separation is as painful for Hardy, feeling that 'a great wall had risen between them, more hopelessly dividing them for the time than thousands of miles of ocean or continent?' (210). There is a melodramatic sense of yearning in the exaggeration of how far the two are separated from one another and in Tom's daydreaming of what his friend is doing and thinking. In *The Allegory of Love*, C.S. Lewis discusses the depth of love that could be felt between men in the chivalric tradition, how loyalty and friendship could be 'lover-like' (9-10). Such a romantic sensibility is reflected through separation, Hardy's care for Tom's manliness coupled with Tom's desire to be physically near his friend. The struggle to maintain manly qualities puts friendship, connections and intimacy with other men, at risk.

Resolution to this division comes only through an even more heroic figure – Hardy's father. Joanne Begiato acknowledges that 'Military men were…useful role models because they battled with and overcame the challenges of self-mastery, often in extreme situations' (10). It is fitting, then, that Captain Hardy is the one who finally convinces Tom to mend the divide between the friends. After speaking with the captain, 'Tom rushed across to his friend, dearer than ever to him now, and threw his arm around his neck; and, if the un-English truth must out, had three parts of a mind to kiss the rough face which was now working with strong emotion' (222). His longing to kiss Hardy directly reflects the similar, historical homosocial, physical bond between Nelson and his Hardy, tying the intimate moment to ideas of heroism and masculine bonds that hold fast in the face of death. That the narrator identifies this as an 'un-English' impulse is ironic given the mythology it invokes, and the suggestion that this depth of connection should be disguised points to a complicated intersection between male friendship and physical intimacy. The desired restraint in the narration is immediately preceded by the admission of Tom's physical urge, which shows a complexity within how manly love should be expressed. Repeatedly, though, through this example of male friendship, we see a manliness expressed in moral guardianship but also in [the fraught uncertainties] of bodily desire. Indeed, after reconciling, Tom and Hardy 'walked toward the High Street arm in arm', their

emotional connection clearly demonstrated by their linked limbs (283). Furthermore, the effects of Tom and Hardy's manly love for one another continue to be represented in Tom's physical movements. He begins to self-consciously mimic Hardy's reactions. The servitor, when once confronting Tom, 'tramped up and down with his arms locked behind him' (168). The repeated, cyclical stride and holding his arms 'locked' reflects a physical control that Hardy asserts over his emotions. Later, Tom uses the same stance when once again confronted over his relationship with Patty, this time by Harry Winburn, as depicted in the illustration below by Sydney P. Hall. While 'Tom's blood tingled in his veins, and wild words rushed to his tongue… the discipline of the last year stood him in good stead. He stood for a moment or two, crushing his hands together behind his back, drew a long breath', before replying (434). He counters the physicality of emotion – the tingling blood and wild words on his tongue – with a sense of physical control much like Hardy's. Thus, a masculine, moral, and bodily control is passed on through homosocial bonds, and these codes of manliness are represented as shared and learned through male friendship.

Figure 1: Sydney P. Hall, *Tom Brown at Oxford*, 1871

Women, Wit, and Work

The way women are represented in the writing of Thomas Hughes, including *Tom Brown at Oxford,* has been rightly questioned by critics of his work and that of other Muscular Christians. The male-centric language associated with Muscular Christianity along with limited direct consideration given to women in Hughes's writings is evident. Vance notes, however, that discussions of 'man' within the nineteenth-century understanding of 'Christian manliness' comprise a potential inclusivity for all 'mankind' (1). The minimal space presented for women in the leading terms of Muscular

Christianity prompts the need to consider the female characters within Tom Brown's world. In terms of quantity, women are much more present in *Tom Brown at Oxford* than in *Tom Brown's School Days*, and, compared to other mid-nineteenth-century university novels, women play a more crucial role in the development of the plot and the protagonist here. In fact, women are the driving force of the novel's conflict and central to Tom's character development. His physical relationship with Patty, though not ruinous, briefly defines his relationship to both Hardy and Harry Winburn. Their homosocial bonds are almost compromised because of Tom's questionable behaviour toward the opposite sex. He lacks this experience because there was no space given to women in the male homosocial world of the public school. Indeed, Alice Crossley, following Donald Hall, notes that since Tom becomes a maternal figure to Arthur in *Tom Brown's School Days* that means there is no need for a female character in that public school novel (38). The presence of women at Oxford creates potential for both conflict through sexual temptation and expression through a marriage plot. Martin asserts that, 'In order to become integrated into the *adult* male world, a world of mandatory heterosexuality, Tom ultimately must learn to define himself in relation to women too' (484). Thus, in formulating a novel of Victorian masculine development, women are present as part of that gendered process. As established in *Reginald Dalton*, a narrative guided toward the protagonist's eventual marriage is common within nineteenth-century university fiction, though not essential, as *Loss and Gain* demonstrates. Because university life operates at the turning point between boy and man, this hinge is often reflected through an exploration of heterosexual attraction and considerations of marriage. While matrimony is incorporated as an indicator of masculine maturity, this narrative endpoint also creates space for female characters to function more directly in the plot. Notably, the women of *Tom Brown at Oxford* are not only represented in relation to Tom but to each other, in scenes which do not include the protagonist. This distinct attention differs from the inclusion of female characters in other university novels. In *Loss and Gain*, there is only one scene where women are alone together – a mother and her two daughters conversing in a bedroom. In *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Verdant's love, Patty Honeywood, is never given dialogue in a scene that does not include Verdant. Women are more central to the plot of *Reginald Dalton*, but they are largely depicted in conversation with other men, not other women. Women are more present and developed here than elsewhere in university fiction up through the 1860s. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily mean that their representation is less problematic or, at times, stereotypical.

There is a clear discrepancy between how female readers and characters are represented in the text. The narrator of *Tom Brown at Oxford* at times directly addresses the women reading the

novel, advising them on how to better understand the masculine-biased plot points. After a college boat race, a disclaimer is given to the 'readers of the gentler sex', requesting that they 'pardon the enthusiasm which stirs our pulses…as we call up again the memories of this the most exciting sport of our boyhood', and fears they may be 'hopelessly unable to understand, the above sketch; your sons and brothers will tell you it could not have been less technical' (149). Despite the ways in which manliness is complicated by more stereotypically feminine qualities, such as Hardy's sensitivity and so called 'womanly' qualities, the invocation here maintains a view of women as the 'gentler sex' who are unfamiliar with the nostalgic significance and mechanics of a boat race. Male relatives are called upon to explain the emotional resonances to them. This condescending mode of address establishes a clear delineation between male and female readers, and the distinction is repeated when describing the joys of fishing. The narrator asserts that for 'lady readers, it is impossible, probably, to give them an idea of the sensation in question' (406). The speaker goes on to liken catching the first fish of the season to 'something of the kind at their first balls, when they heard whispers and saw all eyes turning their way, and knew that their dresses and gloves fitted perfectly' (406). The comparison is perhaps attempting to speak to similar levels of excitement provoked from the 'firsts' of a particular season. However, specifically invoking the image of a ball and how 'lady readers' draw attention to themselves within that space creates a parallel of luring between these designated masculine and feminine activities. The analogous sensations of ladies at a ball to men sporting a rod and reel further implies that attending a formal social gathering may be its own type of fishing. The activity requires its own equipment and type of physical engagement, its own means to catch a specific type of quarry. This transforms a ballroom into a kind of sporting environment in which women fish for, and compete for, the attention of their prey, implicitly identifiable as the male gaze. Underlying these layers of meaning is the stereotypical assessment that women do not understand fishing but do understand a ball, striking a clear gendered differentiation in space and sport through simile.

As with many university novels, *Tom Brown at Oxford* shifts in setting between the college quadrangles to the countryside. Multiple nonsequential chapters are situated in Englebourn, far beyond the scope of university life. This Berkshire village is where the two primary female characters, Mary Porter and Katie Winter, are first introduced. This gendered geographical division positions the rural areas outside of Oxford as a more feminine space. In contrast to how women readers are alluded to, these cousins are portrayed as capable and convivial women. Katie is the local rector's daughter, and because her father is older and disinclined to work, she takes charge of activities such the structure of the Sunday service and visiting local parishioners. She is depicted as

self-assured and authoritative, while Mary is described as 'one of the merriest young women in the world' and of a 'pure and bright nature' (197). Mary is depicted not in terms of physical beauty but with figurative language that encapsulates her talents and inner character. She 'gave forth light and music' and 'every one who knew her was eager to have her with them, to warm themselves in the light and rejoice in the music!' (197). Her presence is a sensory experience, felt through the warmth of her light and heard through her music, giving her an angelic, spiritual quality. There is a purity in her presentation, which speaks not only to how she is defined as a character but also to the setting in which she is placed. In comparison to Patty, the Oxford barmaid who functions as a source of temptation for Tom, Mary and Katie are both presented as upstanding, innocent young women. The moral distinctions made between these women create a parallel sense of moral difference between their locations. Religious purity and goodness become associated with the countryside through Mary and Katie, while immorality is connected with the city, and more specifically, with the university, through Patty and her association with Tom. How these female characters are represented in and out of Oxford suggests that coming into contact with the male environment of the university changes the way in which women are seen and understood.

Notably, of the female characters portrayed in the novels examined in this study, Mary and Katie are the first to go to Oxford for themselves. Ellen of *Reginald Dalton* lives in the city with her guardian. Louisa Bolton, who later in *Loss and Gain* marries Reding's friend White, is present with her husband. Patty Honeywood of *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* travels there with her family only at the end of the novel after she and Verdant are engaged. Even the Patty of this novel, whom Tom encounters earlier in the narrative, is present due to her work as a barmaid in a local pub. Mary and Katie are the first women within these key texts to be portrayed among the undergraduates, engaging in college culture. That they are introduced away from Oxford before being integrated into the university setting heightens the contrast between how they are depicted in the countryside versus the city. Once they arrive in Oxford, both young women become mere pretty objects put on display. Much like Patty is deemed a 'pretty face' without much further description, Mary is suddenly stereotypically concerned with her physical appearance. Similarly to the Oxford men wanting to dress well as a sign of their social status and masculinity, Mary is fixated on her fashioned femininity. She asks Katie "How did you think my new silk looked in the garden?", hoping that the rich fabric looks well posed against 'the velvety turf' of the college gardens (270). This fascination with blending into the scenery establishes a link between Mary and nature. She wants to physically appear as a part of the landscape of Oxford, visually coordinated with the aesthetic of the college

environment. Mary and Katie travel to Oxford for the Commemoration week, and while staying at the Mitre Hotel, they see a group of undergraduates riding by in a coach. As it goes past, 'the young ladies looked out at first with great curiosity; but, suddenly finding themselves the mark for a whole coach load of male eyes, shrank back' (271-2). They immediately become subject to the gaze of the Oxford men below. Even though there is mutual looking done here, for they leaned out the window to take a look at the men themselves, that they 'shrank back' shows their discomfort in being seen at the window. The embarrassment they feel is not from having been caught staring themselves, but from being stared at. Katie's response of "It was our fault…we shouldn't have been at the window", places the problem on the women's agency to put themselves within view of the male audience (272). Thus, the text posits that the male gaze is a given, a force that women are subject to if visible. This kind of attention to the female form is only present within this Oxford setting, however. That Englebourn is not depicted in this way indicates that a heavily male-centric environment informs how the opposite sex is looked upon and reacted to.

The connection between Mary and the physical landscape is heightened later through Tom's emotional ties to her. While spending time away from Oxford, he rides out on Hawk's Lynch and feels 'the exhilaration of the scramble, and the sense of power, and of some slight risk, which…made Tom's eyes kindle and his pulse beat quicker as he reached the top and pulled up under the Scotch firs' (356). Elation characterises this encounter with the land, his pulse beating faster and his eyes kindling, as well as feeling power in traversing the terrain. When he recognises the spot as one of Mary's favourite views, he begins to look 'out over the scene which she had so often looked over' (356). He imagines that 'She might have sat on the very spot he was sitting on; she must have taken in the same expanse of wood and meadow, village and park, and dreamy, distant hill' (356). There is a Romantic connection between past and present, imagined and real, tied to the landscape before him. Tom feels bonded with Mary through the knowledge that they have both experienced the same place in nature. Additionally, she becomes a disembodied presence woven into Tom's experience of the land. He senses and recognises her there, for 'Her presence seemed to fill the air around him' and 'the soft wind which blew straight from Barton seemed laden with her name, and whispered it in the firs, over his head. Every nerve in his body was bounding with new life, and he could sit still no longer' (356). There is a transformational experience that he feels physically, but Mary's disembodiment also suggests a sense of spiritual connection, harkening back to early descriptions of Mary as pure and light. That this experience takes places in the countryside furthers the idea of nature being a space symbolic of morality. Overall, the landscape functions here

as a unifying force between the pair. Tom 'rose, sprang on his horse, and, with a shout of joy, turned from the vale and rushed away on to the heath', realising that he is 'triumphantly in love' (356). Mary's association with the land creates a power of influence over Tom mentally, emotionally, physically, and even spiritually. Her presence crosses bodily and temporal boundaries, and instigates a change in Tom. He believes his love for Mary 'had already raised him, and purified him, and made a man of him' (388). Heterosexual desire is presented here as instigating a transition between boy and man. Thus, Mary, as a symbolic representation of a feminine presence and influence, showcases a crossing of temporal, physical, and developmental boundaries.

The sense of unification between Tom and Mary is further represented through their dialogue, specifically the word play they use with each other. After meeting at Oxford, one of their first conversations consists of witty, light-hearted banter. Robert Bernard Martin claims that for the Victorians 'Wit was generally conceded to be something that entertained by virtue of the surprise inherent in the linking of the fundamentally incompatible, and since surprise is necessarily transitory, wit is no more than – literally – passing fancy. There is no meat, no sustenance in it' (35). While wit may hold no great sustenance in its linguistic brevity, Matthew Bevis notes the relationship that wit cultivates with emotion. He detects that wit 'is a kind of cognitive prowess or psychological cunning', and in the case of romantic comedy, a couple may 'rely on wit to gain some mastery over feelings that they cannot quite control' (Bevis 26). Syncing diction and sculpting wit is a form of power over the emotional undertones of the interaction. We can see this in the way that certain terms recur in the exchanges between Tom and Mary, continuing to interweave in each reply. Their conversation builds from one line of dialogue to the next, each picking up on the word choice of the other. The play with multiple meanings is Shakespearian in nature, furthering the profound and fun linguistic control. Beginning with Tom, the conversation unfolds as follows:

> "And so they are generally agreeable, for wise people are always dull; and so—ladies ought to avoid the dons."
>
> "And not avoid first-year men?"
>
> "Exactly so."
>
> "Because they are foolish, and therefore fit company for ladies. Now, really—"
>
> "No, no; because they are foolish, and therefore, they ought to be made wise; and ladies are wiser than dons."

"And, therefore, duller; for all wise people, you said, were dull."

"Not all wise people; only people who are wise by cramming—as dons; but ladies are wise by inspiration."

"And first-year men, are they foolish by inspiration and agreeable by cramming, or agreeable by inspiration and foolish by cramming?"

"They are agreeable by inspiration in the society of ladies."

"Then they can never be agreeable, for you say they never see ladies."

"Not with the bodily eye, but with the eye of fancy."

"Then their agreeableness must be all fancy."

"But it is better to be agreeable in fancy than dull in reality."

"That depends upon whose fancy it is. To be agreeable in your own fancy is compatible with being as dull in reality as—"

"How you play with words; I see you won't leave me a shred either of fancy or agreeableness to stand on." (291)

In the course of this conversation, their replies circle back to ideas and meanings of 'wise', 'agreeable', 'inspiration', 'fancy', specific verbs ('avoid' and 'cramming'), descriptors ('foolish', 'dull', and 'duller'), and how Oxford dons compare to first-year men. There is a symmetry and poetry to their witty banter that distinguishes Mary as capable of equally maintaining linguistic command alongside Tom. Any difference potentially defined by gender or intellect is nonexistent in their discourse. Without much identification of the speakers by Hughes, the reader can easily lose track of who is speaking, and their voices become near-indistinguishable, blending together and producing a unity between the pair. Tom and Mary are shown to be linguistic equals, wit and linguistic word play blurring any boundaries between them.

The unity symbolically reflected through the natural world and wit is later emphasized through ideas of work. Dennis Allen argues that if in the view of Muscular Christianity every man must do his work in the world, then 'the idea of work is inherently democratic, a universal, equalizing vision: working, one joins with the laboring multitude, and the essence of work is that it is unselfish' (126-7). While Allen uses this point to discuss class divisions, the end of *Tom Brown at Oxford* transitions away from issues of social rank to considerations of gender in relation to work while maintaining this equalising vision. Earlier in the narrative, Katie Winter laments that "I ought to have been a man, I am sure, and then I might, perhaps, be able to do more, and should have

more influence", but this sense of gendered division in what men and women do is combatted in the final scene of the novel (325). The text utilises the marriage of Tom and Mary to further explore the boundaries of a woman's role and power. The final chapter of the book is a conversation between the newlywed couple about the work they can do together. Labelled as 'The Postscript', the section could either be considered as an afterthought or as a vital addition. Titularly and narratively, the scene functions as a sort of epilogue to the main narrative. By this point, Tom has finished his years in Oxford, becoming much more of Christian Socialist, and holds hopes of finding good and useful work in the world. Yet, he has not yet developed a career for himself and sadly contrasts "the sweet burden" of Mary's "pure life and being" with, in a striking phrase, his own "soiled and baffled manhood" (545). His perspective poses her as a kind of martyr to marry him and attach herself to his 'baffled manhood'. This designation of his own masculinity pinpoints the significance of work in relationship to manliness.

Tom further laments that Mary paid "the Price" to be with him, yet she responds to this observation by clarifying "it was my own bargain, you know, dear, and I am satisfied with my purchase. I paid the price with my eyes open" (545). The metaphorical language of purchasing as correlated to their marriage conveys Mary's agency and power. She emphasizes that "I set my mind on having you—buying you, as that is your word", the language placing her in a kind of ownership position over Tom as her husband (546). Tom does not argue with this language, submitting to this idea and explaining, "Mary, you have bought me, and you little know, dearest, what you have bought" (546). His current aimlessness weighs on his idea of what makes him a man and how that impacts their marriage. Mary, in contrast, repeatedly speaks rationally about her decision to marry him, her reassurance working to reaffirm his manhood. The traditional masculine ideal of husband as leader is subverted through Mary's insistence that they partner together and Tom's lack of self-assurance. As Mary begins to make him feel more certain in the path he has chosen, forgoing wealth and striving for reform, she makes the following argument:

> Then, why not put me on your own level? Why not let me pick my way by your side? Cannot a woman feel the wrongs that are going on in the world? Cannot she long to see them set right, and pray that they may be set right? We are not meant to sit in fine silks and look pretty, and spend money, any more than you are meant to make it, and cry peace where there is no peace. If a woman cannot do much herself, she can honor and love a man who can. (549-50)

Though Mary ends by observing that women cannot do much in society other than support men, her question of "Why not put me on your own level?" is a progressive suggestion to pose. Tom does not push back in any way, and instead, the novel closes with agreement and unity, with them standing side by side. Soyoun Kim and Claudia Nelson contend that Tom Brown seems destined for an all-male world, yet this is contradicted by Mary's insistence on a partnership with her husband (326). That the novel concludes on a female-dominated discussion may be a reconsideration of what women are capable of accomplishing. If men and women share like concerns and feel the same wrongs, then why can they not participate in the same work? Michele Cohen makes clear, however, that 'The language of love was not the language of equality, quite the reverse. Analyses of progress…cast women as delicate and requiring protection, positioning men not just as superior but as protectors and governors because of their physical and mental strengths' (329). While gender equality was not realistic in the nineteenth-century, chivalric view of women and heterosexual relationships, the kind of partnership that Mary proposes for this marriage is a progressive view of women as capable and more than domestic objects of beauty. She asserts a leveling of the gendered participation in work, and though she concedes that women may not be allowed to do much, the novel ends with a clear argument that they can.

The idea of progress is woven throughout *Tom Brown at Oxford*. The novel continuously questions the ideas and moral codes present within university culture and guides the reader to see the potential for change. Tom's friendship with Hardy critiques prejudiced social structures and shapes Tom's moral code, demonstrating the profound influence of homosocial bonds in formulating ideas of manliness. While Tom does not have the tenuous relationship to the university seen through previous protagonists, he also does not express satisfaction with the current state of college life. Indeed, the inner change he experiences at Oxford motivates outer action; he leaves with the desire to do good work in the world, whatever that may look like. Thus, this mid-century university fiction develops a concept of masculinity not merely focused on the interior, the morality behind the man, but on the exterior actions driven by those principles.

Chapter 4 – Comic Oxford: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*

In all vestments he revealed himself veritably verdant!

- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Simon Armitage, trans.

The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green is one of the more recognizable tales of Oxford life. Published as a three-decker novel from 1854-1857, the text is distinguished from its university-fiction predecessors by its explicit comedic spirit. Though previous Oxford fiction dabbled with varying concentrations and methods of humour and playfulness, the Reverend Edward Bradley (pseud. Cuthbert Bede) constructed *Verdant Green* as an outright comic novel. The 'traditional' university fiction plot pre-established by writers such as Lockhart remains the same – Verdant Green is a naïve young man arriving in Oxford for the first time and navigating a college culture to which he has had no prior exposure. What follows are the common follies of a freshman's life on an enhanced comedic scale, following Verdant as he grapples with dressing in the appropriate gowned-attire, attending wine parties, riding horseback, playing sports, and more of the typical activities that college life affords. The title page quotes Jonathan Swift to describe the proceeding narrative as 'A college joke to cure the dumps' (Bede). The words of the famous satirist situate the text within the realm of wit and caricature, establishing humour as the narrative's core quality and fundamental goal.

Perhaps it this particular foregrounding, however, that has led to critical neglect of the text. Unlike most previously published – and, when considering that *Tom Brown at Oxford* was produced a decade later, yet-to-be-published – fiction set in university culture, *Verdant Green* makes few claims to realism or seriousness. While there are moments in which the narrator observes the nature of maturing, life at Oxford, and young love with a more sincere tone, the plot is structured around silliness, leaning deeper into the trope of naïve young freshman to create a protagonist that is a caricature of a pre-established caricature. This level of exaggeration dominates the novel and yet is what criticism has struggled most to embrace about the text. Reviewers and critics have yet to engage with the novel's playfulness in any developed approach. Instead, the text's humour has cultivated two varying methods to analysis. The first has been to acknowledge and compliment the comedy while simultaneously implying that it is the drawback to the novel's literary appeal. An 1854 review of the second volume credits Bradley with being a 'promise keeper' in developing the

'merriment' foreshadowed by the Swift quotation, 'showing how England's legal, military, and clerical defenders that are to be improve the precious hours of study' (*The Athenaeum*). Though a brief and positive review, this ending suggests a misreading of the narrative as somewhat realist, supposedly depicting true, versus caricaturised, undergraduate customs. Mortimer Proctor, writing a century later, similarly grants that '*Verdant Green* is at best a literary trifle, but its humor is mature and its admirable fooling was propitiously in tune with the popular conception of the universities' (82-3). Proctor's influence in diminishing the text to 'a literary trifle' continues its stronghold on more contemporary scholarship. Yet, his observation that the novel's fooling reflects wider impressions of university culture is notable, and whether or not this assertion is accurate of a Victorian audience, questionable. John Dougill's *Oxford in English Literature* offers a generous overview that details the novel's charms, but the vast scope of his inquiry into Oxford in fiction allows for little more. This critical approach has kept awareness of the title alive yet has done little to offer any new insight into the text's comedic qualities.

The second critical approach to *Verdant Green*, which has developed only in the last few years, has also shied away from conversations about the comedy itself. Instead, recent analysis has shifted to using the novel as a way of investigating other cultural trends of the nineteenth century. Jordan Lewis Bunzel examines the Victorian pedagogical technique of landscape gazing, arguing 'the university novel was much more pedagogically and formally subversive than even those who study the category suggest' because they 'defend the educational benefits of gazing at university landscapes and at optically illusive devices, and thus value contemporary experiments in visual learning' (2). While his analysis presents a different way of gazing at *Verdant Green*, he overlooks the most visual feature of the text – the authorial-illustrations. Meanwhile, Rachelle Stinson uses the novel to discuss the Victorian culture of commodified nostalgia, positioning the novel as a nostalgic work that operates as a kind of tourist guidebook to the city and university life ('Mass-Market Spires'). While these analyses are beneficially revisiting the text for new potential applications, they fall back to old habits of categorisation and nomenclature. Both Bunzel and Stinson lean into the same views of university fiction (or what Stinson calls 'the varsity novel') that have long been established by Proctor's foundational work, specifically identifying these texts as pieces of nostalgia and works of Bildungsroman. Yet, these approaches have not done justice to the characteristics that make this novel so distinct from other nineteenth-century works about Oxford. Thus, this chapter will seek to examine key features of this novel that have long been neglected, namely the authorial-illustrations, allusions, and scenes beyond the university, in order to explore how they come together to create the

comic spirit of Mr Verdant Green's adventures. How do the illustrations impact how Oxford masculinity is thought about, perceived, and defined in the text, and how do the narrative and images work together to create these comic views of gender representation? How does the significant number of allusions shape and signify the image of the Oxford man? And how does the change in setting and inclusion of more female characters further interrogate the Oxfordian projection of masculinity?

John Tosh in his *Manliness and Masculinities* observes that 'for the most part, the Victorian code of manliness made scant acknowledgement of the body', yet *Verdant Green* demonstrates an understanding of manhood that is founded in what a man does, how he appears, how he behaves, and how well he performs at certain physical tasks (33). Thus, the male body becomes the basis for how Verdant orients himself within this Oxford world. Unlike in the previous works presented in this study, the narrative style here demonstrates a limited interior world for the male protagonist. Instead, exterior life is emphasized, a shift which is significantly achieved through the inclusion of 179 illustrations. Though *Tom Brown at Oxford* and *Une Culotte* also later include illustrations, the sheer volume of *Verdant Green*'s and the ways in which they are positioned, referenced, and utilised as part of the narrative structure provokes the need for closer examination.

These illustrations have given the text a charming and memorable quality, and yet the lack of critical consideration given to them suggests a mindset that views them as supplemental rather than essential. Robert Patten states, however, that illustration 'is work unfettered by the supposed inability of two-dimensional pictures to present narrative, to represent time and change, and, in short, to tell a story. And it is work that may both precede and follow text, may suppose, support, subvert, explain, interpret, and critique its verbal partner, entering into a complexly reciprocal, interactive, and often compellingly persuasive dialogue' ('Serial Illustration and Storytelling' 91-2). Illustration cultivates a story-telling power that intersects with and draws on textual content to provide a deeper, richer experience of narrative and narrative structure. This power takes on greater complexity when the author maintains control over both. All of the illustrations for *Verdant Green* are drawn by Edward Bradley. In considering the comic strip, Patten asserts that such an artform is 'more animatingly voiced when author and artist are two visions from a single ramified source' ('Serial Illustration and Storytelling' 92). If short-form storytelling receives greater energy from having narrative and illustration rooted in a singular artistic voice and hand, this compels us to ask how the novel as a form is affected and energised by authorial-illustration.

Currently, the only critical inspection of the *Verdant Green* illustrations is provided by Maxime Leroy in his recent work *The Magic Window*. Here, he explores the significance of authorial-illustration, pointing out that this use of a singular voice for text and image 'has remained a largely untheorized practice. Even more intriguing than the absence of theory, no author-illustrator seems to have systematically conceptualised his or her practice either' (Leroy 13). Though Bradley is hardly the first or only authorial-illustrator of the nineteenth century, the significance of a combined artistic-narrative voice has been left largely unexplored. Leroy produces some guiding principles, however, that will be useful for an examination of *Verdant Green*, in both its early printing and later three-decker novel structure. First, Leroy notes a difference in the connection between text and image, arguing that 'authorial illustration is part of the production process, whereas illustration is a form of interpretation' (17). Positioning illustration by a secondary artist as an interpretation implies a limitation to what that image can convey and achieve, agreeing with Patten's assertion as to the power of a 'single ramified source'. Therefore, questions arise as to how a text benefits from, is enhanced by, or is transformed through the implementation of images crafted solely by the author.

Second, Leroy notes the imperfections of the term 'paratextual' (18). He argues that to read the text without the author's illustrations 'is to read something other than what the author-illustrators wanted us to read and see' (Leroy 18). The author's illustrations, then, are a fundamental part of the narrative structure rather than any sort of supplemental, secondary material. They function as part of the text itself. Illustrations add to the text, even when creating contradiction and divergence, conveying a different story from the written narrative (Leroy 23). Any contradictions and divergence create space for us to question the prioritisation of text and image, how the two forms are in dialogue with one another, and how much they each stand alone as their own system of storytelling.

Given the comedic tone of *Verdant Green*, it is unsurprising that Bradley's illustrations are themselves satirical. The text and images formulate what Mark Pattison reductively referred to as 'mere caricature' ('A Chapter on University History'). Catherine Golden in her work on the graphic novel demonstrates how much caricature and Victorian illustration were long undervalued by twentieth-century critics such as David Kunzle, Philip Allingham, and Paul Goldman, not taken seriously as a form until the 1970s (5). While Pattison's impulse is to delineate caricature as limited or trivial, Golden demonstrates that this goes against the very conception of what caricature does. She notes that 'the term "caricature" derives from the Italian "*cari-care*," which means "to overload" or "surcharge"' (Golden 50). As a form of exaggeration, caricature does not reduce but expands.

Leslie Stephen offers a slightly different critique on the use of caricature. In his 1865 discussion of the types of men at Cambridge, he makes direct reference to *Verdant Green*, stating that 'Cuthbert Bede has set forth in Verdant Green certain caricatures which represent, I suppose, the current popular myths of student life. But neither these, nor other ambitious attempts, give the whole truth' (Stephen, *Sketches from Cambridge*). He places caricature as a form of myth, as a form that fails to produce 'truth'. However, this fails to acknowledge that caricature requires a source and to question how the exaggerated nature of caricature speaks back and, as Golden suggests, adds to that source. These questions become particularly important when thinking about what is caricatured here, namely, depictions of masculinity.

Tosh explains that in most nineteenth-century societies 'the energy of young men who are physically mature but not yet in a position to assume the full duties or privileges of an adult is combustible, to say the least. Much of the offence that they give is because they precociously affect fully adult modes of masculine behaviour in exaggerated or distorted forms' (*Manliness and Masculinities* 42-3). This specific age range of young men, physically developed yet still not fully culturally adult, is precisely where university culture is positioned, and this engagement and distortion of masculine modes is manifested in the caricaturing presented in *Verdant Green*. Therefore, how caricature is achieved, both linguistically and visually, and how it effects representations of masculinity requires deeper exploration. Caricaturing allows for a masculinity that is exaggerated, beyond the bounds of the expected into the unexpected and subversive. Comedy through caricature operates as a light by which to reflect on the object of the joke, to consider the reason behind the exaggeration.

Comic Illustration and the *Illustrated London News*

The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green did not originate as a three-decker novel. Though scholars such as Proctor and Dougill have acknowledged this fact, the method of preliminary publication has only briefly been addressed by Maxime Leroy. He alone accurately informs that *Verdant Green* was originally published in the *Illustrated London News* (ILN) as 'the first picture story to appear in the magazine' (Leroy 54). Influenced by Bradley's connections to *Punch* and the comic culture the magazine was creating by the 1850s, the narrative began as a series of illustrations in the ILN, a

weekly publication that began circulating on May 14, 1842 (Smith 9).[26] Herbert Ingram and Nathaniel Cooke founded the ILN when 'Ingram became increasingly aware of the fact that many additional copies of the London newspapers were sold whenever they contained a picture of a topical event' (Smith 9). The magazine was an instant success and became the world's first illustrated newspaper (Smith 10). Though the ILN largely maintained a serious rather than comic tone, contrary to *Punch*, the publication borrowed editorial support from among the *Punch* men, including Mark Lemon. It was Lemon who, after seeing Bradley's illustrations depicting the tale of a young man arriving as a freshman at Oxford, suggested publishing them as a series in the ILN. Bradley recounts the details of that publication process decades later in *Notes and Queries*:

> In addition to some stories and other papers, I also contributed to these supplements a series of sketches, "The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green, an Oxford Freshman," which were drawn and engraved to appear, a page at a time, in *Punch*; but as one page of the *Illustrated London News* was equal to two of *Punch*, Mark Lemon asked me to transfer the sketches to his supplements in the former paper. When three sheets of the sketches had appeared the late Mr. Ingram changed his mind concerning those special supplements, and brought them to a sudden close. This led to the "Verdant Green" woodcuts being subsequently "written up to," and issued with letter-press in a book form: Therefore it may be said of it that it was a book written in spite of itself. (362)

Two sheets of Bradley's illustrations of *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* were published, one on December 13, 1851, and the other on January 17, 1852.[27] After Ingram made the decision to end the *Verdant Green* series, Bradley 'wrote up to' the already completed illustrations. Thus, the novel took shape and was itself a success, selling 100,000 copies by 1870 (Powell ix).

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[26] For further considerations of *Verdant Green*'s publication history and the ILN, see Adcock, John. 'Cuthbert Bede (1827-1889).' *Yesterday's Papers*, http://john-adcock.blogspot.com/2012/01/cuthbert-bede-1827-1889.html; Curthoys, M. C., and C. J. Day. 'The Oxford of Mr Verdant Green.' *The History of the University of Oxford*, *Part* 1, vol. 6, edited by M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys, Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 268-86; and Hibbert, Christopher. *The Illustrated London News Social History of Victorian Britain*. Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1976.

[27] There is no explanation for Bradley's mention of three sheets in this quotation from *Notes and Queries* versus the fact that only two can be found in the archives of the *Illustrated London News*. Perhaps a third sheet was planned and never produced; perhaps Bradley's recollection is mistaken.

Bradley and Lemon were both correct in that one of the primary appeals of the novel is the unique illustrations that are imbedded in the text. That the etchings, not the written portion itself, were the first to be produced presents questions about what role they play in developing the plot. The first striking quality about the ILN version of *Verdant Green* is the appearance of the narrative structure. The format resembles a comic book, a genre that was in experimental development in Europe by the 1850s. Rodolphe Töpffer, a Swiss artist who is now considered the father of the modern comic, published two of the first European texts to feature words and pictures as interdependent in storytelling: *Histoire de M. Jabot* (1833) and *Histoire de M. Vieux Bois* (1837) (Golden 188). Each story follows of the antics of a ridiculous gentleman as they each navigate society, particularly their pursuits of romantic interests. Each text's layout positions two to three frames of illustration per page in a linear progression, with one or two sentences beneath in each image to accompany the visual above. The example below demonstrates how the image and text reflect and enhance each other. The French caption included with the second illustration describes M. Jabot's pose. This posturing is described vaguely by the captioning and developed visually by the drawing. The two work in tandem to highlight the ridiculous social strategies of M. Jabot.

Mr. Jabot sets out various thoughts and observations on the use of the world, on the requirements of civility, and on gallops.

Mr. Jabot believes he must demonstrate by his pose, as much as by a slight play of physiognomy, that he perfectly captures the thoughts of a lady who is confused.

Figure 1: *Histoire de M. Jabot*

Verdant Green in its original *Illustrated London News* publication follows a similar format to analogous effect. The two sheets are composed mainly of illustrations with brief portions of text printed beneath. The illustrated scenes of the story are each assigned an individual box, similar to the format of Töpffer's works, except that Bradley's images are all of different shapes and sizes. The drawings of the first sheet, unlike the more-structured second, are not placed in clear cut columns or rows by which to follow the linear plot. Each box on either sheet is instead numbered to signpost the narrative's order, and the numbering continues across the two installments, the second sheet picking up where the first left off so as to provide continuity in the serialisation. Each visual is paired with a piece of the written story beneath the box, the captions describing with greater detail what is depicted in the images. Thus, the narrative moves step-by-step with images and text moving together from box to box, informing and playing off of one another. Catherine Golden states that this form of reading is 'cinematic in nature—made up of sequential panels (also called frames) with black-and-white and color graphics that incorporate word balloons, thought bubbles, captions, a variety of fonts and hand lettering, motion lines (also called speed lines), and sound effects (onomatopoeic words). The eye moves over each panel to gather meaning, rather than move straight across to read the lines of text from the top of the page to the bottom as in reading a book composed all of words' (187). Here, Golden is describing the experience of reading a graphic novel, and yet the methodology is the same when examining *Verdant Green*. Moreover, the piece-by-piece structure presents a kind of non-linear form, resembling that of putting together a puzzle. Bradley himself enjoyed word puzzles and was instrumental in introducing the double acrostic to the readers of the ILN (A. Sanders). Indeed, one of the great advantages to periodical publication in the nineteenth century was that magazines could bring different genres and written forms together in the same space, and with this early version of *Verdant Green*, Bradley is combining those varying genres and forms into a new narrative format (Flint 23). Though *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* was ultimately not completed in this form, this original configuration reveals that illustration is fundamental to the story itself.

Figure 2: From the *Illustrated London News*, Dec. 13, 1851

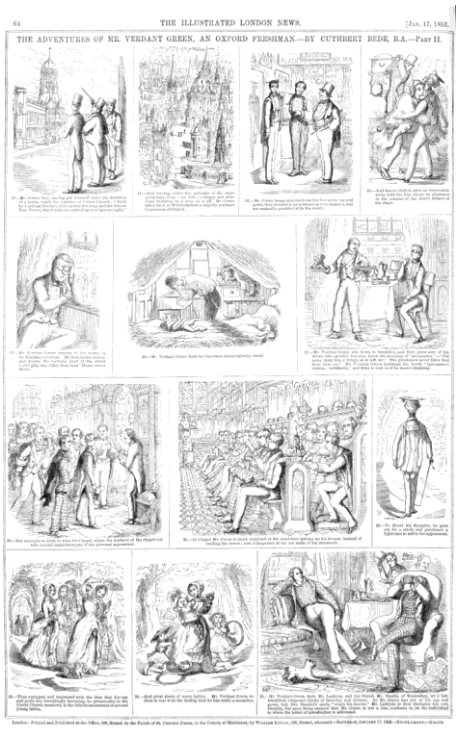


Figure 3: From the *Illustrated London News*, Jan. 17, 1852

Starting with sketches and writing up to the letterpress, as Bradley admits he did with *Verdant Green*, was not a new phenomenon at the time. Dickens did the same early in his writing career to accompany the already-constructed illustrations of Robert Seymour (Patten, 'Publishing in Parts' 12).[28] However, as both author and illustrator, Bradley has greater control over how the written narrative is conveyed in visual form, or vice versa. Consequently, this allows the author to experiment with how humour in particular is developed through both mediums and whether they function as a unit or not. The early ILN version of the narrative is not particularly funny, though the method of storytelling is itself fun. Kai Mikkonen offers a helpful over of the history of narrative storytelling through visuals, noting that the publication styles of the nineteenth century 'allowed rich experimentation with graphic style, caricature, and the story form' (246). This era of publishing saw similar experimentation with the kind of sequential form that Bradley's original sheets produce (Mikkonen 248). He states that 'it is essential to note that the sequential form in the early nineteenth-

[28] For more consideration of Dickens and his illustrators, see Cohen, Jane R. *Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators*. Ohio State University Press, 1980.

century British context is both an aspect of layout and image content, and that in both of these aspects, the sequential structure is used by the cartoonists to engage the readers in certain ways' (Mikkonen 249). Visual, humourous storytelling allowed space to play with how story is constructed and how the reading experience might be impacted.

When transferred to its novel form, the relationship between the text and the illustrations shifts, creating a different effect for the reader. In its traditional book printing, the images are positioned alongside the text on the page. They are of varying size and placement and, therefore, prominence. There is not one consistent way the images are presented nor a formulaic layout for how text and image correspond to one another. Some of the images take up half the page. Others are text-wrapped in either outside margin, sometimes in the corners and at others the outer edges of the pages. This technique is comparable to how the illustrations appear in William Makepeace Thackeray's Cambridge novel *The History of Pendennis* (1850), a leader in making authorial illustration an integral part of the novel (Leroy 10). Thackeray incorporates forty-eight full-page plates throughout his book, each accompanied by captions. Eight full-page plates by Sydney P. Hall were added to *Tom Brown at Oxford* in 1871 and serve as the only illustrations to that text. Conversely, *Verdant Green*'s first illustration is the only full-page plate included, and instead of a caption, the image provides a numbered label under the portraits to clearly identify each Green family member, a format reminiscent of the original ILN numbering system for the plot. This labeling creates a different engagement with the text. Including no extra captions signals that the image can stand alone and conveys an assurance in its storytelling ability without added detail. Thus, while *Verdant Green* corresponds with contemporary trends in illustration, the method of incorporation is distinguishable from common practice.

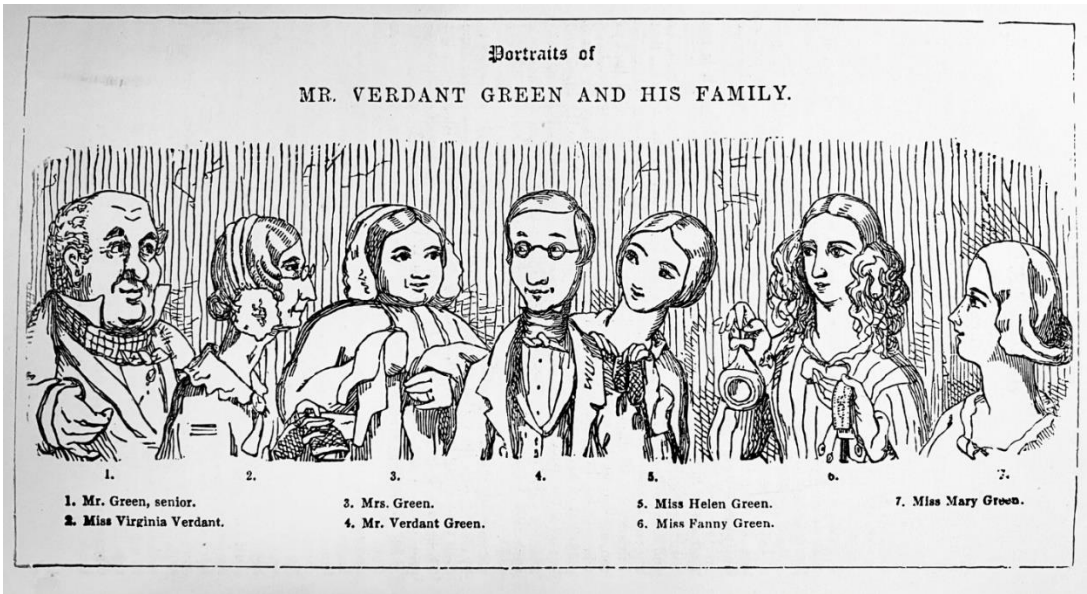


Figure 4: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. I, p. 16

These methods of inclusion, however, become more comparable to the style of other author-illustrators as the volumes progress. Most notably, the third volume of *Verdant Green* includes illustrated capitals to begin chapters, much in the style Thackeray draws for *Pendennis*. Though Thackeray's capitals are more integrated into the illustration, as seen in the example below in which cupid's bow becomes the capital E of the chapter's first word, Bradley's capital illustrations have more thematic unification with the chapter as a whole. For example, the first of these introductory illustrations shows a predictably wide-eyed, cartoon Verdant tied to a target with cupid's arrow aimed directly at his heart. This imagery foreshadows the romantic subplot not only introduced in the chapter, but developed throughout the volume in its entirety. The cartoonish nature of the image keeps the comic tone of the previous volumes, though Verdant is now becoming a more romantic caricature. He keeps his links to Oxford, though, through the mortar board still atop his head, indicating the continuation of his university days to come nearer the end of the volume's plot.

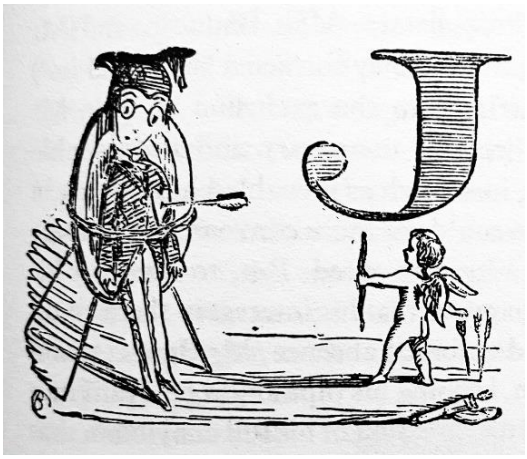


Figure 5: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. III, p. 251

Figure 6: *The History of Pendennis*, Vol. I, p. 134

Overall, the variance in size, shape, and layout of illustrations throughout *Verdant Green* allows for the images to be put to their fullest use on the page and in correspondence with the narrative. The absence of captions produces a convergence of text and image into a multi-faceted narrative structure in which both elements are integral to the act of storytelling. Robert Patten, in his discussion of *David Copperfield*'s original illustrations, points out the error often made is in giving text assumed superiority, thinking it a mistake if pictures appear before the scene is written about ('Serial Illustration and Storytelling' 92). This same phenomenon occurs in the book printing of *Verdant Green*, with the illustrations placed either before or after the event has been described the text. Assuming which should appear first, the illustration or the written language, can result in identifying one element as primary and the other as secondary. Varying this format, as *Verdant Green* does, undermines expectations of status; neither image or text is portrayed as the primary carrier of the story or the deliverer of the laugh. Each can and does operate as such. In this way, the novel format honours the original ILN design, not discounting how illustration is capable of storytelling. The comedy is figuratively drawn out more through the written language and literally drawn out through the authorial-illustrations.

Recognizing the comedic genre of the novel is key to understanding how the illustrations function alongside the written text. The comic scenes that occur throughout the narrative can be broken into humorous moments signified by the presence of an illustration. Whether the comedy is primarily based in the language or the visual varies. Much like a comic strip, the illustrations are not

always humorous on their own, or at least, they do not capture the fullness of the joke. Robert Bernard Martin observes that laughter is a result of our expectations being undermined, an intellectual effect based in incongruity (19). The back-and-forth between illustration and text, while not necessarily odd or absurd to a mid-nineteenth-century audience, maintains the potential to undermine some form of expectation. While readers would be familiar the comic interaction between illustration and captions in contemporary magazines like *Punch*, audiences might hold different expectations for a novel. One might anticipate the images or narrative to be singularly funny and to operate separately from one another in terms of which is humorous. The interplay between written narrative and illustration shows an accomplishment with wit. If brevity is the soul of wit, then illustration becomes an artistic method of conveying succinct snippets of intelligent humour. Wit has 'the ability to relate seemingly disparate things so as to illuminate or amuse', and Patten further notes that the term 'illustration' is rooted in the idea of illumination ('Wit', Merriam-Webster; 'Serial Illustration and Storytelling' 91). *Verdant Green* accomplishes wit in visual narrative by bringing together two seemingly disparate components of narrative storytelling, written narrative and illustration, in order to create the comedy of the novel. The wit produced through distinct yet coinciding narrative approaches, then, goes on to bring other disparate elements – Verdant Green and Oxford – together.

Because the narrative structure is so significantly based in the visual, how things appear, and what that illuminates, becomes an important aspect of interpreting Verdant Green's relationship to Oxford. This idea of appearance influences the way in which this narrative is read because of the presence of illustrations themselves, but also, of course, more specifically, because of what they show and what questions that produces. Matthew Bevis in his *Comedy: A Very Brief Introduction* observes that 'jokes are one way of inviting us to think about what we know – and what we think we know. The surprise that accompanies getting a joke can prompt us to wonder about the expectations that were toyed with to get us there, and what these expectations may tell us about ourselves' (4). More specifically, then, visual humor can push us to evaluate expectations held about the way things appear.

As seen through the Green family portrait plate early in *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, appearance defines identity. Rachel Teukolsky observes that 'caricature invites us to think about character's visual qualities, which are not typically foregrounded in literary discussions of a novelistic character whose focus is inherently linguistic' (*Picture World*). Because the publication history of *Verdant Green* so clearly foregrounds illustration as a vital way of engaging with story, the visuals also

provide the foundation for our understanding of Verdant Green as a character. The text describes him, but the 101 illustrations (of the total 179) in which he appears provide a repetition that is crucial and comical. His identity is consistently marked by the presence of glasses, both visually and verbally. Mr. Bouncer coins the nickname 'Gig-lamps' in reference to his spectacles, and, as gig lamps are the light features on the front of the carriage, this specific, added facial feature relates back to the idea of illustration as illumination. Verdant's glasses operate as point of illumination for the reader in the illustrations, for they allow him to be easily distinguishable from the other characters of the narrative who tend to blend together in the illustrations. Giglamps function as a light to pierce the darkness, an aid to guide the traveler to their destination, illuminating what lies in their path. So too does Verdant function as a guide to Oxford life, shining a light on the university and its practices. Yet, just as the scope of a giglamp's light is limited, Verdant's perspective on what it means to be an Oxford man is limited in some way. He consistently struggles to see the full picture at once, gaining an understanding of the university in pieces, just as the reader is given visual peeks into Oxford in pieces through the novel's illustrations. Verdant is the reader's view into the world, and while we experience the narrative through his adventures, we are also able to observe him through the illustrations.

Verdant Green is not the subject of all the novel's illustrations, however. There are many images which illuminate another key feature of the story – the Oxford setting. So much of how Oxford is characterised is based on the appearance of both Oxford itself and the other students of the story. The way the undergrads are attired with mortar board and gown shows how identity as an Oxford student is defined by physical appearance. Indeed, Verdant learns early on in attempting to buy the proper undergraduate gown that there are distinctions of hierarchy made by style of gown. His ignorance of dress is made light of again when he asks Charles Larkyns about the golden tassels worn by two men walking past. "'Ah," said the ingenious Mr. Larkyns, shaking his head; "I had rather you'd not have asked me that question, because that's the disgraceful part of the business. But these lords, you see, they *will* live at a faster pace than us commoners, who can't stand a champagne breakfast above once a term or so. Why, those gold tassels are the badges of drunkenness!'" (71). At times, Edward Bradley includes textual footnotes in order to explain the jokes specific to undergraduate culture and Oxford tradition. In this instance, he notes that 'the gold tassel is the distinguishing mark of a nobleman' (71). Larkyns's observation made at Verdant's expense doubles as an underhanded commentary on the habits of the upper classes, critiquing their own displays of distinction. Attire is highlighted as an important aspect of Oxford life, and physical appearance that

of the illustrations; gowns become a useful tool by which the reader can distinguish between men of the university versus people of the town, and gowns also distinguish between the setting of Oxford and times spent at home or in the country. They are a line of division between the men of the university and other men and women, a way of embodying a collegiate identity.

But Oxford is not a place where one must only look a certain way. The actions depicted in the illustrations, even down to the how the characters are positioned as lounging, reading, drinking, smoking, rowing, and even walking, also provide characterisations of an Oxford man. These depictions, alongside the textual descriptions, comedically exaggerate whatever actions are being performed. The way in which the illustrations perform as part of the comic storytelling allows for greater insight into the social performance of Oxford that is rooted in how one appears. These actions provide a system of categorisation based in types, which in turn informs how these Oxonians are caricaturised, both in how characters are described and how they are drawn, but overall, by what they do. Bradley is not the first to typify in order to create comical caricatures of Oxford men. 'Hints to Freshmen in the University of Oxford', a pamphlet first written by Samuel Reynolds Hole in 1843, is an example of how categorisation is used comically. Hole was a student at Brasenose (the nonfictional counterpart to Bradley's fictionalised 'Brazenface') in 1840.[29] Hole's proffered advice to incoming freshmen is to understand the 'different species' of undergraduate, and these he places in five categories: men who read, men who hunt, men who drive, men who row, and Peripatetics (men who walk) (17). The text does not have illustration, and yet the different 'species' it defines are grouped based on physical behaviors. Bradley's characters even directly reflect Hole's categorizations. Mr Fosbrooke is nicknamed 'Four-in-hand' Fosbrooke for his skills in driving a coach (26). Mr Sloe is described as a peripatetic reading man based on his pacing up and down his room as he studies (116). Mr Bouncer has two terriers, Huz and Buz, who he uses for hunting, not to mention his horn which he blows in order summon his college scout. Thus, these caricatures reflect pre-established comic varieties of Oxford men.

Though caricature as an art form is often associated with a distortion of dimensions, the exaggeration of physical features here is most widely implemented through Verdant Green's facial expression. His face is consistently identifiable because of his 'gig-lamps' and often expresses great surprise, and even great fear, at the chaos his actions are producing. The illustration below, for

[29] Samuel Reynolds Hole, like Bradley, had personal connections to *Punch*. He and John Leech, illustrator of *Punch* and *The Comic Latin Grammar*, met in 1858 and corresponded frequently through the years. Hole would make suggestions for Leech's illustrations, and he was eventually elected to the *Punch* table in 1862 despite never being a regular contributor to the magazine (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography).

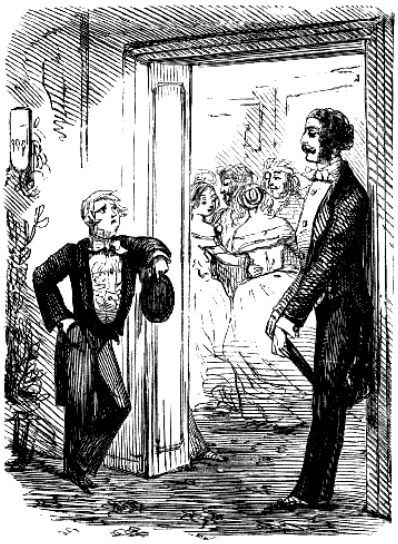
example, shows the outcome of Verdant attempting to ride a horse down the high street. The lifted eyebrows and open mouth are consistently utilised to capture his raw reaction. They also make the moment more laughable against the straightforward tone of the textual description. The narrator states, 'after convulsively clutching at the mane and the pommel, in his endeavours to keep his seat, he first "lost his head," then his seat, and ignominiously gliding over the mare's tail, found that his lodging was on the cold ground' (104). The zeugma here functions as another instance of double meaning, and the dual denotations within the language reflect the duet of the textual components. The subtly of zeugma and its ability to bring two differing ideas or actions together continuously subverts the readers expectations of meaning and adds a layer of linguistic fun. Verdant later consumes both his minutes and cigars, and learns to ice skate from 'Count Doembrownski, a Russian gentleman, who, in his own country, lived chiefly on skates, and in this country, on pigeons' (230, 227). Here, however, as literary technique and illustration work in tandem, the wit becomes more pronounced. Indeed, Verdant Green's facial expression comes to define him to the reader and the epitome of a naïve, thoughtless Oxford freshmen. Reaction, then, is central to the novel's use of caricature. Visible, illustrated reactions are part of the punchline to the jokes, but they can also guide the reader through the scene from beginning to end.

Figure 7: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. I, p. 104

The illustrations shown below exemplify this use of reaction, both in facial expressions and body posture. These three images are part of a sequence that spreads over two pages in the printed book and trace the progress of Verdant's attempts to play cricket. Though he is dressed appropriately (but perhaps too thoroughly) on this occasion, Little Mr Bouncer still has fun with our hero. He pitches the ball, 'but it came in with such swiftness, that, as Mr Verdant Green was quite new to round bowling, it was rather too quick for him, and hit him severely on the -, well, never mind, - on the trousers' (113). Verdant's body language in each image and his change in facial expression walks the reader through the preparation, reaction, and aftermath of his sporting attempt, but the images also play off of each other to increase the comedy and speak to why appearance is crucial. The surprise of the third image makes the look of concentration in the first laughable, and the glasses drawn on his face in both helps maintain his identity to the reader. Indeed, when his glasses fly off in the second image, his face becomes unrecognizable as Verdant Green, perhaps reflecting that even Bradley does not quite know how to distinguish him without his spectacles drawn round his eyes. The images work as a sequence, much like the comic book format developed by Töpffer. The reader is able to watch the events of the scene unfold from beginning to end, and even without the accompanying text, the scene's narrative can be pieced together.

Figures 8, 9, 10: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. I, pp. 112-3

The interplay of action and reaction in caricature creates a theatrical quality from which to build comic twists and irony, exaggeration beyond a purely artistic approach and instead produced through the unexpected. Irony, like caricature, links to typifying in its play on assumption, and thus to two come together and produce witty illustrations that make fun from general characters and characteristics. One of the masters of utilising this type of comedy was John Leech, one of Bradley's contemporaries and friends. From the 1840s-60s, Leech's humor became synonymous with *Punch* magazine's comedic voice (Kennedy). His illustrations are largely based in undermining the audience's assumption of a situation, including those referencing nineteenth-century university culture. In the illustration below, a young man, much like Verdant Green, aims to flaunt his Oxford status at a social gathering and assumes he will be treated with respect based on his identity as a university man. His pose of one arm resting on the door frame hints at an initial nonchalance supplanted by the other man's invocation of age over the youth's collegiate status. Leech portrays the young man's face with not just surprise but embarrassment in this turn of events. He also presents him as significantly shorter in stature and without facial hair, contrasting masculine maturity with the other man who is taller with a full mustache. These boyish characteristics undercut the young man's elevated self-view, posing him outwardly and inwardly as a naïve, juvenile figure. Yet, the caption twice labels him as an 'Oxford Man', a sarcastic denotation when contrasted with the visual. Overall, the illustration challenges the idea that, despite appearances, Oxford is not a site of, or state of, manhood.



THE RISING GENERATION.

Juvenile Oxford Man (who does not think Vin Ordinaire of himself). "A—WERE YOU AT EITHER UNIVERSITY?"

Awful Swell. "YA-AS—WHEN I WAS A—BOY!" [OXFORD MAN *departs in a Hansom.*]

Figure 11: Image and caption from *John Leech's Pictures of Life and Character*, Vol. I, 1851

Leech consistently uses this witty interplay of illustration and caption to produce comic irony while also commenting on different physical and verbal aspects of social performance, including fashion trends, use of slang, party-going, hunting, and romantic pursuits. Bradley, though with a fully constructed narrative instead of one-off images and quick punchlines, uses the same approach to poke fun at the performance of Oxford society, just drawn out in more detailed, nuanced scenes. However, a key distinction to note between Bradley's and Leech's style (aside from overall artistic quality) is the degree of critique implied. Leech does not often hold back his criticism, particularly with women, their fashion choices, and early feminism changing the idea of women's social roles, though he took aim at society of all classes, backgrounds, and ages. Bradley has a much more jovial and kind-hearted approach to Verdant Green and Oxford, despite all of the pitfalls he constructs for him and how he presents the ridiculousness of university culture. Notwithstanding the differences in comic approach, the influence of Leech and *Punch* is felt in how the illustrations of *Verdant Green* can capture, not just subvert, the expectations of a scene but also expand and complicate the accomplishments of caricature to comment on social performance.

A significant portion of the novel's comedy is based on the actions of characters, but there are some visuals which attempt to capture scenes in a way that plays with and distorts time. Certain images portray a character's thoughts in the current time of the text yet capture how the mind morphs past sights and envisions future scenes yet to occur. The first example of this is an illustration that reflects memory, the appearance in the mind of what the eye once beheld. The narrator describes how Verdant's father, upon returning to manor Green once his son is safely installed at Oxford, thinks back and tries to describe the city to his family. The text states that 'When he unrolled that rich panorama before his "mind's eye," all its component parts were strangely out of place' (41). The page continues on to detail how each of the buildings as seen in his mind are out of place, squished next to other landmarks that in reality they are nowhere near. The buildings become personified:

> The rich spire of St. Mary's claimed acquaintance with her poorer sister at the cathedral. The cupola of the Tom Tower got into close quarters with the huge dome of the Radcliffe, that shrugged up its great round shoulders at the intrusion of the cross-bred Graeco-Gothic tower of All Saints. The theatre had walked up to St. Giles's to see how the Taylor Buildings agreed with the University galleries; while the Martyrs' Memorial had stepped down to Magdalen Bridge, in time to see the college taking a walk in the Botanic Gardens. (41)

The illustration of this, when taken out of the context of the narrative, seems to be quite an artistically modified, surreal view of Oxford. But when considered within the framework of memory, the distortions, the stacking of structures one on top of another, make sense. The image reflects the distorted nature of memory, the mind not being able to fully reproduce and remember what it has once taken in. We are offered what is seen in the 'mind's eye' instead of real, presently experienced space. This is balanced with the more cartoonish description of the buildings taking on their own distinct personalities, moving about Oxford and convening with one another.

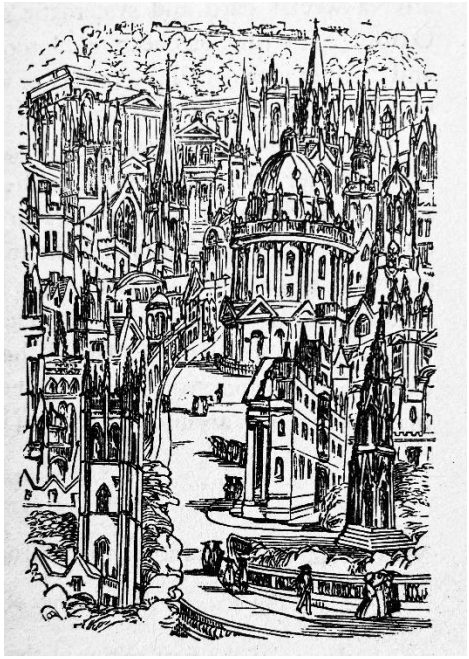


Figure 12: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. I, p. 41

The second example of illustration distorted to reflect thoughts engages with the future instead of the past. Verdant has been invited to his first Oxford party, and as he is dressing for the event and considering his own appearance, he thinks on how the scene itself will appear. The narrator describes that 'as he was dressing, [he] drew a mental picture of the party to which he was going' (74). Bradley draws this imagined scene for us, and the product is the most cartoonish illustration of the novel. The disproportionate physical features, enlarged heads atop smaller limbs, are perhaps the most typical demonstration of "caricature." The unrealistic qualities of the image reflect the unrealistic nature of imagination, how the mind cannot truly visualise a future that has not yet drawn itself out. The image also mirrors the unrealistic expectations Verdant has for that evening's conversation. He believes the gathering will 'be composed of quiet, steady men, who were such hard readers as to be called "fast men." He should therefore hear some delightful and rational conversation on the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, the present standard of scholarship in the University, speculations on the forthcoming prize-poems, comparisons between various expectant class-men, and delightful topics of a kindred nature' (74). The large, inflated heads, then, play on assumptions of intelligence. The image captures layers of imagination that are made

apparent with the added detail of the written narrative, and just as Verdant caricaturises Oxford men in his head, they become caricatures for us on the page.

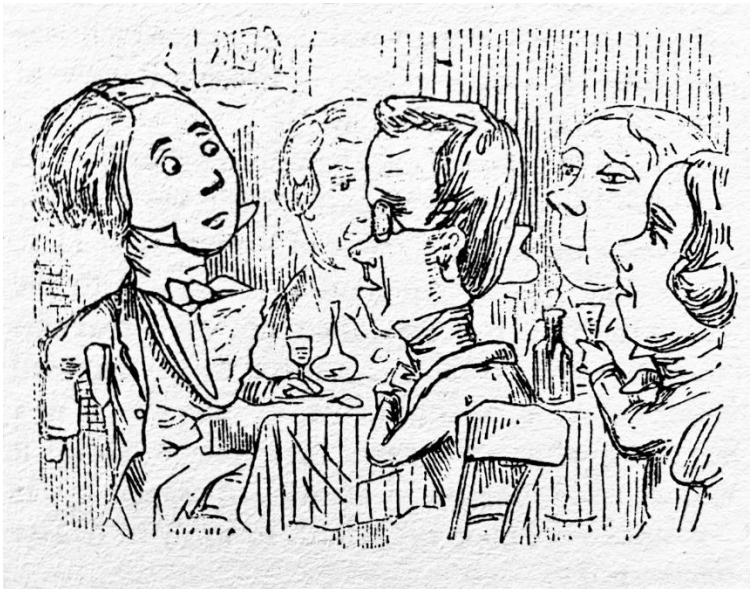


Figure 13: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. I, p. 74

These two images of Oxford buildings and Oxford men are distinct from the other illustrations of the novel, and from one another, yet they each demonstrate how illustration can represent memory and imagination. What is extraordinary and fascinating about them is how they perform externally what for the character is only held internally, and how they provide insight as to how each character thinks, remembers, and imagines. Indeed, *Verdant Green* pushes the capabilities of illustration beyond the customary, or expected, representation of literal scenes into the realm of the abstract, a move which invokes reconsideration as to the power of illustration in the nineteenth-century novel.

The Art of Allusion

The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green is saturated with allusions that range from the classics to the popular culture of the mid-nineteenth century. Bradley either notes or quotes from authors and thinkers such as Virgil, Homer, Aristotle, Euripides, Horace, Livy, Euclid, Shakespeare,

Wordsworth, Cowper, Cowley, Byron, Tennyson, and more. Much like in *Reginald Dalton*, with Lockhart alluding to the works of his father-in-law, Bradley also references Sir Walter Scott multiple times. The allusions here also extend beyond the literary into other popular mediums. Pictures of ballerinas in an 'extremely *au naturel*' state of dress appear on the walls of Charles Larkyns's rooms (63). The narrator describes Mr Bouncer as 'finishing a furious solo, from an entirely new version of *Robert De Diable*', an 1831 French opera (57). Ironically, each reference assumes a level of cultural knowledge that is not necessarily held by the protagonist. Particularly in the novel's first volume, Verdant is established as naïve and ignorant of the world outside his home, which is emphasised through the lack allusion in his dialogue, in his inability to understand parodies of literary works, and indirectly through the narrator's continued employment of varied references and quotations. Michael Wheeler notes that in some critical approaches to allusion, the literary technique is 'usually lumped together with such things as book illustrations…as virtually redundant elements of a literary text' (1). The persistent usage of allusion in *Verdant Green* indicates, as Wheeler goes on to argue, that these many references are not trivial displays of literary acumen. Just as the illustrations are a vital textual element, the layers of allusion are a defining and meaningful device. The longest break between allusions, whether a quotation or unmarked reference, totals about thirty pages, and that portion of the narrative reflects the same points in the story that appeared in the *Illustrated London News*. Therefore, allusions clearly become an instrument for the novel form, part of the more detailed development of the Oxford scene and the voice of the narrator. Furthermore, Philip Horne adds that allusions also can function as 'a reminder of the mysteries of memory and imagination' (620). Consequently, illustrations and allusions have a common power of playing on the mind's interactions with retention and reality.

The challenge of allusion is the exclusivity it can inflict. Horne argues that 'a given set of allusions in a work of literature defines the range of reading in its ideal readership' creating a 'community of allusion' (621). References imply a separation between those who can identify their source and those who cannot. This division highlights in *Verdant Green* the separateness of Oxford culture and hints toward the intellectual abilities of those within it. Yet, they also create a method by which the university men relate to one another. The allusions made in the dialogue operate as points of connection and intellectual repartee, based in fun rather than a contentious bettering. The narrator likewise does not use these references against the audience with a pretentious tone or belittling attitude. While this literary device divides, distinguishing knowledgeable Oxford man from

the naïveté of a freshman such as Verdant Green, there is also a unifying aspect, drawing peers together as the wider scope of culture and literature converges onto the narrative.

The allusions are so ingrained in the text that they are almost woven into the fabric of the Oxford setting. Moreover, the significant number of them has an exaggerated quality, a characteristic much like the illustrations. Many often create overly apparent disassociations or plays on words, putting the reference to embellished use to heighten the humour. Their hyperbolic nature in turn ensures a level of audience accessibility to the joke being made. Comedy makes the reading of allusion more communal. Indeed, the root meaning of allusion is 'to play with, mock, jest at' (4). Therefore, this literary device is easily applied for comedic effect. One such instance is when the highly gullible Mr Pucker is given a fake entrance examination by Verdant and his Brazenface peers. The faux assessment halts the narrative flow as the content of the test is given in full for the reader. Each question is written out and made up of allusion after allusion, joke after joke, over the course of two pages. How the references operate varies, but word play is a common thread between them. For example, question 5 asks 'In what way were the shades on the banks of the Styx supplied with spirits?', playing on the double meaning of 'spirits' as related to the mythic underworld and also as a synonym for liquor (142). In another question, the undergraduates demand '12. Name the *prima donnas* who have appeared in the operas of Virgil and Horace since the 'Virgilii Opera,' and 'Horatii Opera' were composed' (143). Here, the idea of a sung 'opera' and the naming of Virgil and Horace manuscripts produces the same duality of meaning. There is also the overlap between composing as a poetic and musical art. The thirty-three questions, along with passages to be translated into Latin, touch on history, mythology, literature, and mathematics. While the young and naïve Mr Pucker is alarmed by these questions and suffers through the stress of thinking that this is a real entrance examination, the situational irony and its many allusions entertains the audience with a mid-novel puzzle to play. The scene parodies Oxford entrance examinations, making the loftiness of the intelligence they represent feel ridiculous.

When not conveniently compiled into one scene, the novel's allusions are granted varying levels of clarification. Some of the quotations pulled from classical sources are in the original Latin or Greek, but whether or not a translation is provided varies. For example, the section below shows how lines from Horace are incorporated, translated, and footnoted:

> he will still, by his innocent simplicity and credulity, occasionally evidence the truth of the Horatian maxim,-

> "Quo semel est imbuta recens, servabit odorem
> Testa diu;" [22]
>
> which, when *Smart*-ly translated, means, "A cask will long preserve the flavour, with which, when new, it was once impregnated;" and which, when rendered in the Saxon vulgate, signifieth, "What is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh."
>
> ---
>
> [22] Horace, Ep. Lib. I. ii, 69. (134)

Here there are two different translations and a footnote to the original text at the bottom of the page. However, in an earlier quotation also from Horace, there is only a citation. On this rare occasion, the allusion is spoken by Verdant. He quotes while drinking "Nunc vino pellite curas, Cras ingens" and Mr Bouncer replies "Who's that talking shop about engines? Holloa, Gig-lamps!" (76). These two examples together show a constructed range of purpose. The first quotation considers the meaning of the words as thematically applicable to Verdant's development as an Oxford man, and thus translation becomes essential, though comically questionable in its accuracy. The second merely plays on the like-sound of the words 'ingens' and 'engines', which creates Mr Bouncer's comical error. The Latin line from Horace roughly translates to 'Now with wine banish cares', which is pertinent to the scene but not an observation that would add meaning if translated; the literal linguistic meaning, while topical, has little relevance otherwise. The object of the allusions varies, then, between thematic significance and comic word play. Richard Altick notes *Punch* often utilised classical quotation which 'required, for appreciation, a reader's knowledge of Latin', or 'whose witty appeal was limited to the-surely-few *Punch* readers who were well grounded in classical Greek' (97). Bradley, in contrast, does not necessarily alienate his audience through the work of translation, creating an exclusivity to the comedy. These references, instead, make Oxford more accessible by using them for comedic effect. Altick goes on to point out that 'In the eighteenth century, writing classical parodies, especially humourous adaptations of Horace, was a favourite pastime of Oxbridge-educated gentlemen, using this easy familiarity with the classics to one-up the "new shallow wits" who performed only in English (the parodists of Shakespeare) or possibly in French' (97). David Skilton further suggests that for nineteenth-century Oxford undergraduates 'a line of Horace quoted and recognized had…become a social password. Whatever else a classical education

provided, it allowed the ruling class to celebrate a sense of community while operating a shibboleth to exclude the undesirable' (41). While Latin quotation and classical reference may have been historically a part of the one-upmanship of Oxford men, *Verdant Green* subverts this while playing upon social convention. By incorporating translations and using lines of Horace for word play instead of passcodes, Oxford is not limited but made accessible, largely through humour.

The nineteenth-century reader who may have lacked a full familiarity with the novel's classical allusions are rewarded with references to popular culture. Music in particular offers wider common ground from which to further the comedy and build greater insight into character. During the first party Verdant Green attends at Oxford, he is asked to sing a song. He chooses to try his hand at 'I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls'. The attempt is silly on its own, but the song's cultural context provides greater amusement and added emphasis on some of Verdant's characteristics. The song is from an 1843 opera titled *The Bohemian Girl*, and the undergraduates all knowing the lyrics of this song reflects the popularity of this particular opera on English shores. *The Bohemian Girl* was composed by an Irishman, Michael Balfe, with the lyrics of 'I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls' written by Englishman Alfred Bunn. The popularity of the tune reflected not only growing interest in musical theatre in 1840s England, but also the love of having a 'homegrown' work in an artform 'virtually monopolized by the Italians' (Altick 691). The verses became a common source of parody, particularly by *Punch*, who 'parodied it at least three times' because the aria 'instantly became a popular favorite, on barrel organs as well as in drawing rooms' (Altick 699). Lewis Carroll would also produce a well-known, 1855 parody for *Lays of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour*. That this tune is what comes to Verdant's mind when he is asked to sing a song reflects the widespread appeal this piece of music possessed, not just in its original form but in the references made to it throughout publications of the time.

The song choice employs cultural allusion not only for comedic effect but also to play on gender boundaries. The aria is traditionally sung by a female character named Arline. The title of the opera and the gender of the intended singer are plainly contrasted by the male college rooms of Oxford and Verdant as the one performing. Bouncer calls Verdant in this scene 'my Bohemian gal', and Verdant chooses the tune because 'in the bosom of his own family, and to the pianoforte accompaniment of his sisters, [it] was accustomed to meet with great applause' (78). That Verdant assumes this applause is for his singing over his sisters' musical talents adds a subtle irony to his decision-making. Moreover, this ties the tune further to femininity based on the female Greens' implicit enjoyment of playing it at home. The lyrics that Verdant sings (of what he can remember)

are mostly pulled from the first verse of the song, which begins with the line 'I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls'. The mention of marble halls aligns well with his masculine Oxford setting. The lyrics go on to invoke the idea of boasting in 'a high ancestral name', which also carries a masculine undertone of patriarchy and the duty of carrying on a family line. Indeed, like the Dalton's of Lockhart's novel, the narrator here explains in the opening lines of the narrative that 'the Verdant Greens are a family of some respectability and of considerable antiquity' (1). Thus, there a similar emphasis on legacy is present in both, yet here, the patriarchal ideal is made light of through the hilarity of Verdant's singing about it rather than enacting it. Further playing with gendered roles, the second verse reveals the song to be a feminine plea for love, saying 'I dreamt that suitors sought my hand / That knights upon bended knee / And with vows no maiden heart could withstand / They pledged their faith to me'. This verse, which Verdant sings in part, sets him in humourous contrast to the masculine Oxford party setting characterised by drinking and smoking. Associating Verdant with the feminine also perhaps accentuates just how far he is from becoming that 'Oxford Man' to which he aspires (20). The scene showcases the power of allusion in crossing not just cultural boundaries but also gendered ones. The male undergraduates join in singing with Verdant without a second thought, and while the moment could be read as a male mockery of a more stereotypically feminine tune, there is no sense of mocking femininity. Instead, the gendered walls of Oxford come down within a male homosocial space through the combined engagement with a popular song. The allusion creates a common ground where gender does not matter.

Women, the North, and the Mock-Heroic

The third volume of *Verdant Green* makes the same transition as many other university novels, changing the setting from the dreaming spires of Oxford to the countryside. Unlike Newman and Hughes, who take their protagonists back to their own familiar rural landscapes of home, Verdant travels north. Reginald Dalton does the same, though to Westmoreland, and more specifically, to his family's patriarchal seat. In contrast, Verdant joins his peers for a holiday to Northumberland, the home of the Honeywoods. These narrative expeditions away from Oxford can be interpreted as 'a feeling that the author has simply run out of university material', yet juxtaposition between how the protagonist behaves at Oxford and how he engages with the outside world is significant and revealing (Dougill 120). Leech's illustration of the young undergraduate at a

formal affair suggests as much. Therefore, this literal unknown landscape reflects the figurative strangeness of how university masculinity translates in wider society.

Other Oxford fiction has engaged with this contrast in various ways. Hughes, for example, emphasises the issue of class difference, not merely within the walls of Oxford but in the wider fields of Tom's rural encounters. *Verdant Green* takes this difference a step further to emphasise, and caricaturise, cultural disparities. Journeying to the north is likened to venturing to a foreign land. The volume's third chapter is titled 'Mr Verdant Green studies ye Manners and Customs of ye Natyves' (270). The archaic formality and spelling positions the protagonist as an ethnographic observer of exotic practices. These kinds of hyperbolic comparisons dramatically conceptualise the difference between Oxford and the north, Verdant and 'the other'. Identifying who is made 'other' and how are key to examining how humour and gender are at work in the text.

When considering the north as a foreign space, the speech, practices, and general descriptions collectively establish this idea of otherness. Though still set in England, these exaggerated representations situate the north as an uncivilised cultural space. Northumberland is presented as an unknown and unfamiliar landscape, a country 'wild and removed from formality' (272). Specifically, the area is removed from Oxford formality and an implied tameness of the civilised masculine realm. This separation is furthered by the depiction of shepherding, that 'to hear [the shepherd] call the sheep by name, and to perceive how he knew them individually, and how they each and all would answer to his voice, was a realization of Scripture reading, and a northern picture of Eastern life' (259). The north is likened to the East, and more specifically, the Biblical Middle East. Like Jesus, the shepherd can also declare 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me' (KJV, John 10:27). There is a sense of a greater connection to nature, even to the spiritual, in this landscape.

Linguistic challenges are emphasised through narratorial limitation directly claiming that 'the historian of these pages would feel almost as much difficulty in setting down this north-Northumbrian dialect, as he would do were he to attempt to reduce to words the bird-like chatter of the Bosjesmen' (261). The dialectical language and accents of the north of England are, this statement suggests, as difficult to convey as the language of an African tribe. Significantly, this issue is not one-sided. For all involved, 'the conversation at such times was sustained not without difficulty. Old Andrew, his wife, and the major portion of his family, were barely able to understand the language of their guests…while the guests, on their part, could not altogether arrive at the meaning of…the most incomprehensible *patois* that was ever invented' (261). That 'patois', a

seventeenth-century French term literally meaning 'rough speech', has to be translated by the English reader adds a layer of linguistic foreignness to this struggle with verbal interpretation. While this scene could be read as a negative, stereotypical depiction of rural England, that the Oxford undergraduates are also misunderstood positions the university with its own sense of foreign otherness. Dougill notes how Oxford itself is presented in *Verdant Green*, arguing 'there is a distinct sense of oddness about [Bradley's Oxford]…the reader is taken into an alien world with its own rules and its own peculiar way of doing things…The city hovers indeed on the very edge of normality' (121-2). While the north is presented as foreign to the undergraduate characters, Oxford itself has an unusualness to the reader, at least in the beginning of the novel. Interestingly, Verdant's initial arrival at Oxford depicts the locals there in terms of the foreign and indigenous, an othering which originates in the narrative's earliest form. The description within the sixth box on the first ILN sheet states, 'Contrary to Mr. Green's expectations, they arrive safely in Oxford, and are set down at the Mitre; where they are attacked by a horde of the Aborigines, in the guise of Impromptu Porters' ('The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green - Part 1', ILN). Here the students are presented as invaders being bombarded by the native people who immediately become subservient. The description implies a striking distinction between the people of the town and those who occupy, and perhaps conquer, it in their gowns. Oxford's inhabitants and customs have an otherness from the perspective of the uninitiated. Positioning both Oxford and Northumberland as exotic territories at different points in the narrative reveals the subjectivity of the foreign and unfamiliar. This perspectival approach that situates both locations as oddities provides greater freedom for humour. Poking fun at Oxford first, the text suggests, makes caricaturing the north more acceptable to the audience.

Just who is being caricatured within this new space is important to consider, however. Significantly, what defines the unfamiliar qualities of Northumberland is not necessarily the descriptions of the people themselves, but the Oxford characters' reactions to them. A character's reaction of astonishment in light of observing a quirk or eccentricity is part of the comic hyperbole. Thus, the expectation of where the joke is becomes subverted. The humour does not emanate from the 'other' but from the character who sees it as such. For example, Verdant 'and his male friends' visit a Presbyterian church 'one Sunday for curiosity's sake, and found a minister of indefatigable eloquence and enviable power of lungs, who had arrived at such a pitch of heat…he paused to divest himself of his gown…then pursued his theme like a giant refreshed' (273). At this sartorial development, 'little Mr. Bouncer became in a high state of pleasurable excitement, from the

expectation that the minister would next divest himself of his coat, and would struggle through the rest of his argument in his shirt-sleeves; but Mr. Bouncer's improper wishes were not gratified' (273). The quirks of a country minister become a source of entertainment, a kind of comedic spectacle for Bouncer's enjoyment. The preacher is presented as a caricature of a rural minister. He is nicknamed 'The Ruin' while the church building is described as an 'ecclesiastical ruin', the minister's identity fusing with that of the structure itself (274). He is a reflection of the institution and its walls, much like the Oxford men who come to hear him preach. Mr. Bouncer's amused reaction to him is counterbalanced by the narrator's observation that, 'Though it seemed almost incredible to our midland-county friends, yet not a few of these poor, simple, earnest-minded people would walk from a distance of fifteen miles, starting at an early hour, coming by easy stages, and bringing with them their dinner, so as to enable them to stay for the afternoon service' (274). The oddity of such a preacher and style of church service is counterbalanced by the recognition that he is a central figure in this cultural context. Thus, the caricaturing done is not presented as derogatory, at least in the direction of the other but, if anything, reveals the limited perspectives of the Oxford men.

The exploration of foreign space in the novel's third volume is underscored by the increased inclusion of female characters. Women and the romantic subplot claim the focus as the setting shifts, positioning women as part of the 'other' that dwells beyond the masculine realm of university life. The distinction between geographical location also cultivates, then, a sense of distance between male and female environments and customs. The land and the women reflect one another as unfamiliar territories to explored. This othering is in some ways a harsher representation of women than previous works within this project have displayed. Yet, Deslandes shows by his choice to address 'Girl Graduates and Colonial Students' in the same chapter just how much women were considered foreign to life at Oxford.[30] He states that 'the incursion of women into male spaces threw into question traditional ideals and practices of imperial power and male authority and challenged the physical and psychic separateness that "otherness" so often necessitated' (Deslandes 186). Women were seen as 'outsiders' 'invading' Oxford (Deslandes 186). While *Verdant Green* is staged about forty years before the admittance of the first female undergraduates, the later reactions establish the idea of women as having a 'physical and psychic separateness' reflected in novel's third volume.

[30] See Paul R. Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men: British Masculinity and the Undergraduate Experience, 1850-1920*, Indiana University Press, 2005, pp. 184-228.

This separateness, however, is not exclusively presented in negative terms. In fact, just as Tosh describes manliness orienting itself in the world by what a man does, how he appears, and how he behaves, the same can be said of how women are constructed here. This move creates a certain gender equality not previously seen in other university fiction. Notably, there is a distinct tonal shift when women are included in the novel. The comedy pulls back and leaves women untouched. This is surprising for an era in which publications such as *Punch*, particularly through Leech's illustrations, regularly positioned women as the punchline of a joke. While the Oxford undergraduates consistently joke with one another and are presented, at least through Verdant, as somewhat ridiculous and naïve, women are showcased as serious, ambitious, hardworking, and romantic leads in their own right. The female characters are not represented as different through exaggerated emotion or the exaggeration of caricature, but as like their male counterparts in how they interact with and are understood by the world. They are capable and not fumbling to figure out the world as Verdant Green has done through his early Oxford career. The change in location and the greater introduction of a different gender in that location sets up a distinct contrast between the representations of men and women. Women's work is taken more seriously and assessed differently from university culture. Yet, the common ground of action, appearance, and behaviours as defining remains the same. A key difference, then, becomes the space in which these women are introduced and developed. Outside of Oxford, women are accepted and thriving, positioning the university as a sub-culture that is disconnected from the wider scope of work and gender.

While some of the physical descriptions given to characters such as Miss Fanny Bouncer – who is referred to as 'plump' – and Miss Patty Honeywood continue to display stereotypical views of women, particularly regarding their bodies, they are developed beyond those depictions (253). In fact, they are portrayed as innovative and industrious in their work and personal interests. Miss Bouncer, for example, is an amateur photographer. When she is introduced in the novel's second volume, she is described as 'both good-humoured and clever, and, besides being mistress of the usual young-lady accomplishments, was a clever proficient in the fascinating art of photography, and had brought her camera and chemicals' (211). Photography in the 1840s and 50s was becoming a more popular technology; thus, Miss Bouncer's hobby aligns her with the new and experimental. Edward Bradley himself was interested in this innovation, so much so that he published a humorous

work in 1855 titled *Photographic Pleasures*.[31] He states in the book's opening 'the word photography is formed from two Greek words, signifying "light-painting" and that the Photographic art is, therefore, the art of producing pictures by the agency of light. Thus, Photography is essentially a light subject, and ought to be treated in a light manner' (*Photographic Pleasures* 13). The work as a whole is a comical exploration of photography in different 'lights', so the play on the idea of light as illumination and light as humorous continues throughout. The book is light, indeed, and offers an overview of photographic history and pursuits while also including humorous authorial illustrations to highlight the topic of the accompanying text. Bradley goes on to explain that 'There is a humorous side to most things … When we ought to be grave, let us be grave; but, where we may have our laugh, let us have it, and that right heartily…I have the greatest respect for Photography; I hold it in the highest estimation…to derive pleasure from it shall be my primary, and not my secondary consideration' (*Photographic Pleasures* 14). His comic approach to photography, like that Oxford, is out of deference, not malice. His works mock in a quest to have us laugh at ourselves.

Though *Photographic Pleasures* presents comic foibles of amateur photographers, Miss Bouncer is not presented this way in *Verdant Green*. Her aptitude with photography distinguishes her beyond the 'usual young-lady accomplishments', which the language here asserts are much less interesting based on their usualness (211). That she is not the same as all other young women is highlighted as laudable. There is also an accompanying illustration which depicts Miss Bouncer taking Verdant Green's photograph. Unlike illustrations of Verdant attempting to take part in activities, which often results in his falling or flailing, there is no sense of irony or humour in Miss Bouncer's representation as a photographer. That she is a 'clever proficient' in photography is not undermined either in the text or in the illustration (211). By giving her proficiency in her separateness, she is applauded in her ability to do something different than what the Oxford men in her company can.

[31] Bill Jay in the 1980s praised Bradley's *Photographic Pleasures* for its humorous take on the innovations of photography. See Jay, Bill. 'Cuthbert Bede.' *The British Journal of Photography (Archive: 1860-2005)*, 1986, pp. 37-39. *ProQuest*, https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/cuthbert-bede/docview/1701416742/se-2.

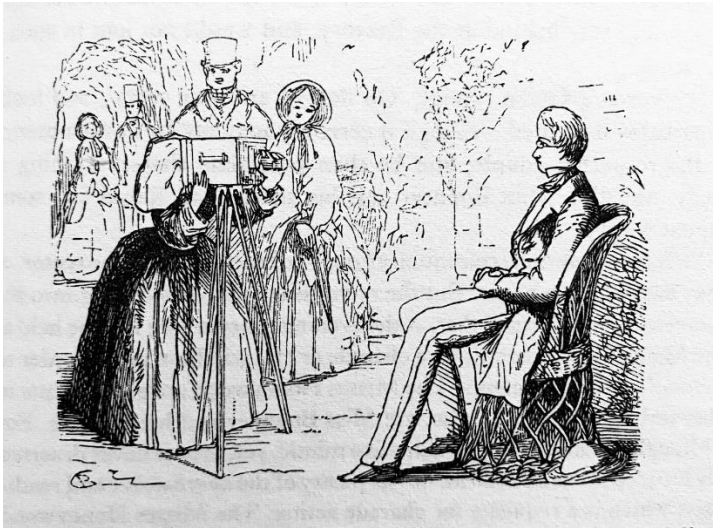


Figure 14: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. II, p. 211

Unlike other university fiction, which introduces women only in direct connection to other Oxford men or the university itself, *Verdant Green* includes women of other locations, occupations, and classes, particularly those of northern farming communities. Much like Miss Bouncer with her camera, these women are presented informatively, not jokingly or mockingly. While in the north, the undergraduates encounter 'Bondagers, - great strapping damsels of three or four-woman-power, whose occupation it was to draw water, and perform some of the rougher duties attendant upon agricultural pursuits' (261-2). These women, hired when there is a shortage of workers, are defined by their physical prowess. Their 'sturdy legs…were equipped in greaves of leather…and their exuberant figures were clad in buskins, and many-coloured garments, that were not long enough to conceal their greaves and clod-hopping boots' (262). Attention is given to their bodies, but not as stereotypically feminine or problematically masculine. Their physiques are a function for their daily occupation. This kind of physically strong, working woman is such a foreign concept to an Oxford audience that Bradley gives a footnote for further cultural explanation and includes an illustration. The visual is not a caricature but a more realist, observational visual aid provided for the sake of understanding rather than humour. These textual and paratextual elements highlight how unfamiliar this particular type of female worker might be and intentionally makes space for these women to be described and seen.

Figure 15: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, Vol. III, p. 261

Miss Patty Honeywood, the love interest for Verdant, is yet another example of a woman who subverts conventionality. She is an artist who 'possessed the enviable accomplishment of sketching from nature; and, leaving the beaten track of young-lady figure-artists, who usually limit their efforts to chalk-heads and crayon smudges, she boldly launched into the more difficult, but far more pleasing undertaking of delineating the human form divine from the very life' (263). Patty's artistic pursuits beyond the typical limits convey a sense of pushing 'boldly' beyond the stereotypical as a woman. She is fascinated not with nature, but with the human form, the novel placing emphasis again on physicality, appearance, and movement. Not only is she contrasted to other women in her artistic interests, but she is also juxtaposed to Verdant Green, who 'was enabled to be of some use to her in carrying her sketching-block and box of moist water-colours, or in bringing to her water from a neighbouring spring, or in sharpening her pencils' (263). Verdant joins in her pursuits rather than establishing his own and becomes a kind of assistant to her. Patty skills position her as a decision-maker and guide for their time together, giving her the lead role in their relationship. Beyond her artistic abilities, she is also highlighted as an accomplished horsewoman, distinctly placing her in further contrast to Verdant. Whereas he cannot keep his seat during his first ride in Oxford, Patty 'was not only distinguished for unlimited powers of conversation, but was also equally famous for her equestrian abilities. She and her sister were the first horsewomen in that part of the county'

(270). Her ability to defy limits is noted here again. Verdant struggles with his words and has limited dialogue throughout the narrative, yet Patty is accomplished with her words. She and her sister are such capable riders that 'in every respect rode so well, that, as a matter of course, they looked well - never better, perhaps, than - when on horseback' (270). While the narrator still notes their beauty, 'well-rounded figures', 'pretty felt riding-hats', and 'graceful dress', these feminine features are described alongside the more traditionally masculine pursuit of riding. Gendered distinctions and language remain, but the physical pursuits of women, whether in photography, farming, artistry, or riding stretch the boundaries of femininity beyond stereotypical assumptions. Overall, women are consistently depicted in *Verdant Green* as industrious, progressive, and capable, in direct contrast to the men, including Bouncer, Verdant, and even Frederick, who swoons after facing a bull though none of the women do. Indeed, the men stand as 'other' in comparison to these women, posing Oxford as a realm disconnected from the progression of a society that accepts and elevates female accomplishments.

Progressively in the nineteenth century, the Oxford of university fiction becomes more of a humorous oddity, a micro-culture progressing society through education while maintaining its exclusive boundaries and traditions. *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* showcases the lightheartedness and joviality to be found in this distinctive college life. The comic modes demonstrated through authorial-illustration and allusion highlight Oxford's eccentricities, while adventures outside of the city show the limitations to the university's ideas of gender. Verdant's quest to graft himself onto the 'Oxford man' ideal is defined by the exterior self – appearance, behaviours, and shared jokes – though he is never quite successful. He maintains a positive connection to the university, yet he never quite loses the naïveté of his freshman self, forever trying and failing to embody the kind of masculine caricature he sees before him.

Chapter 5 – Oxford and the New Woman: *Une Culotte*

> Indeed, it is my experience that both men and women are fundamentally human, and that there is very little mystery about either sex, except the exasperating mysteriousness of human beings in general.
>
> - 'Are Women Human?', Dorothy Sayers

By the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of manhood, manliness, and masculinity had been shifted, altered, and challenged by the previous decades of change in British culture. New anxieties emerged that questioned what masculinity meant, how men behaved, how they dressed, and more. While tracing these changes toward the fin de siècle, what cannot be overlooked are the parallel questions being asked of women, femininity, and gender as a whole. The 'New Woman' was creating a 'cultural apocalypse,' a change that was not just evolutionary but revolutionary to Victorian culture (Dowling 437). Elaine Showalter as well describes that 'Politically, the New Woman was an anarchic figure who threatened to turn the world upside down and to be on top in a wild carnival of social and sexual misrule. Journalists described her in the vocabulary of insurrection and apocalypse' (38-9). This apocalyptic vocabulary 'expressed [critics'] urgent sense of cultural crisis, their fear of imminent besiegement, betrayal, and collapse' (Dowling 439). Though these women were being culturally grouped under the single identity of 'new', the work of Elaine Showalter, Sally Ledger, and other scholars makes clear that the 'New Woman' was not a stable category.[32] What was made consistent, however, was the questionable nature of this newness. Ledger writes that 'The elusive quality of the New Woman of the *fin de siècle* clearly marks her as a problem, as a challenge to the apparently self-identical culture of Victorianism which could not find a consistent language by which she could be categorized and dealt with. All that was certain was that she was dangerous, a threat to the *status quo*' (Ledger 24). She was new, and that is all they knew. The unknown influence, power, and change involved with the idea of 'new' woman left society questioning tradition versus transition.

[32] See Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle.* Bloomsbury, 1991; and Ledger, Sally. 'The New Woman and the Crisis of Victorianism.' *Cultural Politics at the* Fin de Siècle, edited by Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 22-44.

In *Une Culotte; or, A New Woman: An Impossible Story of Modern Oxford*, Horace William Bleackley (pseud. Tivoli) writes, 'If old romance, as handed down to posterity by Frank Fairleigh, Verdant Green, Tom Brown, and other old-world heroes, is to be trusted (and though mirrored in gay colours, their pictures are undoubtedly true ones), the modern undergraduate has degenerated (or, shall we merely say *changed*) more than any other class in Great Britain during the last fifty years' (180). Thus, the novel situates itself within the tradition of male Oxford protagonists alongside Francis Edward Smedley's Frank Farleigh, Edward Bradley's Verdant Green, and Thomas Hughes's Tom Brown.[33] Yet, the 1890s were no longer the age of a university novel with titular male heroes. The broader cultural changes, particularly regarding questions of gender and sexuality, seeped into the newer representations of college life. Most significant was the introduction of women to higher education. Greater concern grew about preserving a culture of masculinity as women's colleges were created and as ideas of masculinity changed. New questions regarding women, femininity, and the introduction of the female student changed and challenged what university fiction could achieve.

Of the novels explored in this study of university fiction, *Une Culotte* is most certainly the least known. There has not been another printing of the book since its initial 1894 release. Horace William Bleackley is also not a well-known nor widely read author. He only published one other novel under his pseudonym 'Tivoli', and by the beginning of the twentieth century, he wrote nonfiction under his own name. Indeed, it seems his satiric university novel would have been entirely forgotten were it not for Mortimer Proctor's acknowledgement of it in *The English University Novel* (1957). Judy Batson later includes the title in her bibliography of Oxford fiction; John Dougill, however, makes no mention of it in his *Oxford in English Literature*.

Une Culotte is the story of two female graduates of Girton College, Cambridge, Helen Murray and Carrie Elliot. After Helen breaks off her engagement to Maurice Lonsdale, whom she presumes is having an affair, she convinces Carrie to infiltrate Oxford with her in order to observe what men are really like outside of their relationships with women. The two young ladies disguise themselves as male undergraduates, Helen as Englishman 'Harry Morton' and Carrie as Frenchman 'Charles Dubois', and attempt to blend into masculine university culture. In a fortuitous turn of events, Maurice Lonsdale also finds himself at Oxford, and the dramatic irony of the plot unfolds. Carrie subsequently falls in love with an Oxford undergraduate, Frank Gilbert, and he proposes after discovering that the young Frenchman he has been rowing with is actually a woman. Helen, after

[33] Smedley's *Frank Fairleigh; or, Scenes from the Life of a Private Pupil* is an 1850 novel set at Cambridge.

revealing her identity to Maurice and realizing that she was wrong to break off their engagement, forgives him. In the end, Helen and Carrie discard their disguises in order to avoid the wrath of a mob of male undergraduates, who aggressively pursue Carrie/Charles after she/he causes the college eight to lose a race.

Bleackley's utilisation of two female protagonists is in itself a notable choice. Having a woman as the central figure of a university novel was not widely done prior to Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* (1911). But whereas Zuleika's sexuality is satirised for its visibility, drawing in the male gaze to such a degree that the men of Oxford drown themselves as a show of love for her, Helen's and Carrie's sexualities are given exaggerated disguise. However, the question of how women and men are sexualised in the text is also worth exploring further.

Alongside the novel's categorisation as university fiction – a valid assessment based on its setting and plot – critics have also attempted to identify *Une Culotte* as a New Woman novel, a judgment perhaps purely based on the reference to a New Woman in the title. In her article on the novel, Mariam Zarif refers to Bleackley as 'an obscure figure in New Woman studies', an observation which mischaracterises both Bleackley and *Une Culotte*. Despite the title, the text does not offer an example of New Women fiction but rather a farcical satire of the emerging genre. In some ways, the story is comparable to Lady Florence Dixie's *Gloriana; or, the Revolution of 1900* (1890), in which the protagonist disguises herself as a boy and later a man in order to attend Eton, then Oxford, before becoming a member of Parliament. But where Gloriana de Lara chooses to cross dress in order to 'transform patriarchy from within', Helen and Carrie are only seeking to understand patriarchy by being part of it ('(Un)Masking Desire', Heilmann 102). Their motivations are much less progressive, particularly when considering the act of cross dressing. While other New Woman fiction represents cross dressing as an experiment with gender identity, *Une Culotte* utilises it in order to disguise gender. Both instances of cross dressing reflect a transformation, but for very different purposes and ends.

Previous scholarship written on *Une Culotte* consistently misrepresents Helen and Carrie's motivations for infiltrating Oxford. Proctor claims that Helen and Carrie 'concluded during a visit to Oxford that the majority of undergraduate males were so weak and effeminate that it would be a lark to enroll among them and pose as men' (73). This summary suggests that the female protagonists are out to prove themselves capable of being men in order to demonstrate that boundaries between masculinity and effeminacy have shifted from previous cultural ideals. Further, Proctor asserts that Helen and Carrie undertake this as a silly prank, a 'lark', implying the scheme serves merely as a

source of entertainment. Neither of those ideas is accurate. Effeminate men are not the incentive, nor are fun and games the end goal. Zarif asserts that '*Une Culotte* is the story of two women who set out on their expedition to Oxford to find out about men and eventually get married, thereby reinstating the idea that marriage is women's ultimate occupation' ('The New Woman'). The storylines for both protagonists do end in marriage, with heteronormativity firmly restored, and Carrie does find it advantageous that Oxford is full of eligible young men. However, Helen's drive to understand men has an emotional source, a motivation which must be analysed further. The female protagonists are not trying to argue that women need to be accepted, but rather that men are at fault ('(Un)Masking Desire', Heilmann 85-6). Because their cross dressing is not about female freedom or for freedom's sake, it places the novel within a sustained patriarchal structure. There is subversion of femininity, but subversion is not the ultimate goal. Based on these inaccuracies exemplified in past scholarship, this novel requires close reassessment and more precise examination. The motivations of the female protagonists, in particular, will be key in understanding what the novel actually argues regarding gender and the New Woman.

Significantly, the majority of the plot is set in Oxford. Considering the desire of the two female characters to learn more about men, their behaviours, and their character, their choice of Oxford as the best place to do so clearly reflects the gendered nature of university life. Helen argues that Oxford is a place where "I can most easily adapt myself to the mode of life without sacrificing my chances of observation. Where else could I live on such intimate terms with those whom I wish to dissect?" (55). As Girton Girls, Helen and Carrie have at least some understanding of the social atmosphere of college life. Narratively, based on the antics that ensue, the authorial decision to utilise a collegiate setting signifies the level of comedic potential there. Indeed, Helen and Carrie face similar trials to those of Tom Brown and Verdant Green, yet here, instead of the young naïve male hero as the punchline, foolish young ladies in disguise become the comic target. However, the humour, at whom it takes aim, and how it does so will be given further examination here.

Ultimately, *Une Culotte* has to be repositioned within New Women fiction, specifically because it lacks the genre's progressive messaging. Moreover, the ways in which the novel speaks to fin de siècle university culture and masculinity make it worth greater consideration than what the text has been granted previously. The novel portrays an emphasis on exteriority in defining gender through its utilisation of cross dressing and the irony and humour of disguising. Studying a representation of masculinity on a female body impacts our understanding of late-nineteenth century conceptions of gender formation. Though the novel makes an argument for patriarchal order

through positioning women cross dressing and invading Oxford as a humourous and ridiculous endeavour, the narrative yields insights into how gender was considered at the fin de siècle, the questions surrounding both the male and female body, and whether the university still functioned as a gendered space.

This chapter argues that while *Une Culotte* attempts to portray women as foolish challengers of male morality and gender divisions, the text in fact demonstrates a problematic enforcement of gender divisions. While patriarchy is upheld by the narrative's conclusion, the process of doing so explores shifting, gendered boundaries. Changing clothes reflects changing codes of desire and challenges perceptions of what masculinity means. Clothing is emphasised as the delineator of gender and sexuality to the point of satire. Though the idea of the New Woman is the presumptive satirical target, in fact, the story becomes a satire of society's restrictions and conceptions of gender difference. The sartorial is the instrument of comedy, but aim is taken at gender more wholistically. New Women are punished for their explorations into a male space, but the territory itself and the way in which it is guarded also come under fire. While endeavoring to show New Women as foolish, the masculine culture of Oxford also becomes a problem. Yet, this analysis does not seek to stretch and sculpt this novel it into a feminist, New Woman text. Instead, through examining the satiric nature of this work, we gain a distinctive male perspective on the inclusion of women in society and university and the changing gender perceptions of the time. This offers valuable insight within the parameters of this project's conversation with university fiction.

Women's Bodies and Men's Clothes

Une Culotte is distinct within Victorian university fiction for its utilisation of two female protagonists and its depiction of women cross dressing. Anna Bogen, in her book *Women's University Fiction*, calls the novel 'bizarre', and perhaps the most bizarre characteristic of the text is its self-declaration as a work about the New Woman (142). Despite centering the plot on women, the narrative is much more fascinated by questions of masculinity. Perhaps this is not as odd as Bogen claims, as all preceding university fiction has also focused on men, and predominantly the idea of the Oxford man. What makes this focus in *Une Culotte* so compelling and, in a sense, bizarre, is the choice to explore what masculinity means through the female body. While university men still feature as characters and play an important part in how masculinity is represented, the New Woman as Girton Girl becomes the lens through which gender boundaries and definitions are examined.

Bogen writes that 'Common to all depictions of the New Woman as well as the Girton Girl…is a sense of public scrutiny; whether represented in a *Punch* cartoon or an avant-garde short story, she is consistently an object under observation, a body that is expected to show signs of mental difference within' (144). The body, then, becomes a lens through which to understand the inner workings of the mind, specifically that of the female undergraduate. Helen and Carrie embrace this idea of difference, yet for them, the distinction lies in the male undergraduate whom they intend to make objects of scrutiny. Thus, the novel sets up a reversal where women are the ones gazing and observing. However, from the perspective of the reader, the narrator takes repeated opportunities to gaze at Helen and Carrie, describing their appearances in detail. This emphasis on their physical features not only reflects the cultural inspection of New Women, but also highlights how representing the body shapes gender norms.

In reframing our understanding of this text, we must first recognize the false perception established by the novel's title, *Une Culotte, or A New Woman*. The idea of a New Woman does not accurately characterise Helen and Carrie. Or, at least, they do not fit the rough idea. Critical examination by such scholars as Elaine Showalter and Ann Heilmann show the difficulties behind the meaning of 'New Women'. Heilmann acknowledges in her work on *New Woman Fiction* that as 'an emblem of the shifting and conflicting conceptualisations of gender and sexuality at the *fin de siècle*, the New Woman was thus constructed "as simultaneously non-female, unfeminine, and ultra-feminine"'[34] (19-20). The concept of what defined a New Woman was mixed, a blend of ideas that both contradicted and at times coalesced. Commonly, though, interest seemed to center in what women did with their bodies and how they fashioned themselves. *Punch* repeatedly published comic representations of New Women wearing trousers, riding bicycles, and ranging widely in physical characteristics that projected a spectrum of sexuality, from over-sexualised femininity to hyper-masculinity.

Bleackley's novel builds on these cultural concepts, and in having two female protagonists, the novel is able to explore varying versions of late nineteenth-century femininity. Angelique Richardson notes that fiction at the fin de siècle was turning inward (xlv). However, this novel stresses the significance of the outward. Helen and Carrie's physical descriptions present both the New Woman and stereotyped, sexualised women. Helen is described as 'a damsel rather older, more masculine and squarely built' with a 'plain, hard-set countenance' and 'soft grey eyes, that together

[34] Here Heilmann quotes from Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*, Routledge, 1992, p. 140 (emphasis in original).

with the full ripe lips imparted to her face its only feminine expression' (2, 4). This is the first of multiple indications that Helen naturally has a more stereotypically 'masculine' body type and face, which adds convenience to her later disguise as a man. Further, her physique places her in a more ambiguous space in terms of gender. She is a woman, but she is not 'womanly'. She is not a man, but she is 'manly'. She naturally embodies a liminal space between gendered definitions of physical form. Moreover, Helen has 'a deep, sonorous voice' that had been made fun of at Girton (10). Sally Ledger notes that 'New Women and feminists in general were often constructed in the periodical press as mannish, over-educated, humourless bores. The Girton Girl was much maligned and ridiculed throughout the period' (26). Even within the context of a maligned group, Helen is further distinguished by her less feminine voice. Paul Deslandes further notes that 'Many male undergraduates considered female students ugly, excessively brainy, and sexually neutered or ambiguous, precisely because they had decided to pursue a degree course and might eschew marriage for an academic career' (194). As Helen is female and a former student, she is portrayed as not particularly sexually attractive, yet this is later contrasted by Carrie, who is. The contrasting elements work to place her in the gendered category of an educated woman, not on the same intellectual plain as a male student and also not with the same physical qualities as the average woman. She has 'the blushing honours of a University degree', a description that signals her educational standing as also sexualised, with a physical, feminine quality of a blush (6).

The narrator goes to provide more detail of Helen's physique and does so to maintain her status as an object of sexual desire:

> Helen was no beauty. Some men would have put her down as quite plain, but then most men are so absurdly fond of pink and white, quite oblivious of the face that these are brushed away, like the bloom off a grape, by handling. Helen had no complexion in the ordinary acceptance of the word – a swarthy, gipsy-like hue overspread her cheeks. All her colour seemed to be concentrated in her lips. The broad forehead and massive chin were very masculine, so were her ears (ladies understand what that means), and her most emphatic nose. It was only when she smiled, and her kind, beautiful eyes and ripe mouth had a chance of displaying themselves, that the true woman stood revealed. At other times you would have thought she was only a plain blue-stocking. (6)

Her lips and mouth as 'full' and 'ripe' and colourful are made the central site of her sexual appeal as a woman. Though the rest of her face and body is given quite a masculine, male-gendered emphasis, her femininity is maintained by the sexualisation of her lips and eyes. However, even before she concocts her scheme to dress as a man, Helen is depicted with this New Woman 'manly' stereotype. She is described as masculine yet again as Maurice observes her for the first time. Interestingly in this moment, the narrator describes not what Maurice does see, but what he, through a lack of experience with women, does not see: 'Some men would have perceived at once that her figure was too square in some places, and too flat in others, and it must be confessed that even her fetching boating costume…did not very much help to convey the impression of femininity' (14). To Maurice, Helen 'seemed no ordinary type of her sex' (20). Indeed, Helen encapsulates not the ordinary but the extraordinary, an exaggeration of new representations of femininity from a male perspective. Zarif notes that 'The narrator's distortions and exaggerations of Helen, such as her "broad forehead and massive chin," make it a caricature. However, Helen's kind and "beautiful" eyes also beg for the ladies' sympathy' (The New Woman'). By maintaining Helen's 'feminine' qualities alongside her masculine physique, she becomes a familiar stereotype and an unfamiliar, 'new' figure. The contrasting descriptions of Helen with a female sexuality but a more masculine body are a useful plot device, constructing the ease with which she can successfully identify as a man, yet also demonstrating the blurring gender boundaries of fin de siècle culture.

Bogen claims in her analysis of the novel that 'Helen's inability to flaunt her own body reduces her to a "boastful little boy," suggesting that had she highlighted her femininity more, Diana of the pavement might not have seemed so attractive to her fiancée, thus suggesting initially that a "proper" sexual identity, at least for women, rests in the body' (146). The novel does not seem to put the blame on Helen's physicality and a failure of her as a woman 'to flaunt her own body'. Instead, the problem lies in a misunderstanding of Maurice's motivations. Helen sees him with another woman, and, because she does not overhear their conversation, the miscommunication lies in misunderstanding his body language. Thus, the central conflict, along with the irony that drives the plot, is focused on interpretations of bodily behaviour.

Carrie, when contrasted with Helen, is much more 'feminine' and, perhaps for this reason, even more objectified. Indeed, the narrative even goes so far as to share Carrie's weight, revealing her to be 8 stone 4 pounds in 'feminine attire' (104). She is presented as much more stereotypically female. The narrator introduces her with the following description:

> She was certainly a fairly handsome girl, with cleanly-cut and rounded features. The healthy bronze, which exposure to the sun had imparted to her countenance, had but mellowed the rosy hue upon her cheeks. If a profusion of dark auburn hair, large, lustrous eyes, and a plump, saucy little chin have any subtle influence upon mankind, then my fair friend was certain to enjoy a considerable amount of masculine attention. She was no fairy vision, but a healthy, nut-brown maid, with a capacity for flirtation which hitherto had not been greatly favoured as regards opportunity. (5)

Carrie is a Girton graduate like Helen – they met there as students – and yet she stands in direct contrast to her friend. Instead of being masculine, she enjoys 'masculine attention'. She is the balance of the stereotypically traditional to Helen's progressive and assertive tendencies.

Significantly, in giving Carrie a more feminine physique, the implication becomes that she cannot take on the identity of an Englishman and has to resort to playing a Frenchman. This lack of sufficient masculinity – suggested in Carrie's size, build, and feminine features – intimates a baseline standard of what British, and Oxford, manhood looks like in contrast to the criterion of other countries. Frank, on observing Carrie as Charles Dubois, states that 'the French boy is just like a girl…Walks like one, talks like one' (66). Thus, the narrative critiques ideas of French masculinity, English masculinity, and English femininity through Carrie.

The emphasis placed on the bodies of these female characters foregrounds questions of gender performance and its significance in constructing concepts of gender. Helen and Carrie are a complicated and simultaneously ill-fitting portrait of New Women, and yet the complexity exhibited through this late-nineteenth-century attempt to understand the 'New Woman' conveys the impossibility of constructing a standard portrait at all. The same issue of a set ideal becomes apparent when considering portrayals of masculinities. Helen and Carrie represent masculine variances based in cultural conceptions and determined by their natural physical appearances. How they operate as men is defined by an English view of manhood and by how their features can fit within that mold. Thus, masculinity becomes defined largely through ways of acting or appearing. To be masculine, the novel argues, no matter the standard, is a matter of wearing the appropriate clothing and behaving in the 'right' way.

The act of cross dressing in the late Victorian era was one coded with layered messages regarding identity, gender, sexual desire, and more. Based on this, critics of *Une Culotte* have attempted to read this depiction of cross dressing through a progressive lens, conflating what is

described and accomplished here with other cross-dressing narratives in fiction and historical accounts. Yet, Helen and Carrie's cross dressing, while still subversive to the point of disguising identity, lacks any insistence on permanent transformation. Their gender identities are not redefined but merely disguised, altered for a temporary purpose. While cross dressing loses a portion of its potential power in this lack of exploration, there are still gender questions which permeate from this decision.

Women cross dressing as men in order to completely fool their male counterparts places the definition of 'masculine' in sartorial and aesthetic choice. Helen asks the direct question "Why shouldn't I wear a pair of trousers if I want to?" (58). This question reads as a stereotypical summation of the New Woman argument for gender equality, and its clear stress on what one wears exposes the aim of the satire. The idea that being a man is simply a matter of changing clothes makes the woman who asserts the thought seem shortsighted. Helen's question is posed to function as a humorous misunderstanding of what masculinity means. Indeed, the underlying impression that to be a man is to dress like one derives part of the novel's comedy. Helen and Carrie put laughably little effort into their male disguises beyond what they wear; their transformations are based solely in attire. As Harry Morton, Helen 'wears a loose, blue coat, which bears the crest of his college upon the breast; his face is flushed and his hair unkempt' (81-2). This brevity of this description of Helen dressed as a male undergraduate is a stark contrast to the lengthy portrait offered of her as a woman. The choice of clothing is simple and stereotypical – a college blazer as a clear marker of identity and the unkempt hair suggesting a young man's lack of attention to personal appearance. When presented in contrast to Carrie/Charles, however, the lack of detail for Helen/Harry indicates how well she takes on her male persona. When Carrie is dressed for riding, Frank, a fellow undergraduate 'sees a small figure approaching him, breeched and booted in brave style. He seems to bear a little nervous swagger as he strolls along by no means unbecoming. His cloth cap is thrown behind his brown curls, and a strange, devil-may-care smile is upon his lips, as he flicks his boots with his whip rather viciously' (138). The returning emphasis on Carrie's/Charles's lips, curls, and small figure convey a feminine sexualisation. However, this description suggests more than an inability of a woman to disguise her physical features. That Frank is positioned by the narrator as the one noticing these details prior to his knowledge of Charles's identity as Carrie establishes sexual desire beyond the heteronormativity constructed in the plot. Thus, while the idea of fashion may be emphasised to make women look ridiculous, the attention given to physical appearance shows a cultural fascination with gender performance through the sartorial. With women beginning to cross dress as men in real

life, there is a cultural focus on fashion. That Helen and Carrie's disguises succeed so easily, for they would not be discovered to be women without pure accident, suggests a less distinct division of gender boundaries.

Identity and Desires

Questions that arise regarding sexual desire add to the unstable nature of cross dressing by a male or female. Helen and Carrie are not sexless and are not attempting to be so; this is not part of the intention in their disguise. Zarif asserts that Helen's proposal 'to impersonate men at Oxford, and her gender-role reversal serves as both a bold political statement and a source of humour' ('The New Woman'). While a source of humour, Helen's motivations are not granted such power or purpose as a political statement. Instead, her actions are an emotional rebounding motivated by heartbreak and anger and sadness and a loss of idolisation of a male fiancé. They are not political but scientific, investigative.

This motivation yields an increased sense of changeability in gender distinctions exemplified through the use of pronouns. Indeed, both the characters and the narrator get caught up in a confusion of gender pronouns once Helen and Carrie take on their male personas of Harry and Charles. At first, when Helen and Carrie arrive in Oxford disguised as Harry Morton and Charles Dubois, the narrator refers to them with he/him pronouns, signifying a clear transition from one gender to another. However, less than twenty pages from the first use of male pronouns, the narrator consciously switches back to female, she/her, pronouns, making the decision not to 'conceal her [Carrie's] name any longer' (83). The same is done for Helen. The reversal from male back to female pronouns confirms the gender identities of the two women despite their cross dressing and demonstrates an unwillingness to participate in the charade of the characters. The narrator seemingly distances themself from a question of gender while simultaneously adding to a sense of identity instability. Carrie also slips up in maintaining the correct gender pronouns. She corrects herself when saying of Helen/Harry that "She-he is a better horseman than I am" (135). Helen does the same when Carrie slips from her horse and Helen asks, "Is she – is he dead?" (147). They have difficulty in maintaining a clear sense of identity for themselves and each other, yet it is not a fluctuation that they are seeking or attempting to formulate into a political, progressive statement. The pronouns are simply another aspect of the gendered disguise. Because these identities are temporary and not transformative, the sense of identity becomes more problematic to

maintain. Carrie worries to Helen "But you do know, my dear, I am so afraid of forgetting myself" (71). This fear may seem silly based on the evidence of the women's disinterest in transitioning their identities, but the concern highlights a sense how destabilising gender impacts a sense of self. Thus, gender performance becomes not just an outward expression of identity for someone else to perceive and recognise but also an inward understanding that requires remembering.

Cross dressing may not be depicted here as a highly political, identity-altering act, but that does not mean altering gender performance becomes a safer choice. In his discussion of men's fashion, Brent Shannon presents the idea of male fashion as social safety ('Refashioning Men'). This is both true and not true for Carrie in the end. Her masculine attire is a threat to her safety, while her feminine attire is what saves her from the mob pursuing Charles Dubois. For non-fictional, cross-dressing women, however, 'the return to feminine clothes and roles often constituted a punishment' (Heilmann 102). Here the return to femininity is not a punishment but safe space, directly opposing a subversion of gendered, sartorial boundaries. The insinuation is that there is risk, a lack of security for women in embracing a masculine style. This idea had resonance with the contemporary events. Lois Schwich, a woman who was arrested for theft, was made a greater spectacle by the fact that she was dressed an errand boy at the time and that this was a repeating occurrence, not a one-time disguise. In this way, she 'was an even more dangerous figure. She took female-bodied masculinity into the streets and succeeded in her role' (Hindmarch-Watson 89). Women who are able to tread gender boundaries successfully are unsafe on two fronts – within themselves, risking being labelled as deviant, and to others as disruptors of social norms.

Nineteenth-century readers were often drawn to 'the perceived sexual content' of New Women fiction (Bogen 144). Representations of the Girton Girl in university novels 'were therefore open to being read with the implied or overt goal of uncovering licentious experience or, at the other end of the spectrum, of locating in Girton, or any woman's college, the source of the sexlessness and superior "coldness" that led to the New Woman's rejection of both male advances and Victorian convention' (Bogen 144). In Helen and Carrie's experience of their sexualities, we see neither end of this extreme, subverting these stereotypical perceptions of the Girton Girl. Sexuality is part of Helen and Carrie's experience of Oxford, however. Though they are cross dressing and presenting themselves as men, their heterosexual preferences remain the same. These desires in turn define how the men in the novel are depicted. Frank is described through Carrie's female gaze. To her 'His bronzed face, with its firm, aquiline features, and kind, blue eyes, appeared to her the perfection of manly beauty. His boating costume showed to advantage his fine, muscular figure. In

fact, Carrie fell utterly in love with his sturdy, pink knees, which his orthodox shorts left exposed to criticism' (94). Through this physical, heterosexual attraction to Frank, 'the sense of her womanhood had returned with cruel force' (100). Here gender is linked to sexuality, Carrie's desire for Frank reflecting a sense of her 'womanhood', an ambiguous term which could here refer to either gender or sexual preference. This distinction of womanhood is also shown to be a product of physique. Carrie's identity as a woman is discovered not because of a fault with her clothing, the tone or accent of her voice, or any of her actions. Her masculine performance is not compromised by its lack of believability. Rather, the feminine shape of her upper body seemingly exposes her. When she is thrown from a horse while out riding, Frank is left to tend to her. He examines her for any injuries, and while the extent of what he sees is unclear, the text implies that he catches of glimpse of her breasts as she lies unconscious. After the fact, Frank thinks to himself 'that it was not his fault that the discovery had been made. He was the victim of circumstances. If he had known the truth, he would have been more ceremonious in the treatment of his patient the other night. Yet he knew that the best restorative for a person in a faint was plenty of air! But a more cautious modus operandi is adopted in the case of a lady' (153). That he tried to get her plenty of air indicates that he must have opened her shirt and thus recognised her as a woman. His thoughts also reveal a distinction in behaviours; men are treated one way and women another. Whereas the late nineteenth-century equated manliness and toughness, this was a quality not afforded to women (Tosh, 'Masculinities in an Industrializing Society' 337). Frank laments not knowing Carrie's identity because he would have behaved differently. Once he knows the truth, his behaviours do change, particularly his looking at her. He begins to see her and her attire through new eyes. Indeed, 'he was of the opinion that a pair of trousers became this young lady very well; as, indeed, they would become all of her sex who were as physically perfect' (158). His acceptance of her in male clothing implicitly extends from a place of desire for this 'physically perfect' woman. Yet, once Carrie is made aware that her secret is exposed, she begins to reject her masculine attire. As Frank is later proposing, Carrie thinks, 'she was not dressed for the part, and never so much had felt the need of a petticoat' (195). Carrie feels a sense of wrongness in not wearing feminine attire for this heteronormative moment. Thus, the novel continues to show a longing for gender to reflect sexuality, one inextricably linked to the other.

Of the Oxford fiction examined in this project, this narrative most lacks depictions of male friendships and homosocial intimacy. Emphasis is heavily placed instead on a reinforcement of heterosexual relationships. Helen and Maurice are reconciled and reunited by the denouement, and Carrie and Frank are likewise engaged, each couple anticipating marriage in the book's final pages.

Yet, there are moments where this depiction of heteronormativity is subverted for the sake of comedy. In a scene after Frank discovers Carrie's identity, he comforts her in a moment of distress, sitting her on his knee. She is still disguised as Charles, however, and this scene of one man sitting on another's lap is an as 'an appalling sight' to Stephen (205). His first response is to exclaim "I say, Frank, you're no longer at school!" (206). His reaction reflects anxieties around homosexuality in public schools and also suggests that while desire for other men may have occurred in earlier educational spaces, Oxford is a space of heteronormativity. That the scene is included as one of the novel's five illustrations offers a moment of male intimacy made comical by the situational irony. Based on the heteronormative nature of the narrative, this scene is set up to present homosexual desire as a punchline, emphasised through visualisation. However, underlying the humour are the convoluted boundaries between sexual desire and gender performance. Both the text and illustration note that when discovered, Carrie looks away in shame. Frank is surprised, rising from the chair to come to his own defense. The need to defend expressions of male intimacy does not occur in the previous university fictions examined here. This shift at the end of the century came with a greater policing of male desire; homosexuality was deemed illegal in the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act. *Une Culotte* was published a year prior to the Oscar Wilde trials, an event which made these anxieties manifest. Yet here in the novel, the suggestion of male desire is portrayed as neither fully acceptable nor deeply problematic. The moment operates as ironic, the audience never questioning the heterosexuality that defines Frank and Carrie's intimacy. The scene does, however, convey a 'defensive homosociality' and the insecurity of women within the university space (Bogen 145). Though heteronormativity is preserved, uncertainties and challenges of gender remain.

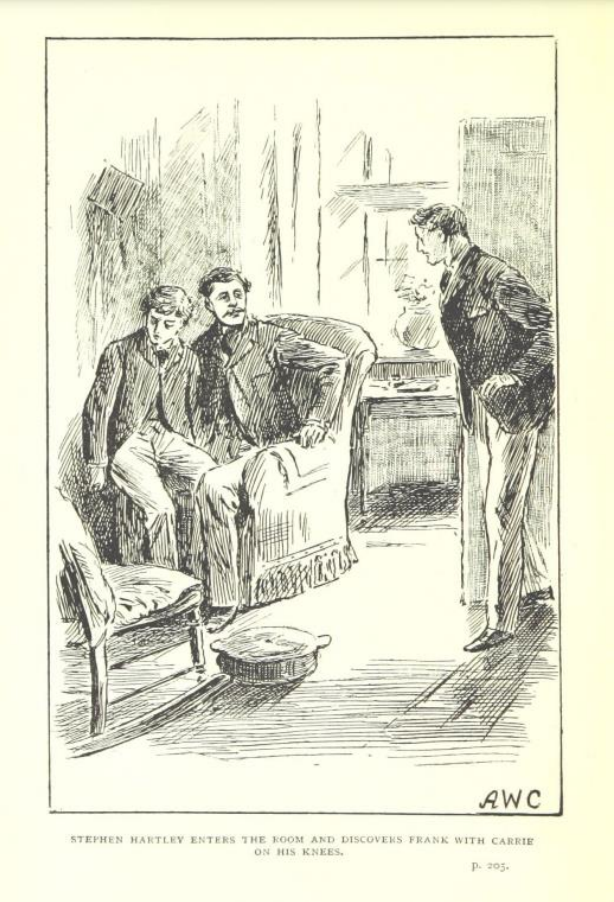


Figure 1: 'Stephen Hartley Enters The Room and Discovers Frank With Carrie On His Knees,' by A.W. Cooper, *Une Culotte*, p. 205

New Women and Men

Helen and Carrie's goal in infiltrating Oxford is an exploration of gender, but not their own. Their quest is posed as a study of men and how they behave. Helen laments for women, "how ignorant we are of the true character of the men we are forced to marry" (37). This bemoaning is a direct result of Maurice Lonsdale's supposed actions, but further suggests that there is a division between men and women, a kind of limited access. This limitation is symbolically represented by the male-centric university. In order to overcome their ignorance of the true character of men, they must observe them more closely. Bogen notes the reversal here, that 'Instead of peering voyeuristically through the curtains of the women's colleges, [Bleackley] places his New Women in the position of voyeurs in the men's colleges' (148). But even before arriving at Oxford, Helen and

Carrie have been observing what men are like, though their assessment is defined not by character but by physical appearance. At the beginning of the novel, Helen watches undergrads with boyish looks walk by and asserts "The mothers of England would indeed deserve contempt if these were the best specimens they could produce" (8). The dehumanising language she uses distances her from the men she is harshly observing. Labeling them as specimens, and later referring to "their genus", both distances herself from them and conveys that that distance is one of a differentiation of species (9). The language formulates a scientific typifying of men. Zarif asserts that there is a significant achievement in this distancing. She argues that 'Helen inverts the traditional male gaze by objectifying men, thus challenging the patriarchal metanarratives of femininity that represent women as passive or subordinate to men…. Helen appropriates the masculine analytic gaze and transforms the 'modern' man into a spectacle' ('The New Woman'). This reversal is a significant maneuver and emphasises the agency and capability Helen feels in shifting the gaze from women to men. She sees herself as undertaking "these investigations in the cause of science and womankind" and states "Hitherto the human male has only been criticized by his own species, who are naturally prejudiced in his favour, or by uninitiated women. My mind, on the contrary, is unbiased. I live among men, and yet I am not of them. I can appreciate their frailties. My psychological study ought to be a perfect one. If I fail, it will not be the fault of my methods" (71, 123). She positions herself as a kind of scientific, objective observer, further enforcing a gendered boundary. The opposite gender is represented as so mysterious and unknowable that its characteristics have to be studied. That she claims lack of bias is laughable given the context of her broken engagement. Thus, the entire experiment predicated on being able to see lacks introspection.

Elaine Showalter notes that 'While men were focusing on the Woman Question, women raised the Man Question. Was the age producing a New Man, the companion who would share their lives and who would evolve by their side?' (49). While the novel critiques the idea of New Women, demonstrating Helen and Carrie to not fit within the archetype, it also questions current formulations of masculinity. Helen refers to the men she sees around her as "effeminate boys" who "love to ape effeminacy" (8). Carrie points out their "sloping shoulder and slim waists", their assessments based purely on physicality (8). Their verdict is that the men they observe "are not manly objects" (8). While Helen and Carrie are unreliable observers, there is a humour in their exaggerated critique that calls out a shift in how masculinity is presented and embodied. This speaks to questions of the feminisation of contemporary men. Beyond a change in exterior presentation, Helen also observes shift in the inner character, exclaiming that "The age of chivalry is dead!...Why

should we then, embalm its corpse? Chivalry regarded women as man's pretty plaything, that must be petted, pleased and deified, and its whole idea was to waste our precious existence in senseless gallantry. Chivalry made man a swoony swash-buckler and a nincompoop, and woman a cruel little coquette" (23). While she rejoices over this death of chivalry through a comically exaggerated assessment of its view of women, the male violence enacted in the novel supports the claim that there has been a change. After Frank discovers Carrie's identity, he demands the truth from Helen/Harry as well. During this confrontation, which the narrator describes as 'growing serious although so farcical', Frank threatens to strike her/him with a riding crop (186-7). However, once Helen confesses that she too is a woman, Frank laughs over the absurdity of it all. While the situation is quickly defused, the threat of violence during this confrontation lacks the kind of honour and respect chivalry once denoted. This is further exemplified by the mob that chases Carrie/Charles after she/he causes the college to lose in rowing. Notably, Mortimer Proctor misrepresents the ending of the novel by suggesting that Helen and Carrie are run out of Oxford. This not the case, though the pursuit by the mob does chase Carrie back into her feminine attire. On one level, the mob scene reads as women being returned to more socially acceptable, feminine behaviour. However, because their gender is disguised, the scene portrays male violence toward same sex peers. They intend to dunk Carrie/Charles in a tub as a punishment for the disappointing outcome of the race. That the Oxford men are, in fact, chasing down a woman takes on predatory connotations and brings up parallels to sexual assault and domestic violence. The troubling, unsettling scene is emphasised by Carrie/Charles's desperation to escape via the roof of the college. Carrie only escapes by quickly changing back into a dress before the men can catch up with her, making Charles completely disappear. In all, this potentially innocent scene of young male behaviour becomes more problematic and incendiary based on gender identity.

The moments of male violence in the novel are revealing; they are only described and not defended. Interestingly, an 1894 review of the novel in *The Saturday Review* assumed that 'Tivoli' was a female author ('Une Culotte' 666). Arguably, however, the way in which the narrator rushes to the defense of the male characters signifies the gender bias of an, in fact, male author. The narrator observes that the 'feminine tissue' is 'too weak for such robustness; it is not fit that it should encounter the horse-play of men. Yet it often teaches a useful lesson in life's experience this contention of the sexes, and reconciles the fair one to the necessities of her environment' (181). This problematically argues that women learn their limitations through conflicts with men. What men may learn is not specified. This argument, though, echoes the culture of the 1870s and 80s, which

'asserted more emphatically than ever that women did not share these attributes [of toughness]; indeed, it was stressed that women's mental and reproductive powers would be impaired by aping men's intellectual pursuits' (Tosh, 'Masculinities in an Industrializing Society' 337). While Helen earlier observes an aping of femininity, there was a similar concern, which Helen represents, of women parroting intellect. Women's education was identified by Herbert Spencer in 1861 as problematic for women, their sexuality, and their reproductive ability (Richardson xl). It was argued that education was robbing women of sexuality/sexual ability; more power utilised mentally yielded less power physically. Grant Allen further argued that education was destroying female sexuality, cultivating women that were 'unattractive and unsexed' (Richardson xliv). Intellectual ability was connected to physical, sexual capability. Tosh makes clear, though, that 'Men's investment in ideas of sexual difference was thus a defensive response to improvements in the status of women' ('Masculinities in an Industrializing Society' 337). Concerns about women were, therefore, in reality more about men.

The initially harsh view expressed by Helen towards men is also shown at the other extreme of deep love and the heartbreak experienced when Maurice supposedly betrays her. When he proposes to Helen at the beginning of the novel, she responds by saying "You have saved my life", as if singleness is a state to be rescued from (27). She goes on to refer to him as her idol and god, and her questioning of his character 'might be likened to that of the religious enthusiast when his faith in a beloved creed first begins to be shaken' (48). When Carrie falls in love with Frank, Helen laments "Ah, poor women! what fools we are!" (107). The shift between religious devotion and scientific separation in order to understand why men are the way they are functions as the satirical extremes of the novel.

A Comedy of Genders

Une Culotte is established as a comedy of genders through its structural elements. The opening of the novel unfolds in a series of 'scenes' rather than chapters. After four scenes that set up three of the novel's main characters (Helen, Carrie, and Maurice Lonsdale) and conveys the plot's central conflict, a new section titled 'The Play' begins (62). This change from scenes to the play itself occurs after Helen and Carrie have acquired their disguises, reflecting the idea of actresses preparing to step onto a stage. Helen is described as 'both physically and mentally suited for the part she was playing…she had proved herself a most excellent actress' (120). This invocation of the theatrical

supports the idea of gender as a performance. Zarif argues that 'Gender in the novel becomes a spectacle. In this sense, Bleackley, through his heroines, employs a Butlerian idea of gender performativity that focuses on iterative bodily practices' ('The New Woman'). The novel consistently conceptualises gender in terms of the exterior, the performative, the ability to physically blend in and conform. Significantly, both women achieve this goal. Neither is discovered due to an inability to be masculine, which further emphasises that gender is a performative act, one that can be put on and observed by others.

The motivations behind this performance are different between both women. The narrator describes Helen and Carrie as 'the *new* woman and the *true* woman' respectively, drawing a distinction in the womanhood based on their intentions in disguising themselves (61). Helen hopes to understand and, in a sense, unmask masculinity, whereas Carrie is more interested in meeting an eligible man. Thus, true womanhood is defined by upholding patriarchy and heterosexual normativity. Cross dressing as men 'presents the possibility of transgressing and subverting the sex-gender system, but the humour generated through the cross-dressing is antifeminist as it suggests that to transgress the codes of gender is to disrupt the traditional view of the social order (Zarif). Thus, the invocation of the theatrical defines Helen and Carrie's experience of embodying masculinity. Sartorial transformation is merely a tool to study gender rather than challenge it. Bogen adds that 'Although Helen and Carrie survive their masquerade, it is only by being found out and restored to proper female dress – by Maurice and Frank respectively – that they attain any sort of happiness, resolving their body/mind split. Thus, despite the trousers, significance finally rests in their female bodies' (148). Unlike for other New Women who did so, cross dressing for the pair is a sacrifice, not a liberation, and resolution only comes when they change back into their feminine attire.

The novel concludes with an odd, brief end scene reminiscent of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, yet not as pleasant nor as clearly resolved. While sitting with Maurice, Frank, and Carrie, Helen 'seemed to have awakened from a wonderful nightmare' (316). The contrasting image of a 'wonderful nightmare' reflects a paradoxical quality within in the text as a whole. The novel both claims to depict the New Woman yet reinforces gender norms in the end. The status quo of masculine and feminine distinctions is restored through the two romantic couplings. Yet, the haziness Helen feels toward what has happened reflects a destabilisation. Examinations and challenges were made in assessing both men and women through the antics of these disguised female undergraduates. These questions linger despite the reinstated social norms, symbolically

reflected in Helen's inability to fully grasp the answer to what has happened. Thus, questions as to how gender is embodied and presented remain and, despite the novel's best attempts, look toward change.

The novel's hazy return to the status quo portrays a university culture struggling with change, a tension reflected throughout Oxford fictions. Here, at the turn of the century, the reader is left unsettled and questioning what the university is trying to hold onto and what it will become, perhaps in spite of itself. Though satirically reaffirming gender divisions that are based significantly in outward presentation, the way Bleackley's novel hyperbolically pushes at the boundaries of masculinity and femininity provokes consideration of what actually divides men and women in this university space and what significance those divisions might continue to have. Oxford continues to offer a revealing setting through which to explore what it means to be a man, and at fin de siècle, what it means to be a woman.

Conclusion

The end of the nineteenth century was a vastly different landscape from the point in which it began. Between the 1820s of Lockhart's work to the 1890s of Bleackley's, concerns about masculinity shifted repeatedly. At the fin de siècle, there was no longer any concern for the definition of a gentleman or understandings of chivalry, but rather a fear of what once gentle women might be becoming and what that might mean for the men around them. Sexuality was more heavily policed, and yet as Foucault demonstrates, in trying to avoid the subject, more attention is drawn to it.[35] The progressive increase in comic humour through the decades highlights a parallel interest in sexuality and boundaries being drawn around gender. However, this specifically applies to men. The female characters of these works convey a complicated involvement with the university and its male undergraduates.

The overarching trajectory of these works demonstrates and complicates how manhood, manliness, and masculinity operated within the university. Whereas inner turmoil and solitude are exhibited through *Reginald Dalton* and *Loss and Gain*, intimate male friendship becomes an important factor as the century progresses, most strikingly exhibited in *Tom Brown at Oxford* and even seen through the influence Verdant Green's peers, who are central to informing him on how to become an Oxford man. Helen and Carrie's female friendship is at the heart of *Une Culotte*, and a different kind of homosocial bonding formulates that still involves masculinity. Thus, each example demonstrates the importance of homosocial bonds in defining and enacting masculine traits. Assertions of how these characteristics are defined becomes less sentimentally subtle and more comically direct. Across these works, emphasis shifts from patriarchal manhood, to religion and chivalric manliness, to the more outward concerns of appearances and masculine performance.

What we see through these shifts in gender representation is directly reflected in the protagonists' relationships to the university. Indeed, the struggle experienced in attempting to embody a kind of 'Oxford Man' ideal, conforming to the current understandings of masculinity, is conveyed through how university life is experienced by them. Though Oxford is a beloved space for each of the male undergraduates, their connection to the university is far from ever perfectly compatible. There is a resistance that begins in earnest with Reginald Dalton's engagement with college customs. The temptations of Oxford, and the need to defend the honour of the woman he

[35] Foucault, Michel. *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Penguin, 1998.

loves, frustrate and ultimately sever his connection the university. This tension is heightened in *Loss and Gain* as Charles Reding struggles with the lack of dogmatism within the Anglican Church and the pull this cultivates to Catholicism. The university cannot reconcile this personal choice with institutional loyalty and tradition, and he too finds himself separated from Oxford. Both Reginald and Reding mourn this loss yet with the recognition that they cannot be what the university desires of them. A lingering sense of this disconnect is also felt through Tom Brown, who steps from the university without a clear sense of what work is waiting for him within his newfound Christian Socialism. While the university helped shape his beliefs, he too sees its limitations. These fictions portray the university understanding of masculinity to be a high, and ultimately unattainable, standard. Thus, there is clear tension between how the university views masculinity compared with each protagonist. This reflects, however, a development of the self that is at the core of the university experience, and thus expresses a fulfilled goal of higher education.

Though there is much less inner turmoil and disconnect seen through *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* and *Une Culotte*, this still is present in some ways. *Verdant Green* continues to be the bumbling undergraduate toward the end of the novel, despite the marriage plot moving him clearly into a life of domesticity. He is never quite able to overcome his naïveté in order to embody the same kind of confident, knowledgeable undergraduate that his peers demonstrate. In *Une Culotte*, there is a sense of rejection evident in the gendered divisions embodied in Helen and Carrie's experience of cross dressing. While their disguises are effective in making them part of the university, there is no true space for them within college life. Instead, this acceptance functions through the reconciliation of their romantic relationships with men who are part of the university. However, this inability to conform, in both these work, is portrayed with humour. Verdant Green's follies make him a likeable, silly character, and Helen and Carrie's antics create hints of farce highlighted by the narrator through the novel. Overall, by the end of the century, the relationship to Oxford was conveyed less seriously with fewer stakes and less inner conflict.

A distinct tonal shift begins around the time of *Verdant Green*. The novel's comic style and lack of self-consciousness contrast the inner turmoil experienced in the first half of the century. This division is a blurred one, though, as *Tom Brown* was published after Bradley's authorially-illustrated three-decker novel. But around the mid-century, the stories written about university life were much less burdened and more open to make light of the oddness of university life. This is by no means a strict rule; Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) is proof of that. But there is evidence to suggest a change in attitude toward the university, one that saw it as less significant to the definitions of self.

Where the university once weighed heavily into a man's interior life, it began to prioritise the exterior representations of masculinity instead. In incorporating humour, the second half of the century shows more willingness to subvert and laugh at the Oxford Man ideal.

The comedic modes recognisable in each of these texts informs how we understand the gender representations and Oxford ideals present there. Lockhart's light-hearted humour and satirical exaggeration highlight the problems of Oxford customs, while a similar satirical edge to Newman's novel speaks to issues of religious belief. The wit of Hughes invokes a greater sense of unity between men and women, an increased involvement with women in work and in informing manliness. The use of visual comedy in Bradley highlights masculinity as observed through appearance, and Bleackley subverts this exteriority through the satirical depictions of women cross dressing as men. The increased intensity of comic modes communicated that gender was open to exaggeration and magnification in order to examine it more closely. Overall, what we find is that humour gives us a different approach to examining university life and the portrayal of masculinity within that space.

This examination of Oxford fiction has attempted to convey the usefulness of investigating the university as a space where masculinity is formulated and instilled in men. Simultaneously, the range of these novels demonstrate distinct interests in how masculinity is defined, and humour has offered a new approach to considering gender representations. There is much more work that can be done to investigate university fiction and rediscover some of the works set at Oxford. The interest in Oxford goes on, a testament to the impact of the university and the appreciation for all it gives to those who study among the dreaming spires. More novels came in the twentieth century, including Max Beerbohm's *Zulieka Dobson* (1911) and Dorothy Sayers's *Gaudy Night* (1935), and continue to be written in the twenty-first. Novels such as *The Last Enchantments* (2014) by Charles Finch, *My Oxford Year* (2018) by Julia Whelan (adapted into a film by Netflix in 2025), and *The Eights* (2025) by Joanna Miller are proof that we are far from relinquishing the impact of university culture, nor have we lost a captivation with Oxford. These stories continue to find an audience, and readers continue to come back for more. This fascination with university culture lingers and perhaps will remain, just as gender and humour, the education university represents, the liminal space of transition as we age and grow, is an ingrained part of our existence. Oxford and its oddities, its traditions, its cultural endurance is merely a signifier of how large this change looms in our lives, how much it means to our minds and hearts, to our sense of who we are.

When I first visited Oxford, I was just as overwhelmed and amazed by it as the nineteenth-century protagonists of university fiction. There, among the dreaming spires, the course of my life was changed. I found myself in ways I could not have anticipated. It is the mysterious power to impact who we are that brings us back to the Oxford landscape. We go seeking an education and find ourselves instead.

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