

RACE - FEMININITY - REPRESENTATION

WOMEN, CULTURE AND THE ORIENTALIZED OTHER
IN THE WORK OF HENRIETTE BROWNE AND GEORGE ELIOT
1855-1880

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the paintings of Henriette Browne and George Eliot's novel Daniel Deronda in order to explore the ways in which European women contributed to imperial cultures of the second half of the nineteenth century. In contrast to many cultural histories of imperialism which analyse Orientalist images of women rather than images by women, the thesis argues, first, that women did produce imperialist images and, second, that an analysis of the production and reception of images by women will develop an understanding of the interdependence of ideologies of race and gender in the colonial discourse of the period. To this end, the representations selected for study are read largely through their reception in the British and French critical press in order to assess the ways in which the gender-specific and author-centred criticism of the time produced a range of (often contradictory) meanings for women's texts and identities for their authors. It is argued that women's differential, gendered access to the positionalities of imperial discourse produced a gaze on the Orient and the Orientalized 'Other' that registered difference less pejoratively and less absolutely than is implied by Said's original formulation (Said, 1978). Thus, the thesis contributes to critical debates about imperial subjectivities; argues for a more complex understanding of women's role in imperial culture and discourse; intervenes in George Eliot scholarship; and provides the first detailed analysis of Browne's work. As an initial exploration of women's involvement in Orientalist art, the thesis also aims to indicate the existence of a larger, as yet unexplored, field of women's visual Orientalism and demonstrate the benefits of taking an interdisciplinary approach to the examination of women's interaction with and contribution to colonial and imperial cultures.

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PREFACE

This thesis sets out to examine, in selected instances, the ways in which European women contributed to what can broadly be termed the cultures of imperialism, in the second half of the nineteenth century. As such, it aims to provide a historical and cultural perspective on contemporary twentieth-century concerns with gender, race and ethnicity. Situated as an adjunct to recent historical studies of white middle-class women's experience of and involvement in Western imperialism,¹ this thesis will contribute an analysis of the constitutive role of culture in the formation of imperial relations and, within that, focus on the role of women as cultural agents.

The project started off with a huge scope - the three terms of my title, race, femininity and representation - and was gradually narrowed down. What I want to do with these three central terms is to explore and define (within certain prescribed limits) their construction and application: not least in order to examine the ways in which they, and their derivatives, are still able to

¹ See for example:

Helen Callaway, Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria, London, 1987,

Dea Birket, Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers, Oxford, 1989,

Billie Melman, Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918. Sexuality, Religion and Work, Basingstoke, 1992,

Vron Ware, Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History, London, 1992,

Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance, Bloomington, 1992.

operate as a sort of short hand categorization - even as those that they define struggle to deconstruct them and trace their discursive efficacy. Accordingly, this thesis sets out to unpick the connections between these three terms, working out how they are variously and variably constitutive of each other in processes of both affirmation and negation. This is done in order to understand the conditions of possibility for, and reception of, women's involvement in imperial cultural production and the role of imperialism in the construction of professional creative opportunities for European women. That is to say, not only will I be examining instances of women's cultural production that support, or otherwise relate to, imperial ideologies, but I will also be arguing that the ways in which European women imagined and propelled themselves into the potentially transgressive position of cultural producer, and the ways in which their output and demeanour as creative professionals were assessed, relied on the differentiating terms of race, class and nation, as well as gender; a series of relational categories that activated and were maintained by a set of hierarchical differences and value judgements that could only be imperial.

This thesis will also add to recent debates about the specificity of the female gaze² as part of a critical movement that has undercut the potentially unified, and paradigmatically male, colonial subject outlined in Said's

²The female gaze is explored most fully in chapter four.

Orientalism in 1978.³ Thus, in contrast to many cultural histories of imperialism that analyse Orientalist images of women rather than representations by women, this study will argue, first, that women did produce imperialist images and, second, that an analysis of the production and reception of representations by women will develop an understanding of the interdependence of ideologies of race and gender in the colonial discourse of the period. To this end, women's representations will be read largely through their reception in the British and French critical press (specialist and general) in order to tease out the ways in which the gender-specific and author-centred criticism of the period produced a range of (often contradictory) meanings for their texts and identities for their authors.

It will be clear in what follows that I am as much interested in how things came to be talked about, written about, recorded - or even neglected and ignored - as I am in the images and representations themselves. Since I take the approach that representations do not have intrinsic meanings in themselves, but that meaning is constructed in the interaction between the reader/viewer and the text (which constructs meanings and identities for both the viewer and the text), the role of art and literary

³Edward W. Said, Orientalism, Harmondsworth, 1978,
Sara Mills, Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism, London, 1991,
Jane Miller, Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture, London, 1990,
Rani Kabbani, Europe's Myths of Orient, London, 1986,
Melman.
For a full discussion of Said's work and responses to it, see chapter one.

criticism is central to this investigation. Thus, the thesis is concerned with culture's imperial role, not just in the propagation of imperial ideas, but in the examination of how culture and, crucially, its reception and circulation, contributed to the disputes and debates that make up the imperial moment. In the pages that follow I will argue that women's differential, gendered access to the positionalities of imperial discourse produced a gaze on the Orient and the Orientalized 'Other' that registered difference less pejoratively and less absolutely than was implied by Said's original formulation. That is, the positionings within Orientalism open to women cultural producers were always contingent on the other shifting relational terms that structured the presumed superiority of the Western Orientalist. It will be shown that women's work was read through a grid of differences that, though it often foregrounded gender, was equally reliant on domestic differentiations of class, religion and nation. It was, therefore, in relation to all these differentials that the conditions of possibility for the emergence of women's (Orientalist) cultural production depended. Thus women's alternative 'take' on difference will be used to throw light on the internal schisms within the fantasized unity of the sovereign imperial subject.

Subjectivity is a recurring theme in this thesis not least because of its central role in the twentieth-century critical developments out of which my work arises, but also because it is my intention to contribute to our understanding of how people, in this case women, came to understand themselves as part of an imperial nation: how they understood themselves as beneficiaries of a structure of systemic differences that, whilst it placed them as superior in the West/East divide of colonialism (the relative privilege of the European woman traveller in the Orient), also placed them as other and inferior in the gendered divides of European art and society (women's

limited opportunities for a professional art education).

The thesis is organized around a detailed analysis of the production, reception and circulation of two case studies: the first centres on visual representations of an overtly Orientalist nature (the Orientalist paintings of the French artist Henriette Browne, active 1855-78); the second focuses on literary representations that are implicitly Orientalist (the depiction of Jews as the Orientalized other in George Eliot's novel Daniel Deronda, 1876). These two studies will be used to develop a focus for an understanding of the heterogeneity of Orientalism and imperial identifications. In this analysis the nineteenth-century significance attached to the nation-specific differences between Henriette Browne and George Eliot will dovetail with my analysis of the structural, and potentially oppositional, role of gender difference. It is immediately obvious that these two authorial identities (neither were their 'real' names) highlight a set of differences: different twentieth-century critical standings (who has not heard of George Eliot, who has heard of Henriette Browne?); different nineteenth-century critical status; different social and personal identifications; different fields of endeavour. Hidden under these contrasts, but fundamental to the pattern of this thesis, is the different state of the available archive.

In contrast to the wealth of readily available and secondary material on George Eliot, Browne, though successful in her day and included in the major

directories to artists at the turn of the century,⁴ is little researched today and the whereabouts of much of her work unknown. Of those that are extant, some are in private collections and unavailable for view, others in poor repair in gallery basements.⁵ Therefore, my work on Browne has required far more detective work and primary research, the fruits of which must necessarily be expressed more fully in the body of the thesis. For a study that is concerned with the production and

⁴See for example entries on Browne in:

Ellen Clayton, English Female Artists, London, 1876,
Clara Erskine Clement, Women in the Fine Arts. From the Seventh Century BC to the Twelfth Century AD, Boston, 1904,
Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, London, 1903,
Algernon Groves, A Century of Loan Exhibitions, London, 1913-15,
Larousse, Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle, Paris, 1864-76.

See also Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, Leipzig, 1907,

E. Bénézit, Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs de tous les temps et de tous les pays par un group d'écrivains spécialistes français et étrangers, (1911-23) Paris, 1976.

⁵Harem Interior: A Visit, (1861), for example, is owned by a private collector who declines to let me see the painting or have a colour reproduction; the whereabouts of its sister piece, Flute Player, are unknown; the Greek Captive (nd.) is in the basement of the Tate Gallery, London. One example of Browne's Orientalist work that is restored and on display is La perruche (1875), at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth.

circulation of meanings, it is, in a perverse way, salutary that I have scarcely had the opportunity to read too much in to the images themselves: with Browne I have never even seen the 'real thing' in some cases and, indeed, have often been in the position of analysing responses to her work before I had managed to track down even a black and white reproduction of the painting. Whilst not an ideal condition for study, I have used the absence of an archive on Browne as an opportunity, not only to research her, but to introduce new material on other (previously unknown) nineteenth-century women painters of Orientalist subjects. The subsequent revelation of the range and amount of women's visual Orientalism challenges the tendency to see Orientalist art as an exclusively male field. In following this trail it has been made abundantly clear to me just how much critical readings of women's work did indeed attach current concerns, enthusiasms, or fears, to any painting that could remotely be linked with the subject of the Orient.⁶ With both Browne and George Eliot reviews inevitably centre on their gender. Thus, where Browne offers an opportunity to study an obviously gendered reception of Orientalist images, I hope that my re-reading of George Eliot will animate Eliot scholarship by re-inserting the overt imperialism of nineteenth-century responses to Daniel Deronda. This will allow us to examine more closely the implicit role of Orientalist discourse in the construction of the professional creative female self and its tautological relationship to the female subject's representation of racialized differences.

One of the things that motivated me to do this work was a

⁶For a good example of this see the Athenaeum's review of Browne's Rhodian Girl that I discuss in chapter four.

nagging sense that things were more complicated than they appeared (debates about good feminists versus bad imperialists etc). In order to unpick what I expected to be the ambiguities of women's imperial positionings (positioned simultaneously within differences of imperialism, femininity, class and creativity) I was prepared to re-think totalizing explanations in order to allow for the vagaries I expected to find. What this produced, and this is evident in the material and structure of the thesis, is a series of related but unresolvable ambiguities, some of which I must address here.

As is now self-evident, this thesis looks at both visual and literary culture, a practice for which there are many precedents and significant support, but that does nonetheless leave some hostages to fortune. Whilst in general I think that it can be unhelpful to rigidly separate cultural forms, in the case of the relationship between culture and imperialism, I agree with Anita Levy's argument that, since disciplinary divisions were themselves produced through, and in the service of, imperialist separations between colonizer and colonized, to accede to them, or to the separation of class from race from gender, would be to 'reproduce unwittingly the logic [that] collaborated to produce a single set of differences between self and other'.⁷

If it seems common sense that the late twentieth-century phenomenon of Media Studies should take as its subject

⁷Anita Levy, Other Women: The Writing of Class, Race, and Gender, 1832-1898, Princeton, 1991, p.12.
See also Michel de Certeau, Heterologies: Discourses on the Other, Manchester, 1986.

mass media representations in print, television, film and music (it is clear to us that reading the newspaper and watching television are different but related activities) then why should it be a problem to assume that the same nineteenth-century consumers who read books and magazines also visited exhibitions and viewed prints? Put crudely, Victorian novels are full of instances of middle-class characters going to art galleries and the national art collections of Europe are full of nineteenth-century paintings with literary subjects and titles. Moreover, these high literary forms (as well as the 'lower' forms of popular imperialism) contain endless traces of second-order discourses such as ethnography, sociology and so on; an intertextuality that is entirely reciprocal. In terms of reception, we would be fools to ignore the experience of (the links between) consuming diverse forms of culture: for these cultural activities were all components of subjective experience and therefore of identification(s) in terms of class, gender, race and nationality. Of course, reading novels and attending exhibitions are selected activities, only, and differently, available to some sections of the population. Just as not all the population today feels itself to be equally addressed by The Late Show or The Word, with their various specialist languages, presumed knowledges and habits of consumption, neither did the whole of the nineteenth-century population (quite accurately) feel itself to be the addressee or audience of the high art areas with which I am dealing.⁸

⁸ Although developments in popular imperialism are signalled, as is the dissemination of its main texts into a wider cultural domain (via prints and the potentially extended readership of the serialized novel), this study is primarily concerned with the domain of high culture.

The thesis aims not to linger on material that is already familiar to readers, but, since I cannot expect every reader to mirror my own particular pattern of disciplinary hybridity, I must of necessity dwell on some material that, though familiar to some readers, will be new to others. Similarly, I have devoted more space to elucidating little known sources, like the Journal des demoiselles, than those, like the Athenaeum, on which secondary material is readily available. It is impossible to be expert in every area and in going for a broad scope I will no doubt have missed some nuances and offended some specialists. I hope that I will have contributed sufficient insights to the various related fields of this study to be forgiven by more singularly focused scholars, from whose research I have repeatedly benefited.

Chronologically, this study begins with Henriette Browne's first major success in France and England with the Sisters of Charity in 1859 and ends with George Eliot's final and seriously unpopular novel Daniel Deronda in 1876. For a project that aims to unpick the totalizing fantasies of Western imperialism and the homogenizing tendencies of twentieth-century critiques of Orientalism, there can be no tidy boundaries, only fortuitous or gratuitous ones: not only because it is still unusual to combine the literary with the visual, but because periodization, like disciplinary boundaries, is a constructed and contested device. Different fields of inquiry set up different periodizations which frequently do not match, even where their objects of study overlap: the advent of modernism in art history (in traditional or revisionist accounts) rarely correlates with modernism in literature; French history is divided into epochs that do not match English history; postcolonial history challenges the colonialist demarcations of imperial history; women's history

challenges the masculinist exclusions of his-story.⁹ This project, then, can only be localized in so far as the thirty years it covers demarcate a particular series of events in the lives and work of Henriette Browne and George Eliot in an era, in both France and Britain, that was unmistakably (but not unchangingly) imperial, and in which Orientalism in Britain and France was becoming established as a mainstream, rather than partisan and avantgarde, area of representation; a period, therefore, in which we can expect to find increasing numbers of women participating in the production of imperial culture. The thesis does not adhere to any neat historical or thematic division and its scope is deliberately allusive and indicative rather than exhaustive or exclusive. Because of the underdeveloped state of its fields, the twin foci of the thesis are intended to be indicative of methodological procedures that could be used elsewhere, to reference other women's involvement in imperial culture (and to gesture forwards, for example, to women's increased involvement in visual Orientalism in the 1880s and 1890s). Thus, readers who hope to find the final word on George Eliot or the complete dossier on Henriette Browne, will be disappointed. What I have tried to do is, through a detailed and attentive reading of selected works, to use them as a double focus for a series of investigations into women's participation in imperial culture.

Accordingly, chapter one sets out my critical and methodological framework, covering Said's original thesis and the critical and feminist developments that ensued. As

⁹See Chaudhuri and Strobel 'Introduction', to Chaudhuri and Strobel (eds) and Judith Newton, 'History as Usual?: Feminism and the "New Historicism"', in Cultural Critique, no.9, Spring 1988.

well as focusing on gender this also involves a short digression on Said's use of Foucault's paradigms of power and knowledge, and a substantially longer one on feminist and postcolonial responses to Foucault's and Barthes' axiom of the death of the author. The ways in which I shall be separating out authors/artists from the social beings who are writers/painters will be outlined, though more specific information on the aetiology of the authorial identities 'George Eliot' and 'Henriette Browne' will be discussed in the chapters devoted to them. The ways in which I shall be using nineteenth-century criticism and the development of, and market for, the periodic press are also outlined. The approach indicated in the chapter will be demonstrated by a reading of the Orientalist gaze that Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snowe directs at a picture of Cleopatra in Villette (1852).

Chapter two is also introductory in form attending to the possibilities of and constraints on women's professional cultural production. The ideology of separate spheres and changing attitudes to women and work in industrial capitalism will be examined in relation to women's opportunities to create and circulate art and literature. This includes an overview of developments in women's art education and opportunities to write for publication as well as an exploration of the possible positions from which women could assume, or be ascribed, a public identity as cultural producers. Whilst our period marks a general increase in the opportunities available to women artists (in training, exhibition, employment, range of subjects and styles considered suitable and other reputation-enhancing factors), it has been persuasively argued that the professional scope of women writers (who had previously led the field in novel-writing) declined in inverse proportion to the rise of the novel as a high

cultural form.¹⁰ Thus, this chapter will set the scene for the subsequent exploration of the differing ways in which Browne and George Eliot positioned themselves, and were positioned, in their respective fields. The example of other women artists and writers in Britain and France will be used to explore how the individual routes followed by Browne and George Eliot were regarded by their peers and the significance of the particular authorial identities ascribed to them.

Chapters three and four focus on Henriette Browne. Chapter three introduces Browne's early oeuvre of portraiture, domestic narrative and religious genre pictures and links their reception to the construction of her emerging authorial profile as feminine, respectable and genteel. The critical reception of her early images of the French religious, notably the Sisters of Charity in 1859 (plate 1), will be linked to British and French debates about female orders and, more widely, to the iconography of sequestered women. It will be argued that the nexus of concerns about sexuality, power and difference that circulate in discussions of her convent scenes, adumbrates the cluster of discourses in which her subsequent harem paintings were to signify. This chapter is particularly concerned with tracing the ways in which critical categories are constructed through the interaction of the series of relational terms outlined in the introduction; in particular with how Browne is simultaneously produced as a different sort of woman artist in France and Britain. The significance of her nationality and her gender within the domestic divides of European art criticism will be

¹⁰ See Gaye Tuchman with Nina E. Fortin, Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers and Social Change, London, 1989.

examined in detail in order to see how this affects the ways in which the subsequent Orientalist paintings were read. Thus the chapter concludes with an analysis of two profiles of Browne that, published during the break in her oeuvre, solidified her reputation in Britain.

Chapter four deals with Browne's Orientalist paintings; it is the longest chapter in the thesis and is broken up into five parts. Part one introduces the main themes and players of Orientalist art in Britain and France and assesses developments in the field, and the related growth of genre painting, in relation to theories of national schools of art and the gendering of the Orientalist gaze. This section also introduces my new findings on women Orientalist artists and relates their and Browne's work to the increased travel opportunities for women brought about by imperial expansion. The second section traces the French and British responses to Browne's initial harem pictures (plates 15 and 16) and analyses how the tendency to regard them as the accurate representation of a female visual privilege is alternately upheld and contested by reference to other women's accounts (written and visual) of the Orient. Section three, therefore, examines Browne's image of the harem in relation to written accounts of harem life by Occidental and Oriental women, with particular reference to the alternative articulation of the harem as a domestic space, analogous to the European domestic, that they shared. It explores how the gendered positionality occupied by Browne as a white Western woman affected her access to the paradigmatically male classificatory gaze described by Said. Section four, therefore, involves a reconsideration of twentieth-century critical theories of the female gaze. Section five widens the discussion in relation to Browne's later Orientalist oeuvre and focuses particularly on the deployment of discourses of anthropology in the reception of her ethnographic types (plates 40, 51, and 52); on the

discourses of sexuality brought out by her representation of Egyptian dancers (plate 36); and on her participation in the sub-genre of paintings of Oriental children (plates 39, 41, 42, 49, 50). Finally, the chapter discusses the lesbian subtext of Orientalism and how the image of Browne as a genteel, lady artist was used both to applaud and defuse the challenge that her work presented to male Orientalists.

In chapter five I move into a consideration of how my conclusions about the female Orientalist gaze reached in the study of Browne, can re-frame the analysis of George Eliot's representation of racial difference in Daniel Deronda. Contemporary Gentile responses are read in relation to Freud's concept of the uncanny and the projection activities associated with anti-Semitism to argue that the novel, by simultaneously constructing the Jews as the text's structural Orientalized other and as a role model for English society, produces a difficulty for Gentile readers that militates against the success of Eliot's avowed project of challenging anti-Semitism. The chapter will also argue that Eliot's partial identification with the ethnic subject matter of her novels relies on the construction of a series of differences between Jews to produce an acceptably familiar other (the 'good', learned Jew) on which such identifications depend. I will also address contemporary Jewish responses to the novel in order to assess the book's role in debates over diasporic identities in an era of emerging political Zionism.

The conclusion evaluates the thesis' contribution to its related fields of study with particular attention to current theories of alterity and representation. It will argue that an awareness of women's varied involvement in the cultures of imperialism repositions Orientalism as diverse field of activity and representation: a flexible

and heterogeneous discourse that functioned through contradiction rather than despite it, in which women's cultural activities were coded as one among a number of competing discourses.

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Assistance in tracking down work by Browne and other women

Orientalists has been generously forthcoming from Phillips, London, and from Joanna Ling in the European Paintings Department, Sotheby's, London; as well as Sotheby's, New York; the Tate Gallery; the Mathaf Gallery, London; Penny Thompson at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth; the Wallace Collection, London; and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. I am also indebted to Kathy Gordon, at the Courtauld Institute, for sharing with me her information on the whereabouts of Browne's work. Responses to Browne's work and tips about reproductions and reviews have been generously forthcoming from Charles Newton, Briony Llewelyn, Paul Greenhalgh, Tom Gretton, John House and Mary Douglas.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Sections of this thesis have been presented as papers at the graduate programmes of Middlesex University and Birkbeck College, University of London; the Association of Art Historians Conference, 1991; and the conference Woman, Image, Text at Sheffield Hallam University, 1993. I have benefited enormously from the ensuing discussions on all these occasions and would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed. Sections of chapter four appeared in Third Text, Spring 1993.

CHAPTER ONE

RACE - FEMININITY - REPRESENTATION

This thesis examines the work of Henriette Browne and George Eliot in order to trace how their gendered agency as cultural producers contributed to and drew from the imperial project. I am particularly concerned with the ways in which their images and texts created or re-conceptualized the spaces in which could be articulated a series of imperial identities for both artists and writers and their readers. I shall argue not only that discourses of gender (by which were produced identities as masculine or feminine) were racialized and that discourses of race (by which were produced raced and national identities) were gendered, but that the very premise on which culture was produced and interpreted in nineteenth-century France and Britain was based on the construction and exclusion of a raced and, in this instance, Orientalized other.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of unprecedented colonial expansion (involving the direct conquest and domination of other countries) and increasingly imperialist foreign policy (dedicated to the extension of European influence over the globe, but without necessarily direct administrative or military intervention) in which Britain and France were established world leaders. Although the age of high imperialism is usually associated with the 'scramble for Africa' of the 1870s and 1880s, Britain and France were already by the early nineteenth century expanding their influence in those parts of the globe that were to become the imperial

theatre of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹ This means that unlike the late nineteenth-century view of imperialism, which tended to paint imperial ideology as a phenomenon arising late in the century (notably in the 1860s and 1870s when it became clear that trade interests would necessitate political control of colonized lands), we can see pervasive structures of imperial ideology from early and throughout the nineteenth century.² The mid-nineteenth century saw a change in the nature of imperial relations as the style of the earlier mercantile period, in which a degree of acculturation by European officials and traders was encouraged, gave way to the increased political and social intervention alongside an emphasis on European separation from 'native' populations, whose Eurocentric legacy we see today. Although imperial references and attitudes were present in European art and literature from the sixteenth century onwards, it is in our period - with the expansion of imperial influence and the diversification of imperial power relations into every element of daily life, for both the colonizers and the colonized - that culture came to play an increasing part in the processes by which European values and interests

¹ See, V.G. Kiernan, The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes Towards the Outside World in the Imperial Age, London, 1969, Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism, New York, 1993, C.C. Eldridge, Victorian Imperialism, London, 1978, P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914, London, 1993.

² Late nineteenth-century histories tend to depict British imperialism in three distinct phases: the 'mercantile' period up to the 1830s, the 'anti-imperialist' phase into the early 1870s, and the 'new imperial' from 1870 onwards. See Eldridge.

were extended to the colonized world.³ As Edward Said explains, culture was

the vital, informing, and invigorating counterpart to the economic and political machinery that... stands at the centre of imperialism.⁴

It is not so much that 'imperial culture' developed to promote imperialism, but that, as a pervasive economic, social, political and cultural formation, the imperial 'mind-set' was a structural component of how people thought, behaved and created. As Benedict Anderson has persuasively argued in his analysis of the development of vernacular print culture, visual and literary culture played a crucial role in the construction of the 'imagined' national communities in Europe that underpinned

³On the early and developing presence of ideologies of racial difference and imperialism in European art and literature see; Brian Street, The Savage in Literature: The Representation of 'Primitive' Society in English Fiction, 1858-1920, London, 1975,
John Sweetman, The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920, Cambridge, 1988,
Frances Mannsaker, 'Early Attitudes to Empire', in B. Moore-Gilbert (ed), Literature and Imperialism, London, 1983,
David Dabydeen (ed), The Black Presence in English Literature, Manchester, 1985,
Ania Loomba, Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama, Manchester, 1989.

⁴Edward W. Said 'Yeats and Decolonization', in Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson and Edward W. Said, Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature, Minneapolis, 1990, p.72.

the imperial ideologies and administrations of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵ Said is clear that, whilst not attaching blame to the particular author or artist, culture in the age marked by imperialism and postcolonialism generally served to normalize imperial power relations.⁶ Although colonialism and imperialism had their opponents (for reasons ranging from the moral to the economic) the question of empire had an impact on all levels of British and French domestic life, with imperialist values frequently structuring even the terms of those who opposed it.⁷ Just as the world-wide recession of the early 1990s permeates discussions about everything from education to fashion without any of those discussions necessarily being 'about' economics, imperialism in the nineteenth century was discussed, debated and contested as an issue of the day, present in every-day activities and diverse forms of cultural production - not just those that were 'obviously' imperialist. As Daniel Bivona argues, breaking down modal boundaries (between the political and the literary) can reveal a wider domain which has the structure of both a 'culture-wide "debate" on the value and cause of imperial expansion and a cultural

⁵ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, London, 1983.

⁶ See, for example, his analysis of Jane Austen in Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism, New York, 1993.

⁷ As Said argues, the opposition to specific imperialist or colonial measures was rarely accompanied by an ability to see subjected peoples as fully human or deserving or capable of self-government. See Said, 'Introduction', Culture and Imperialism, pp.xi-xxvii.

metanarrative or mythology which subsumes even many of the critics of empire'.⁸ Given the enormous impact of imperialism on Victorian life it is - or as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak advocates should be - impossible to consider any text (by man or woman) without taking imperialism into account.

It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. These two obvious 'facts' continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature. This itself attests to the continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms.⁹

These approaches mean, in relation to women's cultural activity, that rather than simply find the few arch-imperialist texts by women, we can analyse imperialism's structural role in all their creative output. I am going to look at visual and literary representations of the Orient and the Orientalized other; a popular area of imagery that encapsulates the attitudes of Europe not just to its colonies but to the whole question of racial

⁸ Daniel Bivona, Desire and Contradiction: Imperial Visions and Domestic Debates in Victorian Literature, Manchester, 1990, p.vii.

⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in Critical Inquiry 12, Autumn 1985, p.243.

difference and which has, accordingly, been the focus of many twentieth-century critiques of imperialism. By attending to one set of representations that is obviously Orientalist (Browne's harem scenes) and another that whilst clearly of an imperial moment, is rarely discussed as Orientalist (the representation of Jews and the division of Palestine in Daniel Deronda)¹⁰ I will show the pervasiveness of women's take-up of colonial ideology and their various mediations of it.

By focusing on women cultural producers in a field of representation generally seen as male I shall demonstrate the pervasive effects of imperial ideologies on female subjects and their particular, gendered, interpellation into imperial discourse. This is not to prove that white European women were either bad racists or good revolutionaries (driven by proto-feminism to empathize with their 'sisters under the skin')¹¹ but to examine how as individuals growing up in an age of unprecedented imperial expansion they were affected by and involved in colonial ideology and imperial relations. If we take the categories of race, class and gender as neither opposing oppressions nor as metaphors for each other but as, as Cora Kaplan puts it, 'reciprocally constituting each other though a kind of narrative invocation, a set of

¹⁰One obvious exception is Said's discussion in 'Zionism From the Standpoint of its Victims', in Social Text, vol.1, 1978.

¹¹An approach adopted for example by Janice N. Brownfoot in 'Sisters Under the Skin: Imperialism and the Emancipation of Women in Malaya, c.1889-1941', in J. A. Mangan (ed), Making Imperial Identities: Socialization and British Imperialism, Manchester, 1990.

associative terms in a chain of meaning'¹², we can transform our understanding of each term by analysing its articulation with and through another. In other words, we never only experience ourselves as female/male but also and already as Black/white - even if the whiteness of a white subject is so normative that it is often experienced as a non-event unless activated by comparison with a Black subject.¹³ Thus we can explore how discourses of femininity constrained women's access to colonial subjectivities and cultures even whilst that very limitation, couched and understood in terms of gender, was also animated by imperial ideology - the gender specificities that accrued to women qua women were always built on their difference as white women.

Applying a perspective of race, class and gender to historical inquiry should effectively transform interpretations based on race and class or class and gender.¹⁴

I shall argue that, in a period marked by heightened imperial activity and increasing female participation in the cultural sphere, the interaction of the identificatory relational terms of race and gender could produce

¹² Cora Kaplan, 'Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism', in Kaplan, Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism, London, 1986, p.149.

¹³ See Adrienne Rich on the 'thoughtlessly white' nature of white experience. Adrienne Rich, 'Towards a Politics of Location', in Rich, Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985, London, 1987, p.219. See also Ware.

¹⁴ Ware, p.43.

positions from which to enunciate alternative representations of racial difference. Exploring the gender-specific discursive pressures on the production and reception of women's representation of the Orient will allow us to undercut the mastery that usually accrued to the Western viewer's position and use the tensions in women's colonial utterances to reveal the tensions in imperial subjectivity as a whole, thereby allowing a reconceptualization of the workings of power and knowledge in the domain of gender.

Said's Orientalism and his critics

In 1978 Edward Said's influential book Orientalism offered a new way to conceptualize the history of relations between what we might commonsensically call the West and the East, or the Occident and the Orient. Rather than accept the term as one that designates an area of neutral scholarly expertise (be it Oriental languages, literature or customs) Said argues that Orientalism was and is a discourse in which the West's knowledges about the Orient are inextricably bound up with its domination over it. Using Michel Foucault's proposition that all forms of knowledge are productive of power (constituting someone/thing as an object of knowledge is to assume power over it) Said assesses the implications of the Western construction of the Orient as an object of knowledge during the period of colonial expansion. Because he refuses to accept the innocence of knowledges about, and representations of, the Orient Said can consider how Orientalism's classification of the East as different and inferior legitimated Western intervention and rule.

For Said, therefore, representations of the Orient produced by Orientalism are never simple reflections of a true anterior reality, but composite images which came to

define the nature of the Orient and the Oriental as irredeemably different and always inferior to the West. Orientalism establishes a set of polarities in which the Orient is characterized as irrational, exotic, erotic, despotic and heathen, thereby securing the West in contrast as rational, familiar, moral, just and Christian. Not only do these Orientalist stereotypes 'misrepresent' the Orient, they also misrepresent the Occident - obscuring in their flattering vision of European superiority the tensions along the lines of gender, class and ethnicity that ruptured the domestic scene.¹⁵

Eventually, Orientalism as a body of knowledge about the East produced by and for the West came to bypass Oriental sources altogether in a self-referential process of legitimation that endlessly asserted the power of the West to know, speak for and regulate the Orient better than the Orient itself.

As a discipline representing institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism thus comes to exert a three-way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist and on the Western 'consumer' of Orientalism... the Orient ('out there' to the East) is corrected, even penalized, for lying outside the boundaries of European society, 'our' world; the Orient is thus 'Orientalized'; a process that not only marks the Orient as the province of the

¹⁵The mid-century in Britain saw the start of organized feminism, with the campaigns over the Married Women's Property Act and the Contagious Diseases Acts; unrest in Ireland; the legacy of Chartism and continued agitation for parliamentary reform. See E. J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, Harmondsworth, 1968.

Orientalist but also forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codification... as the true Orient. Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgement, not of the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist.¹⁶

One of the problems that critics identified in Orientalism was the troubling status that Said accords to the 'real' Orient: the Orient figures as both a construction, 'the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced... any such real thing as "the Orient"',¹⁷ and a real thing that can simultaneously be misrepresented by Orientalism and directly conquered by the West.¹⁸ As we shall see (notably in chapter four) the possibility of the discursive inscription of a 'real' Orient, or innocent experience of it, continues to haunt some scholars in this field, although, to be fair, Said's recent work has engaged more productively with this issue. Leaving aside for now the question of the 'real' Orient, Orientalism emerges as a discourse whose representation of the Orient is determined by its own agenda (largely conceptualized in terms of the dynamics and exigencies of colonial expansion) but whose success for the West

¹⁶ Said, Orientalism, p.67 (original emphasis).

¹⁷ Said, Orientalism, p.21 (original emphasis).

¹⁸ See Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg, 'The Challenge of Orientalism', in Economy and Society, vol.14, 1985, Robert Young, White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West, London, 1990, Ch.7, Edward W. Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered', in Race and Class, vol.27, no.2, 1985.

depended not simply on domination but on the exercise of hegemony and the development of consent - that is, that the Orientalized other be brought to recognize the validity of Orientalist knowledges and abide by their implementation (be it 'better' medical training, 'proper' clothes etc).¹⁹ That hegemony, which relies on the willingness of the governed to be governed, is conducive to a relational mode of power that can respond flexibly, not just repressively, to unrest or resistance, is of great significance for my analysis of Orientalism as discourse within which a variety of different (and differently gendered) positionalities could be produced.

In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on the flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.²⁰

The 'him' of this statement is telling: for Said, in Orientalism at least, Orientalism is a homogeneous discourse enunciated by a colonial subject that is unified, intentional and irredeemably male. Although his subsequent work, particularly Culture and Imperialism, refers more clearly to the impact of discourses of gender and references feminist scholarship, in Orientalism gender occurs only as a metaphor for the negative characterization of the Orientalized other as 'feminine' or in a single reference to a woman writer (Gertrude Bell,

¹⁹The obviously partial and potentially rebellious nature of 'native' conversions and capitulations to Western power will be discussed later.

²⁰Said, Orientalism, p.7 (original emphasis).

in which he pays no attention to the possible effects of her gendered position on her texts). Said never questions women's apparent absence as producers of Orientalist discourse or as agents within colonial power. This mirrors the traditional view that women were not involved in colonial expansion (itself a subplot of a masculinist view of history in which women, if they appear at all, are strictly marginal). In contrast, I intend to argue that women did play a part in the textual production that constituted Orientalism and, moreover, that gender, as a differentiating term, was integral to the structure of that discourse and individuals' experience of it.

To this end I am expanding, to relate to gender, Said's three-way relationship in which Orientalism exercises a force over the Orient, the Orientalist and the Western consumer of Orientalism: just as the Orient is constructed into a series of signs whose significance lies more in their relationship to the Occident's self-image than in any truth about the Orient, so has it been argued that the European paradigm of sexual difference constructs women as objects of knowledge (the 'other-within') which secure definitions of a superior masculinity rather than revealing any truth about women.²¹ The question which then arises is, how can a Western woman, who is feminized as the symbolic inferior other at home (a placement that is also class-specific), exercise the classificatory gaze over the Orient that Said describes? What access does a white European woman have to the enunciative position of a

²¹ See Lucy Bland, 'The Domain of the Sexual', in Screen Education, no.39, 1981, and Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: A Study of the Representation of Elizabeth Siddall', in Art History, June 1984.

White superiority that is implicitly male?

Gender

Whereas Said has tended to represent Orientalism as a discourse that is intentional and monolithic (there is, in Orientalism, no sense of the Orient's resistance or of internal splits - although this also is more fully explored in Culture and Imperialism), attention to women's role in imperial social and cultural relations combined with an awareness of external challenges to imperial power, can resituate Western imperialism as always only one half of a power relation - contested from without and undercut from within. In addition, we are helped by the Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge that Said uses, in which power is never willed, owned (by individuals, groups or states), unitary or monolithic, but discursive: discourse, as an ordering of knowledge, produces positionalities (enunciative modalities) into which individuals are interpellated and from which they may speak or act (as policemen, lawyers, mothers) but which are never the truth of themselves.²² Thus, power can be seen as always productive and never simply repressive: it does not just descend from above with a string of prohibitions but, rather, through the productive force of its apparatuses, actively inscribes human agents into particular (and contradictory) subject positions. The workings and effects of power in this sense can be seen in a web (cluster) of discursive apparatuses that no one owns

²² See Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge, (ed) Colin Gordon, Hemel Hempstead, 1980, ch.2.

or ultimately controls.²³

Since in the Foucauldian scenario, power is a dynamic that is always bounded by resistance, a strategy of resistance could be based on an 'analytics of power' that, by asking how we come to understand ourselves in the terms of the relevant discourse, can deconstruct the operation of the forces of power and allow new forms of resistance to emerge. These new forms, rather than, for example, simply pitting women against men as the 'owners' of patriarchal power, would deconstruct the ways in which our sense of ourselves as gendered beings contributes to our oppression and could generate new alliances and resistances that were not themselves predicated on any essentialist notions of

²³ Foucault never quite resolves the problem of how power, even if it is an 'open, more-or-less coordinated... cluster of relations', appears to serve the interests of particular groups. His description of how power comes to operate through a network of discursive apparatuses that move across and order the human body, is very persuasive, but as to what motivates/activates power he manages only to formulate the existence of 'strategic necessities which are not exactly interests...'. See 'Confessions of the Flesh', in Foucault Power/Knowledge.

On Said's use of Foucault's concept of power see, Dennis Porter, 'Orientalism and its Problems', in (ed) F. Barker et al, The Politics of Theory, Colchester, 1982.

On the possibilities of a Foucauldian analysis of power for feminist praxis (itself characterized by a diversity of localized fronts) see, Biddy Martin, 'Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault', in Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds), Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance, Boston, 1988, Lois McNay, Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self, Cambridge, 1992.

women's (or men's) nature. Although concern has been expressed that Foucault's theory of the micropolitics of power does not allow for a resistance that does not, despite itself, contribute to the hegemony that it seeks to undermine,²⁴ I still think that a discursive model is useful and politically enabling if we insist on what Lisa Lowe calls the 'multivalence' of representation and the 'heterotopical' nature of discourse.

[D]iscourses are heterogeneously and irregularly composed of statements and restatements, contestations and accommodation, generated by a plurality of writing positions at any given moment...In other words, the use of the notion of a dominant discourse is incomplete if not accompanied by a critique which explains why some positions are easily co-opted and integrated into apparently-dominant discourses, and why others are less likely to be appropriated.²⁵

Thus, an analysis of the conflicts inherent in a discursive formation marked by the terms of gender and race would allow for a glimpse of points of resistance within the fantasized unity of Orientalist discourse. The relational and fragmented nature of discourse does not mean that it cannot appear to be unified: indeed, it is the hegemonic ability of Orientalist discourse to retain

²⁴ See Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo 'Introduction' to Arac and Ritvo (eds), Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism, Philadelphia, 1991.

²⁵ Lisa Lowe, 'Nationalism and Exoticism: Nineteenth-Century Others in Flaubert's Salammbô and L'éducation sentimentale', in Arac and Ritvo, p.236.

the upper hand, even whilst it accepts and incorporates challenges, that accounts for its longevity.²⁶ The inherent contradictions of the enunciative positionalities occupied by women within Orientalism can, therefore, reveal some of the fictions of the discourse and of imperial power.

Women's gender specific representations have counter-hegemonic potential not because they were all automatically anti-racists opposed to colonialism, but because the assumption (then and now) that women made no contribution to, or had no active role in, imperial expansion, presents a problem for women who attempt to take up an authorial position within Orientalism and ignores the effects of Orientalism and imperialism on women's lives.

Attention to women writers and artists does not just add to, but actively reforms, Said's original version: it disallows a conceptualization of discourse as intentionalist and unified by highlighting the structural role of sexual as well as racial difference in the formation of colonial subject positions; insists on the impact of imperialism on the lives of women and men (colonizers and colonized); and, by so doing, disrupts the masculinism found in accounts and critiques of imperialism. On the last count, Jane Miller locates Said, like Fanon before him, as part of a trajectory of criticism that ignores women as participants in imperial

²⁶On the political implications of the concept of indigenous resistance for a late twentieth-century analysis of postcolonial power relations, see, Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, 'What is Post(-)colonialism?', in Textual Practice, vol.5, no.3, Winter 1991.

power relations and as readers of Orientalist representations.

Said [in Orientalism] sets out with care and delicacy the parallels and analogies developed in this field between colonial relations and sexual relations, and he shows how illuminating of the reality of the imperial adventure those parallels have been for both West and East. What he does not confront are the sexual meanings on which those illuminations depend. It is possible to feel that within his analysis it is with the distortions of male sexuality [identity and sovereignty] produced by the language of Orientalism that he is chiefly concerned... [something] [t]hat has often involved the theft of their women... The question remains: why does such an analysis not entail a concern for women's loss of political and economic status, in itself? [Women's history] does not become part of the history which is being rewritten.

In accepting the power and usefulness of an analysis like Said's there is an essential proviso... to be made. If women are ambiguously present within the discourses of Orientalism, they are just as ambiguously present within the discourses developed to expose and oppose Orientalism. Their presence in both is as forms of coinage, exchange value offered or stolen or forbidden, tokens of men's power and wealth or lack of them. The sexual use and productiveness of women are allowed to seem equivalent to their actual presence and their consciousness. They are, finally, 'Orientalized' with Said's terms into the perceptions and the language which express, but also elaborate on, the uses men

have for women within exploitative societies.²⁷

In order to avoid an account that marginalizes women as agents and readers (does 'Said assume women are amongst the readers of [his] work?')²⁸ we must include women as agents in Orientalism without losing the complexities of their relationship to domestic discourses on both sides of the Orientalist divide. Rani Kabbani, for example, highlights the many and subtle ways with which the sexually dominated Oriental woman could resist her Western oppressor, but fails to see Western women as subjects similarly produced through the energies of imperialism. Arguing that colonialism is a discourse structured by patriarchal power relations she points to the existence of 'notable' Victorian women travel writers only to claim that they were 'token travellers only, who were forced by various pressures to articulate the values of patriarchy'.²⁹ Kabbani's desire to produce women as pure agents in the face of colonial power relations, leads to the ludicrous supposition that if women were unwilling colonialists, men must be not only self-conscious oppressors but intentionalist authors choosing (where women were 'forced') to misrepresent the other.³⁰ In a book with more than one version of power and authorship (intentional and discursive) some men are similarly

²⁷ Jane Miller, Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture, London, 1990. pp.118-22.

²⁸ Jane Miller, p.121.

²⁹ Rani Kabbani, Europe's Myths of Orient, London, 1986, p.7.

³⁰ See, similarly, my discussion of Melman's 'purifying' of Muslim women writers in chapter four.

exculpated from blame: unlike other artists who exploited the Orient, Fromentin, Matisse and Renoir for example were simply 'exhilarated by the Orient and were therefore considerably enriched as artists by it'.³¹ That this enrichment might itself be an imperial spoil is ignored in an attempt to preserve the favoured few (and a strange few too, surely, given Renoir's arguably pornographic representations of Orientalized women?) as pure and intentional artists.

Sara Mills, in an exemplary analysis of women's travel writing, suggests that one of the reasons why their work is ignored by critics is that the fluctuating and partial allegiance to colonialism produced by women's problematic access to the superiority of a colonial position makes their work difficult to classify. Whilst attention to the gendered axis of colonial discourse may deconstruct Said's monolithic analysis by allowing for counter-hegemonic voices, it is clear that many women authors expended as much energy as their peers on creating the powerful narrative voice afforded by British colonialism. After all, nineteenth-century women who transgressed the codes of femininity to publish or exhibit art were to some extent aspiring for recognition in the terms of their culture. The contradictions of their position mean that their representations are likely simultaneously to confirm and transgress social and textual codes. For example, whilst travelling broke codes of European femininity many women travel writers reinforced colonialist codes of white superiority and emphasized their adherence to feminine propriety of dress and decorum. The unconventionality of their occupation in terms of gender is propped up by or relies on the ideology of colonialism and white

³¹Kabbani, p.12.

superiority in the very conceptualization of the East as a realm suitable for adventuring. A disinvestment in one set of values is counterbalanced by an over-investment in another.

Although women writers often expressed sympathy for 'native' women or voiced criticisms of colonial administration it would, as Mills points out, be wrong to take this as a displaced feminist anger.³² Aside from the personal conservatism of many women travellers, the proto-feminist concern for 'native' women was itself frequently structured by the same assumptions of white superiority and civilization (Indian women are oppressed by their backward menfolk and must be liberated by their more

³²Mills, pp.91-2

advanced white sisters) that drove imperial policy.³³

The Author

Discourse theory is, as James Clifford remarks, 'unfair'

³³For a good overview of feminist responses to and uses of colonial theory see Jane Haggis, 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism', in Women's Studies International Forum, vol.13, nos.1/2, 1990.

On the mixed motives of British feminists in relation to India see Annette M. Burton. In contrast, Janice Brownfoot practically evacuates imperial relations to represent British women as the agents of Malay women's emancipation. Nancy Paxton usefully stresses the pleasures that imperial power offered to Western women, but marginalizes the contradictions of their position:

Annette M. Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and The Indian Woman, 1865-1915', in Women's Studies International Forum, vol.13, no.4, 1990,

Janice N. Brownfoot, 'Sisters Under the Skin: Imperialism and the Emancipation of Women in Malaya, c.1891-1941', in (ed) J. A. Mangan, Making Imperial Identities: Socialisation and British Imperialism, Manchester, 1990,

Nancy L. Paxton, 'Feminism Under the Raj: Complicity and Resistance in the Writings of Flora Annie Steel and Annie Besant', in Women's Studies International Forum, vol.13, no.4, 1990.

See also Susan L. Blake, 'A Woman's Text: What Difference does Gender Make?', in Women's Studies International Forum, vol.13, no.4, 1990. On the colonialist legacy in feminist analyses of third World women see Aihwa Ong, 'Colonialism and Modernity: Feminist Re-presentations of Women in Non-Western Societies', in Inscriptions, vol.3, no.4, 1988.

to authors: it does not allow for their existence in the traditional humanist sense of the author as the origin and owner of the text's meaning.³⁴ In contrast to Foucault, who sees the author not as a real person but as function of discourse, a 'means of classification' that allows us to group together those texts as the product of one author (for example Shakespeare) and not another, Said retains a belief in 'the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts that constitutes a discursive formation like Orientalism'.³⁵ For Foucault, the impossibility of the author is part and parcel of the always heterogeneous nature of discourse in which individuals may occupy multiple and contradictory positions, whereas Said's defence of the individual author affirms his conceptualization of the essentially unified nature of imperial subjectivity and colonial discourse.

When authorship and agency are seen as the concepts produced by power the political and critical implications of the anti-humanist critique of the unified sovereign subject become clear. In 'The Death of the Author' Roland Barthes counters the traditional humanist reverence for the author with the assertion that the term author does not designate a 'real' person but an entity created by readers and critics. This author is a modern figure (replacing previous modes of cultural generation that did not require a single point of origin and ownership) whose emergence is linked to the development of the modern culture industry and the capitalist valorization of the individual. Barthes replaces the primacy of the author's

³⁴ James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art, Harvard, 1988, p.269

³⁵ Said, Orientalism, p.23

intent (as interpreted by critics) with the assertion that meaning is generated between the reader and the text. He transforms the activity of reading from one of decipherment (interpretation of the hidden truth) to one of disentanglement (untangling the web of structures that form the text without assigning a 'secret' or 'ultimate' meaning). Where the former closes the text by finding (creating) its one true meaning, the latter leaves it open by revealing its components but not ruling out other possible tracings.³⁶ The author who precedes the text, is replaced with the 'scriptor', an entity that is

born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate: there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now.³⁷

For feminists, such theories are as problematic as the critiques of imperialism we discussed earlier. Whereas the attack on the foundations of a patriarchal literary and subjective order would seem to be of benefit to feminists, its gender blindness is a problem: although the loss of the sovereign subject that accompanied the death of the author was not such a blow to women who had never collectively 'felt burdened by too much Self, Ego, Cogito,

³⁶Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in Barthes, Image Music Text, London, 1977, p.147.

³⁷Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p.145 (original emphasis).

etc'³⁸ in the first place, to be told that the author was dead (just as courses in women's studies and women's literature were getting off the ground) threatened to close off the possibility of a narrative authority to which women had never really acceded. What is more, as Nancy K. Miller has observed, Barthes' insistence on the atemporality of the reader ('the reader is without history, biography, psychology'³⁹) might well deny women not only the possibility of being authors but also of being (women) readers.⁴⁰

In response to a deconstructive position that takes no referent outside the text Nancy Miller argues for a pragmatic reinscription of the specificity of author and reader.⁴¹ For her, signature matters - it makes a difference if a novel is signed by a woman or a man. A

³⁸ Nancy K. Miller, 'Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing, and the Reader', in (ed) Teresa de Lauretis, Feminist Studies/Critical Studies, Basingstoke, 1986, p.106.

³⁹ Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p148.

⁴⁰ Miller, 'Changing', pp.104-5.

⁴¹ Miller's considerations of this issue over the past fifteen years have occurred in a mainly American academic feminist context (itself in the context of French studies) and indicate the polarities and affinities between two main camps of American academic feminism, characterized as 'pragmatic' or essentialist and deconstructionist, the latter generally represented by Paggy Kamuf. See Kamuf and Miller, 'Parisian Letters: Between Feminism and Deconstruction', in (eds) Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller, Conflicts in Feminism, London, 1990.

'methodologically correct' position, in which 'woman' does not exist except as a product of discourse and the feminine is a mode of writing available to subjects of either gender, has no place to acknowledge the real oppression of real women (however so defined). In contrast to Peggy Kamuf's refusal to see the definition of women's literature limited to one in which 'women's writing is writing signed by women'⁴² Miller illustrates the significance of signature by pointing to women's use of a male pseudonym as a 'desire to be veiled that unveils the anxiety of a genderized and sexualized body'.⁴³ Only female subjects are able to write not only in the 'feminine' (discursive mode) but, as Catherine Stimpson phrases it, 'of, for, to and from the "female"'.⁴⁴

⁴² Peggy Kamuf, 'Writing Like a Woman', quoted in Nancy K. Miller, 'The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and her Fictions', in Hirsch and Fox Keller, p.115.

⁴³ The male use of a female pseudonym, such as the debate over the authorship of the Story of O and the Letters of the Portugese Nun, reveals, 'a male (at least masculine) desire to paper over an anxiety about destination and reception: a sense of powerlessness about writing in a new genre addressed to an unknown "destinataire"'. Nancy Miller, 'The Text's Heroine', p.116.

⁴⁴ Catharine Stimpson, 'Ad/d Feminam: Woman, Literature and Society', in Edward W. Said (ed), Selected Papers From the English Institute, Baltimore, 1978, quoted in Miller, 'The Text's Heroine', p.116.

In a study where both my subjects use pseudonyms (one masculine, one feminine) the class and gender implications of this subterfuge cannot be avoided and will be discussed in later chapters.

The liberation of meaning from author to reader offered by Barthes does not have to exclude the social. Whilst the reader as a positionality in relation to, or even formed by, each text may be a neutral space, the agents who occupy it bring with them a subjectivity (there must be a subject of sorts to perform the reading) that is formed in and through its experience of the social - a realm demarcated by differences of race, class and gender. If meaning lies in reading rather than in the text then any text has a multiplicity of possible meanings that will be produced by each individual reader according to the subjective baggage they bring to the site of reading.⁴⁵ This is particularly important for a study of culture and imperialism, for it is not only, as Anderson argues, that the development of nationalism is indelibly linked to the cultural articulation of the imagined national community, but also, as John Tomlinson suggests, that it is in and through the processes of reading by which they are formed: imagined national communities are also interpretative communities.⁴⁶ Thus, imperial meanings are not simply inherent in texts, but are produced through the various and mediated mechanism of reading: this also means, of course, that oppositional readings may be performed on the same 'imperialist' texts by a different community of

⁴⁵ See also Antony Easthope, Literary Into Cultural Studies, London, 1991.

⁴⁶ John Tomlinson, Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction, London, 1991.

readers.⁴⁷ Foucault's theory of the author as a function of discourse allows for the retention of both the social and the subject.

...an author's name is not simply an element of speech (as a subject, a complement, or an element that could be replaced by a pronoun or other parts of speech)... [it] characterizes a particular manner of existence of discourse. Discourse that possesses an author's name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten; neither is it accorded the momentary attention give to ordinary fleeting words. Rather, its status and its manner of reception are regulated by the culture in which it circulates...

But the subject should not be entirely abandoned. It should be reconsidered, not to restore the theme of an originating subject, but to seize its functions, its intervention in discourse, and its system of dependencies... Rather, we should ask: under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what position does it occupy what functions does it exhibit; and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse? In short, the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex and variable function of

⁴⁷ See Tomlinson and James Clifford who, for example, discusses how nineteenth century Native American objects are radically repositioned from their place within Eurocentric art and ethnographic signifying systems when read as 'newly traditionally, meaningful' by a twentieth century Native American viewer. Clifford, pp.246-7.

discourse.⁴⁸

Thus the form and effectivity of the author-function is reliant on the cultural, and thus necessarily social, values of the era in which it emerges and those in which it is subsequently evaluated. We can therefore locate women's cultural production within the discursively produced conditions of possibility in which they could assume the position of a writing/painting subject. This means giving attention to the restrictions on and conditions of women's access to cultural production (as I shall detail in chapter two) and pursuing the role of gender in the construction of the very subjectivity that the author or artist is thought to possess. As Robert Young makes clear, it should never be possible to empty the attack on the sovereign subject of its social implications since the foundation of that very form of subjectivity, in all its innocent, transcendent universalism, is based on the construction and exclusion of an inferior other.

As Barthes' analyses indicate, the French critique of humanism was conducted from the first as a part of a political critique of colonialism... The anti-humanists charged that the category of the human, however exalted in its conception, was too often invoked only in order to put the male before the female, or to classify other 'races' as sub-human, and therefore not subject to the ethical

⁴⁸Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author', in Screen, vol.20, no.1, Spring 1979, pp.19-28.

prescriptions applicable to 'humanity' at large.⁴⁹

In this instance, the deconstruction of the sovereign Western subject does not mean simply replacing a unified white male Western subject with a unified white female Western subject,⁵⁰ but using all the contradictory positions inherent in those terms to 'disentangle' the

⁴⁹Young, p.123.

Whilst Nancy Miller warns that instead of liberating the previously marginalized others of modernism, the end of humanist definitions of subjectivity may simply be a way to avoid reconceptualizing subjectivity in all its political implications (a critical ideology that 'celebrates or longs for a mode beyond difference') others, like Kobena Mercer, see it as possibly empowering alternative modes of subjectivity that were disenfranchised in the modernist order.

Nancy Miller, 'Changing', p.115,

Kobena Mercer, 'Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics', in Jonathon Rutherford (ed) Identity: Community, Culture, Difference, London, 1990.

See also Tania Modleski, 'Feminism and the Power of Interpretation: Some Critical Readings', in de Lauretis, 1986, and, on the political implications of the end of the grand narratives and related criticisms of Orientalism see, Edward W. Said, 'Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors', in Critical Inquiry, Winter 1989.

⁵⁰On the critical and political imperatives to utilize critical theory as part of a political agenda see, Reina Lewis, 'The Death of the Author and the Resurrection of the Dyke', in Sally Munt (ed), New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings, Hemel Hempstead, 1992, Richard Dyer, 'Believing in Fairies: the Author and the Homosexual', in (ed) Diana Fuss, Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay theories, London, 1991.

ways in which representations of an Orientalized other simultaneously undercut and contribute to imperialist ideas and policies. This involves attending to the processes of 'othering' in texts that are not obviously racist or imperialist in any simple sense of the term because as texts - received within the conventions of author-centred criticism and produced in the heyday of nineteenth-century imperialism - they cannot be considered outside of the imperialist rationale of the humanist project. Anita Levy, in her argument for an interdisciplinary focus in the study of alterity (the construction of the other), links the emergent anthropological and sociological trope of the 'other woman' as the hidden negative ('all that is "'other" than normal, desirable and English') against which English domestic fiction is structured. She cites a process by which, as this monolithic figure of the other woman 'came to comprise myriad social and sexual practices, the other woman displaced other women'.⁵¹ The form of this alterity is, as Rosemary Hennesy and Rajeswari Mohan make clear, 'continually re-articulated in terms dictated by its economic and political conditions of emergence'.⁵² Thus the textual status of the other woman in women's cultural production cannot be separated from the economic and social conditions necessary for the emergence of Western women's cultural agency; conditions which relied, among other things, on the displacement onto the feminized colonial other of forms of gendered exploitation now unacceptable at home. One of the aims of this thesis,

⁵¹ Levy, p.5.

⁵² Rosemary Hennesy and Rajeswari Mohan, 'The Construction of Woman in Three Popular Texts of Empire: Towards a Critique of Materialist Feminism', in Textual Practice, vol.3, 1989, p.328.

then, is to trace the construction of the other woman (the feminine and feminized Oriental other) in women's texts in order to illuminate some of the gendered specificities that made up the variable condition of emergence of the forms of alterity characteristic of Orientalism. As Deborah Cherry has pointed out, neither women cultural producers nor women consumers were a homogeneous group, so we should expect to find variety in the positionings of femininity they assume and the forms of alterity they represent.⁵³ In this I would support Levy's demand that we attend to the structural role of the other woman in order to 're-materialize forms of middle-class power that have since vanished into the commonsense norms of self and identity' still paramount in the twentieth-century enactment of postcolonial alterity.⁵⁴ My aim is to elaborate the contribution women made to the negotiation and naturalization of those colonialist norms.

The female imperial subject

What we need is a working hypothesis of a female writing/painting subject: a theory of subjectivity and agency that acknowledges the contradictions, gaps and internal splits that structure the paradoxical but necessary notion of a collective identity as women that is not divorced from the raced, classed and gendered experience of the social but that can recognize the 'impermanence' of all those various social collective

⁵³ Cherry, Painting Women, pp.10-11 and p.115.

⁵⁴ Levy, p.5.

identities;⁵⁵ an approach that can accept the death of the author as an originating source without re-writing women off the cultural map by forgoing the importance of the historical producer.

Griselda Pollock re-inscribes the historical producer by arguing that the act of cultural production [painting] is 'in itself a site for the inscription of sexual [and presumably class and racial] difference'.⁵⁶ This thus brings into orbit the circumstances of a work's production and reception as constituents of its meaning and the identity/ies produced for its author: we cannot read a text without allowing for its productive role in the encoding of social difference. Likewise with literary representations, as we shall see in the in chapter four, the ways in which women can represent their experience of the harem is always mediated by the form and location of their writing.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See Denise Riley, 'Am I That Name?' Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History, Basingstoke, 1988.

⁵⁶ Pollock's argument that the socially determined spaces in which painting occurs also, to some extent, determine the spaces represented will be discussed in chapter four. Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity', in Pollock, Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art, London, 1987, p.82 (original emphasis, my insert).

⁵⁷ For example, Oriental women writing in the West are clearly writing in relation to what they assume are the specific values of their Western readers. In the case of travel writing, Mills uses Foucault's author-function to suggest how experience is 'channelled into and negotiates with pre-existent schemas which are discursive in nature'. Mills, p.39.

In relation to the individual authors I study, I shall be using the term author/artist to refer to the originating identity constructed for the texts, whilst the term writer/painter will refer to the individual historical subject who performs those creative activities. Whilst such historical agents demonstrate relatively constant components of subjectivity over long periods of time, subjectivity is nonetheless produced within discursively over-determined conditions. It is with this tension between a relatively stable individual identification and the always changing relations of discourse that this thesis is concerned. It is important therefore to keep in mind a sense of the authorial/artistic identity constructed for these female subjects as one that, from their first public exposure, always had a bearing on the interpretation and popularity of their work - and they knew it. So even whilst we argue for the separation of the author from the writer, it is important to acknowledge that the writer was aware of the effects of the author-function and how the author might return to the text. Barthes explains how this fiction of the author within the text is different to the paternal authority imagined to the author outside the text.

It is not that the Author may not 'come back' in the Text, in his text, but then he does so as a 'guest'. If he is a novelist he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters, figured in the carpet; no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological, his inscription is ludic. He becomes, as it were, a paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work; there is a reversion of the work on to the life (and no longer the contrary); it is the work of Proust, of Genet, which allows their lives to be read as a

As we shall see with Browne and George Eliot not only was their work inevitably read as a product of their experience but changes in their work led to reconceptualizations of the nature of that experience, or life. In the case of George Eliot we know that she was acutely aware of the interface between a writer's (known) life and her fictions. With Browne, we can only speculate on the basis of representations of her in the press. Both cases indicate not only the power of public/collective readings but how writers and artists were themselves constituted as readers.

As agents socialized in a age of everyday imperialism it would have been impossible for the subjects of this study to be unaware of, or uninfluenced by, imperial discourse - even if they couched their relationship to it as oppositional. That some of the key writers of the twentieth-century feminist literary canon, like Brontë and Eliot, couched their demands for female emancipation precisely through the Orientalizing of a structural other requires even more our willingness to include the conditions and discourses of imperial difference in our analysis of the work. Attention to the role of what Spivak calls the 'other woman' ('not merely who am I? but who is the other woman? How am I naming her? How does she name

⁵⁸ Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in Barthes, Image Music Text, London, 1977, p.161.

Note that whereas in this instance Barthes uses 'work' as an oppositional term to 'text' (in which work is to author as text is to scriptor/writer) I have used it elsewhere in the body of the thesis in its colloquial sense.

me?'⁵⁹) will open up the imperial dimensions of women's texts and allow us to locate them historically. Without this we will never be able to understand, or challenge, the structural role of racism in the history and praxis of feminism.

...what is at stake, for feminist individualism in the age of imperialism, is precisely the making of human beings, the constitution and 'interpellation' of the subject not only as individual but as 'individualist'. This stake is represented on two registers: childbearing and soul making. The first is domestic-society-through-sexual-reproduction cathected as 'companionate love'; the second is the imperialist project cathected as civil-society-through-social-mission. As the female individualist, not- quite/not-male, articulates herself in shifting relationship to what is at stake, the 'native female' as such (within discourse, as a signifier) is excluded from any share in this emerging norm.⁶⁰

Although Barthes' scriptor is a-social the instance of women's cultural production shows that even a model not reliant on the humanist concept of author cannot divorce the scriptor's activities from the social. Firstly, to perform the process of disentanglement that Barthes

⁵⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'French Feminisms in an International Frame', in Spivak, In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics, London, 1988, p.150.

⁶⁰ Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts', pp.244-5, (original emphasis). See also Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', in Feminist Review, no.30, Autumn 1988.

recommends requires an exploration of social forces that exceed the text in so far as we can detect them working structurally in the text. For example, the scriptor Charlotte Brontë created simultaneously with the text Jane Eyre, (as opposed, for example, to the author Currer Bell) cannot be understood without reference to the social experience of/exposure to colonial discourse that she (the social agent) must have had in order to (a) know that English citizens derived their wealth from plantation slavery in British West Indian colonies (the Eyres and the Rochesters) and (b) be able to represent the character Bertha Mason as mad and degenerate in a way that only makes sense within imperial discourses of race and heredity. Secondly, disentangling the possible meanings of a text requires attention to the way gender determines the social spaces in which the text can signify. That is, that the gender-specific ideologies that permeated cultural criticism of the period had substantial (though not unquestioned) impact on the types of representation women thought they could make and sell and on how they were judged. Female writing subjects, as female reading subjects, could not but be variously affected by those contemporary ideas about gender and creativity just as they were by those about nation, race, and empire.

Writers, readers, critics and subjects

Historically, the reign of the Author has also been that of the Critic.⁶¹

The second half of the nineteenth century was an era in which the author and his or her sidekick, the critic,

⁶¹Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p.147.

reigned supreme. The nineteenth century as a whole was a period of expanding access to culture (visual and literary) marked by a growth in the numbers and role of cultural critics: not only did the consumption of culture involve greater numbers than ever before, but their activities were guided by a vastly expanded periodic press. Each periodical, with its own political bent, was concerned to varying degrees with politics, economics, philosophy and culture (here interpreted in its widest sense to include music, poetry, literature, science) in an altogether more interactive and wide-ranging series of interests than we might imagine today. Although individual critics had their areas of expertise they were, in general, valued for their ability to give opinions on issues of the day within a broad political and cultural field.⁶² A huge number of journals and papers were

⁶² See J.D. Vann and R.T. Van Arsdel (eds), Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research, New York, vol.1, 1978, vol.2, 1989, John Gross, The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life Since 1800, London, 1969, Harold Orel, Victorian Literary Critics, London, 1984, R.G. Cox, 'The Reviews and Magazines', in (ed) Boris Ford, The Pelican Guide to English Literature: From Dickens to Hardy, vol.6, Harmondsworth, 1958, Christopher Kent, 'Victorian Periodicals and the Construction of Victorian Reality', in Vann and Van Arsdel, Vol.2, Walter E. Houghton, 'Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes', in J. Shattock and M. Wolff (eds), The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings, Leicester, 1982. For a guide to the French periodic press see, Claude Bellangerr, Histoire générale de la presse française, Paris, 1969.

published (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly) that, selling at a wide range of prices, were able to reach the specialist and general needs of the expanded reading public.⁶³ Indeed John Klancher argues for the formative role of the periodical press in the very conception of the reading public(s); literally constructing diverse individuals into a collectively identified audience through their reading of, and relationship to, a periodical.⁶⁴ As well as news and entertainment press reviews of cultural developments on all fronts were an inevitable accompaniment to cultural activities. One not only read the novels of Dickens in serial form, one also

⁶³On the readership of the periodical press see, Alvar Ellegard, 'The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain', in Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, vol.13, September 1971.

⁶⁴John P. Klancher, The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832, London, 1987.
On the class make-up of and differences between the reading public (literally those who could read) and the literary public (those who could afford to buy books and periodicals and who were assumed to be their main readers or addressees) see Darko Suvin, 'The Social Addressees of Victorian Fiction: A Preliminary Enquiry', in Literature and History, no.1, vol.8, Spring 1982,

read, and discussed, reviews of each instalment.⁶⁵
Likewise, attendance at the Salon or Royal Academy
occurred in the context of reading reviews in the general
and (growing) art press - how else was one to make sense

⁶⁵On the impact of serialization in terms of criticism, form, plot structure, reading habits (serialized novels were often read aloud to the family and so had to be more respectable than prose for private consumption), relationship to the other contents of the journal, economic implications for authors, see J. Don Vann, Victorian Novels in Serial, New York, 1985, Malcolm Andrews, 'A Note on Serialization', in Ian Gregor (ed), Reading the Victorian Novel: Detail into Form, London, 1980.

of the bewildering display of crowded pictures?⁶⁶ The widely read critical press contributed to the meanings ascribed to texts and the authorial identities constructed for their producers. Additionally, many reviewers or critics were themselves in the public eye as authors, artists, scientists or politicians (Disraeli, a politician who published novels, treatises and reviews is the obvious example here), further complicating the relationship

⁶⁶On the development of the art press, the role of the art critic (particularly in relation to private collections and public exhibitions) and the relationship of art criticism to general review criticism see:
Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, The Art of All Nations 1850-73: The Emerging Role of Exhibitions and Critics, Princeton, 1982,
Christopher Kent, 'Periodical Critics of Drama, Music and Art 1830-1914: A Preliminary List', in Victorian Periodicals Review, vol 13, nos.1-2, Spring and Summer, 1980, and 'More Critics of Drama, Music and Art', in Victorian Periodicals Review, vol.19, no.3, Fall 1986,
Helene Roberts, 'Exhibition and Review: the Periodical Press and the Victorian Art Exhibition System', in Shattock and Wolf,
Julie F. Codell, 'Marion Henry Spielmann and the Role of the Press in the Professionalization of Artists', in Victorian Periodicals Review, vol.22, no.1, Spring 1989,
Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot, The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines, London, 1976,
Joseph C. Sloane, French Painting Between the Past and the Present: Artists, Critics and Traditions from 1848-1870, Princeton, 1951,
Leslie A. Marchand, The Athenaeum: A Mirror of Victorian Culture, Chapel Hill, 1941,
Christopher Parsons and Martha Ward, A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Second Empire France, Cambridge, 1986.

between the read and the written, And of course, all these relations were subject to variables of gender, class, race and nation.

I am going to be using contemporary criticism as indicators of the cultural codes and contemporary meanings ascribed to my 'primary' texts. As such, reviews constitute part of the social reality of the texts, contributing to how they were read and, I will argue, to how they were produced. That is, the periodical press was constitutive of, rather than simply reflecting, Victorian opinion (on cultural, political and social issues).⁶⁷ This is not to say that criticism was monolithic - the meanings and values given to our texts were varied and at times hotly contested - but that as a widespread practice with an important social role (reading periodicals was part of daily family life) the ideas circulating in criticism influenced readers and therefore producers. Aside from (but bound up in) the restraints on women's training and access to cultural production, the role of the critic and the possibility of gaining (any) critical attention (which held true for all artists and writers) had a great impact

⁶⁷For an overview of methodological issues in the use of the periodical press, see, Lyn Pykett, 'Reading the Periodical Press: Text and Context', in Victorian Periodicals Review, Special Issue Theory, vol.22, no.3, Fall 1989.

on the type of work women could produce.⁶⁸ Therefore, for a study which is interdisciplinary in its objects and methods, the use of periodicals which were themselves always relational (for readers the distinctions between individual articles or issues were submerged under a general sense of the recognizable differences between titles) can help to focus my objects as representational practices situated at the edge of several discursive fields and contained by none, in which signification is a relational activity extending beyond the bounds of the single text. As Patricia Mainardi has demonstrated, in her study of French art criticism, critics with vastly different aesthetic and political positions used a shared critical framework and often the same terminology to discuss their very different interpretations of the same painting. She suggests, therefore, that in order to understand the 'broad dimensions of the issues which formed the field of critical discourse' we must attend to the areas of agreement - what all critics were united in believing to be the essential terms of the debate - in order to grasp the significance of their differences.⁶⁹ In

⁶⁸ Illustrating the importance of reception in the construction of meaning, Mills notes that the most striking difference between men's and women's work lay not in its style or execution, but in the way that it was circulated and judged. For example, whereas travel writing regularly involved tales of impossible adventure, when women wrote of undertaking dangerous journeys they were accused of lying (since physical strength and courage conflicted with Victorian codes of femininity) where their male counterparts were not challenged. Mills, p.30 and pp.108-23.

⁶⁹ Patricia Mainardi, Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867, London, 1987, p.68.

my study, this approach allows us to locate the response to Browne's work within widely held, but differently registered, assumptions about gender, art and the Orient; thus, the universal assumption that Browne did see the forbidden harem can be read as symptomatic of a shared field of critical discourse within which the specific responses of individual critics will be explored.

Criticism, then, in both art and literature hints at the meanings ascribed to our texts and indicates the field in which they signified. That is, in assessing the relationship of culture and imperialism we need to see not just the meaning 'in' the text but also those around it. Thus The Spanish Gypsy, which attempts a sympathetic portrait of gypsies, cannot be understood outside of the xenophobia it stirred up in its critics - feelings that are explicitly linked to contemporary identifications of class, gender and nationality. Using criticism as the sites from which were enunciated some of the possible meanings ascribed to the text can, therefore, help us position them in relation to the wider discursive field of which they all were a part.

Relationality

Although Said departs from Foucault on the question of the author, I think that a parallel can be drawn between the relationality of Foucault's author-function and the political implications of relationality in Said's Orientalism; imagine the gendered version of Said's dynamic below:

My principal methodological devices for studying authority here are what can be called strategic location, which is a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental

material he writes about, and strategic formation, which is a way of analysing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large... Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-a-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text - all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking on its behalf. None of this takes place in the abstract, however. Every writer on the Orient... assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient affiliates itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself. The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore constitutes an analysable formation - for example, that of philological studies, of anthologies of extracts from Oriental literature, of travel books, or Oriental fantasies - whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it strength and authority.⁷⁰

In the same way as all Oriental texts are positioned in relation to the Orientalist discourse that precedes them, so too are all women's texts positioned in relation to

⁷⁰ Said, Orientalism, p.20.

pre-existent codes of femininity, which they may simultaneously uphold and challenge. Thus Browne's paintings were not only always related to other Orientalist paintings (Said's strategic formation), they were also always related to the work of other women artists. Critics who disputed her version of the harem often used other women's accounts to disprove them - a necessary move in a discursive formation that invested Brown's alternative accounts of the harem with truth precisely because of her gender. Men were not allowed into the harem, so Browne's allegedly truthful eyewitness account could only be counteracted with another potential - and necessarily female - eyewitness.⁷¹

Browne positions herself (in the choice of subjects and styles) and is positioned (in the reception and circulation of her work) in relation to both Orientalism and gender. In chapters three and four I will consider how the respectable authorial persona constructed for Browne by the early paintings (in the traditionally feminine areas of portraiture, domestic narrative and religious genre) contributed to the success of her Orientalist subjects by maintaining an image of her as an author (classed and gendered) who could avoid being tainted with

⁷¹In my use of women's accounts of the harem as indicators of the possible accuracy of Brown's images, I am not setting them up as another/alternative realist truth, but as an alternative regime of representation. That these accounts were published in our period and that they were evidently known to her readers and critics, points to the existence of alternative or counter-hegemonic voices within Orientalist discourse. The effort expended on denouncing her version testifies to the energy that dominant accounts expend on keeping their position.

the immorality associated with the Orientalist (and particularly the harem) genre. This is not to say that these positionalities, whether strategically selected by the painter or produced by the critic, were the final determinant of meaning - that still lies in the activity of the individual reader - but that a sense of the agency of the painter/writer, coupled with attention to the meanings circulated about their texts, allows us to regard cultural production as a relational activity; that is, as an activity that is undertaken within a social field that is already suffused with meaning and which is in itself the site of the inscription of difference. As a relational activity determined by cultural norms the painter/writer is also implicated as a reader - an activity that for the painter, like any other reading subject, was mediated by the activities of the critic.

George Eliot is perhaps the perfect example of why the (female) writing subject can never be separated from the reading subject: she worked as a reviewer and journalist before and during the period in which she wrote fiction. Thus attention to her critical writings should show us not the hidden clues of a unified authorial intent - the review essay 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' as a rubric for what she intended to write herself⁷² - but signs of the internal splits of a female subject produced by the difficulty of trying to write a certain type of 'highbrow' prose without being dragged down to the level of the pot-boiler in the endless restriction of women's writing to a closed female field. The prescriptions George Eliot lays down about women's fiction therefore show us the processes by which she positions herself, and is herself positioned, as a reading and writing female subject.

⁷²See chapter two.

Women constituted as subjects through discourse were therefore always consciously and unconsciously negotiating a grid of previous knowledges and representations (about the nature of women, men, the Orient etc). We can find in their work traces of transgressive and affirmative attitudes to these fields of representation in an often bewildering display of contradiction and conformity. (As we shall see in chapter three, many women artists and writers emphasised their loyalty to the ideology of separate spheres in order to compensate for the potential transgressions of their creative activities.) Browne challenges certain Orientalist codes in her depiction of the harem, but retains an allegiance to notions of proper femininity in her work and self-presentation to the press:⁷³ George Eliot publishes novels which advocate a mode of self-abnegation for her female heroines but flouts propriety and conventional feminine behaviour in her personal life.

Women representing the Other

Sometimes the very terms of women's transgressions (as writers and readers) are derived from their position as Westerners in the Orientalist divide. For women writing subjects concerned with female emancipation, the Orient

⁷³ See chapter four for additional analysis of Browne's Orientalist subjects. Mills notes that women travel writers write in relation to a grid of previous representations. Again showing women's dual role as readers of Orientalist literature and art at the same time as they produce. Mills, pp.69-73.

often provided a valuable series of metaphors.⁷⁴ There is one such passage from Charlotte Brontë's Villette that has long intrigued me not least because this passage, and the novel as a whole, is often used by feminist critics to highlight the construction of gendered subjectivities and the inherent difficulties of being a female writing subject.⁷⁵ Villette is a novel suffused with Orientalist references and metaphors (Polly sat 'like an odalisque' on the sofa) and filled with reference to visual spectatorship. Jane Miller quotes the following passage in her section on Orientalism: Lucy Snowe is in an art gallery looking at a painting that has all the tropes of an Orientalist odalisque;

It represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life. I calculated that this lady, put into a scale of magnitude suitable for the reception of a commodity of bulk would infallibly turn from fourteen to sixteen stone. She was, indeed, extremely well fed: very much butcher's meat - to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids - must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, that wealth of muscle, that affluence of flesh. She lay half-reclined on a couch: why, it would be difficult to say; broad daylight blazed round her: she appeared in hearty health, strong enough to do the work of two

⁷⁴ See also my discussion of Joyce Zonana's work on 'feminist' Orientalism in chapter 4.

⁷⁵ See for example, Judith Newton, 'Villette', in Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (eds), Feminist Criticism and Social Change, London, 1985, and Mary Jacobus, 'The Buried Letter: Feminism and Romanticism in Villette', in Jacobus (ed) Women Writing and Writing about Women, London, 1979.

plain cooks; she could not plead a weak spine; she ought to have been standing or at least sitting bolt upright. She had no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa. She ought likewise to have worn decent garments; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case: out of abundance of material - seven-and-twenty yards, I should say, of drapery - she manages to make inefficient raiment. Then, for the wretched untidiness surrounding her, there could be no excuse. Pots and pans - perhaps I ought to say vases and goblets - were rolled here and there on the foreground; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them, and an absurd and disorderly mass of curtain upholstery smothered the couch and cumbered the floor. On referring to the catalogue, I found that this notable production bore name 'Cleopatra'.⁷⁶

Jane Miller argues that for Lucy to adopt the position of white superiority that so judges the Cleopatra requires the assumption of a masculine positionality.

Lucy Snowe scrutinises a man-made image of female voluptuousness and adopts a man's voice (could she have done otherwise?) as she wrestles with the problems it poses for her as a woman who writes.⁷⁷

For Jane Miller the Cleopatra represents a male fantasy of female sexuality (and male pleasure) that Lucy can only criticize by undertaking a 'male impersonation' and

⁷⁶ Charlotte Brontë, Villette, (1855), Harmondsworth, 1985, pp.275-6. All page references are to the Penguin edition and hereafter are given in brackets in the text.

⁷⁷ Jane Miller, p.109.

subsequent displacing onto the painting 'a life's constraints and a history of imperialism in which she is implicated'. Whilst I agree with Miller that the text projects onto the Cleopatra the negative aspects of an active female sexuality with which Lucy cannot be associated, I do not think that Lucy critiques the Cleopatra as a man. The dynamics of imperialism give Lucy the ability to criticize social norms not because she displaces them and her implications in them (onto the picture or a masculine alter ego), but because they provide a series of positional superiorities in which Lucy can claim for herself as a woman the authority to judge and represent that the codes of femininity and class normally deny her. The terms of Lucy's analysis are intrinsically female: evaluating the figure's stature in relation to the domestic labour (of shopping and cooking) that its maintenance would require; casting a housewifely eye over the jumble of accoutrements in the Oriental interior that to other (male) eyes might constitute the essential elements of an Orientalist fantasy of sexual fulfilment;⁷⁸ recasting the Oriental drapes in terms of the yardage required to make clothes; asserting the Protestant work ethic over the lassitude of Oriental sexuality. To Lucy, this is not a room of inviting sexual relaxation and pleasure but an untidied (i.e., waiting to be tidied) domestic space. This is a judgement encoded in the terms of a feminine positionality that is structurally dependent on, at the same time as it is productive of, a concept of femininity that is white and Western. What Jane Miller misses out from her analysis of Lucy's judgement is

⁷⁸ The disorder of the Oriental interior provides a metaphorical contrast to the tidiness and parsimony of the repressed English interior. See chapter four on the debate over the sparseness of Browne's harem interiors.

that the chapter sets it from the very beginning into a context of public viewing and contested meanings which mobilizes not just gender but the classed, raced, and nationed differences that structure the social. Before her long contemplation of the Cleopatra, Lucy's narrative voice gives us a derisive picture of the painting's status in Villette's municipal gallery.

...I found myself alone in a certain gallery, wherein one particular picture of pretentious size, set up in the best light, having a cordon of protection stretched before it, and a cushioned bench duly set in front for the accommodation of worshipping connoisseurs, who, having gazed themselves off their feet, might be fain to complete the business sitting: this picture, I say, seemed to consider itself the queen of the collection. [275]

The picture is put in context and given full description before its title is revealed. It is no coincidence that the subject is Cleopatra; Villette is novel concerned with the quest for an 'independent self-determining female subject[ivity]'⁷⁹ that like all the 'subject constituting'⁸⁰ proto-feminist projects of its era relies on the axiomatics of imperialism. Lucy Snowe's Bildungsroman is animated by the Orientalist construction of the Continental Roman Catholics as the inferior Orientalized other of Protestant England. Not only does Madame Beck maintain her despotic control over her charges (staff and students alike) by a regime of scopic surveillance, but Lucy explores different modes of

⁷⁹Kaplan, 'Pandora's Box'.

⁸⁰Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts', p.249.

feminine sexuality via their representation in visual culture. Despite her lowly position in the English domestic social order, once displaced onto foreign soil, Lucy, like all the impoverished younger sons who achieved rank and fortune in the colonies unimaginable at home, can assert a previously prohibited authority to judge and represent. The Roman Catholic characters are represented as essentially different and positionally inferior, characterized, as Said finds the Oriental to be, as

irrational, depraved (fallen) childlike, 'different'... [and living] in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence.⁸¹

Lucy's scopic surveillance of the Roman Catholics endlessly reiterates their difference, inferiority and threat: Catholicism is a formation of 'dreadful viciousness, sickening tyranny and black impiety'.

Romanism pervaded every arrangement... each mind was being reared in slavery; but to prevent reflection from dwelling on this fact, every pretext for physical recreation was seized... the CHURCH strove to bring up her children robust of body, feeble in soul, fat, ruddy, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning... [196]

Charlotte Brontë was not the only author to substitute European for colonial differences. As Fredric Jameson points out, in the period prior to World War One,

⁸¹ Said, Orientalism, p.40.

the relationship of domination between First and Third World was masked and displaced by an overriding (and perhaps ideological) consciousness of imperialism as being essentially a relationship between First World powers or the holders of Empire, and this consciousness tended to repress the more basic axis of otherness, and to raise issues of colonial reality only incidentally.⁸²

The tendency to mask relations of (colonial) exploitation with those of (European) rivalry was more pronounced in 'high' literature, and Jameson suggests that such substitutions be thought of as 'a strategy of representational containment, which scarcely alters the fundamental imperialist structure of colonial appropriation'.⁸³ In the case of Villette and our study, we can add that the tendency to displace imperial relations onto European differences gives the woman writer or artist the chance to avail herself of a colonial superiority that may well elude her in the colonial field itself but can be appropriated, by proxy, in the textual domain of an Orientalized Europe. In this light, read Protestant Lucy's response to the curatorial advice of M. Paul. He is shocked to find her alone in front of this painting;

'Did you come here unaccompanied?'

'No, monsieur. Dr Bretton brought me here.'

⁸² Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in Eagleton et al, p.48.

⁸³ Jameson p.50. In popular or 'lower' genres, like the adventure story, the 'more radical otherness of colonized non-Western peoples' was likely to be represented directly.

...'And he told you to look at that picture?'

'By no means: I found it for myself.'

M. Paul's hair was shorn close as raven down, or I think it would have bristled on his head. Beginning now to perceive his drift, I had a certain pleasure in keeping cool, and working him up.

'Astounding insular audacity!' cried the Professor.
'Singulières femmes que ces Anglaises!'

'What is the matter, monsieur?'

'Matter! How dare you, a young person, sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a garçon, and look at that picture?'

'It is a very ugly picture, but I cannot at all see why I should not look at it.'

'Bon Bon! Speak no more of it. But you ought not to be here alone.....asseyez-vous là - là!' Setting down a chair with emphasis in a particularly dull corner, before a series of most specially dreary 'cadres' [representing four stages in the 'vie d'une femme'].
[276-7]

In contrast to M. Paul's attempts to assert the fixity of gender roles (prohibiting Lucy from behaving like a boy, a garçon) the imperial ethos that gives Lucy leave to judge men's vision of female sexuality also lets her judge their judgements. She turns her attention to other people's readings of the Cleopatra.

A perfect crowd of spectators was by this gathered

round the Lioness, from whose vicinage I had been banished; nearly half this crown were ladies, but M Paul afterwards told me, these were 'des dames,' and it was quite proper for them to contemplate what no 'demoiselle' ought to glance at. I assured him plainly I could not agree in this doctrine, and did not see the sense of it; whereupon, with his usual absolutism, he merely requested my silence... A more despotic little man that M. Paul never filled a professor's chair, I noticed, by the way, that he looked at the picture himself quite at his ease, and for a very long while....

[She asks his opinion of the Cleopatra]

'Une femme superbe - une tialle d'imperatrice, des formes de Junon, mais une personne dont je ne voudrais ni pour femme, ni pour fille, ni pour soeur. Aussi vous ne jeterez plus un seul coup d'oeil de sa côté.' [278-80]

Meanwhile the English Dr Bretton arrives and takes a turn about the room with Lucy.

I always liked dearly to hear what he had to say about either pictures or books; because, without pretending to be a connoisseur, he always spoke his thought, and that was sure to be fresh: very often it was also just and pithy...I asked his what he thought of the Cleopatra (after making him laugh by telling how Professor Emmanuel had sent me to the right-about...)

'Pooh!' said he, 'My mother is a better-looking woman. I heard some French fops, yonder, designating her as "le type du voluptueux;" if so, I can only say, "le voluptueux" is little to my liking. Compare

that mulatto with Ginevre!'[282]

What we see in this passage is the way that cultural consumption is demarcated by the shifting relational differences of class, gender, nationality and race. Although Lucy uses the opportunity of viewing the Cleopatra to pass judgement on people normally above her, she does not do this by pretending to be male, but by reframing her femininity with the signifiers of nation and class. In other words, the text uses whatever ammunition comes to hand, activating whichever set of differences will work. Lucy sides with Graham to refuse the erotic voyeurism of the Cleopatra on grounds not of gender but of nationality and class. Arrogating to herself the Doctor's lofty disdain she consigns M. Paul, otherwise her ally, to the sidelines as part of the Catholic contingent along with the enraptured de Hamal.⁸⁴ But the urbanity and diffidence Graham deploys in front of the Cleopatra is described as 'callous' when turned on the live spectacle of female passion embodied in the performance of the actress Vashti: 'he judged her as a woman, not an artist: it was a branding judgement'.[342]

Viewing is represented as a public activity subject to the power dynamics of the social; for women judgement comes from without and it is proscriptive ('Vashti was not good, I was told' [340]). But in Villette the text undercuts those judgements even as it represents them, displacing the authority of male interpretations and permitting a

⁸⁴ See Judith Newton on how the strategic disadvantaging of Paul places him in a suitably equitable position to Lucy to be her help meet and lover. With the superior Graham the only possible female positionality is that of the child-like dependence of Paulina. Newton, 'Villette'.

transgressive female reading. The multiplicity of feminine subjectivities represented in the text (and, significantly, represented as visual images) are seen to have different meanings for those who view them, indicating that gendered identifications are contested and contingent. The transgressions of Lucy's voyeurism rely on all the terms of social differentiation, not just gender.

It is clear, then, that Lucy's identity is constituted through her activities as a reader and spectator and that an intervention into cultural codes is one way of challenging the positionalities open to women: Lucy does this both in her reading of culture (her knowing disbelief in cultural conventions) and her active disruption/production of the fictions that culture seeks to normalize (her disruption of the play). The contradictions of women's challenges to imperial power indicate the splits within imperial discourse and its imperial subject. In order to break up Said's monolithic Orientalist discourse, Homi Bhabha maps Said's schema of latent and manifest Orientalism onto the psychoanalytic concept of the splits between the unconscious and conscious mind to reveal imperialism as a mode of discourse that is based on an ambivalence and anxiety, in which the colonial other is 'at once an object of desire and derision'.⁸⁵ He utilizes a Lacanian explanation of subjectivity as something that is at once formed through language (the child must learn to take up a place within a signifying system that predates it in order to join the realm of the social) and intrinsically split (the moment of recognition and splitting in the 'me/not me' of the

⁸⁵ Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question', in Screen, no.24, vol.6, 1983, p.19.

mirror phase)⁸⁶ to decode Orientalism as a discourse, based on representation, that is driven not by a unified and intentional power but by the splits and ambivalences of the subjects who enunciate it. Bhabha takes us back to the moment of enunciation to emphasize the role of the enunciating agent, (potentially in all its classed and gendered specificity - something which Bhabha, like Said, ignores) to bypass Said's reliance on the concept of the exceptional individual author (as the only one who can function outside of the constraints of Orientalism) and reveal Orientalism as an always incohesive discourse that always already contains conflictual positions.⁸⁷

Thus, the apparent unity and homogeneity of imperial discourse attests not to the reality of imperial power (Said's problem of the real Orient) but to a motivational fantasy of unified power and control. Rather than trying to match our representations against the 'reality' of (say, women's) experience of colonialism or imperialist ideology, we can read them as traces of collective fantasies about power, control, desire and difference - channelled through the subjective particularities of the

⁸⁶ See Madan Sarup, Jacques Lacan, Hemel Hempstead, 1992.

⁸⁷ For a critique that challenges the potential innocence of Bhabha's conflicted colonial subject see Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature', in Critical Inquiry, Autumn 1985.

See also J.A. Mangan, 'Introduction', to Mangan (ed).

individual.⁸⁸ These fantasy traces are not simply wish fulfilment but reveal the fragmentary nature of the psychical realities engendered by the contradictions of imperial discourse.⁸⁹ It is only with attention to the social and psychical elements of women's experience and representation of imperialism that we can explain why, for example, Charlotte Brontë's imagining of female independence relies on the subordination of other (Orientalized) female subjectivities. Fantasy, like subjectivity itself, is contradictory and unstable relying, as we shall see, on mechanisms of repression and displacement that may both mask and reveal the conflicting desires of the subject, and influenced by the social realities of the subject's experience. So far I have used a Foucauldian paradigm; however, despite his opposition to psychoanalysis, we can benefit from its insights into human behaviour without accepting its transhistorical and universalist claims.

If we accept that subjectivity can only be produced as a fragmented and unstable structure we can also assert that the particular splits of the subject will be in some relation to the rules and values of the society in which it is formed, and that those values and codes will impact differently, to different psychic effect, on agents in

⁸⁸ On the subject's role in and relation to fantasy see J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality', in International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 49, Part 1, 1968.

⁸⁹ See also David Bate, 'The Occidental Tourist: Photography and Colonising Vision', in Afterimage, Summer 1992.

different classed, gendered and raced positions.⁹⁰ As Henriques et al show in their examination of psychological practices we cannot get away from the fact that whilst people experience their subjectivity as real, the possibilities of those subjectivities are not only historically determined but are also relational; that is, affected not just by some impersonal discourse, but by the relations between the individuals through whom discourse is articulated.⁹¹ To avoid the universalizing tendencies of Lacan and the functionalist tendencies of Foucault they argue for attention to the 'motivational dynamics through which people are positioned in discourses' and the role of discourse in the production of desire.

The content of desires, then, is neither timeless nor arbitrary, but has a historical specificity...It is precisely this formation of power-knowledge relations through the positioning of subjects within discursive practices [that] simultaneously produc[es] relations

⁹⁰ See for example Hortense Spillers' exploration of the psychoanalytic implications of the different types of kinship relations possible for enslaved Black subjects in the American plantation slavery system. Hortense J. Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', in Diacritics, no.2, vol.17, Summer 1987.

See also Ashis Nandy's exploration of the forms, pleasures and personal costs, that colonial subjectivity produced for both colonized and colonizer in India. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Other: Loss and recovery of Self Under Colonialism, (second edition) (1983), Delhi, 1988.

⁹¹ Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn and Valerie Walkerdine, Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity, London, 1984.

of desire...⁹²

If we see desire as not only historically specific but also as a formation based in fantasy that is always relational (the unfulfillable nature of desire stems from its originatory moment - the loss of the mother, the original object - which, in turn provides the sense of absence and loss necessary to drive the infant into signification) then we can see the motivational possibilities of assuming an enunciative position in discourse - itself a placement that is relational and significatory. By theorizing the reasons why individuals take up discursive positionalities Henriques et al open up a space for the recognition of how discourses are changed by the activity of the individuals who reproduce them. If desire is produced (contingent) and not innate, then it can change, and since power is relational and enunciated from relational positionalities by individual subjects, then that too can be changed. This takes us one stage further away from a mechanistic view of a unitary power. Moreover, since all subjects are the product of more than one discourse the ascendancy of different discourses may differently complexion the relations of power and knowledge, which, in relation to our project, means that the particular contradictions we may detect in women's representations will indicate not only the limitation of, but the changes wrought by, the gender-specific access that white Western women had to the enunciative positions of colonial discourse. Thus the representation of the Orientalized other is never one of a secure and absolute difference although it may evidence a will to be just that. It is precisely this desire to assuage the splits and instabilities of the imperial

⁹²Henriques et al, 'Introduction to Section Three: Theorizing Subjectivity', pp.218-223.

subject that is revealed by women's problematic and partial (but not necessarily oppositional) access to colonial representation.

CHAPTER TWO

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN ART AND LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will set out the material and ideological constraints on women's cultural production in the mid to late nineteenth century to assess the ways in which this would have affected and been affected by (since these things were never static) the lives and work of women such as George Eliot and Henriette Browne. In this period ideas about gender variously restricted the education opportunities open to aspiring women artists and writers, the forms and techniques they could use, the subjects they could cover and their opportunities for exhibition and publication. More than this, discourses of femininity had a determining effect on the authorial identities established for them and the meanings attributed to their work. In an era when paintings and writings tended to be received as the emissions of a specific (and typically gendered, classed and national) author, the effects of the 'critical double standard' that Elaine Showalter identified in relation to women's novels (which also holds true for women's work in the visual arts) cannot be underestimated.¹ Accordingly, one of the aims of this thesis will be to explore the complex and contradictory ways in which women negotiated and internalized gendered codes of behaviour and of artistic and literary production.

¹Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing, (1978) London, 1982.

The separate spheres: the problems of a professional identity

The nineteenth century has been characterized as a period in which the growth of the industrial bourgeoisie and the ideology of femininity led to the increasing bifurcation of men's and women's lives. The work of Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff has shown that whilst middle-class women were originally crucial to family businesses they were moved out of the realm of production into the domestic once the family's prosperity allowed, and subsequently required, the visible leisure of its women.² Conspicuous female leisure came to function as an index to the prosperity and gentility of the middle and upper-class family. Moreover, as Levy has shown, it was not only the development but the representation of the nucleated middle-class family that was essential to the development of industrial capitalism and middle-class hegemony. She argues that novels by women and largely understood to be addressed to women ('rhetorical strategies that are also cultural strategies') functioned as educative norms that played a central role in the reproduction of the social relations required by capitalist forms of production.³ Changes in the workplace developed alongside a sexual double standard in which men were conceptualized as sexually active beings whilst (middle-class) women were

² Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850, London, 1987.

³ Levy, p.9.

seen as naturally lacking in sexual feelings.⁴ The Enlightenment valorization of Man's rationality was calibrated by social and gender divisions to produce a libidinal economy in which white Western men were able to control their natural/animal sexuality by virtue of their superior intellect and thus deserved their position of power over those lower orders (women, working classes, subject peoples) who were unable to exercise the civilizing cogito. For women, the licentious sexuality that had previously been regarded as a propensity of all women now came to function as a division between women in which the construction of middle-class women as innately chaste and asexual was countered by the attribution of a virulent, rapacious and un-Christian sexuality to working-class women at home and all women in the colonies.⁵

Mary Poovey argues that the split between the public and the private rests on the ideological division between alienated and unalienated labour.⁶ She extends existing work on the symbolic value of the domestic as a natural haven away from the seemingly unnatural world of commerce and work to incorporate an analysis of how the work that did occur in the domestic was secured as unalienated. Domestic work was presented as the natural outcome of innate feminine qualities that, since it was unwaged and

⁴See Lucy Bland, 'The Domain of the Sexual', in Screen Education, no. 39, 1981.

⁵On the differentiated ways in which the sexuality of colonized women was constructed in relation to Europeans and to colonized men see Hennessy and Mohanty, pp.338-352.

⁶Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England, London, 1989.

not publicly visible, was not of the same order as waged labour in the capitalist mode of production - which was represented by many as an unnatural imposition on man from which the weaker sex should be shielded. Even philosophies which valorized work as morally valuable and personally fulfilling, like the (different) ethos of Carlyle and J.S. Mill were, as Catherine Hall points out, immutably gendered - premised on the construction of a masculine middle-class power base which contrasted its definition of work, as manly and noble, to the effeminacy of aristocratic leisure.⁷

Whilst middle-class women were increasingly conceptualized as frail, leisured and in need of male protection, working-class women worked as servants, seamstresses and manual labourers. Although this made sense in terms of prevailing class identities, there was considerable anxiety that working women should not engage in manual trades (like mineworking) that might de-sex them.⁸ Throughout the century opponents and advocates of women's entry into the labour market shared the assumption that

⁷ See Catherine Hall, 'The Economy of Intellectual Prestige; Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and the Case of Governor Eyre', in Cultural Critique, no. 12, Spring 1989.

⁸ See for example, Sally Alexander, 'Women's Work in Nineteenth Century London: a Study of the Years 1820-50', in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (eds) The Rights and Wrongs of Women, Harmondsworth, 1983, Liz Stanley (ed) 'Introduction' to The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick: Victorian Maidservant, London, 1984, Leonore Davidoff, 'Class and Gender in Victorian England: the Diaries of Arthur Munby and Hannah Cullwick', in Feminist Studies, 1979.

jobs and professions were gender- and class-specific.⁹ Even when the hardships of 'feminine' jobs, like seamstressing, were sufficiently recognized to warrant a government inquiry they were still considered preferable to more masculine, manual and visible work in heavy industry. It was common, especially in the case of middle-class women, to maintain that women's entry into waged labour relations could only be justified on account of hardship and necessity (reasons being widowhood, the unavailability of husbands or male relations' mismanagement of family finances). Like most well-known Victorian moral issues, the application of theories about women's work, though widespread, was first formulated for the middle classes themselves and only secondarily exported to the rest of the population and the empire. But, as Hennessy and Mohanty make clear, the existence of imperial power relations had a more than merely symbolic importance for changes in the status of women in Europe: at different times and in different ways the possibility of the systemic exploitation of the feminized colonial other was a pre-requisite for progressive developments in gender relations at home.¹⁰

So any woman who wanted publicly to exhibit or publish work was engaging in a process of public and remunerated labour that, in different and similar ways, contravened several codes of class- and gender-appropriate behaviour. Paradoxically, as Poovey points out, both literary and domestic work, as activities that 'seemed completely

⁹ Poovey, p.159

¹⁰ See Hennessy and Mohanty, p.332.

outside of the system of wages and surplus value',¹¹ fell into the same category of unalienated or 'creative' labour. But this attempt to maintain a rarefied space for cultural production (in this case, literature) did not mean that writers considered themselves to be like housewives or that unalienated work of the literary sort was considered suitable for women: women were not imagined to have the intellectual, philosophical or visionary qualities required for creative endeavours and any creative energy they might possess should be more properly directed into the exercise of their innate maternal vocation. Similarly, as the debate over women's entry into art education testifies, both academic and avant-garde circles saw art as a male field. Indeed, the nineteenth century saw the start of a self-conscious artistic avant-garde and the rise of the romantic image of the bohemian artist hero (a sensitive, unconventional individual of personal vision who, whilst often at odds with society, could offer insights unavailable to the crowd) that was immutably male.

Women's art education

As the middle class sought to augment their economic primacy with political and cultural capital they not only opposed themselves to previously hegemonic aristocratic cultural values (now increasingly seen as decadent and immoral) but adapted and adopted selected aristocratic traditions. As with the ethos of conspicuous leisure, it was often the bourgeoisie's women who bore the burden of signifying these developing middle-class identities. The adoption by bourgeois women of the aristocratic

¹¹ Poovey, p.156.

conventions of accomplishment art is a case in point: despite the differences between the French and English middle classes, in both countries in the first half of the nineteenth century the leisured middle-class lady was expected to be versed in the accomplishment arts practised by her aristocratic predecessor. Young ladies were routinely educated to an elementary level in the arts of painting, drawing and music, as well as sewing and other household skills. Unlike the large oil paintings of classical subjects favoured by the Royal Academy or the Salon, accomplishment art stressed drawing, copying and water-colour work in a restricted range of subjects (notably flowers, landscapes, still lives, or portraits).¹² As Charlotte Yeldham (whose detailed research I have drawn on in this chapter) has demonstrated, accomplishment skills were clearly understood to be of a minimal nature - sufficient to adorn the home, occupy leisure time, prove the family's cultural standing and provide after-dinner entertainment - but insufficient to engage in public, professional and, by

¹²These efforts were sometimes only achieved with substantial assistance: the drawing master 'mounting' Amelia Sedley's pictures had inevitably done 'all the best parts' himself. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, 1848, ch.4.

implication, waged activities.¹³ The one area where women were expected to demonstrate saleable skills in art was in their work as a governess where they often had sole responsibility for the art, as well as general, education of their pupils.

But of course, many women did aspire to be artists and many succeeded. The first obstacle facing them was the lack of proper training and the exclusive practices of the major art institutions. Art education for women in Britain and France did improve during the course of the century but was always restricted in content and availability. The worst problem for any woman wishing to pursue a professional career was lack of access to the nude model. The life class formed the centre of any serious art education, and was a prerequisite for history painting - the most prestigious academic genre.

Although the state training schools barred women students (the Royal Academy did not take women students until 1860 and the École des beaux-arts held out until 1897) there

¹³The advent of accomplishment arts in the middle classes was not without criticism. Hannah Moore as early as 1789 was bewailing the rise of accomplishment in art and design and the subsequent loss of a previous, more functional, level of art training. The practice continued to receive criticism throughout the nineteenth century, especially after the aristocracy lost interest in the 1840s and accomplishment became an exclusively middle-class enthusiasm. See Charlotte Yeldham, Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England: Their Art Education, Exhibition Opportunities and Membership of Exhibiting Societies and Academies, with an Assessment of the Subject Matter of their Work and Summary Biographies, New York, 1984, pp.8-34.

were some opportunities available even by mid-century: in Britain in the 1830s and '40s many women who were to become successful artists (ironically often, as in the case of Eliza Bridell Fox, going on to exhibit at the Royal Academy once their career was underway) benefited from Henry Sass' School of Art in Bloomsbury (at which it is possible there was a life class), and by 1848 James Matthew Leigh's General Practical School of Art was admitting women, such as Kate Greenaway, on equal terms to men (including the life class).¹⁴ The significance of access to the live model is attested to by the efforts women made to arrange such classes for themselves: in 1848 Eliza Bridell Fox arranged a private female life class and in 1863 the Society of Female Artists (established 1857) organized a life class from the dressed model for their members.¹⁵ Even when the Royal Academy allowed limited access to a restricted number of women students in 1860, they had to continue campaigning for entry to the life class until 1893.¹⁶ The Slade school took women students from its establishment in 1871 and provided draped models

¹⁴Yeldham, pp.20-21.

¹⁵Although opportunities for women to study from the live model were available from the 1840s, it seem that they were little known and insufficient for demand. Comments and reviews though the mid-century reiterate that the unavailability of study from life impeded women's careers. The Art Journal wrote sympathetically of this in 1858 and even the feminist English Woman's Journal knew of only one that year. The Art Journal 1858 p.143, in Yeldham, p.24.

'On the Adoption of Professional Life by Women', The English Woman's Journal, 1858.

¹⁶Yeldham, p.31.

from the first (nude study was available from 1898).¹⁷

As in previous eras, most women artists came from artists' families and in nineteenth-century Britain and France most were wealthy. Such art education as was available was generally too expensive to be accessible to any but the affluent. In addition to the obvious advantages of a family sympathetic to or involved in a career in art, many women from wealthy or artistic families avoided the public arena of formal education altogether by taking private lessons from successful artists who were often family friends, although, as Cherry points out, even here the daughters of the house generally received a different schooling from their brothers, being directed to lesser genres etc.. The line between accomplishment and professional skills was clearly understood - Berthe Morisot's mother was warned that to allow her daughter further training would cross the line between accomplishment and a career. For lower middle-class and working-class women the state undertook some vocational training in design - a lesser area of applied artistic activity that was compatible with gendered definitions of labour and aimed to provide women with the chance to earn a living by respectable means. The Female School of Design in Britain was opened in 1843 and initiatives to provide education in design and the applied arts continued throughout the century: like accomplishment art, it was registered as a lesser, feminine activity and thus provided no threat to male artistic supremacy.¹⁸

¹⁷Yeldham, p.33.

¹⁸Though men in the design field did complain that women were taking their jobs. See Yeldham, p.13.

In France there were better educational opportunities for women at an elementary level but advanced opportunities for women were highly restricted. Provision for design education, based on the belief in women's innate aptitude for design, was available from 1803 at the women's Free School of Art and Design. This included some study from life, in keeping with the greater involvement of fine art in French design, and provided a (limited) possibility of art education.¹⁹ But higher level art education remained largely unavailable. Although established women artists sporadically ran ateliers for women students (from Labille-Guyard in the 1780s) and some male artists took women students in the first half of the nineteenth century, opportunities were restricted. The École des beaux-arts was forbidden to women as was participation in the prestigious showcase for new talent, the Prix de Rome competition. Refusing women access to major commissions or reputation-enhancing awards effectively kept them out of the profession.²⁰ In France the gender-specific ethos of visual representation was differently registered: whereas in England women were encouraged to paint decorative and sentimental subjects of a frivolous nature, in France this was made weightier by the stress on women's maternal role as moral educators of the family and hence nation. Women were encouraged to express their femininity by painting morally uplifting or religious subjects and by designing objects to decorate the home.²¹ Education opportunities

¹⁹This varied from school to school: the Paris school under Rosa Bonheur in the 1850s was very artistic in orientation and compared favourably to provision in England.

²⁰Yeldham, pp.47-59.

²¹Yeldham, p.174.

improved with the advent of the second empire in 1850 and more ateliers began to take women students. But the atelier system, in which master painters trained a number of students in their studio, was a male-dominated world to which women's access was still restricted, even though the number of ateliers taking women increased - not just because not all artists would teach women, but because the atelier was itself a gendered social space that was not suitable for women. Women could not respectably be present in an environment that prompted one male student after his first visit to write

The coarseness and vulgarity of art students was something that, naturally enough, I had not idea of till then. Taunts and snubs were legion...²²

Women art students went to selected ateliers, known as 'ateliers féminins', that specialized in training women. Henriette Browne went to one; the atelier of Chaplin, a popular genre painter noted for teaching women, where she would have had access to life models in women-only classes in an environment that would compromise neither her femininity nor her gentility.²³

²² Alfred de Curzon on Drollings studio, in Alfred Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1971, p.53.

²³ Other studios notable for training women in this period were those of Madame O'Connell (from 1859) who taught from live models, and the women's section of the Académie Julian (established 1868) where nude life classes were available for women from 1877. Yeldham, p.51.

Gender, genre and middle-class taste

Once women managed to find themselves some form of art education their practice was continually affected by the discursive pressures of femininity. Gendered ideas of art were mapped onto, if not internal to, the Academy's division of visual art into a series of hierarchical genres that, running from history painting down through portraiture, genre (scenes of daily life), still life and landscape, relegated women (untrained in the nude or classics) to minor fields of endeavour. In the nineteenth century subject and technique were morally weighted issues for all artists, but for women the codes of artistic activity were comparable to the strict codes of behaviour in which they had been tutored since childhood. Women, within the areas of representation open to them, were encouraged to paint in a manner that could be read as suitably feminine according to the prevailing codes of femininity: subjects should be respectable and performed in a manner that could be traced back to innate feminine qualities such as delicacy, intuition, compassion. Although men also specialized in genre it had come, particularly in France, to be associated with the feminine qualities of sensibility and simplicity.²⁴ By the time Browne was painting it was customary to read the sentimental qualities of genre pictures as a sign of the (often female) artist's own morality and compassion. Cherry notes that the tendency to read women's work in

²⁴Of the multitude of female genre painters, one, Madame Haudebourt-Lescot (1784-1845), who specialized in Italianate scenes and exotic images of children (as Browne was later to do with the Orient), was very highly regarded and credited with the popularization of genre in France. See Yeldham, pp.220-6

relation to stereotypes of femininity emerged most clearly in the 1850s - at precisely the moment when women were 'increasingly numerous and visible as professional artists'.²⁵ As we shall see in the next chapter, Browne's initial practice of portraiture, domestic narrative painting and scenes of the French religious (of the domestic, not the grand historico-classical, type) fell precisely within the remit of feminine art.²⁶ Portraiture, which several leading women artists concerned themselves with almost exclusively, did offer a cross-over from

²⁵Cherry, Painting Women, p.66.

²⁶Yeldham, who suggests that Browne's initial tendency to genre may have been as a result of Chaplin's influence as much as because they were proper feminine subjects, persistently underestimates the determining effects of cultural convention on individual subjects. Browne, who may indeed have been influenced by Chaplin, was studying with him in the first place precisely because his choice of subjects rendered him a suitable tutor for women students. In a similar vein Yeldham argues that the uniformly condescending tone taken by art critics to women's exhibitions was prompted solely by the standard of exhibits:

The result of grouping women together was bound to be a generalized attitude to women as artists, and since most of these societies existed for remedial reasons - chiefly to help women artists lacking privileges and adequate art education - the standard was bound to be fairly low, and so too the standard adopted by critics.(p113)

This approach undermines her earlier exegesis of the institutional bias that led to a) women's relative lack of skill and b) the organization of women's exhibiting societies to militate against their exclusion from the existing events.

accomplishment art of which 'taking a likeness' was an essential component. Portraiture, unlike classical subjects, required no specific education and could be seen as eminently suitable for women who were believed to be endowed with innate qualities of intuition and sympathy. Browne was acclaimed as a portrait painter throughout her career but never specialized in portraiture to the exclusion of other areas of representation.²⁷

If women produced art that echoed their perceived social and moral role it compensated for the transgression of their artistic activities.²⁸ Likewise, as Whitney Chadwick has pointed out, women whose progressive professional endeavours might lead us to presume that they were personally radical, often emphasized their allegiance to the ideology of the separate spheres - precisely because it deflected attention from their potentially de-sexing

²⁷On the links between portraiture, genre and ethnography see later.

²⁸Even allowing for the vicissitudes of a sexist Art Historical establishment, there are hundreds of Victorian women whose work is undocumented because it has neither the technical daring nor the challenging content that would endear it to mainstream or feminist art historians today. These artists who, probably account for the vast majority of Victorian women's art production, painted saleable, popular images that upheld, rather than challenged, the dominant ideologies of their day.

cultural activities.²⁹

The ways in which women achieved success in the art world depended on both the relationship of their work to existing or developing codes, styles and conventions of art and the form of their particular authorial and professional identity. Different conditions of production facilitated the conditions of possibility for different forms of success; so, for example, in contrast to Browne's respectable, ladylike persona and initially feminine subjects could be ranged her compatriot Rosa Bonheur who challenged codes of femininity and art in both subject and lifestyle but still managed to be a very successful artist. Bonheur (unmarried and living with a female companion) rose to phenomenal fame as an animal painter with canvases that, like her most famous picture The Horse Fair (1855, plate 3), celebrated the passion and beauty of the untamed beast and were a far cry from the saccharine domestic pets expected from a lady's brush.³⁰ Although Bonheur had the advantage of a supportive artistic family, the success of her work (sufficient to compensate for her notoriously unconventional lifestyle) must be understood in the context of the changes in and increased critical status of the representation of animals brought about by

²⁹ Likewise, in the ancien regime, successful women artists emphasized their personal grace and charm which, in era when class not gender was the key differentiating agent, were important means of securing their respectability and endorsing their class identity. Whitney Chadwick, Women, Art and Society, London, 1990, ch.5.

³⁰ See also Chadwick, and Alfred Boime, 'The Case of Rosa Bonheur: Why Should a Woman Want to be More Like a Man?', in Art History, vol.4, no.4, December 1981.

the development of Romanticism. But this professional success did not mean that Bonheur's personal life ceased to be a matter of public concern, and in chapter three I shall be examining the different ways in which Bonheur and Browne's personal and social identities were negotiated in the critical representation of themselves and their work.

In Britain in this period we see the meteoric rise of the battle artist Lady Elizabeth Thompson Butler, who managed to make inroads into the male preserve of history painting in the 1870s, without compromising her classed and gendered identity even though her subject was the previously male-dominated field of battle art. Butler, who was wealthy, well-behaved and well-connected, managed to enter the realm of history painting as a woman artist with works that were understood to be intrinsically feminine because the climate was ready for a re-evaluation of the depiction of war and the art world was ready to extend the definition of history painting to include contemporary events (see plate 4). The bourgeoisie's growing influence in the art world and increasing power in the military (via the army reforms of the 1870s) meant that her humanizing studies of war met with enormous success.³¹ Her narratives managed simultaneously to valorize the common soldier, endorse middle-class criticisms of the aristocracy's uncaring and inept military administration, and uphold the values of colonial expansion, and could still be accommodated within notions of feminine compassion. Like Browne's intervention into the male field of Orientalism, Butler's battle painting was sufficiently consistent with

³¹ See J.W.M. Hichberger, Images of the Army: The Military in British Art, 1815-1914, Manchester, 1988, and Paul Usherwood and Jenny Spencer-Smith, Lady Butler: Battle Artist 1846-1933, London, National Army Museum, 1987.

codes of femininity to allow her to be incorporated as a lady artist without the sort of scandal that attended Bonheur. But, as we shall see, Browne's successful entry into Orientalism depended not only on it being a popular area of representation in which she was offering something new, but also on her existing reputation as a respectable lady artist - which could mitigate the potential immoralities of the subsequent Orientalist subjects.

The amount of women's work on display in public exhibitions in Britain rose during the course of the century (most notably after 1875) but never accounted for more than 14% at any of the major venues (the Royal Academy, the British Institute and the Society of British Artists).³² Apart from the all-women exhibitions of the Society of Female Artists there were a few private galleries that specialized in exhibiting women's work: the Dudley gallery (from 1848), the Grosvenor Gallery (from 1877) and Gambart's French Gallery where Bonheur and Browne were represented.³³ But women were still refused entry to the majority of artists' exhibiting societies, which limited their access to important professional forums. If women's work was not seen it was not reviewed and their reputation floundered. (The role of the Society of Female Artists should not be underestimated here. Despite the mixed quality of their exhibitions - and it was clear to most that this only proved the detrimental effects of women's limited education - the Society did

³² Figures from 1800-1875 rose from 5.5 to 10.5% at the Royal Academy, from 3.1 to 11.4% at the British Institution and from 5.9 to 14% at the Society of British Artists. Yeldham, p.63.

³³ See Pamela Gerrish Nunn, Victorian Women Artists, London, 1987, ch.3.

manage to keep the issue of women's art in the public eye and received considerable and sympathetic press attention.)³⁴ In France the situation was reversed. Women showed more work at the start of the century and less during the Second Empire when their contributions to public exhibitions decreased from an average of 11-13.3% to one of 4.9-8.9%.³⁵

Henriette Browne had a successful career by any standards. Though not as revered as Bonheur (the first woman to be awarded the Legion d'Honneur, in 1894), her work, regularly on display at the major public exhibitions in England and France (the Salon, the Royal Academy and the International Exhibitions), received substantial critical attention and acclaim. In the late 1860s Browne and Bonheur were the only women to be given honorary membership (and hence exhibiting rights) of the New Watercolour Society in Britain, which, though it allowed a few women to join as

³⁴The Society initially showed work by professional and amateur women artists, prepared to brave the inevitable criticisms, even from their supporters, of the 'preponderance of children and flowers'. Its widely known reputation gained support from professional women around Europe, including Browne who exhibited with the Society on one occasion. In 1872 the name changed to the Society of Lady Artists and displayed only professional work, although it subsequently reverted to the earlier name and policy. In France the equivalent l'Union de femmes peintres et sculpteurs was not established until 1881 and promulgated a belief in an innately female art. Yeldham pp88-105 and Tamar Garb, '"L'Art Féminin": The Formation of a Critical Category in Late Nineteenth-Century France', in Art History vol.12, no.1, March 1989.

³⁵Yeldham, p.65.

ordinary members, never honoured any British women in such a way.³⁶ In France Browne was one of four women allowed to hold associative membership (sociétaires, or membres fondateurs) of the Societe Nationale de Beaux-Arts in 1862.³⁷

Her reputation in Britain was helped enormously by her early and continued association with Ernst Gambart's French Gallery which was the premier showcase for contemporary Continental art in Britain. It was under his auspices that she first showed in Britain when he brought paintings from her debut Salon to London in 1856, although her reputation did not take off until the exhibition of the famous Sisters of Charity in 1859 (plate 1).³⁸ Gambart's gallery in Pall Mall was at the forefront of the move away from the Old Masters and towards contemporary

³⁶ Nunn, Victorian Women Artists, pp.99-100.

³⁷ In 1862 Browne was one of four women fondateurs out a total of ninety four associative members. The fourteen-member committee was entirely male. Yeldham, p.348.

³⁸ See Jeremy Maas, Gambart. Prince of the Victorian Art World, London, 1975.

art in the mid-century.³⁹ Although at first he had difficulty selling contemporary French work in Britain, by the late 1850's Browne's work would have been seen in a popular venue by an audience sympathetic to modern continental art. In 1861 her Orientalist works on display at Gambart's (after their initial exhibition at the Salon) would be seen in conjunction with the great masters of French Orientalism, Gérôme and Fromentine.⁴⁰ Visits to his French Gallery became a regular part of the London Season and thus on the itinerary of the buying public. Although

³⁹Gambart sold both paintings and prints and it was through print sales that he first familiarized the British public with modern Continental artists. His reputation as a print dealer was established by the late 1840s and stood him in good stead as his picture trade and status in the art world increased. Prints in the nineteenth century formed a growing part of the art trade. Copyright was sold independently of the painting although often a patron would purchase both. Apart from making potentially vast sums from the copyright for the owner and printer, print circulations of a large run were invaluable in establishing an artist's reputation and ensuring success. The international print trade meant that not only were cheap reproductions available to large sections of the British population (also via the illustrated press) but that popular paintings travelled the world, and most certainly the colonies.

⁴⁰Demonstrating that imperial policy can interact with all levels of cultural activity Jeremy Maas notes that the timing of Gambart's first French exhibition in 1854 opportunistically tied in with the 'growing rapprochement' between the two countries that culminated in their alliance in the Crimean War of that year.
Maas, Gambart, pp.62-64.

women accounted for a very small proportion of artists shown at his gallery, they included some of the leading French and British women artists of the day (Browne, Bonheur, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Eliza Bridell Fox).⁴¹ He also represented several of the British Pre-Raphaelite circle (Holman Hunt, Millais and Rossetti) and the phenomenally popular Alma-Tadema.

The demands of the growing market of middle-class art buyers played a large part in the increasing interest in modern art. They wished to acquire the genteel ring of cultural capital associated with High Art but were not, in the first generation, products of the Grand Tour and therefore tended not to have a predilection for the Old Masters (many of which in circulation in the 1840s had turned out to be fakes). Dianne Sachko Macleod presents the middle-class penchant for contemporary art and domestic genre scenes as not simply a lack of education or an inability to appreciate the Old Masters, but a sign of their growing confidence and influence in the cultural sphere.⁴² The middle classes, who now sought a cultural authority to augment their economic power, exerted increasing influence on the art market and the growing national art collections. These important new patrons instigated new patterns of patronage and taste and were guided in this by a new art press, such as the Athenaeum and the Art Journal, aimed at the middle classes.

⁴¹Cherry maintains, however, that despite representing several female artists, Gambart 'tokenised' them and reserved his best efforts for male clients. Cherry, Painting Women, p.98.

⁴²Macleod, Dianne Sachko, 'Art Collecting and Victorian Middle-Class Taste', in Art History, vol.10, no. 3, September 1987, pp. 328-350.

Although, as Phillip Hook and Mark Poltimore argue, genre was a characteristic taste of the developing international art market that served the middle classes throughout Europe (and also in the colonies) we must not forget that the shared enthusiasm for art of an emotive nature and domestic detail was experienced alongside a series of perceived national differences in artists and audiences. As we shall see Browne's work, whether displayed at Gambart's or the International Exhibitions, was always treated as a specifically French, as well as gendered, phenomenon.

The large market for genre subjects and small canvases (suitable for the middle-class drawing room rather than vast aristocratic halls) opened up the market for, and raised the prestige of, areas of representation traditionally associated with women artists. Additionally avant-garde moves to treat contemporary subjects with the weight of history painting shocked the Academy but had wide-reaching effects for the choice of subjects in the second half of the century. The French Independents' response to Baudelaire's call for the painting of modern life (1852) gave artistic credibility to the representation of modern urban life and increased status to the experience of the domestic sphere removing it from a previous categorization as feminine and trivial.⁴³ Although gendered codes of behaviour severely restricted women's participation in avant-garde artistic circles and,

⁴³As we have already noted, genre was an area in which women were expected to excel and although there were always some men who worked with genre subjects, it was never advanced as a reason for restricting them to genre. A talent for genre in women, however, was often used to confirm the, albeit charming, limitations of their range and talent.

as Griselda Pollock has shown, in the modern subjects considered suitable for women to view and paint, the fashion for these new subjects did mean that in both the avant-garde and the Academy women were able to participate more fully in high prestige areas of representation.⁴⁴ More than this, the 'triumph of genre' influenced other subjects, couching everything from history painting to classical or Oriental subjects in the tropes of sentiment, domesticity and embourgeoisement that characterized genre, thereby creating opportunities for precisely the sort of feminine intervention into generic codes with which Butler and, as we shall see, Browne were so successful.

Opportunities for women in literature

If the nineteenth century was a period in which women artists struggled to break down the existing exclusions of the art world, women writers faced the opposite problem: contrary to the traditional twentieth-century feminist view that the nineteenth century was a period of expanded

⁴⁴Griselda Pollock 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity', in Pollock, Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art, London, 1987.

Tamar Garb highlights how subject alone could not secure a picture's moral meaning. Women Impressionists, who painted apparently 'feminine' subjects, provided a problem of moral meaning depending on how one read the political implications of the Impressionist technique. This was seen as both innately suitable for women (being decorative and frivolous) or as radical and hence unsuitable (its fragmented surface being incompatible with the unambiguous moral meanings expected from art). Garb, p.43.

and successful activity for the woman writer,⁴⁵ Gaye Tuchman argues that women writers faced not only the maintenance of the status quo but the development of new forms of exclusion as the novel made the transition from a low form of popular entertainment, suitable only for ill-educated girls and women, to a serious and high-prestige area of literature suitable to be read and written by men.⁴⁶ Women were publishing in substantial numbers and, although the anxiety that prompted nearly every periodical in the mid-century to carry an article on the phenomenon of the lady novelist outweighed women's actual share of the market, writing for publication did offer a better return on labour than other wage-earning opportunities open to middle-class women.⁴⁷ (Novelists of either gender were overwhelmingly recruited from the upper or middle classes.) Tuchman argues that as the status of the novel, its writer and reader began to change men moved into novel writing so effectively that by the early twentieth century women had lost what, in 1859, had been a 50% share of the

⁴⁵For an overview of developments in twentieth-century feminist literary criticism see Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory, London, 1985.

⁴⁶Tuchman, p.7.

⁴⁷Women could earn more from the publication of a novel that might have taken a year to write, than from the annual salary of a governess or the income derived from fancy work. Showalter, Literature, p.48.

fiction market.⁴⁸

In the first half of the nineteenth century the novel was not considered to be high literature, which consisted of poetry and non-fiction - areas largely prohibited to women because they lacked a classical education. The novel, typified by the sensationalist three volume 'triple-decker' that sustained the circulating libraries with their largely female readership, was seen as a low form of literature suitable only for women writer's petty literary skills of observation and romance. In the 1870s, as novel writing rose in prestige, literary critics began to detect and encourage a version of the realist novel that, rather than being simply a realistic description of life, was of a philosophical nature, a superior 'manly' form of fiction that concerned itself with abstract concepts and intellectual issues - qualities usually held to be absent from women's work. Although George Eliot was one of the few women who made, and contributed to, this transition to the modern novel her work was always judged in relation to

⁴⁸Tuchman (using records of the publishing house Macmillans) defines a three stage process by which women were edged out of the novel: the invasion period of 1840-79, where most novelists were women and women were more likely to have their manuscripts accepted than men; the period of redefinition, 1880-99, in which men of letters redefined 'good' novels as those with a form of realism that tackled great philosophical questions, where men and women were equally likely to have their manuscripts accepted (though she does not define which men she thinks were considered to be successful practitioners of this new style); and lastly, the period of institutionalization 1901-17, in which men confirmed their hold of the high culture novel and were more likely to have manuscripts accepted.

her gender. Like many women writers of what Showalter calls the 'feminine stage' she emphasized her allegiance to the ideology of separate spheres and dominant literary values.⁴⁹ Just as in visual art the prevalent critical double standard praised women's literature for displaying qualities that endorsed their femininity (such as sentiment, refinement, tact, observation, high moral tone and knowledge of the female character) and criticized it for lacking precisely those attributes that women were not supposed to have (intellectual training, originality, abstract intelligence and knowledge of male character). Men's work, on the other hand, was found to display the valued qualities of 'power, breadth, distinctness, clarity, learning, abstract intelligence, shrewdness, experience, humor (sic), knowledge of everyone's character and open mindedness'.⁵⁰

Not only were women's novels judged differently from men's, but their ability to pursue and further a literary career was hampered by prevailing codes governing feminine behaviour. Tuchman emphasizes that the critical double standard was mirrored by a double standard in the publishing industry that consistently offered women less

⁴⁹Showalter divides women's literature into three phases: the feminine phases, from 1840 to the death of George Eliot in 1880, in which women emphasized their allegiance to the ideology of the separate spheres and wrote literature that tended to emulate dominant/male literary values; the feminist stage, 1880-1920, characterized by a literature of protest; and the female phase, from 1920, notable for the quest for authentic forms of literature to represent the female experience. Showalter, Literature, p.13.

⁵⁰Showalter, Literature, p.90.

advantageous terms. Women, who were seen as delicate creatures intended to be separate from the alienating world of work and commerce, were unable or unwilling to argue for better contracts or negotiate aggressively with publishers. Like women artists, women novelists found the institutions of the increasingly professionalized literary world largely closed to them⁵¹ just as the restricted social spaces available to bourgeois women largely prohibited them from access to, or effective cultivation of, the social and business networks that provided such useful patronage for their male peers. Women did not enjoy an equal share of the proliferating jobs in the literature industry that accompanied the rising status of fiction - they were under-represented as reviewers, critics, editors and publishers' readers, positions that were financially and professionally rewarding. Although the new opportunities offered by the feminist presses and periodicals in the 1860s and 70s⁵² ameliorated the situation somewhat, when George Eliot started her career writing was still a transgressive and potentially

⁵¹One indication of the both the increased status and professionalization of novel writing and the exclusion of women from high prestige literature is that women were not eligible for entry to the Society of Authors - a body dedicated to the protection of authors' interests founded in the late 1880s.

⁵²On the feminist press see David Doughan and Denise Sanchez, Feminist Periodicals: 1855-1984, Brighton, 1987.

compromising activity.⁵³

Women's access to literary pursuits was always double edged. On one hand writing was an activity that required little by way of space, equipment or special education and so was relatively easy to do (the English Woman's Journal was convinced that this was why women had succeeded far more in literature than in art),⁵⁴ but on the other, to

⁵³As an indication of the unrespectability of being a novelist Tuchman cites the 1865 census where only 8.7% of all persons who listed themselves as authors were women as compared to the 23.9% of those who identified themselves as painters or sculptors or the 17.1% of musicians who were women. (Was it harder to remain anonymous as a visual artist than as a writer?) This is balanced against the teaching profession where 72.5% were women and stage performers where women accounted for 40.5%. Tuchman, pp.51-2

⁵⁴Writing on professional opportunities for women the English Woman's Journal was convinced that women could more easily achieve professional standards in literature than in art:
...it is infinitely more difficult to draw passably well than to write passably well, and for this simple reason, that our ordinary education furnishes us with the main instruments of of literature, while the mécanique of art is a study unconnected with any other....The Art Student has, therefore, to acquire a whole technical language...[and] demands space, freedom, quietness, and unbroken hours... It is possible to write fine things at a desk in the corner of the kitchen... but it is not possible to paint without a studio, or some sort of separation from the noise and bustle of the external world.
The English Woman's Journal, 1858, pp.4-5.

publish for money transgressed all the codes of the separate spheres.⁵⁵ Like careers in art or design, women often claimed that writing was undertaken in response to dire need, rather than out of personal ambition⁵⁶ and in our period often emphasized that writing did not compromise their 'normal' femininity. Against popular characterizations of women novelists as ugly bluestockings, frumpy old maids or masculinized oddities, writers like Mrs Gaskell and Mrs Oliphant waxed eulogistic about the incorporation of their writing into their usual household duties and stressed the paramountcy of the family.⁵⁷ They de-emphasized the labour involved, presenting novel writing as a natural outpouring of feminine emotion, thus camouflaging the deviancy of their literary activities and devaluing the creative labour involved. In an era when creativity was increasingly seen as a male prerogative, this vision of unmediated, unskilled transposition found considerable favour and

⁵⁵ Although the disreputable nature of the publishing trade in the eighteenth century meant that even men published fiction anonymously, the improvements in trade practice and the increasing respectability of the novel meant that by the 1840s most men were owing to their fiction. Tuchman, ch.2.

⁵⁶ Showalter details some of the techniques women used to sidestep the transgressions of their writing and deflect attention away from their ambition: Rosa Nouchette Carey only gave into her vocation when 'driven' to writing in order to support her orphaned nephews; Charlotte Yonge agreed to write only edifying Christian stories and donate the profits to charity. Showalter, Literature, pp.55-7.

⁵⁷ Showalter, Literature, p.85.

upheld the vision of the leisured lady.⁵⁸

Women writers were inevitably compared to other women and by the 1860s it was customary to range George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë as the two poles against which women were judged. Both Brontë and George Eliot tacitly acknowledged the existence of the critical double standard by beginning their fiction careers with male pseudonyms, although the commonality of this experience was, as we shall see, undercut by important differences between them. Marian Evans/George Eliot was already widely published in the conventionally anonymous field of periodical criticism and did not take the pseudonym George Eliot until she began to publish fiction.⁵⁹ The tenacity of gendered judgements of literary merit, subject and technique is attested to by not only the terrific debate about the gender of the mysterious authors of Jane Eyre (1847) and Adam Bede (1859) but by the prompt re-interpretation of both novels as women's novels once their author's gender was known. Readers of Jane Eyre could not believe that a woman had written such a daring and innovative novel with its indelicate heroine and convincingly passionate hero whilst the quality, insight and convincing male and female characters of Adam Bede confounded George Eliot's readers: although some thought they detected a woman's hand most

⁵⁸ Another way of obscuring the labours of creativity was to use the time afforded by periods of illness, the other great pursuit of the Victorian lady, to write or research. George Eliot turned the social ostracism she suffered as a result of the Lewes liaison into research time. Showalter, Literature, p.43.

⁵⁹ See chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of the Marian Evans/George Eliot controversy.

readers assumed a male writer and deliberated whether he was a member of the clergy and, if so, of what age, rank and denomination. When George Eliot and her publisher decided to reveal her gender in 1860 the public were shocked and critics instantly reinterpreted the novel in relation to its female point of origin - scenes which previously had been seen as realistic representations of clerical and country experience were now judged on their suitability for the female author's presumed presence.

Like women artists, women writers were faced with restrictions about subject and technique. In fiction, as in visual art, women's limited experience and socialized behaviour led to a preponderance of novels with domestic settings and an emphasis on the romantic and personal that corroborated the prevalent view of women as small minded emotional creatures.⁶⁰ Although some critics did recognize that women were forced to specialize in such subjects because of limited opportunities rather than natural aptitude, very few suggested that the social causes should

⁶⁰ Showalter, Literature, pp.79-80.

be changed.⁶¹ The very language that women could use was restricted: strong language or indelicate subjects brought censure (as was the case with the 'damn' of Jane Eyre and the 'vein of perilous voluptuousness' in Adam Bede).⁶²

Like many women who succeeded in gaining access to the professional literary world, George Eliot often subscribed to dominant ideas about the inferiority of women's writing. Her 1856 essay 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', was sympathetic about the restrictions inflicted on women by poor education but poured scorn on the 'mind-and-millinery' fripperies associated with the lady novelist, maintaining that such pulp would not advance the cause of women's education or women's literature.⁶³ Arguing against those who believed that clemency in judgement was an act of charity towards the poor, if not destitute, women

⁶¹George Henry Lewes (1852) detected a correlation between women's domestic orientation and their literary tendency to excel at the observation of detail and the representation of pathos whilst failing in the masculine skills of plot construction; Richard Holt Hutton (1858) suggested that the differences in men's and women's writing could be traced to the differences in their education and resultant habits of intellectual discipline.

G.H. Lewes, 'The Lady Novelists', in Westminster Review, 1852 and R.H. Hutton, 'Novels by the Authoress of John Halifax', in North Britain Review, 1858, both in Showalter, Literature, pp.84-8.

⁶²Quoted in Showalter, Literature, p.25.

⁶³George Eliot, 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', in Westminster Review, October, 1856, in Thomas Pinney, Essays of George Eliot, London, 1968.

driven to writing from desperate circumstances George Eliot, revealing that most novels emanated from women in 'lofty and fashionable society' whose only experience of poverty was the 'poverty of brains', demanded that women's fiction be taken seriously and judged by the same standards as men's.⁶⁴ She was not alone in this opinion. Other women who aspired to critical success and professional standing often felt it necessary to disassociate themselves from the failings of lesser women writers and prove their allegiance to dominant literary

⁶⁴J. Russell Perkin notes that although George Eliot did herself rely on the money she earned from her writing, her connections in the literary world allowed her to command larger sums than many women who were never able to get off the treadmill of writing pot-boilers to order. He compares the £10,000 she was offered for Romola against the few hundred generally offered to such well known novelists as Julia Pardoe (author of Beauties of the Bosphorous) for the copyright of their work. J. Russell Perkin, A Reception-History of George Eliot's Fiction, London, 1990, p.27.

and social standards:⁶⁵ the popular novelist Dinah Murlock Craik warned women against overestimating a minor talent;⁶⁶ and Geraldine Jewsbury (who secured work as a publisher's reader for Bentley's) frequently upheld the gendered ideas of the critical double standard in her reviews and recommendations.⁶⁷

Such contradictions abound in the lives and works of women writers and artists in the 1850s-60s. The internalization of dominant values exists alongside, may even be a necessary component of, their potentially radical acts as

⁶⁵ Just as in art, women were involved in literary pursuits on an amateur level although their place in George Eliot's debate is not clear. Tuchman defines the 'hobbyist' writer as one who published less than eight novels (based on definitions of occupation in the Dictionary of National Biography) though Showalter does not maintain such rigid distinctions. Tuchman's point, that amateurs tended to have a different agenda from that of professional writers, is credible and explains the tension between the two groups. Amateurs, who were less likely to be involved in literary debates, often wrote the type of fiction they would like to read rather than that which would gain symbolic capital in the cultural elite. Tuchman's identification of eight publications as the benchmark appears to indicate a high level of amateur literary activity, the social implications of which I can only at present speculate about for women who wished to write without entering the public/waged domain of professional literature.

⁶⁶ Showalter, Literature, p.45.

⁶⁷ Tuchman, p.184.

authors and professionals.⁶⁸ George Eliot who was not only a novelist - she was also a poet, literary critic, editor, translator and essayist - was in many ways typical of her era. Despite the transgressions of her professional life and her personal relationships (notably the adulterous liaison with Lewes) she was conservative in her manner and restrained in her support for the feminist politics of her friend Barbara Bodichon.⁶⁹ Unlike the transgressive romance of Brontë's novels, the transgressions of George Eliot's private life were not mirrored in her fiction which, though it explored the fate of women in contemporary society, advocated a cult of fulfilment

⁶⁸ Showalter, somewhat confusingly, argues both that novelists were not ordinary women, 'they were different from the start', and that the experience of professional life changed those women who entered novel-writing out of motivations that were financial rather than ambitious, 'they were more organized, more businesslike, more adventurous, more flexible, more in control of their lives'. Showalter, Literature, p.97.

⁶⁹ Gillian Beer suggests that George Eliot's refusal to give public support to feminist causes also arose from a fear that public association with the name of one notorious for her adulterous liaison would bring disrepute on the cause she advocated. Gillian Beer, George Eliot, Brighton, 1986, ch.1.

through renunciation.⁷⁰

Just like the contradictions and complexities we experience in our lives today nineteenth-century women writers and artists, along with their audiences, struggled to make sense of the contradictions inherent in women's cultural production. It is not that all publishers tried to swindle women writers, or that they laboured under a protectionist code of chivalry, but that as agents formed within a society structured by divisions of gender and class, it was impossible for them to ignore prevalent concepts of identity in their dealings with each other. That these notions of identity were formulated across structural divisions of not just class and gender, but race and nation can be seen in the response to Browne's and George Eliot's work.

Nation, empire and culture

Our period is one in which representations of national and

⁷⁰ Showalter, for whom George Eliot's conservatism is a disappointment, points out that by the 1860s (ie. before Daniel Deronda) many of her fellow women writers preferred the image of the passionate but tragic Brontë produced by Mrs Gaskell's biography to the austere and superior intellectualism of George Eliot. Showalter, Literature, pp.107-9.

On George Eliot's female friendships and relationships see also Pam Johnson, 'Edith Simcox and Heterosexism in Biography: A Lesbian-Feminist Exploration', in Lesbian History Group, Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History 1840-1985, London, 1989.

racial identity (whether of Orientals, Jews, French or English) were read by an audience already versed in the concepts of Imperialism and accustomed to the idea that they were part of a nation identifiable by its territories, characteristics and culture.⁷¹ By the time Browne started exhibiting in 1855, Algeria was firmly established as a French colony. By the time George Eliot published Daniel Deronda in 1877, most of North Africa was under European rule, the Indian colonies were subject to direct political and military government and Britain and France regarded themselves as the major imperial nations. The imperial project might have been supported by an ideology that saw all Europeans as superior to all colonized peoples, but it also brought Europeans into competition with each other for the new lands and markets of the colonies and for cultural supremacy. Thus we find that the critical press in our period is characterized by the attempt to define national cultural characteristics (the Dutch excel at still life, the French at history painting) that parallels the ethnographic division of the world into clearly demarcated types. It is this widespread imperial ideology, and the tensions within it (for national and imperial identities were always only precariously maintained in the face of external challenges and internal contradictions)⁷² that, I shall argue, structures the work and reception of Browne and George Eliot. Their audiences were familiar with imperial concepts whether it was Orientalist paintings (which were so numerous as to be commonplace), Orientalist references

⁷¹See also chapter one.

⁷²See also Anderson, chs.4-8.

and analogies in literature⁷³ or the increasingly common first-hand experience of travel in North Africa or the Near East.⁷⁴

One important cultural contribution to the dissemination of imperial ideology was the series of International Exhibitions that punctuated the nineteenth century. Although these were purportedly a chance for the leading nations to enjoy amicable cultural exchange they were, in fact, the site of intense national rivalry with governments sinking vast sums into their country's display.⁷⁵ Sensationalist exhibitions (of technical developments or 'native villages') and reduced entry fees attracted a wider audience than the annual art exhibitions

⁷³ See later for more on this.

⁷⁴ By the 1870s North Africa was on the extended travel circuit for wealthy travellers and was being recommended in the Art Journal as a suitable watering hole for convalescents. As travel technology improved and wives and families joined colonial administrators on their postings, visits from relatives at home became more common.

L. G. Seguin, 'Walks in Algiers', in the Art Journal, 1878, p.112.

⁷⁵ They were also the source of intense internal machinations over selection, precedence and so on. Of particular significance in France was that the Expositions, unlike the Salon which showed only commissioned work (and therefore was bound to reflect aristocratic and Church taste), exhibited non-commissioned work. This led to fears that it cheapened the artist and reduced the display to a market place in which the vulgarities of middle-class taste would hold sway. See Mainardi, Part 1.

at the Royal Academy or Salon. This provided an opportunity to develop not only an awareness of the benefits of empire (which opponents thought too costly or immoral) but also a sense of national (and imperial) identity that would override the internal schisms of class, gender, politics and ethnicity.⁷⁶ The Fine Art pavilions were selected by each nation to show the best of their art and Browne frequently represented France, showing five paintings at the Exposition Universelle in 1855, eight in 1867, and one at the British International Exhibition in 1872. As Paul Greenhalgh has shown, the International Exhibitions were integral to the presentation of colonies as part of the national heritage and resources: from the display of imperial produce in the French National Exhibition in the Champs Elysées in 1839 to the British Great Exhibition in 1851 it became usual to organize display around the presentation of imperial wealth and acquisitions.⁷⁷ Thus Browne's paintings of both domestic and Oriental subjects were viewed in spaces imbued with imperial ideology that were significant events in the formation of a sense of national culture and imperial

⁷⁶For example Napoleon III welcomed the chance to present himself as responsible for France's cultural strength and economic prosperity through his identification with the Paris International Exhibitions of 1855 and 1867. See Nicholas Green, "All the Flowers of the Field": the State, Liberalism and Art in France under the Early Third Republic', in Oxford Art Journal, vol.10, no.1, 1987, p74.

⁷⁷Paul Greenhalgh, Ephemeral Vistas, The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939, Manchester, 1988, ch.3.

pride for vast sectors of the population.⁷⁸

The battle for cultural supremacy that split the imperial nations of Europe can be seen most clearly in the belief that there were discernible national schools of art and patterns of taste. For example, no matter how widespread the taste for genre, critics could still detect national differences. This is the Art Journal in 1862.

The French paint genre with more point and play of intellect, the English with greater breadth of sympathy: the French with more vivacity and

⁷⁸ Schneider quotes ten million visitors to the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1878. W. H. Schneider, An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870-1900, Westport, 1982, p.8.

The relationship of the fine art exhibits to the display of material culture from home or colonies is difficult to ascertain but, although the fine art pavilions were probably less popular with working-class visitors, we cannot assume that their audience was homogeneously middle class. The availability of cheap prints and the fact that exhibition guides aimed at all pockets included details of the fine art pavilions indicates that the fine art displays were probably visited by a more socially mixed audience than that which attended the Royal Academy if not the Salon. (One British observer at the Salon noted that its audience was far more mixed than the Royal Academy and bewailed that British artists has not such an opportunity to 'be published' ie. reach a wide audience.)

See Phillip G. Hamerton, 'The Salon of 1863', in Fine Arts Quarterly Review, October 1863, in Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, The Art of all Nations 1850-73: The Emerging Role of Exhibition and Critic, Princeton, 1982.

cleverness, the English with more sobriety and decorum.... [The English school has] now seldom to complain of intentional coarseness: Hogarth's works would, in this day, be intolerable. We are, in like manner, preserved from the double entendre in which the French rejoice. Virtue is respected: vice... has a moral tagged on to it...⁷⁹

Lynda Nead has identified this as a trajectory of art criticism that attempted to harness the newly elevated status of genre to the national reputation by claiming it as an area of British excellence. (A possible balm to the ego of a nation that could not deny that the French continued to excel at history painting.) Thus Britain's talent and taste for genre figure as proof of both the nation's moral standards and artistic skill. Contrasted to British taste for decodable moral narratives executed in a clear realist style the French treatment of genre reveals their moral as well as stylistic ambiguities. The alleged French tendency to innuendo is not restricted to their treatment of genre subjects. It is highlighted again in the Art Journal's review of the French Orientalist Jean Louis Gérôme in 1866. Gérôme, whose high gloss eroticism was extremely successful in France and Britain, nonetheless provided a problem for his viewers. His salacious scenes were difficult to align with their vision of art's moral and educative purpose.⁸⁰ This is the Art

⁷⁹The Art Journal 1862, p.150, in Nead, p.57 (original emphasis).

⁸⁰Gérôme will occur again in this thesis as a yardstick against which to measure Browne's work and its reception since he was, and arguably is, taken to be the paradigmatic French Orientalist.

Journal on his painting Phryne in 1866 (plate 5).⁸¹

'It might... have been possible for Gérôme to have touched on such a history with discretion; but then he would have lost the point and purpose... it can scarcely, indeed, be a matter of surprise that a French artist should be expressly French in his treatment; cleverness of innuendo, a certain semblance of decorum preserved in the midst of sentiment dubious, such is the cunning subterfuge which has made French novelists, dramatists and painters notorious.'⁸²

Note again how the charges of immorality are seen as signs of a peculiarly national indecency that extends to the whole of French culture. Considering that Gérôme was very successful it is surprising that reviews betray such profound discomfort. Of course, as Linda Nochlin has pointed out, part of Gérôme's appeal is precisely that he shocks and titillates at the same time⁸³ but I think that there is also something about Gérôme's work that pushes it to the limits of acceptability, particularly for his

⁸¹Phryne was accused of profaning the Eleusinian Mysteries but acquitted by the judges on account of her beauty, which she is seen displaying naked to them in the chamber.

⁸²The Art Journal, June, 1866, p.194.

⁸³See also his Slave Market, n.d., plate 17.

British reviewers.⁸⁴ Whilst French art critics question his choice of subject but admire his skill,⁸⁵ there is something about the way Gérôme's combination of subject choice and glossy realism so substantially discomforts the British press that suggests that his work transgresses not only propriety (almost beyond the range of artistic licence) but also the boundaries of what they consider to be British national taste and sensibility. This national code of art and interpretation makes a pleasure in viewing for the British critic differently problematic.

It is difficult to imagine a woman artist emerging unscathed from such attacks as were levelled at Gérôme. In British reviews of Browne's work, discourses of gender mediate the construction of a nation-specific analysis so that although her work is criticized for displaying 'French faults' which may even be defined as 'cowardly', the accusations are restricted to comments on the poor tone and 'slurred' detail - a far cry from the indecencies attributed to Gérôme.⁸⁶ (This is not to say that Browne's paintings are not substantially different from Gérôme's, and I shall later detail how they differ, but that, given

⁸⁴Linda Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient', in Art in America, May, 1983.

See also Olivier Richon, 'Representation, the Harem and the Despot', in Block, no.10, 1985.

⁸⁵As Mainardi elucidates, this is as much to do with the genre-ization of history painting that critics of all political persuasions detected in Phryne as it with moral issues. Mainardi, p.162.

⁸⁶The Athenaeum, August 1857 P. 213. See chapter three for full analysis of this review.

that reviews are critical interpretations of the pictures on display informed by current definitions and values of art, the discursive pressures of femininity will inform the meanings ascribed to her work as much as those of nationality.) Accordingly, the following chapters will explore how Browne's early work was seen as specifically French and Catholic within the structural differentiations of European nationalism, and how her Orientalist subjects figured as generically European within the discursive divide between Occident and Orient. The thesis will conclude with an analysis of the concepts of national identity and ethnicity deployed in relation to George Eliot's fiction, notably the definition of Englishness defended by critics of Daniel Deronda.

CHAPTER THREE

GENDER, GENRE AND NATION I: READINGS OF HENRIETTE

BROWNE'S NUNS

Introduction

Henriette Browne first rose to prominence in Britain and France with pictures of French Catholic nuns, most notably in 1859 with her phenomenally popular painting The Sisters of Charity (plate 1). This chapter will examine the ways in which Browne's early oeuvre (particularly her pictures of nuns, including also The Convent Dispensary, plate 2) was received in Britain and France in order to trace the construction of critical categories of art and to assess how Browne's nuns were read within, or transformed, that matrix in relation to gender, nation and class. Although this thesis is primarily concerned with Browne's Orientalist subjects of the 1860s and 1870s, the early work cannot be ignored, in that the authorial identity established for her by the early pictures and her (different) placing within discourses of femininity, nation and art in Britain and France, set up the referential grid through which the Orientalist works were later viewed. Therefore, this chapter will analyse the representation of Browne and her work in a selection of journals (not only art, but also general and specialist interest periodicals) to see how the pictures of nuns were read; not to arbitrate the one true meaning of the paintings but to trace how the types of meanings produced for them, and of her, functioned as signs within discourses of art, gender, religion, nation and class.

Browne's early oeuvre consisted of portraiture, domestic genre scenes (in both contemporary urban and picturesque rural settings) and representations of the French

religieuse. Her pictures of nuns gained the most critical attention, but their critical status in Britain and France was quite different. In France they were significant in establishing her as a woman artist and paved the way for her later fame as a Orientalist, but they were not seen as significant within the genre of religious painting, whereas in Britain they were exceedingly popular and well received despite the widespread anti-Romanism expressed during the Anglo-Catholic Revival and the associated controversy over female nursing orders in the 1850s and 1860s. Indeed, the British interest in her religious subjects and portraiture (both of which continued throughout her career) eclipsed the far more moderate interest expressed in her Orientalist works, whereas in France it appears that there was nothing controversial about these early images in terms of religion, gender or technique despite the central role of images of religion in aesthetic and political debates.

Henriette Browne was the professional name taken by Sophie Bouteiller, later Desaux, or de Saux. She was born in Paris in 1829, the child of her mother's second marriage to the Comte de Bouteiller, a moderately successful amateur musician hailing from an old Brittany family. Her mother, widowed young and left with insufficient funds with which to provide a proper education for her son, worked as a music teacher to supplement her income. So although Sophie Bouteiller did, in the end, enjoy affluent circumstances, as a young woman she was educated in a profession that would allow her to support herself if necessary. She studied first with Perrin in 1849 and in 1851 moved to the female art class run by Chaplin (where she was able to study from the figure). Sophie Bouteiller married Jules de Saux in 1853, the same year as her debut at the Salon under the name Henriette Browne, a name that

all sources agree was taken from a maternal ancestor.¹

It is apparent in all the critical material on Browne that, despite the pseudonym, the details of her background and training were well known and were central to the critical construction of her artistic and social identity. We shall see how these biographical details of gender and class determined Browne's access to the institutions and codes of art (affecting, as we have seen in chapter two, not only women artists' training, but their choice of subject and self-presentation as artists) and also influenced the critical response to her work.

The adoption of a professional pseudonym reveals some of the contradictions of Sophie Bouteiller's social position. For a woman of her class to have a profession at all transgressed codes of bourgeois femininity, yet her own family's history would have revealed the precarious position of a woman unable to support herself. The clashes between definitions of artistic creativity and a classed femininity are evident in the frequent accusations of, and defences against, dilettantism in reviews of her work, whilst the contradictory combination of financial risk and classed identity was, as we shall see, central to the picture of Browne published in the feminist magazine English Woman's Journal in 1861.

It was unusual, however, for women artists in this period

¹Chris Petteys, Dictionary of Women Artists, Boston, 1985, John Dennison Champlin, Cyclopedia of Painters and Paintings, New York, 1927, Bryan, and Clement.

to exhibit under female pseudonyms.² Unlike George Eliot's pseudonym, 'Henriette Browne' does not conceal the gender of the artist in order to gain entry into a male field. It did not really conceal her identity either - as early as 1861 Gautier is indicating that he knows who Henriette Browne is and, it seems, he was not alone. Although many women exhibited under both maiden and married names, few used a separate name. So we are left unclear as the function of the title Henriette Browne, since it is apparent that the artist never actually kept her identity secret and the personal details rehearsed in the press would have given her away to anyone in Society. But the pseudonym, however transparent, does allow Sophie Bouteiller to create and maintain a separation between her painting and social self; a distance that obviously must have had a personal significance for her but whose function is quite different to that of the pseudonym George Eliot since it had a minimal impact on the

²Personal conversation with Briony Llewelyn.

reception of her work.³

Browne exhibited regularly in the Salon between 1853 and 1878, winning third class medals for painting in 1855 and 1857 and a second class in 1871. From 1866 she was awarded the distinction of exhibiting hors concours, that is, without having to compete in the annual Salon selection procedure. She was known as an engraver as well as a painter and obtained a third class medal for engraving in 1863. Browne met with immediate success in her career; after her first Salon she sent five paintings to the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1855, all of which sold, one (L'École des pauvres) achieving the distinction of purchase by the Emperor Napoleon. Her work continued to sell well and claim high prices in both France and Britain throughout her career.

The frequent references to her studies with Chaplin tend

³Although 'Henriette Browne' could not produce the preferential treatment instigated by a male pseudonym, it would be misleading to imagine that it had no impact at all. The common references to the title's pseudonymous status and to the figure that hid behind it, seem to have activated a set of class associations that may possibly have reinforced the impression of the artist's gentility and thus affected the interpretation of her work.

Note that although I follow Gillian Beer in always referring to George Eliot by the full pseudonym (to avoid naturalizing this constructed title), I do shorten Henriette Browne to Browne, allowing it to function syntactically as a real name. This is because Henriette Browne is the title generally used to designate both the painter and the artist of the corpus of works.

to place her within a line of painters of charming but inconsequential genre pieces, assisting in the (re)categorization of her religious scenes as feminine genre paintings. (In France religious subjects were a well developed traditional genre that appears to have been open to women artists, since several are named in reviews, but not one in which Browne counted.) But that does not mean that her pictures were simply neutral. If they are able to be uncontentious it is due to the way that certain meanings are foregrounded from the range of associations available in what was a volatile area of representation. Further, their crossover from religion to feminine genre painting and their pleasing and traditional qualities means that they could also be related to what Tamar Garb, working on the turn of the century, identifies as l'art féminin, a womanly art concerned with tradition and moral continuity which reflects woman's role as guardian of the nation.⁴

Marriage to the Comte de Saux (d.1879), secretary to Count Waleski, would have brought Sophie Bouteiller into diplomatic circles. Waleski, the illegitimate son of Napoleon I, acted as diplomat for Louis Napoleon and the de Saux were associated with him during the second Empire in which his power was at its greatest. In addition to diplomacy, Waleski was also known as a writer and moved in intellectual circles. This, coupled with the aristocratic heritage of the Bouteiller and de Saux families placed Browne in a powerful conservative and intellectual milieu, guaranteeing contact with patrons, critics, dealers and other key figures of the literary and artistic world. It also involved travel. By 1860 she had visited Holland and Italy and made a fortnight's trip to Constantinople and

⁴Garb. See chapter two.

journeyed to Morocco in 1865 and Egypt and Syria in 1868-9.⁵

I think we will see, by studying the reception of Browne's The Sisters of Charity, that a series of critical spaces are opened up into which could be inserted - with varying degrees of mediation - these later Orientalist subjects: spaces that delineate the gendered, classed and nation-specific persona of the artist; that focus on the representation of female labour, sexuality and space; and that, above all, rely on the critical construction of Browne as a naturalistic artist with a reputation for working from observable fact. That her rigorous preparation and powers of observation are also, as we shall see, registered as feminine - tied to gendered ideas of intuition, compassion and perception - is used by critics to both enhance the verisimilitude claimed by and for her representations of the harem and to undermine these claims on account of her susceptibility, as a woman, to the effects of the harem.

The elements that contribute to the ambiguity of what was critically understood to be Browne's gendered gaze on the harem are already being marked out in the reading of the nuns (like the harem, a sequestered community of women) and the coding of Browne's artistic persona. In this chapter I will examine not only the initial reviews of her early work, but also the construction of her authorial identity in two early profiles (in the English Woman's Journal, 1860, and by Charles Kingsley in the Fine Arts Quarterly Review, 1863) which were instrumental in

⁵ See Yeldham, pp.347-349.

Champlin records that she 'has sketched in the East and North Africa'.

establishing the particularities of her British reputation.

My selection of journals is obviously partial and often, in the case of those other than the main art journals, determined largely by the availability of secondary research. I have used the main art journals in Britain and France systematically, looking at reviews for the years when Browne exhibited at the Salon, the International Exhibitions or, in Britain, at Gambart's, as well as keeping an eye on the gossip columns that were a regular update on commissions, acquisitions and new developments. In Britain this function has been served by the Athenaeum and the Art Journal, both of which ran continuously throughout my period. In France I have concentrated on L'Artiste, Gazette des beaux-arts, and Le Moniteur universel, which last, though a newspaper and not a specialist art periodical, had a high profile review section and the services of Théophile Gautier - who as well as being enormously influential was also a keen proponent of Browne. In addition to the art press I have looked at the Catholic press in France to see what they made of Browne's religious subjects (and her Orientalism) and at a women's fashion magazine Journal des demoiselles in which Browne is featured, to see how it registers gender and art. Where a particular critic is little known but has been of significance to this thesis I have followed their trail to other journals to get a sense of the attitudes and allegiances they brought to their interpretation of Browne (the critic Noémi de Cadiot/Claude Vignon in the Journal des demoiselles is a case in point here). In the case of more famous and more researched critics I have relied on secondary sources. As well as the periodical press I have drawn on separately published volumes of critics' work as well as making odd forays into journals that I otherwise ignore if they feature Browne prominently in one issue. Although most of

the British and French art journals did include some literary reviews, they are not, by and large, the source for the lengthy reviews of George Eliot's work that I draw on in chapter five; these reviews, many of them available in secondary compilations, will be discussed fully in the chapter on George Eliot.

The British reception of the religious works.

The unusual provenance of The Sisters of Charity made its arrival at the French Gallery in 1859 something of a cause célèbre. (Purchased for a lottery by the French government at 20,000 francs it was won by the holder of a single ticket who sold it immediately. When the second owner went bankrupt, Gambart, already owner of the copyright, bought the picture.) Consequently, the painting was assured of coverage in the general and art press.

The British reviews of this early and apparently unproblematically womanly painting illustrate the grid of gender, class, religious and national values within which the paintings were to signify. The Athenaeum begins by describing Browne as 'a lady almost as clever as Rosa Bonheur, but in a gentler and more tender way', before likening her also to Angelica Kauffman and asking, 'are they ['ladies'] now going to beat us in our own cold intellectual Kingdom?'⁶ This ostensibly facetious question attempts to dismiss as ridiculous the inroads women were making as cultural practitioners - fears about which were out of all proportion to women's still meagre share of the market. One of the few sources to comment on her anglicized pseudonym, the Athenaeum makes attempts to

⁶The Athenaeum, August 1859, p.213.

claim Browne as British, 'we believe, [she is] of English or Irish extraction', before going on to read her work as laden with feminine and French characteristics.⁷

The picture, if a little less thin and timid, would be almost perfect as an expression of Christian charity and religious sentiment... what delicacy of colour and feeling for textural variety! Story there is none to tell: it is merely a little fevered child wrapped in a blanket, lying on the lap of a Sister of Mercy; while another (with a face painted hard and flat) mixes medicine... The French faults of low tone and slurred detail are here; but what beauties, what careful yet unpedantic drawing. What delicious love for the languid child is visible in the thoughtful eyes of the Sister of Mercy - a real face too, not a keepsake one, or a stone one - a rosy warm face, glowing with a woman's love for children and looking so blossom-like, pretty and innocent and good between the stiff snowy wings of the starched linen head-dress. Surely Corporal Trim's Béguine was such a loving motherly creature as this Sister, with her sober Puritan gown, apron and rosary. The details are, of course, kept back in the usual cowardly French way, for fear of detracting from the faces... The picture like so many modern ones... wants building up... It wants the Roman self-conviction, anxious pride and sense of permanence...the child's frock is naturally arranged, but not with English feeling - but let that go.⁸

⁷Larrouse also suggests that her anglicized surname might have contributed to her success in Britain. Larrouse, p.1325.

⁸The Athenaeum, August 1859, p.213.

Frenchness in this instance is constructed as operating at the level of technique, rather than in the choice and treatment of subject, as was the case with the same issue's criticism of Gérôme which we looked at earlier. But, whether the body of the critique rests on subject or style, the tone is uniformly xenophobic. What poses as a technical discussion is overwhelmingly moral: it is Frenchness that is being criticized as much as the artist's skill. Note that the faults decried as typically French are cowardice, low tone and a slurring of detail, all defects that it is imputed are part of the French national character. The review of Browne cannot avoid playing on the national difference it perceives in her art but, with respect to the aristocratic Browne as a gendered and classed subject, the negative moral terms used here are not loaded with the ideas of sexual transgression that are attached to Gérôme.

The complimentary use of terms like careful, delicate, gentle and tender secures the painting as the product of a feminine brush whilst the implicit suggestion that there is a limit to what can be expected from a female artist effectively tones down the criticisms. If the painting is found to be too timid and a 'little lacking in decision' then that is hardly surprising given that it is the work of a young woman. Indeed, if the work had displayed the pedantry of drawing that the critique seems to suggest it needs it would have been hard to contain such a departure from the acceptable repertoire of feminine skills. The review clearly approves of the subject choice, a Christian scene of womanly nurture and calm, for its enhancement of the painting's femininity.

Both the Athenaeum and the Art Journal (which we shall come to shortly) refer to the painting and its female subjects as Sisters of Mercy rather than as Sisters of

Charity, as it was exhibited and known in France (Les soeurs de charité). Although such liberties with translation or title were not uncommon, and the painting appears to have been variously exhibited in Britain under either title and is referred to by both names in the British press, the confusion over which order the sisters are from is hard to explain since both orders, and presumably the differences between them, were known in Britain. Although the Sisters of Charity were the most prominent internationally it seems likely that the Sisters of Mercy were the most familiar in Britain, not only for their high profile as nurses in the Crimean War, but also as the name of orders based in Britain; an Irish Catholic order of the Sisters of Mercy was established in London in 1839 and one of the first British Anglican nursing orders, founded in 1848, was called the Sisters of Mercy of Devenport.⁹

The Art Journal of 1859, like the Athenaeum, detects evidence of a French style but treats it far less judgementally.

The beauty of the picture is its captivating simplicity: the dispositions are most effective, without appearing in the slightest degree artificial. The painting of the face of the seated figure is a masterpiece of Art; presented under the amplitude of the linen head-dress, the features are lighted by reflection, and the lighting and the brilliant transparency of the face are triumphs of a character that are very rarely accomplished... The smaller

⁹I am grateful to Anne Summers for her comments on this issue. See also, Anne Summers, Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses 1854-1914, London, 1988.

pictures [The Hospital Laboratory, The Toilet, The Muse and The Portrait] are painted on a fine ticken, of which the sharp threaded texture plays an important part in assisting the painter to that indefinite and facile manner that is a characteristic of the French school.¹⁰

The canvas which started Browne's reputation in Britain is identified as a masterpiece - literally, the large significant painting proffered by an aspiring artist to denote their arrival on the academic art scene. Although Browne is identified as an artist of the French school the technical discussion about canvas and the notice that she was a pupil of Chaplin seem to present this as a simple matter of genealogy and training rather than as a moral indictment. Note also that the spectacular head-dress of the sisters is picked out for mention, presumably as one of the simple and un-artificial details that so delight the reviewer. Attention to the sisters' head-dress, as we shall see, serves to mark both the representation's authenticity and signify the Catholic order's picturesque exoticism.

Both journals appear to have no difficulty in ascribing to the sisters, women outside of familial relations, the motherly emotions considered innate in bourgeois women. This sureness about the sisters' femininity is surprising considering that pictures of nuns and nursing were not necessarily safe and uncontentious subjects in the anti-papist climate of the 1850s. Although the Catholic Sisters of Mercy and the issue of women nurses had become familiar in Britain during the Crimean War, Browne's paintings of nuns were shown in a period of raging debate about

¹⁰The Art Journal, September 1859, p.291.

nursing, medicine and religion prompted by the Anglo-Catholic Revival's espousal of religious orders for women in Britain and proto-feminist demands for the professionalization of waged work for women.¹¹

The popular John Bull image of an anti-Papist Protestant Britain falls apart in the face of the struggle for the national religious imagination that marks this period. The Orientalist divide that posed a heathen Islamic Orient against a superior Christian Europe struggled to maintain the idea of a united Europe in the face of religious differences between European nations and internal schisms within the religious life of each nation.¹² In Britain the nineteenth century is marked by the gradual emancipation and growing power of religions outside of the Church of England¹³ and challenges from dissent and rancour within - the most pertinent of which, in this instance, was the Anglo-Catholic Revival.

¹¹ See Geoffrey Rowell, The Vision Glorious: Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism, Oxford, 1983,
Peter F. Anson, The Call of the Cloister. Religious Communities and Kindred Bodies in the Anglican Communion, London, 1964, pp. 25-28,
and Summers, Angels and Citizens.

¹² See Malcolm Warner, 'The Question of Faith: Orientalism, Christianity and Islam', in The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse, Royal Academy, London, 1984.

¹³ Most notable of which was the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and the resulting loss of sees in Ireland, interpreted by many as a parliamentary breach of the clergy's absolute patristic authority.

Dating to the Oxford Movement of the 1830s the Catholic Revival marked a movement among certain groups in the High Anglican Church to reclaim those elements of the early Church that they considered to be Protestantism's true Reformation heritage. The apostolic tradition that they sought to rekindle was often grafted onto a nostalgia for the era of the medieval Church which they, like Disraeli's Young England group, saw as a time of powerful popular religion, an undivided Church and a socially responsible hierarchy of gentry and clergy. With a mission to reach the increasingly urban parishes of industrial Britain the Revivalists stressed both ritual and sacrament and, through poor work and the nursing orders, the holistic role of the priest and piety in the lives of the masses.

In a power/knowledge relation typical of Orientalism scholars of the Anglo-Catholic Revival looked to the current Eastern Churches for a solution to their domestic crisis of faith. Extending their research parameters to include the modern and classical East, they produced the Oriental Church as an object of study for the West; an object that could be extrapolated from its living moment and reconstituted in the form that served the West's current purpose.¹⁴ For Anglo-Catholics striving to recreate an authentically classic Catholic Church the modern Eastern Churches could be viewed as an unmediated expression of patristic religion, a living embodiment of the original Church before the advent of Roman Catholicism. The Oriental Church figures as simultaneously contemporary and archaic, its contemporaneity being

¹⁴Their interest in the writings of the Early Christian Fathers and the modern Eastern Churches was unusual among Anglican scholars of the period. See Rowell.

significant only as an example of its lack of progress. In this instance, the anachronistic culture that the West so frequently found and deplored in the Orient (as a sign of barbarity and lack of progress) is valorized as a commitment to true Christian principles that the West has left behind.

The Oriental Church, both classical and modern, is made to stand as a relatively unchanging incarnation of the European Church's glorious past. Just as the Jews, as we shall see, in Daniel Deronda are presented as an ancient religion and society whose thriving example may illuminate and galvanize the degenerating English, the Eastern Churches are produced as a possible solution for the crisis within British Protestantism. But note that the way the East is seen as providing a way forward rests on its apparent isolation from history, the freeze-frame that presents the nineteenth-century Oriental Church as an uninterrupted, unchanging slice of the first four centuries of the Christian Era. The way forward suggested by the Eastern Church is in fact a way back to an earlier era, couched in terms of a return to former (proto-European) glory.

Despite their insistence to the contrary, the Revivalists were often pilloried as papists and perceived as a threatening Roman intervention into British religious life. This was particularly so after the scare over 'Papal Aggression' in 1850 when Pope Pious IX issued a papal bull restoring the Roman Catholic hierarchy to Britain.¹⁵ Nowhere was this anxiety seen so clearly as in the

¹⁵The size of the opposition to the revival is attested by the establishment and proceedings of the 1867-70 Ritual Commission and the 1874 Public Worship Regulation Act.

opposition to Anglican women's orders where stereotypes about women and Catholicism coalesced to depict women as particularly gullible to the machinations of a grasping Church.

Formed in the 1840s, the female orders developed their nursing role from the 1850s. Despite the evident need for trained nurses - clerics and medics in Britain had been voicing concern about the lack of any English equivalent to the continental Sisters of Mercy or lay Beguines since the 1820s - the Catholic associations of the religious orders were vehemently attacked by opponents.¹⁶ The recognition of the social need for a 'decent' class of devout nursing women (working-class waged nurses, unlike voluntary lady carers, were represented by Nightingale et al as unhygienic, immoral and unskilled)¹⁷ went some way towards clearing a path for the recognition that the spiritual dimensions offered by the nursing sisterhoods (whose recruits were mainly middle and upper class) were also needed, not least because otherwise the aspiring religious would be lost to Rome.

For all that nursing or nunning were conceptualized in relation to women's innate femininity, submission and selfless devotion, they were also seen as a threat to women's divine role as wife and mother. Nursing was

¹⁶The Anglican communities for women were modelled on Continental Roman Catholic orders which were themselves the result of eighteenth-century reworkings of medieval sisterhoods.

¹⁷Anne Summers, 'Pride and Prejudice: Ladies and Nurses in the Crimean War', in History Workshop Journal, no. 16, Autumn, 1983.

developing as both a respectable job for working women (women's entry into the labour market being always understood as an eventuality driven only by dire need) and a high profile philanthropic activity for leisured women.¹⁸ Ostensibly the nuns were able to avoid the anxieties about class and sexual probity that surrounded lay nurses since, as brides of Christ, they were symbolically declassed and morally beyond question.¹⁹ But the evidence that numerous women did find the cloisters an attractive alternative to the bourgeois Christian family threatened the very basis of femininity. Recruitment to the 'Puseyite nunneries' was explained away as brainwashing, a diletante fad for socially sanctioned displays of fashionable and fake piety, and art and literature that appeared to condone the conventual life

¹⁸ There was considerable tension between these two approaches: Nightingale was not only opposed to religious nursing orders but also prioritized the promotion of nursing as a vocation (suitable for the independently wealthy) rather than as a career (motivated by financial concerns). See Summers, Angels and Citizens.

¹⁹ The sisters' vows and status as brides of Christ were an acrimonious issue in the Anglican Church. The concept of the spiritual marriage was too Roman to be acceptable to many Anglican bishops who faced public anxiety on several counts: that vows were Romish and superstitious; that the predominantly young and bourgeois women could not make life choices; that their wealth would accrue to the Church; and that the male mentors of the sisterhoods had an unhealthy hold on their devotees' impressionable minds. See Susan Casteras, 'Virgin Vows: The Early Victorian Artists' Portrayal of Nuns and Novices', in Victorian Studies, no.2, vol.24, Winter 1981.

faced critics ready to pounce on any sign of popery.²⁰ Typical of the mockery faced by the convents are these two extracts, one from Punch's 'Convent of the Belgravians' (1850) and the other from Charles Kinglsey's novel Yeast (1860):

... the costume of the sisterhood will consist of a judicious admixture of the conventual style with the fashion of the day. The Nun will not be obliged to sacrifice her hair, but only to wear it plain, a la Madonna... Absolute seclusion will by no means be enforced; indeed it will be incumbent on the Nuns to appear in society, in order to display the beauty of sanctity.. At the same time, they will renounce the world, in the Belgravian sense...²¹

She had taken up the fancy of becoming a Sister of Charity, not...from any genuine love of the poor, but from a 'sense of duty'... she longed [for]... some signal act of self-sacrifice. She had looked to this nunnery, too, as an escape, once and for all, from her own luxury, just as people who have not strength to be temperate take refuge in teetotalism; and the

²⁰A heated debate about the cloistered life was carried out in fiction where a series of tractarian novels celebrating the spiritual fervour of the convent was rigorously countered by a campaign of anti-Revivalist stories produced by adherents of the Evangelical Churches and scorn from the mainstream. As with any type of literary production in this period, we find many women listed among the authors on both sides. See A. L. Drummond, The Churches in English Fiction, Leicester, 1950.

²¹Punch 19, 19 October 1850 p.163, in Casteras, 'Virgin Vows'.

thought of menial service towards the poor, however distasteful to her, came in quite prettily to fill up the little ideal of a life of romantic asceticism and mystic contemplation, which gave the true charm in her eyes to her wild project.²²

It is evident then, that Browne's pictures, of French Catholic nursing nuns, on display in Britain in 1860, were highly unlikely to be seen as neutral: so how did they come to be so popular? A look at the reception of other representations of nuns in Britain may help us to understand how Browne's were positioned. Nuns were a popular theme in the mid-century; Susan Casteras finds an increase in the frequency of images of nuns and novices in visual art and literature that parallels the development of the Anglican sisterhoods.²³ But not everyone depicted nuns with the same contemporaneity as Browne. The early Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, for example, who were known to have Revivalist connections, painted nuns that were Biblical or medievalist rather than ostensibly

²² Charles Kingsley, Yeast, A Problem, London, 1860.

²³ She finds that although images of nuns in the first three decades of the nineteenth century were not unknown, they were quite rare, whereas from 1839 to the end of the century at least one such subject was on display at the Royal Academy or British Institution every year. Casteras, 'Virgin Vows'.

contemporary.²⁴ Whilst this treatment accorded with their mission to return to the painterly and moral purity that they, like Pugin in architecture, associated with the early masters of the Italian Renaissance, their style and subject choice outraged the aesthetic and religious sensibilities of their critics who saw the new medievalists' emphasis on early (and definitely Catholic) masters as an anti-Protestant aesthetic.²⁵ Critics deplored the Pre-Raphaelite technique, condemning their ugly medievalist perspective as a gruesome departure from the post-Reformation ideal. Targets for such treatment included Rossetti's The Girlhood of Mary Virgin (1849, plate 6), Ecce Ancilla Domini (1850, plate 7), Millais' Christ in the House of His Parents (1850, plate 8) and Charles Collins' Convent Thoughts (1851, plate 9) which had too many Romanist and Tractarian tendencies even for

²⁴ See, Lindsay Errington, Social and Religious Themes in English Art 1848-1860, New York, 1984,
Jan Marsh, Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art, London, 1987,
Susan Casteras, Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art, London, 1987,
Andrea Rose, The Pre-Raphaelites, Oxford, 1977.

²⁵ Members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle were active in the cultural overlap between Gothicism and Anglo-Catholicism in the restructuring and embellishment of the Church; Maria Rossetti translated the Day Hours of the Roman Breviary and Burne-Jones contributed to the new Gothic Church of St. Peter's in Brighton, built in the Roman Catholic manner of Pugin.
See Anson, p.332.

Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites' great champion.²⁶ In contrast, Millais' The Vale of Rest (RA 1859, plate 10) managed to be sufficiently gloomy about convent life to avoid charges of popery (one nun is seen digging what many reviewers took to be her own grave) and sufficiently gracious in its style to avoid charges of medievalist ugliness without giving up the romantic interest in the old Church.²⁷ Evidently, representations of nuns - however obscure the setting or period - were likely to activate the contemporary preoccupation with the Anglican sisterhoods.

There was, as well, a market for visual representations of nuns and novices that were clearly opposed to the female orders. Like their literary equivalents, prints and paintings in this camp portrayed convents as the misguided destination of lovelorn maidens: Alexander Johnston's 1850 (British Institution) painting and Alfred Elmore's 1852 (Royal Academy) canvas, both entitled The Novice (plates 11 and 12), show fashionably buxom maidens entombed in convents gazing wistfully out of windows awaiting rescue. Where Browne pictures nuns as busy middle-aged women, the convent's opponents favoured languishing (beautiful)

²⁶ It was only after being personally assured by Collins that he had ended his association with Anglo-Catholicism that Ruskin revised his opinion and accorded the picture moderate praise. John Ruskin, in The Times, 13 May 1851 and 31 May 1851 quoted in Casteras, 'Virgin Vows', p.173.

²⁷ Although the Athenaeum comments on the 'awkwardness and weakness of the woman using the unaccustomed spade' and the nuns' 'hard and painful faces', I take this to be an approving interpretation of these details as criticism of the hardships of conventual life. The Athenaeum, 1859, p.586.

novices and postulants whose probationary status left open the possibility that they might change their mind.²⁸ What is surprising, then, given this level of xenophobia and anti-Catholic feeling - both the Athenaeum and the Art Journal responded favourably to the anti-conventual sentiments of Elmore's painting²⁹ - is that nothing negative is made of the Catholicity of Browne's nuns. It is clear that they were recognized as being from a French Catholic nursing order, despite the confusion over their affiliation, but they are nonetheless read as perfect expressions of Christian humility and devotion - not at all the repressed harpies or misguided girls represented elsewhere. Where, as we shall see, the English Woman's Journal marks them as other in terms of their Catholicism, the art press is astoundingly neutral in its reading of Browne's nuns, reserving its national slurs for the failures of her French painting technique - a transmogrification of a religious dispute into aesthetics that, for all its prejudice, has nothing like the venom directed at British supporters of Anglican female orders. Susan Casteras suggests that British artists tended to represent nuns as vaguely Catholic or medieval in order to share in the heightened interest in the subject aroused by the controversies over the Anglo-Catholic Revival without being damaged by accusations of Tractarianism.³⁰ In this light, the specifically French Catholic significations of Browne's pictures, though suppressed by the Athenaeum and the Art Journal, start to function as markers of a difference that, rather than being threatening signs of a

²⁸ Casteras, Images, p.178.

²⁹ See Casteras, 'Virgin Vows', pp.174-5.

³⁰ Casteras, 'Virgin Vows', pp.180-2.

Roman incursion, are precisely what makes a pleasure in the painting possible. The routine disapproval of Catholicism is projected onto a nationally inflected critique of Browne's style which establishes the pictures' foreignness sufficiently to re-present them to a British gaze. Conversely, in the English Woman's Journal and Kingsley reviews, where discourses of national schools of art are more marginal,³¹ the signification of otherness returns to the subject, rather than style, of the painting and the nuns themselves re-surface as a trope of difference and alienness.

In France as well as the traditional market for religious subjects, nuns and religiosity, along with the peasantry, took on a new currency in the mid-century debate over naturalism, associated with the new realism and radical subject choice of Courbet and the Independents, or Impressionists. As Linda Nochlin suggests, the construction of a new type of religious painting in this period rested on the representation of the religious life of peasants whose relationship to religion was understood as fundamental to their significance for the nation: whether they figured as radical revolutionaries or steadfast serfs, religion and religiosity were clues to their collective identity and political affiliations.³² Structurally the peasantry are propelled into the place of

³¹The English Woman's Journal says little about the paintings themselves and Kingsley acknowledges, but overrides, theories of national artistic difference in his search for the universal Ideal in art.

³²See Linda Nochlin, Realism, Harmondsworth, 1987, pp.82-88, and Theodore Zeldin, France 1848-1945, vol II, Intellect, Taste and Anxiety, Oxford, 1977, Section 20, Part III.

the Orient in the schematic Occident/Orient divide: they are both irredeemably different and similar, acting as a key site for the production of meanings that always relate back to the dominant discourses of urbanity and nation just as all 'truths' about the Orient can be seen to function in relation to the Occident. The rural population was on one hand constructed as archaic, superstitious, colourful, quaint and conservative, living a life governed by ancient customs and beliefs, or on the other as rebellious, desperate and radical in a political debate between conservative and liberal critics that traversed the Academy and the avant-garde.³³

Whereas in France there was a clearly understood difference between the academic painters of peasants (Hébert, Frere, Dagnan-Bouveret) and the avant-garde (Courbet, Millet, Breton), British critics often mix together the different types of peasant painter, minimizing the differences between, for example, Millet and Breton's extollation of rural labour and Hébert's picturesque poverty, to present a group of artists as generically French. Thus Browne, who does not figure in

³³ See, Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, 'Les Données Bretonnantes: La Prairie de Représentation' in Art History vol. 3, no. 3, September 1980,
Griselda Pollock, 'Van Gogh and the Poor Slaves: Images of Rural Labour as Modern Art', in Art History, vol. 11, no. 3, September 1988,
Michael Orwitz, 'Criticism and Representations of Brittany in the Early Third Republic', in Art Journal, vol. 46, no. 4, Winter, 1987,
Nicholas Green, The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France, Manchester, 1990.

the French art press as a significant figure in either the battle over realist technique or peasant subjects, is often cited amongst a group of French naturalist painters in the British press. Despite her detailed and naturalistic style, and although much of her early oeuvre included scenes of the peasantry and religion (for example the poor rural children in The Catechism, Salon 1857, plate 13, and A Brother of The Christian School, The School For The Poor at Aix, and Mutual Instruction in the Salon and Exposition Universelle of 1855), she has more in common with an older tradition of domestic genre than with Courbet's attempt to put rural labour on the the map of history painting. The Art Journal in 1862 identifies her as a naturalist and in 1868 reviews her in a group of other naturalist painters including Breton, Millet, Hebert and Frere, claiming that 'no apology can be needed for so doing, seeing that she paints not the smallest accessory without placing nature before her eyes'.³⁴

The relatively marginal status of her work in France is particularly interesting given the seminal status of images of religion and the peasantry in the debate over the nation's morals. Although the nineteenth century in France is often presented as a period of anti-clericalism much of the population was still religious, or at least outwardly observant, if not devout. Scenes of religion and religious life touched on a debate about religiosity that was as concerned with the Church's changing role in French politics as it was with the decline in national piety and morality; Theodore Zeldin suggests that the Church's history of support for Right wing regimes was a greater motivation for popular anti-clericalism than specific

³⁴The Art Journal, May 1868, p.53. See also Art Journal 1862, p.166 and 1868, p.12.

religious disputes. For supporters of Church and Papal power, the Second Empire under Louis Napoleon, who had been steadily increasing the Church's power in the French state, looked optimistic until his plans for a Papal Confederation failed in 1859.³⁵

The French reception of the early works

Although the British tended to remark on The Sisters of Charity's strong moral message, the French Catholic press do not include Browne among their lists of notable religious painters in their 1859 Salon reviews, despite their emphasis on viewers valuing a painting's moral content above a pleasure in technique.³⁶ Gillette-Dammitte, for example, in the Revue catholique has no qualms about assessing the Christian interest of the fine arts at the Salon of 1859, but his joys at the splendours of the exhibition are tempered by the small proportion of religious paintings on display.

Of the 3,045 pictures, we counted about 220 which relate to Religion, that is, on average nearly 1 religious picture to 10 profane pictures.³⁷

³⁵ See J.P.T. Bury, France 1814-1940, London, 1985, pp. 79-97.

³⁶ The Christian press regularly reviewed the Salon, and although not all titles covered it each year, the recurrence of the same writers in different publications suggests that there was an elite of Christian writers specializing in art criticism.

³⁷ Gillet-Damitte, 'L'Art chrétien au Salon de 1859', in Revue catholique, 1859, pp.168-73. This, and all subsequent translations, is mine unless otherwise indicated.

The identification of other pictures as profane indicates the central problem for this review: namely how to differentiate between aesthetic and moral achievement - should profane as well as religious pictures be counted as good art? (The combination of moral and technical attributes that merit praise includes good painterly skills, sentiment and a sense of inspiration in the depiction of the faces of the saints and most particularly 'l'accent religieux et traditionnel dans les figures du Christ, de la très-sainte Vierge'.) His selection includes portraits of the clergy by Regnier, Dupin and Delaroche and scenes from the lives of Christ and the saints by numerous artists (several of them female), but no mention of Browne.³⁸ This omission of The Sisters of Charity, a moral subject which clearly did attract public attention, is surprising. It is obviously considered to be neither on the first rung of religious painting nor a danger to the faithful.

In the French art press, little is made of the painting's

³⁸ Françoise Beslay in Revue d'économie chrétienne in 1861 responds to the depressed state of religious painting by suggesting that artists abandon the old common subjects (descent from the cross etc.) and seek inspiration from new motifs and techniques. He recommends the subjects and techniques of not only traditional but also avant-garde artists including Courbet (apparently no longer radical by 1861), Dore, Millet and Chavannes. In 1861, the year that her harem scenes gained such prominence in the Salon, Browne is mentioned only in a short notice under genre, and that concentrates on the innocuous and pretty La Consolation. Françoise Beslay, 'Salon de 1861', in Revue d'économie chrétienne, 1861, pp. 490-514.

moral subject either. Browne merits attention mainly as the female producer of a work that has caught the public eye and the painting's themes are often only glancingly referenced. For example, in the honourable mention given to Browne in L'Artiste (1859) gender is obviously a key reason for notice.

Her portrait of M. de G. is treated with a hand of a delicate and nearly virile touch. Madame Browne is, I do believe, the most gifted and clever women artist that we have at the moment. The Sisters of Charity, in which the work is less apparent than in the portrait, holds the first rung in what we call today light painting [la peinture claire]. The sick child who figures in the picture is of fair and masterly execution.³⁹

The oscillation between masculine and feminine qualities in her technique (delicate and virile, fair and masterly) and the desire to secure her as a woman artist clearly take precedence over any discussion of the painting's moral content. Théophile Gautier, writing in Le Moniteur universel, offers a gendered reading of both artist and content.

We will not give away the real name which is hidden in the anglicized pseudonym of Henriette Browne; a modesty resistant to success doubtless has reasons which must be respected. The Sisters of Charity has caught public attention, if often distracted. A young sister, whose charming figure is illuminated by the white sheen of her large winged head-dress, holds on

³⁹A. de Belloy, 'Salon de 1859', in L'Artiste, vol. 6, 24 April 1859, pp.257-259.

her knees, a sick young child... An older religious stands near a table strewn with phials and pharmaceutical ingredients, preparing a medicine for the poor baby, all morose and worried on the young religious' lap: because in the end a sister of charity is not totally a mother. She will also be of service to another child who is in her charge...The figures in the painting are of natural grandeur...⁴⁰

The prominence Gautier gives to Browne's anonymity amplifies both the secret of her real identity and the gender of the artist, whose modesty, like that of any lady must be respected. The rather arch tone of his introduction, indicates that her real identity is no secret to him and hints that she is a public personage of some status. This position doubtless adds to his reasons for noticing her, but the review is clear that the painting is popular and has artistic merit.⁴¹

The painting's artistic value is understood to be intrinsically bound up with gender - of the artist and of the subject. The review simultaneously describes the nuns in the terminology of femininity and places them outside

⁴⁰Théophile Gautier, 'Exposition de 1859', in Le Moniteur universel, September 1859, p.831.

⁴¹Although Gautier moved in elevated court and artistic circles and was noted for the inclusiveness of his reviews, rarely leaving anyone out, he cannot be dismissed as a sycophant; his reviews were accessible, widely read and profoundly influential.

See Joseph Sloane, French Painting Between the Past and the Present: Artists, Critics and Traditions from 1848-1870, Princeton, 1951, chs. 2 and 7.

of it. They are described in the terms by which women are conventionally judged; age, appearance and physical attractiveness, but the young nun, to whose 'charming figure' we are directed, is located within a discourse of the picturesque and the exotic, presented as something out of the ordinary and not in the usual mode of feminine beauty. This is borne out by the subsequent remarks about how the sisters' care for the child is different from that of a mother - their innate spark of maternity is, in fact, prohibited by their holy vows. One of the problems presented by this canvas is that it lends itself to being read as the feminine work of a woman artist at the same time as it raises questions about the nature of women's work and their relationship to the labour market. In Britain, where most nuns were middle-class, such displays of maternal solicitude could be incorporated into the idea that it was only middle-class women who were naturally inclined to the higher points of good mothering which, whilst not minimizing the orders' threat to gender roles, at least allowed treasured ideas of class difference to remain intact. In France, where the clergy (male and female) were recruited from lower social orders and where nursing orders were more established, the concept of the sisters as hired help (one who will serve many children) was less contentious, but the interplay between the duplicate demands of family and religion continued.

In Journal des desmoiselles Noémie Cadiot, writing under the male pseudonym of Claude Vignon, is overtly concerned with the gender of the artist, making only passing reference to the moral value of the paintings.

[Henriette Browne] is well enough despite inevitably mixed praise, this year her critical success has been less than her public success. It is said, that when a woman joins the crowd and distinguishes herself, she must pay for her success; while the public, the real

public, the one that goes to the Salon in search of a pleasurable time among admirable subjects, stops in front of madame Browne's pictures, the artists and judges aim acerbic praise at her, slip a barb in the guise of a caress, drawing parallels between her and certain prickly rejects [artistes hérrissés et refusés], giving her the worst of it by insinuation.⁴²

The main thrust of her argument is the gender inequality of Browne's reception and she asserts the validity of Browne's claim to fame by constructing an alternative 'popular' public whose taste is held to be more discerning than that of the august jury and art world. The construction of this other public introduces another protagonist into the diatribes commonly levelled at the Salon jury by reviewers. In this case the public serves to justify Vignon's estimation of Browne, whose works are only signalled and not discussed in detail. The reader is invited to identify with this appeal to a popular public, who see the Salon as a source of entertainment and edification, just as her young lady readers might regard Journal des desmoiselles.

The readership of Journal des desmoiselles was young, unmarried women who could afford to subscribe to what must have been a costly journal whose contents indicate an affluent female, but not (proto) feminist, bourgeois

⁴²Claude Vignon, 'Causerie artistique:Salon de 1859', in Journal des desmoiselles, June and July 1859, p.193.

readership.⁴³ Many of the named contributors are female, some like Claude Vignon are male pseudonyms and others are definitely male. Being neither an art journal nor a political paper, Journal des desmoiselles readers will not be expected to have a personal stake in the machinations of the art world - what is assumed to concern them is the treatment of a woman, not the internal disputes of the Academy.

How then, does this assault on misogyny in the Salon fit into the profile of what is, on the whole, an unremarkable magazine for young ladies full of respectable articles,

⁴³ Every issue has fashion plates, reproduced in colour, and paper patterns for dress making, embroidery and lace making: the fashion plates are the height of fashion, the articles are of an edifying and respectable tone, and the presence of musical scores, embroidery patterns and so on would be appropriate for leisured women adopting the accomplishments associated with the cultured young lady. On one hand, that the tapestry designs are reproduced on canvas in colour points to the magazine as an expensive and therefore luxury commodity affordable only to the very wealthy, but on the other, the presence of paper patterns suggests a middle bourgeois reader who either makes her own clothes or takes patterns to a dressmaker. (A member of the haute-bourgeoisie would patronize a couturier who would not use prepared standard patterns.) I am indebted to Kate Stockwell for this last point.

Whilst Bellanger includes Journal des desmoiselles in his list of 'la presse enfantine', I think we can safely assume its readership to have been young and adolescent women, rather than actual children. The dress designs are for adults and Vignon's comments about marriage in a later issue indicate the assumed proximity of such an event in her readers' lives.

trivia and advice? One way of ascertaining this is to look at what Vignon wrote in other publications. For example, in her 1861 Salon review for Le Correspondent - a more intellectual review journal of current affairs, philosophy and art - she adopts a serious tone dwelling on aesthetic debates in the assumption that these readers are familiar with the Salon and its concerns. In contrast, her contribution to that year's (1861) Journal des demoiselles is chatty and gossipy in tone, diminishing art world developments to the level of domestic events in the readers' lives rather elevating the readers to play a part in an intellectual aesthetic discourse.

This is my third time, mesdemoiselles, to talk to you about the Salon...but like art, things here change, maybe my readers from 1857 are already married [etc]...⁴⁴

It is possible therefore, that the discussion of discrimination against Browne in Journal des demoiselles can be accounted for as a way of capturing the young readers' interest. Few critics considered Browne's gender to be immaterial: reviews in vastly different locations reference it one way or another and also criticize the inequality of the Salon judging (see the Art Journal review discussed in chapter four). Vignon is able to take the judges to task in 1859 on the grounds of popular support for Browne, posing the diatribe as a general rally against injustice and self-interest rather than as a political demand for equality. As we shall see, her own reading of Browne's Orientalist paintings relies on a specifically gendered author, so we must not interpret

⁴⁴Vignon, Claude, 'Course à travers le Salon', in Journal des demoiselles, June 1861, pp.161-166.

this 1859 review as a demand for the abolition of gender as a criteria of critical judgement but as a demand, couched in the prevailing terms of gender, for a fair judgement of the reviewer's favoured artists.

The establishment of Browne's artistic identity in Britain

The themes set up by these initial reviews of The Sisters of Charity were consolidated in the early 1860s by two reviews of Browne which crystallized, for the British reader, the definition of the artist and her oeuvre. A long profile of Browne in the English Woman's Journal in 1860 enhanced her reputation and established her as a paradigmatically ladylike artist prior to the potentially risqué subjects of the Orientalist paintings,⁴⁵ and Charles Kingsley's review of The Sisters of Charity, on the occasion of its second showing at Gambart's in 1863, provided what was to become an influential interpretation of the artist and her work. (It is Kingsley that Mrs Clement quotes in 1904.)

The English Woman's Journal, associated with the Bodichon/Boucheret feminist set of Langham Place, was a campaigning periodical that included profiles of prominent and creative women and female figures of the day alongside reports on women's legal status, education and employment opportunities, married women's property, female

⁴⁵See Yeldham, p.345.

emigration, charity work and poetry and fiction.⁴⁶

The article on Browne, by an author known only as A.B., sets out a portrait of Browne as a professional artist.⁴⁷ But, at the same time as it relies on her gentility in its portrayal of her as the perfect working wife and mother, it is haunted by the spectre of her equally genteel mother brought into pecuniary hardship and stresses the importance of women's ability to be financially independent. For a journal that assumes a mainly middle and upper-class readership (the poor occur only as the recipients of middle-class philanthropy) the spectre of the impoverished aristocrat was one of the staple real-life nightmares that the supporters of women's financial independence relied upon to make their case. Browne's story thus serves as both a success story and a warning.

...this excellent mother... never lost sight of the importance to women, even in comparatively easy circumstances, of possessing some honourable and certain means of making money... such a reverse she

⁴⁶Founded in 1858, the Journal joined the Alexandria Magazine to become the Englishwoman's Review in 1866 which ran until 1910. Although the later Review adopted a current affairs, short report format, the Journal was more in the tradition of the review periodical with long features and greater arts coverage. Doughan and Sanchez cite a circulation of five hundred for the Journal but estimate that the actual readership was much greater. See David Doughan and Denise Sanchez, Feminist Periodicals 1855-1984, Brighton, 1989, item 4.

⁴⁷A.B., 'Madame Henriette Browne', the English Woman's Journal, April 1 1860, pp.85-92.

naturally regarded as most improbable in her daughter's case; but taught by her own experience, she regarded it in principle as a positive duty for every woman, no matter what may be her position or prospects, to be prepared for such a possible contingency.⁴⁸

The review, which begins by stressing Browne's impeccable lineage, gentility and present position as wife of a well-known diplomat, is faced with the problem of insisting on the artist's talent and diligence without compromising her as perfect wife, mother, hostess and, above all, lady. At this point in the narrative we begin to see the contradictions inherent in the English Woman's Journal's (classed) feminist reworking of discourses of labour and art. Whilst the first insists on the necessity of women's financial independence and ability to earn a living, the second wants to secure a status for art that is beyond the alienation of wage labour. It here that the class status of the subject Browne takes a narrative ascendancy over a feminist discourse supporting the respectability of (certain kinds of) labour. Aristocratic connections and wealth serve to free the artist from any taint of financial motivation: Browne is a woman trained in a profession, but one who fortunately has no need of its wages. At this stage the counterclaims of an art discourse intervene again to demand a defence of the artist's professionalism against the gendered charges of dilettantism and fashionable dabbling that she so frequently faced.

Cultivating painting from the pure and simple love of art, apart from the ordinary incentives of ambition

⁴⁸A.B., 1860, pp.86-7.

and pecuniary gain... [Henriette Browne is] of a remarkably modest and retiring disposition, devoted to her family and her home, and prizing the sympathy of friends far more than the applause of strangers, she has scrupulously kept her personality in the background...⁴⁹

Browne is represented as holding herself aloof from the 'stormy precincts' of the art world and as leading, apart from her painting, 'the ordinary life of a woman of this nineteenth century in the higher walks of social existence'. The presentation of Browne as a self-effacing and proper society matron is almost too much for the writer's liking:

Unaffectedly modest and simple in all things, and regarding the domestic circle almost too exclusively as the peculiar sphere of women's action, Madame Henriette Browne is especially noticeable for the utter absence of all pretension...⁵⁰

The contradiction of the position artist/woman, or more correctly artist/lady, is evident in the detailed portrait of Browne that follows. Having made a case for her absolute and unremarkable normality, the writer now tries to weld onto this a female version of the artist/genius persona and begins by listing the artist's manifold talents.

From her childhood Madame Henriette Brown has been noted for her skilful fingers,... she [is] au fait at

⁴⁹A.B., 1860, p.85.

⁵⁰A.B., 1860, p.88.

every species of cutting out and sewing; able, if she saw a bonnet that pleased her in a shop window, to go home and make one like it; but she is also a fair upholsterer, fully equal to the task of putting up curtains, covering chairs and sofas,... can paper a room, and has a knack at all sorts of domestic carpentering.⁵¹

Note that the description of her prodigious skills is, in the case of a female practitioner, carefully associated with the domestic. Unlike the popular image of the male artist, Browne's plethora of skills and excess of creative energy lead her to home improvement, not to a diversification into other activities rated as serious art. Indeed, in the review her venture into the realm of art is characterized by the same 'complete and orderly practicality' that she adopts in the domestic.

Having devoted the morning to superintending her household affairs... she makes her toilet for the walk or visits of the afternoon, and proceeds... to her atelier... She there takes off her bonnet, puts on a pair of gloves which lie ready beside her easel, and works at a picture for a couple of hours, without even turning up her sleeves or putting on the least bit of an apron. And so neat and methodical is she in all she does, that to this day she has never dropped a particle of paint, never made the slightest speck or smear, on any part of her dress while painting. About four o'clock... the artist lays aside her palette, wipes her brushes, exchanges her painting-gloves (without which she never touches a brush) for a pair of spotless kid, resumes her

⁵¹A.B., 1860, p.89.

bonnet, and goes off to take a walk, pay visits...⁵²

The review's approval of Browne's scrupulous attention to the details of dress signals the heightened importance of these markers of class, and thus respectability, in the face of her possibly demeaning manual activities as a professional painter. By exhibiting and selling her work Browne clearly refuses the status of accomplishment artist but must still hold herself above the taints of the art market. This is where these details of personal appearance (the gloves, the bonnet)⁵³ come in as signs of her femininity that minimize, or compensate for, her deviation

⁵²A.B., 1860, p.89.

⁵³Gloves were a key signifier of female respectability, featuring large as a sign of embourgeoisement in the diaries of Hannah Cullwick, a working-class woman who had a cross-class relationship with the middle-class Arthur Munby. Though they generally met in secret, her diaries speak at great length about the necessity, and inconvenience, of wearing gloves and other restrictive items of ladylike apparel on the occasions when in public she passed as his companion, and not his servant.

See, Liz Stanley (ed), The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick. Victorian Maidservant, London, 1984, p.266, Davidoff, 'Class and Gender', Heather Dawkins, 'The Diaries and Photographs of Hannah Cullwick' in Art History, vol.10, no. 2, June 1987.

from the ladylike model of art as a leisure pursuit.⁵⁴

The significance of this obsessive detailing of dress and personal habit is illustrated by the lengths to which the English Woman's Journal went in 1858 to try to present as similarly respectable and feminine the transgressive persona and activities of Rosa Bonheur. Bonheur, unlike the eminently respectable Browne, never married but travelled and worked with her companion Nathalie Micas and, further, was notorious for wearing men's clothing during sketching visits to horse fairs and cattle

⁵⁴It is clear that many women in public life gave serious thought to the matter of personal style, using it to create a preferred image, be it arty, respectable or serious. As Cherry points out, whilst dress and demeanour would of course have signified to men, it was other women who were the most informed and acute observers of each others' style, as is suggested by the detailed tone of the English Woman's Journal. Cherry, Painting Women, pp.83-9.

markets.⁵⁵ The English Woman's Journal tries to take the sting out of Bonheur's transgressive dress and life-style by justifying both as signs of her dedication to her art, describing her approach to both leisure and work wear as being similarly utilitarian and disinterested in fripperies. By presenting Bonheur as a woman for whom dress is merely functional the text, which nonetheless devotes much space to her appearance, tries to free her from the overloaded significance of attire.

[Bonheur has] a compact, shapely figure... true artist's hands, small delicate, nervous; and extremely pretty little feet. She dresses very plainly, the only colours worn by her being black, brown or grey; and her costume consisting invariably of a close fitting jacket and a skirt of simple material...She wears none of the usual articles of

⁵⁵We know this relationship was often remarked on, for Gambart, who was apparently protective of the Bonheur/Micas relationship went to some trouble to quash rumours. It is impossible to know if this was a knowing defence of a lesbian relationship or a chivalrous protection of what he saw as an irreproachable friendship. See Alfred Boime, 'The Case of Rosa Bonheur: Why Should a Woman Want to be More Like a Man?', in Art History vol.4, no.4, December 1981, and Maas, pp.75-80.

On romantic friendships and lesbian history see, Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women From the Renaissance to the Present, New York 1981, Martha Vicinus, '"They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong?": The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity', in Altman et al. (eds) Which Homosexuality?, London, 1989.

feminine adornment; not from contempt of them, but simply because the elegant trifles so dear to womankind are so utterly foreign to her thoughts and occupations, that even to put them on, would be, to her, a forced and unnatural proceeding. When at her easel, she wears a sort of round pinafore or blouse of grey linen, that envelops her from the neck to the feet.⁵⁶

This picture of a woman in overalls is very different from that of Browne working neatly in her afternoon dress. Bonheur's male attire at the cattle market is rationalized as

... a precaution she found necessary to adopt, both as a convenience, and still more as a protection against the annoyances that would have rendered it impossible for her to mingle in such gatherings in feminine costume.⁵⁷

Despite the review's sympathies for Bonheur, the difficulties of her cross-dressing and disregard for appearance produce confusions in the text. It is essential that it secure her as beautiful in some way - her 'pretty little feet' - despite the trouble to which this leads when trying to tiptoe round the tranvestism of her public persona.

Her good looks... in the assumed character of a youth of the sterner sex, would sometimes make sad havoc in the susceptible hearts of village dairy maids; under

⁵⁶A.B., 'Rosa Bonheur: An Authorised Memoir', in the English Woman's Journal, vol.1, no.4, June 1858, p.229.

⁵⁷A.B., 1858, p.238.

which head certain laughable incidents might be narrated.⁵⁸

Such mistakes are presented as laughable and therefore dismissable: presumably the attitude we are meant to adopt when we read that both Bonheur and Micas adopt male dress when travelling in remote regions on sketching excursions.⁵⁹ The humorous reference to Bonheur's sexual identity (and orientation) attempts to diffuse the problems of representing the Bonheur/Micas relationship. The text uses the presence of Micas' mother to assure the respectability of Bonheur's household and even sidelines the Bonheur/Micas relationship into a sub-clause of the arrangement with Madame Micas.

Living solely for her art, she has gladly resigned the care of her outward existence to an old and devoted friend Madame Micas, a widow lady, who, with her daughter - an artist, whose exquisite groups of birds are well known in England, and who has been for many years Rosa's most intimate companion - resides with her, relieving her of every material responsibility...⁶⁰

Whereas Browne is presented as prioritizing home over art, Bonheur's refusal of household responsibilities moves her

⁵⁸ A.B., 1858, p.238.

⁵⁹ According to Boime, Bonheur habitually wore male attire at home as well and broke other codes of female behaviour, such as driving her own carriage etc. Boime, 'The Case of Rosa Bonheur'.

⁶⁰ A.B., 1858, p.242.

part way into a symbolically male space in keeping with the new model of the single minded existential artist. The convoluted logic deployed to somehow present Bonheur within dominant definitions of the feminine highlights how relatively unproblematic was Browne's gender identity. Compare the description of Bonheur's attire with this glowing report of Browne's grasp of the intricacies of female fashion.

The same natural and unstudied simplicity which forms so striking a feature of this lady's character, distinguishes her personal appearance, and gives a peculiar cachet even to her style of dress. She never wears a mixture either of materials or of colours; and whether her dress be of velvet, or of muslin, it is always of the same material and the same hue throughout...she is always conspicuous above all others for a certain undefinable grace and harmony of appearance which are too often wanting in costlier and more elaborate toilets.⁶¹

This vision of elegant loveliness is important in the English Woman's Journal not only for the glow it throws on Browne's aristocratic femininity, but also because by emphasizing the responsibility of her taste and judgement it pre-empts challenges over her rather dubious conduct in the affair of the nun's habit for The Sisters of Charity.

Browne, whose principle of painting only from observation was well known, encountered enormous difficulties in obtaining permission to study the order's habit (it being out of the question that a real sister might pose for her). After spending over a year in negotiations, she was

⁶¹A.B., 1860, p.89 (original emphasis).

'permitted to have the use - at her own house, for a few days only - of the complete costume of a Sister of Charity, to put upon a lay-figure [mannequin] which she had had prepared expressly for that occasion'.⁶² A.B.'s account of the artist's persistence in this matter ostensibly shows Browne's dedication as an artist, but the incidentals of the story reveal the writer's anti-Catholic feelings and the extent to which Browne's aristocratic position is used to forgive and even applaud her subsequent conduct. The nuns themselves are represented as worthy but needlessly superstitious and described in terms laden with negative overtones.

[the nun's costume] is so familiar to every resident of Paris; the quaint poke-bonnet of snowy linen, so miraculously starched, and brought into shape by the aid of such wonderfully inserted pins, with its white flaps standing out like sheltering pent-houses above the shoulders of the dark grey figures, whose serge gowns are to be seen gliding at every hour of the day, and in every direction, through the streets of Paris; with their long open sleeves, their heavy flat folds that fall so straight and so obedient to the primitive crease impressed on them by their maker; relieved by the white collar, the rosary and crucifix, and the kindly and generally pleasing faces of their excellent and devoted wearers.⁶³

The description that ostensibly praises the ceaseless good works of the sisters is worded like a tourist's description of picturesque folk 'costume'. Note the

⁶²A.B., 1860, pp.90-91.

⁶³A.B., 1860, p.90.

'quaint' bonnet, the 'primitive' creases and the patronizing account of the artistry of the 'miraculously' starched bonnets and their 'wonderfully' inserted pins. Just as in Villette the Roman Catholic Church is characterized as devious, archaic and dangerously powerful, for the Journal's English readership the French religious are situated as generically other in terms of nation and religion, collapsing the differences over religious subjects and techniques that were so controversial in France. The terms 'obedient' and 'primitive' may be used to apply to the folds of the habit, but they could just as well refer to their inhabitants whose endless gliding through every quarter of the city suggests the pervasive power of a primitive Church whose hold over the obedient faithful lets it mould them into whichever creases or shapes it wishes. In a climate fearful of Papal incursions into British society, the review's confusing image of the Sisters as both exemplary nurses and primitive believers begins to make sense. The nuns' refusal to sit for their portrait is presented as misguided if not insincere;

[they have] an invincible repugnance to sitting for their portrait - which they regard as a vain act, and contrary to "the Christian humility and abnegation" they profess...⁶⁴

which clears the way for a positive representation of Browne's decision to flout the conditions laid down for the use of the habit.

Madame Henriette Brown, however, not being able to get the lay-figure into just the attitudes she

⁶⁴A.B., 1860, p.90.

wanted, her friend at last boldly donned the long-sought vestments, and, thus arrayed, sat for the various figures introduced into the picture. This sacrilegious substitution was, of course, kept a profound secret; the "Sister" to whose use the objects confided to the artist were destined, as well as the Superiors by whose permission they had been at last obtained, remaining in happy ignorance of the fact that they had been desecrated by being placed upon the person of a woman of the world.⁶⁵

Such a breach of contract is seen as perfectly acceptable on three counts: firstly, the preceding comments about the sisters indicate that their regard for the habit is excessive and superstitious and, moreover, that their motives are not entirely to be believed; secondly, the image of the worthy, well-liked and above all respected Browne allows that no dishonour be attached to her most honourable name; and thirdly, that the Church almost deserved it, because the artist was led into such a misdemeanour by her scrupulous painting practice, a loyalty to truth that the Church had impeded at every step.

Charles Kingsley, whose view of the nuns differently stresses their otherness, sees the painting's moral message as proof of Browne's own righteousness. Kingsley, who might be expected to oppose both the subject and style of Browne's paintings (he was an Anglican minister noted for his opposition to female orders and a writer and critic known for his disapproval of the Pre-Raphaelites's

⁶⁵A.B., 1860, p.91.

departure from the Academic ideal),⁶⁶ turns out to be one of her greatest supporters. Where the English Woman's Journal reveals an Orientalist schema of otherness within the differentiation of European nations and religions, Kingsley directly invokes ideologies of racial difference through the application of degeneracy and evolutionary theories to art. Art, which should aim to represent the ideal in nature to which Man should aspire, has no place to represent disease - something which appears even or 'especially in civilized nations'. But before he proceeds to explain why Browne's depiction of the sick room is acceptable he delivers a polemic on the function of racial difference in the artistic representation of the ideal. He naturalizes an evolutionary hierarchy of race to endorse the Black as a pure form within nature whilst simultaneously relegating him to the bottom of the scale.

Imperfect development may be, of course, [a proper subject] provided the imperfection be that of a whole genus, not an individual. High art deals principally with generic forms; nothing individual or personal is allowed in it, it interferes with the generic type; much less anything aberrant or degraded. Thus, a healthy negro may not be so high in the scale of humanity as a deformed white man; but he is, as far as he goes, healthy and what he ought to be by nature, and therefore beautiful; and therefore a proper subject for high art, While the deformed white man, not being what he ought to be, is ugly, and

⁶⁶See Errington.

therefore an improper subject.⁶⁷

Kingsley upholds Browne as one whose technique, the result as much of innate good taste as of talent, has found a middle way between the idealists and the realists.

The picture which is the best modern instance of this happy hitting of the golden mean, whereby beauty and homely fact are perfectly combined, is, in my eyes, Henrietta [sic] Browne's picture of the Sick Child and the Sisters of Charity... I believe that it will surely be ranked hereafter among the very highest works of modern art.

..in all this there is nothing painful. No contortion, no trace of acute suffering.. Neither is there any element of ugliness; the child has been, and will be again, a pretty child...A child, into whatsoever attitude the limbs may fall, is seldom or never ungraceful, owing to the great suppleness of the ligaments, which allow each limb to take instantaneously the most easy, which again is certain to be the most graceful, attitude. Ungracefulness, it must be remembered, is always a mere sin in the painter, proceeding either from wilfulness, carelessness, or ignorance of the true anatomy of the human body... For ungracefulness is the product of deformity... The average savage of every race, like the wild beast, is always graceful in body, however

⁶⁷ (Reverend) Charles Kingsley, 'Henrietta Browne's Picture of The Sisters of Charity', in Fine Arts Quarterly Review, no.1, vol.1, May 1863, pp.299-300.

low in brain.⁶⁸

In an aesthetic in which realism reflects the reality of the world as an evolutionary theatre, race and gender are integral defining terms. The nun is itemized as a separate category of woman, a sub-group with a distinct physiognomy and temperament which, like the healthy savage, is beautiful in itself as an example of type.

It is in the nuns that Madame Browne's power of painting the actual fact without shocking us by a disagreeable line, or suggestion, is shown most perfectly. We have all seen nuns painted; nuns like ghosts, nuns like navigators, nuns like witches, nuns like nothing at all; but here are real nuns; and not mere nuns, but sisters of charity.

[A conception] so perfect, that it can have been gained only by long personal acquaintance with that good class, and no less by the woman's instinct, enabling her to understand women, and to read many things in countenances, which to the world would seem as impassive and common place as these two sisters' faces seem... one remarks the impassivity, the absence of emotion. The younger nun's face, as she looks down on her charge, has in it no tenderness, no pity... Theirs is the true nun-nature, in which (rightly or wrongly, no matter) passion has been long since driven out as useless and dangerous, and emotion, or indeed any exhibition of personal self-will, has been systematically repressed by a life of discipline. Therefore they have (and in catching that expression Madame Browne has shown her extraordinary

⁶⁸Kingsley, 1863, p.303.

genius) that peculiar look which marks the self-inspecting and over-meditative pietist; inward, self-repressed, meditative, hanging on the verge of slyness, and yet not slyness in those whose hearts are pure, though too likely to become such in those whose hearts are not; a look which was common enough in England in Puritan days, but which can only be seen here now in the countenances of some Quaker or Wesleyan women.

It would have been easy for Madame Browne to have excited a little sentiment by making them emaciated, hollow-eyed, and so forth. But she has been too true to fact and nature to do anything of the kind. The two look, at first sight, two fat comfortable ladies. Their stoutness (as their colourless complexions indicate) is that which is so often produced in ladies of their class... not altogether healthy, it may be, but with a pleasant softness and fairness of its own. This softness and fairness takes off (as was needed) from the primness of their dress, and the studied, almost stiff attitude, so common in persons under perpetual self-restraint.⁶⁹

To legitimate its claims the review relies on the essential qualities attributed to the child, the variation of femininity constructed for the nuns (significantly at odds with those who see the nuns as surrogate mothers) and the racial determinism of the 'savage'. These three figures (child, woman, savage) stand as emblems for different stages of evolution and, in the case of the negro, as a different genus if not species. In Kingsley's hierarchy the white boy child has every chance of acceding

⁶⁹Kingsley, 1863, pp.304-6.

to the sovereignty due to Western rationality, the woman less, the negro none. Browne's ability to draw out the noble essences of these three types is proof of her moral stature as well as her talent. For once, in an assessment of her skill as an artist, gender is relatively immaterial.

[T]o paint such pictures ... the artist must be a good man. Henrietta Browne (or whatever her name in the world may be) is said to possess a heart pure, noble, charitable, and pious. I believed it when I saw that picture; for had she not been what she is reported to be, neither would the picture have been what it is... out of the abundance of the heart not only does the mouth speak, but the hand paint. Therefore it behoves the naturalist painter, above all painters, to purify and elevate his own spirit by the contemplation and practice of the divine virtues...

Conclusion

Kingsley's review highlights the Orientalist schemas and racialized discourses that structure, in different ways, the reception of the religious subjects in Britain and France. Regarded in this light, we can see how these seemingly innocuous pictures connect to the network of discursive clusters around race, gender and class that I outlined in chapter one.

Whilst we can detect codes of Orientalist otherness in the reception of The Sisters of Charity, reviews in both countries are overwhelmingly approving. I think that this is made possible by Browne's treatment of a subject that, whilst its contemporaneity raises the question of female labour and women's social role, does not necessarily

disallow the comfortable image of female devotion and steadfast morality that was beloved by both sides of the political divide. It is interesting that although The Sisters of Charity was exhibited at both the Salon and Gambart's with another of Browne's pictures of nuns, The Convent Dispensary, no critic makes more than passing mention of this second canvas either originally in 1859, or in 1862 when British and French critics had the opportunity for a second viewing when it hung with a selection of her work at the French Exposition Universelle. If we look at differences between the two pictures we can begin to understand how The Sisters of Charity was able to so successfully bypass the potential pitfalls of its subject.

The figures in The Convent Dispensary are, like those in The Sisters of Charity, of various ages and indifferent looks, their bodies obscured in heavy habits. But whereas The Sisters of Charity is a large painting (167 x 130cm.) offering a close-up portrait of the seated woman and child in the left foreground, The Convent Dispensary is described as a cabinet picture (probably of similar dimensions to Browne's other works of this disposition i.e. c.65 x 80cm.) and depicts a number of women busily engaged in pharmaceutical tasks, only one of whose faces is available to the viewer. Whilst there is nothing overtly shocking about such an image it does not present the same touching and feminine vision of nurture and charity that was so beloved in The Sisters of Charity. Whereas Kingsley, as we have seen, uses the sisters' non-descript features as a key to their authenticity as a particular type of woman, I would suggest that there is no obvious reference to repression or self-denial in either of these paintings; they could just as easily be interpreted as representing the women and their work with dignity and stature (far rarer are Browne's contemplative figures such as A Nun, 1859, seen in England 1866).

Although the size and provenance of The Sisters of Charity positioned it as the young artist's masterpiece, its subsequently unshakeable place (in Britain at least) as her chef d'oeuvre must also be to do with its choice of subject. It is no coincidence that British art critics in the mid-century prefer the image of a woman nursing a child over one of women working outside of familial references: images of women and children, generally mother and child, were phenomenally popular at this time, and the more sentimental the better. As Lynda Nead has shown, the popularity of such scenes celebrates not only the bourgeois ideal of wifely maternalism but also fends off the spectre of disease and death associated with the previously preferred practice of wet nursing which had recently been replaced by the actively child-rearing bourgeois mother.⁷⁰ In contrast to fears of class contagion from working-class wet nurses the image of the middle-class mother and her child is invested with all the life-preserving sanctity, security and safety of the madonna. We have already seen how the middle-class Anglican nursing orders were able to sidestep the class problems raised by paid nurses, and how the Frenchness of the Sisters of Charity, or of Mercy, would have similarly separated them, so it becomes possible to see how pictures like Browne's The Sisters of Charity could be read as properly feminine displays of maternal or natural solicitude despite the nuns' obvious rejection of family life.

Compare Browne's painting with The Young Mother (1846, plate 14) by Charles Cope, one the most successful purveyors of scenes of idealized maternity. Whilst Cope

⁷⁰ See Nead, Myths of Sexuality, pp.26-8.

depicts the young mother actually breastfeeding her child (the one thing a nun could never do), both paintings produce a madonna-like dyad focusing on the intense concentration between woman and infant. In Browne the dyadic enclosure, that is so emphasized in Cope, is broken by the presence of the second nun but the sanctified theme is reinforced by the pose of the (older) child sprawled limply on her lap like a pieta. Browne's choice of the popular woman and child format for a subject that was a potential challenge to the bourgeois family accounts in part for the plaudits heaped upon her work. In 1868 the Art Journal is convinced that;

She will never paint a greater; and this singularly fine, touching and womanly work must always rank among the famous pictures of the century.⁷¹

But images of nuns also had a seamier side, and another reason for the success of Browne's work was that it managed to avoid the negative associations of sexual deviancy that were regularly invoked by the debate over female religiosity. For, the convent, like the harem, was often seen by its opponents as archaic, self-contained, tyrannous and tempting. Above all it was seen as essentially sexual, a subject of prurient fascination and dread. Nineteenth-century fascination with the presumed perversion of the punishments laid down by the convent Rule brings to mind the West's never-ending horror at, and interest in, the sadisms attributed to the East, be it cruelty in the slave market and harem, or 'suttee' in India. Pusey's code of spiritual discipline for the

⁷¹The Art Journal, May 1868 p.53.

Anglican convents⁷² included certain modes of obedience, humility, mortification of the flesh, confession and penitence the details of which (including possibly 'having to eat off the floor, being blindfolded for looking at a lay person... or making the sign of the cross on the floor with [the] tongue for a breach deemed sufficiently serious by the mother superior')⁷³ intrigued and repelled the public.

The idea that women were responsible for the tyrannous rule of the convent adds a further frisson to the lesbian overtones that colour discussion of the unnaturalness of the orders. Although some people saw the convents as a solution to the 'surplus' million women who were demographically unable to find husbands, others disapproved too much of what they saw as the convents' unhealthy unnaturalness to advocate another form of enforced celibacy. The tension between the benefits of a career for women and the potential disadvantages of female seclusion are apparent in the 1855 lecture 'Sisters of Charity: Catholic and Protestant, Abroad and at Home' given by the art critic Anna Jameson, a strong advocate of training for women. Jameson's obvious conviction that the Sisters of Charity provide a good model for female social

⁷² Although Pusey went to great lengths to edit out any overly Roman traces in his adaptation of St. Augustine's Rule, as Peter Anson emphasizes, it would have been difficult for the Anglo-Catholics to have adopted it without being accused of Romanism, since they were trying to distil a purely Protestant regime from a tradition that was historically formed in the Roman Catholic, and not patristic or Eastern, Church. Anson, pp.220-232.

⁷³ Casteras, 'Virgin Vows', pp.166-7.

work is continually disrupted by the need to prove that she is not a Papist supporter, at the same time as she is acutely aware of the real disadvantages of such prejudice to the furtherance of her cause.

I know that many well-meaning, ignorant people in this country entertain the idea that the existence of communities of women, trained and organised to help in social work from the sentiment of devotion, is especially a Roman Catholic institution, belonging peculiarly to that church, and necessarily implying the existence of nuns and nunneries, veils and vows, forced celibacy and seclusion, and all the other inventions and tradition which, in this Protestant nation, are regarded with terror, disgust, and derision. I conceive that this is altogether a mistake, The truth seems to me to amount to this: that the Roman Catholic Church has had the good sense to turn to account, and assimilate to itself, and inform with its own peculiar doctrines, a deep-seated principle in our human nature, - the law of life, which we Protestants have had the folly to repudiate.⁷⁴

How many women, widows, and unmarried of a certain age, would have gladly responded to the appeal from Haslar Hospital [for women to train as nurses], if ignorance, timidity, and defective education, and a terror of the vulgar, stupid prejudices around them - chiefly, I am ashamed to say, of masculine prejudices - had not stifled their natural feelings and

⁷⁴Anna Jameson, Sisters of Charity and the Communion of Labour: Two Lectures on the Employment of Women, London (1855) 1859, p.18.

trammelled their natural energies! True, hundreds of women had done the same thing before; but then those were Nuns and Roman Catholics - words of fear! - precedents to be repudiated- snares forged by Satan himself in guise of philanthropy!⁷⁵

Despite condemning the effects of prejudice Jameson is unable to avoid replicating its terms as she distances herself from similar charges of Papism.

I am no friend to nunneries. I do not like even the idea of Protestant nunneries, which I have heard discussed and warmly advocated. I conceive that any large number of women shut up together in one locality, with no occupation connecting them actively and benevolently with the world of humanity outside, with all their interests centred within their walls, would not mend each other, and that such an atmosphere could not be perfectly healthy,- spiritually, morally, or physically. There would necessarily ensue, in lighter characters, frivolity, idleness, and sick disordered fancies; and in superior minds, ascetic pride, gloom, and impatience. But it is very different with the active charitable Orders, and I should certainly like to see amongst us some institutions which, if not exactly like them, should supply their place.⁷⁶

We see how the structural differences of nation, religion and class constrain the progress of her argument and force her to make a division between the active and

⁷⁵ Jameson, p.53.

⁷⁶ Jameson, p.34.

contemplative religious orders which locates all perversions within the closed sphere of the contemplative cloister. Such imputations of homosexuality were the unspoken of many representations of the convent, where differences of age and beauty are used to institute a heterosexual model of domination and subordination in relations between women (analogous to the role of race in the construction of similar hierarchies in images of the harem where accusations of lesbianism are often more explicit).⁷⁷ The way that Jameson resolves the problem of the routine demonizing of the Roman Catholic other is to contain the negative side of Catholic devotion in her picture of contemplative orders, thus producing the social working Sisters of Charity as exemplary Christian, rather than Roman Catholic, women - a role model that should, and could, be available to upright Protestant British ladies. Similarly, Browne's technique and choice of subject, combined with her authorial persona as a known to be respectable French lady artist operate within critical categories of art to secure a safe place in Britain for The Sisters of Charity that allows it to avoid being overwhelmed by the negative associations of nursing orders.

Indeed, Browne's Frenchness and Catholicism may well have

⁷⁷And not only in the nineteenth century; Casteras also ignores the spectre of lesbianism implied by Jameson and reads her words as a criticism of enclosure and the Church's supplanting of parental or patriarchal authority. Despite the frequent use of loaded terms like unhealthy and unnatural, Casteras fails to interrogate what such accusations might mean, leaving lesbianism as the unspoken of her text as well. See also chapter four.

been integral to the acceptability of The Sisters of Charity; naturalizing as alien and other a version of the nun that was at that very moment threatening to transform British religious life and the role of women in society (thus the confusion over the specifics of the title can be subsumed under the generic foreignness and Catholicism associated in Britain with either appellation). In Britain, if Browne - a French woman and a Roman Catholic - could be uncontentious about an issue currently occupying the minds of the British then it is hardly surprising that she managed to be so in relation to the more marginal subject of Orientalism. In contrast, the importance of her early paintings in France emerges retrospectively when they are re-examined as forerunners to the Orientalist subjects which were to excite the French art public in the 1860s and 1870s.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Olivier Merson introduces his review of Browne's harem subjects with reference to the English admiration for The Sisters of Charity and Larrouse also references her popularity across the Channel. Olivier Merson, Exposition de 1861: La peinture en France, Paris, 1861, pp.274-5.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER, GENRE AND NATION II: ORIENTALISM

PART ONE

Introduction

In 1861 Henriette Browne exhibited two paintings at the Paris Salon entitled Une visite (intérieur de harem; Constantinople, 1860) (plate 15) and Une joueuse de flûte (intérieur de harem, Constantinople, 1860) (plate 16). Referred to generally as the Interiors, these paintings of the Oriental harem - a site forbidden to Western men - received a large amount of (conflicting) critical coverage. In this chapter I am going to examine the reception of Browne's Orientalist work in France and Britain to work out how those discourses of race, nation, class and gender that we saw in operation with regard to Browne's earlier work, came into play in the readings of her Orientalist subjects.

The paintings, which prompted Théophile Gautier, who had already published an account of his visit to Turkey,¹ to exclaim that '[o]nly women should go to Turkey', were far less prominent in British accounts of Orientalist art, although at least one (and it is impossible to ascertain which) of the Interiors was on show at Gambart's French Gallery in 1862, when it did get some coverage in the British art press. Although Browne's pictures of the harem fairly exploded onto the French scene, she never returned explicitly to this presumably lucrative and certainly high

¹Théophile Gautier, Constantinople of Today, (1853) trans. Robert Howe Gould, London, 1854.

profile subject; she continued to produce Orientalist subjects but tended to restrict herself to pictures of children, schools and scholars and individual ethnographic types. In this chapter I am going to lay out the field of Orientalist representation in the second half of the nineteenth century in order to explore how Browne's work was related to ideas of feminine art practice and to engage with the complex of contradictory relations between her work and that of her male and female Orientalist peers. I shall first examine the Interiors and then a selection of her later work.

I am going to suggest that Browne's Orientalist work offers a feminized vision of the Orient; a choice and treatment of subjects that functions as an extension of domestic narrative painting. I will argue that her gaze on the Orient is both as woman and as Westerner and that the enunciative position from which she paints foregrounds a relation to the Orient that, whilst it retains a sense of difference, challenges Western assumptions about the inimical otherness of the Orient by portraying points of similarity between the two (the Oriental domestic as analogy for the Occidental domestic); this threat to the conventional assumption of absolute difference is also a challenge to the West's assumption of absolute superiority. In this, I am partially in accord with Billie Melman, who, in her work on nineteenth-century British women's written Orientalism, argues that European women desexualized the harem, domesticating it to reproduce the haremlik (the segregated quarters of women and children) as an 'image of the middle-class "home": domestic, feminine and autonomous'.² I shall be analysing the transposition of Western concepts of femininity and

²Melman, p.101.

domesticity in women's Orientalism in the rest of this chapter in order to see the ways in which Browne's work related to what we are now discovering to be the substantial and varied involvement of European women in the cultural codes of Orientalism, and (this is where I depart from Melman) to tease out what those cultural interventions can tell us about the formation of imperial female subjectivities.³ It will be argued that like other women travellers Browne retains a sense of difference from the Orient, despite the experience of points of similarity, that is not necessarily registered as pejorative in the totalizing sense characteristic of hegemonic Orientalist discourse. Instead it is contingent on a gendered set of differentiations whose possibility of a total superiority is compromised by the parallels between Western and Eastern gender relations and by the gender-specific restrictions on women's activities in work, creativity and politics.

Accordingly, this chapter will situate her as a professional woman artist producing overtly Orientalist images in relation to the various trajectories of mainstream Orientalism and women's visual and written records of the Orient. As in other chapters, I am drawing on contemporary art criticism to explore the meanings associated with Browne's paintings. The criticism's dispersion of Orientalist 'truths' about the harem will be counterposed by an alternative set of knowledges

³Also important here is Zonana's work on 'feminist Orientalism' discussed later in this chapter.

Joyce Zonana, 'The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of Jane Eyre', in Signs, vol.18, no.3, Spring 1993.

constructed through Western and Oriental women's reports of harem life. Therefore, I shall in fact be reading readings of Browne's images and in so doing not making assumptions about their accuracy but analysing the different discursive strategies that claimed for her the gendered authority associated with women's Orientalism. Thus, I shall be addressing, and contesting, both the critical tendency to read women's work as straightforwardly truthful and the autobiographical claim to an unprejudiced natural vision inherent in women's written accounts of the harem. These both will be regarded as (often conflicting) attempts to establish differently gendered knowledges about the East and West and, as such, will be used to provide an index to the issues at stake in the (female) representation of the harem rather than regarded as a truth of it.

Looking at Browne's Orientalism in this way will allow us to explore how far a white Western woman could accede to the enunciative position of Orientalist discourse; or rather, to unpick the singularity of that positionality and reframe it in relation to the evident, if necessarily partial, access available to a gendered subject like Browne. What contradictions are thrown up by the conjunction of a female gaze on the Orient, and how and to what extent are these contained in and by critical discourses of imperial culture?

Browne's first Orientalist subjects were hard to ignore. They were not innocuous landscapes or genre pieces transplanted to the Orient. They marked a deliberate and, I would argue, necessarily self-conscious foray into the key myth of Orientalism: the forbidden harem, a space whose denial of the (Western) male gaze has been seen as central to the fantasies that structure Orientalist discourse. As such they posed a conundrum within the logic of Orientalism: although only a woman could report

accurately on this enticing subject, the resulting information threatened to challenge long-cherished fantasies and invalidate the vision of established male Orientalist artists. Griselda Pollock in an extension of the point that we discussed in chapter one - that the act of painting is itself constitutive of sexual difference - argues that the social spaces open to and occupied by women artists are linked not only to the spaces they represent but also to the viewing position inscribed in the paintings.

The space of the look [of the producer] at the point of production will to some extent determine the viewing position of the spectator at the point of consumption.⁴

If we take from this the argument that the social spaces occupied by Browne the painter will have a determining effect on the subjects she can paint and the viewing position they foreground, we begin to conjecture how her take on the Orient will be different, and differently received, to that of men. This is not because her gender makes for an innate empathy with Oriental women, but because the (gendered) enunciative position from which she represents will affect the choice of both subject and technique. Thus, the social, historical, raced and gendered specificities of Browne's Orientalism cannot but deconstruct a homogeneous notion of Orientalism, indicating instead, alongside the work of other women Orientalists I shall mention, a discursive field of multiple voices and visions.

But first, let us look briefly at the state of Orientalist

⁴Pollock, 'Modernity', p.66.

painting in Britain and France and the activities of some of the main practitioners. In both countries Orientalism was a popular area of representation but its critical status was higher in France, where several of the Salon's most prestigious painters regularly selected Orientalist subjects. Their popularity was partly due to the conscious deployment of the Fine Arts in the imperial project and the opportunities in technique and content offered by the new sights and colours associated with the East. The French interest in Orientalism began with the first generation of painter-explorers who brought back images of deserts, souks and odalisques that were to become the key tropes of Orientalist painting. Decamps, though obscure today, was the most esteemed Orientalist of his day (1813-60). His impasto and chiascuro technique is often characterized as a glamorous and dramatic vision of the East⁵ but, significantly for our analysis, he also painted numerous vignettes of Oriental children that, whilst connoting Oriental otherness, bear more relation to the mischievous urchins of Southern Europe than to the brutality and sexuality of his adult Orient (see plates 18-20). By the 1860s the French tradition had developed into the glossy eroticism typified by Gérôme, whose luscious canvases were invariably greeted with praise for his technique and horror at the immorality of his subject choice.

The British tradition of Orientalism was far less obviously salacious. It is typified by the archaeological landscapes of David Roberts, the illustrated travelogues of Edward William Lane and Edward Lear, the detailed and allegedly well-researched pictures of John Frederick Lewis

⁵ See Lynn Thornton, The Orientalists: Painter Travellers 1828-1908, Paris, 1983, p.26.

and the typological biblical canvases of William Holman Hunt. Specifically in relation to Turkey much visual information in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century derives from Luigi Mayer's Views in the Ottoman Dominions (1810), compiled under the aegis of the British ambassador to Constantinople, and Thomas Allom's topographical painting from his visit in the late 1830s. In the nineteenth century British Orientalist painting was an altogether smaller field than in France. Its concern with ethnography and topography was of course informed by the vision of the Orient as different, exotic and archaic, but it tended to avoid the overtly sexual subjects popularized by leading French artists. Instead of explicit sexual fantasies, British Orientalism concerned itself with the anthropological chronicling of lives and customs with an emphasis on exotica and difference.

Typical of this tendency is J.F. Lewis, whose detailed paintings were widely accepted as authentic since he had lived in Cairo from 1842 to 1851 - although most of his paintings were made in the studio from sketches on his return to Britain. Like Browne his paintings were praised for their accuracy and detail, enhanced by his almost photo-realist water colour technique (much admired by Gautier and Ruskin).⁶ He often painted clothed Oriental women going about their lives which, like The Arab Scribe, Cairo (1852, plate 21) and The Reception (1873, plate 22) are not unlike Browne's in subject. But in Lewis' paintings, although the figures are dressed, we find more emphasis on the luxury and exotica associated with the Orientalist fantasy (the gazelle, the pool, the young

⁶ See John Sweetman, The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920, Cambridge, 1988.

Black male servant and intricately inlaid windows and floors). Lewis provides a beautiful and less morally troubling Orient than Gérôme, relying on spectacle, authenticity and humour for effect but although he represents women as active social beings, rather than just as passive objects, he still maintains the erotic charge of the harem: the reclining déshabille of the sleeping figure in The Siesta (1876, plate 23) reveals considerable bosom and the narrative of An Intercepted Correspondence (1869, plate 24) implies active sexual desire or profligacy on the part of the young woman, both of which reinforce the image of the harem as a site of sexual intrigue.

Although European Orientalism was a heterogeneous phenomenon, it can be argued that the cult of the harem was its driving force. The harem's mystique stemmed from the vision of it as a segregated space, a polygamous realm, from which all men except the husband (generally conceptualized as the Sultan) and his eunuchs were barred. Although some artists include the Sultan, eunuchs or male guards at the harem entrance, the presence of men is most often signified by their absence. The erotic charge of the harem has two main trajectories: the fulfilment of seeing the forbidden faces and bodies of Muslim women; and the fantasy of one man's sexual ownership of many women. In addition to this is the persistent but less obviously articulated frisson of the women's sexual (lesbian) activities in the master's absence. As in Orientalist discourse where the harem women's existence centres around the absent and controlling man, Orientalist paintings are organized by the needs of the absent and controlling Western viewer; women bathe and prepare themselves for the Sultan/husband and by proxy for the artist and viewer. Harem pictures are generally scenes of minimal activity where the location simply provides a new setting for a single or group nude with the added pleasure of seeing the

forbidden. The represented women rarely interact with each other as they do in Browne's Interiors. Typical of the representation of the harem as a frozen tableau of erotic ennui are Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' Bain turq (1862, plate 25) and Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte du Nouy's White Slave Girl (1888, plate 26), where the dark skinned woman's gaze fails to connect with the foreground figure who stares into space as we (and the Black woman?) admire her.⁷ Although Browne is unusual, she is not alone in picturing Oriental women in a more flexible relationship to social and private spaces than the stereotypically enclosed walls of the fantasy seraglio. There always was a body of work that represented women's access to other sites (balconies, gardens, journeys) although the manner of representation may have retained the myth of sexuality and indolence.⁸ Gautier's characteristically prosaic acceptance of Turkish customs is disrupted when he comes to the subject of the harem. His usual tone of entertaining but matter-of-fact reportage gives way to a fantasy rhetoric of longing and excess when he discusses the hidden women.

Utter silence reigned around this mysterious palace, which, behind its trellised windows, encloses so much of languor and ennui; and I could not forbear to think of all the wealth of loveliness thus lost to human sight; the marvellous types of Grecian, Circassian, Georgian, and Indian beauty, which fade

⁷For an exploration of the gendered gaze in relation to Ingres see Wendy Leeks, 'Ingres Other-Wise', in Oxford Art Journal, vol.9, no.1, 1986.

⁸For examples see Lynn Thornton, Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting, Paris, 1985.

there, without having been reproduced or perpetuated, by the pencil or the chisel, but which should have been immortalized in marble or on canvas, and bequeathed to the loving admiration of ages: Venuses, who will never have a Praxiteles; Violantés, without a Titian; and Fornarinas, to whom no Raphael will ever be known...

Speak to me of the Padischa! - the Sultan! - who gathers only the purest lilies, and most immaculate roses, of the garden of beauty; and whose eye rests only upon forms the most perfect, never sullied by mortal gaze;- forms which pass from the cradle to the tomb, guarded by sexless monsters, in those magnificent solitudes which the boldest dare not seek to penetrate; and surrounded by a mystery and seclusion which offers no scope to even the most vague desire.⁹

This eruption of lyricism anticipates his level of excitement eight years later when Browne's Interiors promised to decode the mysteries of the 'hermetically sealed' harem (a zone that is also, he notes, forbidden to Muslim men other than brothers and fathers). Gautier's stress on the hidden pleasures of the harem is symptomatic of Orientalist discourse, where the secret of conquering the East is conceptualized as the breaching of the harem's walls. Not for nothing did the subject predominate in art and literature of the period. Gautier, who longs to see the hidden beauties, reveals the vulnerability of the desirous Western man whose wants make him gullible to

⁹Gautier, Constantinople, pp.187-8.

ruses pretending to offer access.¹⁰

Although Orientalism was a popular genre, many critics in France and Britain had trouble approving its morally dubious subjects, regardless of the artist's gender. It was not simply that some subjects were morally disturbing and others were not (although some undeniably caused more problems than others) but that subjects became disturbing when treated in morally dubious ways. (Or ways that did not sufficiently assert the preferred morality: see for example, Bourniol's revue of Interiors in Revue du monde catholique later in this chapter.) This inevitably brought into question the morals of the artist which, as we have seen, was often articulated most clearly in the mixed reception of Gérôme's work.

Gérôme's Orientalism functions as a benchmark in this chapter because it is his work that pushes the genre to the limits of acceptability and brings out the moral censure around which other artists skirt more successfully. As a woman Browne has even less lee-way than other artists, and the depravity associated with Gérôme marks the boundaries to which she must not go, even if she were so inclined.¹¹ Linda Nochlin has analysed how Gérôme's use of detail authenticates the Oriental setting of his salacious scenes and presents the pictures as a

¹⁰ Jacques Bosquet, in his review of dream narratives in Romantic literature, notes the predominance of fantasies of sexual access to the multitude of women in the harem.

Jacques Bosquet, Les themes du rêve dans la littérature Romantique, Paris, 1964, in Kabbani.

¹¹ See later on the difficulties critics experienced in decoding Elisabeth Jerichau Baumann's work.

slice of life, thus obscuring the presence of the artist and facilitating a voyeuristic viewing position for the Western audience without implicating them in the (often) tawdry, un-Christian, but nonetheless titillating scenes on display.¹² One of the most obvious differences between Browne's Interiors and Nochlin's example of Gérôme's Slave Market (plate 17) and Snake Charmer is their lack of luscious surface and opulent detail. The critics who, as we will see, berate Browne for abandoning and therefore throwing into question Decamps' tradition of Orientalism (of which Gérôme is heir) are not just defending a favourite artist. The detailed luxury of that strand of Orientalism is an important part of the discursive construction of the Orient as other and inferior to the West. As Nochlin points out, luscious detail allows the eye to feast on the beauty of the painting as a whole and reduces the Oriental figures to just one more interesting, exotic and potentially de-humanized detail, effectively distancing us from them, their context and the power relations of the picture. As we have seen, critics struggled to contain their admiration for Gérôme's skill with their repugnance at his immoral subjects. This is true in both France and Britain. In 1868, reviewing Gérôme's thirteen paintings on display at the 1867 Paris Exposition Universelle, the Art Journal is again highly critical.

Heartlessness, cruelty, lust, Gérôme has glorified, while that which is noblest in humanity his pictures ignore or outrage.¹³

¹²Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient'.

¹³The Art Journal, May, 1868, p.12.

The writer then goes on to praise Browne (who exhibited eight paintings) for producing virtuous scenes which appear to have no links with the errors of her compatriot and arch Orientalist. The same issue commented on the authenticity and charm of Rhodian Girl and Israelite School at Tangiers in its review of Gambart's London exhibition, illustrating how Browne's work managed to run along parallel tracks, activating the interest in the Orient, but avoiding charges of immorality and prompting nation-specific criticisms that tend to avoid the outrage levelled at Gérôme. Gérôme, despite his fame, was persistently criticized in Britain as embodying the worst of all that was French. This is an earlier piece from 1861 lamenting that Gérôme had

made a dangerous start to notoriety in his art; neither his style nor his subjects will bear a close scrutiny. The one is, for the most part, a finished effeminacy, the other, but too often, a culpable lasciviousness.¹⁴

What is coded as a moral transgression is also a gender and sexual deviation. The formal stylistic effeminacy reveals a content that is itself corrupt and lascivious, identified as a national fault;

The evil vein which so notoriously and lamentably permeates French novel literature, is here fully and execrably exemplified and emulated.

The theme of the French as overly cultured to the point of effeminacy occurs again and again as Britain strives to find a form of artistic production and identity that is

¹⁴The Art Journal, 1861, p.183.

not at odds with concepts of masculinity.¹⁵ The moral conflict over Gérôme's evident skill (registered as good) and evident lack of moral judgement in his content (registered as bad) is given a nuance of sexual deviance in this British review. Generally it is Gérôme's technical skill that saves him from total condemnation, but in this review it is his technique itself that denotes his effeminacy. Combined with an analysis of his content as morally culpable the hero of beautifully constructed patriarchal fantasies is demoted to the level of eunuch or de-masculinized/emasculated man.

The French press obviously does not blame Gérôme's faults on his nationality. Vignon in Journal des desmoiselles deplores his choice of subjects in 1861 and advised her young readers against joining the crowds around his paintings. But, writing the same year in Le Correspondent, she does not berate Gérôme in the same way, leading me to assume that readers of Le Correspondent are considered more able to withstand the shock of Gérôme's canvases than the dear desmoiselles. The 1867 Revue du monde catholique's Salon review of Gérôme's Slave Market is torn between admiring his skill, condemning his taste and condemning the iniquities of the slavers.

... the foul/squalid Jew puts his fingers into her mouth and forces her to open it wide to show that the teeth are intact... Shame, shame, to represent such scenes in which the brutal indecency adds nothing to our horror of the abominable moors. It is not

¹⁵For the modern-day counterpart, witness the 1990 'Chequers Memo' in which Thatcher's cabinet when asked to discuss European national identities characterized the French as poodles.

difficult however to recognize that there is always talent there, great talent...¹⁶

Bourniol puts his finger on the problem; the paintings rely on the assumption that the civilized and superior Western viewer will deplore slavery and hence read the painting 'properly'. But nothing in the construction of the picture flouts the traditions of voyeurism and the nude to disallow the viewer's pleasure in the scene. The review struggles to condemn the content (slavery - here displaced onto bad Arabs and Jews) and save the artist (the esteemed Frenchman who chooses to paint such deplorable scenes). We will see later how this journal is one of the few to level similar accusations of insufficiently clear moral values at Browne's paintings. Significantly, in this Catholic paper that criticizes all Moorish slavers, the most brutal figure in the painting is interpreted as a Jew.

Browne and other women painters of the Orient

Given that women's accession to both colonial subjectivity and cultural production was filtered through discourses of femininity as well as nation, the search for imperial culture made by women must relate to the different, gendered, axis of women's experience of empire. This means extending the boundaries of Orientalism to include images which may be implicitly if not explicitly Orientalist (since women may produce a differently coded representation of Orientalist otherness) and the productions of amateur as well as professional artists

¹⁶Bathild Bourniol, 'L'amateur au Salon', in Revue du monde catholique, no. 141, June 10, 1867, pp.468-508.

(whether in Surrey or Syria the women of the ruling classes engaged in the accomplishment arts and social niceties that anchored their classed and gendered sensibilities). This approach will allow us to situate the professional and overtly Orientalist productions of Browne within a spectrum of Orientalism wide enough to theorize how European women were inscribed as specifically gendered and classed subjects of Orientalist discourse. The existence of Orientalist images made by amateur women artists, which had a predominantly or even exclusively family audience, illustrates the pervasiveness of imperialism and ideologies of racial difference in the formation of of specifically female social and subjective matrixes.

Briony Llewelyn is inclined not to categorize women's amateur art as Orientalism since she thinks it displays not so much a (learned) interest in Oriental culture as a tourist's desire to sketch picturesque views and people.¹⁷ Most of the visual Orientalism produced by women was topography in the form of sketches and water colours made during trips abroad. Because the images often served as mementos of journeys and holidays, women were more likely to paint out of the way places that appealed to them, or had pleasurable memories, as well as the sites of famous ruins as immortalized by Roberts. The Searight Collection contains examples of this type of amateur production; landscapes by Maria Harriet Matthias (active 1856-57, see plate 27) and an album of sketches by Charlotte Inglefield and her family (d.1901) that concentrates on landscape and

¹⁷Briony Llewelyn in personal conversation. See also Briony Llewelyn The Orient Observed: Images of the Middle East From the Searight Collection, London, 1989.

street sights curious to Western eyes.¹⁸

But I would claim that much of this work can indeed be included under the remit of Orientalism because the inscribed mode of viewing is based on an Orientalist paradigm of difference and superiority. Further, we may learn just as much about contemporary attitudes from the tourist's unselfconscious selection of significant sights as from the more overtly mediated subject choice of the professional artist. But the inclusion of Oriental subjects in amateur art is not a neutral event - although rich women may have sketched regularly whatever the location, they always made choices about which subjects were suitable based on prevailing aesthetic and social value systems. The very acceptability of Oriental lands and peoples as subjects for amateur art attests to the hegemonic status of imperial and Orientalist ideologies. In addition, as Melman's research indicates, it was often an Orientalist or imperialist motivation that took women to the East in the first place: in her sample of evangelical women missionaries it is clear that painting and sketching served a crucial function in their spiritual appreciation of the Biblical landscape.¹⁹

As we have seen, the relationship between amateur and professional women artists was fraught with difficulties. Although many European women chose a life of travel as an escape from the constraints of life at home, the heightened stress on conformity and manners that

¹⁸ See the Searight Collection at the V&A; nos. SD663 and 50523 (17).

¹⁹ See particularly the sections on Matilda M. Cubley's, The Plains of Palestine, 1860. Melman, ch.9.

characterized expatriate society meant that woman artists in the Orient may well have had even less chance of breaking out of the clearly gendered spaces of proper society. All Western women would have found themselves caught up in a similarly gendered interaction with the Orient - professional women not only occupied similar social spaces to non-professionals, but also shared a gendered access to representation, in terms of subject, technique, and often reception.

The number of professional woman artists who painted Orientalist subjects grew as the century wore on (due in part to the increased ease and safety of travel). As might be expected, the majority stuck to safely feminine areas of representation such as topography, portraiture, children and ethnographic types (among which can be included some of Browne's work), but others ventured into what we might consider to be the more dangerously immoral area of the Orientalist pseudo-classical nude. Whilst there were some artists whose work clearly fell into one camp rather than another, many women painted both 'feminine' cameos of Oriental daily life and nudes and odalisques. The range of subjects and styles adopted by women artists in relation to the Orient suggests that the boundaries of the field were more fluid than had previously been supposed and also indicates the changing nature of women's relationship to art. Certainly, by the 1880s when the British artist Margaret Murray Cookesley (d.1927) was exhibiting, her pseudo-classical Oriental nudes appear to have been quietly received; her Nubian Girl of 1886 (plate 28) leans against an urn, proudly bare-chested, clad only in an 'Oriental' drape and was

shown to no great notoriety.²⁰

More difficult to explain or categorize is the mixed oeuvre of the Polish/Danish artist Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann (1819-1881) - noted by the Art Journal as having 'sometimes been under obligation' to Browne²¹ - who enjoyed popularity as a portraitist in royal courts of Europe and the Orient in the 1860s and '70s.²² Apart from portraits Jerichau-Baumann's work consisted of cameos of daily life (see, for example, A Turkish Beauty with her Child and Nurse, 1850, plate 31) including several

²⁰ Cookesley's work is very similar to mainstream British Orientalism of the 1880s and does not appear to have been discussed as a particularly authentic view of the harem. Although she did travel to the Middle East, I think her work largely reproduces the generic codes of Orientalism that were challenged by the work of other women artists like Browne. Cookesley's scenes of the harem (like Entertaining in a Harem, 1894, Smoking the Pipe, 1893, plates 29 and 30) are obviously cobbled together Oriental-ish tableau (the women in all the paintings wear the same pseudo-classical drapery) which, rather than indicating anything about the specificity of the female gaze, simply show that Orientalism was, by the turn of the century, so large and popular a field that anyone could venture in without necessarily being understood to be making a major intervention. In addition to this, the increased availability of art education (and the life class) for women means that we should expect to see larger numbers of women participating in all areas of cultural production.

²¹ The Art Journal, June 1866, p.194.

²² Clement, pp.98-107, the Art Journal, 1869, p.382, both in Yeldham, p.348.

pictures of Fellaheen women and their children as well as some which, like Vandbaersker (1875, plate 32) and The Odalisque (n.d., plate 33), contain a level of nudity that seems surprising for a woman artist of this period. Jerichau-Baumann exhibited in Britain and France from the 1860s, building a thriving portrait practice in Europe and, upon travelling to North Africa and the Middle East armed with introductions from European royalty, gained entry into Oriental high society where she received several portrait commissions from the royal families of Turkey and Egypt.²³ It seems that one way in which these potentially transgressive pictures were legitimated was in terms of prevailing discourses of ethnography; The Art Journal praises Jerichau-Baumann's semi-naked women in terms of her 'pronouncedly ethnographical' style and accurate depiction of 'nationality'.²⁴

Thus a space is opened up for women to paint the nude if such images could be favourably received because, like Jerichau-Baumann's use of Oriental settings and accoutrements, they could be coded as authentic (pseudo) scientific enquiry. How else can the British bourgeoisie invite Jerichau-Baumann into their respectable homes to

²³ She wrote two books about her career and travels, including visits to harems in Constantinople, Smyrna and Cairo. Elisabeth Jerichau Baumann, Brogede Rejsebilleder, Copenhagen, 1881.

See also, Nicholaj Bøgh, Elisabeth Jericahu-Baumann; En Karakteristik, Copenhagen, 1886.

²⁴ The Art Journal, 1871, p.165.

paint their daughters?²⁵

There are a number of British women artists whose Orientalist subjects were generally less contentious. Eliza Fox Bridell who originally exhibited genre and portraiture later built a reputation for Oriental landscapes after a sojourn in Algeria in 1863.²⁶ From 1867 to 1871 she showed similar works at the Society of Female Artists, the Royal Academy and the Dudley Gallery (eg. Arab Marriage, 1871 and An Arab Epithalamium, 1870.) Mrs Clayton noted than Bridell, like other women travellers and artists, benefited from contacts with high ranking officials in the East again emphasizing the variety of ways in which women travellers were dependent on expatriate society. In the case of Bridell, 'much assistance in obtaining insight into the native Arab life',²⁷ was rendered her by her acquaintance Madame MacMahon, the wife of the Governor of Algeria. By the end of Bridell's career in 1887 she was best known for her Orientalist scenes although, as Charlotte Yeldham points out, they formed only a small part of her overall oeuvre. Emily Mary Osborne (b.1834), a successful artist best known for her scenes of social commentary, also travelled and painted landscapes in Algeria.²⁸ Likewise, Sophie Anderson (1823-1903), who is best known for Italianate genre scenes and fancy images of children, also painted

²⁵For example, the royal Academy Index lists three portraits of English families in 1866 and 1867.

²⁶See Yeldham, pp.295-5.

²⁷Clayton, vol.2, p.86, in Yeldham.

²⁸See Nunn, Victorian Women Artists, pp.22-4.

Orientalist subjects, including In the Harem, Tunis (n.d., plate 34) and the Portrait of Toklihili, The Indian Princess, (n.d., plate 35). Other artists include the feminist campaigner Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891) who travelled to and painted landscapes of North Africa,²⁹ Edith Martineau (1842-1909) who exhibited ethnographic portrait types (such as Head of a Balkan, 1867) and Frances E. Nesbitt (1864-1934) who painted watercolours of local life in North Africa and Palestine. In France, the Princess Mathilde Bonaparte (1820-1904), Jaqueline Commère Paton (b.1859) and Laure Houssaye de Léoménil (1806-1866) sent Orientalist subjects to the Salon.³⁰ Like Browne, most of these women produced a mixed oeuvre, different elements of which achieved prominence at various stages of their careers. (We shall be returning to some of these artists later.)

Despite women's evident involvement in Orientalism, they were still treated as a special case by critics as well as facing the usual discriminatory treatment given to women's art. Some of the problems posed by women artists using Orientalist subjects can be clarified by looking at their work in relation to gender and genre. In relation to gender we have seen how the biographical knowledge of the gendered artist was an important part of interpretation: in Browne's case, her venture into what was seen as the possibly immoral sphere of Orientalism was safeguarded from moral danger by artist-centred commentaries that produced the paintings as worthy offerings from a morally respectable brush. In relation to genre, the tendency to read them as womanly representations of a womanly space,

²⁹ See review of the Society of Female artists in the Art Journal 1868, p.46.

³⁰ See Petteys and Thornton, Women.

situates them within the strong moral narratives associated with domestic genre painting. This is assisted by Browne's choice of some subjects (portraits, family, the education and care of children and devotional scenes) and avoidance of others (slave markets, prostitutes, executions and low-life street scenes). Although all Orientalist subjects could be imbued with sexuality by the West, Browne rarely enters such dangerous waters. One exception (apart from the obvious case of the harem) is her 1869 painting Dancers in Nubia, Assouan (plate 36), a subject with the potential for overt immorality that she usually avoided. I am going to suggest that Browne's Orientalism was open to being seen as a transposition of the paradigm of domestic genre painting for which she was already famous in Britain and France, thus implying a morally acceptable tone and subject and minimizing the deviation of a female Orientalist, by locating the paintings in a field considered appropriate for women artists.

As we have seen, critics' pre-occupation with genre's extending influence was mapped onto the theory of distinct national schools of art. In chapter two we saw how the Art Journal in 1862 characterized French genre as overly coarse, in contrast to the propriety of English genre artists, and, in the passage below, from 1867, it bewails the French genre-ization of History painting. But, note how this valorization of the every day (cabinet pictures) can open up a space for a non-history painter, like Browne.

It is evident that historic art in France, as in England, has been descending into genre... In proportion as directly historic treatments decline, do romantic and genre subjects increase in favour. If the French are tempted to bring history within the range of genre... they not infrequently give to

cabinet pictures unusual dignity of manner and largeness of treatment. Their knowledge of the figure enables them to paint even trivial topics with artitude and force...³¹

This expansion of genre and the validation of domestic subjects accompanied the increase in opportunities for women artists. But, whilst the stress on the domestic may have benefited professional women artists it also made it even more important for them to secure their work as qualitatively different to the depiction of similar subjects by their amateur sisters.

Travel

Women and men's opportunity to travel increased in this period. The extension of industry and empire had combined new technology and terrain to open up the globe for more comfortable and accessible travel than ever before. Men who worked abroad in business or colonial administration were often, and in our period increasingly, accompanied by sisters, wives and daughters. Accordingly, visits to friends and relatives abroad became more commonplace, expanding the number of women likely to have experience of travel outside Europe. The tourist industry had begun and the rich could now visit, with relative ease, parts of the world that hitherto had been the goal of only the hardest

³¹ 'Paris - The Salon des Beaux-Arts', in the Art Journal, 1867, p.168.

explorers.³² For rich women travel to the East or Africa became less foreboding as social networking extended beyond Europe into the colonies and areas of Western influence. The chance of independence and freedom from the restraints of polite society that inspired the generations of women travellers and explorers, as well as the dangers and hardships that marked their journeys, were mostly eradicated from the newly colonized and 'civilized' areas of North Africa and the East that were now appearing in the press as favoured destinations for holiday tours.³³ Unless one travelled into the interior away from the main centres of European influence it would have been difficult to avoid contact with expatriate and travelling communities.³⁴ Indeed, Melman suggests that the model of the travelling spinster lady was atypical and that most women travelling or working in the Orient were there as the companion to a male relative. In this Browne was typical.

In relation to art, the greater experience of travel outside Western Europe blurred the differences between conventions of the picturesque and Orientalism, leading to an overlap between the two areas of representation.

³² See E.J. Hobsbawn, The Age of Capital, London, 1975, ch. 11, and The Age of Empire, London, 1987, John Pudney, The Thomas Cook Story, London, 1954.

³³ See Birkett and Mills.

³⁴ For an account of the growth of tourism and the accompanying Europeanization of one region of Algeria that was particularly popular with artists and writers see, Gareth Stanton, 'The Oriental City: A North African Itinerary', in Third Text, no. 3/4, Spring/Summer, 1988.

Orientalism, as a mode of viewing based on difference and Western superiority becomes both more overtly available to women (who have more first hand experience) and more pervasively implicit in the experience and representation of non-Western Europe (perceived as similarly 'primitive'). It is against this backdrop of Europeanization that Browne's trips to the East need to be placed. These journeys, which (even where they were not specifically initiated by de Saux's diplomatic obligations) would have brought them into contact with new and known members of the French diplomatic and European ruling-class communities abroad, cannot be separated from French imperial interests. However, none of the contemporary accounts of Browne's travels treat them as anything other than a productive excursion on the part of a member of the fashionable sophisticated rich. T. Chasrel, in an 1877 retrospective of Browne in the French periodical L'Art, highlights the stresses of painting in a hot climate, but does not suggest that such activities are unsuitable for a woman. Browne like any other artist deserves praise for her perseverance in drought and heat which 'attests... a true vocation because you have to be twice the artist to apply yourself to art with such consistency and regularity...'.³⁵ But his comment that '[i]n addition to enlarging the framework of her talent they [her travels] also assured her the liberty to paint' is highly unlikely: as the wife of a diplomat, Browne's household and social duties would simply have been transposed from Paris to Constantinople. Accounts of colonial expatriate society paint a world where social interaction mattered more not less, and if anything, was more rather than less time-consuming than at home.

³⁵T. Chasrel, 'Henriette Browne' in L'Art revue hebdomadaire illustré, vol.2, 1877, pp.97-103.

Chasrel's commentary, for all its apparent sympathy, misrecognizes the boundaries and function of women's apparent leisure.

PART TWO

Critical Responses to the Harem Scenes, 1861.

Interest in the Interiors stemmed less from their artistic merit than from their being known to have been produced by a woman who claimed to have seen inside the harem. The reviews deal in various ways with the conflictual dynamic in which on one hand women travellers' different access (real or imagined) to the forbidden territories of the harem appears to offer a source of reliable information and on the other brings back 'evidence' that often conflicts with the West's cherished visions of the Orient.³⁶ This was true of the Orient in general - one has a vision of Western tourists travelling despondently in search of something that would meet their expectations. Travellers wrote of the disappointment of coming face to face with landmarks, buildings and people that bore no relation to the splendour ascribed to them in Western legends.³⁷ Travel writers like Chateaubriand grappled with the desire to adulterate the truth in order to retain the vision that flourished in Europe. In painting, Ingres used

³⁶ See also Lisa Tickner, 'Feminism, Art History and Sexual Difference', in Genders, no.3, Fall 1988.

³⁷ See David Scott, 'The Literary Orient', In James Thompson (ed), The East Imagined, Experienced, Remembered: Orientalist Nineteenth-Century Painting, National Gallery of Ireland and National Museums and Galleries of Merseyside, 1988.

Lady Mary Wortely Montagu's account of her visit to a Turkish bath as a source for his bath scenes, but deviated from her insistence on the highly moral behaviour of the women when he wanted to produce a picture of sex and excess in keeping with Europe's treasured myths. Subsequently, an account like that offered by Browne was likely to be both welcome and contentious since its 'authentic' information was a potential challenge to Orientalist conventions. What is not explained by an account like Melman's, which stresses the growing market for women's Orientalism (which was certainly well established by the mid-nineteenth century), is the persistence and longevity of hegemonic Orientalist tropes, even though it seems they were regularly disproved by readily available women's accounts. In what follows, I am concerned to see how the authenticity attributed to Browne's work - and here I agree with Melman that women's work was read as authentic on account of their presumed feminine empathy with their Oriental subjects³⁸ - is perceived as both a challenge to and potential support for elements of the Orientalist harem fantasy. The different critical strategies adopted in response to her paintings illustrate both the flexibility and the limits of the power/knowledge dialectic of Orientalist discourse.

The interpretations of the painting rely on the artist's presumed presence at the scene, which immediately disrupts the traditions of Western voyeurism outlined by Nochlin. Rather than hide the presence of the Westerner at the scene, the construction of the paintings as testimony

³⁸ Thus, women missionaries worked with Oriental women and children, aiming to civilize Oriental men via the feminine sphere, in an Orientalized reproduction of women's moral mission at home. Melman, p.42.

foregrounds the presence of the artist: the image would not have been possible if Browne had not been there, even though the figure of the artist is not actually depicted in the painting. Her presence is projected into the scene by a combination of the viewer's allegiance to Orientalist knowledges about the harem (in which a woman's view has a privileged access to a forbidden sight) and the pictures' traditional composition (where the viewing position accords with that of the artist) which lends itself to such a reading. Add to this Browne's existing reputation as a naturalistic painter who prioritized study from life to get her details right (remember the lengths she went to in order to get her hands on a real habit for The Sisters of Charity) and we have a painting whose meaning is inextricably linked to its point of production.

Browne's paintings are differently detailed from those of Gérôme. Where his display polished surfaces, opulent sets and lavish detail, hers are restrained in tone and understated in detail. Her different vision connotes an insider's knowledge rather than obscuring evidence of the artist's presence. This tautologically re-inscribes the woman artist as the owner of the gaze that reveals the mysteries of the Orient. Browne does not use an armoury of detail and her finish is not that of the seamless, invisible brushwork practised by Gérôme. Some writers criticize her work as being too sketchy but this is a standard accusation levelled at women artists, and working from black and white photographs we cannot tell if this is an accurate description or unjustified criticism. The actual paintings of Browne's I have seen appear to be quite highly finished and no looser in brushwork than was

usual in this period.³⁹ Her relatively sparse compositions are seen by some as a fault in her technique and by others as proof of the reality of her version of the harem. For her supporters the scarcity of detail is simultaneously a sign of the painting's veracity (Browne tells it is how it is) and a claim to fame for the artist who moves on from outmoded Orientalist conventions. Melman argues that women's Orientalism was seen to bear the mark of a particularly feminine eye for detail - men being inclined to ignore detail in their lofty contemplation of the whole - which was in turn tied back into women's presumed empathetic and experiential knowledge of the Orient. Thus, Browne's detail (though it is not lush it accords with other women's accounts of the haremluk) functions as both proof of her having been there and substantiates her femininity.

Again, we find that the response to Browne's work is split across the French/English divide, but this time in reverse: where the religious and domestic narrative pictures had been hugely successful in Britain but marginal in France, the Interiors mark the start of her rising French reputation as an Orientalist but were practically ignored in Britain.

The British art press reviews of the 1861 Salon mention Browne but pay no attention to the Orientalist paintings that were so remarked upon in France. The exhibition of one of them at Gambart's also received scant critical attention. The Art Journal noted that the French Gallery's exhibition had popularized French artists and identifies Browne as a 'distinguished lady artist [like Rosa

³⁹ See, for example, the detail of the draperies in La perruche (plates 37 and 38).

Bonheur]' but of the picture it merely mentions that it is 'widely differing from the "Soeurs de Charité" she has recently painted'.⁴⁰ The Athenaeum only records that Browne has sent in 'the fruit of a recent tour in her 'Scene in the Seraglio'.⁴¹

Does this silence mean that the British reviewers did not like her new work or that they did not see it as anything very different from the genre scenes that they expected from her easel? It is not that Browne is out of favour - in 1862 the Art Journal welcomes the publication of an engraving of The Sisters of Charity (a sure sign of popular status) - but the new work certainly does not arouse the same excitement as the religious scenes. That fewer British than French critics situate her work in relation to mainstream Orientalism may be accounted for by Orientalism's greater standing in the French art world, and also by Browne's greater affinity with the work of Lewis, Britain's leading exponent of Orientalism. In relation to Lewis, Browne's work marks less of a departure from British Orientalism than French, and was perhaps therefore less remarkable. (Although, it must be noted, that there was sufficient interest in Britain in women's representation of the harem to sustain the publication of a quantity of women's written accounts: all the written sources I have used were available in English.)

As we shall see in relation to her subsequent Orientalist subjects, the British reception of Browne's work tends to mobilize discourses of ethnography and it is possible that the presentation of the pictures with titles classifying

⁴⁰The Art Journal, May 1862, p.126.

⁴¹The Athenaeum, April 1862, p.514.

subject and location in much the same way as an ethnographic case study mitigates her potentially illicit venture into the masculine and sexualized field of Orientalism: for example, A Turkish Scene (n.d., plate 39), Jeune fille de Rhodes (plate 40) and Une école israelite à Tanger (Salon and Exposition Universelle 1867, Gambart's 1868, plate 41), Un tribunal à Damas and Danseuses en Nubie; Assouan (Salon 1869) and Les oranges; Haute Égypte (Salon 1870, plate 42).⁴²

In France Théophile Gautier gives an enthusiastic reception to Browne's harem scenes. He valorizes the Interiors on the grounds that they are the realistic depiction of the eye-witness account only a woman could produce. His rhetoric expands this into a hyperbole asserting that there is no point in men visiting the Orient at all, since so much is hidden from them.

In Constantinople, when our curiosity is allowed to run the streets, enter the houses it irritates us to be unable to go past the selamik with our cups of coffee and chibouks, we often say to ourselves 'Only women should go to Turkey - what can a man see in this jealous country? White minarets guilloche⁴³ fountains, red houses, black cypresses, mangy dogs, hammals with loaded camels... or photographs and optical views.' Nothing more. For a woman, on the

⁴²The English titles given to these paintings varied slightly but included most, or different versions, of the geographical detail. For example, Les oranges; Haute Égypte was shown at Gambart's under the title Children with Oranges; Nubia.

⁴³Guilloche refers to ornamentation that imitates braided ribbons.

contrary, the odalisque opens itself, the harem has no more mysteries; those faces, doubtless charming, for which the bearded tourist searches in vain have become sour, the muslin yachmak, she contemplates stripped of their veil, in all the brilliance of their beauty; the feredge, a domino from Islam's permanent carnival, could not conceal more gracious bodies and splendid costumes.⁴⁴

The dream which we have Mme Browne has truly brought into realization; she has reported a new Orient fresher than those of the Thousand and One Nights, to which we must make a comparison.

A Visit shows us at last the interior of a harem by one who has seen it, a thing rare and perhaps unique, because however well male painters often do make odalisques, not one is able to boast of having worked from nature. - for architecture, don't go imagining an Alhambra or a fairy palace, but [instead] a very

⁴⁴Feredge means cloak. The Koran requires women to cover their breasts and ornaments, but not faces. The veil was not a religious Islamic ruling, but a social institution based on secular and religious ideas of modesty which impacted most on affluent and urban women. Rural women were far less likely to observe it, since the economic imperative which required their agricultural labour made more than a cursory attempt at observance impossible. See:
Ian C. Dengler, 'Turkish Women in the Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age', in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (eds), Women in the Muslim World, Cambridge, 1978,
Emily Said-Ruete, Memoirs of an Arabian Princess, (1888) London, 1981, p.149,
Thornton, Women, p.54.

simple room, with some colonettes and white walls decorated with divans - The visitors arrive, the cadine receives them at the top of the stairs, they haven't yet taken off the yachmak and feredje, one is in red the other in blue, and the transparent muslin of their chinstrap allows one to see that both of them are pretty; they have brought with them a little girl. The harem women, sitting or rather squatting, on the divan, have the air of trying an activity which breaks into their nonchalance in order to celebrate the new arrivals. Their occupations were never very important, one was smelling a flower, and the other, leant against the partition of the wall, smoking a papipos - the cigarette of the Orient - when, they note it well, the narghile is beginning to go out of fashion there. On a stool encrusted with mother of pearl sits a plate of copper with its bright shine.

Nothing is as elegant as these long robes of such delicate colours, which trace the figure and give the body so much grace and svelteness. It makes us hold crinolines in horror! Above these long robes, like flowers on their stems, are poised fresh faces that cannot be imagined by one accustomed to European complexions, because they have never been exposed to the open air.⁴⁵

Gautier's typically detailed descriptions of the paintings emphasize their ethnographic details.

A Flute Player initiates us into the diversions of

⁴⁵Théophile Gautier, Abécédaire du Salon de 1861, Paris, 1861, pp. 72-77.

the harem. Draped in white muslin, a young musician plays on a derviche's flute one of those melodies of strange charm which seizes you if invisibly, and you recall the memories of airs heard in a previous existence; three women cadines or odalisques are listening leant against the wall in an attitude of ecstatic dreaming. One of the flute player's companions, recognizable by her guzla, teases a tortoise to crawl along on a stool. A third musician watched her do it.⁴⁶

For him Browne's entry into the female quarters marks out her paintings as real representations of the East as opposed to fantasies.

These two scenes have a character of oriental intimacy which distinguishes them from all the fantasies of 'le turquerie'. This is really the truth about Turkish women. M Browne found, after Decamps, a new way to paint white walls, instead of thickening them, or scratching them, or trowelling, she stuccoes them, so to speak, leaving all the pattern to the figures; the resultant effect is very happy.⁴⁷

Gautier's pointed intervention highlights the importance of the battle over technique between the followers of Decamps and Browne. Considering that the paintings are clearly Orientalist it is surprising that technical differences aroused such condemnation - the conventions of harem walls à la Decamps must have more riding on them than a dispute over how to depict plaster. They signify

⁴⁶Gautier, 1861, p.75.

⁴⁷Gautier, 1861, p.76.

the very structures of Orientalist discourse and thus Browne's walls disrupt the codes of viewing critics expect from Orientalist painting. Gautier relates the different way that Browne paints walls to the claims of veracity afforded by her visits to the harem. The plainness of the rooms she depicts may surprise some - 'don't go imagining an Alhambra...' - and may dismantle treasured dreams about the harem but Gautier welcomes them as a sign of reality.

He contrasts Browne's intimacy with the Orient to other artists' fantasies. Her paintings are made to function as visual reports. Some may feel that these scenes are too tame and domestic, but Gautier utilizes their claim to reality to give them novelty value and thus promote the paintings. His detailed reading of the content relies on an acknowledgement of the class, gender and nation-specific spaces from which Browne paints. He uses the particularities of her relationship to the harem to construct a critical space in which he can discuss the paintings as mainstream Orientalism (not just as ethnographic portraiture or topography as is the case with other amateur and professional women's Orientalism)⁴⁸ without having to contend with the unfeminine immorality associated with the genre. He thus manages to meet the challenge of Browne's desexualized harem and incorporate it within dominant Orientalism by offering a modified fantasy of the harem - if some viewers dislike the paintings it is because they lack the taste to appreciate

⁴⁸ See for example, the treatment of Eliza Fox Bridell's Algerian scenes as topography when other location shots like Robert's are dealt with as mainstream Orientalism or Gautier on the Princess Mathilde's Une Fellah which is read as a picturesque portrait.

Gautier, 1861.

the real thing. Gautier establishes a relationship between the woman artist and the represented space in keeping with the European linkage of women and the domestic. Thus gender determines Browne's access to the harem (on which rests the paintings' claim to truth) and foregrounds a special relationship to the domestic (on which rests his readings of the paintings as truthful and as womanly). Because of the projection of the idea of women's innate empathy with the domestic, the exotic erotic fantasy harem of Ingres and Gérôme becomes a knowable domestic location. The details of exotic costume and customs become ethnography, albeit picturesque, rather than titillating, lascivious vignettes. The fascination with the harem is amended from one that is overtly sexual to one that is overtly ethnographic, where the harem's sexual significance is implicit rather than explicit (caught up, for example, in the emphasis on the women's beauty). But for all their affinities, it is important that the Occident not be confused with the Orient. Gautier may praise the feredge over the crinoline but he maintains enough strategic distance to portray the Orient as inferior to European civilization. (Islam as a 'carnival' is spectacular but spiritually worthless, the animals are mangy, the women lazy, etc.)

The review favours the humble details of domestic life available to a woman over the myths of Orientalism available to a man; the key tropes of the Orientalist fantasy (cypresses, minarets, camels, odalisques) and industry (photographs and panoramas) no longer thrill. Instead the reviewer revels in a new vision of the Orient. Browne's claim to reality is endorsed by the contemporaneity of her details, such as the new fashion for papipos over narghile pipes, which Gautier, with his travel experience, is able to decode. The introduction of fashion, a phenomenon that requires both a concept of time and channels of communication, potentially undermines the

image of the harem as an anachronistic prison and emphasizes the temporality of the Orient, in distinction to its traditional representation as timeless and archaic.⁴⁹ But the painting displays sufficient traditional tropes to enable the (re)viewer to contain it within the Orientalist myth: Gautier is able to extrapolate the flute melody as a reminder of previous lives in practically the same breath as he remarks on the modernity of the pipes.

This contradiction is typical of Gautier's critical approach which is based on connoisseurship and a Romantic immersion in the art object. As such, to be transported (into an evocation of previous lives) was a sign of a painting's success. Gautier's Romantic belief in re-incarnation and 'intellectual homelands' (his was ancient Egyptian, Delacroix's Anglo-Hindu...) worked particularly well in the case of his Orientalist friends because it mapped onto the traditional view of the Orient as the cradle of Western civilization.⁵⁰

Claude Vignon is less than impressed with Browne's harems. Unlike Gautier, she sees no advantage deriving from the artist's gender. In fact Browne, who she previously liked to praise as a masculine and virile artist, is found to have succumbed to the weaknesses of her sex and is demoted to the status of female.

⁴⁹This phrase about the cigarette also occurs in Constantinople of Today. It is apparent in this, and other, reviews of Orientalist work that Gautier frequently drew on his Turkish experience to read Orientalist paintings. Some phrases are repeated almost verbatim.

⁵⁰See Snell, pp.61-64.

Madame Browne, whose talent we recognized from the first... counts among the three or four best portraitists. A Femme d'Eleusis is a charming study; The Consolation, a pretty genre picture. The two Harem Interiors don't at all indicate a progress of the artist whose appearance at the Salon we bring to attention, there was for a short while, a totally virile talent. It is feminine painting, a little shallow, a little cold, such at last that, if the Interiors were not placed next to the portrait of Baron de S and signed with the same signature, they would not arouse a second glance. M Browne owes us more, it is said that she has captured nature in the Interiors, she was, despite herself, influenced by the harem's enervating atmosphere.⁵¹

Where Gautier thinks Browne has made a coup by depicting the truth of the harem, as far as Vignon is concerned, the artist was betrayed by her own nature. It seems femininity, like blood, will out. Although Vignon criticizes the harem's effects on women, note that her condemnation of Browne is not couched in the terms of moral repugnance that we earlier saw her direct at Gérôme in that year's Journal des desmoiselles. Meanwhile she continues to praise Browne in the Journal des desmoiselles. She does not refer to the disappointing Interiors at all, leading me to deduce that the importance of Browne as a role model for the young women readers overrides her dislike of the recent work. Gender, which in Le Correspondent accounts for Browne's failure, in Journal des desmoiselles is the grounds of her success. This

⁵¹Claude Vignon, 'Une visite au salon de 1861', in Le Correspondent, vol.18, 25 May 1861, pp.137-160.

example shows how the review's presumed readership impacts on the operation of discourses of gender and art.

Hector de Callias in L'Artist cannot rest easy with Browne's rejection of Decampian conventions. He is impressed with her paintings and accepts their documentary status but wants to retain some of the favourite elements of the Orientalist fantasy. His tone suggests that realism is all very well, but since the fantasy is so well established it is perverse to go against it in case the resultant image is less credible to Western eyes. If Browne equals documentary then what de Callias wants is docu-drama!

She has journeyed in the Orient. Like Lady Montagu, she penetrated into the harems, there she filled her palette with the richest colours and brings back to us interiors peopled with indolent beauties.... The harems' white walls are uniform and stucco. We reproach the artist who opposes herself to Decamps' encrusted and engraved walls. One doesn't dream that such walls would be entirely out of harmony with the general contents of the paintings...⁵²

De Callias' fervent championing of Decamp reveals the level of resistance to other versions of the Orient, although his reference to Lady Montagu substantiates the importance of the female eyewitness account.

Olivier Merson is disappointed with Browne's account of the harem. Rather than dispute whether she actually saw what she painted, he minimizes the centrality of the

⁵²Hector de Callias, 'Salon de 1861', in L'Artist, vol.11, no.11, 1 June 1861, pp.241-248.

Interiors by presenting them as just one version among many. This defuses their challenge to the Orientalist 'dream' which, it is implied, continues in reality elsewhere (in the harems of the very rich). Whilst on one hand this seems perfectly reasonable (why should there not be different types and classes of harems, just as there are different types of houses in Europe?) on the other it dilutes the significance of the Interiors by refusing their claim to relate to harems as a whole.

Having been able to clear the threshold of the harems, she [Browne] painted from nature those strange and jealous interiors, ... This then is the harem. Instead of diamond palaces and rejuvenated Alhambras, marble basins and gushing fountains, sumptuous rugs and naked odalisques rolling about in their pearled costumes, on piles of cushions or mosaics, we see a room that is austere and serious, without ornamentation, with colonnettes and white-washed walls, a mat unwinding on the flags, a divan dominating all around, and populated with silent women, bored, somnolently graceful, chaste in the muslim of their long robes which outline their fragile and languid bodies. I confess that these pictures disturb our Oriental dreams a little. It is true, if the artist had painted the seraglio of a Grand-Seigneur, perhaps we would have been less disappointed, perhaps we would rediscover the voluptuous setting, that sensual and breathtaking luxury that permeates the stories of A Thousand and One Nights.⁵³

⁵³Olivier Merson, Exposition de 1861: la peinture en France, Paris, 1861, pp.275-6.

Merson offers the most telling criticism of Browne's technique. He tells us quite clearly that she has broken the rules of verisimilitude required in the representation of foreign subjects, and so fails to convince.

Now, the painter permits us a technical observation. The inside of the rooms are whitewashed. To give this effect, Mme Browne has covered the background with a paste sufficiently resistant, and this is for the best. Then, the shaded parts of the figures that must project from this solid background, she has only covered with a wash of colour as light as the weave played across toile. This time she is mistaken. In order to free oneself for a foreign plan, it is not enough to give it a more definite location; it is important also that the manner in which it is put is close to natural in the eye of the spectator. This is not a cunning trick of the trade, it is a positive rule whose application we see in all the pictures of the master colourists. On the contrary, in The Visit and The Flute Player if I see the shaded tones of people sinking deeper instead of moving away, it is less because of their quality of colour than because they were placed there for opposite reasons to the effect they were called upon to express.

It seems that Gérôme had it right all along: Browne's deviation from Orientalist conventions (and the review starts with a passage on the particular colour opportunities offered by the light of the Orient) is not a matter of interpretation, it is a mistake.

The ease with which Merson and the other critics sum up the characteristics of the Oriental dream shows how familiar, and how cherished, it was. Women who reported back on the harem were faced with an audience curious for knowledge but resistant to changes in the accepted

knowledges about the East. Of course not all women agreed on what the harem was like. Léon Lagrange in the Gazette des beaux-arts plays women off against each other, using the Italian princess Belgiojoso's travel writings to dispute the authenticity of Browne's image of the harem.⁵⁴

The Visit and The Flute Player, which present themselves as revelations of the mysterious harem life, don't exceed in value and interest, a woman's travelogue; again the indiscretions of the princess Belgiojoso have a completely different version of the truth. It is possible that in 1860 the young Paris milliners taken to Constantinople by the Crimean War, amused themselves by playing out innocent and insipid entertainments [berquinades] in front of Madame Browne that she fixed quickly in her notebook.⁵⁵

Both women's products are trivialized by reducing them to the level of childish amusements, like those indulged in by bored milliners, which implicitly relegates Browne's paintings to a similar level of diversionary and frivolous

⁵⁴Princess Belgiojoso is sometimes referenced as a woman who wrote about travels in the East. The Italian born princess, came into her title when she married Prince Emile, ruler of the Italian principalities Barbian and Belgiojoso. She was a staunch Italian nationalist and removed to Paris when her city of residence, Milan, was under Austrian control. She was noted for her nationalism, her literary and political salon and her frequent belles lettres publications on subjects as diverse as Catholic dogma and travel. Larrouse, p.491.

⁵⁵Léon Lagrange, 'Salon de 1861', Gazette des beaux-arts, vol.11, 1 July 1861, pp.49-73.

activity. The combination of Parisian milliners, who featured regularly in the list of working-class women suspected of clandestine prostitution, and the term 'innocent' lends an air of sexual duplicity that reinforces Belgiojoso's 'indiscretions' as a more accurate view of the harem.⁵⁶ In this case it is implied that Browne was the innocent dupe of the sexually knowing, which undermines her alleged access to the truth. Having thus demolished her claim to serious critical attention he delivers the coup de grâce by claiming that only the Parisian obsession with Orientalism protects the canvas from serious critical discussion.

Madame Belgiojoso peoples harems with massive beauties, that strictly conform to the Mohammedan ideal of the houri type figure, and dressed with the bad taste which characterizes this exquisite flower. For us it is impossible to recognize [this] in the luminous pastels that light up the Interiors of M. Browne.... The walls too appear naked to us. What! No flashy mirror, no covering from Paris or London, and, similarly with the furniture, no piano, no porcelain clock, likewise no music box. Verisimilitude does not bow in favour of M. Browne: only the totally Parisian fondness for Turkish subjects protects them from the most serious reproaches that criticism would be in its rights to make of them in the name of art.⁵⁷

Browne's work is characterized as silly and diletante and as a mere fad, a thing of fashion and thus of no lasting

⁵⁶ See Theresa Ann Gronberg, 'Femmes de Brasserie', in Art History, vol.7, no.3, September 1984.

⁵⁷ Lagrange, 1861.

consequence. It is unclear whether the sarcastic reference to the absence of Western goods points to the increased two-way trade between East and West in this period, and is thus an accusation of inauthenticity, or is a sneer at the genre in general for its fondness for interiors crammed with goods. As Kabbani points out, this 'catalogue of goods' available to the Western viewer is one of the main pleasures of the Oriental text - a fantasy of ownership that extends to the women pictured in the Oriental interior.⁵⁸ The absence of luscious accoutrements in Browne's paintings therefore threatens to disrupt the expected mode of viewing and satisfactions of the Western audience. Although Orientalism is characterized by the European acquisition of Eastern goods, Western products were also sought after in the East. This was particularly the case with clothing - after the dress reforms of the 1830s many rich Turks wore Western dress - but this 'inauthentic' clothing was generally edited out by Western artists, even though the display of Western artefacts in rich Ottoman households was often seen by their owners as a sign of progressiveness.⁵⁹ Gautier, who approves of the Sultan employing Donizetti's brother as leader of his musical staff, is still somewhat staggered by the Turks' taste for vulgar French clocks or reproduction pictures, all of which are held in high esteem because of their European origin.⁶⁰

Although in many ways the Interiors conform to the image of Ottoman houses in Orientalist art (the

⁵⁸ Kabbani, p.70.

⁵⁹ Said-Ruete, p.20.

⁶⁰ Gautier, Constantinople, pp.106-7, 187, 203-7.

mouche Arabia/lattice screened windows, yashmaks and feredjes, the coffee pot, the tiled floor, low level seating, arches and columns) they also differ in that the furnishing is sparse and the room, as Lagrange points out, is bare and simple.⁶¹ This is quite in keeping with Ottoman interiors where space and coolness were maximized by storing furnishings and linens in cupboards when not in use. The dark-skinned woman at the right of the picture is carrying a cushion, such as would be brought out of store for use when guests arrived. This practice contradicts the Western vision of the multitudinous splendours of the Orient that was transposed from their own domestic predilection for interiors crowded with ornament and display. No doubt some visitors to the public areas of Oriental houses were met with an impressive array of luxurious furnishings but the vision of rooms crammed like an Aladdin's cave full of treasures would disappear when belongings were packed away once the room was vacated.

Several of the architectural and social details of the paintings seem reliable. Charles Newton, curator of the V&A's Searight collection, considers A Visit to be a fairly authentic representation of the interior of a wealthy Ottoman household. The stone structure indicates an expensive, large and probably old house. (Modern houses in nineteenth-century Constantinople were generally built of wood since few people could afford to build in scarce

⁶¹Harvey confirms that the walls of reception rooms were generally painted plain cream with 'Turkish' sentences from the Koran as a border.
Annie Jane Harvey, Turkish Harems and Circassian Homes, London, 1871, p.56.

and expensive stone.⁶²) The dimensions of the room in A Visit suggest that it is the main reception hall of the haremluk in a moderately wealthy household. Another possible illustration of the family's wealth is the carpet in A Flute Player which, judging by the pattern, may be a Western import. (Although it is impossible to tell clearly from a black and white photograph.)

These images of domestic detail and social interaction relate more to the English school of Orientalism exemplified by Lewis than to French high Orientalist fantasy. Orientalist paintings are caught up in a complex of intertextual relations wherein they invoke each other in a general sense (Europe's knowledge of the Orient is derived from the repetition and authentication of its signs about it) and reference each other specifically. In Merson's review, for example, there is a sense in which he acknowledges that the dream of the Orient challenged by Browne's Interiors is a fantasized reality based on representations. As such, an antidote to the disappointment of the Interiors can be provided by re-activating the pleasures of A Thousand and One Nights. Although Browne deviates from some strands of Orientalism, for example, she does not quote reclining nude odalisques, her realist style quotes enough conventional details of the field to counter-balance such omissions and authenticate the particular image of the harem on offer. The presence of well-rehearsed signs of the Orient, such as the women's yashmaks and curved 'Turkish' slippers, give the paintings a sense of ethnographic verisimilitude. Some critics were able to read this as the detailed representation of an everyday event available only to a female witness. Although some criticize her content and

⁶²Charles Newton in conversation.

style, for her champions Gautier and Chasrel it is this combination of new and 'known' information about the harem that proves their worth.

Chasrel's 1877 retrospective depicts Browne as an important Orientalist and traveller artist. Entering into recent art world debates about the usefulness of travel for artists, he cites Browne, alongside Gérôme and Fromentine, among those who reap the benefits of tours abroad (similar to the inspiration Millet finds at home) in contrast to the multitude of untalented artists whose search for ideas on any continent is futile. Browne's presence among such hallowed company is couched in the sugary terms of femininity:

Without attempting a comparison which would pose as flattery we do not regret the advantages of circumstances which made space for the elegant talent and sensibility [sympathique] of the artist [Browne]... who has added a new note to the rich and varied scale of Orientalist painting. A feminine note with all the delicacy, all the drama and all the distinction which gives the impression of a woman adding to the essence of art. The addition is but a semi-tone, or even, if you like, a quarter-tone to stay [rester] in the Oriental gifts, but this quarter-tone belongs to the artist who has had the good fortune to penetrate some of the mysteries of the intimate life of the Orient, and the talent to turn to painting's profit the womanly privileges of discovery she gained. We are reminded of the instant success of A Visit to the Harem in the salon of 1861. If not a revelation, it was at least an amendment which had the mark of direct and personal observation. It was what others had caught fleeting glimpses of, guessed at or simply imagined, Mme. Henriette Browne saw it herself, it was part of a

privilege; and she succeeded in communicating to the lay public all the freshness and all the vivacity of the initial impression, it is part of her talent.

Browne's talent is relentlessly traced to her gender at the level of both form and of content; Chasrel follows the trend of earlier British reviews and relates Browne to Millet and the painters of peasants, but he does not base his belief in the authenticity of her representations to the naturalistic style she shares with them. The paintings' credibility rests on the innate femininity of the woman herself:

That which we find pleasing about this talent is.. the natural distinction and the modesty of the woman... artist for everybody except perhaps herself, and so recognized by her peers and her masters, without her work betraying the infatuation of newly arrived dilettantism.

The touch, without overly precious scrupulousness, [tends] to the delicacy and quality of fine needlework. The accent is precise without any trace of the search for virile energy which too often spoils the most charming qualities. The sentiment is discreet without losing its intensity... The painting of Mme. Henriette Browne holds itself equidistant from grandeur and from affected winsomeness, from power and from affectation, and finds in the right milieu of its nature the sign of good taste and charm of which any upstart in Art would be incapable.

Although all the critical material on Browne assumes gender to be significant, Chasrel's stress on femininity is the most like the profile in the English Woman's Journal. Promoting the genteel femininity of the artist as the crucial measure of her work, the text sets up a series

of associations with discourses of art and gender in which to position Browne: she is both likened to all things womanly and rescued from the possible pejorative connotations of excessive femininity; her work is delicate but not precious; it is compared to skills relegated to the lesser sphere of craft but rescued from too much diminution by the careful note that the comparison is to 'fine' needlework and the heights of accomplishment, not the labour of a common seamstress. Further, it is discreet but not inane.

If Browne is saved from the taints of excessive femininity, she is also protected from the unnatural 'search for virile energy' that 'too often' ruins women's work. Whereas numerous art critics use virile as a term of praise (Vignon worried that the harem had emasculated Browne's erstwhile virile talent), Chasrel goes to great lengths to absolve Browne from such associations. The language of the review lets the terms of description slide between their apparent object, the art work, and the women who produce them. Thus we find that the 'charming' women who produce such delicate work are themselves in danger from the taints of virile energy, for 'traces' of which the critic carefully searches. The review's problem is how to encompass Browne's achievements within an ideology of art as a male activity without denying her femininity. On one hand, her paintings are validated precisely because they come from a woman's sphere, but on the other, she and all women artists, are in danger of infection by the virility of the art world and the potency of their male counterparts whose achievements (flowing from that very virility) they no doubt might falsely wish to emulate.

The review conceptualizes Browne's Orientalism as a feminine addition to a male field. Chasrel constructs a genealogy of Orientalism in which Browne figures as cousin to the great male Orientalists without compromising her

classed gentility.

[S]ince... we cited the names [Fromentine, Gérôme, Delacroix] of the leaders of this line of Oriental painting we could claim a place for her beside them which they would in other circumstances not hesitate to offer her. Mme. Henriette Browne is their kinswoman and if the artist had had the time to wait to choose herself a pseudonym she could have restricted herself to the feminization of the first name of one or other of her illustrious colleagues because her painting is a cousin of theirs.

The shifting status of Browne in the 'family' of Orientalism attests to the problems of locating a woman artist in this club. In order to facilitate her inclusion in the field of Orientalism Chasrel streamlines her oeuvre by de-emphasizing her role as the producer of domestic genre and portraiture which signals a woman artist. Her gender is never disguised (unlike the cross-dressing Rosa Bonheur, there is never any doubt that Browne is a woman) but is modified to produce a version of femininity that can fit the concept of Orientalist art. If she figures as too feminine an artist then her status as honorary Orientalist is threatened.

PART THREE

The Ordinary Orient: Women's Accounts

Browne's view of the harem, made possible because of her gendered access, was generally understood to be a rarity. But, as the references to Belgiojoso and Montagu suggest, her audience did know of other written accounts by women. Accordingly, in this section I am going to read Browne's

images alongside written accounts (in English) of harem life by Occidental and Oriental women in our period. This will map out a field of female experience of the Orient in which to theorize, via the different authorial positions inscribed in these texts, the type of positionalities available to Browne. To accept a gender-specific point of production does not of course make gendered qualities innate or legitimize claims for authorial control. As Griselda Pollock points out, the loss of the controlling author or artist does not mean the loss of the social producer of the art object.⁶³ Rather, by tracing the social spaces open to women artists we can assess how the pictorial spaces created by Browne bear, and were made to bear, the inscription of a gendered social existence. What is more, the variety of women's visual representation of the Orient will allow us to speculate on the range of representational options accessible to women as they each differently resolved the contradictions of being women artists.

The earliest written account I am using is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters from Constantinople, published on her return from that city where her husband had been Ambassador from 1716 to 1718.⁶⁴ Another British woman writer was Sophia Poole who travelled to Egypt in 1833 with her brother Stanley Lane, author of the famous Customs of the Modern Egyptians (1837). Her book, The

⁶³ See Griselda Pollock, 'Agency and the Avant-garde: Studies in Authorship and History by Way of Van Gogh', in Block, no.15, 1989.

⁶⁴ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, The Complete Letters, (ed) Robert Halsand, Oxford, 1967 (1763).

Englishwoman in Egypt was published in 1844.⁶⁵ According to her preface, he had suggested that she record and publish her impressions of the country since her access to things he was unable to observe would be a welcome supplement for his/their Western readers. Lady Anne Blunt's two-volume A Pilgrimage to Nejd was published, with prints after the author's drawings, in 1881.⁶⁶ It recounts her travels with her husband in Arabia and Persia and their dealings with local politics. Like Poole, Blunt was related to men associated with Orientalism (granddaughter of Lord Byron and wife of the Arabic scholar Wilfred Scawen Blunt), which no doubt contributed to the scholarly as well as popular market for her books: as with women artists, many women Orientalists benefited from an Orientalist family background.⁶⁷ Details of the exigencies of a tourist itinerary, including negotiating visits to harems, are provided by Annie Jane Harvey's Turkish Harems and Circassian Homes (1871).

I have also drawn upon two very different accounts of Islamic life by Oriental women: Emily Said-Ruete's Memoirs of an Arabian Princess, which was published in 1881 and Melek-Hanum's Thirty Years in the Harem: or the

⁶⁵ Sophia Poole, The Englishwoman in Egypt: Letters from Cairo, written during a residence there in 1842, 3 and 4 with E W Lane esq, author of 'The Modern Egyptians', London, 1844, 2 vols.

⁶⁶ Lady Anne Blunt, A Pilgrimage to Nejd: The Cradle of the Arab Race. A Visit to the Court of the Arab Emir, and "Our Persian Campaign", London, 1881, 2 vols.

⁶⁷ See Jane Robinson Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers, Oxford, 1990, see also Melman, p.31.

Autobiography of Melek-Hanum, wife of H.
H. Kibrizli-Mehemet-Pasha from 1872.⁶⁸ Both these women migrated to Europe and wrote for Western audiences. But Said-Ruete, who converted to Christianity and married a German, retained fond memories of her homeland, Zanzibar, whereas Melek-Hanum, who was a Catholic Georgian by birth, never identified with the Turks or the Muslims and produces a text that is hostile to both. Their varying circumstances provide different viewpoints on the East and valuable information about the structure of Muslim women's lives in the mid-nineteenth century.

Said-Ruete, the Princess Salme bint Said ibn Sultan al-Bu Saidi, was born to a Circassian slave in the royal harem of Oman and Zanzibar. She lived in the palace harem until she eloped with her German fiancée. Melek-Hanum grew up in Constantinople and was married first to a European man (of unspecified nationality, but since he is described as Protestant and having been in the suite of Lord Byron, it is likely that he was British) for five years. During and after this time she visited Europe. There she met and fell in love with Kibrizli-Mehemet-Pasha whom she agreed to marry, despite her 'dread of the harem' and its seclusion. The marriage lasted some years and is represented, until its breakdown, as happy. Melek who is presented throughout as boisterous, feisty and ambitious, helped her husband to overcome reversals and obtain several important postings. When the marriage ended he retained their only living child, a daughter, who then fell into the power of the incalculably evil new wife. At this point the text waxes lyrical about the evils of Islamic society and the

⁶⁸ Melek-Hanum, Thirty Years in the Harem: Or, the Autobiography of Melek Hanum, Wife of H.H. Kibrizli-Mehemet-Pasha, (1872) Calcutta, 1888.

iniquities of Mehemet-Pasha. Eventually mother and daughter are reunited and flee to Europe, where the narrative ends.⁶⁹ Since the period covered is the run up to the Crimean War, Thirty Years in the Harem offers an insight into the Porte's attitude to the impending alliance with Europe.

To analyse the power relations in the production and viewing of Browne's paintings and these women's writings we must consider variables of class, race and religion as well as gender. Because Western travellers like Browne, Montagu and Poole were known to have had access to segregated Muslim spaces, their accounts were generally seized upon as true. But their gaze in the harem is registered both as female, since their gender gains them entry, and as Western, since their presence is as spectator and rarely participant.⁷⁰ How do we read in women's work the effects of the slipping of positionalities that such expeditions provoked?

Clothes, or their absence, are frequently the means by which such a distance is affected. Oriental clothes signify the exoticism of the Orient, but for women, as for all Westerners, the pleasures of cultural cross-dressing must be forfeited when Western clothes are necessary to signal their Europeanness and inculcate respect or

⁶⁹Melek-Hanum subsequently published Six Years in Europe: Sequel to Thirty Years in the Harem, London, 1873.

⁷⁰See Leeks on this aspect of Lady Montagu's accounts of her visits to the harem and the use made of them by Ingres.

discipline.⁷¹ Lady Montagu, despite her envy of Muslim women's financial independence, is careful to create differences and distance between herself and the Oriental women: on a visit to the baths she insists on remaining clothed - whilst delighted to be there, she does not wish to become part of the spectacle. Sophia Poole highlights the significance of dress in this excerpt dealing with the conflict of Oriental and Occidental etiquette in harem visits. Adamant that her station as Westerner puts her above all Oriental women, she goes to great lengths to disguise any compromise of her status.

In visiting those who are considered the noble of the land, I resume, under my Eastern riding costume, my English dress; thus avoiding the necessity of subjecting myself to any humiliation. In the Turkish in-door costume, the manner of my salutations must have been more submissive than I should have liked; while, as an Englishwoman, I am entertained by the most distinguished, not only as an equal, but generally as a superior. I have never given more than the usual salutation, excepting in the case of addressing elderly ladies, when my inclination leads me to distinguish them by respectfully bending, and lowering my right hand before I touch my lips and forehead, when I am presented, and when I leave them.⁷²

Note that whilst she feels 'inclined' to bow out of a

⁷¹ See Gail Ching-Liang Low, 'White Skins/Black Masks: the Pleasures and Politics of Imperialism', in New Formations, no.9, Winter 1989.

⁷² Poole, vol.1, p.209.

proper European respect for her elders, she feels no such inclination to recognize Oriental distinctions of rank and eminence. Securing the essential hierarchy of racial difference - signified by her European clothes - compensates for giving up the superior suitability and comfort of Turkish clothes in the hot climate.

At home and when visiting ladies of middle rank, I wear the Turkish dress which is delightfully comfortable, being admirably adapted to the climate of this country.⁷³

The careful preservation of a certain superiority and distance is complicated for women by points of possible contact and disassociation in which (scenes of) the women's quarters or of children can be both the familiar terrain of femininity and the immutable other of the Orient. For example, Poole finds that talking about children is an ice-breaker and shared interest in the harems she visits, but is dismissive of the Oriental women's fear of the evil eye (which renders it inauspicious to praise a child outright). The actual or imagined relationship between author and Orient in these accounts is differently determined by variants of race, class and religion and personality. That Montagu is more open to playing at Turk than the snobby and frankly unlikeable, Poole can be explained by their different periods, status (as wife of the British Ambassador or sister of a mere traveller and scholar), and the temperament engendered by these and other variables (wealth, contacts, etc.).

For the two non-Western writers, a different set of

⁷³Poole, vol.1, p.211.

relations is constructed. Both Said-Ruete and Melek-Hanum contend throughout their accounts with the comments and assumptions they expect from their European readers. Said-Ruete, as a convert to Christianity, is critical of some Islamic institutions but, as a foreigner in Europe, sees the hypocrisy of Western Orientalism and defends much of Islamic life. She offers the moderated (remember, she is now dependent on European good-will) voice of the Oriental other answering back. Melek-Hanum, on the contrary, says little about Europe but is damning about Islam and the Turks. The text of Thirty Years in the Harem is frantic to establish a critical distance between the author and the Muslim Turks. This distance varies: depending on the heroine's ever changing fortunes Islam is depicted as tolerable (at times of marital harmony when the distance is minimized) and evil (where distance is maximized when she is presented as victim of the iniquities of a positively fiendish and utterly alien Islam). Whereas Said-Ruete self-consciously paints Muslim life in answer to European questions, Thirty Years in the Harem describes it far more in relation to the author's own changing concerns. The pleasures and familiarity of harem life are neither a problem nor a fascination. It is only when Melek-Hanum is out of favour and in danger that the image of the gullible, corrupt and cruel Turk is mobilized as negative. Prior to that the same qualities are seen as simply part and parcel of Ottoman life and she is happy to own to her successful machinations and briberies in the circles of power.⁷⁴ The author's position as a non-Turk and non-Muslim only surfaces when she needs to assert a separation from the society around her. It is this conflict within Melek-Hanum's text that is obliterated by Melman, who cites Melek-Hanum as one of the Muslim women

⁷⁴Melek-Hanum, p.39. See later.

writers whose accounts of the harem present the oppressive realities that were edited out by Western women in their desire to see the harem in terms of the bourgeois domestic.⁷⁵ We would be very wrong not to attribute to the representational practices of those positioned as the Orientalist other the same complex of social and subjective determinants as we do to Occidental authors.

The emphasis on the 'othering' and de-humanizing of the Orient central to the critique of imperialism favoured by recent twentieth-century art historians has led to a picture of Orientalism that necessarily emphasizes the sensational and exotic aspects of the genre. But, as we have seen, the field to which Browne contributed contained conflicting images of the Orient by artists of both genders. Contemporary readings of Browne's Interiors structure themselves around the viewing position attributed to the artist and the authenticity of the paintings. Critics see Browne's particular cachet as being her authentic representation of an ordinary Orient - a foreign domestic - whose mundanity is charged with excitement by the exotic location and the understanding that she presents a previously unobtainable view into the harem.

Browne's version of the harem disallows some of the genre's expected pleasures; unlike the isolated sexual prison crowded with half-clothed somnolent women and desirable consumer durables, she presents a calm austere and social space, marked by relations between the female figures. She activates it as a social realm, its walls regularly penetrated by visitors, friends and musicians from outside. As such the paintings offer an alternative

⁷⁵Melman, pp.308-10.

reading of relations of power, kinship and society in the harem. Her women are dressed and active, in clothes that have a social status and purpose in their wearer's lives instead of merely figuring as decoration or a mismatch of all things vaguely Oriental. There is no sexual intrigue in Browne's harems: the visits and entertainments seem quite above board. The dominant sense of A Visit is of an Oriental version of the afternoon visit which so structured European bourgeois society.

Contrary to the stereotype of the isolated forbidden harem, it was often relatively easy for Western women to visit Muslim harems. Melek-Hanum depicts Western women's visits to the royal harem in Constantinople as frequent enough to be considered commonplace in the late 1840s.⁷⁶ By the time Browne went in 1861, after the rapprochement of the the Crimean War, the increased numbers of Western tourists in the city meant that demand for harem visits began to outstrip supply, and by 1871 Annie Harvey noted that 'every year it is more difficult for passing travellers to gain admittance to the harems'.⁷⁷ (Harvey herself had sufficient connections to ensure introductions to all the best households.) We have no evidence of where Browne visited in Turkey (nor would this conclusively prove the truth of the paintings), but we can attempt to verify them with reference to representations from other

⁷⁶Melek-Hanum, p.13.

⁷⁷Harvey, p.8.

sources.⁷⁸ Foreign visitors remarked the Turks' hospitality and it is possible that Browne's paintings are based on the experience of more than one Ottoman interior. (As a member of French diplomatic circles she would have met with the upper echelons of Constantinople's varied business, political and ethnic communities.)

Browne's image of the harem as a social space contradicts the two most common themes of the Orientalist fantasy harem - sex and idleness. In literary representations Western and Eastern women dispute the West's vision of the harem as a space devoted to indolence and passion. Sophia Poole notes that female 'brokers' are frequent visitors to Egyptian harems who want to shop⁷⁹ and Sarah Graham-Brown, who has traced photographic images of harems, emphasizes the number of connections the inhabitants had with the rest of the female world.⁸⁰ She cites a list of visitors that includes laundresses, servants, musicians, doctors, friends and peddlers.

Poole, who is very protective of the status due to her as a European, also disputes the licentious image of harems.

The ideas entertained by many in Europe of the immorality of the hareem are, I believe, erroneous.

⁷⁸We also do not know if Browne worked from props in her Paris studio as well as from direct observation. Certainly, some of the later Orientalist subjects like La perruche (Salon 1875) could quite easily have been done in the studio.

⁷⁹Poole, vol.2, p.18.

⁸⁰Sarah Graham-Brown, Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950, London, 1988.

True, it is, that the chief ladies have much power which they might abuse; but the slaves of these ladies are subject to the strictest surveillance; and the discipline in the Eastern harem can only be compared to that which is exercised in the convent.⁸¹

On the other hand Lady Anne Blunt, who presents herself as an industrious, studious and self-disciplined traveller fearless of danger and discomfort, is convinced that Oriental women are lazy.

They have no idea of amusement, if I may judge from what they say to me, but a firm conviction that perfect happiness and dignity consist in sitting still.⁸²

Note that she links itemizes dignity as one of the values placed on idleness, thus giving the women's leisure a social dimension just as it had in the West. But although European women of the middle and upper classes were encouraged to a life of leisure, it was always registered as productive - not just in the signification of the family's wealth - but also materially in the visible activities of philanthropy and cultural appreciation. For Blunt, the absolute leisure of the harem women is registered as qualitatively different to the apparent leisure of Western women. Ironically, it is Gautier who most clearly draws out the similarities between the lives of affluent women in the Orient and in Europe,

⁸¹ It is unclear whether the surveillance is intended to discipline the slaves or control the wives' movements via their slaves. Poole, p.79.

⁸² Blunt, vol.2, p.232.

highlighting the geographical mobility of Muslim women;

...one sees them [women] in the shops, in groups of two or three, followed by negresses, who carry sacks, and to whom the ladies hand their purchases, as Judith passed the head of Holofernes to her black [sic] servant.

'Shopping' seems as much an amusement of the Turkish ladies as of the English; and is, with the former, a means of passing the time and exchanging a few words with other human beings, which few of them would deny themselves.⁸³

...contrary to the European idea, the Turkish ladies, far from remaining walled up in the harems, go out when they please, on the sole condition of remaining closely veiled; and their husbands never think of accompanying them.⁸⁴

The power of the Orientalist stereotype of laziness is attested by Emmeline Lott, author of The English Governess in Egypt (1866).⁸⁵ She is no lover of Islam, and frequently bemoans the suspicion with which she is treated as an unbeliever whilst portraying the Muslims as governed by a cruel and primitively superstitious religion. In her sequel, The Mohadetteyn in the Palace: Nights in the Harem (1867) she includes a diatribe against Western assumptions

⁸³ Gautier, Constantinople, p.121.

⁸⁴ Gautier, Constantinople, p.190.

⁸⁵ Emmeline Lott, The English Governess in Egypt: Harem Life in Egypt and Constantinople, London, 1866.

about Oriental women. This is attributed to the figure of Yusuf, the kislär agaci (chief eunuch) of her Highness Fatimah Khaboum, wife of the recently deceased Viceroy Abuss Pacha, who, having accompanied the late Pacha to England, is able to compare Oriental ladies to European high society.

[The words in speech marks are Yusuf's.]

'The ladies of her Highness's suite, although unable to read, write or play on musical instruments, were not, on that account, idling away their time.'

I [Lott] felt that this remark was again specially addressed, with a species of innuendo, to myself, the Frankish Cocona. 'True, they were uneducated... but at that moment they were, or looked, patterns of industry [engaged in spinning and sewing]. As I looked upon these sempstresses, I thought how little the few Frenk ladies, who have been permitted, from time to time, to enter the audience halls of the odalisques of Sultans, viceroys, princes and pachas, without proceeding further, can know of how much exertion those quiet, sedate, and apparently impassive creatures are capable, whom they have only seen listlessly indulging in their cigarettes. They can work with their fingers assiduously, as you see. They can work with their brains also, frequently. They formerly were - ay, and many of them still are - the profoundest adepts in every species of political cabal or domestic intrigue; and even Machiavelli; that well-known Italian prince of diplomatists, of whom history speaks, had he possessed an Eastern harem, might have found his match - state-crafty (sic) and astute, as he was - in the Oriental

odalisque'.⁸⁶

Yusuf accurately sums up the characteristic Orientalist picture of the lazy, mindless, smoking odalisque and challenges it specifically in relation to the accomplishment skills expected of women in Europe. Like Poole, Lott presents herself as being very careful to maintain her status and special privileges as a European, whether it is to have the moucharabia removed from her window, or to regularly transgress codes of religious and royal etiquette. On such occasions she pragmatically utters totemic statements about Allah's will to affirm her actions and placate her audience. The character Yusuf acts as a story teller and bringer of news for the length of the book, deploying an Oriental tradition of storytelling, reminiscent of A Thousand and One Nights and lending an authentic flavour to what is basically a collection of tales recycled from other sources (notably Lane, to whom she has Yusuf acknowledge a debt for knowledge about his own country) and Lott's digressions on various aspects of Egyptian life.

The clearest deconstruction of the stereotype of the lazy Oriental woman comes from Said-Ruete, who is obviously infuriated by its prevalence. She ignores the sexual element of the stereotype completely and deals with the Oriental's apparent leisure as an issue of work, contrasting women's work in the Orient to Europe.

How many times have I been asked: 'Do please tell me how can people in your country manage to live, with nothing to do?' I had the pleasure of answering this

⁸⁶Lott, The Mohadetteyn in the Palace: Nights in the Harem, London, 1867, pp.43-44 (original emphasis).

question six or eight times over at a large party... coming from a person inhabiting a Northern country, the question is quite a natural one I admit, for it is hard for such to fancy a life without work, being firmly convinced, moreover, that women in the East do nothing all day but dream away their time in a shut up harem, or, for a change play with some luxurious toy.

[T]he Arab, so frequently described in books as idle and lazy, is accustomed to an abstemiousness in which perhaps a Chinaman only equals him. The climate itself, brings it about that the Southerner may work as he likes, while the Northerner is obliged to.

Now, I ask, is the Arab mother, who wants so very little [materially, since the 'blessed' climate decreases the dangers to the newborn] for herself or her child, to work as hard as the European housewife? She hasn't the slightest idea of what is meant by darning stockings or mending gloves, or any of those numerous trifles that a nursery entails; and as for that important and troublesome domestic item, a washing-day, it is a thing to us unknown; our linen is washed daily, and dried in little more than half an hour, smoothed flat (not ironed), and put away...All this helps to render life to the Eastern lady, without distinction of station and rank, much

less complicated.⁸⁷

In her rebuttal of the charge of idleness, Said-Ruete produces a clearly feminine response that weaves between national and class differences. Her stress on the devotion of Arab mothers requires the text to prioritize the tasks of childcare as an index to Arab women's responsibilities (however much eased by the warm climate) whilst her self-presentation as royalty puts her above the menial work of a housewife.⁸⁸

A picture emerges from these accounts of the harem as a space governed by social and legal regulations, which is no less circumspect or more restrictive than the European

⁸⁷ Said-Ruete, pp.48-50 (original punctuation and emphasis). The stereotypical reference to a Chinaman's abstinence is one of a range of national, racial, and religious stereotypes that punctuate Said-Ruete's text. Whilst the existence of stereotypes and theories of racial difference in the East has often been overlooked (in the desire to see the West as the origin of all evil) they are doubtless of a different impact depending on the status and situation of their enunciation. Dengler quotes the Ottoman poet Mishri (d.1699) who summarized women from different ethnic groups in relation to their suitability as wives according to stereotypical characteristics; Circassian women were 'intractable and warlike', Russians 'hostile' and Georgians 'undemanding' etc. Dengler, p.234.

⁸⁸ It is quite possible that poverty, as much as the change in climate, brought Said-Ruete into contact with Northern domestic drudgery since wealthy Western women would be equally unused to the labours described, except in the supervision of the servants performing them.

drawing room. Both Western and Eastern sources comment on the flexibility offered to women by the harem system, which is seen by some as superior to the freedom enjoyed by European women. As Melman illustrates, the terms in which Muslim women's relative freedom are conceptualized vary according to the agenda of their Western observers: thus where the aristocratic Lady Montagu applauds Muslim women's individual (sexual) liberty in keeping with the Enlightenment concepts of personal freedom that she wants to claim for women, nineteenth-century writers stress Muslim women's freedom from sexual demands (being particularly impressed by the idea that no Muslim husband entered the haremluk without permission) and depict the haremluk in terms of the middle-class concept of 'home', with all its gendered and classed connotations.

Montagu reported from rich Turkish harems that rather than 'lament the miserable confinement of Turkish ladies' as male writers were wont to do, she found them to be 'freer than any ladies in the universe'. Unlike their Western counterparts, Muslim women benefited from having control over their income and so 'are the only women in the world that lead a life of uninterrupted pleasure, exempt from cares, their whole time being spent in visiting, bathing, or the agreeable amusement of spending money and inventing new fashions'.⁸⁹ Thus, for Montagu, once a woman accepts the regulations of segregated living, the system can work to her advantage, offering possibilities for sexual intrigue and independence. Islamic law ensures rather than restricts women's liberty with even the veil working to their advantage:

⁸⁹Montagu, in (ed) Dervla Murphy, Embassy to Constantinople: The Travels of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, London, 1988, p.189.

[T]here is no distinguishing the great lady from her slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her, and no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street. This perpetual masquerade gives them them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery.⁹⁰

Here, Gautier's 'permanent carnival' of Islam that entrances the spectator is transformed into a string of conventions that the (independent and affluent) women participants can use to their own purpose, producing a social mode of female existence far more liberated than that of eighteenth-century Europe. In the nineteenth century Melek-Hanum paints a corroborating picture of the flexibility of of harem rules; even her own mother and father met via flirtatious letters and looks from the harem window.⁹¹ Segregated male and female worlds (which always impacted more on affluent and urban women) were not seen necessarily to deprive Muslim women of power or influence. Considering that female interest and influence in politics was precisely what the West wanted to avoid in its own women, it is not surprising that when Oriental female power is represented by men it figures as a spectre of evil. The idea of the harem as a centre of hidden patronage - it was known that, though less now that Ottoman power was in decline, the mothers and wives of royalty and high ranking officials exercised immense power through patronage networks⁹² - only added to the sense of

⁹⁰Montagu, in Murphy, p.111.

⁹¹Melek-Hanum, p.4 and p.13.

⁹²Dengler, p.232.

intrigue and threat that is the other side of the fantasy of the harem as a palace full of listless bimbos.⁹³ Poole reports that women in the harem of the Efendee are very well informed on international affairs and discuss politics avidly;⁹⁴ Melek-Hanum is clear that women take an active and recognized part in political life and indicates that the harem system, rather than secluding women from the outside world, actively creates a central role for them in the dissemination of information.

The women are generally the first to learn and circulate news. The men often visit each other, but they are always reserved. They speak with less restraint to their wives, and tell them for their entertainment what they have heard... The wives of high functionaries are on terms of close intimacy with other great ladies, and repeat to them what their husbands have said; in this way news is spread abroad with unheard-of rapidity.⁹⁵

Women in Europe were also expected to play a part in furthering their husband's career by cultivating useful friendships. But in Turkey these subterfuges are a clearly recognized means of power. Melek-Hanum makes it quite plain that claimants knew that whilst her husband as state official could not accept 'presents' (the essential route to success and influence), his wife could. Women's

⁹³The theme of political intrigue in the harem surfaces frequently in music and opera of the nineteenth century, most notably in Verdi's Aida. See Said, Orientalism.

⁹⁴Poole, vol.2, p180.

⁹⁵Melek-Hanum, p.81.

communication networks were more than mere gossip circles, they constituted a recognized but unofficial part of the structure of communication and power; '[i]n two years I disposed, in this manner, of more than fifteen important posts in favour of persons whom I had never even set eyes on!'⁹⁶ As even Emmeline Lott points out, women in Egypt played a considerable part in the political life of their country. Said-Ruete pointedly contrasts rich Oriental women's economic power to that of Western women.

The household stands entirely under the control of the wife, and there she is absolute mistress. She does not receive a certain sum for housekeeping, as is customary in Europe - she has full liberty to dispose of her husband's funds. When the latter has two wives living apart, his income is equally divided between them.⁹⁷

Her account of the questions she faced in the West shows how Islamic society was judged by the treatment of its women - who were polarized as either cruelly repressed or wantonly promiscuous. Browne's paintings which show the harem as respectably domestic destabilize the lavish fantasies projected onto Oriental women. One wonders whether the complaints about the lack of worldly goods are a transferred demand for the lush trappings of sexual excess where mirrors, fountains and carpets signify the scene, setting and satisfaction of the Orientalist fantasy.

Just like a European domestic genre scene, Browne's

⁹⁶ Melek-Hanum, p.39.

⁹⁷ Said-Ruete, p.154.

Orientalist painting is structured by details indicating a series of social nuances, the picture plane animated by a grid of gazes between the figures. The relations between the figures have all the marks of a ritualized social interaction: the two central figures (hostess in indoor clothes and senior visitor in outdoor clothes) greet each other with a salaam motion whilst the rest of each party prepare for their part in the visit.

The paintings accord with what is known about harem etiquette and where they deviate there are supporting precedents. One example is the manner of greeting. Said-Ruete writes that, unlike in the painting,

It is not customary for her [the hostess] to rise and meet her visitors as courtesy requires in this country; she only rises to express her pleasure, or in honour of the rank and station of the calling lady... Only a lady of the same rank can sit down on the Medde [seat] - those of an inferior station in life have to sit at some distance.⁹⁸

However, Melek-Hanum, aware of the significance Europeans placed on rising and, experienced in the problems of incorporating Western visitors into the harem's hierarchies, delighted her royal hosts when posted to Belgrade by going to greet them at the room's entrance.⁹⁹

The pictures are contradictory in their use of the veil. The transparent gauze veil worn by the arrivals in A Visit accords with urban Ottoman fashion of the period, and

⁹⁸ Said-Ruete, p.174.

⁹⁹ Melek-Hanum, pp.59-69.

corresponds to its usage as an outdoor covering - the women have presumably just arrived since they still have on their outdoor clothes (feredge). But the same veil in A Flute Player, where they are presumably staying long enough to hear a music recital, seems incongruous. It has always been assumed that veils were removed on arrival since there is no prohibition on women seeing each others' faces. It is impossible to know if Browne observed such a phenomenon or misunderstood the mix of dress visible as women arrived. But, again, evidence about the veil is conflicting or varied according to location and culture: although Melek-Hanum observes that in Turkey veils are removed on harem visits along with the feredge,¹⁰⁰ and Poole in Egypt is evidently able to see women's faces, Said-Ruete in Zanzibar is clear that outdoor clothes remain: 'the mask is retained; with the exception of the shoes no part of the dress is removed, not even the Schele [large shawl of black silk that is worn outdoors]'.¹⁰¹

Kinship

Perhaps one of women writers' and artists' biggest challenges to hegemonic Orientalist versions of harem life is their representation of polygamy. A central theme of Orientalist discourse, polygamy afforded both a male fantasy of the ownership and control of multiple women and a reason to condemn Islam as heathen and barbaric. As a subject that was depraved and exciting, polygamy could be a potentially touchy subject for a woman artist.

¹⁰⁰ Melek-Hanum, p.70.

¹⁰¹ Said-Ruete, p.175.

Said-Ruete, like most sources, maintains that polygamy was rare (for economic and social reasons)¹⁰² and compares it favourably to the vagaries of Western marriage.

I have never met any man who really had four wives at once. Of course a poor man can only afford to have one; the rich man restricts himself to two at most, who live apart and keep house separately...

Practically, and in most cases, monogamy predominates.¹⁰³ Whenever a man avails himself of the full liberty granted to him by law, the relations between the different wives become rather uncomfortable.

How is it with Christians? how about wedded life in civilized Europe?.. Is wedlock always considered a sacred institution in moral Europe? Is it not bitter irony and delusion to talk of only 'one' wife? The Christian may, of course, marry one woman only, and that is the great superiority of Christianity; the Christian law requires the just and the good, the Mahometan allows the evil; but custom and practice mitigate to great extent in the East the evil consequences of the law, while sin is rampant here in spite of it. I should say the only difference in the position of a married woman in the East and in Europe to be, that the former knows the number as well as the characters of her rivals, while the latter is

¹⁰² See also Harvey, p.69.

¹⁰³ Monogamy here refers only to sexual relations that are marital. It is implied that a man might still have numerous slaves or concubines without apparently encountering the same problems.

kept in a state of considerate ignorance about them.¹⁰⁴

By presenting the harem as a domestic space whose social environment is shaped by the women who live there, Browne minimizes the importance of the absent husband. The incorporation of a child into an utterly respectable and unremarkable domestic scene dilutes the sexual charge of the harem location, drawing out the parallels between the European and Oriental domestic and challenging Western Orientalist fantasies. Unlike the fantasy of the sexually available and interchangeable harem women, women's accounts present us with a network of specific kinship relations, basically an extended family, in which children are clear on the various ties that link them to their mother, their siblings, half-siblings and the foster families of their wet nurse. This displaces as the central force in harem relations the all-powerful figure of the father on which Western identifications depend and challenges the viewing position of Western superiority. By painting a child as part of the harem's social structure Browne implicitly allies herself with the women's version of harem life.

Children who are not slaves are an uncommon feature in Orientalist painting. They were of course a staple of domestic genre scenes where family, with woman as wife and mother, was the mainstay of the ideological understanding of hearth and home. Although many artists emphasized the everyday qualities of Oriental life few of them combined motherhood with harems. Young children occur now and then as slaves or servants (eg. in Lewis' The Reception there is both a Black boy slave and a, fairer, girl child with

¹⁰⁴Said-Ruete, pp.151-2.

the visiting party) and more rarely as the children of harem women such as in Frederick Goodall's A New Light in the Harem (1884, plate 43) and Jan-Baptist Huysmans' Tending Baby (n.d., plate 44). Oriental women most often figure as mothers in rural settings away from the harem, particularly as Egyptian Fellaheen. This helps to keep the myth of the harem as a rarefied area of sexuality and intrigue, in contrast to its more mundane function as the quarters of women and young children.¹⁰⁵ Goodall's A New Light in the Harem with its coy title transplants some of the sentimentality of motherhood from West to East, but unlike the upright prim young mothers of Cope's domestic (see chapter three), Goodall's new baby is entertained by two odalisques, their forms revealed through transparent robes as they lounge about the Oriental interior. The drape pulled back over the moucharabia emphasizes the viewer's sense of access to a private sphere. But this is not the Occidental domestic - despite the intent gaze of the mother to her child (for the logic of the painting can only allow that the white woman is the mother, thus placing the Black figure as a slave or servant) no proud Victorian mama would be leaning revealed for all to see. The tiles, nargile and animals emphasize the exotic location and key what is titularly a picture about motherhood, into the sexualized realm of racialized fantasy. The contrast between the white and Black figures here is typical of the sexualized representation of racial difference in the harem, (In section five I shall discuss this more fully in relation to Browne's work.)

Said-Ruete gives some idea of mothering in a harem

¹⁰⁵The depiction of Oriental children on their own constitutes a popular sub-category of Orientalism from Decamps onwards. This will be discussed later.

situation, again comparing it to motherhood in the West.

The education of the children is left entirely to the mother, whether she be legitimate wife or purchased slave, and it constitutes her chief happiness. Some fashionable mothers in Europe shift this duty onto the nurses and by and by on the governess, and are quite satisfied with looking up their children or receiving their visits once a day. In France the child is sent to be nursed in the country, and left to the care of strangers. An Arab mother, on the other hand, looks continually after her children. She watches and nurses them with the greatest affection, and never leaves them as long as they may stand in need of her motherly care; for which she is rewarded by the fondest filial love. Her children repay her in a great measure for all the disadvantages of polygamy, and their affection renders her life more happy and contented.¹⁰⁶

The relations between women/wives/mothers in the harem and the children include not only the child's half-brothers and sisters (the children of other wives) but also the children of wet-nurses and slaves. Said-Ruete is clear that half-brothers and sisters are regarded as siblings but not of course all their various mothers, so that although all the 'children', many of whom are older than her own mother, are her siblings, there is no loss of distinction regarding the mother. They may share a father but each child is clear who is its mother. Said-Ruete often describes the race of the mothers and talks of childish discrimination and 'hatred of race' particularly between the children of Circassian women and the darker

¹⁰⁶Said-Ruete, p.155.

Abyssinians, who are generally agreed to be the next in line of beauty.¹⁰⁷ Although she waxes lyrical about motherly love, it is clear that slaves act as wet nurses and carers to harem children. This class differential is presented as also a kinship relation. Her account emphasizes the devotion of the wet nurse and the elevation rather than loss of status for the nurses' children.

Especially the black nurses distinguish themselves by their great attachment to their charges... [she] considers herself a second mother to the child..What a difference there is between this and the half-hearted interest shown by the nurses in this country [Germany]!...a black nurse is not required to part with her child but frequently , if not always, she retains it. The child of the nurse receives the same nourishment as its little foster-brother or sister, shares its pap, its bowl, its bath, wears its old dresses, and by and by shares its toys. The child grows up a slave, but always preferred to others except by very badly disposed people who can forget their foster relation.¹⁰⁸

Evidently, this vision of concord is not without tensions, but since many royal children were themselves born of slaves such points of identification and disassociation are unavoidable.

The destabilizing potential of such woman-centred accounts can still be contained within the Orientalist fantasy harem. For, although the singular relationship of each

¹⁰⁷Said-Ruete, p.34.

¹⁰⁸Said-Ruete, pp.67-8.

child to its mother (arguably one already split in the case of wet-nursed children) confounds the fantasy of the replaceability of women, it is upheld again by the irreplaceability of the father who has a relationship to all the children. For Western men the harem rescinds the formula of marriage as the cost of secured paternity: the Oriental husband can proliferate via all the women in his harem (except his daughters) without problems of legitimacy. In the West's fantasy economy the Oriental harem figures, as Spivak argues, as an arena to rehearse both the exploitation and subjugation of Black women by Black men (a wish-fulfilment in relation to women's social agitation at home) and the avenging of female wrongs by the morally superior West.¹⁰⁹ Browne offers a way in for the female viewer by depicting a suitably feminine (and maternal) space with which the female viewer can identify. This is not new: European women had been using the harem as a metaphor for their predicament for some time; in Jane Eyre (1847) Jane identifies with the harem against Rochester's restrictive love. But providing a point of entry for female viewers does not necessarily mean that the harem will be seen as a positive space - it can be emptied of its local significance and charged with Western associations just as well for white women as for white men - Jane plans to save herself and the 'houris' by leading them in revolt for equality against the despot/Rochester's tyranny. Here the typical formula wherein white men save Black women from Black men is adapted to feature a white

¹⁰⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 'Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice', in Wedge, nos.7/8, Winter/Spring 1985.

See also Nancy L. Paxton, 'Mobilizing Chivalry: Rape in British Novels About the Indian Uprising of 1857', in Victorian Studies, vol.36, no.1, Fall 1992.

woman as saviour - although at least in Jane's case the white man is also depicted as a threat and tyrant. Indeed, Joyce Zonana argues that Jane Eyre is part of a 'fully developed cultural code' of feminist Orientalism, in which the use of Islam and the harem as a metaphor for the oppression of Western women, was familiar to Charlotte Brontë and, as is evident in Jane Eyre, to her readers.¹¹⁰ Significantly, this tradition of feminist Orientalism, whilst overtly concerned with the Islamic oppression of women, actually functions to save Western women by reforming Western men of their Orientalized sins: by conceptualizing the evils of European gender relations as Oriental, the Western feminist can, as Zonana argues, disarm the challenge of her words by engaging in a battle to purge the West of its Orientalized failings and thus return the Occident to itself, simultaneously shoring up the West's Occidental primacy. What is interesting in this instance is that, whilst Zonana makes a convincing case for the familiarity of Western women writers with the traditions and tropes of feminist Orientalism, it is clear that they were equally familiar to Oriental women who wrote for a Western audience since their writings frequently challenge feminist as well as hegemonic Orientalist assumptions. Thus Said-Ruete's defence of the apparent laziness of Oriental women stands as much against Florence Nightingale's (1849) representation of the enforced leisure of the harem as 'hellish' as it does against male stereotypes of indolent harem women.¹¹¹ It is

¹¹⁰ Zonana and see also, Susan L. Meyer, 'Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of Jane Eyre', in Victorian Studies, vol.33, no.2, 1987.

¹¹¹ Florence Nightingale, Letters From Egypt: A Journey on the Nile, 1849-50, in Zonana, p.605.

within this cluster of dominant and alternative Orientalist discourse, then, that women's accounts need to be read, in order to allow for the variety of oppositional and collaborative positionalities assumed by both Occidental and Oriental women cultural agents.

Melek-Hanum, who by the end of her marriage is disenchanted with Muslim society, paints a picture of the harem system's evil effect on 'family life'. It is clear that the concept of 'family life' used here signifies the Western family model which surfaces as other and superior to the Oriental version.

Family life is, in reality, unknown amongst the Turks. The law of the Koran, which divides mankind into two distinct classes - men and women - does not admit of the existence of a family in which each member can live the same life and form part of the harmonious whole... Thus persons who pretend to form part of one and the same family, have, in reality, nothing common amongst themselves, - neither apartments, nor goods, nor furniture, nor friends, nor even the same hours of taking rest. The selamlık (the apartments of the men) and the harem are in consequence, two separate establishments placed side by side, where each one does what pleases him or herself.¹¹²

Harvey, who is full of praise for the kind manners and temperament of Turkish women, sees the segregation of the harem system as an over-riding evil. By the time of her visit polygamy itself was nearly obsolete in the 'best families' but the harem of course remains. In her view men

¹¹²Melek-Hanum, pp.129-30.

and and women, 'deteriorate by separation. Men who live only with other men become rough, selfish and coarse; whilst women, when entirely limited to the conversation of their own sex, grow insolent, narrow-minded, and scandal-loving'. For Harvey, the iniquities of the harem system do not compensate for its presumed benefits.

We had often heard that Eastern women enjoyed in reality far more liberty than their Western sisters, and in some respects this is certainly true; but in point of fact the liberty they possess in being able to go in and out unquestioned, to receive and pay visits where they choose, does not at all compensate for the slavery of the mind which they have to endure, from being cut off from the education and mental improvement they would gain by association with the other sex.

Mental imprisonment is worse even than bodily imprisonment, and by depriving a woman of legitimate ambition, by taking from her the wish for mental culture, she is reduced to the condition of a child - a very charming one, probably, when young, but a painful position for her when, youth having departed, the power of fascination decays with the loss of beauty.¹¹³

No such degradation of family life is evident in Browne's painting. Indeed for some in the West this is just what is lacking; Browne's version of the harem becomes morally disturbing, because the apparently impeccable moral qualities of the scenes she witnessed throw into question the power relations between the Occident and Orient.

¹¹³Harvey, pp.12-91.

Bourniol writing in the Revue du monde catholique in 1861 is horrified at her failure to censure Islamic law.

One scarcely recognizes [in Browne's harem scenes] ...the place ... that the Princess Belgiojoso recently showed us in colours... which are without doubt the truth!... Certainly the calm of these cheerful interiors, the decent grace of the completely dressed, elegantly draped, women, scarcely recalls the shame of the moors, who are depraved, if not infamous, for the vice of polygamy. I shall restrict myself on this subject, and praise with pleasure the artist's talent and the ravishing finesse and delicacy of her fortunate pencil.¹¹⁴

The same Salon contained Gérôme's Phryne which Bourniol also criticized on moral grounds: 'I have the right to be severe with this artist whose talent I greatly esteem... Unfortunately M. Gérôme seems more and more to take pleasure in a deplorable choice of morally reprobate subjects...'.¹¹⁵ Note that whilst both artists are praised for their talent, Gérôme is berated as immoral and depraved in his choice of subjects whilst Browne is castigated for her treatment of subject. In this instance the revelations of Princess Belgiojoso were preferred because the discretion of Browne's image of the harem does not appease the reviewer's proscriptive stance on the institution of polygamy. His horror at Gérôme's immoral choice of subject does not mean that a more circumspect

¹¹⁴Bathild Bourniol, 'Nos impressions au Salon de 1861', Revue du monde catholique, 1861, vol.I, no.7, 6 July, p.457.

¹¹⁵Bathild Bourniol, 'Nos impressions au Salon de 1861', Revue du monde catholique, 1861, vol.I, no.4, 21 May, p.228.

type of Orientalism automatically finds favour. Browne's thoroughly moral and proper scene is interpreted as a canvas of implicitly lax morals because it does not overtly condemn the heathen custom of polygamy.

PART FOUR

The Female Gaze

Whilst it is easy to accept the gendered position from which Browne produced foregrounded certain types of representation, it is harder to ascertain whether this also produced a particular viewing position. Arguably, her harems invite us to see the Orient from a woman's point of view - but how does this gendered view relate to traditional positions of Western superiority? The Orient remains significantly different. For all that the harems have affinities with European drawing rooms they are quite clearly not the same thing; women wear Oriental dress, loll against cushions and smoke cigarettes. However this difference is not necessarily pejorative. Although reviewers are able to judge these local details as signs of Oriental deficiency (in morals, posture and work ethic) the paintings do not rule out a less judgemental stance.

This is not to suggest that, because she was female, Browne in some proto-feminist manner immediately understood the relations between misogyny at home and exploitation abroad. Rather, that, given the moral implications of subject matter, the socializing act of painting for a woman in Browne's position foregrounded a positionality in relation to the harem that was necessarily less damning and eroticized than that of her male counterparts. It is not necessarily conscious politics on her part but the position from which she paints that leads to the representation of the harem as a

space respectable enough to contain the respectable lady artist persona associated with Browne. Unlike Gérôme, as analysed by Nochlin, Browne's differently detailed technique emphasizes rather than obliterates her presence at the scene. By breaking with the voyeuristic viewing position facilitated by the implied absence of the artist, Browne destabilizes the West's fantasized relationship to the Orient as other. Her sympathetic rendition of the harem theme challenges one set of artistic conventions (Orientalism) but re-affirms another (the codes of feminine art practice).

Although the paintings provide a different Western view of the Orient they are not beyond appropriation - Gautier can still revel in the beauty of the (dressed) women and Vignon can deploy stereotypes of idleness. The interpretations of race and gender that the pictures are made to bear at the point of exhibition circumscribe the radical potential of the female gaze to disrupt imperial ideologies at the point of production. Browne's pictures provide a bridge between the all-female space of the harem and the mixed gender space of the Salon. Both men and women see a female view of a female space (the harem) but within a context subject to critical meanings largely determined by a predominantly male critical community.

Contemporary criticism makes much of the active female spectatorship it associates with the paintings. We can also use twentieth-century theories of the female gaze, developed originally in film theory, to tease out the relationship between the woman artist's look and the viewing positions constructed by her paintings. The ownership of the gaze on screen and between viewer and representation has been of significance to cultural critics since Laura Mulvey equated being the agent of the

look with an active position of power.¹¹⁶ Arguing that cinematic representation appealed to unconscious scopophilic drives (the fantasy of control through visual mastery) Mulvey produced an explanation of pleasure in which the viewer identifies with the active male protagonist on screen. His actions appear to drive the narrative and control the filmic space unlike the female figures who are subordinate and passive. Mulvey's later attempt to situate the excluded female viewer (who can only identify sadistically with the male character or passively and masochistically with the female) arrived at an uncomfortable notion of transvestism, wherein she (the viewer) slips between the two polarities of a masculine or feminine identification.¹¹⁷ Mulvey started a debate about the nature of the female spectator and her pleasure that lasted through the 1980s and extended beyond film to the analysis of other forms of representation.

Though useful, developments in film theory can never be straightforwardly applied to static visual representations like painting. Some help is offered by the amendments made by television theory, since television, like a visit to an art exhibition, is viewed in circumstances where the social (in the form of interruptions, other people's opinions and the consciousness of a shared viewing) obviously intervenes (unlike the apparently private viewing experience of the darkened, silent, cinema). Lorraine Gamman and Jackie Stacey, working on the woman's gaze in film and television, stress the importance of

¹¹⁶Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in Screen, vol.16, no.3, Autumn 1975.

¹¹⁷Laura Mulvey, 'Duel in the Sun: Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in Framework, nos.15-17, 1981.

gazes (and verbal exchanges) between female figures as a way of analysing a desirable viewing position for the female spectator that does not rely on Mulvey's active/passive/transvestite mode of viewing.¹¹⁸ The active roles of, and relationship between, female protagonists like television detectives Cagney and Lacey differ from the usual cop show format by challenging the traditionally passive status of woman in the narrative and therefore foreground a pleasurable viewing position for women.

Browne's paintings differ from the generic codes of Orientalism by inserting gazes and action between women into a situation that paradigmatically relies on inactive female figures frozen into a static space. Like narrative film, the myth of the harem is activated by the male hero who alone has the power to move the narrative, to be, as de Lauretis puts it, the agent of transformation.¹¹⁹ Harem women are traditionally stuck in a freeze-frame awaiting the husband's transforming presence/gaze. Browne, as the only other possible witness/viewer of the harem (symbolically, if not literally), replaces the husband as the transforming agent but, rather than simply climb into his metaphorical shoes and parody a typical harem painting, she sidesteps the myth and socializes rather than sexualizes the harem's petrified space. Browne paints

¹¹⁸ Lorraine Gamman, 'Watching the Detectives: The Enigma of the Female Gaze', and Jackie Stacey, 'Desperately Seeking Difference', both in Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (eds), The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture, London, 1988.

¹¹⁹ Teresa de Lauretis, 'Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women's Cinema', in Deidre Pribham, Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television, London, 1989.

the harem from a position that implies neither a sadistic identification with a male perspective nor a masochistic identification with subordinate female participants (Mulvey's original formulation). Nor is she simply transvestite, hopping awkwardly between the two (Mulvey's second position). She paints from a position that had to be female, according to the prevailing ideas of artistic production, femininity and the harem, and that had to be active, according to the construction of her as the author of a text predicated on a direct viewing of an unremittingly gendered space. She thus intervenes in the dynamic of active/male and passive/female by being, and being understood to be, a female painting subject who actively looks at and represents the harem.

The active relationships she represents between the female figures counter the traditional narrative of a male-dominated harem and, like the buddy relationship of Cagney and Lacey, can facilitate a pleasurable viewing position for the women in the audience. Film theory's stress on narrative (multiple or single) is germane here not only because Browne's audience was accustomed to decoding narratives from paintings but also because to represent the harem in any form was to enter into an longstanding, well-understood, narrative about the harem and the East. No representation of the harem stood on its own. As the reviews clearly show, her paintings were seen as part of an ongoing dialogue about the harem with which nearly everyone was familiar at least in part (whether it was Decamps' paintings, cartoons, A Thousand and One Nights or the endless use of the harem as metaphor for slavery, servitude or sex). The paintings effectively act as another instance in an ongoing story - the painterly equivalent of the reverse shot from the woman's point of view - whose opposite (the numerous and sexualized harem scenes) is well known to the audience.

As representations of a woman's look the Interiors set up a special relationship to the female spectator. They challenge the idea of women as the object, rather than owner, of the gaze by showing female figures who were looked at first by a female spectator and by representing them contrary to the generic codes of passivity. Whilst, as Mary Ann Doane highlights, 'woman' was originally conceptualized as the ideal film spectator (a passive consumer) she is generally refused the position of active looking subject in the diegesis.¹²⁰ Browne in contrast is conceptualized as doing both: she is imagined as both consumer of the scene (in this case the 'actual' scene of the harem not the represented scene) and agent of its representation. But although this allows the female viewer to stand in the artist's shoes (without resorting to cross-dressing) the distance between the artist/viewer and the subject of the picture is retained. Unlike the pathos of the 'woman's' film where weeping, a sign of over-identification with filmic characters, is a sign of the film's success, the Interiors cannot risk collapsing the distance between the Western observers and the Eastern observed. The insistence on the difference between women (Occidental and Oriental) effectively marks the female spectator (both Browne and the paintings' audience) as Western and other to the female subjects of the painting. Theories of the female gaze have deconstructed the earlier tendency to a monolithic female spectator, affirming that the term refers not to any woman who watches a film but to a constructed space of viewing.¹²¹ This textual addressee

¹²⁰ See Mary Ann Doane, The Desire To Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s, Bloomington, 1987.

¹²¹ See Mary Ann Doane and Janet Bergstrom (eds), 'The Spectatrix', Special Issue Camera Obscura, no.21, 1989.

who does not equal, but whose position may be occupied by, a 'real' individual (male/female) is also subject to social differentials (race, sexual orientation etc) and an equally, but often differently, differentiated access to critical codes which will give various viewers a different purchase on the text.¹²² Browne's demarcation of difference between Oriental and Occidental women is inscribed in the dynamics of the viewing activity rather than overtly played out in the scene itself. (Unlike the twinning of alternative female personas highlighted in Stacey's analysis of Desparately Seeking Susan for example.) Rather than depict herself or another Western woman in the painting as a contrast to the Oriental women, Browne's Interiors rely on the traditions of viewing and codes of Orientalism to assert the difference between audience and subject. By subverting some codes and repeating others the paintings are able simultaneously to provide points of entry and identification for women viewers and maintain the West's distance from the East. In the final analysis the points of similarity and empathy must not over-ride the points of difference. Browne's status as Westerner and artist requires the construction of difference at the same time as her gender allows the

¹²²On the specificities of the Black female gaze and its implications for cultural studies see, Jaqueline Bobo and Ellen Seiter, 'Black Feminism and Media Criticism: The Women of Brewster Place, in Screen, vol.32, no.3, 1991, and Jane Gaines, 'White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory', in Screen, vol.29, no.4, 1988. On the interrelationship between (socially determined) critical and spectatorial positionings see Cherry, Painting Women, pp.115-6.

construction of an affinity between herself and the women's space. Browne must become not only a seeing but a differentiating agent.¹²³

But the spectator who sees through Browne's eyes cannot see everything: there is still something in the harem that denies our inquisitive gaze; something signified by the intense looking activity of the two figures on the steps at the right of the painting. They twist their bodies and turn their backs to us in order to look down at something that is hidden from our view. This visual dynamic within the picture plane undercuts the visual mastery promised by the narrative and disrupts the compositional coherence of the painting. There remains a mystery in the harem that even the female gaze cannot penetrate - or, will not represent for a mixed gender audience. There is, thus, a tension between the promise of an unimpeded vision offered by the calm, uncluttered, open spaces of the haremluk in Browne's painting, and the signification of a residual knowledge that remains forbidden. Within the apparently transparent inscription of harem life there lurks a repressed or hidden knowledge that, as with the lesbian sub-text of harem and convent imagery, could only be indirectly invoked by an artist with Browne's particularly respectable public profile.

It is evident despite the scarcity of other examples of Orientalism by women, that women's Orientalism is as heterogeneous as its mainstream equivalent and we must not assume that Browne's version was unchallenged. For all that there are plausible reasons for her to avoid improper

¹²³The phrase is adopted from Ros Coward, who uses it in relation to sexual difference. Ros Coward 'Re-Reading Freud: The Making of the Feminine', in Spare Rib, no.70, 1978.

subjects, it does not mean that other women artists did the same. (At the same time as Browne and Mary Cassat were selecting decorous subjects to paint and behaving like nice ladies, Rosa Bonheur was rocketing to fame with her distinctly unfeminine choice of subject and self-presentation.)

We simply cannot tell why some women tried to resolve the contradictions of being a woman artist by conforming to rather than transgressing codes of femininity. It is apparent that Browne, by personality as much as upbringing, was a relatively conservative individual (using a pseudonym is indicative here). What is even more intriguing is how someone like Jerichau-Baumann could still be seen as a respectable person when she exhibited such unfeminine and potentially improper paintings. Browne's work might challenge Orientalist traditions, but it is easy to classify as feminine, yet though Jerichau-Baumann's oeuvre was far more transgressive of gender codes there is no evidence that this ever impacted badly on the artist herself: gendered codes of art and behaviour had considerable flexibility. This does not mean that the boundaries were so blurred that they ceased to be meaningful: it was their discursive ability to incorporate, or neutralize, transgressive examples like the work of Jerichau-Baumann that ensured the continued hegemony of dominant definitions of gender.

Reviewers seem to have worked hard to read Jerichau-Baumann's work as feminine. Also, it is evident from the range of work she showed that Jerichau-Baumann regularly presented herself within the parameters expected of women artists (her Royal Academy exhibits were predominantly 'feminine' genre, the picturesque or portraits) and that the respectability of her social position (she was, after all, a member of the Copenhagen Royal Academy and married to its president, the eminent Danish sculpture Jens-Adolph

Jerichau) went a long way towards compensating for her more unfeminine works. But the Art Journal's review of her 1871 exhibition at 142 New Bond St (possibly a one-woman show, the only other exhibits appear to have been a few by her husband) demonstrates how difficult it was to maintain critical hegemony.

The paintings of this lady command attention as they are marked by characteristics which are by no means common to woman's work... A single glance at them, nay even at one of them, teaches us that Madame Jerichau moves only in obedience to the purest strain of academic inspiration. The high and low life of her country, Denmark, are as rich in social situations and picturesque costume as those of any other European nation; but she does not yield to fascinations against which the majority of female artists are not proof. We do not therefore find any of the common episodes of social life - no allusions to tender relations between the sexes - little to stir the emotions in sympathetic accord with distress or touch the heart by a narrative of affliction. This lady is impelled upwards into the epic vein by her tastes and feelings, and, at the same time, is more pronouncedly ethnographical than perhaps any artist of the day. There is, however, one tie which her woman's heart acknowledges, and that is a love of children; at least we thus read the many studies she has so successfully endowed with the natural graces of childhood. Notwithstanding, however, the element that gives a masculine quality to Madame Jerichau's works, there are yet examples which show us she has the power of working up to the utmost refinement of feminine beauty. We instance her portrait of the Queen of Greece, wherein appear the utmost delicacy of treatment and brilliancy of colour... but so entirely different from all else round, that its

execution would never be assigned to the same hand as the others. The Favourite of the Harem, an oil-picture, declares itself at once a veritable study from Oriental life. All attempts at the improvisation of Harem beauty by painters and poets have been very wide of the truth, as we learn from this and all other genuine representations of so-called eastern beauty. There are several pictures of eastern women: what is most valuable in them is their indisputable nationality, which is brought forward without any modification or dalliance with conventional prettiness of feature... Again Helen, a young maiden from Hymetos, affords evidence of independent thought. In this figure the artist might have yielded to the fascination of the Greek facial line supported by classic and Academic authority, but she proposes nothing less than a Helen of a type distinctly modern and individual... There are also one or two female studies of Fellaheen, in which truth and genuine nationality prevail over poet's dreams of matchless houris and peerless Egyptian maids. But Madame Jerichau's love of children as shown in her works is remarkable - she paints them as she loves them, that is, with an earnest and warm devotion, as appears in O Sanctissima!, Corn Flowers, Little Carin and others.¹²⁴

As we shall see in part five, ethnographic discourse was often used as a way to validate Orientalist images as scientifically authentic and thus endorse the artist's vision as objective. But in this case, the rigours of objective reality sit uneasily with the definition of

¹²⁴ 'The Works of Madame Jerichau', in the Art Journal, 1871, p.165.

feminine art. The review cannot but admire Jerichau-Baumann's depiction of nationality, but would far rather see the conventional prettiness that the artist eschews.¹²⁵ Similarly, whilst it is forced to applaud the assertiveness of her independent thought, the review does its best to give her oeuvre a feminine complexion by closing with a re-affirmation of her womanly love for children. What interests me here is that her oeuvre was mixed and did include paintings which could be received as unproblematically womanly, but that despite this there is something about her Orientalist subjects that creates a problem big enough to destabilize the overall classification of the artist and her work, something that other women Orientalists generally manage to avoid.

That the majority of women's visual representations of the Orient, and of the harem, are morally untroubling could be either because (for those that actually travelled) they never actually saw anything immoral, or that they edited it out of their accounts lest it impinge on them as witnesses of the scene.¹²⁶ In literary representation, although women writers did have to fend off charges that they were only as moral as their last novel, the conjunction of literary-critical practice and the increasing number of women writers produced a different resolution of the problem of subject than in the visual arts. Here, artists were assumed to have studied what they

¹²⁵ See part five for more on ethnography and raced definitions of beauty.

¹²⁶ Melman claims that they edited out evidence of Muslim women's oppression in order to preserve the 'domesticated' image of the harem as a forum in which to bemoan Western women's oppression. Melman, pp.308-9.

depicted, in a model if not in situ, and were thus tied more closely to the represented scene. For an artist like Browne who was known for her rigorous study from life it would have been hard, if not impossible, securely to inscribe such a disassociation from her subject. This obstructed the establishment of a morally essential distance with which a literary author might have had more chance of success. For Western women writers like Emmeline Lott it is relatively easy to disassociate themselves from any immoral acts represented by deploying an imperial distance that presumes the author's and readers' disapproval of such heathen acts. For Oriental women writing in Europe, where they presumably had to contend with racist assumptions about their own morality, it is imperative that they be disassociated from any misbehaviour in the harem. So although Melek Hanum describes scenes of debauchery (in the apartments of Nazly-Hanum, the daughter of Mehemet-Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt)¹²⁷ she clearly signals her disgust by telling her readers of her prompt departure from the room. The endless assumption of an isomorphic relation between Browne's pictures and her experience of the harem makes the presentation of such a split difficult.

It is clear from the response to Browne's Interiors that they upset dominant perceptions of the harem and of the differences between East and West. Linda Nochlin argues that the prerequisite for an art (like Manet's Olympia) that transgresses discursive codes is the combination of an alternative practice in both subject and technique.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Melek-Hanum, pp.50-59.

¹²⁸ See Nochlin, 'Women, Art and Power' in Women, Art and Power and Other Essays, New York, 1988, pp.12-13.

Although the technical differences of Browne's work are not as radical those of Manet and the French avant-garde, I think that some of outrage aroused by the Interiors can be explained in relation to a similar combination of innovation in style and technique. The changes she makes in the representation of the harem may seem small, but they are not insignificant. The attention devoted to them by critics suggests that the ways which the Interiors differ from other (notably French) Orientalist art constitutes a challenge to generic codes. (The frequent invocation of Decamps, the symbolic father of Orientalist art, acts as a strong defence mechanism that attests to the seriousness of the threat.)

Rosemary Betterton links challenges to generic codes to the specificity of the female gaze. Writing on Suzanne Valadon, she argues that the conditions under which women view in patriarchy predispose them to look 'against the grain' and therefore subvert hegemonic codes of viewing.¹²⁹ This 'ability to move between and to acknowledge different viewing positions' is determined by the social space occupied by the painter. In Valadon's case, her specific social position (as woman, working-class, model and artist) leads to a different gaze on and resolution of her chosen subject (the female nude) which manifests itself in a subversion of the nude's generic codes. Browne, unlike Valadon or Manet, was not associated with the avant-garde but her changes to the Orientalist canon can be regarded, and were received, as similarly significant. The censure aroused by her harems is not just

¹²⁹Rosemary Betterton, 'How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon', In Betterton (ed), Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media, London, 1987.

because she paints plain walls and austere interiors or because she claims that her subject is the actual truth about the harem but because of the interaction of the two. Whilst the luscious surface detail of Gérôme substantiates his superior viewing position in relation to the East, the new details and austere surfaces of Browne's work transgress the ideological codes of Orientalist representation.

Her very claim to truth, that was for some the value of her painting, could also be used to downgrade her work and hence minimize its threat. Critical willingness to read the paintings' content from her entry into the harem occludes recognition of her role as active creator of the artefact and allows a discussion of the pictures as if they were transparent recordings of her experiences.¹³⁰ The tendency to read the art object as an unmediated representation of an anterior reality is common to critiques of men's and women's work. But in this case it resolves the difference between the fantasy logic of the harem and the observed truth of the woman. The tendency to accuse the paintings of technical deficiencies utilizes a language of formalism that belies its ideological

¹³⁰ Melman's emphasis on women Orientalists' tendency to construct intersubjective relationships with Oriental women, operating as 'participant observers' rather than as distant onlookers, also runs into the problem of seeing their texts as the straightforward transcription of that experience. Whilst I agree that women were often more inclined to position themselves as participants, this positioning is itself presented to us through a series of textual strategies that simultaneously emphasize the intersubjectivity of the represented encounter and strive to differentiate between the text's Occidental and Oriental subjects. Melman, pp.62-3.

function. One senses in some of the defences of Decamps the implication that hers may be more authentic but his are more artistic.

If there is a threat in her work it lies in its offer of an alternative discourse on the Orient and throws into question those 'turqueries fantaisistes' of many successful male practitioners.¹³¹ More than this it becomes morally disturbing, because the apparently impeccable moral qualities of the scenes witnessed by Browne throw the power relations between the Occident and Orient into question. This is where the different but nearly equal stance of images of the 'ordinary' Orient (that we shall see particularly in her treatment of Oriental children) is important. Whilst it is possible to read in Browne's representations a treatment of difference that is not necessarily condemnatory the continued stress on that difference is crucial. It allows the Occident to retain its vision of the separateness of the Orient and therefore to continue to pose itself against it. The ongoing separation of the West and the East mediates any fundamental challenge to the imperial ideology that informs Orientalism. There is room within the discourse for a feminine, and perhaps less virulently xenophobic, version of Orientalism that adapts and amends but does not remove the imperial imperative.

PART FIVE

Discourses of Race and Nation

After 1861 Browne continued to exhibit Oriental subjects alongside portraits and the occasional genre piece. But

¹³¹The phrase is from Chasrel.

she never returned explicitly to the harem. In this section I am going to look particularly at how discourses of racial difference were mobilized in relation to one of her ethnographic portraits, Rhodian Girl (Salon 1867, Gambart's 1868),¹³² and at a number of her studies of Oriental children. These relatively unproblematic subjects for a woman artist will be contrasted to her 1869 painting, Dancers in Nubia, Assouan (Salon 1869), which, as a subject that was practically the stock-in-trade image of a sexualized Orient, was therefore a more provocative choice, particularly for an artist with so respectable a reputation as Browne.

Rhodian Girl

The Art Journal review of Rhodian Girl (plate 40) in 1868 explicitly relates it to existing critical knowledge of Browne as a French lady artist. Browne, who is grouped with the French 'naturalistic' painters of peasants, Breton, Millet and Hebert, is given the longest review. The author deplors that she was not awarded even a third class medal.

Her sex may have been to her prejudice; there is even more jealousy of a female artist in Paris than in London, Rosa Bonheur even has obtained recognition with difficulty. Madame Browne, a lady of fortune and position, may possibly have injured her professional standing by the amateurish and dilettante aspect her works have sometimes borne; occasionally complaint

¹³²In the Salon catalogue the painting is entitled Jeune fille de Rhodes and was exhibited at Gambart's as A Young Rhodian Girl.

has been made of the incertitude of her handling, and the vague generalization of her drawing and modelling. Indeed, the want of strict, academic training must always prescribe limits to the lady's sphere. 'Les Soeurs de Charité' continues the artist's chef d'oeuvre. She will probably never paint a greater, and this singularly true, touching, and womanly work must always rank among the famous pictures of the century...¹³³

The review recommends Rhodian Girl as an example of Browne's new prowess.

... that carefully elaborated and truly artistic study of the young Rhodian girl... of her [Browne's] tender womanly sympathies, of her true Art-intuitions, there can have been no doubt at any time within the past five years. But [would]... the accomplished lady... by severe training or submission to irksome drudgery ever actually acquire power of drawing and mastery over the realism and technicality of her Art[?]. How far she has now advanced may be judged by this study from Rhodes.

In the Athenaeum, Rhodian Girl is discussed exclusively in terms of ethnographic and Orientalist discourse with no reference to the effects of the author's gender on the painting.

Madame Henriette Browne sends us A Young Rhodian Girl (49), a three-quarter-length life size, of a splendid specimen of the almost Nubian-looking women of the ancient island. The likeness of her features to the

¹³³The Art Journal, 1868, p.53.

old race of the Upper Nile is enhanced by the wide lappets of her Oriental headress, its mode of fastening across the forehead, and the fashion of her body-robe of red. The largeness of the style in this painting is most welcome, although the mere handling of the draperies is not a little careless, with all its richness in colour.¹³⁴

One wonders if the reviewer saw the painting at all, so far is s/he able to extrapolate African-ness from this fair-skinned European looking figure which bears no resemblance to a Black African Nubian. But, rather than contest his/her diagnosis with an alternative feat of racial classification, I want to draw our attention to the ease with which disparate non-Western European identities can be fused and the fecundity of such a process for the imagination of the text. With one fell swoop the review is able to add to a picturesque portrait all the history and mystery of the Nile. Illustrating the interpretive impact of imperial knowledge, the detailed descriptive tone of this review draws on ethnography as an objective mode in which to read the painting. The premium placed on the accurate and realistic representation of detail, which for the Art Journal was a sign of Browne's advancing artistic prowess, functions here as a tool of imperial surveillance. Detail effectively substantiates the realism of the figure and, by implication, endorses the theories of racial identification at work in the review. Since many of these theories and practices were premised on a notion of visible decodable signs of race and temperament they are central to the production and reception of visual

¹³⁴The Athenaeum, April 1868, p.531.

representations.¹³⁵

In Orientalism the finely observed detail so typical of nineteenth-century painting works to authenticate images and uphold the artist's worldview. In the case of Browne, as we have seen, this was combined with gender to read the images as evidence of a female view. This combination was particularly effective in the case of portraits, since women artists were frequently attributed with the ability to intuit, and thus accurately represent, their subject's character. In the case of the Orientalist portrait like Rhodian Girl it constructs a gaze from West to East that

¹³⁵ See also chapter one, where I discussed the links between Villette's Orientalist themes and its emphasis on visual representations in the virtual pathologization of the Catholic characters. Note in relation to this how the Athenaeum's review of A Nun collapses analysis of pictorial style onto character;

'[she] is seated at prayers, a book in her lap;
although demure the face is full of expression;
although grave and sober, the picture is powerful and
rich in colour...'

The Athenaeum, May 1866, p.640.

is immutably gendered.¹³⁶ The dialogic relationship of reviews, biographies and paintings produces a composite picture of Browne the artist that is brought to bear on the readings of all her paintings. Thus her skills of observation are seen as invaluable in the formulation of a reliable truth about the Rhodian woman which the review can use to support the ethnographic rationale of its interpretation.

The Athenaeum's use of the term 'specimen' de-humanizes the painting's subject and places her as an object of scientific interest. She is no longer an individual, but a type. The review keys into scientific discourse and endows the painting with all the validity of a scientific classificatory system which, since it claimed to be based

¹³⁶The pseudo-ethnographic verisimilitude of Browne's technique is combined with a gendered reading of the pictures to presuppose an intuitive affinity with the subject of the painting. In an Orientalist context this suggests that the artist, and by implication the viewer, is engaged in a different mode of viewing. For example, Browne's pictures of scribes (Scribe, c.1865 and A Poet: Copts in Upper Egypt, 1874) differ from the usual Orientalist stereotype. They are seen in the midst of their trade surrounded by books and papers, sitting upright on chairs not cross-legged on the floor. Their position and posture flout conventions of representation and suggest dignity and self-possession. In each case the figures are on the viewer's eye level and in The Scribe the subject holds us in a clear and forthright gaze. Compare this to the positioning of the figures in Lewis' The Arab Scribe where the brightly dressed scribe and his customers are set below our eye level and become, along with the ornate tiles, part of a richly exotic scene laid out for our perusal.

on the unmediated, objective ordering of true facts, obscures the ideological underpinnings of the discourse. Browne's audience would have been used to the idea that, in parlour games, social work or legislation, facial characteristics could be used to distinguish personality, class, nation and race.¹³⁷ It is clear that the reviewer draws on the popular currency of sciences like phrenology and craniology. S/he is able to read the represented woman's racial heritage from her facial features and construct a genealogy that transports her from Rhodes to Egypt, secure in the knowledge that the contemporary reader will understand.

The writer identifies this woman, and by implication all the people of Rhodes, as being 'almost Nubian-looking'. But the identification as Nubian does not simply signify a general African-ness. Nubians occupy a special place as the (only) beautiful African, and noble savage, within Europe's racialized hierarchy of female beauty that correlated race/skin pigment with morality. Sander Gilman has traced how the conjunction of medical and anthropological discourses that constructed Blacks as biologically different from Europeans was mapped onto existing theories of gender difference to produce non-

¹³⁷For the use of visual images in the classification, pathologization and regulation of the British working class, see John Tagg, 'Power and Photography' in Screen Education, no. 36, 1980.

For the creation of national differences within Europe, see Hitchberger, and for an account of the interplay of class and nation in a modern colonial situation, see Callaway.

European women as a physically different species.¹³⁸ This was commensurate with the theory of an evolutionary scale of beauty that ranked women from the heights of white European beauty down to the women of Africa. Thus, while all Europeans were considered more beautiful than all Africans, some Africans were more beautiful than others. Within this value system Nubians stand out as an ethnic group of almost mythical beauty and bearing in contrast to the hideous ugliness and deformity ascribed to other Africans. (Note particularly the de-humanizing series of animal associations attached to the categories Pigmy and Hottentot.¹³⁹)

The region of Nubia extends from modern-day upper Egypt, the Red Sea and the Lybian Desert down into the Sudan as far as Khartoum and includes the Nile Valley to the meeting of the White and Blue Nile.¹⁴⁰ Nubia has not had an administrative existence since the fourteenth century; in the nineteenth century the area fell under the jurisdiction of Egypt and Eastern Sudan. The reference to Nubia in this review is an example of the mythical geography of Orientalism where geo-ethnic identities are constructed and distributed regardless of actual geographical locations.

Nubia's identity as a region rests on the genealogy of its

¹³⁸ Sander Gilman, 'Black Bodies, White Bodies; Towards an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine and Literature' in Critical Inquiry, vol.12, 1985-6.

¹³⁹ See Schneider.

¹⁴⁰ Encyclopaedia Britannica, London, 1963.

peoples, (whose language, by the nineteenth century, was known to be ancient) and trade (notably, slaves, ivory and gold). The nineteenth century was marked by its predilection for classification, whether of races, plants or architecture and a glance through any one of the growing number of dictionaries and encyclopaedias of the period will reveal how widespread was the apparently scientific discernment of racial types and national characteristics. The Nubians figure in both the English Encyclopaedia Britannica and the French Larrouse Grand Dictionnaire as an agricultural race with energetic and warlike qualities, notable for their muscular physiques and moral fibre.¹⁴¹ They are credited with being one of the first Black nations in Egypt and subsequently a formidable power in the Sudan. The Nubians' status as the noble savage was heightened by the fact that they had once been Christians (Nubians were affiliates of the Egyptian Coptic Church through the Medieval period until the Christian town of Dongola fell to the Muslims in the fourteenth-century). The reputation of the Nubians as a beautiful Black race and as one that had seen the light of the Christian god renders them a potent mix of the beautiful savage and the lost tribe, able to be regarded as a lost part of the Christian Empire still living in the lands of the Bible.

In the racial lexicon of Orientalism different peoples and regions operated as a shorthand for certain social and moral positions. These often overlapped, giving multiple or contradictory meanings to particular identities. In addition to the associations with Christianity and noble

¹⁴¹Larrouse p.1148 and Encyclopaedia Britannica pp.610-12. Both sources give detailed physiological descriptions including skin colour, facial anatomy and hair type.

savagery the Nubians were also associated with the slave trade, although accounts differ as to whether they were slavers and/or slaves themselves.¹⁴² Although the 1875 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica records that slaving has been 'almost entirely suppressed' in recent years it goes on to explain that the word Nubian 'has become synonymous in the Nile valley with "slave", or "Negro slave"'.¹⁴³ The importance of Nubia for the internal African slave trade accounts for the frequent interpretation of Black figures in Orientalist paintings as Nubian slaves. This web of conflicting associations explains some of the allure of the Nubians for Europe.

In this review the reference to Nubians as 'the old race of the Upper Nile' links the represented woman to the Nile as the cradle of Western civilization. She can be read as an ancient and heroic (and pseudo-European) type; a 'splendid' woman who is rescued from the taints of Africa by this location as proxy Nubian, ie. as the best that Africa can offer, and still be seen as inimically and enticingly different.

Bourniol in Revue du monde catholique, who had previously questioned Browne's morality over the harem and polygamy, finds this painting to be properly chaste and tasteful. In contrast to yet another criticism of Gérôme's immorality (this time for his Salon offering of the Slave Market, whose 'brutal indecency adds nothing to our horror of

¹⁴²On the complexities of the internal African and external Atlantic slave trade see, A.G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa, London, 1973.

¹⁴³Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1875, pp.610-12.

those abominable moors',)¹⁴⁴ Bourniol has only praise for Browne.

Again an admirable portrait, one of the best in the Salon... [an] exquisitely modelled figure...What pure, young and rich blood circulates in the veins beneath her transparent skin! This is what one can call wholesome painting [une peinture saine]. In the young woman's attitude, as in the expression of her figure, there is no preoccupation with coquetterie.¹⁴⁵

For a review that purports to admire the purity of the image the writer manages to inject a fair amount of purple prose with its vision of the young, rich - possibly impassioned - blood coursing through the models veins! The apparently unavoidable device of 'appreciating' the physique of the represented woman whilst either admiring her modesty or deploring her brazenness, is a typical paradox of art criticism. Just as Gautier makes a long aside about the flower-like beauty of the women in the harem, Bourniol evidently feels compelled to do justice to the beauty of the very woman whose sobriety he so admires. Whilst beauty was expected of women it was also potentially dangerous, especially in a Catholic framework, having the power to tempt men astray. The problem for Browne is to make images that fulfil the requirements of beauty and the pleasure in viewing which will not be interpreted as immoral and unchaste. Just as the language

¹⁴⁴Bathild Bourniol, Revue du monde catholique, 10 June 1867, p.473.

¹⁴⁵Bathild Bourniol, 'L'amateur au Salon', in Revue du monde catholique, no. 141, June 10 1867, pp.488-9.

of the review tends to confuse the beauty and purity of the subject with that of the artist, so too might an immoral canvas impinge upon the artist's reputation.

Beauty and race were important components of Orientalist art. Although for many artists the Orient provided an opportunity to paint pleasing nudes in a new and interesting context and avoided the problems of trying to paint a contemporary European nude (witness the outrage over Manet's Olympia in 1863) it required considerable juggling to fit a European vision of pale-skinned beauty into an Oriental setting. The surprising number of pale-skinned, blond-haired women represented as odalisques, slaves and concubines was frequently explained by identifying them as Circassians, an ethnic group of fair-skinned Turks. Like Nubians, Circassians were a people legendary for their beauty, held to be characterized by codes of hospitality and vengeance.¹⁴⁶ Originating in the West coast region of the Black Sea, the Circassians' heroic resistance to Russian domination brought them into the public eye in Europe, particularly in 1864 when the whole population (400,000 to 500,000 people) emigrated to Turkey after defeat by Russia. The Circassians had long been slave traders of their own people: it is reported in several sources that Circassian families often willingly sold their daughters to slavers in the hope that they would be taken on as an odalisque in the harem of a rich Turk. Some accounts claim that young women chose this option in preference to the hard life of a peasant.¹⁴⁷ Certainly, for those going to one of the few large harem establishments, life might be easier. As Muslims the

¹⁴⁶ See Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1875, and Larrouse, 1864-76.

¹⁴⁷ See also Melman, pp.146-7.

Circassians would have been familiar with the Qur'anic codes of conduct governing the treatment of slaves, something that Western observers tended to ignore.¹⁴⁸

The presence of Circassians in Turkish harems provided an ethnographic rationale for the Orientalist depiction of white odalisques. Black female figures often appear in Orientalist paintings, but are not marked as the overt object of desire. There are numerous examples of paintings where, as in the Occidental twinning of a white prostitute and Black maid in Olympia, the pairing of a light- and dark-skinned woman prioritizes a reading in which the white woman is the object of desire. In Orientalist examples like Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Nouy's The White Slave Girl (1888, plate 26) and Edouard-Bernard Debat-Ponsan's The Massage: Turkish Bath Scene (1883, plate 45) the greater nudity and passive pose of the white women mark them as overt objects of desire whilst the emphasized musculature and active labouring pose of the Black women places them as workers in the scene, not the

¹⁴⁸ See Thornton, Women, p.183, and Bernard Lewis, Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry, New York, 1990.

See also Said on Lewis' 'traditionally' Orientalist attitudes, in Edward W. Said, Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How we See the Rest of the World, London, 1985.

beauty around whom it is arranged.¹⁴⁹ This does not mean that no erotic charge was attached to the Black figure but that, like the fancy for servant women at home, it was sublimated under the overt appreciation of the paler/leisured/ladylike figure. At home the West set Black and working-class women, whom it endowed with an animal and voracious sexuality, against its conceptualization of white European wives as innately chaste and asexual. When extended to the Orient, this polarization, within the sexualization of all Orientals, constructed a differentiating set of sexual identities for different Oriental women. So that whilst the pale Circassians and Georgians could easily be registered as objects of desire, they could also be seen as objects of pity - unwilling victims of Oriental despotism (as typified by the pale nude female slave in Gérôme's Slave Market, plate 17) and therefore potentially asexual and more moral than Black women who were conceptualized as actively sexual and therefore immoral. The pale harem women oscillate between being like and not like European women, ie. as both the permitted and the forbidden object. Part of the frisson of the white odalisque comes from the projection of the White wife (the licit object) into what amounts to a brothel

¹⁴⁹ Lynne Thornton in her extensively researched volume Women reaches the same conclusion. The absence of such images even in her vast sample suggests that Black women were never placed as the acknowledged object of desire, or that if they were we must look to other media for such representations. One possibility in a non-High Art category of Orientalism would be the picture postcard which often verges on the pornographic in its depiction of Oriental women in provocative and semi-clothed poses, and also images of Black and Oriental women in European pornography.
See Malek Allouah, The Colonial Harem, Minneapolis, 1986.

situation (an illicit site): she is pitied but desired as the fantasy combination of Europe's splitting of female sexuality. This is why the desire to save as well as savour the harem woman is so significant - it allows the West to view her within a lofty Christian and abolitionist rationale, saves her from taints of the harem, but does not prohibit voyeuristic pleasure in her image.

In contrast to the Athenaeum's addition of Blackness to Rhodian Girl, is the case of the Black figure in A Visit which is ignored by all but Merson, and he only notices her to comment that a 'negress' accompanies the guests. None of the other reviewers pass comment on this figure but Gautier makes much of the others' fair-skinned beauty. Their pallor, which he assumes is from never exposing themselves to fresh air, reinforces the sense of seclusion and delicacy he attributes to the harem women. The Black woman is implicitly not included in the paeon to Oriental beauty since it is couched in terms of the beauty of pale skin. But A Visit deploys racial difference in a social rather than sexual manner, marking her as a servant or slave (the only one carrying a cushion) and not emphasizing her body, or the stereotypical contrast between the figures, at all.¹⁵⁰

For all that the represented bodies in the Interiors are mostly fair-skinned and elegant, they are clearly not European. Their foreignness is marked by their posture and dress. The critics' frequent references to 'indolence',

¹⁵⁰ Servants could not usually be differentiated from slaves by dress, so the exact status of the figure is impossible to determine. But we do know that dark-skinned women were cheaper to hire or buy and often worked as household servants. See Bernard Lewis.

'leaning', and 'nonchalance' point out precisely those bodily performances that were frowned upon in Europe. There, bodily behaviour and appearance were perceived to be moral, not just aesthetic, issues: only certain parts of the body might be respectably revealed; dress carried finely coded social connotations; behaviour signified morality.¹⁵¹ Thus leaning was slothful, staring rude, etc. Bourgeois clothes supported the accepted codes of behaviour, with restrictive corsets producing for women an inflexible posture that would have made it impossible to lean on walls or sit on floor cushions. So when Gautier suggests that Eastern dress will bring crinolines into disrepute we must take it with a pinch of salt. The beauty in the unstructured bodies on display in the Interiors is precisely their difference from the women at home. They are similar enough to be desirable and different enough to be exciting.¹⁵²

But we do not know if the Athenaeum reviewer treats the Rhodian woman as Nubian in an attempt to suppress or activate the chain of sexual associations that Browne's work generally manages to avoid. I think this is contradictory to the review's intent, but typical of the

¹⁵¹The link between dress and morality is highlighted by the outrage over the Dress Reform Movement's call for less restrictive clothing several years after these pictures were painted. See Stella M. Newton, Health, Art and Reason: Dress Reformers of the Nineteenth Century, London, 1974.

¹⁵²Kabbani notes that like Munby and his Pre-Raphaelite peers who re-educated, re-moulded and married working-class British women, Lane repeated the process in the Orient, this time purchasing a female slave whom he educated and subsequently married. Kabbani, p.79.

shifting parameters of colonial discourse: ethnography as a 'new' scientific discipline was both respectably objective and worryingly amorphous. It included an extraordinary range of practices in which sex was constituted as an object of scholarly study and also introduced into the side lines (or foot-notes) in what we would see as sexual speculation and prurient curiosity.¹⁵³ We saw some of this confusion in The Art Journal's 1871 review of Jerichau-Baumann where despite the strongly ethnographical significations of the paintings the review's helpless muddle about the artist's predilection for both the epic and the maternal indicates how difficult it was to define her work as the products of a female Orientalist. In contrast Browne can be thus classified with comparative ease.

Dancers in Nubia, Assouan

Like the Interiors, Dancers tackles the sexualized image of the Orientalized other straight on. Dancing 'girls' were an early and regular feature of the (initially male) tourist itinerary, popular with painters since the subject afforded an opportunity to paint Oriental beauties in poses of abandon and sensual movement. Examples include Prince Grigoriy Grigorievich Gagarin's A Bayadere from Shemakha (Azerbaijan) (c.1842, plate 46) and Gérôme's

¹⁵³The frequent accusations of lesbianism (which was sometimes presented as a peculiarly Eastern condition) and other sexual perversions in the harem were either heavily coded or printed separately for private (male) perusal. See Kabbani on Sir Richard Burton's 'erotica', ch.2.

Dance of the Almah (1864, plate 47).¹⁵⁴ Different regions were renowned for the beauty and sensuality of their female dancers who were seen by the West as sexually explicit and, often, sexually available. Although some visual and written accounts gave them a status within the culture of their own community, dancers increasingly came to be fetishized into an isolated female sign of the Orient's erotic and passionate potential. (It might be noted that female performers in the West were also subject to assumptions about their sexual availability and loose morals.) Images of dancers, therefore, provide a good example of the erotic potential of ethnographic detail.

Why does Browne choose such a contentious subject? Gérôme's Dance of the Almah of five years earlier is typical - a lone dancer performs in a state of undress and abandon for an all-male audience - a portrayal of an overt sexuality that prompted the usual moral doubts from critics.¹⁵⁵ Like Gérôme, Browne's painting uses details of costume and instruments to authenticate the scene. So how does she negotiate the eroticism associated with the subject without compromising herself? She must have done so with some success since no less a moralist than Bourniol praises Browne for her chaste treatment of the theme.

¹⁵⁴The Oriental dancer remained a popular theme, often in later years being interpreted into a Salome theme to incorporate the fin de siècle predilection for the femme fatale. One might look at Aubrey Beardsley's Salome, Edouard Richter's Eastern Dancer and Otto Pliny's Dancer with a Tambourine (1909). Some are illustrated in Thornton, Women.

¹⁵⁵See Stevens, pp.139-40.

La Danse des Almés though animated, has the merit to be perfectly chaste; the svelte and elegantly formed dancers seemed to me a little too moorish, that is to say, of a type more savage and primitive [original], than gracious.¹⁵⁶

The actual title under which the painting was exhibited at the Salon was Danseuses en Nubie, Assouan. Just as different ethnicities were extrapolated from the portrait of Rhodian Girl, Bourniol redefines Browne's unspecified dancers as Almah. By retitling the painting the Dance of the Almahs he introduces further signifiers of the sexual since Almah were dancers famed for their skill and fabled for their alleged sexual availability. Like 'Nubia', 'Almah' as a category had a significance beyond its geographical and historical specificity - in this case as a signifier of the sexual display and exchange of women.

The Almah were Egyptian dancers noted for their skill in improvised dancing and chanting.¹⁵⁷ By the mid-century the term had come to refer to any female dancer and generally, in the West, carried sexual overtones. The Almah also had a reputation as sexually active in the East, where they were often linked with prostitution. One sign of their apparent undesirability was Mohammad Ali's edict of 1834 which banned female dancers and prostitutes from Cairo, restricting their practice to three cities: Qena, Esna and

¹⁵⁶ Bathild Bourniol, 'L'Amateur au Salon 1869', In Revue du monde catholique, Vol.25, no.28, 25 May 1869, pp.516-545.

¹⁵⁷ In the Muslim East dancing was one of the few art forms open to women. See Dengler, p.231.

Assouan.¹⁵⁸ Bourniol decodes the painting's original title, using Assouan as a clue, to interpret the figures as Almah. This foregrounds the sexual connotations of the scene, despite the lack of their overt presence in the painting itself. Unlike other representations of dancers, and specifically the Almah, Browne's plays down the images of frenzy and abandon associated with the theme. Gautier's 1845 description of Moorish dancers suggests how clearly they are positioned at the cutting edge of respectability.

Moorish dancing consists in perpetual undulations of the body: twistings of the lower back, swaying of the hips, movements of the arms, hands, waving handkerchiefs, languid facial expressions, eyelids fluttering, eyes flashing or swooning, nostrils quivering, lips parted, bosoms heaving, ...¹⁵⁹

Like Bourniol, Gautier's account emphasized the dancers' culturally different bodies. The erotic potential of bodily undulations and the sexual overtones of flared nostrils, heavy breathing and unspoken communication can only refer to an uncorseted and non-European figure. Although a much diluted version of this sexualized body language existed in the heaving bosoms and fluttering eyelids of nineteenth-century novels (particularly popular romances) the proper Victorian heroine, unless she was an

¹⁵⁸ In Turkey and Egypt homosexuality and transvestism were common attributes of dancers, both male and female. The Turkish regime resorted to exercising controls over the male cengi because the janissaries feuded over them so often. See Metin And, A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey, Ankara, 1963-4.

¹⁵⁹ Gautier quoted in Thornton, Women, p.136.

abandoned gypsy type, generally fainted rather than fornicated as the culmination of the scene. The sexual availability of the Oriental dancer is encoded in their distinctly non-European bodies. In Browne's painting this is emphasized by posture, dress and ornament. Note particularly the right-hand figure whose supply bending torso, which can only be uncorseted, marks her as indelibly non-European. The hand gestures, the figures sitting crosslegged on the floor and those leaning on the wall all reinforce the sense of Oriental difference. Whilst Browne's attention to movement and pose emphasizes the unstructured body underneath the clothes, she manages, by breaking generic codes, to minimize the sexualization of the subject.

As was customary in Orientalist art, the painting appeals to ethnography by having a geographically precise title and focusing on details of dress and setting. This, coupled with its circulation as a female produced artifact, help it to avoid some of the sexual innuendo frequently associated with the subject. Of course, the scientific claims of ethnography often helped rather than prevented the Western objectification and fossilization of Eastern cultures, so I am not suggesting that an ethnographic mode rescues Browne from complicity in imperial power dynamics. But, whilst the setting clearly signifies Orientalness, the treatment and disposition of the figures invites the viewer to key into the less salacious version of ethnography. This is achieved, as in other instances, by quoting some and challenging other parts of the Orientalist repertoire. Browne's dancers dress and dance as the informed viewer would expect - but she avoids the nudity and overt sexuality that often accompanies images of such performances. Many of her viewers would have been familiar with the illustrations from Lane's Modern Egyptians which pictures similarly posed and clothed women in the article on Egyptian dancing

girls (see plate 48). Like Lane, Browne features the girdle on the hips, scarves, headdresses and castanets, but unlike him her figures are not wearing revealing décolleté. The reworking of stereotypical referents for the Oriental dancer serves to substantiate her version and avoid the usual sexualization of dancers. Though the viewer might construct a sexual interpretation, the painting prioritizes a different type of relationship to the Oriental figures depicted. Rather than fetishize details out of context Browne's picture (like her harems) is markedly plain (as far as we can tell without colour). Unlike the low cut transparent chemise of Prince Gagarin's Bayadere whose provocative pose was considered too risqué for publication in either of his two volumes,¹⁶⁰ Browne's dancers wear clothes that are not revealing and seem reasonably authentic. (Though both And and Scarce describe the sleeve as being loose from the elbow whilst hers are close fitting to the wrist.¹⁶¹)

Where other artists show dancers resting idly like the harem stereotype, Browne's are shown in the process of their work. Apart from the central figure who gazes ahead (whether at us or with drooped eyes is impossible to tell), no one spares a glance for the viewer. As in A Visit the picture space is structured by gazes between the figures: this is not an inactive Orient energized only by our Western interrogative gaze. The figures are shown as participants in an event. The right-hand dancer and foreground musician are bound together in an intent communication as they perform in synchrony and the other

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Llewelyn, p.118.

¹⁶¹ See And and Jennifer Scarce, Women's Costume in the Near and Middle East, London, 1987.

musician cranes his head to take his cue. Everyone else watches the dancers. The construction of relationships internal to the picture space holds the figures in a setting and helps to give them a purpose other than as passive spectacle. Browne was not the only artist to represent Oriental women working as musicians or dancers in a less than titillating way, but it was more usual for artist to offer either a vision of passive indolence and inactivity, or a display of flesh, frenzy or fury.¹⁶²

It is likely that the seated women in Browne's painting are part of the troupe, not the audience, since Muslim women would not be present (especially unveiled) at a mixed performance with male musicians.¹⁶³ Melek-Hanum writes about female slaves being trained as musicians, singers and dancers for purchase by rich ladies for harem entertainment¹⁶⁴ but then the whole troupe would be female, as male performers could not enter the harem. (Eunuchs did take part in entertainments, but in Turkey at least, they would be recognizable by their distinctive clothing.) This means that the audience is placed in the viewer's position, a non-gender-specific viewing position that is an important departure from Browne's treatment of a stereotypically sexualized subject in the harem paintings. Where the Interiors present a sight forbidden to men, prioritize a female gaze and thus contest male

¹⁶² See for example, Manuel Munoz Otero's Harem Musicians (1885) and Francisco Masiera Y Manoveni's The Favourite of the Harem (1881), illustrated in Hook and Poltimore p.365.

¹⁶³ Women did attend mixed performances in the country where religious codes were more relaxed, but Assouan is a town.

¹⁶⁴ Melek-Hanum, p.74.

fantasies, the construction of Dancers in Nubia, Assouan implies a traditional viewing position. Dancers in Nubia, Assouan proffers a viewing position open to all (except perhaps Muslim women) and contests male representations of sights that were available to them. Although critics made much of Browne's privileged, and hence truthful, gaze on the harem, Dancers in Nubia, Assouan received little attention. It did not show in Britain and the British press do not pick it out in their Salon reviews. Perhaps it did not have to be taken as seriously and contested as much as the Interiors because men could 'verify' their rendition of the subject as well as she, once gender had no privilege. Elie Roy, writing in L'Artiste in 1869, can insinuate that the dancers are fake, the result of dressing up, with far more plausibility than Lagrange's attempt with the milliners' 'berquinades' in the case of the Interiors: 'We find, today without much surprise, but with the greatest of regret, Mme Henriette Browne in the Orientalist camp. Her Dancers in Nubia are of a manifest inadequacy of drawing and suggest fancy dress [déguisement]'.¹⁶⁵

By the late 1860s dancers, in the three areas where they could legally perform, were becoming a respectable tourist attraction. Since Cook's first boat tour of the Nile in 1869 tourism in Egypt grew in numbers directly in proportion to the increased safety and availability of transport.¹⁶⁶ The extension of European political and purchasing power to areas previously dangerous and uncharted meant that the local population was increasingly involved in producing goods and services for tourists. So

¹⁶⁵Elie Roy, 'Salon de 1869' in L'Artiste, June 1869, p.91.

¹⁶⁶See John Pudney, The Thomas Cook Story, London, 1954.

it is possible that the exiled dancers performed to mixed-gender Western audiences and quite likely that Browne's party attended a public display or hired a troupe for a private performance. By setting the picture in a mixed domain which is clearly not the harem, Browne throws herself into the mainstream of Orientalism where there can be no appeal to the privilege of female access.

The strength of myths about the Almah (a general signifier for all Oriental dancers) is such that Bourniol is able to read it into the painting but only at the cost of some confusion. Firstly, he performs the same type of double-think as he did about Rhodian Girl by praising the canvas's modesty whilst invoking the immodest which he purports to dislike.¹⁶⁷ This is made possible by the projection of immorality onto the figures themselves - the scene is animated but chaste whilst the dancers though svelte are savage. The dancers' bodies are read as indelibly raced markers of the sexual and the primitive (which is obviously inferior in European models of progress, whether Christian or evolutionary). In the attempt to save Browne from contamination the choices made by the lady artist are lost: the critic transfers responsibility for what he sees as the suppressed savagery of the scene onto the figures themselves.

Secondly, despite the text's desire to secure it, the figures' racial classification remains unstable. The title's identification as Nubian is replaced with the

¹⁶⁷For a comparison in domestic narrative painting see Nead's exposition of the clashing codes faced by pictures of fallen women, where realism demanded authenticity and High Art expectations demanded that Woman be represented as an ideal and timeless beauty.

vaguer nomenclature of Almah but then, in a confusion of stereotypes and geography, the figures are criticized as too Moorish. If they are too Moorish why has Bourniol written out the Nubian identity offered in the Salon title, since this would allow him to relate them to the stereotype of the noble African rather than the North coast Arab that is too Moorish for his taste? The figures are clearly not pale-skinned Circassian and are of different physiognomy from the figures in the Interiors, but Bourniol's need to pin down a racial classification goes beyond the visible signs of race. It is fuelled by the very sexuality that he praises Browne for avoiding: he requires the dancers to be elegant and gracious but finds them too Black and too African to be entirely beautiful to European eyes.

These contradictory racial classifications indicate an anxiety to produce a sexual meaning for the painting. It is not that the painting must be purged of the sexual but that a way must be found for it to suggest it - the debate over racial identity is in fact productive rather than repressive of a number of sexual meanings. Although Gérôme is often criticized as immoral, one of the reasons for his success is that his paintings allow the viewer to remain ambiguous, to let them be titillated by subjects they deplore. For the lady artist Browne the onus is the other way: her pictures cannot be risqué but they must be sufficiently pleasing/titillating to fulfil the expectations of her audience.

Pictures of children

In a way, the most 'feminine' of Browne's Orientalist paintings get the least comment. Precisely because they are so easily classified as womanly and there was such a boyuant market for pleasing pictures of children, Browne's

pictures of Oriental children rarely got more than a passing nod of affirmation. Where individual figures like Rhodian Girl could be incorporated into the critical appreciation of her existing portrait practice, the scenes of schools and children could be mapped neatly onto an extended version of women's traditional concerns with education and social welfare. One might suppose that, like the harem scenes, the pictures of children would be seen to clearly project a gendered point of production. However, pictures of Oriental children were a standard part of mainstream Orientalist art and it is hard to distinguish Browne's pictures from those of Decamps, whose numerous vignettes of Oriental children playing at home, school and in the streets, are not markedly different. Noone makes much of the similarity, which is surprising, considering the outrage over her break with Decamps' depiction of the harem. In fact, noone has much to say about Browne's children at all - her reputation as a genre artist was secure by this period so most commentators simply hail the new paintings as more of the same.

Browne's scenes of children include three school scenes: Egyptian Boys Chanting from the Qur'an (dated 1869, shown at Gambart's 1870, plate 49); the Witt Library reproduction entitled A Turkish Scene (n.d., plate 39); Israelite School at Tangiers (Salon 1865/7, plate 41); as well as Les Oranges: Haute Égypte (Salon 1870, British International Exhibition, 1872, plate 42). Individual portraits of children include Portrait of a Jewish Boy (possibly the painting exhibited at Gambart in 1869 as The Seminarist) and Greek Captive (1863, no exhibition date, plate 50) and intersect with her other ethnographic portrait types like La Perruche (Salon 1875, plate 37), The Scribe (possibly Un bibliophile, Salon 1876, plate 51) and A Poet: Copts in Upper Egypt (Salon 1874, plate 52). These paintings are evidently not diagrammatic illustrations of racial types, but the lack of details

about the sitter's identity re-inforces the anonymity of the figures and emphasizes the paintings' ethnographic rational. La perruche and Greek Captive lean most heavily towards an Orientalist portrait type, with their emphasis on costume and minimal locations (certainly Greek Captive was done in the Paris studio)¹⁶⁸, whereas The Scribe and A Poet depict a more detailed location. Only the Portrait of a Jewish Boy follows the conventions of portraiture more closely showing the figure in the typical half profile head and shoulders portrait pose.

The scenes of children in the Orient mirror Browne's pictures of children in Europe. Followers of her career would have been accustomed to expect such paintings from her easel, from the Catechism of 1857 to the cutesy The Children's Room ten years later. The three Oriental school scenes combine the sentiment of child painting and the excitement of Orientalism. They are ethnographically respectable, with their clear demarcation of religion and region, and bear the markers of the Orient in the prominent display of the children's pointed Turkish

¹⁶⁸ The model for Greek Captive was Maria Pasqua Abruzzesi (1856-1939) an Italian peasant girl taken by her father to work as an artist's model in Paris. (it seems that she was sold to the Comtesse de Noailles in 1856, subsequently adopted, and finally married an English country gentleman). Her darkly pretty good looks which allowed Browne plausibly to transform her into a Greek, doubtless accounted for her popularity as a model with artists like Hebert, who specialized in scenes of picturesquely impoverished peasants. We do not know how often Browne used European models for Oriental subjects, but it is clear that she did also work in situ on her travels. On Abruzzesi see the catalogue notes held at the front desk of the Tate Gallery, London.

slippers, robes and headdress, but they also tap into the market for the accurate and emotional representation of children - regardless of specific locale. These examples, together with Browne's pictures of European children, provide cameos of 'children around the world' that are facilitated rather than impeded by national barriers. On one hand the universality of children's experience is emphasized (whether Muslim, Jewish or Christian they attend religious instruction with varying degrees of diligence) and on the other the differences believed to exist between the Occident and Orient are endorsed through physiognomy, dress and posture.

The relations of similarity and difference in Browne's children undercut the polarization between East and West at the same time as they try to uphold it. By placing the construction of group identities for children in either a humble Church or a crumbling Eastern interior the paintings suggest that it is education and socialization, rather than innate racial difference, that produce national identities. Jews function as both a specific and generic Oriental population in Orientalist discourse, Jewish women in particular being so frequently used as models (they were more willing to pose and available unveiled) that they frequently serve as an unidentified stand-in for the Oriental Islamic woman.¹⁶⁹ In Browne's case, the different head-wear denotes differences between Muslim and Jewish children whilst the compositional similarities (particularly the pile of shoes quoted in both paintings) highlights their Oriental similarities.

¹⁶⁹ See also Thompson, p.70 and Rosenthal, pp.70-3. Melman suggests that European women artists, unlike their male counterparts, were able to persuade Muslim women to pose for them. Melman, p.117.

These paintings show young Muslims, Jews and Christians in the making, and therefore raise the possibility of them being made differently. It might be that the Eastern scenes are read as evidence of Islam's brainwashing of the young, or as scenes of a backward, superstitious and dying religion, but I see nothing that supports this. Islam and Judaism come under the same benign if slightly patronizing eye (remember the disrespect for the sisters' habit) that is cast over European Catholicism. Browne was not a radical or free-thinker, her genre pieces about the Catholic Church may make it picturesque and slightly other-worldly but they do not make it ridiculous. Her scenes of Islamic culture follow a similarly sympathetic path.

Likewise the rendition of children in Oranges favours a sympathetic rather than judgemental interpretation. The scene of two young children seated on the floor, or in the street, engrossed in eating a basket of oranges could be seen as an indictment of Oriental childcare (why are they in the street eating with their hands and not in a proper nursery?) and economy. But I would suggest that whilst this operates as a sub-theme it does not overrule the painting's prioritization of a reading in the genre traditions of lovable urchins. The children's utter concentration on their task, the bright colours and attention to detail all help direct the viewer into a mode of response that is charmed rather than critical. The Oriental location and suggestion of poverty is essential to demarcate these children from the rich misses and masters of domestic genre, but it does not rule them out of its range so much as link them to scenes of the European other, the poor at home and the Orientalized peasantry of Southern Europe. The distinctly classed and nationally coded body of the child in representation can be seen in Sophie Anderson's work where her rendition of

the restrained, winsome, bourgeois girl child in No Walk Today (n.d., plate 53) registers class and nationality quite differently to the picturesque poverty and happy dishevellement of the Southern European urchin girls of Guess Again (RA 1878, plate 54).¹⁷⁰ It is clear that these different modes of viewing were easily activated. The interchangeability of the Oriental and Occidental locale in the depiction of children is illustrated by a pair of Delaroche medallions in the Wallace Collection, London, where the same two children feature in both an Occidental interior (Mother and Children, or The Happy Mother, 1848, plate 55) and an Oriental exterior, as urchins with a dark-skinned woman (A Child Learning to Read, or The Unhappy Mother, 1848, plate 56).¹⁷¹ In this children's version of cultural cross-dressing it is apparent that no aspersion is cast on the status of the transplanted European children. That the mother in the Oriental setting is 'unhappy' appears to have more to do with the typical distraction of her young student than with any generic disapproval of Oriental child-rearing. Indeed the mother, who perseveres with her attempts to win his attention despite her rags and their dirty outdoor nursery, appears to be woefully misinformed about the stereotypical ignorance of poor women abroad.

In her paintings Browne makes a clear distinction between Oriental children and Oriental adults. Although certain similarities are suggested between children of different

¹⁷⁰ For a twentieth-century equivalent think of the thousands of pictures of big-eyed urchins sold to British tourists on the 'Costa del sun' every year.

¹⁷¹ See Catalogue of Pictures: vol. II, French Nineteenth-Century, Wallace Collection, London, 1986, pp.110-111.

ethnicities, the differences between children and adults are maintained. Given that Orientals and non-Europeans (not to mention European women and the working classes) were often infantilized, this insistence on the adulthood of Oriental grown-ups is important. Her paintings of children bear all the markers of cuteness and sentiment - the over-emphasized open mouths of the boys in Chanting the Qur'an, the fretful boredom of students in The Catechism and An Israelite School at Tangiers - which allow the affinities between children to be registered as a property of childhood, whilst the insistence on generational difference refuses the paternalistic diminution of all Orientals to the status of dependent children. This leaves the adults free to signify the validity and vitality of Oriental culture. The choice of scholars and poets over other popular Oriental subjects like shopkeepers, soldiers and peasants, indicates a willingness to represent the Orient as a place peopled by independent and cultured adults.

Conclusion

As we have seen critics generally assumed that Browne's gaze on the Orient was different because of her gender. I have assessed how a female gaze on the Orient can destabilize the paradigmatic viewing, and hence power, positions of Orientalist discourse. But we have also seen how the disruptive potential of the gendered gaze has been minimized by appropriation and opposition. Critics who sing the praises of Browne's specific view also confirm that it is not the neutrally authoritative world view of male artists. The particularity of her gaze, that on one hand marks its value, is also the grounds of its dismissal as biased and insufficiently detached. John Barrell has traced the pre-eminence of detachment as a mark of authority to the eighteenth-century interest in the

classical Republics and the concept of Public Virtue wherein to qualify for the Republic of Citizens, and hence the Republic of Taste, men must have the ability to be self-governing and to govern others.¹⁷² It was the Public, or Liberal, Man's independence (financially, and so politically and personally) that allowed the detachment needed to make decisions for the greater good without personal motivation. Although by the nineteenth century the concept of the Republic of Taste had been modified to include the newly rich accultured middle classes (previously excluded because of the coarsening effects of mercantile endeavour) the idea of disinterested objectivity lived on in art, politics and science. The classical exclusion of women, slaves and subject peoples as unworthy, whether by nature or nurture, from the category of citizenship was incorporated into Enlightenment thinking and lived on in mid-nineteenth-century ideas of femininity and race.

In relation to nineteenth-century Orientalism, woman's gendered inability to accede to the position of the detached scientific observer (the nineteenth-century corollary of the Public Man) compromised her superiority as a Westerner over the Orient. Women Orientalists tended to be positioned as unmediated witnesses not as scientifically neutral observers. Note how Stanley Lane encouraged Sophia to publish an account of her women-only sights in Egypt as an experiential appendix to his scholarly research. Likewise, Browne who is praised for her testament about the Orient is not constructed as the bearer of an independent scientific look but as the transmitter of an experiential and empathetic gaze. There

¹⁷² John Barrell, The Political Theory of Painting From Reynolds to Hazlitt, London, 1986.

is no suggestion, from even her strongest supporters, that she is learned about the East - only that she is experienced. Experience can be interpreted as good or bad: for Gautier it is an unsurpassable bonus, for Vignon it dilutes her talent.

Any authority accruing to the female gaze is grounded in its presumed (gendered) experience. Although the Romantic cult of the sublime emphasized experience, it was not a mode of engagement that correlated to the axis of female experience. The Romantic immersion in what they took to be the authentic experience of strange lands ideally led to the loss of their contemporary Western identity in favour of a passionate over-identification with the exotic other. (Like Delacroix's paintings, Gautier's extrapolations of half-remembered previous lives is a clear example of the pathways to fantasy that the Orient offered the Romantics.) For women, the loss of identity involved in a passionate experience of the sublime threatened the boundaries of the proper femininity essential for their reputation. Only women who chose, or could afford, to risk notoriety and social ostracism could tread that path. In a period when an active female sexuality was widely conceptualized as dangerous and aberrant, female artists could only be marginally involved with the ethos and antics of Romantic life. Whereas men could use passion to create art, women, if they were allowed any passion at all, were meant to subsume it into motherhood.

Browne's gendered gaze on the Orient can adopt neither the authority of disinterested science nor the over-involvement of the sublime. Instead, a position emerges in which is constructed for women a knowledge that is both particular and diminutive. A knowledge that has some authority because it is experiential (but that is trivialized because it rests on womanly empathy rather than the clinical detachment of the authoritative

scientific gaze) and that is emotional (but petty because its emotions are merely those of feminine sympathy and intuition rather than the grand passion of the Romantics).¹⁷³ The very grounds that secure the efficacy of the female gaze also threaten to dismember it: it is caught between the inability to be disinterested and the pitfalls of over-identification. The same dynamic constrains the construction of the paintings' viewing positions. The female gaze of Browne's paintings needs to produce a viewing position that threatens neither (by an excess of feminine and insufficiently separated identification) the West's superiority over and separation from the Orient nor (by too passionate a response) the female spectator's femininity. Whilst over-identification for men can be rejuvenating, for women, as Vignon points out, it is enervating and not to be recommended. Thus, women at best can be endowed with a gaze of partial authority (based on empiricism and sympathy) which leaves unchallenged both the detachment of science and the grand emotions of Romanticism and thus the authority of the male gaze. This is not to deny that Browne's work issued a challenge to the male Orientalist gaze for, as we have seen, such a challenge was keenly felt, but to highlight how this damage was minimized by attributing to her a knowledge that was specific but subordinate.

Emily Apter argues that there is a counter-knowledge within the harem genre itself.¹⁷⁴ She maintains that the sapphic themes of the harem genre are so pronounced as to constitute a veritable 'haremization' effect, in which the

¹⁷³ See also Mills, p.99.

¹⁷⁴ Emily Apter, 'Female Trouble in the Colonial Harem', in Differences, vol.4, no.1, 1992.

alleged or assumed sexual relations between harem women construct a challenge to the patriarchal power around which the harem is understood to be organized. Working from the position that the harem functions as thinly disguised version of the Occidental brothel, Apter argues that in order to understand why writers and artists took the trouble to re-locate such images in the East, we must assess the harem as a 'cultural supplement' that offers something extra, something not available in an Occidental setting. Seen in this light, the latent lesbian libidinal ordering of the harem, far from being an impediment to the paradigmatic male Western viewer's pleasure, constitutes a challenge to the phallic interdictory power of the harem that threatens to keep them out and facilitates their voyeuristic entry. It allows a scopophilic fulfilment of supplementary desires that are suppressed in the Western context, replacing castration anxiety with the multiple identifications of a 'more troubling vision of bisexually coded biculturalism', (based on the pleasures of the cultural and gender cross-dressing of the colonial mise-en-scène.) The harem and its lesbian sub-text thus mirror the ambivalence of colonial discourse itself - simultaneously shoring up and challenging a vision of absolute phallic power. Apter's inference that one of the pleasures of the harem genre is its fantastic promise of disobeying the phallic order shares some ground with Wendy Leek's argument that Ingres' bathers and harem scenes constitute a denial of the woman's lack, associated with the onset of the recognition of sexual difference, thus offering the viewer a loss of identity and a return to the jouissance of the pre-Oedipal access to the mother's body - before the advent of the third term. Read in this way, Apter's haremization effect would permit an incestuous desire without the threat of castration produced by the recognition of sexual difference. I am somewhat swayed by both these approaches since they seem to offer between them a possible explanation for the dialectic between

phallic power and lesbian codings that suffuses the genre. However, I have some problems with Apter's account which has a problematic relationship to the 'real' harem. Like me, she reads women's accounts of the harem for traces of an alternative discourse, and notes that they persistently challenge the Orientalist fantasy account, but she sets up women's accounts as evidence as if they too were not the products of the self-same discourse whose workings she has been analysing. Similarly, whilst I am tempted by the possibilities of a feminist recouping of the harem as an 'antiphallic, gynocentric fantasy about the thwarting of colonial mastery', I have to argue that any attempt that tries to reclaim the harem as a site of radical opposition to phallic power per se is doomed if it does not recognize that the phallic power that is being challenged by either the harem women's sapphic 'mektoub' or the Western interloper is an Oriental patriarchy that has already been constituted as impotent.¹⁷⁵ The phallic order that controls the harem is an order that in Orientalist discourse is already understood to be, and continually reproduced as, emasculated and de-legitimate or, at best, barbarically potent (a temporarily pleasurable identification for the Western male viewer that has no evolutionary future). If as Apter emphasizes, Lacan relies on Orientalism for his metaphor that 'the phallus can only play its role as veiled', then the anti-phallic challenge offered by the haremization effect is also one step

¹⁷⁵ 'Mektoub' is an Arabic term denoting a passive acceptance in the face of destiny. It is taken by Apter as a way to reconceptualize what the West characterizes as harem women's passive docility in response to the tyranny of the harem. She re-reads 'mektoub' as a 'kind of fatal, voluptuous, sapphic masochism pegged to an originary self-generating feminine libido'. Apter, p.219.

removed - a challenge to an already subaltern phallic order.¹⁷⁶

It is here that the iconographic links between, and possible visual pleasures of, Browne's images of convents and harems become clearer. Both figure as sequestered communities of women organized around the symbolic or actual power of a male figure, cut off from the male gaze yet understood to be activated by it. As Melman also notes (and this is particularly telling in her sample of writings by evangelical women missionaries), we find within the representation of the convent themes which mirror those fundamental to the cult of the harem: repression, exclusion, despotism, punishment, sadism, exoticism, lesbianism, sexual deviancy, archaism and rescue.¹⁷⁷

Just as the women in the harem rely on the bravery of a (Western) man to free them from their prison, so too do the novices in the convent either gaze helplessly out of the window or wait for men to rescue them, establishing both sets of women as passive victims of unjust regimes,

¹⁷⁶I also wonder if a haremization effect would be possible in a Western setting. One might fruitfully explore the significance of contemporaneous representations of lesbianism in Occidental locations. See also Thais Morgan, 'Male Lesbian Bodies: The Construction of Alternative Masculinities in Courbet, Baudelaire, and Swinburne', in Genders, no.15, Winter 1992.

¹⁷⁷Melman also finds that similarities are registered in relation to the communal living arrangements of the convent and the harem, where inhabitants live, sleep and eat en masse. In contrast the bourgeois home was an increasingly divided space. Melman, pp.158-9.

rather than as active self-directing subjects formed by the praxis of both power and resistance. The repression of this play of power/s is the unconscious project of many representations of the harem and the convent: the ease with which such meanings were read into Browne's convent scenes, despite her reputation for faithful detail, pre-empted the conflictual dynamic that would greet her harem scenes, in which the paintings were understood as realistic because Henriette Browne, a woman and an artist with a reputation for factual reportage, had really been there, but were nonetheless interpreted through a grid of Orientalist knowledges about the East and the harem that often over-rode the manifest content of the images. Despite her challenge to the stereotypical Orientalist fantasy, Browne's paintings obviously offered a range of alternative visual pleasures. Although she presents images of the Orient couched in realist terms we can see how, through a variety of responses, critics are able to incorporate (Gautier), provide an alternative 'truth' to (Lagrange), or simply ignore (De Callias), her challenge to the Orientalist fantasy, emphasising the crucial flexibility of discursive definitions of the Orient.

Earlier in this chapter I suggested that we regard Browne's harems as an analogous extension of the European drawing room that offered a safe point of limited identification for female spectators. The question now arises as to whether she really did experience them as such or unconsciously projected onto them the familiar structure of the European domestic? It is a question we cannot answer - we do not know what Browne observed, only what she painted and although her representations are backed up by a number of other women's accounts, it is just as possible that they were subject to the same unconscious determinants as she. What we can deduce is that the limited viewing and painting positions available to women artists contributed in various ways to their

particular framing of the Orient. This results in a series of representations of a realm generally conceptualized as innately other that, for all the exceptions like Jerichau-Baumann, display overall a remarkable structural similarity to the familiar European domestic - a similarity that tends to be affirmatively registered, rather than treated as a sexualized contrast as is the case with mainstream and men's Orientalism.¹⁷⁸

I have found little in women's visual Orientalism that adopts the vigorously critical stance on harem life outlined by Zonana, so, although further investigation may reveal such works, it seems likely that women artists who wished to criticize the gender status quo in Europe involved themselves more directly in the representation of Occidental gender relations.¹⁷⁹ Whilst Browne's (apparent) lack of involvement in proto-feminist politics and cultural formations may explain why her work intervenes in Orientalist conventions without mounting an overt critique of European gender inequalities (though I do think that the presence of an implicit challenge is felt by her critical audience) I am more inclined to regard this difference as a sign of the heterogeneity of women's involvement in Orientalism. That is, that we cannot narrow down to a single strategy the ways in which Western women cultural agents represented the Orient. As Mills points out, the alternative power/knowledge relationship that prompted women Orientalists to represent the Orientalized other as individuals rather than types

¹⁷⁸ See Kabbani on the Oriental interior as transplanted Occidental interior.

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, Deborah Cherry on Rebecca Solomons in Painting Women.

(what Melman calls the 'particularizing' of the harem) is the result of an experience of the Orient that was itself always structured by discourses that positioned women as emotional, empathetic and personal rather than objective, scientific and political.¹⁸⁰ Where Mills allows for the always mediated nature of representation and reading, Melman retains the possibility of an innocent transcription of experience, even if viewing is acknowledged to be culturally determined (women simply 'described what they had seen. And seeing is a pre-programmed activity'¹⁸¹), that does not allow for the polysemy of the text. It is not just that Orientalism was a heterogeneous, polyglot discourse, but that each individual image was in itself polysemic and contradictory. Thus, the loss of traditional distances between self and other offered by a counter-hegemonic women's Orientalism (empathizing, particularizing, domesticating, familiarizing as it may be) is not an absence of distance but a differently inscribed distance. Although it is likely that the women's accounts I have covered bear a closer resemblance to the experience of harem life than the highly eroticized fantasies of Gérôme, they are nonetheless subject to the fantasy mechanisms associated with Orientalism. We can therefore regard women Orientalists as neither more pure (truthful and non-imperialist) than men, nor as more susceptible to fantasy (the dangerously gullible female tourist) but as agents whose mixture of observation and fantasy about the East is specifically gendered because of the social and psychological restraints on their experience and

¹⁸⁰ See also Satya P. Mohanty, 'The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: on Beloved and the Postcolonial Condition', in Cultural Critique, Spring 1993.

¹⁸¹ Melman, p.308.

representation of the Orient.

CHAPTER FIVE
DANIEL DERONDA

Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine how George Eliot's representation of Jews and Judaism in Daniel Deronda relates to the Orientalist paradigm. Daniel Deronda, published by Blackwoods in eight parts from February to September 1876,¹ was George Eliot's eighth and final novel. It offered a devastating critique of English society, seen as degenerating and regressive, by holding up a Jew, the Daniel of the title, as an emblem of an ancient but thriving Jewish culture to which England should look for inspiration. Whilst the earlier 'English' half was uniformly well received (despite some early disapproval of Gwendolen as a role model for the female readership)² the 'Jewish' half provoked strong reactions in Gentile critics but was taken up gratefully by Jewish critics in Britain who were desperate for a positive image in mainstream culture.

George Eliot's oft-quoted letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe makes it clear that the book was primarily aimed at a Gentile readership and that she had anticipated some of

¹All references are to the Penguin edition, page references hereafter given in brackets in the text.
George Eliot, Daniel Deronda, (1876) Harmondsworth, 1987.

²See also Bonnie Zimmerman, 'Gwendolen Harleth and the "Girl of the Period"', in Anne Smith (ed) George Eliot: Centenary Essays and an Unpublished Fragment, Vision Press, 1980.

the hostility it provoked.

As to the Jewish element in 'Deronda', I expected from first to last in writing it, that it would create much stronger resistance and even repulsion than it has actually met with. But precisely because I felt that the usual attitude of Christians towards Jews is - I hardly know whether to say more impious or more stupid when viewed in the light of their professed principles, I therefore felt urged to treat Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to. Moreover, not only towards the Jews, but towards all oriental peoples with whom we English come in contact, a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous dictatorialness is observable which has become a national disgrace to us. There is nothing I should care more to do, if it were possible, than to rouse the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in customs and beliefs. But towards the Hebrews we western people who have been reared in Christianity, have a peculiar debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment. Can anything be more disgusting than to hear people called 'educated' making small jokes about eating ham, and showing themselves empty of any real knowledge as to the relation of their own social and religious life to the history of the people they think themselves witty in insulting? They hardly know that Christ was a Jew. And I find men educated at Rugby supposing that

Christ spoke Greek.³

In this chapter I will be arguing that, despite the novel's generally positive portrayal of Judaism and Marian Evans' evident desire to challenge prejudice, Daniel Deronda replicates many of the fundamental Orientalist tropes of difference and otherness that are modulated if not challenged by Henriette Browne's paintings. In keeping with those critics who have claimed that Daniel Deronda is a novel whose apparently split plot is driven by a concern with heredity, race and degeneration, it will be further argued that the deployment of Jews as a signifier of otherness for English society reinforces, despite its attempts to challenge, naturalized ideologies of racial difference. Nineteenth-century readings of Daniel Deronda will be used to explore how fluctuating theories of racial identity were read into the book by both Gentiles and Jews. It will be asserted that for both it was an important factor in the conception of Anglo-Jewry and that for Jews it was a central moment in the formation of diaspora identities: the British Chief Rabbi wrote to George Eliot praising the novel; Rabbi David Kauffman from the Budapest Yeshiva published a series of articles (George Eliot and Judaism: An Attempt to Appreciate Daniel Deronda, 1878) in defence of the novel that were immediately translated into English; Jews wrote reviews in the Jewish Chronicle and the mainstream press (Joseph Jacobs in Macmillan's Magazine and James Picciotto in Gentleman's Magazine).

This will place Daniel Deronda's construction of Jews and

³George Eliot to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 29 October 1876 in Gordon S. Haight The George Eliot Letters: Vol. 6, 1874-1877, London, 1956, pp.301-2.

Judaism in relation to other representations of Jews in fiction and in the Jewish and Gentile press in order to map it within discourses of evolution, racial identity and nationalism. Accordingly, this chapter will concentrate on the meanings ascribed to Daniel Deronda in the years immediately after its publication, rather than entering into the field of twentieth-century George Eliot scholarship. Her other work and the corpus of the George Eliot letters will be used as auxiliary material to trace the development of the concepts (notably of Englishness, the familiar and the alien) that pre-empt and structure Daniel Deronda. Although Jews throughout Germany and Eastern Europe responded to Daniel Deronda (in the Yiddish, Hebrew and vernacular Jewish press) I shall be concentrating mainly on the responses of British Jews, (or rather of Jewish critics in the English or Anglo-Jewish press) in order to focus my analysis on the interpenetrative discourses of Englishness and Jewishness that suffuse the novel and its reception.⁴

Authorship and identity

By the time Daniel Deronda was published the author George Eliot was known to be a woman and had become one of the foremost literary figures of her day. Unlike Browne, who though popular in her day is obscure now, George Eliot has been the subject of massive investigation in the late twentieth century.⁵

⁴On the European Jewish response to Daniel Deronda see Shmuel Werses, 'The Jewish Reception of Daniel Deronda', in Alice Shalvi (ed), Daniel Deronda: A Centenary Symposium, Jerusalem, 1976.

⁵Eliot's reputation declined after her death, and her work

languished in relative obscurity for the first few years of the twentieth century until she was rescued by Virginia Woolf in 1919 and subsequently immortalized in the literary canon by F.R. Leavis' Great Tradition in 1948 (Leavis of course wished to edit out the Jewish parts and republish Daniel Deronda as the 'Gwendolen Harleth Story'.) Apart from Leavis' notable aberration, twentieth-century critics have tended to integrate Daniel Deronda's scientific themes into their analysis, whether in relation to scientific philosophy, structuralism, psychoanalysis, Judaic scholarship and historiography or feminism. There are, of course, a number of competing interpretations in all these fields, notably in feminist literary criticism which has placed Eliot on a series of (often conflicting) pedestals since the 1970s.

Virginia Woolf, 'George Eliot', in The Times Literary Supplement, 20 November, 1919, pp.657-8,

F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition, (1948) Harmondsworth, 1980.

On Daniel Deronda and science see:

Sally Shuttleworth, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning, Cambridge, 1984,

Suzanne Graver, George Eliot and Community: A Study of Social Theory and Fictional Form, Berkeley, 1984,

Peter Allan Dale, In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture: Science, Art and Society in the Victorian Age, Madison, 1989.

For an overview and example of deconstructive readings see:

J. Russel Perkin, A Reception-History of George Eliot's Fiction, London, 1990,

George Levine, 'Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot', in PMLA, vol. 77, 1962,

Peter Dale, 'Symbolic Representation and the Means of Revolutions in Daniel Deronda', in Victorian Newsletter, no. 59, Spring 1981,

Mary Wilson Carpenter, 'The Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Daniel Deronda and the Interpretation of Interpretation', in PMLA, vol. 99, 1984,

Cynthia Chase, 'The Decomposition of Elephants: Double Reading Daniel Deronda', in PMLA, vol. 93, 1978.

On feminist readings see:

Elaine Showalter, 'The Greening of Sister George' in Nineteenth-Century Fiction, no.35, 1980,

Carol A. Martin, 'George Eliot: Feminist Critic' in Victorian Newsletter, no.65, Spring, 1984,

Elaine Showalter, 'Looking Forward: American Feminists, Victorian Sages', in Victorian Newsletter, no. 65, Spring 1984,

Jill Conway, 'Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution', in Victorian Studies, vol. 14, no. 1, September 1970,

Jacqueline Rose, 'George Eliot and the Spectacle of the Woman', in Rose, Sexuality in the Field of Vision, London, 1986.

Her status as a female literary figure was, and is, complicated by her notoriety as Marian Evans - the adulterous partner of the philosopher, publisher and writer George Henry Lewes. The methodological problems of differentiating between George Eliot the authorial persona confirmed by nineteenth and twentieth-century criticism, Marian Evans the anonymous writer and editor of articles and reviews, and the historical individual Mary Ann or Marian Evans (or Marian Lewes as she chose to be addressed) who wrote the letters, diaries and notebooks that make up the George Eliot archive has been elucidated elsewhere (notably by Gillian Beer).⁶ In this instance, I shall use George Eliot to refer to the author of the novels and the journalism (which after Cross' Life in 1885 was read into the corpus of George Eliot's published work) and reserve Marian Evans for references to the historical personage attested to by the letters and diaries, which will be introduced in so far as they are read into the construction of the author George Eliot. Thus my use of the two terms George Eliot and Marian Evans should signal the thesis' movement between a biographical and a discursive subject. For example, the letter from Marian Evans to Harriet Beecher Stowe which is frequently used to prove Marian Evans' own hatred of prejudice, can also read in light of how critics have used it to construct not only Marian Evans but also George Eliot as the agent of that tolerance. I shall follow the conventions of George Eliot scholarship and include letters written by George Henry Lewes which it is usual to presume are representative of their shared opinions.

Daniel Deronda was George Eliot's last novel in a literary

⁶For the clearest explanation of the debate and most workable solution see Beer George Eliot.

career that encompassed journalism, translation, editing, poetry and fiction. Before she began to write and publish fiction at the age of thirty-six (Scenes of Clerical Life, 1858), George Eliot had established herself in journalism through her work (as a contributor and editor) for the Westminster Review, a liberal intellectual journal concerned with literature, politics, art, philosophy and the developing social sciences, with which Daniel Deronda was to be so associated. She also translated the German humanist critics of Christianity Strauss and Fierbach in 1846 and 1854. So she had built a considerable literary reputation for critique and commentary before venturing into fiction. But although Marian Evans was regularly in print, her name was not - like all journalism her contributions to the Westminster Review were anonymous and her identity would only have been known to the small coterie of intellectuals associated with the magazine - the name George Eliot first appears as the author of the novel Scenes of Clerical Life in 1858 and again with Adam Bede in 1859. There is the question of why - when so many women writers published under their own names - Marian Evans chose a male pseudonym? Gillian Beer provides three possible avenues of explanation here: firstly a desire to create an authorial persona that would not be tainted by the controversy surrounding Marian Evans, secondly, the need for an authorial identity that would not publicly impact on her journalistic career if the novels failed, and thirdly, a desire to write from a space that would not be judged as female.⁷ Evidence for this last is provided by George Eliot's famous 1856 essay 'Silly Novels by Silly

⁷Beer, George Eliot, p.10.

On the conscious construction of George Eliot's sybilline public image, see also Dorothea Barrett, Vocation and Desire. George Eliot's Heroines, London, 1989.

Lady Novelists' in which she had deplored the low standard of much women's fiction and demanded that serious women writers be read and judged by the same standards as men, ie. on the basis of their work not their gender. Even after George Eliot had been revealed as a woman and the possibility of a male narrator was past, Marian Evans continued to publish under her chosen authorial name (although her journalism would have remained anonymous to most of her readers). By the time Daniel Deronda was published, nearly twenty years after Adam Bede, George Eliot was recognized as a famous female author and debate centred more on the novel's relation to her oeuvre than on her gender, as had been the case with her earlier fiction.⁸

Contemporary responses

Because Daniel Deronda was published serially, every month for eight months, critics were able to develop their

⁸David Carroll notes that the intellectual rigour and thwarted romance of Daniel Deronda fed into a critical reassessment of George Eliot's career in the 1870s and '80s which, especially after Cross' Life, tended towards a view of her oeuvre (including the journalism alongside the novels) that stressed the continuity of her moral and philosophical outlook, rather than the sense of disjunction that met the overt scientificity of Daniel Deronda on its publication. David Carroll, (ed), George Eliot; The Critical Heritage, London, 1971.

opinions as the novel unfolded.⁹ This accounts for the immediacy of some of the reviews where readers speculate on characters' future actions and possible plot outcomes, just as we would today over a soap opera or television drama serial. Several critics wrote more than one review, changing their views as the narrative, and the controversy it provoked, developed. Critics were also trying to adapt to the changes that Daniel Deronda signalled in George Eliot's oeuvre. By no means all the general press were hostile to the Jewish elements of Daniel Deronda but to many its intellectualism was overdone - either in its scientificity (of language and sentiment) or its irrevocable distance from the bucolic realism of Adam Bede (for which many of her fans were nostalgic). Critics might admire her research and be in awe of Daniel Deronda's intellectual capacity, but they often regarded such intellectualism as an ungainly addition to the romance or, more xenophobically, as a foreign intrusion into an English narrative. George Eliot did not complete the final volume of Daniel Deronda until June 1876, five months after publication began and, despite Lewes' well known censorship of criticism, was not unaware of responses to the novel as it emerged, the tenor of which she had correctly anticipated.

One of the most overtly anti-Semitic and jingoistic responses was paraded in an unattributable review in the Saturday Review in September 1876 as publication of Daniel Deronda came to a close. The elements of this review, with

⁹ Twentieth-century research into literary (as distinct from art) criticism means that more reviews in this part of the thesis can be identified. Therefore this chapter will use the names of critics wherever possible and signal those that cannot be identified.

its mix of outright anti-Semitism and the very high-handed arrogance that George Eliot had criticized in the letter to Beecher Stowe, encapsulate the main themes found in objections to Daniel Deronda: namely that English readers will not be interested in Jewish concerns; that it is too foreign; that it lacks religious sentiment; that it is too intellectual; and that the plot is incredible by realist standards of reading.

The reader... has to ask himself whether the conviction that the author has fallen below her usual height is owing to any failure of power in herself, or to the utter want of sympathy which exists between her and her readers in the motive and leading idea of the story. This is a question which can hardly be settled. Some resolute readers may indeed endeavour to adjust their sympathies to this supreme effort, but there can be no class of sympathizers. Jew and Christian must feel equally at fault; and those who are neither one nor the other are very unlikely to throw themselves with any fervour into the mazes of Mordecai's mystic utterances... the fact is that the reader never - or so rarely as not to affect his general posture of mind - feels at home. The author is ever driving at something foreign to his habits of thought. The leading persons - those with whom her sympathies lie - are guided by interests and motives with which he has never come into contact...

And not only are these personages outside our interests, but the author seems to go out with them into a world completely foreign to us. What can be the design of this ostentatious separation from the universal instinct of Christendom, this subsidence into Jewish hopes and aims?.. It might be explained if it were the work of a convert, but Daniel Deronda may be defined as a religious novel without a

religion... We are at sea throughout. Nobody seems to believe in anything in particular. Nobody has any prejudices... Nobody expects a novel to contain a religious confession, and the reader of strictest personal faith may pass over latitude in this matter in an author whose legitimate work of delineating human nature is well executed; but when a young man of English training and Eton and University education, and, up to manhood, of assumed English birth, so obliging also as to entertain Christian sympathies, finishes off with his wedding in a Jewish synagogue, on the discovery that his father was a Jew, the most confiding reader leaves off with a sense of bewilderment and affront - so much does definite action affect the imagination, and we will add the temper...

...She must know her public too well to have allowed herself any delusion here, and must have been fully aware that Mordecai would be caviare to the multitude, an unintelligible idea to all but an inner circle.

Of course in the design of Daniel Deronda we are reminded of the part played by Fedalma in the Spanish Gipsy [sic]. Fidelity to race stands with this author as the first of duties and virtues, nor does it seem material what the character of the race is. Fedalma feels her gipsy [sic] blood, as soon as she is made aware of her origins, to be as strong and imperious a

chain as his Jewish descent is with *Deronda*.¹⁰

The link to *The Spanish Gypsy* (George Eliot's epic poem of 1868 in which the heroine Fedalma, though raised as a Spanish noblewoman, renounces the affective and social ties of her upbringing for the blood ties of her gypsy blood) is not lost on other critics. Indeed, several maintain that the subject of 'hereditary race feeling'¹¹ is best suited to poetry and should stay there. George Saintsbury's review for the *Academy* in September is explicit about the difficulty of aligning such subjects with the 'English' novel.

We do not in the slightest degree feel 'imperfect sympathy' with Jews, and we hold that Shylock had the best of the argument. But the question here is whether the phase of Judaism now exhibited, the mystical enthusiasm for race and nation, has sufficient connection with broad human feeling to be stuff for prose fiction to handle. We think that it has not...Poetry could legitimately treat [Daniel and Mordecai's beliefs]; indeed, many of Mordecai's traits may be recognised, - as we think, more happily placed - in the Sephardo of *the Spanish Gypsy*. They are, no doubt, interesting historically; they throw light on the character and aspirations of a curious people, and supply an admirable subject for a

¹⁰ Unattributable review in, *Saturday Review*, 23 September 1876, quoted in John Holmstrom, and Laurence Lerner, (eds) *George Eliot and Her Readers. A Selection of Contemporary Reviews*, London, 1966, pp.146-8.

¹¹ Unattributable review in the *Academy* 5 February 1876 in Holstrom and Lerner, pp.126-7.

scientific monograph. But for all this they are not the stuff of which the main interest or even a prominent interest, of anything but a very carefully reduced side interest, of prose novels should be wrought.¹²

The accusation that, though appropriate for intellectual activity, such investigation of contemporary Judaism has no place in fiction is an extension of his dislike of the scientific slant in George Eliot's later work. Whilst he cannot but admit that, '[i]f the thing was to be done, it could hardly have been done better', he cannot accept the 'singular way in which the characters are incessantly pushed back in order that the author may talk about them and about everything in heaven and earth while the action stands still'.¹³ He reads technique as a sign of intellectual allegiance, citing phrases like 'emotive memory', 'dynamic quality', 'hymning of cancerous vices' and 'keenly perceptive sympathetic emotiveness'¹⁴ as proof of George Eliot's worrying support for new sciences, not only as digressions from the plot.

Like Saintsbury (whose opposition to Darwin was well known)¹⁵ Henry James and Richard Holt Hutton also take exception to George Eliot's introduction of scientific language and values to a novel. Henry James published a

¹²George Saintsbury in the Academy 9 September 1876, in Carroll, pp.374-375.

¹³Saintsbury, in the Academy, 1876, in Carroll, p.374.

¹⁴Saintsbury, in the Academy, 1876, in Carroll, p.374.

¹⁵See Harold Orel, Victorian Literary Critics, London, 1984.

dialogue about Daniel Deronda in the Atlantic Monthly of December 1876 that encapsulates the split response to the novel. The three characters Theodora, Pulcheria and Constantius respectively defend, deplore and dither about the book. Pulcheria displays all the tropes of upper-class anti-Semitism, musing on the likelihood of Daniel's nose ('I am sure he had a nose, and I hold that the author has shown great pusillanimity in her treatment of it. She has quite shirked it') and the odiousness of Jews - whom she sees as either priggish or dirty.¹⁶ Further, George Eliot is accused of a 'want of tact' in bringing scientific language into a novel and, moreover, of corrupting English literature with language that, whether it be German or Latin, is definitely 'not English'. George Eliot is defended by Theodora who, in contrast to Pulcheria's patronage of Austen and Thackeray, cultivates a taste for French novelists like Balzac and George Sand and other 'impure writers'.¹⁷

Theodora: [S]o long as she [George Eliot] remains the great literary genius that is is, how can she be too scientific? She is simply permeated with the highest culture of the age... It shows a very low level of culture on the world's part to be agitated by a term [dynamic] perfectly familiar to all decently-educated people.¹⁸

The foreignness of Daniel Deronda, associated with

¹⁶Henry James, 'Daniel Deronda: A Conversation', in Atlantic Monthly, December 1876, in Carroll, p.420.

¹⁷James, in Carroll, p.419.

¹⁸James, in Carroll, p.427.

Theodora's taste for French novels, is registered here at one remove since the author and his characters are Americans reviewing the English literary scene,¹⁹ but it is a pointed reminder of the way that the Gentile reviewers subsume other intrusions under a dislike of the Jewish content. The problem of foreignness that is made so explicitly by the Saturday Review is about more than Jews - it is about the way that the novel distances itself from the concerns of the 'English' half (and presumably the familiar concerns of the English readership) that should by rights provide its setting and focus.

The criticism of George Eliot's technique, like those of Browne's changes to the vocabulary of Orientalist painting, are fuelled by the defence of the values they both implicitly or explicitly attack. Hutton, in a series of reviews in the Spectator, characteristically attempts to find a moral message and belief in a 'higher order' in a book that implicitly challenges a Christian world view.²⁰ He cannot like her scientific technique, deploring the numerous 'small pedantries' and 'laborious

¹⁹On the significance of James' relationship to European culture as an American, Perkin points out that though for the English literary scene George Eliot was avant-garde in the French realist style ('low' subjects, that challenged the existing social and literary orders) for James, who was versed in French literature, her changes were minimal. This explains his accusations elsewhere that her work was conformist. In this lights, Pulcheria's comments are a snide aside on the narrowness of the English literary imagination. Perkin, p.88.

²⁰On Hutton's changing but persistent beliefs in a Christian moral code see Orel.

sentence[s]'²¹ that he finds in the novel, but unlike others, who see its scientificity as proof of its flawed character, Hutton finds Daniel Deronda to be George Eliot's most successfully structured narrative. This is because he is able to find evidence that George Eliot really does (despite earlier indications or doubts to the contrary) believe in an order higher than Man. Although in June (five volumes into the narrative) he is concerned that George Eliot's philosophy has 'parted with all the old lines of principle ... and imported nothing new and definite in their place except the vaguest hopes and aspiration',²² by July he is convinced that although the introduction of Mordecai into a work of fiction cannot be justified, the novel's moral message can.

If the conception of Mordecai's religious and political mission has transgressed the bounds of what even George Eliot can accomplish in fiction, there is yet a religious element in the story far surpassing in power and in the skill with which it is developed, anything corresponding to it in any other of her books. We refer to the very great power with which the over-ruling influence of a spirit which moulds human wilfulness to its higher purposes is brought out.²³

²¹Richard Holt Hutton, unsigned review in the Spectator, 9 September 1876, in Carroll, pp.368-9.

²²Hutton, in the Spectator, 10 June 1876, in Holstrom and Lerner, p.133.

²³Hutton, in the Spectator, 29 July 1876, in Holmstrom and Lerner, p.134.

There is in this tale more of moral presentiment, more of moral providence, and more of moral subordination to purposes higher and wider than that of any one generation's life, than in any previous story of this author's...²⁴

In this case the coalition of Judaism and science denotes not intrusive threats but the long-awaited proof of George Eliot's traditional Christian devoutness.

It is true that so far as this book conveys the author's religious creed, it is a purified Judaism, - in other words, a devout Theism, purged of Jewish narrowness, while retaining the intense patriotism which pervades Judaism; and that the hero... evidently sees nothing in the teachings of Christ which raises Christianity above the purified Judaism of Mordecai's vision. But however much we may differ from her here, it is not on such a difference that our estimate of the power or art of this fine tale can turn... The art of this story is essentially religious.²⁵

Judaism is both evoked and denied; like the fetish, it exists to prove that loss does not occur, that George Eliot has not challenged god and Englishness. Hutton imagines that Daniel Deronda's representation of Judaism provides evidence of George Eliot's interest in and validation of religion that will save her from the other evil of atheistic positivism. By emptying Judaism of its

²⁴Hutton, in the Spectator, 29 July 1876, in Holmstrom and Lerner, p.135.

²⁵Hutton, in the Spectator, 9 September 1876, in Carroll, p.366.

specific meaning, he is able to abstract a universal of faith which is implicitly re-registered as proto-Christian.

Although Hutton manages to make a pro-Christian element out of Daniel Deronda, in general both its representation of Jews and its scientific language are interpreted as signs of a foreign intervention into English literature, alien to the English imagination and unfit subjects for literature. Like science, the representation of Jews would be more manageably placed in poetry or, better still, as the object of scientific investigation. Despite the obvious differences between a positivist scientific framework and Jewish mysticism, both are understood as variously out of place, immigrant, inappropriate and impossible to empathize with. The displacement from Judaism to science indicates a disavowal by reviewers (who do not want to identify as anti-Semitic) in which the negative value of Jews as interlopers and aliens in the English body politic is projected onto the inappropriate incursion of scientific language into the body of English literature. The English state and the English literary imagination must both be defended from an alien force that threatens to change characteristics held dear as natural, ancient and moral by overthrowing naturalized boundaries between Jew and Gentile, science and art. This attempt to segregate Judaism into another field (from literature to poetry to scientific observation) marks a process of fetishistic disavowal that denies the reality of loss (here of Englishness) either by displacing the anxiety-producing (Jewish) object into a more comfortable form (Judaism as the object of science), or by disavowing its existence altogether (Judaism purified into

Christianity).²⁶ This desire to remove Judaism from English literature and segregate it into another field is reminiscent of Joel Kovel's description of the aversive racist as one who, unable to reconcile racist feelings with his/her superego, represses them into a fantasy life and avoids contact with the object of hate; unlike the dominative racist whose enactment of violent feelings about racial difference requires intimacy with the object of hatred (notably found in the plantation slavery system). The aversive racist needs the object of hatred to be at a distance, if it comes too close (by moving in next door or wanting to marry the white daughter, or in this instance, by intruding into English Literature) then the aggressive feelings that are normally sublimated will be reactivated, with a corresponding problem of self-image for the subject who believes that s/he is 'not racist but...'.²⁷

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, 'Fetishism', in On Sexuality, Pelican Freud Library, Harmondsworth, 1986, vol.7.

See later for more on the Jew as fetish and the displacement activity of anti-Semitism.

²⁷ Kovel argues that aversive racism is the effective mode of racial discrimination in bourgeois society, since it relies on the regulatory power of depersonalized institutions rather than direct contact between individuals - an avoidance of contact echoed in the nineteenth-century critics' displacement of anti-Semitism onto the rules established by the institutions of literature.

Joel Kovel, White Racism: A Psychohistory, London, 1988.

Evolution, organicism, fiction and Jews.

Despite the concern evinced by critics about the particular amalgamation of science and fiction in Daniel Deronda, scientific ideas frequently found their way into fiction. Scientific thought had a wide circulation among the educated public and fiction not only reflected but actively promoted the lay interest in science, with many novels being published whose intention was an explication of one theory or another.²⁸ The publication of Darwin's On the Origin of Species in 1859 and then The Descent of Man in 1871 prompted a flurry of novels dealing specifically with the evolutionary debate. Daniel Deronda is a novel that unites evolutionary theory with concerns about degeneration, taking the project of Silas Marner and Adam Bede (which looked at the best of old England) further to assess the future of the nation. That Jews were held up as a healthier alter ego offended readers even more than the unfavourable analysis of Englishness itself. To understand this we must understand the situation of Jews in England and their significance in an intellectual framework dominated by evolutionary theory - whether accepted or rejected, Darwin's ideas could not be ignored.

George Eliot was a novelist particularly interested in science. She and Lewes were associated with positivist circles and her interest in evolutionary theory and

²⁸ See Leo Henkin, Darwinism in the English Novel 1860-1910. The Impact of Evolution on Victorian Fiction, New York, 1940.

organicism was well known.²⁹ Organicism, a theory of the interdependent growth and development of organisms (individual and collective, plant and human), stresses the interdependence of the parts on each other and on the whole. No organism can be assessed outside the role of its constituent parts or the parts in isolation from each other. When transposed to an analysis of society the ratio of individual rights/will to civic duty is contested by the theory's exponents, but all writers (from Mills to Comte, to Spencer and Lewes) agree on the importance of historical specificity to an analysis of the social organism. Of all George Eliot's novels, Daniel Deronda most overtly incorporates scientific theories. In many ways it is the culmination of her vision of organicist development as the solution to the theme of personal will versus social and moral responsibility that structures her fiction over a number of years.

In Daniel Deronda organicist ideas about the healthy development of the individual and society are based on a concept of a nation-specific and racialized social unit in which the two key identifications are Jewish and English. This brings together organicism, evolution and theories of racial identity. Indeed, for Darwin's public the very idea that some evolved more successfully than others (the survival of the fittest) was mapped onto discourses of class, gender and race identity. Current social problems (be it the poor standard of army recruits scrutinized by the army reforms of the early 1870s, nascent feminism or criminality and insanity) were analysed in relation to the

²⁹Her essay 'The Natural History of German Life' (1856) based on a review of Riehl's work is generally cited as the clearest explanation of her organicist views. See Beer, Darwin, ch.4, and Shuttleworth.

evolution and possible degeneration of different sections of society.³⁰

On the Origin of Species displaced man from the centre of the universe and challenged the traditional anthropocentric view of the world. By the time Daniel Deronda was written Darwin's Descent of Man had defined man as part of the animal kingdom, which further threatened the already destabilized image of man as born leader and had implications for theories of racial and national identity that saw white man as the natural ruler of the world.³¹ The Descent also included a section on the role of sexual selection in evolutionary survival, thus giving an evolutionary significance (of heredity and descent) to the novel's typical themes of marriage, sex and beauty. In Daniel Deronda, for example, the ethos of civic responsibility for women is one that centres around marriage and lineage. Gwendolen's inner conflicts and romances become more than a matter of individual preference. The women in the novel have a moral and civic

³⁰ Jews were a moot point within nineteenth-century classification of race and nation. They were used to prove arguments on both sides of the evolutionary debate. Anti-evolutionary polygenists, who believed that different races had separate origins, saw the Jews' retention of a distinct identity after centuries of dispersal as proof that they were descendants of a separate race of distinct heredity. On the other hand, evolutionary thinkers who took a monogenist approach, saw this racial identity as the result of evolutionary fitness, picturing Jews as a favoured race who were best suited to adapt and survive in hostile environments. See Beer, Darwin, p.203.

³¹ On Darwin's attitudes to race, see Beer, Darwin.

duty to select worthy mates and produce offspring who will benefit the polity and, in the case of Catherine Arrowpoint, maintain the family fortune.

At the time of Daniel Deronda's publication, theories of degeneration were increasingly influential, and intersected with evolutionary thought. Definitions of degeneration stemmed from concern with the opposite to progress and evolution - the aberrations of illness, insanity and criminality that threatened the body politic and the progress of the race.³² To medical and scientific commentators in the nineteenth century the Western model of industrial progress that was meant to be the apotheosis of evolution appeared to bring with it a perplexing increase in devolution and social unrest. Like the debate over evolution, degeneracy theory was a heterogeneous formation with numerous applications (educational, medical, military). Our main concern is the stress on heredity and the fear of hidden threats to the social fabric that were thrown up by changes in the concept of degeneration in which it shifted from being understood as something that threatened the individual to something that threatened society and, correspondingly, from being an illness (that anyone could contract) to a congenital inheritance (to which some groups were more prone). Indeed, it has been argued that the growth of national identities in the late eighteenth century was a crucial prop for the emergent definitions of normality and

³² See Pick on why the concept of degeneration took such hold in the second half of the nineteenth century. Daniel Pick, Faces of Degeneration. A European Disorder c.1848-c.1918, Cambridge, 1989.

abnormality that structured degeneracy theory.³³ The threats perceived to reside in the working class, the insane, criminals (and the particularly nineteenth-century conception of the dangerous classes and the mob) were exactly those projected onto Blacks and the colonies. As Daniel Pick argues, the imperial concept of the inferior but dangerous racial other is bound up in, and relies on, a sense of the other at home. Western subjectivity and society had threats to withstand from within as well as without.³⁴

Jewish Responses: Daniel Deronda and the formation of an Anglo-Jewish identity

If, as I have argued, Jews are positioned as England's Orientalized other in Daniel Deronda, then Jewish responses to Daniel Deronda will be indicative of the third movement in Said's three way process of Orientalism. That is, if Daniel Deronda is the product of the West (England) looking at and writing up the Orient (Jews) with an agenda of Western (English) concerns, then Jewish responses testify to the impact of Orientalist representation on the self-image of the represented. The haste and enthusiasm with which Jews rallied Daniel Deronda to their cause (Joseph Jacobs in retrospect

³³George L. Mosse, 'Nationalism and Respectability: Normal and Abnormal Sexualities in the Nineteenth Century', in the Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 17, no. 2, 1982.

³⁴Pick, pp.37-43.

characterized his review as 'gushing')³⁵ shows the desperate quest of the Orientalized to modify and improve their self-image and the inflated significance accorded to Occidental representations. Jewish responses to Daniel Deronda not only contain traces of the processes by which Anglo-Jewry constructed and contested a series of self-identifications; when placed alongside Gentile criticism, they reveal the reading of Daniel Deronda to be an arena in which Jewish and Gentile writers struggled to control the classification, meaning and identity of Anglo-Jewry.³⁶

By 1880 there were 60,000³⁷ Jews in Britain. This figure had risen from 35,000 in 1850, but Jews remained a small percentage of Britain's population, being 0.01% in 1850, 0.17% in 1880 and 0.38% in 1900.³⁸ In Europe as a whole there were 4,100,000 Jews out of a population of 266,000,000. Their numbers in Europe increased in the

³⁵ 'I had written an enthusiastic - I fear I must add gushing - defence of Daniel Deronda, from a Jewish point of view in the June number of Macmillan's Magazine...' Joseph Jacobs, Literary Studies, London, 1895, p.xv.

³⁶ For twentieth-century examples of the impact of Orientalist representations on the Orientalized reader, see Edward W. Said, Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World, London, 1981, Zakia Pathak et al, 'The Prisonhouse of Orientalism', in Textual Practice, vol. 5, no. 2, Summer 1991.

³⁷ V.D. Lipman, Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950, London, 1954, p.65.

³⁸ Colin Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939, London, 1979, pp.4-5.

nineteenth century from 1.1% of Europe's total population at the start of the century to 2.2% at its close.³⁹ Throughout Europe Jews were still subject to restrictions on their movements and occupations: in Russia the Pale of Settlement was not revoked until the 1917 Revolution, whilst political emancipation was achieved in Austria-Hungary in 1867 and in Germany in 1871. In France, although Jews were enfranchised along with the rest of the population in 1789, their rights to be counted as citizens were questioned throughout the nineteenth century and conspiracy theories thrived in Catholic, secular and socialist circles.⁴⁰ Jews were not officially allowed into Britain after the expulsion of 1290 until 1656.⁴¹ From then until the 1860's Jewish immigration was never above 8,000 a century (less than the corresponding figures for other immigrant groups like the Huguenot refugees who fled to Britain and Ireland). Jewish emancipation in Britain came in 1835 when the removal of the requirement to swear the Christian Abjuration Oath effectively gave Jews access to parliamentary representation.⁴²

The first Jewish immigrants to England were Sephardim (largely skilled business families) who, as the most

³⁹ Figures in Salo W. Baron, 'The Jewish Question in the Nineteenth-Century' in The Journal of Modern History, vol.10, no.1, March,1938.

⁴⁰ Jacob Katz, From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933, Cambridge, Massuchesetts, 1980, chs. 8 and 9.

⁴¹ See Holmes, p.3.

⁴² See M.C.N. Salbstein, The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain, London, 1982.

established section of Anglo-Jewry, were at the core of the struggle for emancipation. The Sephardim (Jews of Spanish and Portuguese descent who had emigrated to Protestant Northern Europe or the Ottoman Empire after the inquisitions) tended to be seen as having a culture that was sophisticated and unassimilated but not ghettoized and isolated. Although by 1700 there were as many Ashkenazim as Sephardim in Britain⁴³, the first wave of significant Ashkenazi immigration did not occur until the mid-nineteenth century when Western European Jews who fled after involvement, or implication, in the European revolutions of 1848-9 were augmented by Russian and Polish Jews fleeing pogroms and persecution. This challenged the balance of power in the Anglo-Jewish community and is the backdrop against which Daniel Deronda was read. In contrast to the Sephardic image of dynastic wealth and learning, Ashkenazim from Eastern and Central Europe were seen as illiterate peasants (albeit with a tradition of spiritualism and piety) although Western European Ashkenazim tended to be seen as highly educated and politically radical.⁴⁴

In retrospect, the 1870s were a period of calm and consolidation for Jews in Britain prior to the upheaval caused by the mass migration of Russian Jews after the renewed pogroms of 1881-1904. When Daniel Deronda was written the Jewish community in Britain was relatively

⁴³ See Lipman, p.5.

⁴⁴ See Salbstein, and Cecil Roth, A History of the Jews in England, Oxford, 1964.

stable and increasingly well organized,⁴⁵ and enjoying increased legal rights despite continued anti-Semitism. But this does not mean that George Eliot's contemporary Jewish readers did not have pressing concerns about their status in Britain and the development of their own community. Although the turmoil leading up to the Aliens Act of 1905 has tended to take precedence in twentieth-century histories, the 1840s-60s were a period in which the older Jewish communities were already being challenged and changed by the influx of Ashkenazi migration. The resultant frictions were not just (as is sometimes understood) because of Ashkenazi or Sephardi cultural differences, but over political and religious affiliations too.

Daniel Deronda was reviewed by Jews in the Jewish and

⁴⁵ Jewish schools were established by the early nineteenth century and by 1850 the Board of Jewish Deputies had persuaded the government to grant aid to Jewish schools in keeping with other denominations; by 1859 the Jewish Board of Guardians was established to oversee relief work. Lipman pp.41-64. Note that Lipman sees the main period of change as running from the 1880s to 1905.

Gentile press and on the whole greeted with acclaim.⁴⁶ Whilst Jewish writers praised George Eliot's literary skill, they made no bones that their main interests lay in her sympathetic portrayal of Jews and the realism of Daniel Deronda's Jewish characters as well as the related issues of assimilation, anti-Semitism and the rise of

⁴⁶The Anglo Jewish press also began during the period of legal reform and mass immigration of the 1840s. The first to be published was the Reform-minded Voice of Jacob (1841-8) but the later Conservative Orthodox Jewish Chronicle (est. 1841) proved to be more long lasting. Yiddish and vernacular papers appeared throughout Europe, some lasting only a few issues, others continuing into the twentieth century. The Yiddish press did not take off in England until the 1870s and '80s brought a large Yiddish and bundist (Jewish Trade Union) readership over from Eastern Europe. See The Jewish Encyclopedia, New York and London, 1904.

Jewish nationalism.⁴⁷ Daniel Deronda was seen as an answer to the dearth of literary portraits of Judaism and an

⁴⁷In contrast to what, as we shall see, was an overwhelmingly positive response to Daniel Deronda in the organs of the Anglo-Jewish communities, the response from Jews in Germany and Eastern Europe was far more mixed. Daniel Deronda was published in German in 1876, almost simultaneously with its British publication, and sections of it translated into Russian, Lithuanian and Hebrew over the next decade. Indeed for many Jewish readers, the novel only existed in the form of a series of translated passages (notably Mordecai's speeches), elements of which were mobilized almost instantaneously by Zionists. Like their Gentile counterparts who concentrated only on the Christian half of the novel, reviews and debates in the European Jewish press focus mainly on the Jewish characters and the Zionist narrative. But unlike Britain, the response of Eastern European Jewish writers was far less a consensus: some responses were opposed to the Zionist slant; others, whilst supporting the ethic of a national heritage, stopped short of the Zionist dream of actually buying and settling land in Palestine; others criticized readers for concentrating only on the representation of Jews and advocated an artistic appreciation of the novel as a whole. George Eliot, it seems, whilst pleased to be informed of positive Zionist attitudes to the book, declined to be actively involved or lend her support to political campaigns of Zionists like Chaim Geudallia, with whom she had some correspondence. See Werses.

antidote to unbalanced stereotypes.⁴⁸ Joseph Jacobs writing in Macmillan's Magazine in 1877 asserts that

Hitherto the Jew in English fiction has fared unhappily: being always represented as a monstrosity, most frequently on the side of malevolence and greed... [or] still more exasperatingly on the side of impossible benevolence. What we want is truth, not exaggeration, and truth George Eliot has given us... The gallery of Jewish portraits contained in Daniel Deronda gives in a marvellously full and accurate way all the many sides of our complex national character.⁴⁹

Picciotto (in Gentleman's Magazine of November 1876) is keen to treat the book as a novel rather than a political tract, as which it was dismissed by critics, and thus validate George Eliot's representation of Jews as disinterested realism, rather than political posturing. He applauds Daniel as a realistic portrait - a Jew who is

⁴⁸ On the representation of Jews in English literature, the role of Jewish fiction, and the impact of fictional representations in general in resolving the tensions of identity for Jews in Britain see;

Montagu Frank Modder, The Jew in the Literature of England: to the end of the Nineteenth Century, Philadelphia, 1939, Michael Ragussis, 'Representation, Conversion and Literary Form: Harrington and the Novel of Jewish Identity', in Critical Inquiry, vol. 16, no. 1, Autumn 1986, Linda Gertlin Zatlín, 'High Tea and Matza Balls: Religion in the Victorian Jewish Novel', in Victorian Newsletter, Spring 1979.

⁴⁹ Joseph Jacobs, 'Mordecai: A Protest Against the Critics', in Macmillan's Magazine, June 1877, p.100.

'perceived to be neither a Sidonia nor a Fagin, neither a Shylock nor a Riah'.⁵⁰ Sidonia, the unrealistically wonderful Jewish hero of Disraeli's novels, is criticized as part of a distorted world view in which, 'the supremacy of the world belonged to the Jews, who reigned paramount everywhere by their wealth and intellect'.⁵¹

Jewish supporters of Daniel Deronda confront its critics by insisting that Jews and Judaism are a suitable subject for fiction, defending Daniel and Mordecai as convincing characters and insisting on Daniel as a suitable emblem for the race in the face of Gentile critics' dismissal of him as unrealistic, weak and unlikeable. Picciotto rescues Daniel from charges of sainthood, perfection and effeminacy ('ideal men, drawn by feminine hands') by stressing how George Eliot's consummate artistry allows Daniel to develop into a real man - flaws and all - thus saving both author and character from charges of feminine wish fulfilment. This transforms Daniel into a realistic young man and, most importantly, into a romantic but credible figurehead for Judaism.⁵² It is important to establish Daniel as a believable character, so that his 'conversion' cannot be invalidated as implausible. The issue of his conversion to Judaism, which so horrifies the English press, is to Jewish readers a central feature of

⁵⁰ James Picciotto, 'Deronda the Jew', in Gentleman's Magazine, November 1876, in Carroll, p.408.

⁵¹ Picciotto in Carroll.

⁵² On the difficulty of constructing Daniel and Gwendolen as credible characters in relation to the rest of George Eliot's work see, Baruch Hochman, 'Daniel Deronda: the Zionist Plot and the Problematic of George Eliot's Art', in Shalvi.

the book's validation of heredity and race identity and a welcome reversal of counter-conversion scenarios. Faced with internal disputes over assimilation and reform the Jewish writers place themselves firmly against assimilation and welcome Daniel Deronda's messianic schema of redemption, nationalism and above all religious and cultural vitality.

Both Picciotto and the anonymous reviewer in the Jewish Chronicle (15 December 1876) hold up anti-Semitism as the root of assimilationist tendencies. This even extends to the Princess Halm-Ebstein's denial of Judaism. Picciotto recognizes that as a rejecting and unloving mother she is 'scarcely likely to inspire much sympathy or attachment', but still presents her as an ultimately maternal woman whose motivation in denying her son his Jewish identity is to spare him the pain of persecution. The Princess' revolt against the institutions of orthodoxy that Daniel Deronda represents as being motivated by her own (gender-specific) desire for self-expression and fame

('Had I not a rightful claim to be something more than a mere daughter and mother? The voice and the genius matched the face. Whatever else was wrong, acknowledge that I had a right to be an artist, though my father's will was against it. My nature gave me a charter.' [728])

is transformed into a revolt against Judaism per se, based on a loose-principled, but sincere, motherly desire to protect her child from an anti-Semitic society. By presenting the determining factor as (misguided) innate feminine virtue, Picciotto minimizes the potential damage of a Jew's conscious denial of Judaism. This explains why he stresses that although Alchirisi deprives Daniel of maternal love she carefully arranges for the protection of his wealth - safeguarding the material conditions

necessary to produce her child as an English gentleman.

The Jewish Chronicle also ignores the Princess' campaign against the institutions of orthodoxy and reads her as a victim of anti-Semitism. She becomes a representation of

... the class of Jews who despair of the future because borne down not by legal persecution, which no longer exists, but by social ostracism; but by that prejudice which is the inheritance of past ages and handed down from generation to generation... by which the bigotry of the past has warped the Jewish character; and which like the scars of wounds continue to disfigure and impede movement long after the original wounds have been healed. They are therefore anxious to save their offspring the pangs of the struggle they had to endure themselves...⁵³

These Jews are chastized for sending their children to Christian schools at impressionable ages and thereby diminishing the strength of their Jewish identity. Assimilation is perceived as a threat to a religious, and, for some, increasingly national, identity as the Jewish people or race. Whether the identification is constructed as religious and/or historico-cultural or racial it is perceived to be under threat.

Jacobs, writing for a mixed audience in Macmillan's Magazine, provocatively extends the discussion of anti-Semitism to analyse the signs of contemporary prejudice in the reviews by Gentile critics. He agrees with the book's critics that the Jewish half fails 'in reaching and

⁵³Unattributed review, the Jewish Chronicle, 15 December 1876, in Holmstrom and Lerner, p.151.

exiting the interest and sympathy of the ordinary reader' because of the difficulty of accepting the new idea that 'Judaism stands on the same level as Christianity', and imagines the

jar most readers must have felt in the omission of any explanation of the easy transition of Deronda from the Christianity in which he was bred to the Judaism in which he had been born.⁵⁴

But he proceeds to demolish such objections by claiming that if critics experience difficulty in sympathizing is because their suppressed anti-Semitism has prompted them to deny their familiarity with the very concepts (of hereditary determinism and evolution) that would allow them to make sense of the book.

English critics, however, seem not to believe in hereditary influences: they have unanimously pronounced him [Mordecai] an impossibility. They require, it would appear, some more tangible proof of the existence among modern Jews of a character like Mordecai's than the a priori probability afforded by the consideration of the historic continuity of national character.⁵⁵

We do not remember a single critic who seemed to think that Mordecai's fate was in any way more pitiful than that of any other consumptive workman with mystic and impossible ideas. What reasons can be given for this defect of sympathy? In addition to the

⁵⁴ Jacobs, Macmillan's Magazine, p.103.

⁵⁵ Jacobs, Macmillan's Magazine, p.104.

before-mentioned assumption that Mordecai does not possess artistic reality, there has been the emotional obstruction to sympathy with a Jew, and the intellectual element of want of knowledge about modern Judaism. If Mordecai had been an English workman laying down his life for the foundation of some English International with Deronda for its Messiah Lassalle, he would have received more attention from the critics. But a Jew with views involving issues changing the future history of Humanity - 'impossible, vague, mystic.' Let us not be misunderstood: the past generation of Englishmen has been so generous to Jews that we should be ungrateful if we accused cultured Englishmen of the present day of being consciously repelled by the idea of a poor Jew being worthy of admiration. But fifteen centuries of hatred are not to be wiped out by any legislative enactment. No one can say that the fact of a man's being a Jew makes no more difference in other men's minds than if he were (say) a Wesleyan. There yet remains a deep unconscious undercurrent of prejudice against the Jew which conscientious Englishmen have often to fight against as part of that lower nature, a survival of the less perfect development of our ancestors, which impedes the Ascent of Man.⁵⁶

Jacobs uses current scientific theory to undercut the myopia of the Gentile critics, pointing out again and again how unconscious resistance to experiencing any affinity with Jews causes them to de-skill themselves as readers. This turns the evolutionary tables on the English who in other accounts see themselves as the ultimate in evolution. Jacobs pictures them hovering on the brink of

⁵⁶ Jacobs, Macmillan's Magazine, p.107 (original emphasis).

devolution in which repressed anti-Semitism threatens to cause an atavistic throwback to ancient, uncivilized prejudice and thus a national regression to a previous and inferior incarnation. Thus, where Gentile critics fulminate against the inappropriate incursion of science into literature in an attempt to protect a national culture from intruders, Jacobs reads their exclusion of modern science as a sign of the arrested growth and hence potential degeneration of the very culture they seek to protect.

Although the Jewish reviews we have come from a culturally hegemonic section of the Jewish population, they are nonetheless structured by the limitations that constrain the subordinate discourse of an ethnic minority whose exploration of identity is couched in terms of their representation in the dominant culture.⁵⁷ We have no evidence of how Daniel Deronda was received by less powerful sections of the Jewish community - although George Eliot and The Times note that Dr Herman Adler lectured on Daniel Deronda to 'the Jewish Working Men'.⁵⁸ Both George Eliot and Lewes emphasize that the Jews who wrote in praise of Daniel Deronda were 'learned'.

...we have both been much gratified at the fervent admiration of the Chief Rabbi and other learned Jews, and their astonishment that a Christian should know so much about them and enter so completely into their

⁵⁷ Despite the Jewish Chronicle's high circulation it could not be called a popular paper in terms of its class readership.

⁵⁸ George Eliot, letter to Charles Bray, 21 December 1876, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.320.

feelings and aspirations.⁵⁹

George Eliot and Jewish sources

And yet despite the evident approval of her Jewish readers, George Eliot's selection of Jewish material highlights the Orientalist structure of Daniel Deronda in that, for all that she addresses contemporary Jewish concerns, she presents a picture that is edited according to Judaism's role as other, not centre, of the text. There was considerable Jewish research available to George Eliot (she read nine Jewish historians in all) and many of their ideas are espoused by characters in Daniel Deronda. Given that the ethical and political differences within contemporary Jewish scholarship would have been clear to George Eliot, the way she uses these sources and decides which version of Judaism will be legitimated by the narrative, indicates her sympathies.⁶⁰ Basically, nineteenth-century Jewish historiography was divided into two camps - assimilationist and nationalistic - and George Eliot read several authors in each. Those most heavily

⁵⁹ George Henry Lewes to Elma Stuart, 12 October 1876, in Haight, Letters vol.6, p.294.

See later this chapter for an analysis of the significance of the 'learned' Jew.

⁶⁰ Ruth Raider, who is concerned with how the mix of literary styles in Daniel Deronda works against the credibility of its narrative, relates George Eliot's selection of Jewish material to the highly theatrical manner in which they are represented. Ruth Raider, "'The Flash of Fervour": Daniel Deronda', in Ian Gregor (ed), Reading the Victorian Novel: Detail into Form, London, 1980.

referenced in the novel are Zunz and Geiger (assimilationist) and Graetz and Munk (nationalist), who, despite their differences, were united against the picture of contemporary Judaism as culturally sterile popularized by Jost (with whom George Eliot was also familiar). Their books, written in the 1820-70s, must be understood, like all history writing, as bound up in the contemporary debates and dilemmas of their author's worlds.⁶¹ Although Marian Evans knew some Jews in Britain, most of the information in Daniel Deronda comes from written sources in Jewish history and philosophy. She also translated Spinoza's Ethics in 1854 and shared with Lewes an enthusiasm for the poetry of Heinrich Heine, whose positive attitude to being Jewish and emphasis on the common humanity of man sat well with their humanism and organicism.⁶² It was Heine who authored an epic poem on the medieval mystic and philosopher Jehuda ben Halevi

⁶¹ See William Baker, ch.7, for details, but briefly; of the assimilationists Zunz and Geiger, Zunz (whom Daniel is represented as reading in chapter 42) stresses poetry of lament and suffering, plays down nationalism and hopes that a knowledge of Jewish culture and intellectual traditions would increase Jewish and Christian understanding, while Geiger values diaspora culture's contribution to humanity as a whole. The nationalist writer Graetz presents Jewish history as a history of great individuals who act as transmitters of the faith and keep the religion alive. (It is from Graetz that George Eliot probably derived the Berenice story of Hans Meyrick's paintings.)

William Baker, George Eliot and Judaism, Salzburg, 1975.

⁶² George Eliot wrote four essays on Heine in 1855 and 1856 for the Saturday Review, the Westminster Review and two for the Leader. See Pinney.

(c.1075-c.1141), the philosopher and poet whose major work the Kusari is quoted directly in Daniel Deronda.⁶³

Although George Eliot's research on Jewish religion and history was based on her visit to Germany in 1854 and she drew on German rather than British Jewish scholarship,⁶⁴ her emphasis on the spiritual Sephardi period of the Spanish-Arabic Renaissance ignores one of the main developments in nineteenth-century German Judaism - the Jewish reform movements. Like the Anglo-Catholic Revival's interest in Eastern Churches as the living embodiment of ancient patristic religion rather than as a contemporary and developing faith, Judaism is represented as a living example of an ancient culture that owes more to developments in its past than its present. (Although Zionism was a contemporary concern it is conceptualized in relation to ancient and Renaissance traditions rather than to, for example, contemporary Socialism.) Thus British Jewish scholarship is ignored in favour of German Jewish scholarship, and research into the Spanish Renaissance is preferred to contemporary German Jewish developments in theology and liturgy. Although the existence of a Jewish Reform Movement is referenced in the novel, particularly in the scene in the Hand and Banner, the narrative and the plot endorse Mordecai's vision over all - not only his Zionism but his allegiance to Sephardi spiritualism and orthodox religion.

⁶³ See Baker, ch.3, also Gershom Scholem who disputes that Halevi was a mystic.

Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, London, 1955.

⁶⁴ For details of the German visit and George Eliot's research and sources see Baker, chs.3, 6 and 7.

This minimization of Reformism in British Jewry does not accord with its actual support at the time of writing. (And all reviewers understood the novel's setting to be the recent past). Although the Jewish Reform Movement, initiated by Moses Mendelssohn in the late eighteenth century, was never as popular in nineteenth-century Britain as it was in Germany and North America there was a discernible body of reform Jews in Britain. It is clear from their struggle to be included in the English state's liaison with Anglo-Jewry that they regarded themselves as an alternative to the Orthodox. (When the government wished to designate a statutory representative body of Anglo-Jewry in 1846 Reform Jews fought unsuccessfully against the Orthodox Board of Jewish Deputies⁶⁵ and campaigned, more successfully, in 1856 over amendments to the Marriage and Registration Acts - which offered to give legal recognition to London and provincial Reform synagogues).⁶⁶ The battle against the ascendancy of the Orthodox in the specific situation of state recognition indicates the fierce struggle for the definition and public image of Jews in Britain. Like the government, Daniel Deronda's validation of Orthodoxy as the valid form of Jewish expression and identity supports the claims of the Board of Deputies to define being Jewish in England. The increasingly hegemonic status of this organization (and the fears of criticizing one's own in public) presumably account for the lack of criticism about this in the reviews. Certainly, the Jewish Chronicle supported the Board of Deputies and Picciotto, whose father (Moses H.

⁶⁵The Board were also granted the sole power to certify Jewish places of worship.

⁶⁶Salbstein, pp.47-50.

Picciotto, 1806-79) was certainly no opponent.

Daniel Deronda's disapproval of Reform Judaism may seem an unlikely choice for the author who popularized Methodist Non-Conformist Christianity. Unlike the Methodists in Adam Bede who, though strange to the villagers, are found to be familiar (homely to the point of fulfilling a family role, like Dinah as surrogate daughter to Adam's grieving mother) the Jews in Daniel Deronda are often of a sort calculated to stay strange. By choosing to emphasize orthodox Judaism and marginalize Reform, Daniel Deronda bars access to precisely that section of the Jewish population that most vociferously advocated adaptation to English social mores. (Not that reformism was assimilationist per se.) For a writer who might be expected to support a more rationalist version of religion, and an author who demystified Methodism as England's religious other (though never the ultimate other of Roman Catholicism), Daniel Deronda's mystical Judaism is an anomaly.

The exclusion of reformist philosophy from the narrative's sympathy also closes off an avenue of Judaism that might allow more fulfilment to the female characters. Judaism is not represented as a liberatory force for women in the same way as it is for mankind and Jewish national interests: the only heroism open to the ayshet hiyel (woman of worth) is the quiet, determined, understated support of her menfolk for which Picciotto praises such 'daughters of Israel'. The thriving organic development of Judaism comes to a halt in relation to its women: it is the prison from which the Princess flees and the haven that Mirah craves, but it is never represented as changing in response to their actions. As usual in George Eliot's fiction it is the exceptional woman, Alchirisi, who most approaches fulfilment in her own terms. She is able to move out of the bounds of respectability (this time Jewish

Orthodox) because of her talent.

Although evidence shows that Halevi was a significant figure in nineteenth-century Jewish thought, we have to explore why Daniel Deronda gives his ideas such prominence when other equally influential writers are ignored.⁶⁷ Why does Daniel Deronda support a form of Jewish identification that is Sephardi, that is based on the highly esoteric traditions of the Kabbalah and that propounds a Jewish nationalism in both rational and spiritual terms, when we know that George Eliot also read Spinoza and the writers of German reformism? The answer lies, I think, in the book's mission to spread tolerance and understanding among the English readership and suggest a way forward for English society. Thus Mordecai's Kabbalistic vision not only offers a way to reconstruct society but conveniently relocates nineteenth-century Jews in a spiritually glowing medieval past, thereby bypassing any of the difficulties associated with contemporary Jews with all their flaws.

Apparently, Daniel Deronda's vision of a thriving medieval culture (in spite of the horrendous persecution of that period) was as attractive to representatives of Anglo-Jewry as it was appropriate and expedient for Daniel Deronda. Jewish reviewers do not reject Daniel Deronda's endorsement of mysticism, even though it was not a predominant feature of Anglo-Jewish life. The status accorded to Sephardi spiritualism had changed in the mid-century prior to the writing of Daniel Deronda from being disparaged as a defensive reaction to Spanish anti-Semitism to being hailed as a golden age of cultural achievement and spiritual integrity. Daniel Deronda

⁶⁷ Baker.

therefore, presents the Kabbalistic past, which for nineteenth-century Jews has come to function as a mythical prior moment, to Gentile readers as a contemporary phenomenon. It is hardly surprising that Jews were pleased - Daniel Deronda wraps nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewry in the glow of a long-gone halcyon past and offers a fantasized return to glory (manifestly Zionism, but latently medieval Sephardi diaspora) at the same time as it offers Gentiles a route to regenerate England.

Daniel Deronda places Daniel as a direct heir to learned Sephardi traditions in two ways: firstly as Mordecai's spiritual heir (a position he is seriously considering even before his Jewish origin is known to him) and secondly, through the dynastic heritage revealed to him by Kalonymos. His grandfather, Daniel Charisi is represented to him as a doctor who, 'mingled all sorts of learning...like our Arabic writers in the golden time' and as someone who

used to insist... that the strength and wealth of mankind depended on the balance of separateness and communication, and he was bitterly against our people losing themselves among the Gentiles.[791]

Daniel's Sephardi heritage is presented as one of learning and aristocracy. His association with the substitute patriarch Kalonymos links him to a dynasty of hofjuden, or court Jews.[790] If the Ashkenazim could lay claim to a tradition of, often impoverished, mystics and martyrs (as epitomized in the modern-day figure of Mordecai) the Sephardim gloried in a proud heritage as scholars, statesmen and nobility, with a corresponding stress on dynastic continuity and reputation, into which Daniel can be inserted. Picciotto's derision of that 'certain class' who change their names is in contrast to his emphatic praise of the Sephardim who 'have carefully preserved

through generations and ages their ancient family names, and are proud of them'.⁶⁸ It is thus significant for both Jewish and Gentile readers that Daniel is identified as a particular sort of Jew - Sephardi, learned and aristocratic.

Origins and heredity

Daniel's descent, upbringing and 'conversion' are central to the narrative's construction of both Englishness and Jewishness, for he is the linchpin of a new identity for both. George Eliot complains at those readers who

cut the book into scraps and talk of nothing in it but Gwendolen. I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there.⁶⁹

This is the other much quoted statement about Daniel Deronda and is taken to refer both to her organicist beliefs and the desire to make readers confront their anti-Semitism.⁷⁰ Sally Shuttleworth, who sees Daniel Deronda as a profoundly organicist novel, argues that for

⁶⁸ Picciotto, in Carroll, p.412.

⁶⁹ George Eliot to Barbara Bodichon, 2 October 1976, in Haight, Letters vol.6, p.290.

⁷⁰ H.M. Daleski, whilst acknowledging the failure of the novel to achieve this end (for both Jewish and Gentile readers) argues that George Eliot had attempted to unify the novel through the motif of the abandoned child, which recurs in both plot and imagery. H.M. Daleski, 'Owning and Disowning: The Unity of Daniel Deronda', in Shalvi.

George Eliot the Jews represent 'the virtues of organic growth without the attendant disadvantages of the corruption of the English social organism'.⁷¹ The Jewish 'philosophers' in the Hand and Banner frame their discussion of Jewish identity in evolutionary terms. Against arguments that post-emancipation Jews should assimilate and refrain from their 'superstitions and exclusiveness' or that 'as a race [the Jews] have no development in them' Mordecai retaliates that the faith that has survived centuries needs only to be revitalized in a new organic State.

Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality. Looking towards a land and a polity, our dispersed people in all the ends of the earth may share the dignity of a national life which has a voice among the peoples of the East and the West - which will plant the wisdom and skill of our race so that it may be, as of old, a medium of transmission and understanding.

The divine principle of our race is action, choice, resolved memory...choose our full heritage, claim the brotherhood of our nation and carry it into a new brotherhood with the nations of the Gentiles.[592-8]

But the Orientalist construction of Jews as the other (albeit positive), overrides the purity of George Eliot's organicist theory. The construction of Judaism as a healthy organicist alternative to stultifying Britain relies on an anachronistic image of medieval Jewry that is out of keeping with the relativism of its own organicist

⁷¹ Shuttleworth, p.184.

drive. George Eliot invokes Judaism as an unbroken continuum of practically unchanging spiritual development and, by giving narrative endorsement to Mordecai's transhistorical hopes for the transmigration⁷² of his soul into a union with Daniel's, suggests a romantic affiliation with the imagined past rather than any

⁷²The idea of transmission on an individual level is the foundation of Mordecai's belief that his soul will find a home with Daniel. Kabbalistic traditions (most notably from the post-expulsion Sephardi community in Safed) speak of the transmigration of souls in need of support into a union with a stronger 'mother' or host soul. This combination of metempsychosis and an ethos of exilic redemption acted powerfully on the Jewish imaginary, since the individual soul could be seen as an icon for the tragedy of a whole people. Scholem notes the 'startling rapidity' of the expansion of ideas of transmigration into Jewish popular belief and folklore after 1550.

Scholem, pp.250-83.

Beer sees the theory of transmigration as compatible with the new evolutionary time scale that sees beyond the life of a single generation into the aeons of evolutionary time. She points to Daniel Deronda's privileging of the future over the present and Mordecai's belief that his ideas will live on in Daniel after his death (and beyond the novel's time span).

Beer, Darwin, pp.182-190.

Shuttleworth, however, likens Mordecai's faith in his vision against all odds to the scientist's faith in a hypothesis until proven. Shuttleworth, p.180.

Al-Raheb in relation to Daniel Deronda's emphasis on the Kabbalah, argues that persecution, and not the mystical qualities of the Jews, was the greatest force behind the rise of Jewish nationalism. Hani al-Raheb, The Zionist Character in the English Novel, London, 1985, p.90.

heroicization of the average modern-day Jew. Despite organicist and evolutionary stress on the ever changing state of an organism, Judaism is represented as a curious mix of adaptation (physical/economic) and stasis (spiritual): successful adaptation has enabled it to survive centuries of persecution and landlessness, whilst a tenacious clinging to ancient traditions has maintained its spiritual life. Judaism is no longer seen by Daniel, and hence the reader, as

a sort of eccentric fossilised form... [but as] something still throbbing in human lives, still making for them the only conceivable vesture of the world.[411]

Daniel's gradual accession to his Judaic heritage acts as an antidote for his personal aimlessness (conceptualized as an unhealthy remoteness from the rest of the social organism) and as a model for the revitalization of English society. His Judaism provides a solution to the plot's requirement that he marry Mirah and continue Mordecai's mission, and the narrative's Bildungsroman of his inner life. (Gwendolen, who acts as the representative of English society with her vacuous introspection and lack of meaningful social interaction, is moved by Daniel towards a will to live that breaks her out of her narcissistic isolation but never approaches the state of moral plenitude achieved by Daniel.) The pre-Judaic Daniel labours under a

too reflective and diffusive sympathy [that] was in danger of paralysing in him... the conditions of moral force... [He] longed for... some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action and compress his wandering energy... the influence that would justify partiality, and making him what he longed to be yet

was unable to make himself - an organic part of social life, instead of roaming in it like a yearning disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation to render fellowship real.[413]

His need for a role in the social organism, a moral purpose and his quest for his origins are all structured a priori to be fulfilled by the eventual revelation of his Jewish birth. The shock of this conversion/transition can also make sense in relation to contemporary attitudes to comparative religion, evangelism and Empire. The horror and denial revealed in the press is produced by the spectre of the imperial English gentleman undergoing precisely the process of influence through example and eventual conversion that was being propounded in the colonies by Empire and Church. Missionary and popular colonial literature is awash with examples of natives converting not only to Christianity but also to a (lowlier) version/imitation of British life.⁷³ If a Briton is represented as 'going native' it is rarely applauded.⁷⁴ Note in Daniel Deronda that the Meyricks' instant response on meeting Mirah is to deplore her Jewishness and speculate on the possibility of converting her, and that Lady Mallinger on hearing Mirah's story 'was much interested in the poor girl, observing that there was a Society for the Conversion of the Jews, and it was to be hoped that Mirah would embrace Christianity.' [267]

⁷³ See Brian Street, The Savage in Literature: The Representation of 'Primitive' Society in English Fiction 1858-1920, London, 1975.

⁷⁴ On the pleasures of cultural cross-dressing see Ching-Liang Low.

This desire to convert Jews into Christians adumbrates the aversion to Christians converting into Jews that was to be articulated by Gentile critics. At the heart of the critics' outrage is a curious fantasy of cultural miscegenation, for Daniel - though raised a Christian - was born a Jew: his move to Judaism in adult life cannot technically be called a conversion, it is really a discovery. Although the responses to Daniel Deronda display all the tropes associated with discourses of racial purity, there is no mixed blood; even within the discourse's own fantastical definitions of pure blood and stable originary identities Daniel's biological and intellectual heritage comes directly from both his natural parents. He receives his Jewishness through the matrilineal line (the fact of being born of a Jewish mother) and from his father (a patriarchal endowment unwillingly passed on by the Princess) the traditions and heritage that sustain him, offering his soul the 'fixed local habitation' and 'definite line of action' that he craves. Yet, nevertheless, Daniel is never really a whole Jew, rather he will be a new hybrid Jew, as George Eliot fuses blood with sympathy-through-experience to advocate a heredity that is socially as well as biologically derived. This is the miscegenation or cross-breeding of the text, that it mixes the social with the biological and thus recognizes both origins - the English and the Jewish. Daniel is able, in terms of plot and narrative, to go forth as the new messiah who will symbolically revitalize English society and inspire Europe's Jews because he is both Jew and Gentile.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ See also Patrick Brantlinger, 'Nations and Novels: Disraeli, George Eliot, and Orientalism', in Victorian Studies, vol.35, no.3, Spring 1992.

'The effect of my education can never be done away with. The Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared can never die out of me,' said Deronda, with increasing tenacity of tone. 'But I consider it my duty - it is the impulse of my feeling - to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people, and if I can see any work to be done for them that I can give my soul and hand to, I shall choose to do it.'[724]

I will not say that I shall profess to believe exactly as my fathers have believed. Our fathers themselves changed the horizon of their belief and learned of other races.[792]

George Eliot has Kalonymos greet this last quotation with respect and benediction. The cultural interface becomes one of exchange, where the novel's vision of a Judaic enrichment of English life is offset by Daniel's stress on his allegiance to his English Christian heritage. The emphasis laid on Daniel's attachment to his English upbringing attempts to retain the reader's support and the narrative's credibility. But the threat of his conversion and the spectre of the trappings of English aristocratic civilization dropping from him, outweigh such structural concessions. The press response, from incredulity to fury, suggests the severity of such a disruption.

Shifting stereotypes: aliens at home/Britons abroad

The anger over Daniel's 'conversion' is typical of the English in Daniel Deronda who are marked by their refusal to accept their connections with other races and nations. It is this narrowmindedness, unlike the fertile cross-influences of the Jewish diaspora, that accounts for their

petrified culture. The English assumption of imperial power is challenged by Klesmer's attack on Mr. Bult, which highlights the disavowal (of relations with other nations and of imperial brutality) at the heart of England's autarky, and is criticized again in the colonial characterization of Grandcourt's tyrannous rule over Gwendolen.

He knew the force of his own words. If this white-handed man with the perpendicular profile had been sent to govern a difficult colony, he might have won reputation among his contemporaries. He had certain ability, would have understood that it was safer to exterminate than to cajole superseded proprietors, and would not have flinched from making things safe in that way. [655]

The sense of difference and superiority experienced in relation to the colonies underlies the perceived difference and distance between England and mainland Europe, and between the English and the Jews. Grandcourt's standoffishness in Genoa culminates in a theatrical display of such stereotypical English arrogance and eccentricity that it leads to death.

This handsome, fair skinned English couple manifesting the usual eccentricity of their nation, both of them proud, pale, and calm, without a smile on their faces, moving like creatures who were fulfilling a supernatural destiny - it was a thing to go out and see, a thing to paint.[745]

Whilst Daniel Deronda criticizes the ethos of imperialism on several occasions, it does not relate it to Mordecai's

plans in the East.⁷⁶ However, by choosing to represent Jews George Eliot unleashes the latent anti-Semitic aggressions that were otherwise re-directed at the more distant and more successfully 'othered' peoples of the colonies.⁷⁷ The assertion that Jews are not only similar enough to be a role model but also are already present in the English bosom was just too much - reviewers' hostility was in direct proportion to the psychological importance of keeping Jews separate from the self. The struggle between a liberal self-image and habits of stereotyping can be seen in the 'I'm not anti-Semitic but..' tone of many of the reviews, as well as in the insistence that the book is too foreign to understand and the displacement of their fury into diatribes about science's unsuitability for English literature.

The link between Jews and English imperialism is not only thematic. At times Jews were perceived to have very specific potential for England's imperial development: in 1840 Palmerston's government considered supporting Jewish colonization in Palestine as a solution to conflicting imperial interests in the region. His letter to the British ambassador in Constantinople suggested that the Sultan should be encouraged to

⁷⁶ See Edward W. Said, 'Zionism From the Standpoint of Its Victims', in Social Text, vol.1, 1978.

⁷⁷ Indeed, Horkheimer (in 1946) suggests that the apparent decrease in anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century is due to the substitution of colonized peoples as the recipient of the aggression previously (and subsequently) directed at the Jews. Max Horkheimer, 'Sociological Background of the Psychoanalytic Approach', in Ernst L. Simmel, Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease, New York, 1946.

[immediately] issue some formal edict or declaration granting and assuring to such Jews as may choose to fix themselves in any part of the Turkish Dominions... full security, and free liberty to go and come...[and that] very great benefit would accrue to the Turkish Government if any considerable number of opulent Jews could be persuaded to come and settle in the Ottoman Dominions, because their wealth would afford employment to the People, and their Intelligence would give an useful direction to Industry...⁷⁸

Palmerston's letter brings the Jews into play as an envoy group of Europeans to the Orient; they count as aliens at home and Britons abroad. But where Palmerston in 1840 depicts Jews as agents of British imperial interest, the Bulgarian Horror the year before Daniel Deronda was published (when Disraeli continued to support the Turks despite their massacre of Bulgarian Christians) led many to see Jewish links abroad as a threat to British interests.⁷⁹ The idea of Jews as a nation within a nation persistently stressed that their contacts and alliances abroad allowed them a loyalty to the British state that was, at best, tenuous. In this light, the efforts of Jewish institutions to prove their loyalty and their Englishness can be seen as a defence mechanism as well as a desire for national identity. Mordecai's vision of Israel as a buffer state in the East constructs Jews as

⁷⁸ Palmerston quoted in Baron, p.63.

⁷⁹ Anglo-Jewish links to Jews and Jewish interests in the Ottoman empire were held to have influenced Disraeli's decision. Holmes, pp.10-14.

civilized Westerners and able statesmen in much the same way as had Palmerston's communique to Constantinople thirty years earlier.

There is a store of wisdom among us to found a new Jewish polity, grand, simple, just, like the old - a republic where there is an equality of protection, an equality which shone like a star on the forehead of our ancient community, and gave it more than the brightness of Western freedom amid the despotisms of the East... And the world will gain as Israel gains. For there will be a community in the van of the East which carries the culture of every great nation in its bosom; there will be a land set for a halting of enmities, a neutral ground for the East as Belgium is for the West... Let our wise and wealthy show themselves heroes. They have the memories of the East and West, and they have the full vision of a... new Judea, poised between East and West - a covenant of reconciliation.[594-7]

Here, Jews as a race are constructed as a 'medium of transmission and understanding' that relies on their similarities to Europe rather than to the East (though they will benefit from their knowledge of both). Where the letter to Beecher Stowe links Jews and Orientals as recipients of English prejudice, Mordecai's speech clearly differentiates between Jews (here presented as ersatz Westerners) and Orientals (presented as despotic). In their construction as Western envoys, as stand-in European Christians, Jews come to occupy a space comparable to the category of the 'not quite not white' that Homi Bhabha

analyses in his work on colonial mimicry.⁸⁰ Compared to the ultimate other of 'despotic' Orientals the Jews become like Europeans offering in their democratic (republican) state a repeat or mimicking of England that bridges the gap between the Oriental/colonized and the English. The Jewish state will fulfil England's desire for a 'reformed, recognizable Other,' that is 'a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite'.⁸¹ Like the constitutions given to colonies, the 'almost but not quite', other of colonial mimicry is not meant to have any power. The constitution appears real, but is only pretend. Likewise, the new Jewish state can only mimic the power of the colonizers to whom it will owe its being it is not intended to have its own efficacy.

But the Jew, who does function as 'not quite/not white', is not the mimic man. The mimic man is a translator, a go-between, who looks native but thinks and feels English. Bhabha's mimic man only retains his place by filling an always partial subjectivity that relies on him, despite appearances, 'emphatically' not being English. Daniel Deronda on the other hand present Judaism, the new Danielic Judaism, as an authentic and complete identity. There is nothing lacking in Daniel's subjectivity - now all is made whole, he will be the best of both. The shifting significance of Jews in discourses of nation and race mirrors the ambivalence in colonial discourse necessary for the creation of mimicry. It is the Jew's symbolic not quite not whiteness that, like the fetish, testifies to the fear that it is its function to disavow.

⁸⁰ Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in October, vol. 28, Spring 1984.

⁸¹ Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', p.126.

The desire to place the Jewish state as a mimic state of nearly but not quite Europeanness in the East displays a disavowal of racial difference (between Orientals and Occidentals) that reveals, to borrow Bhabha's phrase, the 'phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body'⁸² at the heart of colonial and Orientalist discourse. Because Jews are in between Black and white, are in themselves the signifier of a problematically unspecifiable difference,⁸³ the Jewish state occupies a different space to the mimic states of puppet colonial principalities. The Jewish state has more chance of being more properly white than any other and is, therefore, both more useful and more dangerous.

George Eliot's letters and her essays construct another representation of Jews in which the differences between Jews and Gentiles are minimized (so extensively as to allow her a partial identification with Jews) and replaced with a stress on the differences between Jews. The correspondence divides Jews into good and bad Jews, with education as the differentiating sign of the special/good Jew.

[W]e have both been much gratified at the fervent

⁸² Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', p.133.

⁸³ Daniel fulfils the Jew's role as the perennial other, the outsider on the inside who is alien at the same time as he is included. See also Juliet Steyn on the role of Jewish artists as the internal alien in the construction of a Modernist paradigm at the Whitechapel 'Twentieth-Century Art' exhibition in 1914.

Juliet Steyn, 'Mods, Yids, and Foreigners', in Third Text, no. 15, Summer 1991.

admiration of the Chief Rabbi and other learned Jews, and their astonishment that a Christian should know so much about them and enter so completely into their feelings and aspirations.⁸⁴

Had not learned Jews and impassioned Jewesses written to her from Germany, Poland, France, as well as England and America, assuring her that she had really touched and set vibrating a deep chord, Mrs. Lewes would have been very despondent...⁸⁵

Whereas Silas Marner or Felix Holt invite us to empathize with the common people, it is impossible in the George Eliot letters to contemplate such an alliance of sympathy with the common Jew. That only the learned (and acculturated) Jew can break across the inbuilt barriers of prejudice is born out in George Eliot's recipe to David Kaufman for the perfect Jewish reader.

Certainly, if I had been asked to choose what should be written about my book and who should write it, I should have sketched... an article which must be written by a Jew who showed not merely sympathy with the best aspirations of his race, but a remarkable insight into the nature of art and the processes of the artistic mind. Believe me, I should not have cared to devour even ardent praise if it had not come from one who showed the discriminating sensibility,

⁸⁴ George Henry Lewes to Elma Stuart, 12 October 1876, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.294.

⁸⁵ George Henry Lewes to Edward Dowden, February 1877, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.336.

the perfect response to the artist's intention...⁸⁶

The emphasis on the specialness of the educated mind sets up a meritocracy in which the educated Jew can be a social equal and, by aligning George Eliot with good Jews, allows the disavowal of the bad Jew (the one who deserves to be the object of discrimination - like the unexceptional woman who does not deserve liberation). This permits revulsion from common Jews to stand unchallenged and shifts the disapproval of (some) Jews from an unacceptable basis in race discrimination to a more acceptable basis in class discrimination. George Eliot is content to pass as a Jew (although only the best sort - a learned Rabbi⁸⁷) but not as working class. The pleasures of going native, in this case a sort of intellectual cultural cross-dressing, are predicated on the security of knowing one is really English. So although George Eliot can be flattered to be accepted as a quasi-Jew, the letters construct her as emphatically non-Jewish, thereby allowing the fantasy of passing for native without the risk of being judged as one.

The emphasis on education is not only a euphemism for class (the educated working class appearing cultured enough to pass as middle class), but a specific category of social validation that had biographical significance

⁸⁶George Eliot to David Kaufman, 31 May 1877, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.379, original emphasis. According to Werses, George Eliot read Kaufman's book in its original German form and was instrumental in getting it translated and published in England. Werses, p.14.

⁸⁷George Henry Lewes to Blackwood, 1 December 1875, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.196.

for Marian Evans and Lewes. The repeated reference to learning and special intellectual qualities suggests the elevated currency of intellect for Marian Evans who, herself of modest class origin and choosing to occupy a marginal and transgressive social position as Lewes' common law wife, relied on her profession as an intellectual for finance and social status. George Eliot may risk diluting her religious and national identity in the affiliation with Jews, but the stress on education serves to maintain a sufficiently distinct class identification to underwrite these transitions. In the corpus of her work it is clear that whereas Christianity and nationality can be criticized, and even disowned, class remains stable. Once Marian Evans had given up her ardent Non-Conformist Christian belief her work betrays little difficulty in criticizing Christianity. Likewise, she is a frequent critic of the English national character, not only in the regressive degeneration seen in Daniel Deronda but particularly for its xenophobic small-mindedness.

To my feeling...this inability to find interest in any form of life that is not clad in the same coat-tails and flounces as our own lies very close to the worst kind of irreligion. The best that can be said of it is, that it is a sign of the intellectual narrowness - in plain English, the stupidity, which is still the average mark of our culture.⁸⁸

But despite her illuminating studies of class relations and the sympathy for the rural working class espoused in Adam Bede and Silas Marner, the letters and essays have no

⁸⁸ George Eliot to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 29 October 1876, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.302.

problem enunciating a genteel 'we'. The letters are peppered with requests for servants with good 'characters' and accounts of hiring 'help'. George Eliot's essay 'Servants' Logic' in the newly established Pall Mall Gazette of March 1865 dwells ironically, but with an air of longsuffering familiarity, on the problems of communication between mistress and servant, without ever challenging the terms of class difference.

...the fellow-mortals we most need to involve, and whose minds we find ourselves the most incapable of grasping, are our servants, and especially our cooks... When reasoning with servants we are likely to be thwarted by discovering that our axioms are not theirs... A mild yet firm authority which rigorously demands that certain things be done, without urging motives or entering into explanations, is both preferred by the servants themselves, and is the best means of educating them into any improvement of their methods and habits.⁸⁹

Distance and difference: the problems of reading Daniel Deronda

Despite her sympathy for the working class, George Eliot maintains a distance from them that avoids a compromise of

⁸⁹George Eliot, 'Servants' Logic', in Pall Mall Gazette, no.1, 17 March 1865, in Pinney, pp.392-5. On the (unpalatable) evidence of levels of prejudice in feminist heroines see Cora Kaplan, 'Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism', in Kaplan, Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism, London 1986, p.169.

her, or her readers', class position. The empathy between reader and working-class object in the earlier works relies on the successful implementation of a distance that is lacking in relation to the racialized Jewish object of Daniel Deronda. In Adam Bede and Silas Marner the spatial and temporal distance of narratives set in the long-gone but dimly remembered (and already mythologized) rural past allows a nostalgic and safely remote sense of affiliation which, like Felix Holt's careful differentiation between the good, worthy, working-class radical and the terrifying spectre of an uncontrolled mob, permits an association that will not compromise middle-class readers' sense of self.⁹⁰ But in Daniel Deronda, the closeness of the contemporary Jews threatens to close down the reassuring distance necessary for the empathy she apparently intends. If Daniel Deronda is to fulfil George Eliot's aim of reconciling Christians to their Jewish compatriots then a distance between the Christian reader and the Jewish object must be established. But this is where the book sets up its own self-destruction: it is impossible to bring Christian readers to a recognition of their 'debt' to Jews without collapsing the psychically essential distance between reader and textual other that is successfully maintained in the earlier novels.

If, as many critics suggest, Daniel Deronda is a failure it is because the success of the plot relies on Daniel being accepted as both Jewish and Christian and this, because it requires the loss of distance and a recognition of the Judaic roots of Christian culture, is more than many can stomach. The difficulty of accepting Daniel's hybridity disrupts the narrative and intervenes in the

⁹⁰On George Eliot's splitting of the working class, see Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950, Harmondsworth, 1963.

pleasure of reading to such an extent that it prompts a denial - of Daniel, the novel and the existence of anti-Semitism. Like Freud's description of the uncanny - the shock of seeing the familiar (heimlich) in an alien guise (unheimlich) - Jews contain elements of the familiar in a form that is strange.⁹¹ Daniel, who is recognizable as the ultimate English gentleman (or is he? Is he not always strangely looking for something more - to the bewilderment of Sir Hugo?) is now a Jew, something alien, and the horror of this explains the denial we see in the reviews.

The reason the uncanny is familiar is because it is elements of the self that have been repressed and displaced. According to Otto Fenichel, it is the projections of anti-Semitism that render the Jew uncanny.⁹² The revulsion readers feel for Daniel as a Jew is based on the unpleasantness of being confronted with repressed elements of their own unconscious (typically, for Fenichel, displaced hatred of authority figures and the corresponding fear of retaliation by the object of prejudice). The expectations readers have of George Eliot novels, where the development of individual characters often stands in for a larger generic (individual and social) development, leaves them particularly open to empathize and identify with the lead characters and so explains the level of shock when characters like Daniel turn out to be Jewish. The misrecognition, as self blurs with other, is cumulative as Jews, who previously were

⁹¹ Sigmund Freud 'The Uncanny', in James Strachey (trans and ed), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, London, 1955, vol.17.

⁹² Otto Fenichel, 'Elements of a Psychoanalytic Theory of Anti-Semitism', in Simmel, pp.20-22.

alien, are revealed to be the 'man next door' and seem increasingly to populate the novel.

For Freud, displacement in the uncanny is normally of negative qualities. Daniel Deronda turns this on its head by presenting Jews as the uncanny, but claiming that they represent favourable qualities of Englishness (faith, vision, integrity, organic purpose) that have been lost from the English self. The Jew in Daniel Deronda becomes the sum total of the repressed elements of the English psyche: the personification of qualities that are debased and forgotten in Englishness - qualities that were present in another form in the pre/early industrial rural society of Adam Bede and Silas Marner - but sadly lacking by the time of Daniel Deronda. The uncanniness of the Jews is that they represent a displaced version of Englishness itself, embodying the positive elements of the English character that were, it is implied, sacrificed in the construction of the industrial and imperial subject. Thus, Klesmer, a sensitive, Jewish, musician outside the industrial order, retains elements of humanity and creativity that are lacking in the party man Mr. Bult.

This is the tension that unhinges the narrative of Daniel Deronda - that the Jews are simultaneously produced as a projection of the self and something alien to the self. It thus naturalizes the very dynamic it tries to challenge. This distance between reader and textual other threatens to collapse and bring with it a clash with repressed elements of the self that, whether negatively or positively valued, can only result in trauma. Therefore the divisions established between good Jews and bad Jews are essential to rearticulate the distinctions between self and other, like and not like, that are challenged by the closeness (uncanniness) of the Jews' dangerously partial otherness. The assumptions about class difference in the letters underpin its role as substitute in Daniel

Deronda for the race bias it endeavours to challenge. Although the narrative is critical of the Arrowpoints' snobbery in finding Klesmer too foreign to be their heir, ruthlessly depicts the real heir Grandcourt as the ultimate in degeneration,[77] and ostensibly counteracts prejudice about 'vulgar' Jews, it nonetheless requires that Daniel himself be revealed as coming from noble and learned stock. In order for Daniel to function as the representative of the Judaism that is going to inspire and invigorate Britain his class status must be secured, by the attribution to him of those elements of Jewish stereotypes that might find most favour with its British Gentile audience: he is represented as educated, learned, independently wealthy, sensitive to the plight of others and, importantly, from an impeccable dynastic heritage. In addition to this he is healthily athletic (all that rowing) which in combination with his qualities of sportsmanship and platonic loyal friendship presents a form of Judaism that pre-empts the advent of muscular Judaism in the 1890s. (This alternative to the cerebral ghetto Jew propounded an Anglicized upper-class model of masculinity following the ideals of muscular

Christianity.)⁹³

The problem with reclaiming the more acceptable elements of any racial stereotype is that it will also invoke its other components. George Eliot herself, in a review of Beecher Stowe's Dred in Westminster Review, is adamant that unrealistically positive images can be counterproductive.⁹⁴ To what end, then, does Daniel Deronda represent negative qualities in Jews? The component parts of the Jewish stereotype are present in Daniel Deronda's Jewish characters but not always brought

⁹³ See Richard Voetz, '...A Good Jew and a good Englishman: The Jewish Lads' Brigade', in Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 23, no. 1, January 1988, pp.119-129.

This model of Jewish masculinity is also an antecedent of the of the pioneering Zionist figure (strong, noble, physical). Said and al-Raheb point out how the Jewish stereotype was split by the new Zionist image into the good (strong, noble and modern) Zionist Jew and the bad (infirm, dirty) Ghetto Jew. But whereas for al-Raheb the non-Zionist stereotype retains its Jewishness, Said argues that the negative qualities (laziness, sexual permissiveness and dirtiness) of the pre-Zionist anti-Semitic stereotype shed by the modern Zionist Jew come to be displaced on to the other Semite other, the Arab.

al-Raheb and Said, Orientalism, p.286.

⁹⁴ Beecher Stowe is criticized for overly idealizing the Negroes whose cause, George Eliot thinks, will not be helped by presenting them as unrealistically noble since she worries that such a depiction might lend credence to the pro-slavery claims that slavery is a civilizing influence. George Eliot, 'Three Novels', in Westminster Review, October 1856 in Pinney, pp.323-34.

to the fore. Avarice, for example, recurs in different ways: whereas Kalonymnos, who is presented as all things noble, is not denigrated on account of his occupation as a banker, Cohen's occupation as a pawnbroker definitely drags him down. He is described as distastefully 'fat' and 'glistening', not to mention money grubbing, and although the family are represented as common but not unlikeable (they are after all invited to the wedding), it is clear that they are mercenary. Their charity in housing Mordecai is tempered by his use value:

he's an encumbrance; but he brings a blessing down, and he teaches the boy. Besides he does the repairing at the watches and jewellery.[452]

In a pro-Jewish novel popular anti-Semitic financial conspiracy theories (reactivated by the crashes of the 1860s) are not advocated - but cannot be excised.⁹⁵ Mrs. Davilow explains their reversal of fortune to her daughter thus, blaming the loss on one person alone, who bears a distinctly Jewish-sounding name.

You know nothing about business and will not

⁹⁵ See Steve Cohen's analysis in That's Funny You Don't Look Anti-Semitic, Leeds, 1984, chs. 2 and 4. See also Baker, pp.124-30.

See also Ellen Rosenman's analysis of how Daniel Deronda, as a narrative of financial collapse, writes in the perspective of the women who suffered as the result of male speculation that was normally excluded from economic analysis. The Jewish element is not touched on however.

Ellen Rosenman, 'The House and the Home: Money, Women and the Family in the Bankers' Magazine and Daniel Deronda', in Women's Studies, vol. 17, nos. 3-4, 1990.

understand it; but Grapnell & Co. have failed for a million and we are totally ruined... we must resign ourselves to God's will. But it is hard to resign oneself to Mr. Lassman's wickedness, which they say was the cause of the failure.[43-4]

George Eliot's comments about Dred are borne out by Lewes and Kaufman who both feel that her treatment of negative qualities in Jews is fundamental to the book's task of making Jews real.

...[Daniel Deronda] will rouse all the Jews of Europe to a fervor of admiration for the great artist who can - without disguising the ludicrous and ugly aspects - so marvellously present the ideal side of that strange life.⁹⁶

I am far from imagining that a thinker and poetess of George Eliot's calibre would ever have attempted to represent Judaism as the only source of high-mindedness, and Jews as the sole and hereditary possessors of all morality... The specifically Jewish virtues may go along with the specifically Jewish vices, concerning which hatred has invented so many fables.⁹⁷

Kaufman is clear that it is the anti-Semitic interpretation of vice in Jews that is of interest.

⁹⁶George Henry Lewes to Blackwood, 1 December 1875 in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.196.

⁹⁷David Kaufman, George Eliot and Judaism: An Attempt to Appreciate Daniel Deronda, London, 1877, pp.55-56.

While all the world is satisfied that avarice is congenital among the Jews, and their special inheritance rather than the inheritance of all mankind, George Eliot expresses a very different opinion. She says of Ezra Cohen: 'He was not clad in the sublime pathos of the martyr, and his taste for money getting seemed to be favoured with that success which has been the most exasperating difference in the greed of the Jews during all ages of their dispersion.' To be greedy, then, is human; it is successful greed that seems to be peculiarly Jewish.⁹⁸

Despite her criticisms of Beecher Stowe, George Eliot does heroicize the Jews in Daniel Deronda: like Fedalma in The Spanish Gypsy, Daniel also beatifies himself by giving up a privileged place in his foster culture to join his

⁹⁸Kaufman, pp.76-7 (original emphasis).

hereditary people in their oppression.⁹⁹ But although Fedalma gives up all for her old ties and Daniel at least does not reject his English Christianness, critics writing on Daniel Deronda suggest that The Spanish Gypsy was easier to stomach. One might imagine that this could be explained by the obvious difference of affiliation - English critics are less likely to be personally affronted by the renunciation of a Catholic Spanish identity than by the dilution of a cherished Englishness - but the initial responses to The Spanish Gypsy were startlingly similar to those that met Daniel Deronda. The unwelcome elements (of hereditary determinism and scientific theory) made it a bad poem and a failed romance just as they were held to blight Daniel Deronda. We see the same sense of personal outrage displayed in response to Fedalma's rejection of

⁹⁹Beer (George Eliot p.215) suggests that George Eliot uses the discrimination facing Jews and Gypsies as a metaphor for the oppression of Victorian women, in much the same way as it became customary to use slavery as a metaphor in the struggle for female rights. Although George Eliot represents neither ethnicity as a source of satisfaction for women, the quest for self-determination is analogous to the emergence of a self-directing female subject that Spivak has characterized as the project of the Victorian proto-feminist novel. But whereas Spivak, in the case of Jane Eyre can argue that the construction of Bertha as the racial other is essential to Jane's progress to civil individualization, in Daniel Deronda it the racialized other of the Jews whose development stands as a rubric for the national development of the English. Further, there is another level of differentiation in that the amended, manageable otherness of some Jews (Daniel, Mirah, Mordecai) relies on the continued alienation of others (Lapidoth, the Cohens).
Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts'.

her affective ties as we do to Daniel's amendment of his.

[I]n our opinion, the cultured Fedalma should live, and not the untutored Zincala who pays the mere barbarian's homage to authority...The doctrine of authority preached in this fashion is nothing higher than the unmeaning loyalty of a savage.¹⁰⁰

We are inclined to maintain that when the conduct of a hero of romance is such that to expound it you must have recourse to physiological phenomena, your romance is a failure [like] [p]oetry that is unintelligible till it is subjected to scientific demonstration...

Fedalma is a woman of gypsy blood: but at three years old she is taken into the home of a great lady and reared as a Christian gentlewoman: as a Spanish gentlewoman. So secluded is she from the coarser accidents of life that she is described as having been 'nurtured as rare flowers are...'

Does anybody believe that being born of a certain family of human creatures is sufficient to account for the apparition of a high bred young woman - always delicately nurtured - dancing in the midst of a mob on the highway?¹⁰¹

How is it that by the time Daniel Deronda was published eight years later, The Spanish Gypsy seemed a more acceptable treatment of the theme? To some extent the

¹⁰⁰ Unattributed review, Westminster Review, July 1868, p.189.

¹⁰¹ Pall Mall Gazette, 27 June 1868, p.12.

intersection of romance and the exotic helps to remove the scene from the reader's everyday, unlike the contemporaneity of Daniel Deronda which more overtly threatens the status quo. But the strength of feeling evinced about The Spanish Gypsy in 1868 pre-figures rather than dilutes the shock of 1876 when the terms of comparison are brought closer to home.

...moreover, she is a Christian gentlewoman (do not let us forget that)... And in an hour, in her bridal dress, with that kiss by which she pledged herself still on her lips, she is persuaded by a gypsy father whom she has never before known in her life to go away with him for ever. And why? because Zarca's political aspirations demand her help, after he has sacked the city in which his daughter has been cherished so tenderly, and has slaughtered or overthrown those who have ministered to her all her days. Is that quite a credible thing?..[only if we assume] that in gypsy blood there is so much loyalty that the moment it is appealed to it overcomes every other feeling, and levels the edifice of a whole life's education and circumstance.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Daniel, like all Gentiles who have not knowingly met a Jew, knows the stereotype ('he had lately been thinking of vulgar Jews with a sort of personal alarm'[414]) and it is this familiar stereotypical knowledge about Jews that Daniel Deronda seeks to make strange. The alternative (stereo)type that emerges is a preferred image of Jews

¹⁰²Pall Mall Gazette, 27 June 1868, p.12.

that disarms their dangerous generic strangeness by making them individually knowable to the reader (we like Daniel overcome our initial prejudice) but that also retains the sense of the Jews' difference crucial to their function as the text's other. Whereas George Eliot often uses emblematic characters to great success the Jewish characters in Daniel Deronda, particularly Daniel, cannot but remain strange: unlike, for example, Eppie in Silas Marner who (despite her obvious symbolic role) can be realistically familiar because she evokes what readers recognize as their collective past. The difficulty of associating with the persistent alienness of the (now) heimlich Jews disallows, for George Eliot's nineteenth-century Gentile readers, a comfortable reading position and is what prompts the (critics') splitting of the text. Daniel Deronda insists that the Jews are both familiar and alien (their strangeness remains even as their familiarity and acceptability increases) but attempts to reverse the value of their difference: what was once the sign of their inferiority is now the mark of their superiority, the signifier of the new life. But it does not work: for Daniel Deronda's contemporary readers the psychological risks of giving up the separation between self and projected other are too high; it is clear in the critical response that, like the inviolable division between George Eliot and her working-class servants, the very alienness that makes the Jew work as the text's other, makes it practically impossible for Gentile readers - those to whom the book was ostensibly addressed - to achieve an empathetic positionality. It becomes a case of either splitting the text or splitting the self.

Anita Levy has argued that the project of British domestic fiction was, broadly, to naturalize the middle-class nucleated family as a unit based on affective ties rather than on aristocratic demands of dynasty and the mystification of blood, and thus to help develop both

middle-class hegemony and the form of social reproduction required by industrial capitalism.¹⁰³ Whilst, in some ways, this is indeed the project of Daniel Deronda - where Gwendolen's hopeless marriage to preserve a decaying aristocratic title is contrasted to Mirah's affective relationship to Daniel (Catherine Arrowpoint's determination to marry the man of her choice rather than perpetuate the family's chosen alliance, reinforcing the theme) - the Jewishness of the romantic hero (or heroes, if we count Klesmer) sets it up to fail, in that the modal middle-class English audience cannot accept an affective tie with a subject so stubbornly Jewish. For Jewish readers, on the other hand, this combination of blood and affection is perfect, since the Jewish identity relies on a blood lineage. Paradoxically, the novel is able to provide for Jewish readers the confirmatory narrative arguably expected from fiction (via a combination of future fulfilment and a naturalized past) that it cannot provide for the Gentile audience.

For George Eliot, whose social and subjective position allows only a partial identification with the version of Christian Englishness defended by her detractors, an identification with the vilified Jewish other is possible because the emphasis on Daniel's learnedness and dynastic heritage maintains the class identifications which, as we have seen, were the crucial underpinnings of her oppositional gender positioning. Thus, like the

¹⁰³ Levy also emphasizes the role of nineteenth-century anthropology which, by institutionalizing kinship patterns as a determining area of study and representing blood alliances as primitive and affective endogamy as civilized, provided an 'appearance' of legitimacy and permanency to the middle-class family as the apotheosis of social development. Levy, ch.3.

paradigmatic woman traveller who, as a representative of white colonial power, could accede to an ersatz male authority once displaced into the bush, George Eliot is able, through the transmogrification of class into learning, to enunciate an alternative (masculine) English identity. That this appears to offer little to the female characters in the novel is in keeping with her usual refusal to provide redemptive narratives of gender. Unlike Henriette Browne's work, which appears to offer an improved range of viewing positions for Western women spectators, the textual spaces of Daniel Deronda are shifted through the interposition of a class opposition. The emphasis on class (sublimated as learning) that secures Daniel as a viable identificatory position for George Eliot is never enough for her critics: although, as I have argued, her representation of Daniel and the other Jews from whom he is differentiated, is reliant on an imperial and Orientalist notion of difference, her departures from, or challenges to, the value systems of these discourses is too much for her Gentile critics; they cannot accept the newly modelled re-presented Jew (who is anyway too much of a woman's fantasy of the ideal man) as one who lurks uncannily in their midst without facing a terrifying de-stabilization of the sovereign subject and the imperial privileges and pleasures on which it depends.

How is it, then, that a representation of Jews that is arguably determined by an Orientalist construction and valorization of them as other, nonetheless appeared to offer them something they craved? George Eliot received

testimonies...from Jews and Jewesses in Germany , France, America and England - especially the learned Rabbis who seem to think "Deronda" will instruct, elevate, and expand the minds of Jews no less than modify the feelings of 'Christians' towards the

In contrast to Daniel Deronda's picture of Judaism as a vibrant, spiritually rich entity with a path into the future, the contemporary Jewish press construct Judaism as being under threat from anti-Semitism, assimilation and reformism. George Eliot's representation of Judaism, whilst more positive and less overtly anti-Semitic than others, is still one that fantasizes the state of contemporary Judaism in relation to the concerns of dominant English society. Her desire to challenge prejudiced stereotypes of 'Jews [and] all oriental peoples',¹⁰⁵ whilst no doubt of potential benefit to Jews as the victims of persecution, is really addressed to the Gentile reader. Jewish reviewers were not unaware of the problems in Daniel Deronda, for example its glossing over of the Ashkenazi/Sephardi divide, but generally declined

¹⁰⁴George Henry Lewes to Elma Stuart, 23 December 1876, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, p.322.

¹⁰⁵George Eliot to Harriet Beecher Stowe, in Haight, Letters, vol.6, pp.301-2.

to criticize the resultant homogeneity.¹⁰⁶

It is clear that for Jews there is a productivity to Daniel's hybridity which counterweighs the inherent problems of an Orientalist representation. Robert Young argues that although Bhabha solves the problem of Said's unified and monolithically repressive colonial subject by pointing to the splits and anxieties that undercut the colonizer's subjectivity (and hence offer the possibility of resistance) the same theory must imply similar splits in the subjectivity of the colonized with the attendant problems for the formation of an effective resistance.¹⁰⁷ But this need not be a problem since resistance, like power, need not be monolithic to be effective. In Daniel Deronda, the split nature of Daniel's identity works for Jewish readers because it speaks to the split subjectivity of the represented within Orientalism, rather than attempting to be a discrete totality that can only be

¹⁰⁶ Picciotto, who notes that George Eliot 'does not enter into the nice distinctions' between Ashkenazi and Sephardi, asserts that although
to the present day these sections of the Hebrew race form in England and in most other countries distinct communities... practically all differences between them have ceased to exist.

But later we read that the Sephardim are the 'sangre azul' of the nation and that, unlike their Askenazi bethren, 'Israelites of Spanish and Portuguese descent are above [the] weakness' of anglicizing their names to avoid anti-Semitism. Clearly the social and political implications of differences within the Jewish community live on. Picciotto, in Carroll, p.45.

¹⁰⁷ Young, ch.8.

couched in the terms of distinct otherness. The vision of Daniel as the ultimate Jew, cast in the mould of all that is best about Englishness and Judaism is acceptable because it is in keeping with the nascent project to be like the Christian English and maintains the separateness of Mordecai. The reality of anti-Semitism is in keeping with, not opposed to, the fantasy of resolving both parts of the immigrant experience by being both Jew and English. Kaufman is clear that Daniel's acculturation is essential for the success of plot and narrative in Daniel Deronda.

Hence it is peculiarly characteristic that he [Mordecai] cannot conceive the fulfiller of his ideas and the hero of his race as other than a noble, prosperous, and cultivated man of the world.¹⁰⁸

Daniel's enhanced separateness (being the best of Jew and Gentile) is why Daniel Deronda appeals to Jewish readers. The hook of Daniel Deronda is that whilst one could argue that it opportunistically deploys Jews (and uses contemporary debates about Jewish national identity) to suggest how English society might be revitalized, it also offers Jews a chance to see themselves represented in a positive light and validates a national identity they crave. The crumbs from the Orientalist table have a hamishe [Yiddish: home-made] flavour. Daniel Deronda relies on its realistic appropriation of Jewish concerns in the hope that for Gentile readers this will make

¹⁰⁸ Kaufman, p.69.

strange the old stereotype and familiarize a new one,¹⁰⁹ but in this it largely fails, creating a disturbance where it seeks to produce harmony. But it does succeed in contributing to a modified self-identity for Jews. They seek a unified and unifying identity in order to combat assimilation but cannot deny the power of the divisions within the Jewish population. Daniel Deronda offers Jews the fantasy of a unified identity - even if the proffered identity only partially accords with their own agenda.

¹⁰⁹Al-Raheb also sees Daniel Deronda as a novel which restores a past rather than offering a future, but reads this as a sign of George Eliot's growing conservatism and not an effect of Orientalism. He maintains that George Eliot's criticisms of the English are 'not engendered through Deronda, nor are the Jews presented as exemplary models for the English to follow. Al-Raheb, p.80.

CONCLUSION

This thesis started with a gap and a guess. When I started my research I did not know of any women Orientalist artists, but I was convinced they had to exist. Everything I knew about women artists and feminist art history told me that they must exist, or if they did not, that the reasons for their exclusion would in themselves be revealing of the interaction between definitions of gender and nation in the second half of the nineteenth century. The absence of an emphasis on images by women - rather than of women - in cultural histories of empire could not be the whole story. In literary studies and art history feminist research had taught me that women were involved in most areas of cultural production, albeit written out of history or sidelined into low prestige areas of activity, so I wanted to find the missing women artists and writers who had represented the racialized other so necessary to the workings of empire. As I started this research, developments in my related fields of art history, literary studies, history and women's studies, were beginning to acknowledge and explore the active contribution made by white nineteenth-century European women (and feminists) to the aims and objectives of empire. This was for white scholars a painful but necessary journey, allowing us to begin to grapple with the multiple contradictions of a female imperial subjectivity. For Black and other scholars of colour, it marked the entry, or re-entry, of the colonial and postcolonial repressed - speaking to the iniquities of the colonial past and the continued epistemological violences of ideologies of racial and sexual difference. So I also saw one of my jobs as being to tackle the persistent marginalization of issues of race and empire in women's studies and feminist literary and art historical studies.

The thesis has pursued two main goals: to draw attention to (the variety of) women's involvement in visual Orientalism and to resituate George Eliot criticism in relation to imperial discourse. To this end, it has unearthed not one, but several, nineteenth-century women Orientalist artists, and contributed a new analysis of the structural workings of ideologies of racialized difference in the most overtly 'anti-racist' of George Eliot's novels. In specific terms this allows us to see that, as I had hoped, women were involved in Orientalist cultural production and that, as I had feared, the dynamics of imperial discourse could not but enter and structure their work - even if their relationship to some racialized ideologies was self-consciously oppositional. It is precisely this contradiction between the opportunities to enunciate an 'against the grain' vision of imperialism thrown up by the gendered ambiguities of women's positioning within imperial discourse and the ability of dominant ideological formations to (partially but never totally) recoup their transgressive representations that has been my focus: to examine how the combination of restraints and opportunities provided by particular classed and gendered imperial and cultural positionings were played out in the production and reception of women's work.

This thesis has shifted the debate in a number of ways in its related fields. In relation to post-Saidian analyses of Orientalism, it has participated in the new understanding of the multiplicity and instability of Orientalism's enunciative modalities; for women's studies it has added a historicized and, I hope, useful, example of what the deconstruction of the category 'woman' can enable us to do. Thus, in both cases, the journey I have taken in the 'discovery' of Henriette Browne and the interpretation of Browne's and George Eliot's work is indicative of a re-conceptualization of the object of

study.

Initially, the excavation of Browne in itself offered a new paradigm for studies of Orientalism. The mere existence of woman's representation of the harem's forbidden spaces had the potential to destabilize the masculinist fixity of Said's version of the Orientalist's classificatory gaze. Simply situating a female gaze on the Orient undercut the characteristics of homogeneity, intentionality and omnipotence for which Said had been criticized, and which had been reproduced in some of the first art historical deployments of his work. At first, this single gaze seemed to be the whole story, and it was indeed quite a shift; instead of the sexual excess, depravity and luxury associated with the representation of the harem, Browne painted fully-dressed women and their children engaged in what looked like a polite afternoon visit. My research into Browne, herself very little known today, revealed her to be a respectable woman of the haute bourgeoisie, with a reputation for detailed study from life and an oeuvre of perfectly proper domestic genre painting and portraiture. Searching for reviews of her work revealed that the classed and gendered specificities of her social position were - despite the use of a thinly veiled pseudonym - regularly detected in her paintings. Browne's Orientalist art thus appeared to present us with a neat new paradigm in which the power relations of empire were filtered through the class and gendered identities produced by and for the woman artist to effect a view of the Orient that could not but challenge some of its key sexualized myths. Put crudely, Browne was a respectable lady artist with a reputation for accurate depiction of well-observed detail who, once she ventured into the Orient, had no choice but paint the harem as a respectable space - since no lady could be present in one that was not. Recourse to women's written accounts of the harem backed up her pictures; there was indeed a representation

of an experience of the segregated female spaces of the Orient that directly counteracted the dominant masculinist fantasy.

But, as the research went on, I kept unearthing clues to other female versions of the Orient and the harem. Scraps of information, faded catalogue illustrations, elusive references in reviews, all pointed to a previously unimaginable number of women's images that covered an equally unimaginable range.¹ All of a sudden the apparently neat counter-discourse that I had set up around Browne began to fragment and fray at the edges. Yes, there were indeed substantial numbers of women artists engaged in Orientalist representation, but they did not all follow the same route as the eminently respectable Henriette Browne. At the very moment that I proved my hypothesis of women's involvement in visual Orientalism the stability of its constituent categories began to crumble. The alternative female Orientalism indicated by the likes of Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann, for example, undercut the determining imprint of gender that appeared to operate so smoothly in the case of Browne. The female Orientalist gaze became a far more fluid and contested entity than I had previously suspected.

Orientalism emerged as a diverse field in which meanings were always and already contested and shifting. It is clear from the reviews of Browne's work that whilst her images provided a challenge to dominant Orientalist conventions they were in themselves already understood to be one among a number of competing alternative discourses.

¹Sara Mills writes of experiencing a similar surprise at how much women's travel writing she found in a field that had previously been characterized as male.

The heterogeneity of nineteenth-century Orientalist discourse simultaneously produced spaces from and in which women could represent whilst developing strategies to contain, appropriate or minimize the threat of their alternative voices. The hegemonic knowledges about the East that Said sees as fundamental to imperialism are still there - but the emphasis now is on the fluidity essential to the maintenance of that hegemony. Orientalism is never static, but perpetually fending off or responding to challenges from within and without: challenges that are not simply an unavoidable burden, but that are themselves productive of dominant and alternative definitions of not only race or Orientalism, but also gender, class and nation. Nineteenth-century responses to women's Orientalism are therefore, as I have shown, symptomatic of the wider schisms within imperial subjectivity and illustrative of a discursive flexibility that allows for the necessary production of multiple subject positions. Thus, we are able to consider women's relationship to Orientalism and imperialism as a series of identifications that did not have to be either simply supportive or simply oppositional, but that could be partial, fragmented and contradictory.

The position that I arrived at through the analysis of women's visual culture illuminated the complexities of female positionings within the intersecting discourses that made up Orientalism and gave me another way to approach women's written culture: by re-introducing Orientalism into the analysis of Daniel Deronda I was able to reveal how the book's self-consciously anti-discriminatory project is itself reliant on an Orientalist construction of the Jewish other in order to facilitate its 'pro-Jewish' stance and its author's partial identification with the ethnic subject matter of her novel. This approach is in keeping with developments in feminist literary criticism that can acknowledge the

discursive constraints on women's writing without needing to save or condemn them. As well contributing to the nascent focus on race in the feminist literary field, this work re-situates Eliot (who now occupies a senior position in the feminist literary canon) as a figure whose gendered authorial voice and social identities could not but be shaped by the classed imperial power relations of her day. The conditions of possibility for the pursuance of her literary career in general, and the construction of the positive Jewish stereotype of Daniel Deronda in particular, rely on interconnecting ideologies of racial, class and sexual difference. Thus, it becomes impossible to separate out the achievements of a subject like George Eliot from the figure of the 'other woman' so clearly demarcated by Spivak and Levy.

It is not just that George Eliot's fiction simply contributes to the overwhelming displacement of other women into the structural monolith of the other woman - but that, by focusing on the otherness of the Jews (and by dividing the Jewish other into a series of knowable characteristics) - she effectively proliferates and re-inscribes the otherness she seeks to make familiar. The positive portrayal of Daniel reproduces, in a differently gendered but structurally identical setting, the projection and displacement that Levy describes: 'precisely that talking about other women, historically, has been the source of their displacement'.² In George Eliot's case, the tragedy of this prevalent dynamic is that Daniel Deronda cannot but displace 'those members of a different race, class and sexuality in a negative relation to the rational, middle-class, white Englishman'

²Levy, p.5.

even as it tries to talk about them.³ George Eliot's fiction and her construction of a professional and tolerant self cannot operate without the strategic displacement of a range of (feminized) others at the same time as she tries to combat those very forms of projection and denial.

Where Levy argues that it is impossible to talk about other women without re-enacting their displacement, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick worries that the topos of otherness has become naturalized, institutionalized even, within liberal analysis.⁴ Whilst she agrees that a theory of othering is often necessary initially to make the oppressed visible, she raises two questions about its efficacy: first, that it tends to ignore the variability of forms of othering, and, secondly that it cannot explain how those that Orientalism, for example, creates as other, 'those whom it figures simply as relegated objects', engage and act, even where this agency also figures in their own relegation.⁵ When we look at European women's representation of and participation in processes of othering, we are looking at representations made by agents who are themselves partially othered (as the symbolic feminized other of men in Europe) and whose actions may add to both the relegation of themselves and other women. There is work to be done (and, indeed, being done) on the forms of representation enunciated by the Orientalized others of

³Levy, p.5.

⁴Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Nationalisms and Sexualities in the Age of Wilde', in Parker et al, Nationalisms and Sexualities, London, 1992.

⁵Sedgwick, pp.238-9 (original emphasis).

nineteenth-century imperialism and the contradictory positionalities they construct.⁶ It remains to be seen whether the field can move beyond a theory of othering as Sedgwick demands; I hope that I have helped by destabilizing the dominant terms of that critical formation.

What I see as my particular contribution to this debate is the repositioning of Orientalism as a discourse that, riding above the specificities of imperialism and colonialism, but reliant on the forms and relations they produce, functioned through contradiction rather than despite it and so had room within it for a diversity of women's voices; for the articulation of knowledges and subjectivities outside of its dominant orders that were in

⁶ See for example;

Patricia Rooke, 'Slavery, Social Death and Imperialism: The Formation of a Christian Black Elite in the West Indies 1800-45', in Mangan (ed), Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak', Hazel Carby, Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist, New York, 1987, Ziggi Alexander and Audrey Dewjee (eds), The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands, London, 1984, Mervat Hatem, 'Through Each Other's Eyes: The Impact on the Colonial Encounter of the Images of Egyptian, Levantine-Egyptian and European Women, 1861-1920', in Chaudhuri and Stobel (eds), Sylvia M. Jacobs, 'Give a Thought to Africa: Black Women Missionaries in Southern Africa', in Chaudhuri and Stobel. Particular attention has been paid to the changing role and signification of the veil in North Africa. See for example, Winifred Woodhull, 'Unveiling Algeria', in Genders, no.10, Spring 1991, Lama Abu Odeh, 'Post-Colonial Feminism and the Veil: Thinking the Difference', in Feminist Review, no.43, Spring 1993.

themselves constitutive of both liberatory and relegatory positionings. The myriad ways in which middle and upper-class European women positioned themselves in relation to the various possible others of Orientalist discourse indicate both the flexibility of imperial power and the contingency of resistance. That resistance is in various ways contingent does not mean that it is not, or cannot be, effective. Rather, this line of inquiry, by focusing on the critical meanings circulated about the texts, underlines the tensions inherent in the Orientalist project in order to reveal the always conflicted nature of the identifications that the criticism seeks to produce for the text, its author and its audience.

This also has implications for new historicist⁷ discussion about the role of representation and the problematic of the category 'woman' in women's studies, contributing a demonstration of history writing that is able to find the missing female object at the same time as it disaggregates the category 'woman'. This does not lead us into some nihilistic deconstructionist void, nor to the impossibility of a gendered analysis: instead, it offers us the opportunity to understand the necessarily conflicted nature of our subjects without having to reduce all to a single determinant. This means that we can research how women as women - since their gendered socialization affected the conditions of production, reception and circulation of their work - contributed to the culture of imperialism and to the imperial project

⁷One cannot ignore the category new historicism, but I must admit I agree with Judith Newton's attitude that it seems to be a posh new title for what some of 'us' (feminist, socialist, cultural materialist) historians and critics had been doing all along. Newton, 'History as Usual?'

itself. Given the anti-theoretical stance of some advocates of women's history, who cannot tolerate losing the object of their study (and identification) to critical theories, this approach allows us to retain a version of the object (as indeed we must retain versions of identification) without having to resort to essentialism or a naive belief in the purity of the archive. I hope to have shown that, whilst all archives are imprinted with the ideological matrix of their production, we can find within those patternings the gaps and stresses that, like the near impossibility of the woman Orientalist, reveal the constituent tensions of the discourse. We do not lose the woman in history, therefore, but are able to locate her as a nodal point at the intersection of a variety of different determining discourses. (A subject who is overdetermined but not without agency: the variety of women's responses to the exercise of representing the Orientalized other cannot be explained without some allowance for the vagaries of personality and individual psychology.⁸) This, to my mind, opens up rather than closes down the possibilities for feminist research, providing a way to think about gender and empire that can allow for the different modes of female creativity signified by Browne or Jerichau-Baumann or George Eliot and for the structural significance of all of them for the formation of identities in the distinct but relational fields of culture, empire, gender, domesticity and nationality.

⁸On the importance for art history of making a 'pragmatic' allowance for a version of the social even outside, or at the edges of, discourse, in so far as it structures women's experience of themselves and their agency as women see Janet Wolff, 'Excess and Inhibition: Interdisciplinarity in the Study of Art', in Grossberg et al.

This thesis, like all history writing, is driven by the needs of its present: in this case by my need to develop an understanding of the relationship between gender and empire that can contribute to the understanding of late twentieth-century postcolonial power relations and move beyond the assumed polarities of identity politics. I wanted to be able to think beyond simple binary analyses of culpability and innocence towards an understanding of how we are variously interpellated into the types of complex positionings that can lead to racism in the name of feminism, or homophobia in the name of Black nationalism, or anti-intellectualism in the name of class.⁹ The very anxiety associated with using such a universalistic 'we' is a sign, not of the tyranny of so-called Political Correctness, but of the efficacy of those postcolonial structural differences that make it almost impossible for anyone to articulate the realities of their experience without simultaneously grappling for the words to describe the forms of othering that it produces. Unless we can find a way to acknowledge the myriad and convoluted balance of subjective and social payments instituted by imperialism, to talk of the possibility of opposition without requiring proof of absolute purity or absolute oppression, and without resorting to blaming and silencing, we will not be able effectively to shift the discursive paradigms that structure our existence. It is to this debate too that I hope my thesis has contributed.

⁹For recent explorations of the implications of such oppositional constructions see Andrew Parker et al.

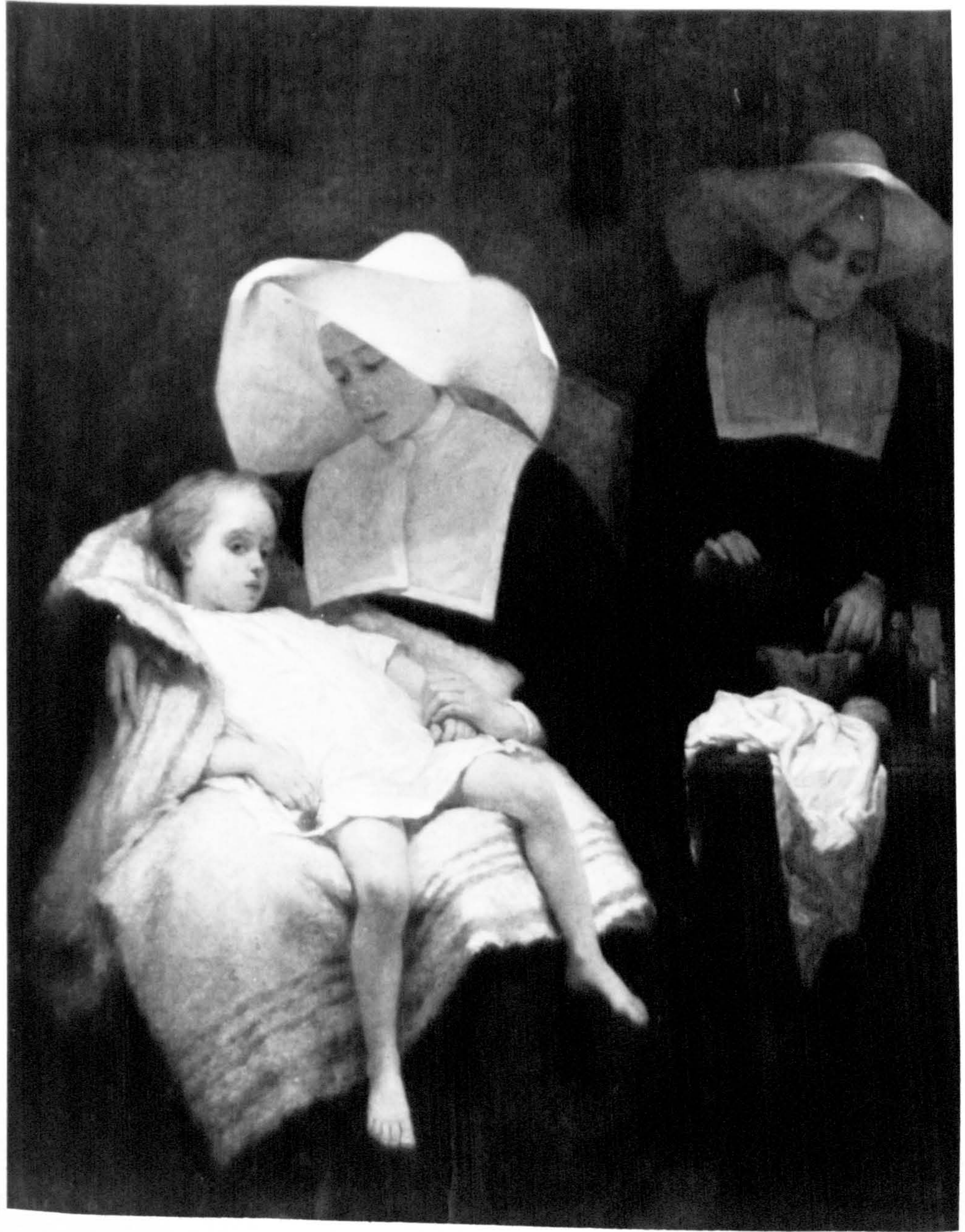


Plate 1





Plate 3

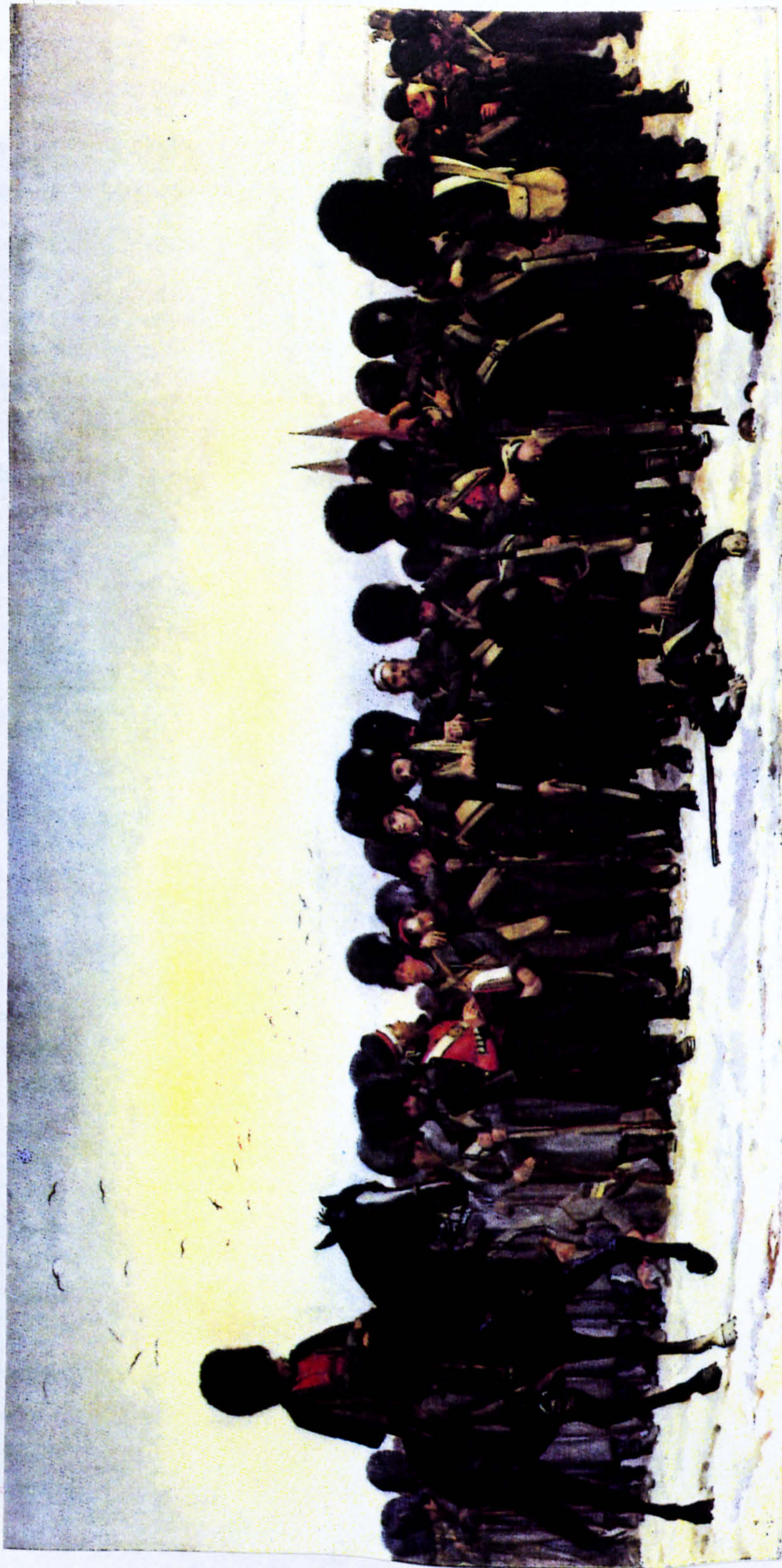


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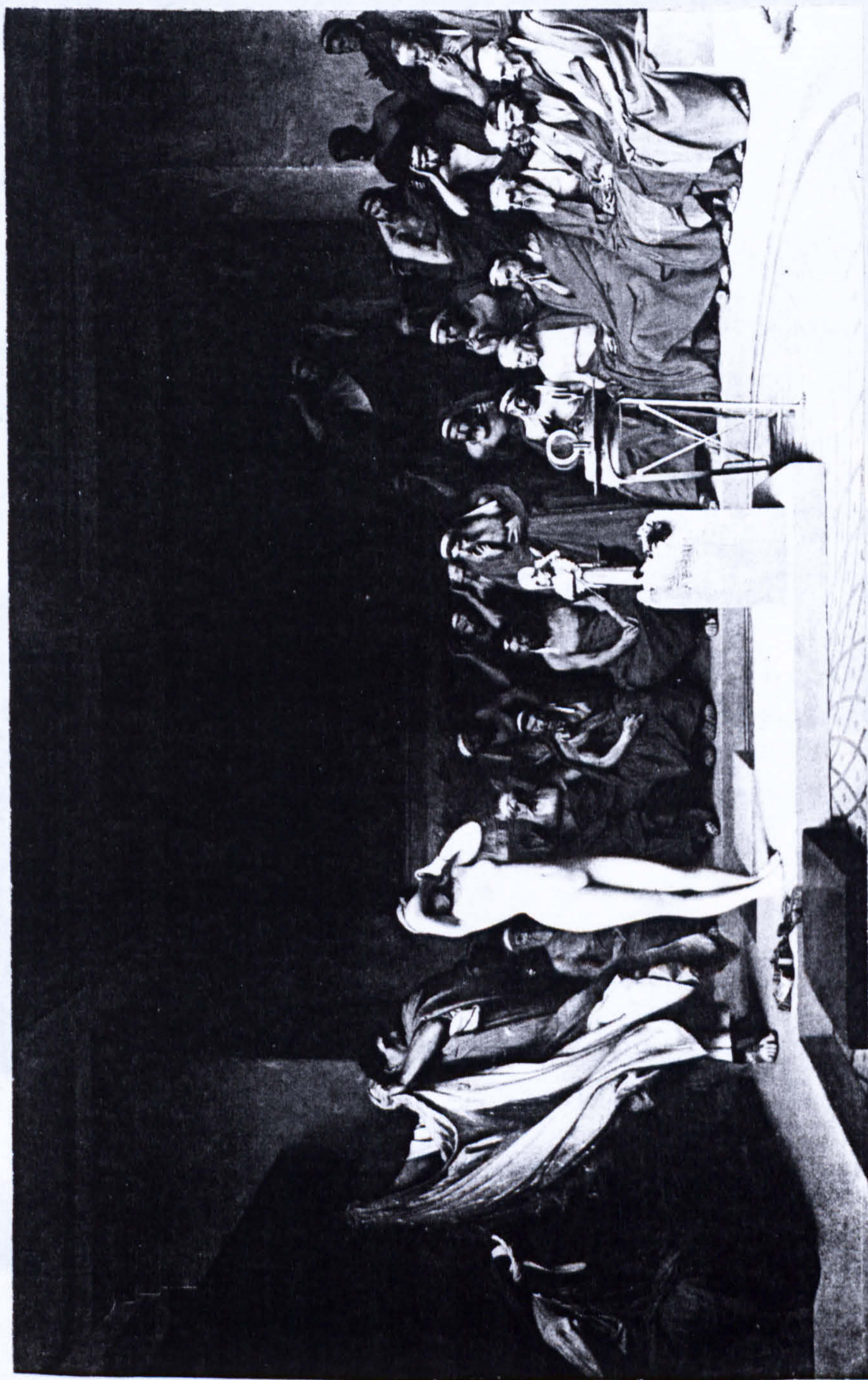


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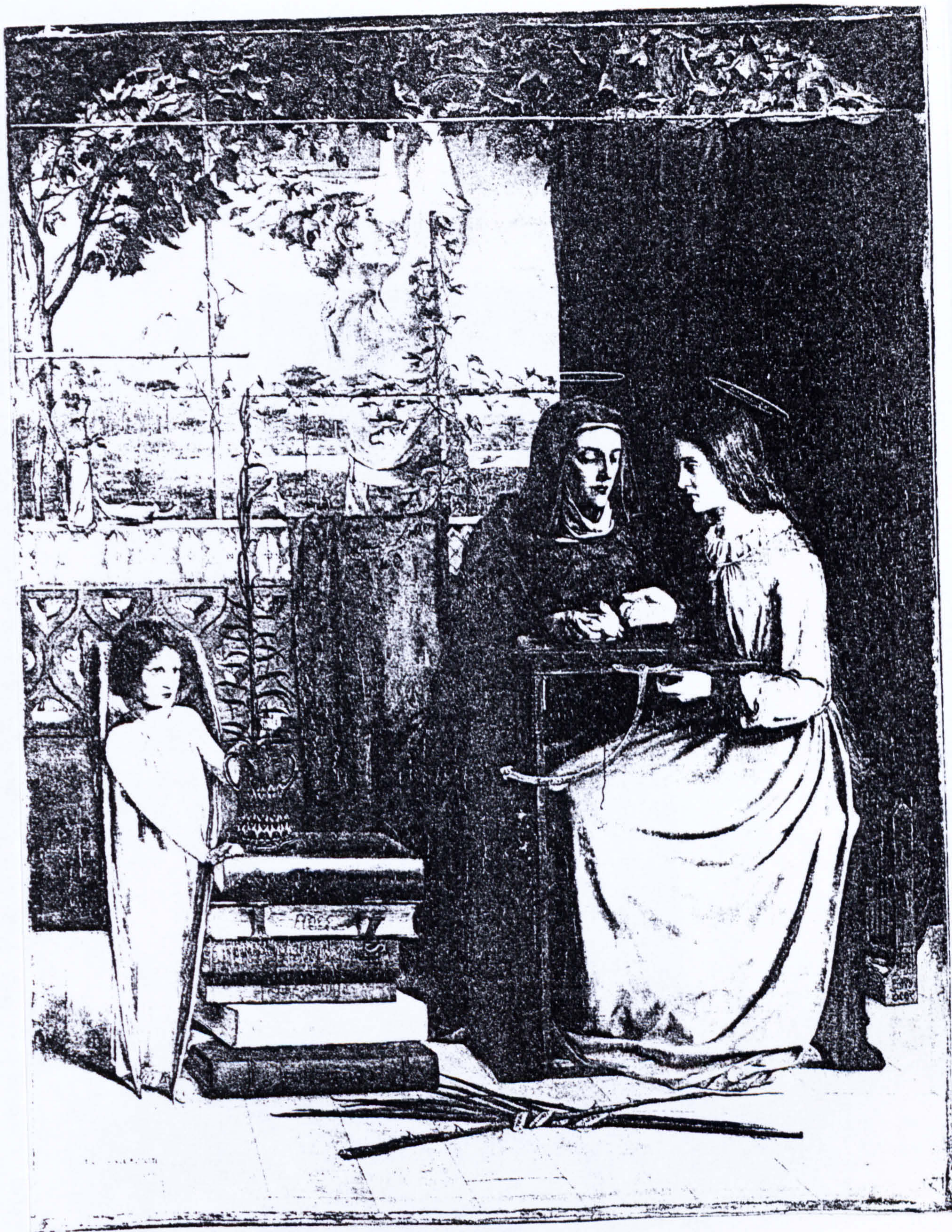


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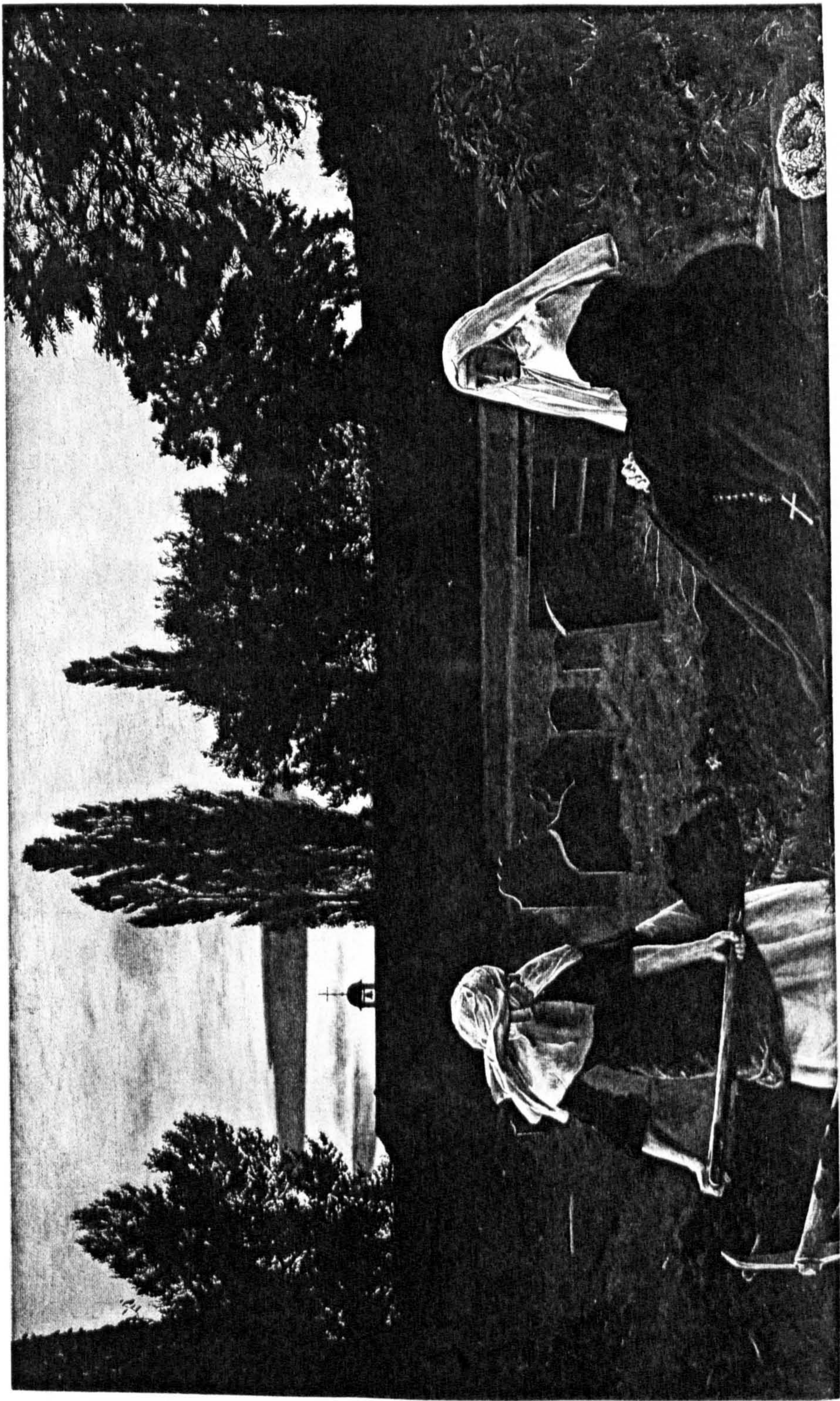


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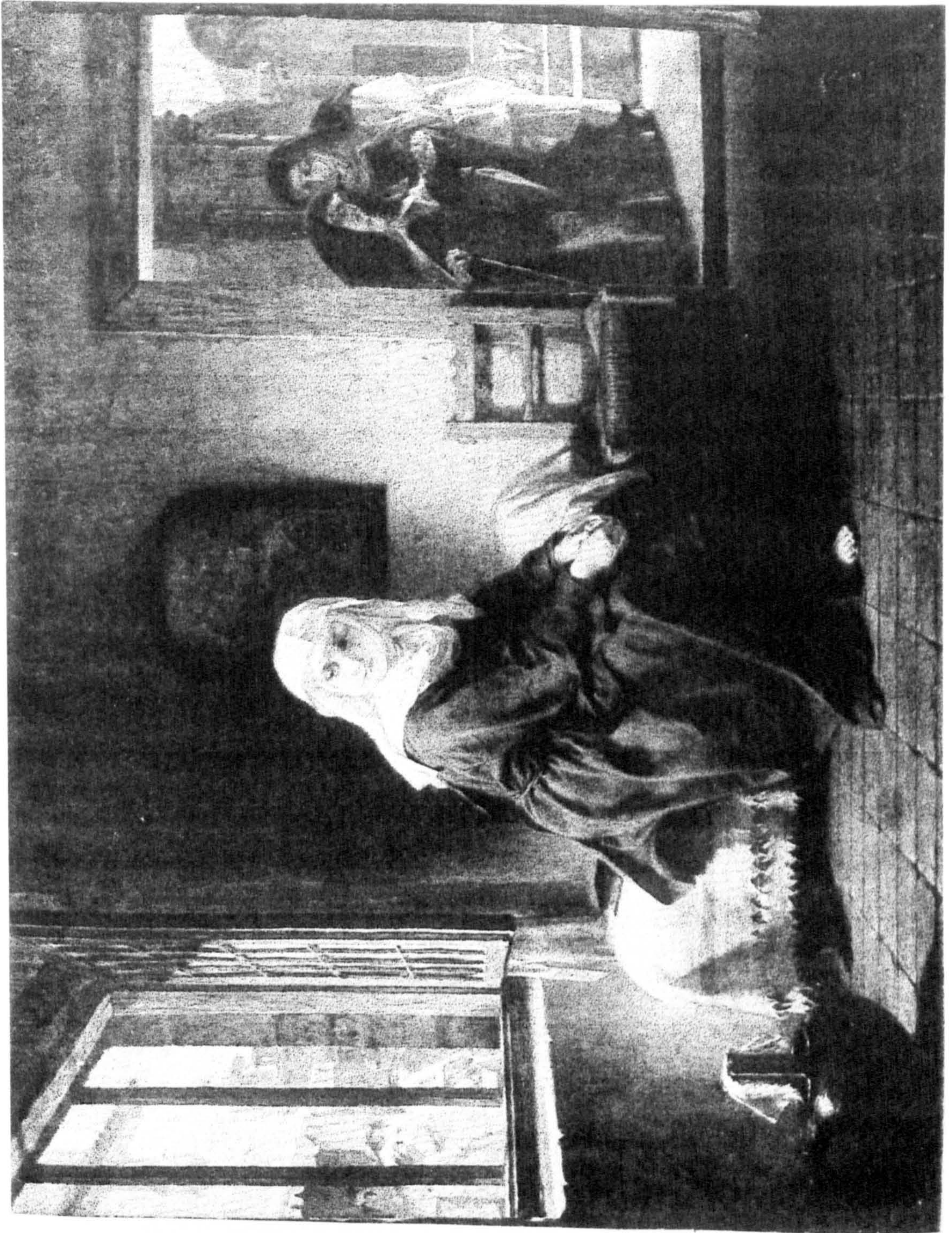


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Plate 14



Plate 15



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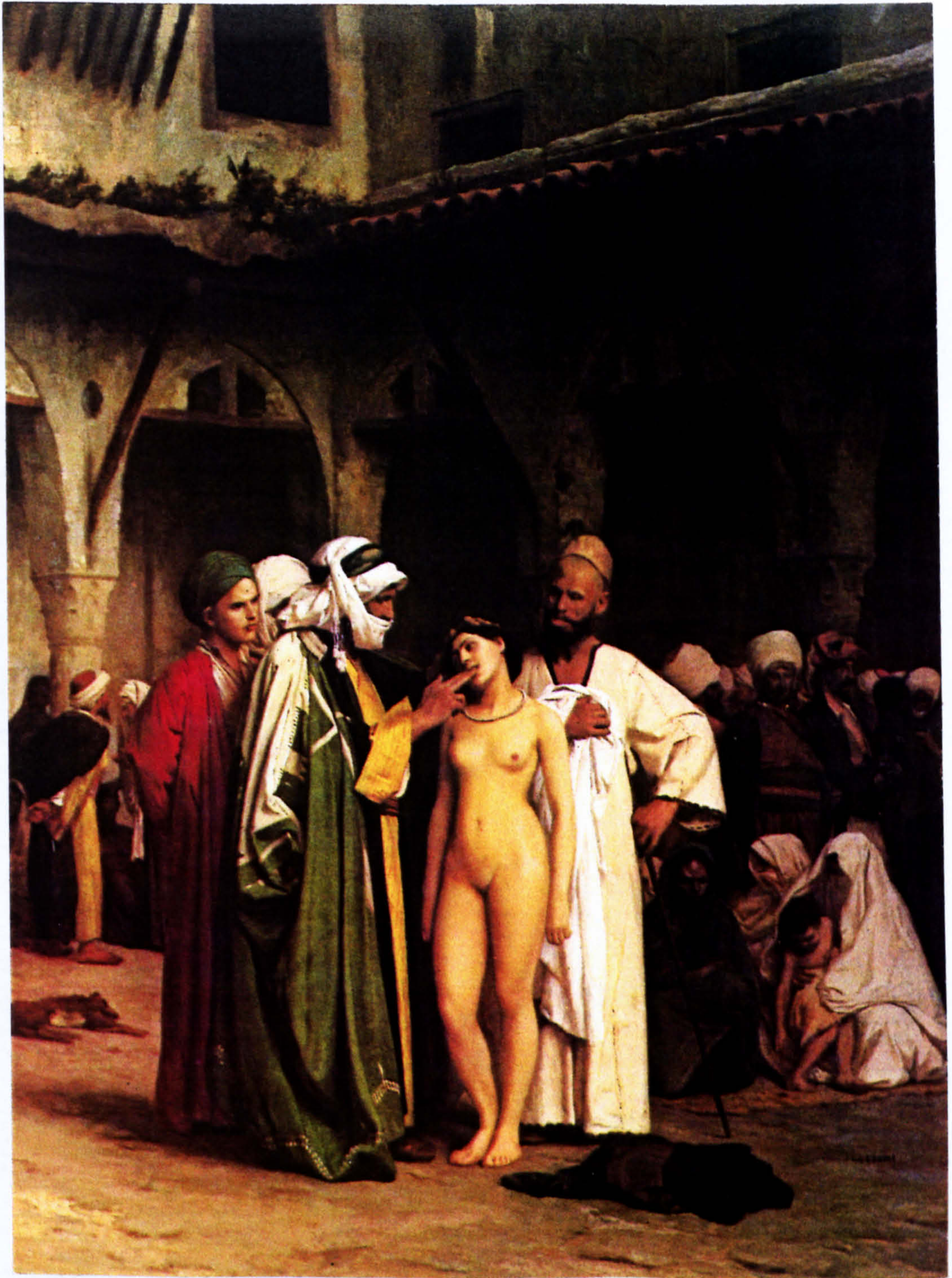


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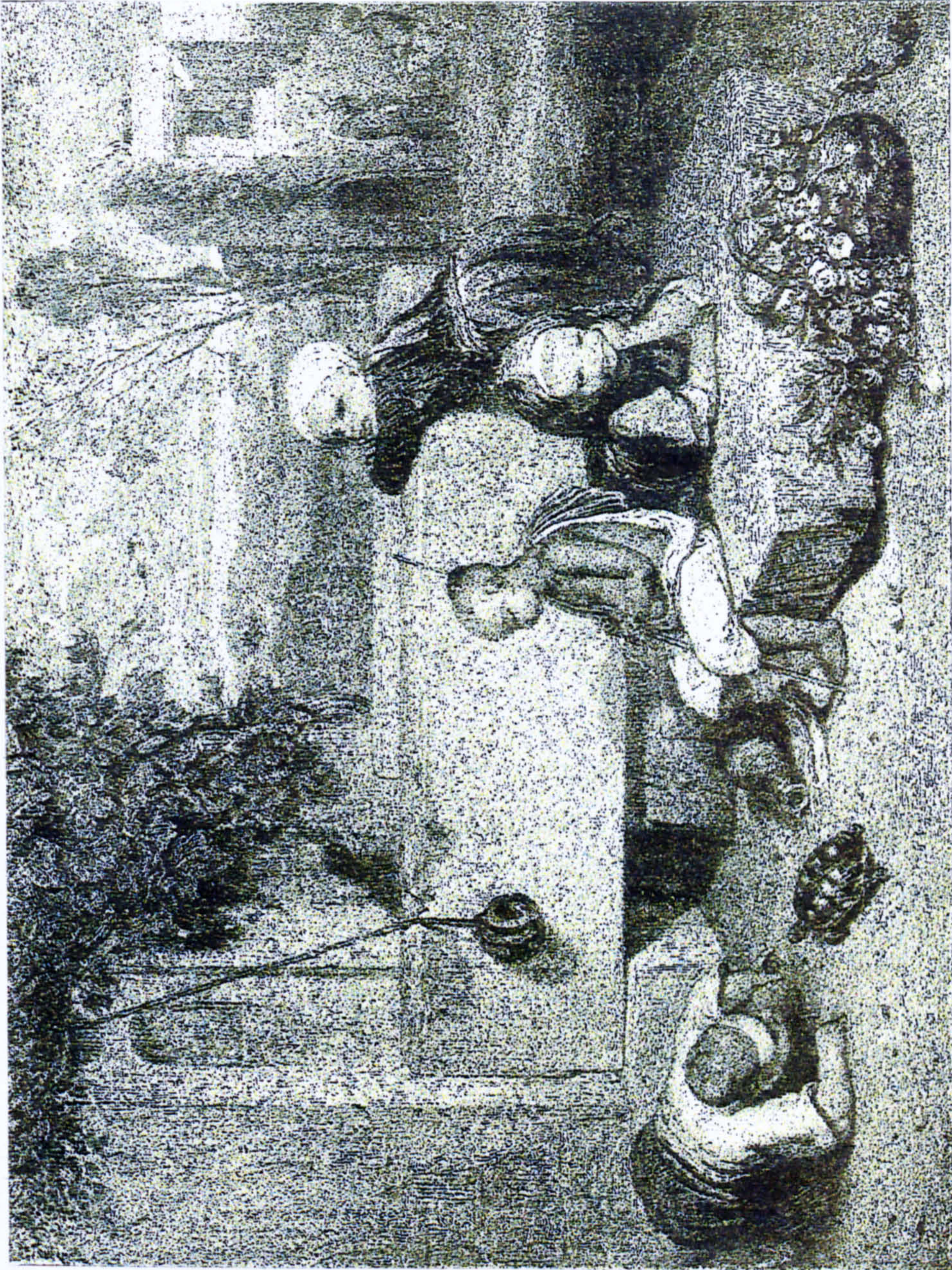


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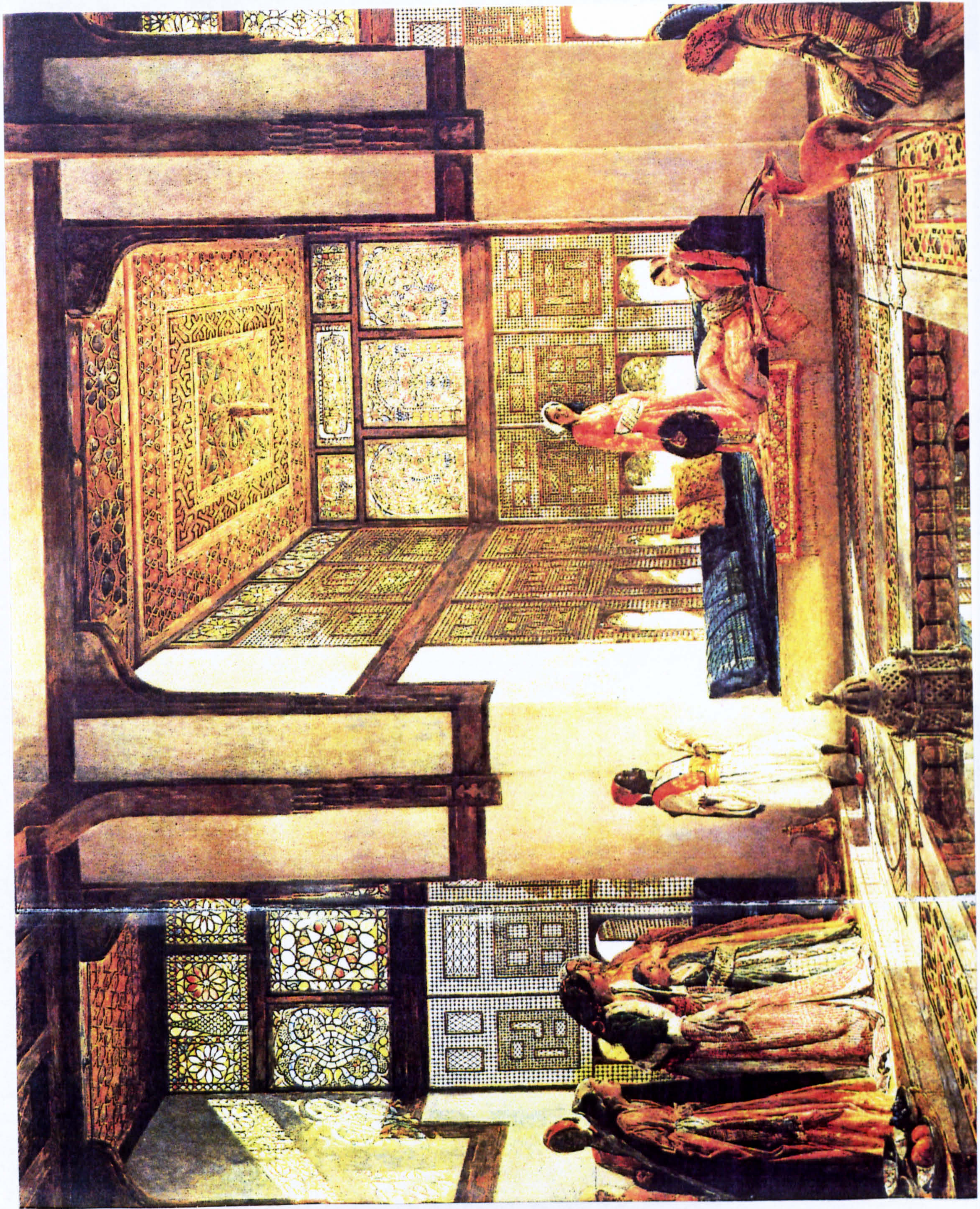


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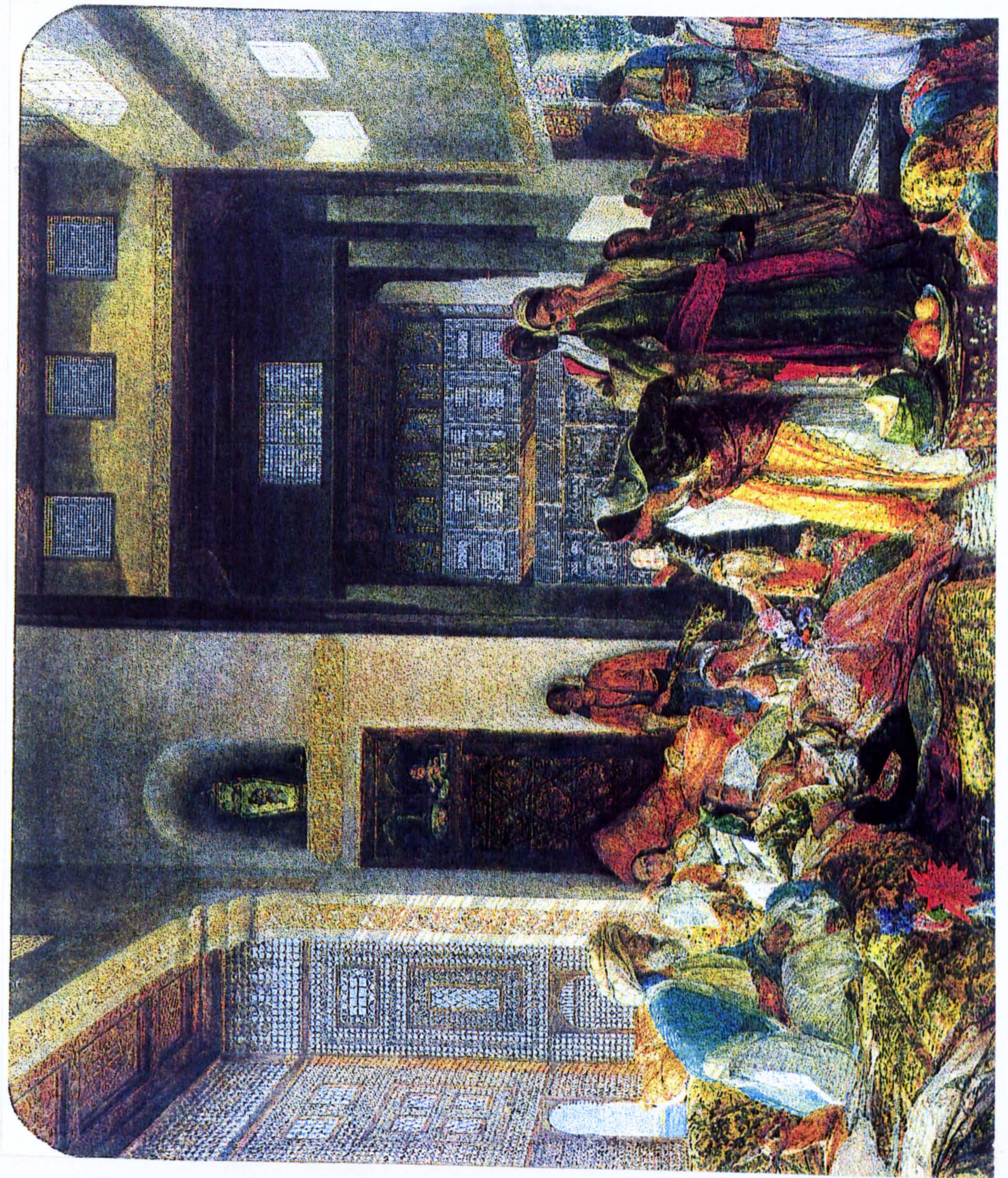


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Plate 30

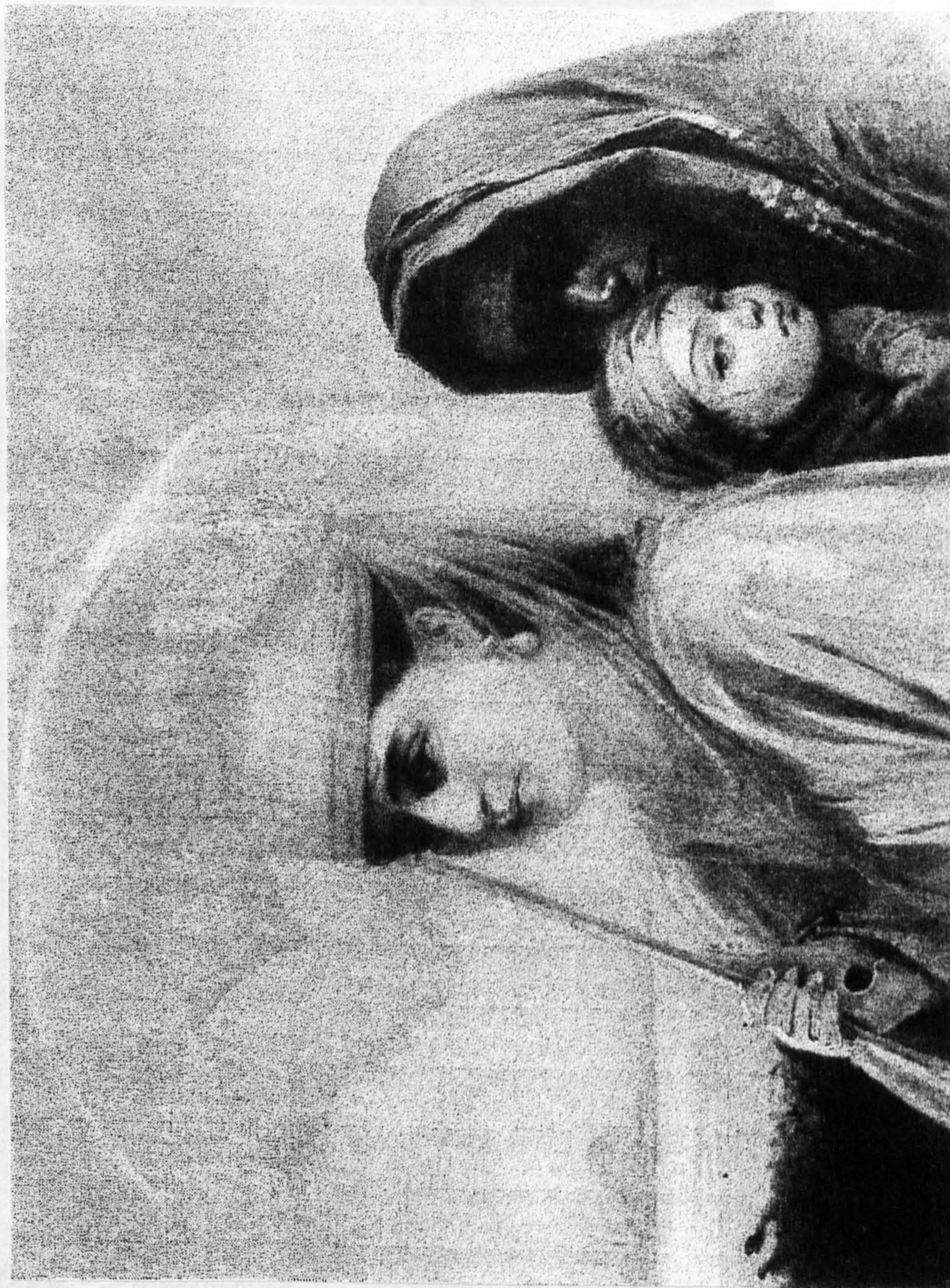


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Plate 38



Plate 39



Plate 40



Plate 41

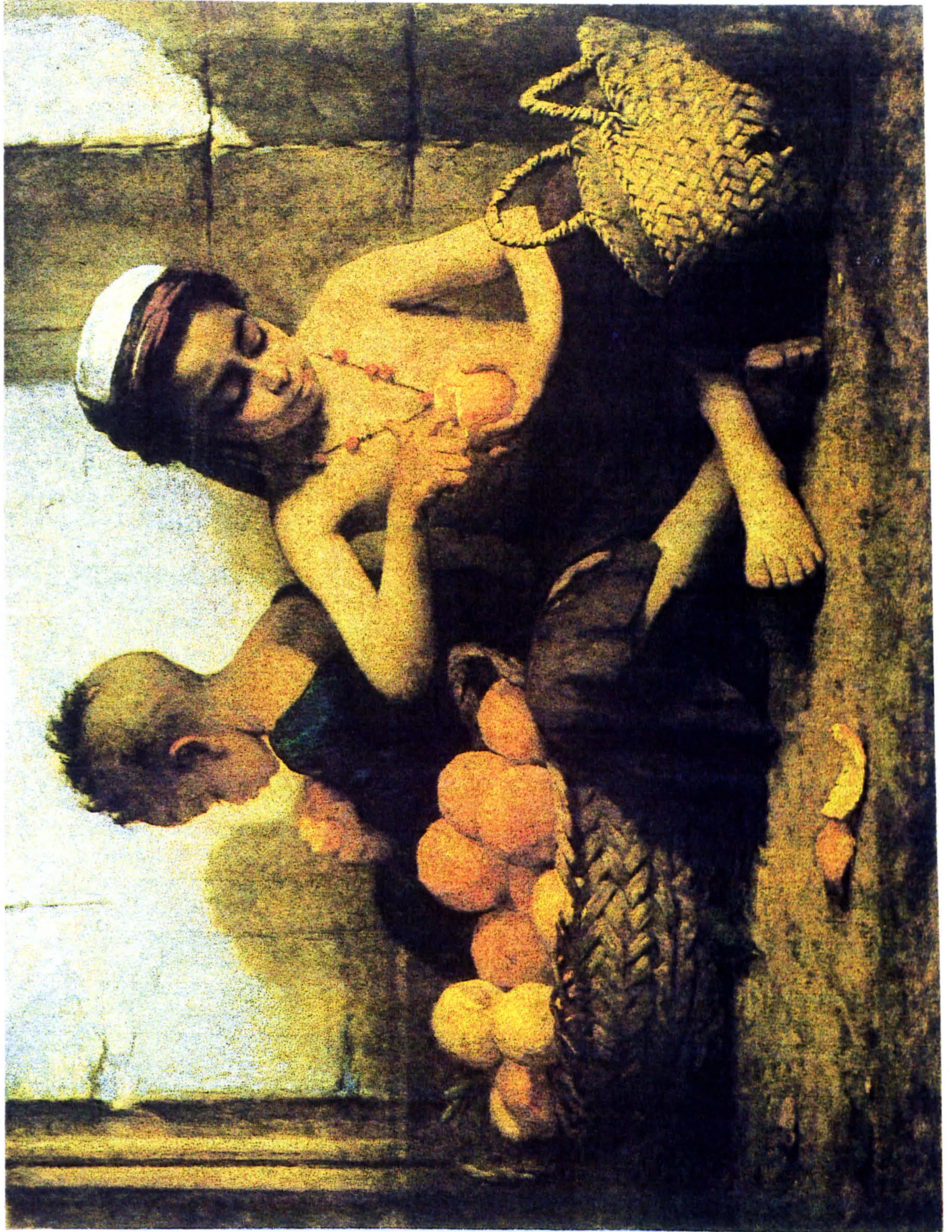


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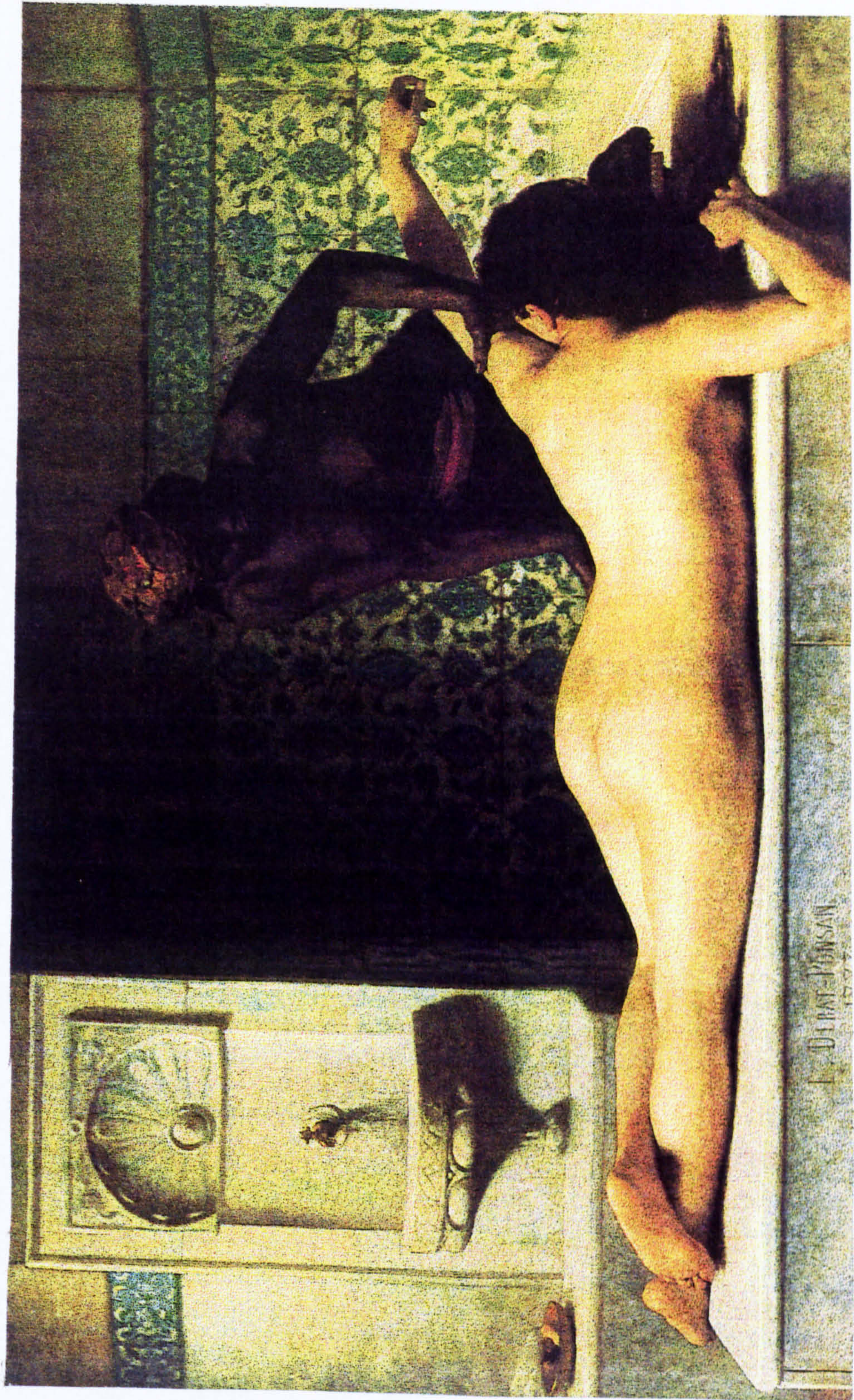


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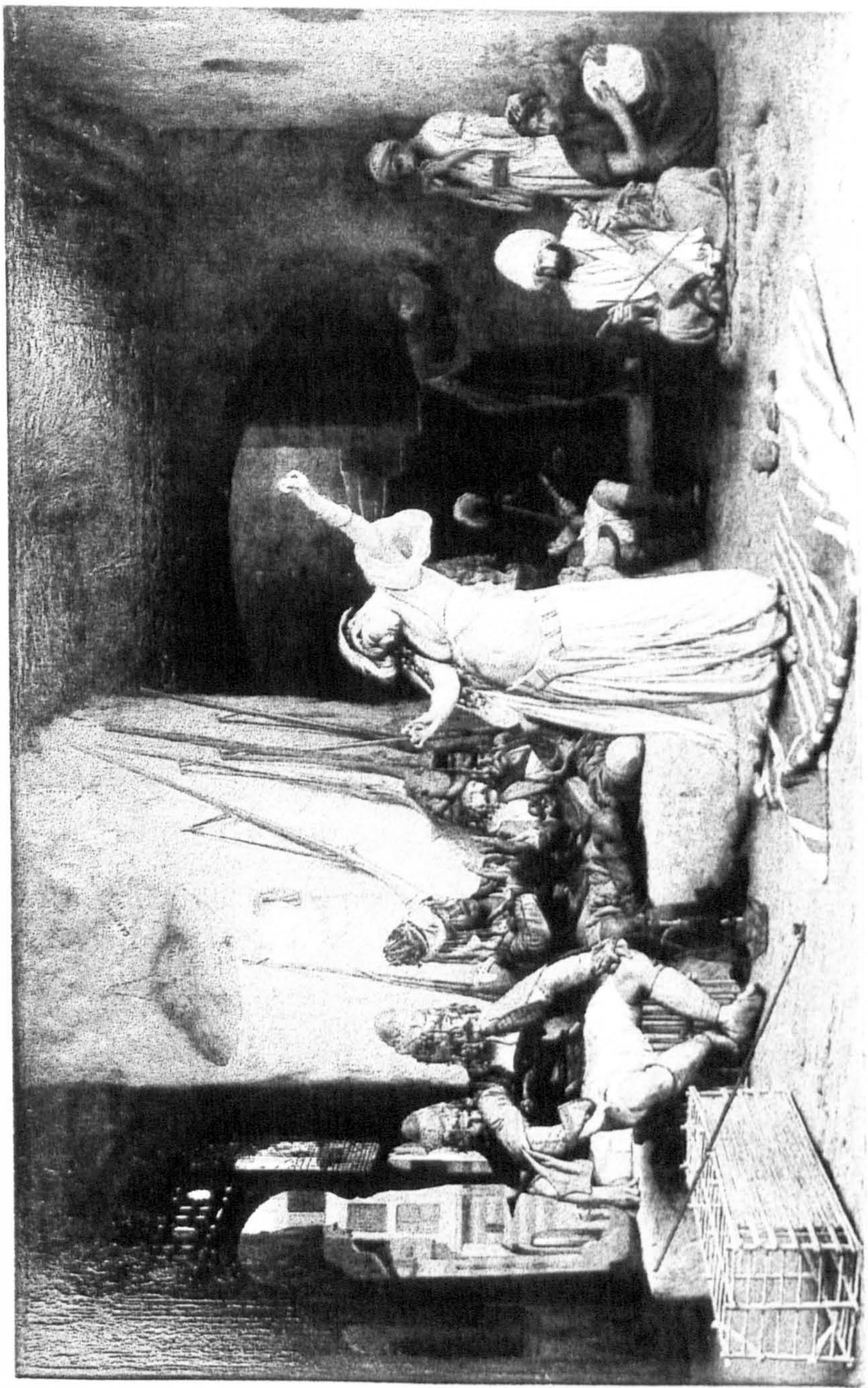


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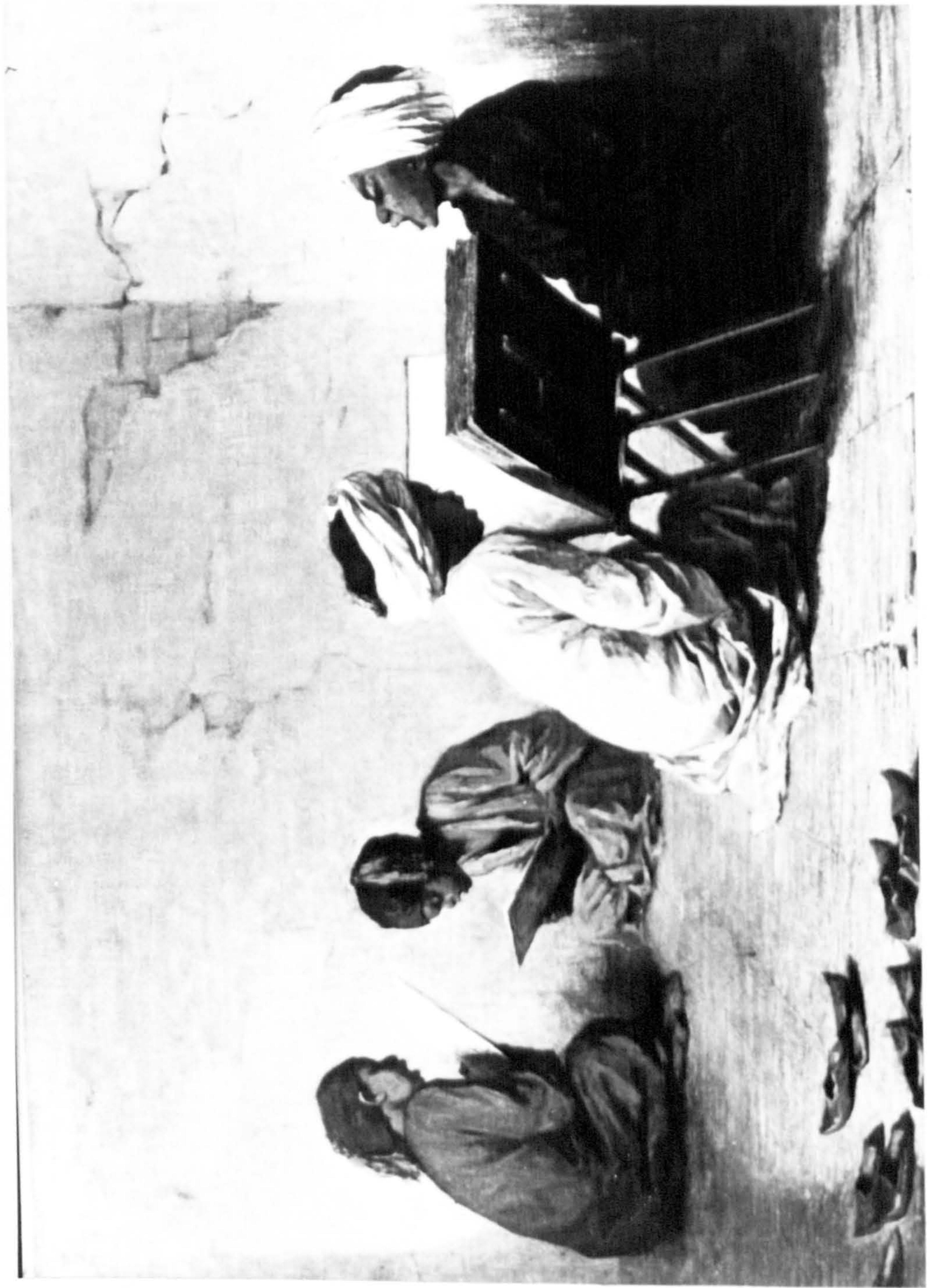


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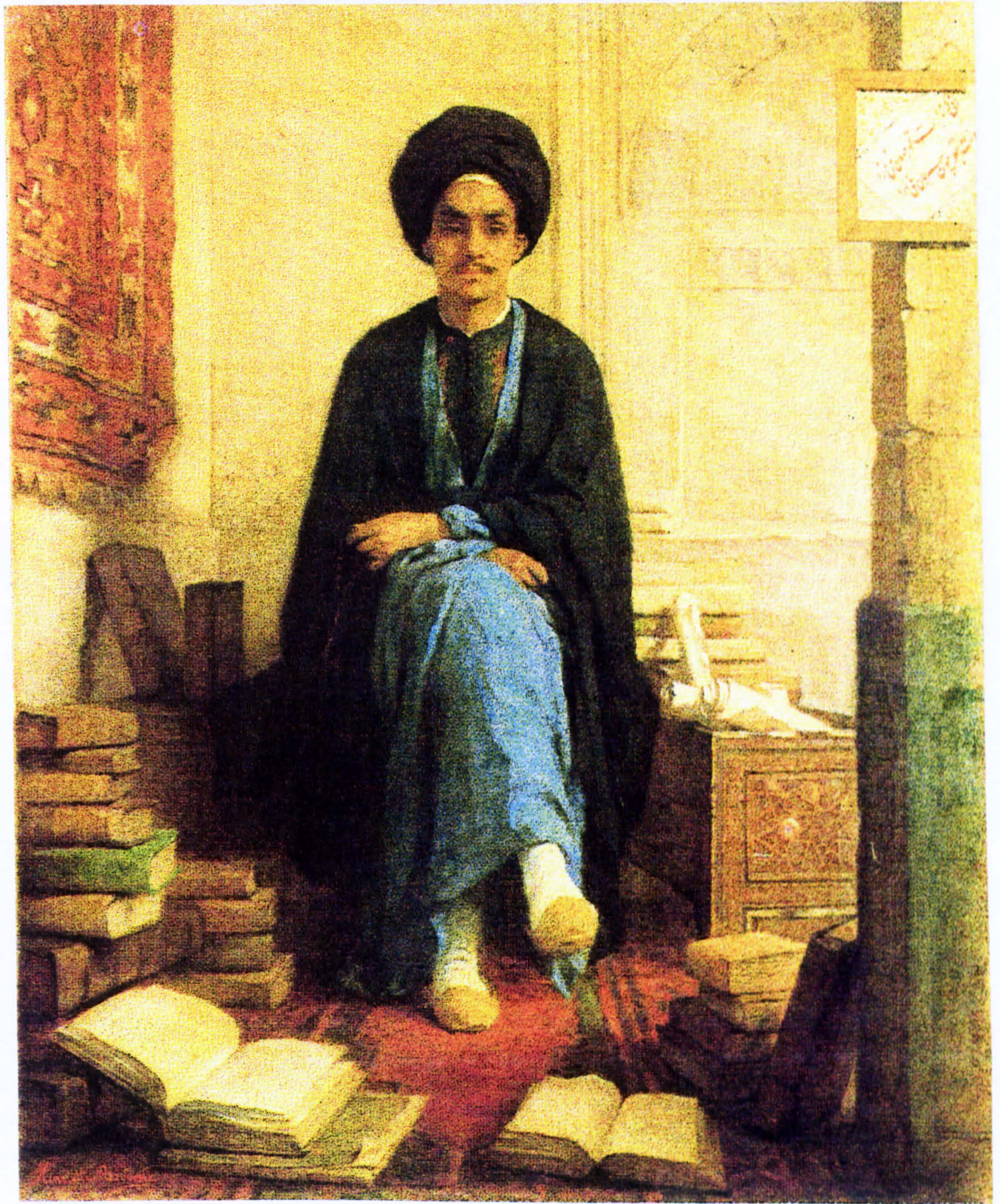


Plate 51



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Plate 53



Plate 54



Plate 55



Plate 56

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

n.d. no date

R.A. Royal Academy

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The bibliography is divided into primary and secondary sources. The primary material falls into three sections containing material on Henriette Browne and other nineteenth-century women artists; George Eliot and professional opportunities for women; and travel writing, in particular women's travel writing. Where primary materials have been taken from widely available secondary sources (such as the collections of George Eliot letters and reviews) they have been listed in the primary bibliography. Similarly, resources on women artists compiled before 1925 have been listed as primary.

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