Whirlwinds of Thought and Ferments of Mind: the Process of Personal Change in Mrs. Humphry Ward

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List of Abbreviations

Texts by Mrs. Humphry Ward:-

DG	*The History of David Grieve* (London: Smith, Elder, 1892).
GT	*Sir George Tressady* [1896] (London: Smith, Elder, 1896).
Har	*Harvest* (London: W. Collins, 1920).
HB	*Helbeck of Bannisdale*, ed. Brian Worthington [1898] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983).
Mar	*Marcella*, ed. Beth Sutton-Ramspeck and Nicole B. Meller [1894] (Peterborough, ONT: Broadview Press, 2002).
PH	*The* collection of Mrs. Humphry Ward's letters held in Pusey House, Oxford.
RE	*Robert Elsmere*, ed. Rosemary Ashton [1888] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1987).
RM	*The Case of Richard Meynell* [1911] (London: Smith, Elder, 1912).
US	*Unbelief and Sin: A Protest (Addressed to those who attended the Bampton Lecture of Sunday, March 6)* (Privately printed in Oxford, 1881).
WE	*The War and Elizabeth* (London: W. Collins, 1918).
WR	*A Writer's Recollections (1856-1900)* (London: W. Collins, 1918).

Other Texts:-

Ass	Newman, John Henry, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, intr. Nicholas Lash [1870] (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).
BW	Butterworth, John Raymond, *The Novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward: A Study in Form* (Unpub. PhD Dissertation, University of California, 1959).
DD	Eliot, George, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Barbara Hardy [1876] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).
Suth	Sutherland, John, *Mrs. Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).
Tr	Trevelyan, Janet Penrose, *The Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward* (London: Constable, 1923).
VH	Peterson, William S., *Victorian Heretic: Mrs. Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976).

Introduction

> one comes again and again upon books that have broken bounds so to speak, and that have owed both their motive-power and their success to this desire [. . .] of 'reforming the world,' or, as I should put it, to the expression of 'a criticism of life,' which may advance, whether in the hearts of the many or the few, thoughts and causes dear to the writers. 'Think with me!' 'See with me!' 'Let me persuade you!' they seem to say, and again and again the world, or rather the world which belonged to the book, has let itself be persuaded, gladly.[1]

This work is concerned with the nature of the self and with the influence that one self might wield over another, as revealed though the life, personal developments, and writings, fictional and non-fictional, of Mrs. Humphry Ward. It examines the factors required in order for influence to take place, how the process might work, and whether lasting influence over another is possible. Mrs. Humphry Ward's aim to use her fiction as a tool for her didactic purpose of educating and directing her readers to lead more socially responsible lives by triggering moral and personal growth within them makes her a good subject for such discussion. In this Introduction I will first summarise my understanding of the possibility and process of influence, then move on to consider Mrs. Humphry Ward in particular.

I define influence as the effect of one individual's self – character, opinions, emotions – upon that of another, aiming to produce change of some kind in the beliefs or behaviour of that other (exactly the kind of influence that appears in Ward's work). It seems logical, then, to begin with the nature of the original self. In the words of John Henry Newman, an important figure in Ward's, and more particularly her father's, life:

> I am what I am, or I am nothing. I cannot think, reflect, or judge about my being, without starting from the very point which I aim at concluding. My ideas are all assumptions, and I am ever moving in a circle. I cannot avoid being sufficient for myself, for I cannot make myself anything else, and to change me is to destroy me. If I do not use myself, I have no other self to use. My only business is to ascertain what I am, in order to put it to use. It is enough for the proof of the value and authority of any function which I possess, to be able to pronounce that it is natural. What I have to ascertain is the laws under which I live. My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature

[1] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *The History of David Grieve*, *The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.3 & 4 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), v.3 p.xviii; hereafter cited *Aut. DG.*

Ass, pp.272-3

Newman indicates that the self has been created with innate inclinations and capacities, that it is fully defined at an unconscious level, that it is the most fundamental part of a person; and that the conscious mind sits within it. This inborn core functions as a kind of filter; all experience passes through it, and its biases and inclinations guide the individual towards either acceptance or rejection of outside influences and ideas. Material opposed to the dictates of this inner core is rejected, that in harmony with it is accepted, and in both cases more of the nature of the self is revealed (individuals can be identified by their dislikes as much as by their likes). The only way to break this pattern is by force, which, Newman argues, would destroy the very identity it tries to manipulate: 'to change me is to destroy me'. This filter, then, inevitably and unavoidably both defines and limits a person's thoughts and actions. Newman presents it as a natural, empowering feature, which the individual's duty is to accept, and then to focus attention upon uncovering and integrating the unconscious traits which govern his life, in order to become a fully realised self:

> each of us has the prerogative of completing his inchoate and rudimental nature, and of developing his own perfection out of the living elements with which his mind began to be. It is his gift to be the creator of his own sufficiency; and to be emphatically self-made. This is the law of his being, which he cannot escape; and whatever is involved in that law he is bound, or rather he is carried on, to fulfil.
>
> *Ass*, p.274

'I am what I am' is therefore a glorious, liberating affirmation, and to follow 'the laws of my nature' is the highest of callings, both a law, and a gift.

Newman's ideas, expressed in 1870's *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, contrast with the concept of selfhood later presented in Walter Pater's novel *Marius the Epicurean* (1884), in which the character Marcus Aurelius argues in favour of an inviolable self:

> What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it; hold to this, and you are safe: One thing is needful - to live close to the divine genius within thee, and minister thereto worthily.[2]

Like Newman, Pater presents the self as empowered and purposeful, able to consciously define and classify experiences, but the two men differ over the nature of convictions. For Newman they arise from within, at the dictates of the inner self; for Pater they can be chosen regardless of inner forces, and only the unsupported individual consciousness matters. His 'circle of thought' is no filter, but a solid barrier, protecting and preserving the freedom of the individual consciousness.

While Newman, the religious man, argues that the pre-defined self is natural and should be accepted as such, Pater, the agnostic, somewhat surprisingly lays stress on 'the divine genius within thee'. Rather than seeking to discover 'the laws of my nature' to understand the self, Pater sees it as something divided, containing both the 'divine genius', and another part subordinate to this, and tending it; an inner split which could be seen as similar to the conscious/unconscious divide of Newman's theory. Nonetheless, Pater and Newman agree that accepting the self as it is gives the individual direction and purpose in life. But how can it be possible to reach this deepest, inner core of self, to discover its needs, to use it, to affect it? Several factors are, arguably, involved.

Firstly, for external influence to have any chance of success, there should be an openness, a lack of strong direction or opinion in the subject since, as Newman wrote, such people are vulnerable:

> there is no one centre in which their mind sits, on which their judgment of men and things proceeds. This is the state of many men all through life; [. . .] unless by good luck they are in safe hands, and ruled by others, or are pledged to a course. Else they are at the mercy of the winds and waves.[3]

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[2] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, ed. Michael Levey [1885] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.193; hereafter cited *Marius*.

[3] John Henry Newman, *Loss and Gain and Callista* [1848 and 1855] (New York: Garland Publishing, 1975), pp.15-6; hereafter cited *Loss*.

A mind full of strong opinion is closed, a 'circle of thought', but an individual without direction is an easy target, unable to resist or even to properly assess material presented to him. One tragic example of such a person is the doomed Lily Bart in Edith Wharton's novel *The House of Mirth*, described as 'a water-plant in the flux of the tides'.[4] Daniel Deronda, in George Eliot's novel of the same name, is also at risk:

> what he most longed for was either some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy.
>
> *DD*, p.413

Daniel's lack of purpose, as I shall demonstrate, leaves him open to the charismatic presence of Mordecai.

The passages from Newman given above, however, indicate that it is not possible for an individual to be completely open, since the inner self forms an unconscious filter for external material. As Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote:

> Man lives that list, that leaning in the will
> No wisdom can forecast by gauge or guess,
> The selfless self of self, most strange, most still,
> Fast furled and all foredrawn to No or Yes.[5]

Hopkins seems here to agree with Newman, that the self is indeed pre-defined, and has innate inclinations, of which the individual may or may not be aware. Influence in such a case can only occur if the inner self has traits which are favourable to the matter in hand. As his uncle, Sir Hugo, tells Daniel Deronda, 'If you are to rule men, you must rule them through their own ideas' (*DD*, p.434). Daniel himself is unaware of his own leaning towards Judaism until it is revealed to him by his contact with Mordecai. Personal growth initiated through such triggering of already-existing inner tendencies fits well with the definition of education expressed by Hans Aarsleff in his *Study of Language in England*:

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[4] Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* [1905] (New York: Bantam, 1984),p.50.

[5] Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People', *A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.176-7; hereafter cited *Hopkins*.

> The etymology of 'education' tells us that it is not a process of 'the filling of the child's mind, as a cistern is filled with waters brought in buckets from some other source.' It is, on the contrary, 'the opening up of its own fountains,' for education must educe, being from 'educare,' which is but another form of 'educere'; and that is 'to draw out' and not 'to put in.'[6]

The drawing out brings more of the unconscious inner self to the fore, making the subject aware of new aspects of himself, which can then be integrated into consciousness, and used.

But how can an influencer/educator achieve this influence, this triggering? Assuming that conditions in the subject are as desired, there are still requirements upon the person who wishes to influence, such as the necessity to frame his message in an appealing way:

> Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice,
> Him or her I shall follow,
> As the water follows the moon, silently,
> With fluid steps, anywhere around the globe.[7]
>
> *DD*, p.371

As Walt Whitman describes, there is power in the 'right' form of communication. However, both Pater and Newman agree on the difficulty of achieving it, though for slightly differing reasons.

> Of other people we cannot truly know even the feelings, nor how far they would indicate the same modifications, each one of a personality really unique, in using the same terms as ourselves; that 'common experience', which is sometimes proposed as a satisfactory basis of certainty, being after all only a fixity of language.
>
> *Marius*, p.113

For Pater, communication is difficult since language is inadequate due to differences in the understanding of words' meaning. For Newman, the problem is not necessarily linguistic, but is linked to the inevitable filtering of perception by the pre-defined self, which may ascribe meaning according to unconscious, and therefore undetectable rules.

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[6] Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England 1780-1860* (London: Athlone Press, 1983), p.244; hereafter cited *Aarsleff*.

[7] Epigraph to Chapter 29. Walt Whitman, 'Vocalism', *Leaves of Grass* (1860, 1881).

The solution to these difficulties, as indicated in Whitman's choice of the word 'voice', rather than 'language' or 'words', is in the presentation of the message, its ordering and sound, and in the person who owns the 'voice', rather than in the literal meaning. That is, communication needs to go beyond its overt content, beyond what can be assessed by the rational, conscious mind. Influence is most likely to take place if the message can bypass reason, establish an emotional and imaginative connection, and so strike to the deepest core of the self. A good example is the heightened language used by Mordecai to Daniel Deronda:

> Man finds his pathways: at first they were foot-tracks, as those of the beast in the wilderness; now they are swift and invisible: his thought dives through the ocean, and his wishes thread the air: has he found all the pathways yet? What reaches him, stays with him, rules him: he must accept it, not knowing its pathway
>
> *DD*, pp.560-1

The language swoops and races as swiftly as the movement of which Mordecai speaks, culminating in the short, memorable rhythm of 'reaches ... stays ... rules', bypassing reason to strike Daniel's inner self. Its effect is the same as that described in George Eliot's presentation of influence taking place when ideas:

> are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame.[8]

For Eliot, as expressed through the characters of Mordecai and, above, Mr. Tryan in *Janet's Repentance*, it is the embodiment of ideas that gives them power, through the simple, personal, human relationship between individuals. Ideas alone are not enough. Newman agrees:

> The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of

[8] George Eliot, 'Janet's Repentance', *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. David Lodge [1858] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p.364; hereafter cited *Scenes*.

> facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us.[9]

In the attempt to communicate and to influence, then, it is the personal touch, linked with an appropriately framed message which has power to 'reach...touch...stay'.

Eliot adds a further dimension to this attempt, however, which also links back to Newman's concept of self-development and growth. Through the character Mordecai, she argues that as an individual grows mentally and spiritually, so he will wish to benefit others by helping them to reach the same understanding:

> the fuller nature desires to be an agent, to create, and not merely to look on: strong love hungers to bless, and not merely to behold blessing. And while there is warmth enough in the sun to feed an energetic life, there will still be men to feel, "I am lord of this moment's change, and will charge it with my soul."
>
> *DD*, pp.531-2

This urge is presented as innate, emotional, and by implication, divine - rooted in the soul, and thus linked with the creativity of God. Associated with the sun, it is an expression of a natural energy which gives the individual a feeling of empowerment. But such power can only be gained through an intense personal commitment – 'charge it with my soul' – through the willingness to present ideas as honestly and as thoroughly as possible, showing their inner truth through personal detail, through self-revelation. In other words, the attempt to influence involves risk, as the influencer puts his very self on the line, accepting that attacks may also come.

I will examine the life and career of Mrs. Humphry Ward in the light of the theories of influence described above, to illustrate and explain her developments and influences over time. Can the self be kept inviolate, as Pater argues? Can autonomy and integrity be maintained in the face of all influences around the individual? How can a sense of self be maintained? How do

[9] John Henry Newman, 'The Tamworth Reading room', *Discussions and Arguments* (London: Longmans, Green, 1918), pp.254-305 (p.293); hereafter cited *Discussions*.

changes, or resistance to changes, affect relationships between the self and others? People do not exist in splendid isolation, after all, and developments in one person inevitably place strains upon those around them, which may be more or less difficult to resolve. How can such resolution be achieved, and in what way?

Ward's long and prolific career and complex personal life make her an ideal subject for such discussion. She lived from 1851-1920, and produced twenty-six novels over a period of thirty-nine years from 1881 to her death (her last novel was published posthumously). She enjoyed enormous success and popularity, particularly during her strongest period during the last 1880s and the 1890s, the period that I shall concentrate upon. Her first big hit, *Robert Elsmere*, was the biggest seller of 1888, and a subsequent novel, *Marcella*, was instrumental in breaking the hold of Mudie and the lending libraries over British fiction, and so ending the reign of the three-volume novel. However, she is almost totally forgotten today; as I write, only *Marcella* is in print. Ward wrote during Victorian and Edwardian times, through the First World War and beyond, yet where she has been heard of, she is considered principally as a Victorian writer, and she was condemned by post-war writers such as the Bloomsbury group. As part of my work I will examine why this should be, and whether such condemnation, and such oblivion, was merited.

Ward was writing at a time when the ideas of Newman and Eliot had had time to sink in to the consciousness of the intelligentsia, and to be presented naturally as factors in their own writings. Her novels of ideas and of moral teaching were often compared to those of George Eliot, although the two women only met on one occasion. John Henry Newman's influence upon her family was also large: when she was a child her father converted to Catholicism, had frequent contact with Newman, and later worked for him for many years. Her connection with Pater is also personal, as he had been her husband's tutor at Oxford, and the two men remained great friends, living on the same street in Oxford for several years.

She was born a member of the Arnold family, well-known for their work in the field of education. Her grandfather was the famous Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School; her uncle was his eldest son Matthew, the poet, critic, and Inspector of Schools; and her father,

Thomas (usually called Tom[10]), Dr. Arnold's second son, was also an Inspector of Schools, and later a University don. Mary Augusta Arnold, as she was born, was well aware of this family tradition, and one of her main aims in writing, whether in non-fiction or fiction, was didactic: to educate, to show people her conception of the right way to believe and to live, using her fiction as a medium to engage with new ideas. To this end, Eliot and Newman's concept of an influencer embodying the ideas to be communicated appears throughout her life, as she lived out the theories of which she wrote, over a range of the major issues of her time.

Ward's fiction fullfils the criteria above that writing should be as personal as possible, since it is more or less explicitly autobiographical. She records in her fiction her own beliefs, developments, experiences and relationships, sometimes with uncanny accuracy, as is revealed through the details of her real life. *Robert Elsmere* contains the history of her loss of orthodox faith, *Marcella* her deprived and unhappy schooldays, *Delia Blanchflower* her anti-suffragism, and, most notably, *Helbeck of Bannisdale* her struggles with her father's conversion to Roman Catholicism. Evidence from other documents, such as her letters, confirms this, and indicates that to understand Ward's beliefs accurately her novels are a major source of information. Just as Charlotte Brontë never wrote an orthodox autobiography, but 'transmuted her memories into fiction',[11] and as George Eliot expressed the complexities of her relationship with her brother Isaac in the sonnet sequence *Brother and Sister* and through the characters of Maggie and Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, so Ward documented the major traumas and issues of her life in her own fiction, leaving her ostensible autobiography, *A Writer's Recollections* (1918), to concentrate on what remained: for the most part it is used to relate anecdotes of her friendships with famous people and her social life in London. It is her fiction which answers what Cockshut considers the question asked by all 'true autobiographers': "How did I become what I am?"[12]

[10] I shall refer to him as Tom to avoid confusion with his famous father.
[11] Valerie Sanders, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Novelists* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p.1; hereafter cited *Sanders*.
[12] A.O.J. Cockshut, *The Art of Autobiography in 19th and 20th Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p.16; hereafter cited *Cockshut*.

I begin with her early life and childhood traumas due to the religious conflict between her parents provoked by her father's conversion(s) to Catholicism as opposed to her mother's adamant Anglicanism. Her own religious development, moving from the Evangelicalism of her school years to a rejection of orthodox Anglicanism in her late teens, and settling irreversibly on rational theism in her early twenties, will be considered alongside her fictional documentation of the process in *Robert Elsmere*. Her family's religious conflict, and the question of whether there can be any possible resolution, appears again in Chapter Three, through the traumas of a cross-religion love relationship in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, generally considered to be her finest novel. This chapter also continues the examination of Ward's own developing religious opinions, with the rise of religious Modernism and its portrayal through her sequel to *Robert Elsmere, The Case of Richard Meynell*.

Since I take her major works chronologically, to reflect her developments over time, Chapter Two considers her novel of social questions and the position of women, *Marcella*. Through Marcella's development from extreme Socialist views to a far more Conservative (and conservative) political position, Ward discusses the plight of the poor, both in town and country, and considers how they can best be aided. Alongside this runs discussion of the duties and responsibilities of the rich, the landowners on whom the poor depend: how can they marry progress with the best of tradition? Implicit in Marcella's development is also the question of the position of women, at a time when women's horizons were expanding at what many (mostly men) believed to be an incredibly fast rate, with better and higher education, an increasing range of available employment, and its associated independence. Ward's position vis-à-vis this question was nothing if not contradictory. She was highly intelligent, mainly self-educated after an inadequate school education, yet despite an early belief in the importance of a good education, and being instrumental in the founding of Somerville College, Oxford, she permitted neither of her daughters to go to University (although her son went as a matter of course). She was a family breadwinner and matriarch with immense strength of will, and great drive, who yet preached, in real-life and in her novels that submission to one's husband, and self-denial in favour of others were women's main duties in society; even as her philanthropic work offering

care for children actually freed them to go out to work and become self-supporting and independent. She was an indefatigable campaigner against women's suffrage, leading the anti-suffrage party in defiance of the growing body of opinion against her. At the same time although recommending love, marriage and children above all for her women characters, she showed them as capable of a surprisingly wide range of jobs, some of which, particularly in her war fiction, were traditionally available only to men.

These three chapters concentrate particularly upon Ward's ideas, beliefs and personal growth, and the equivalent developments in her portrayal of her characters, to show how far she believes the interaction between people influences them and their path in life. Then, in the final chapter, I examine the form of her fiction: the mechanisms she used in her attempts to influence her readers, which information was included and which omitted, and why. I then explore the reasons why I consider such analysis to be, ultimately, unsatisfying, and inadequate to explain Ward's effect upon her readers. Finally, this chapter also considers her role in relation to the literary developments of her lifetime, in order to discover why she has been so neglected and forgotten since her death. There have been few biographical studies of her since her daughter Janet Trevelyan's laudatory work in 1923, the most detailed being John Sutherland's thorough *Mrs. Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-Eminent Edwardian* in 1990. Study has increased in recent years, however; Beth Sutton-Ramspeck includes Mrs. Ward in her study of Literary Housekeeping, *Raising the Dust* (2004), and Judith Wilt considers her in relation to the changing times in which she lived in *Behind Her Times* (2005). The time therefore seems ripe for further examination of Mrs. Ward's life, work, and developing beliefs.

Whirlwinds of Thought: Early Life and Robert Elsmere

> he felt brought near to the great primal forces breathing through the divine workshop; and in place of natural disposition and reverent compliance, there sprang up in him suddenly an actual burning certainty of belief. 'Axioms are not axioms,' said poor Keats, 'till they have been proved upon our pulses;' and the old familiar figure of the Divine combat, of the struggle in which man and God are one, was proved once more upon a human pulse on that May night, in the hush of that quiet lecture room.
>
> *RE*, p.61

> I have been sitting thinking in the Parks to-night, thinking of *historical* religion, and of the basis history affords for faith in God and a spiritual life. It is borne in upon me more & more that there lies our only or our main 'ground of certainty' there and in conscience. Conscience is surely God's revelation to each one of us and the imperfections of conscience do not practically matter. It is the business of each one of us to obey what we have – to him that hath more shall be given,[1] - out of obedience will spring strength and light. Conscience within, knowledge without, God's inner & outer laws, there are the guides of the future. And behind and above all the Power who hath brought us this far, and into whose bosom we yield ourselves at death.[2]

> No radical change was possible. It is character that makes circumstance, and character is inexorable.
>
> *GT*, p.343

Each of these quotations reveals a different aspect of Mrs. Humphry Ward's beliefs. The first is found early in her breakthrough novel, *Robert Elsmere* (1888). The title character, a student at Oxford University, is listening to a lay sermon given by Henry Grey, who is to become his friend and mentor; a sermon which questions whether Christianity should be considered as an entirely spiritual matter, or whether it is dependent upon miracles, such as the resurrection, which have hitherto been accepted as factually true. The subject sounds dry, but the words used are insignificant compared with the effect of Grey himself:

> a man in whom the generation of spiritual force was so strong and continuous that it overflowed of necessity into the poorer, barrener lives around him, kindling and enriching.
>
> *RE*, p.60

He is a born catalyst, and so 'of necessity' affects others, after the manner of George Eliot's Mordecai on Daniel Deronda: "What reaches him, stays with him, rules him: he must accept it,

[1] Matthew 16:12.
[2] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to T. Humphry Ward 19 July 1881, *PH*.

not knowing its pathway" (*DD*, p.561). Grey's personality draws Elsmere at a similarly basic level: 'primal forces' indicates immensely powerful, ancient urges, which overwhelm Elsmere's normal mental state so that 'reverent compliance', mere acceptance of religion, becomes vital and immediate.[3] With no time or chance allowed for bringing the faculties of intellect and reason into play, Elsmere's new certainty springs up as instantly as emotion, and his pulse races with excitement.

Ward's choice of quotation expands upon this process, particularly when slightly more of it is considered:

> axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses: We read fine things but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same Steps as the Author[4]

She indicates that even the best-established principles cannot truly be understood or accepted until the individual has shared the author's experience. For her, unless the author can evoke his own emotions and commitment in the reader, neither full understanding nor influence is possible.

The second quotation above seems to contradict this vivid, passionate impression. It appears in a July 1881 letter from Ward to her husband Humphry. Once again, the topic is the relation of history to religious faith, but here it is argument, not emotion, which counts. Understanding of the past, of hard facts, is viewed as providing a rock on which religious confidence and faith can stand. The passage is not conventionally Christian in tone, referring merely to an ultimate Power, yet it is spiritual: Ward is dealing with 'God's revelation', with conscience, and with duty.

The main emphasis, though, is not upon influence. Instead, Ward discusses two factors: knowledge, particularly knowledge of history, which can be gained by study; and

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[3] Elsmere himself will later have a similar effect upon others: 'What *was* noticeable, what *was* remarkable in this work of his, was the spirit, the religious passion which, radiating from him, began after a while to kindle the whole body of men about him.' *RE*, p.486.

[4] Letter from John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds 3 May 1818, *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.93; hereafter cited *Keats' Letters*.

conscience, the still small voice[5] inside people that prompts them to try to follow God's laws, and to be dutiful. Knowledge is understood as an 'outer' law, divinely sanctioned since coming from God: actively seeking knowledge and truth will bring individuals the 'ground of certainty' of which she speaks. For Ward, then, knowledge and faith are intimately associated. Conscience, by contrast, is a strictly internal faculty: to follow its dictates is to be self-reliant, to be an individual. More than that, conscience is 'God's revelation', the voice of God within; to obey it is to obey God and so to come closer to God. As Ward describes it, 'to obey what we have', to carry out 'the business of each one of us', is to use inborn abilities of all kinds to the full, both internal conscience, and external learning. It is to follow God's laws to the best of one's ability, to do one's duty, as defined by John Henry Newman: 'My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature' (*Ass*, p.273).

The final quotation returns to the question of influence. The latest of the three, from Ward's 1896 novel *Sir George Tressady*, it views character as inborn, pre-determined by God, and unchangeable in any fundamental way (radical, after all, comes from the latin *radix*, or root), just as it is for Newman: 'to change me is to destroy me' (*Ass*, p.273).

Overall, these three quotations show both complementary and contradictory attitudes in Ward. History, knowledge and the need to learn are associated with faith and the spiritual life: what then of miracle and religious dogma? Conscience, the inner voice, provides direction for inborn character, and the individual has a duty to follow it in order to become a fully realised individual: how then may outside influence take place? Intellect and rationality are helpless in the face of the emotional impact of another's personality: how then may outside influence be prevented? How may all these factors be reconciled? This chapter will consider Ward's conception of the internal and external forces surrounding character and belief in the light of her early life and spiritual development, and through her first bestseller, *Robert Elsmere*.

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[5] Kings 1, 19:12.

Early Life and Religion

One major concern in Ward's writings is religion, and aptly enough for a writer whose first bestseller presented the effect of a change in religious belief upon a husband and wife relationship, she came from a home disrupted and torn apart by just such a change. Her father, Tom Arnold, emigrated to New Zealand in November 1847, and after a failed attempt at farming returned to the Arnoldian tradition of educational work, becoming Inspector of Schools in Van Diemen's Land (renamed Tasmania in 1856). Within a few weeks he met, fell in love with, and married Julia Sorell, the granddaughter of a former governor. Their first child, Mary Augusta Arnold, the future Mrs. Humphry Ward, was born just under a year after their marriage, on 11th June 1851.[6]

At this time Tom Arnold, although professing conventional Anglicanism, had little religious belief. Gradually, however, he felt himself drawn 'back to the old true ways from which I wonder and bitterly repent that I ever should have strayed.'[7] Unfortunately, by this he did not mean Anglicanism: on 12th January, 1856 he was accepted into the Catholic church.[8] Well aware of the distress this would cause his family,[9] particularly as his wife Julia had: 'imbibed the strongest prejudices against Catholicism, and I see no prospect, humanly speaking, of her altering her mind' (*LTAY*, p.61),[10] he wrote to John Henry Newman himself for advice on how to handle the situation. His concern was entirely justified: Julia threatened to leave him, and threw a brick through the window of St Joseph's pro-Cathedral during his acceptance ceremony. No effort of Tom's could reconcile her, and he was forced to admit that:

[6] To avoid confusion I will refer to her as Ward throughout.

[7] Letter from Thomas Arnold to Mrs Arnold (his mother) 12 October 1854, *The Letters of Thomas Arnold the Younger (1850-1900)*, ed. James Bertram (New Zealand: John McIndoe, 1980), p.53; hereafter cited *LTAY*.

[8] The enormity of this event is well expressed by John Sutherland: 'Short of disembowelling the Colonial Secretary, there was scarcely a more shocking thing an Arnold could have done. The Doctor and Newman had been the irreconcilable champions of their respective churches.' *Suth*, p.8. The Doctor is, of course, Tom's father, Dr. Thomas Arnold.

[9] 'My mother and sisters - all in England - are sincerely Protestant, and I cannot doubt that my conversion will be a serious blow to them.' Letter from Thomas Arnold to J.H. Newman, April/May, 1855. *LTAY*, p.61. It was his first letter to Newman.

[10] Letter from Thomas Arnold to John Henry Newman April/May 1855.

> an instinct deeper than logic made you prefer what you had been taught as a child to new-fangled opinions.[11]
>
> *LTAY*, p.200

Her opposition, as he saw, had been learned so early that it had become internalised, part of her self at so fundamental a level that no argument could reach it; what Ward later described as 'something drawn from deep wells of history, instinctive and invincible' (*WR*, p.7).

Years later, Ward created the characters of Catherine Elsmere (Robert Elsmere's wife) and Laura Fountain after her mother's pattern. Robert's reasoned arguments explaining his rejection of Christian orthodoxy only increase Catherine's resistance, as emotionally she clings to the old fashioned Anglicanism of her father, Richard Leyburn, who died when she was sixteen. They had been kindred spirits: 'he made her and trained her. He poured all his ideas and convictions into her' (*RE*, p.78). His beliefs are ineradicably embedded in Catherine:

> restrained by a hundred ties of training and temperament, [she] would not surrender herself, and could not if she would.
>
> *RE*, p.153

Laura Fountain, in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, opposes equal strength of resistance to the lifelong Catholicism of her fiancé, Alan Helbeck. Against his vast armoury of character, faith, education, experience, and intellect, she marshals no arguments, only the instinctive independence of her character, and the denial learned as a child from her father. Surrender is impossible, for these characters just as for Julia Arnold, whose conflict remained unresolved at her death in 1888.[12] The reader is led to the provisional conclusion that early beliefs and teachings become so intensely bonded into the character as to be forever unalterable, and it is no wonder that Ward should conclude that 'character is inexorable' (*GT*, p.343). But if character is inborn, how can early teachings become so part of it? The answer lies in character's innate bias towards certain attitudes, and will be discussed in more detail later.

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[11] Letter from Thomas Arnold to Julia Arnold (his wife) 23 December 1879, *LTAY*, p.200.

[12] 'Her passionate affection for my father endured till her latest hour, but she never reconciled herself to what he had done.' *WR*, p.21.

The Arnolds' passionate wrangling over religion meant that their household was hardly a peaceful place for young children, and Ward was already old enough to be affected by this. She became increasingly disruptive until finally her parents sent her to stay with friends. It was the beginning of a pattern of separation which continued after the family returned to England; most of her childhood was spent away from her family at boarding school, and she joined them only for holidays. She learned early that religious difference brought lasting turmoil and division.

Tom's conversion to Catholicism had more immediately practical consequences: since he was the family breadwinner, what affected him affected them all. Although officially Catholics had been admitted to full civil rights back in 1827, in practice a man's religion could still bar him from whole ranges of jobs. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale* Ward described how Stephen Fountain's unorthodoxy cost him university positions for which he was well qualified, leaving him very short of money, and in *Robert Elsmere* how Elsmere's abandonment of his living also uproots his wife. Other writers described similar situations: Elizabeth Gaskell's Mr. Hale moves to a poorly-paid job in the north of England as a result of religious qualms, and his wife and daughter have no alternative but to accompany him.

This situation had arisen earlier that century, when, just as Catholics were fighting for emancipation, longstanding prejudice against them as religious predators[13] was increased by the evangelical revival. Matters were not helped by the ritualism and perceived movement towards Rome of the Oxford Movement of the 1830s and 40s. Tensions increased alarmingly in 1850 (only six years before Tom Arnold's conversion) when Pope Pius IX reinstated the Roman Catholic church hierarchy of parishes and dioceses, and again in 1869-70 when the Vatican Council 1869-70 declared the infallibility of the Pope's pronouncements on morals and doctrine. Prominent Catholics exacerbated matters by their arrogance and refusal to make it clear that their sway extended only over other Catholics, and Lord John Russell's famous letter to the Bishop of Durham sums up the general Protestant attitude:

[13] As shown by Stephen Fountain's attitude to the young Alan Helbeck: 'That young fanatic, a Jesuit already by the look of him, would of course try all their inherited Mumbo Jumbo upon her'. *HB*, p.55.

> There is an assumption of power in all the documents which have come from Rome; a pretension of supremacy over the realm of England, and a claim to sole and undivided sway, which is inconsistent with the Queen's supremacy[14]

Not surprisingly, there was great speculation over whether Catholics would hold themselves bound by the laws of the land, and so whether they could be good Englishmen. The superstitious fear of Catholicism was increased by the fact that although actual converts to Catholicism were relatively few, they included people of high status and intellectual prominence, such as John Henry Newman, Henry Edward Manning (archdeacon of Chichester), the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, one of W.E. Gladstone's sisters, and even three sons of William Wilberforce the evangelical leader!

In Van Diemen's Land, anti-Catholic sentiment was strong, and Tom Arnold's conversion cost him his job; the resulting shortage of funds forced the family to move to England. Newman found Tom a post at the new Catholic University in Dublin, despite his lack of either qualifications or experience, but it only paid £200 per annum, half what he had earned in Tasmania.[15] The family suffered continual money problems from this time, one consequence of which was Ward's poor education - 'As far as intellectual training was concerned, my nine years from seven to sixteen were practically wasted' (*WR*, p.96) - while her brothers were groomed, as was traditional for Arnolds, for Rugby. As a girl, she was expected to marry, and therefore not to need much education. She attended three different boarding schools and her miserable experiences, particularly at the second, the Rock Terrace School for Young Ladies in Shifnal, Shropshire, appear in detail in *Marcella*, whose early chapters 'have a great deal of my own youth in them, which was very miscellaneous, & often out-at-elbows.'[16] Her rejoicing was all the greater, then, when in June 1865 Tom Arnold returned to Anglicanism, and so to the well-paid academic life that suited him best. The family settled in Oxford, and all seemed well.

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[14] Letter from Lord John Russell to the Bishop of Durham 4 November 1850, E.R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968), pp.159-60.
[15] Later he would work, again with Newman's help, as senior classics master at the Oratory school in Birmingham (started 1862). His sons became pupils there before going to Rugby.
[16] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to George Smith 7 August 1892, *Honnold.*

Unfortunately, 'the vacillating habits that were an exasperation to his family and friends'[17] continued, and eleven years later, in October 1876, on the eve of the election for the Rawlinsonian Chair of Anglo-Saxon, which carried a Professorship and a salary of £1,000 per annum, Tom Arnold sent letters round the University announcing his intention to return to Catholicism. He did not win, and had to make ends meet by journalistic work in London until once again Newman found him a job. His eldest daughter, now Mrs. Humphry Ward, tried hard to mediate between her parents, advising her father to conceal his true beliefs:

> I know how hateful it must seem to you to put off an open profession of belief for any worldly reasons, but do not look upon them as worldly reasons. Look upon them as reasons of affection and pity to those more dependent on you and the whole matter looks differently. It is a great sacrifice but God will reward it.[18]

In *Robert Elsmere* she emphasises the duty of a breadwinner to his dependants, as Elsmere considers whether he should give up his living: 'A man is bound above all things to protect those who depend on him from his own immature or revocable impulses' (*RE*, p.333). Elsmere's eventual decision reflects that of Tom Arnold: when balanced against individual duty to God, and conscience and character's demand for integrity, the needs of family come second. Tom would not even agree to delay open conversion, since for consistency's sake this would require him to dissemble, and remain ostensibly Anglican for a decent period after being appointed:

> Such an act would be a forcible suppression of my conscience, and would raise a wall of partition between me and my God.[19]
>
> *LTAY*, p.181

Tom's act seems wilfully self-destructive, bringing hardship upon his family for a second time, and earning him a reputation for religious dithering (Edmund Gosse referred to Tom and his

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[17] Bernard Bergonzi, *A Victorian Wanderer: The Life of Thomas Arnold the Younger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.2; hereafter cited *Wanderer*.
[18] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 16 February 1876, *PH*.
[19] Letter from Thomas Arnold to T. Humphry Ward 14 October 1876.

friend the poet Arthur Hugh Clough as 'those monuments of virtuous irresolution.'[20]) Ward never fully understood it, and fell back on divine intervention: 'Is it not enough to say, as was said of old – "The Holy Ghost fell on them that believed"?' (*WR*, p.20) The timing of his conversions to Catholicism, though, is suspicious: both occur when he is becoming successful not only in worldly terms, but in Arnoldian terms, with respectable jobs in education, and a steady income; the family black sheep slotting back into his destined niche. It seems at least possible that, all unconsciously, Tom Arnold was re-establishing his own independence and individuality. Of his gradual return to Catholicism, Ward wrote:

> all the while, under the surface, an extraordinary transformation was going on. He was never able to explain it afterwards, even to me, who knew him best of all his children. I doubt whether he ever understood it himself.
>
> *WR*, p.19

It is the phrase 'under the surface', recalling the idea of innate character and bias, which gives the key: the need was developing internally, below conscious awareness. A.O.J. Cockshut's description of the process of conversion fits the case exactly:

> The convert may be able to say that he wishes he had acted sooner, or that he cannot understand what delayed him; but he will not be able to say why the decisive moment came at one time more than another. But when it does come it appears as the practical enactment of something settled long before. It encapsulates a long process of thought, of weighing arguments, of rejecting old ideas and adopting new ones, or of developing old ideas in a new direction. Its momentary quality does not make it sudden.
>
> *Cockshut*, p.181

In Tom's case, the slow build-up indicates a long-maturing drive, gradually gaining strength to break through into consciousness. When it did so, it appeared to him as his conscience, 'God's revelation', in his daughter's terms. He wrote to Julia:

[20] Edmund Gosse, *Silhouettes* (London: William Heinemann, 1925), p.204. Tom Arnold seems less indecisive when it is remembered that his conversions were widely spaced: nine years as a Catholic after his first conversion, eleven as an Anglican, then the final return to Catholicism.

> as before God, my conscience seems to leave no other way open for me, and what other guide have we in this confused world but our conscience?[21]
>
> *LTAY*, p.176

There seemed to him only one way to find peace of mind. Elizabeth Gaskell's Mr. Hale expresses the same sentiment: 'I must do what my conscience bids.'[22] No matter how vacillating, or how impractical his actions appeared, Tom Arnold was true to himself and to his state of belief at any given time: 'The only plea I can urge is, that I acted in good faith, and that the taint of self-interest never attached to what I did.'[23] Ward also emphasizes this point, and personal integrity is important throughout her life and work.

In attributing her father's conversion and reconversion to divine intervention, Ward was consistent with two of her long-standing beliefs: firstly, that conscience comes from God, and that, obeying it, the individual draws closer to God; and secondly, that people must follow their innate character. For her, Tom was both 'obeying what he had', and answering a divine call; taking the only course possible to maintain his own integrity, whatever the collateral distress caused.

What, then, did Mary Ward née Arnold learn from her father's religious changes, and her mother's vitriolic opposition? Firstly, that they caused division and suffering within even the closest relationships, and brought practical hardships as well as emotional. Secondly, that people's most strongly held attitudes and most far-reaching acts arose from within themselves. She measured Tom's mysticism and quiet obstinacy against Julia's passion; Tom's imperative conscience against Julia's instinctive revulsion, and concluded that the inner dictates of character and conscience drove them both, even against what was generally considered the course of good sense and reason. She saw how bravery and integrity could co-exist with unconscious selfishness, and neglect. Above all, she saw how irresistible such inner forces could be.

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[21] Letter from Thomas Arnold to Julia Arnold 13 January 1876.

[22] Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, ed. Dorothy Collin [1855] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p.68.

[23] Thomas Arnold, *Passages in a Wandering Life* (London: E Arnold, 1900), p.186.

These observations were closely linked with her own religious career. Mary Ward had a history of evolving belief, long before her final change to rational theism, belief in a human Christ, and Christianity without miracle. Her earliest religious beliefs were imbibed from her mother and, like her, she was fervently Anglican; it was during her time at the Rock Terrace school that her real involvement with religious matters began, and its origins were anything but grounded in dogma. At the age of thirteen, Ward developed a crush on the Evangelical vicar of Shifnal, Reverend Cunliffe, and his wife, and adopted their beliefs. The experience is closely reproduced in *Marcella*, where the Cunliffes appear as Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton:

> it raised her to another plane of existence, gave her new objects and new standards. She who had hated going to church now counted time entirely by Sundays.
>
> *Mar*, p.41

The Evangelical influence upon Marcella is presented in a similar manner to that upon Jane Eyre. Both girls have friends who tell them moral stories. Marcella's friend Mary Lant, equivalent to Jane Eyre's Helen Burns,[24] tells her a long story which is 'extremely moral and evangelical, designed indeed by its sensitively religious author for Marcie's correction and improvement' (*Mar*, p.43). The influence upon Mary Arnold at Rock Terrace came through the extremely moral fiction of Charlotte Mary Yonge. Although Yonge was Tractarian, not Evangelical, and a close friend of John Keble (she would pass him her manuscripts for approval before publication), the values she preached were entirely in keeping with Ward's Evangelicalism, namely: self-discipline, and self-scrutiny to seek out, repent of, and correct the smallest sin. Yonge also emphasised the need for self-sacrifice and submission in women; among her characters 'uncontrolled female intellects or emotions are particularly heavily penalised.'[25] For example, Ethel May in *The Daisy Chain* must give up her Greek Studies to free her for domestic and philanthropic duties, and the attempts of Rachel Curtis in *The Clever Woman of the Family* to save children from exploitation as lace-makers result only in failure.

[24] The parallel is extended by the poverty and hardships suffered at school by both heroines, and by both the storytellers dying of consumption.
[25] Margaret M. Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace: A Survey of the Religious Novel in the Victorian Age* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), p.37; hereafter cited *Maison*.

Under these influences Ward tried hard to control her temper and to behave well, in great contrast to her former tempestuous career.

The Evangelical influence over her strengthened on her move to finishing school at Clifton the following year, since there she developed an even more passionate crush on the headmistress, Miss May, 'a gentle and high-minded woman, an ardent Evangelical' (*WR*, p.97), (who appears as Marcella's headmistress Miss Pemberton).

What does not appear is any evidence of Ward becoming Evangelical because of any particular doctrines, and there is no sign of any conversion such as her father's. Of course, as a poorly educated teenager she could not be expected to deliberate greatly over dogma, but even so her Evangelicalism seems rooted rather in the desire to draw closer to those she adored. The human connection came first, as Newman puts it: 'Persons influence us' (*Discussions*, p.293). Emotional ties to a person thus appear to render an individual vulnerable to influence by that person, in keeping with the need for appropriate framing of the message before influence can take place which was discussed in my Introduction. In any case, the effect upon Ward was intense: 'What I learnt during those years was learnt from personalities' (*WR*, p.97).

In June 1867 Mary Arnold left school, aged sixteen, and joined her family in Oxford, where Tom was working as, apparently, a thoroughly orthodox Anglican academic. She remained there for fourteen years, during the last nine of which she was a married woman,[26] and never forgot its effect upon her, although over time the memory became somewhat idealised. Of her first summers there she wrote: 'To have lived through them is to have tasted youth and pleasure from a cup as pure, as little alloyed with baser things, as the high gods allow to mortals' (*WR*, p.114). To a young woman just released from the rigours of school and financial hardship, it must have seemed exalted indeed. Raptures aside, it was during this period that her religious opinions developed and settled into their final form, and William Peterson rightly comments in his biography of Ward that: 'her religious and literary education was essentially completed in 1881. In an intellectual sense, as *Robert Elsmere* indicates, Mrs.

[26] She and Humphry Ward were married on 6 April 1872.

Ward never left Oxford' (*VH*, p.84). She freely admitted that *Robert Elsmere* contained her own experiences in fictional form: 'The astonishment awakened in Elsmere, [. . .] was in truth my own astonishment.'[27] This is fortunate, since her *Recollections* pass over this material very swiftly, and we look there in vain for any psychological insight.

In the effect of Oxford upon her there were two main threads. The first was literary and intellectual: for the first time, she was in an academic environment, among highly educated people who lived in the world of ideas. Her father's position, and the friends she made through him, brought her at last both opportunity and encouragement to study and to remedy some of the deficiencies of her school education. The second thread was religious, and some background is necessary to explain the situation.

At the time of Ward's arrival there, Oxford and religious controversy had long been inseparable, due to the Oxford Movement of almost thirty-five years before. These Tractarians, as they were named (after their Tracts for the Times which began in 1833, and were mostly written by John Henry Newman), had laid emphasis upon the supreme importance of the sacraments, on respect for liturgy, and on the function of priests to interpret the teachings of the Church. The movement originally claimed that its aim was to defend the Anglican Church, but its espousal of such rigidly High Church principles led to a general perception of it as a movement towards Roman Catholicism, and it was accordingly opposed as a new outpost of Protestantism's traditional enemy. The virulent opposition seemed justified when in 1845 Newman converted to Catholicism, an act which led to the Movement's collapse. Oxford, on the rebound, replaced fervent religion with rationalism and anti-clericalism. Mark Pattison, the rector of Lincoln, who from a rigidly Evangelical upbringing had become a close follower of Newman, although he did not convert, commented that: 'Our thoughts reverted to their proper channel, that of the work we had to do'.[28] He, and others, began to see the Tractarian period as an aberration, now being corrected:

[27] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Robert Elsmere, The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.1 & 2 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), v.1 p.xix; hereafter cited *Aut. RE.*
[28] Mark Pattison, *Memoirs* [1885] (Fontwell: Centaur Press, 1969), p.237; hereafter cited *Pattison.*

> the period of Tractarianism had been a period of obscurantism, which had cut us off from the general movement; an eclipse which had shut out the light of the sun in heaven. [. . . .] in 1845 the darkness was dissipated, and the light was let in in an instant, as by the opening of the shutters in the chamber of a sick man who has slept till mid-day.
>
> *Pattison*, p.238

The 'general movement' to which he refers is the growth of Biblical criticism, which, already well-established in Germany, only began in England around the time of Newman's conversion. The first major critical texts published in England were translations of German works, including George Eliot's translation of Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu* in 1846, and of Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* in 1854. Controversy was stirred up again in 1859 by the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, and in 1861 by *Essays and Reviews* (to which Pattison contributed one essay: 'Tendencies of Religious Thought in England 1688-1750'). Pattison's comment above, however, is misleading, since Oxford remained a place of vigorous religious dispute. Ward found there a number of different factions, each located in a different college, and portrayed the situation in dramatic terms:

> Balliol, Christ Church, Lincoln: - the Liberal and utilitarian camp, the Church camp, the researching and pure scholarship camp - with Science and the Museum hovering in the background, as the growing aggressive powers of the future seeking whom they might devour: - they were the signs and symbols of mighty hosts, of great forces still visibly incarnate, and in marching array.
>
> *WR*, pp.131-2

This was more than dispute over which religion was right: people sought a new form of religion, one that could accommodate new scientific discoveries and critical theories. For Ward, after her long deprivation, the resulting whirl of ideas, disputes and controversy was irresistible, and she 'slipped into the Oxford life as a fish into water' (*WR*, p.102).

Her Evangelical views led her to form friendships among the liberal, Broad church party, characterised by tolerance and breadth of opinion, as opposed to the High Church party of Dr. Pusey and Canon Liddon, whose narrower doctrines included priestly authority, and the saving power of the sacraments. Her friends eventually included the philosopher T.H. Green, the historian J.R. Green, Walter Pater, and Benjamin Jowett, the Master of Balliol 'who, for the

High Church party at Oxford, [. . .] was the symbol and embodiment of all heresy' (*WR*, p.130). Her first and most intense friendship, at least before her marriage in 1872, was with the rationalist scholar Mark Pattison and his much younger wife. She visited them frequently, and claims never to have tired of listening to the talk of Pattison and his fellow dons although, still strongly Evangelical in her views, she was at first 'much scandalised often by the speculative freedom of the talk I heard' (*WR*, p.103). By the age of eighteen, however, she was reading secular works such as those of Auguste Comte[29] and T.H. Huxley[30] without either agitation or offence, as a diary entry from that summer indicates:

> Mr Huxley's arguments against Comte's 'Law of the three States' seemed to me by no means conclusive. . . . It is curious how entirely the infidel tone of these papers passes me by without causing me any discomfort or disquieting me in the least.
>
> *WR*, p.33

Her tone is detached, registering the material's opposition to her former beliefs with intellectual curiosity, and analysing herself as much as the arguments. The fervent Evangelical seems to have become an equally fervent Rationalist. (Or does the lady protest too much?) Ward later described her change of belief through the title character in *Marcella*: only two years after leaving the headmistress she so adored:

> Those precious letters had worn themselves away; so, too, had Marcella's religious feelings; she was once more another being.
>
> *Mar*, p.46

Removal from the beloved person, from the embodied idea, had proved Ward's religious passion unsustainable: she had been drawn to Evangelicalism through affection for others, rather than through an inner bias such as that described by Newman, and the effect was strictly temporary. But were her changes simply the result of new influences and affections and the excitement and turmoil of Oxford, or were other forces at work?

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[29] Known for his philosophy of Positivism, and of the passage of time bringing progress to the world.
[30] The zoologist and agnostic known as 'Darwin's bulldog' for his aggressive support of evolutionary theory.

Study and Reason

A superficial view would argue that her close bond with Pattison led her to adopt his beliefs as she had previously adopted the Cunliffes' Evangelicalism. However, a new factor had entered the equation. Alongside Ward's passion and enthusiasm (religious and otherwise) was a hitherto undeveloped intellectual streak, for the first time being given opportunity to grow. It formed one more bond between the two friends: both had suffered from poor early education, leading to what each saw as delayed development of the intellectual faculty, and both considered themselves late developers mentally. Pattison wrote in his Memoirs of how: 'at twenty-one I seemed ten years in the rear of my contemporaries' (*Pattison*, p.325). Ward wrote of how at Oxford she:

> awoke intellectually to a hundred interests and influences that begin much earlier nowadays to affect any clever child. I had few tools and little grounding; and I was much more childish than I need have been.
> *WR*, p.99

Pattison had studied long hours at university to correct his deficiencies, and advised her to follow his example, albeit in rather extreme terms: 'Get to the bottom of something. [. . .] Choose a subject, and know *everything* about it' (*WR*, p.105). She took his advice. While at school she had written fiction only: her first known story, 'A Tale of the Moors', a romance set in Spain, was written at the age of 13, in October 1864. Several more followed. In 1869 she wrote a novel, 'Ailie', which was rejected by Smith, Elder that August. 'A Westmorland Story' was her first published work, in 1870, about a girl who nurses cholera victims to atone for jilting her fiancé, and then dies, repentant. Now, however, Ward abandoned fiction, and began her first experience of serious academic study:

> the only thorough 'discipline' I ever had; it lasted about two years - years of incessant, arduous work, and it led directly to the writing of *Robert Elsmere*.

WR, p.151

Her chosen subject was early Spanish ecclesiastical history, a subject of which few people at the time had any great knowledge. The resulting expertise would later make her the first woman to set exams at Oxford University. More immediately, her studies had a far-reaching effect upon her.

Firstly, she learned how to research facts, organise material, and present her resulting theories in a clear, structured manner. Secondly, she learned to concentrate, to read with purpose, to learn a subject deeply rather than switching in her previous dilettante fashion from one area to another.[31] Thirdly:

> It altered my whole outlook, and gave me horizons and sympathies that I have never lost, however dim all the positive knowledge brought me by the work has long since become.
>
> *WR*, p.163

The greatest effect lay in the attitudes and feelings to which Ward's work led her. The earliest changes were religious, yet, although ecclesiastical history of her period meant Roman Catholic history, she did not follow her father and convert to Catholicism. It is interesting to consider why.

First of all, given her previous pattern of adopting the opinions of those she was fond of, it might be considered significant that none of her new friends were Catholics. More important, however, was Ward's growing independence: although several of her mentors were historians, none was a specialist in Spanish ecclesiastical history. She could work alone in the Bodleian library, reading, assessing and appraising for herself, with few to challenge her conclusions: applying the methods she had learned from them to her own work. The strength of will that she had demonstrated as a child came to the fore, and such independence of mind, and desire to experience for oneself rather than through others' interpretation, are far closer to

[31] For example, treasuring passages of Ruskin 'without in the least caring to read the books from which they came', *WR*, p.99.

the personal experience advocated by Evangelicals than to the authoritarian teachings of Catholicism. Ward was becoming inner-directed.

Her approach to study was also determined by the innate bias of her character. Instead of working to piece together the past to produce an overall picture of progress and human advance leading to the present, as was the practice of the time, she would pore over an old document for hours, with the aim of:

> attaching to it some fragment of human interest, so that gradually something of a picture emerged, as of a thing lost and recovered - dredged up from the deeps of time - that, I think, was the joy of it all.
> *WR*, p.165

She wanted not simply to acquire facts, but to imaginatively understand; to uncover the thoughts and experiences of real people, fitting clues together in a kind of treasure hunt until at last a vivid scene emerged with all the thrill of a mental leap across centuries. It was a personal, emotionally involving approach, after the manner of the school of which her friend J.R. Green was one of the leaders:

> which holds that without imagination and personality a man had better not write history at all; since no re-creation of the past is really possible without the kindling and welding force that a man draws from his own spirit.
> *WR*, p.147

Since she worked alone, Ward could be sure that the interpretations and understanding she gained were hers alone, coloured only by her own character and imagination. Her choice of words is interesting in this sense: the personal force involved would kindle her material as if starting a fire and bringing forth the desired warmth, then this material and her imagination would combine in what, to her, would be a lasting reconstruction of the past.

To put it another way, her approach resembles that shown by Walter Pater in *The Renaissance*, with his insistence upon the personal revelations of art. In the example below, he discusses Michelangelo:

> To him, lover and student of Greek sculpture as he was, work which did not bring what was inward to the surface, which was not concerned with individual expression, character, feeling, the special history of the special soul, was not worth doing at all.[32]

Ward, like Pater, advocated personal, emotional, imaginative reactions. It was the approach of a novelist.[33] She may have set aside her fiction-writing in favour of study, but the talent was inborn, and demanding to be used.

When Ward's similarity of approach to Pater above is combined with her religious interests, her area of greatest focus seems inevitable:

> what began to interest and absorb me were *sources* - *testimony*. To what - to whom - did it all go back? - this great story of early civilisation, early religion, which modern men could write and interpret so differently?
>
> *WR*, p.165

Her ultimate aim, despite the paucity of known facts, was to use witness statements from the past to uncover the truth buried under centuries of accumulated dogma and tradition, and so reveal the true origins of Christianity. Later, she would endow her alter ego Robert Elsmere with the same ambition, through his equivalent study of early French ecclesiastical history. Her work involved the earliest examples of personal testimony she could find, and the Bible itself, regarded by many Protestant sects, including the Evangelicals, as the primary source of religious guidance. Two decades of biblical criticism in England had already worked to remove much of the mystique surrounding religious documents; her friend Benjamin Jowett had famously instructed others to 'interpret the Scripture like any other book.'[34] Ward would not allow scruples or taboos to prevent her, but analysed the Bible for evidence as she would any ancient document. If Jowett's injunction is viewed as influence upon her, then, it is influence

[32] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, ed. Adam Phillips [1873] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1986), p.43; hereafter cited *Ren*.
[33] Pater, too, was a novelist, publishing *Marius the Epicurean* in 1885.
[34] Benjamin Jowett, *Scripture and Truth* (London: Henry Frowde, 1907).p.53. This follows the approach of David Friedrich Strauss in *Das Leben Jesu* (1835): 'He simply examined the New Testament critically as if it were any other text to show that its supernatural elements were myths created like other myths by the Messianic expectations of the early disciples', Gordon S. Haight (ed.), *The Portable Victorian Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.xxvi.

regarding approach, rather than religious conviction. She tried as far as she could to keep an open mind, using the latest historical knowledge as an aid to understanding, since:

> to adopt the witness of those centuries to matters of fact, without translating it at every step, into the historical language of our own day, a language which the long education of time has brought closer to the realities of things - would be to end by knowing nothing, actually and truly, about their life.[35]

The belief systems and world view of ancient people had to be taken into account, and documents had to be placed in their proper context, else correct understanding could not be attained. However, Biblical study produced other effects besides understanding; removing mystique from religious documents also led to doubts and uncertainties regarding the miracles they contained, such as the divinity of Christ, the atoning power of the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection.

The more Mary Arnold studied, the more insistent her questioning, and the greater her doubts. Her remaining Evangelicalism, with its emphasis upon close adherence to the Bible, upon stifling doubts and avoiding theological discussion, fell away under the paramount need to study and to understand. She was not alone: her grandfather Dr. Arnold had come to doubt miracle many years before, and her friends Mark Pattison, Stopford Brooke, T.H. Green, and J.R. Green had trod the same path. Religious dogma, particularly Roman Catholic dogma (given the prejudice of the time) was viewed as forbidding free enquiry and self-reliance:

> The dogma consecrated by the blood of martyrs, becomes in lapse of time a tyrant over reason; and from having been the bulwark of faith, settles into its chief impediment.[36]

Over time, Pattison argues, since dogma, once decided, never changes, it becomes less and less appropriate to the needs of the age, and so increasingly hard to accept and to trust. John

[35] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Mandell Creighton 13 March 1888, William S. Peterson, 'Mrs. Humphry Ward on Robert Elsmere: Six New Letters', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 74 (November 1970), pp.587-97 (p.591); hereafter cited *Six Letters*.

[36] Mark Pattison, 'Calvin at Geneva', *Essays*, ed. Henry Nettleship (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), v.2 pp.3-4.

Morley agreed, believing that the vows sworn when taking Orders forced the clergy to 'take oath, in other words, to lead mutilated lives',[37] since they could never thenceforward change their opinions. Dogma, to him, was therefore unnatural and harmful. T.H. Green considered that it 'holds free thought in bondage'.[38]

Such views were increasingly widespread, as appeared in the idea that, of Anglicans, only the High Church party wished to retain dogma. Yet it is open to question. If ideas develop over time, then the accumulation of dogma forms part of that development: John Henry Newman believed that the church defined itself slowly over centuries, opposing dogma to the continual onslaught of outside ideas, and that to survive the present increase of rationalism it must become ever more restrictive:

> I do not shrink from uttering my firm conviction that it would be a gain to the country were it vastly more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion than at present it shows itself to be.[39]

Not a vision of England that would appeal to the anti-Catholic factions! The whole debate can be summed up by two quotations, both delivered in sermons in 1865. Firstly, one by Pattison, ending:

> It will be an ill day for the Church of England when dogma and authority gain the upper hand and reason is denied its rightful place as the corner-stone of all religion.[40]

The very same afternoon, a High Church sermon given by Canon H.P. Liddon, began:

> Dogma and authority, authority and dogma - these two form the keystone in the arch of our holy faith.
>
> *Sayce*, p.35

[37] John Morley, *On Compromise* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874), p.30; hereafter cited *Morley*, p.30.
[38] T.H. Green, 'Christian Dogma', *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, ed. R.L. Nettleship (London: Longmans, Green, 1888), p.182; hereafter cited *Green*.
[39] John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* [1864] (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), p.121; hereafter cited *Apologia*.
[40] A.H. Sayce, *Reminiscences* (London: Macmillan, 1923), p.35; hereafter cited *Sayce*.

Here is the Oxford dispute in a nutshell. For High Churchmen and Catholics, dogma maintained the required unquestioning obedience to the Church; while questioning led to loss of faith, and was therefore sinful. In contrast, Broad Churchmen and freethinkers, among them Ward and her friends, held that dogma obstructed free individual enquiry, caused rigidity and stagnation, and was therefore harmful. They wanted the liberty to fully assess the progression from original testimony to their modern, scientific, knowledgeable present.

Mark Pattison was a prime example of such free development. To outsiders, he seemed to be constantly changing, from original Evangelicalism to High Anglicanism and Tractarianism, to his final rationalist position. Pattison himself, however, claimed that these were not sudden, thoughtless, switches, but that 'what took place with me was simple expansion of knowledge and ideas' (*Pattison*, p.326). After the Oxford Movement ended:

> Catholicism dropped off me as another husk which I had outgrown. There was no conversion or change of view; I could no more have helped what took place within me than I could have helped becoming ten years older.
>
> *Pattison*, p.328

Pattison saw his religious changes as natural growth, inner developments towards progressively more advanced levels (he outgrows his earlier stages as he goes). Through it all, he maintains inner integrity and a sense of continuity, regardless of outward appearance. Such understanding sheds new light on the conversion, perversion and reconversion of Tom Arnold, following his inner voice in the face of all opposition. It also explains Ward's insistence upon the need for total honesty about one's beliefs at any given moment, regardless of inconsistency with past declarations. It is even true of that great advocate of dogma, Newman himself, who wrote that 'in a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.'[41] (No matter that what he called change and development, others saw as increasing narrowness and exclusivity.) Heather Henderson, in *The Victorian Self*, argues that in his *Apologia*:

[41] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, ed. J.M. Cameron [1845] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p.40.

> Newman was anxious to show that his conversion was not an abrupt, discontinuous change, but rather a natural, almost inevitable, organic process.[42]

Yet Newman is actually consistent. He follows his own argument that individuals should discover and follow their own inner needs ('My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature' (*Ass*, p.273)), according to God's intention for them, and wherever those needs may lead. Dogma, as a feature of the church, was part of God's intention, therefore another law which should be followed.

Ward linked individual development with God's purpose, and with the concept of progress. In *The Case of Richard Meynell*, her sequel to *Robert Elsmere*, the title character informs his bishop that to adhere to dogma is:

> to fly in the face of that gradual education of the world - education of the mind - education of the conscience - which is the chief mark of God in the world.
>
> *RM*, p.256

For her, conscience is 'God's revelation', a guide for individual development according to God's plan. And as individuals follow this guide with all their faculties, they learn and develop; through them the human race develops, and what seems to traditionalists a rejection of religion (undermining dogma, denying miracle) actually becomes a new form of it. It is no surprise that for Ward, as for her friend T.H. Green, reason was also a faculty associated with the divine:

> God is forever reason: and His communication, His revelation, is reason; not, however, abstract reason, but reason as taking a body from, and giving life to, the whole system of experience which makes the history of man.[43]

[42] Heather Henderson, *The Victorian Self: Autobiography and Biblical Narrative* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p.21.
[43] 'The Witness of God', *Green*, p.239. The passage is quoted in *Robert Elsmere* by Henry Grey, a character modelled upon T.H. Green.

Reason is part of 'God's revelation', yet conscience and reason are not identical. Both are inborn, from God, yet while conscience is constantly present, reason has grown just as humans have grown, until it aids interpretation of God's message, and facilitates perception of patterns in human progress. Through the use of reason, individuals become self-reliant, able to make the conscious, deliberate choice to follow God's path: and thus denial of miracle, and unconventional religious beliefs become a sign of progress of the world and its people.

Traditionalists argued that reason was destructive rather than constructive, since it created doubts where there need be none. In *Robert Elsmere*, Mary Ward provides several examples of such destructive power, beginning with Squire Wendover, identified by many readers as Mark Pattison: both had links with Newman before losing their faith, turned to rationalism and intellectual work; and both died before completing their magnum opus. Wendover's immense learning dies with him, and no affection or fond remembrance of him is mentioned, a picture of waste that hints at Ward's final judgement upon Pattison. A similar judgement is also indicated through George Eliot's scholar Casaubon, also popularly supposed to be based upon Pattison, whose Key to All Mythologies is left incomplete upon his death. Ward gives the reader to understand that Wendover's life was an unbalanced one, in which his natural bent towards intellect and criticism was followed at the expense of all else. What Ward criticises in the novel, then, is not the use of intellect as one character trait among many, but over-emphasis upon it - rather a different thing. Wendover's library, the source of the books which intensify Elsmere's doubts, contains, in its statue of the malevolent figure of Medusa: 'an apt symbol of that absorbing and overgrown life of the intellect which blights the heart and chills the senses' (*RE*, p.254), and serves to indicate the risk Elsmere runs in his studying: he may be set on the same path as the Squire.

The main example in the novel of emotional numbness caused by excessive use of intellect, however, is that of Elsmere's former tutor Edward Langham, and his aim of 'being pure intelligence, pure open-eyed rationality'. Over the years, Langham has withdrawn from any active involvement in life, in personal relationships and in his University career, and Ward describes 'the cold critical instinct which had been for years draining his life of all its natural

energies'. The tragedy of Langham is that his numbness is not yet complete; he still has 'a kind of hunger for life and its satisfactions, which the will was more and more powerless to satisfy' (*RE*, pp. 240, 216, 217). Once the process begins, it is more and more difficult to reverse.

The threat to Elsmere in both examples lies also in the initial excitement caused by devotion to intellect. Ward illustrates this through Langham's abortive love affair with Catherine Elsmere's sister Rose Leyburn, to whom he speaks more freely than to anyone:

> Vaguely at first, and then with a growing flame and force, he fell to describing to her what the life of thought may be to the thinker, and those marvellous moments which belong to that life when the mind which has divorced itself from desire and sense sees spread out before it the vast realms of knowledge, and feels itself close to the secret springs and sources of being [. .] till the bewildered child beside him, warm through and through as she was with youth and passion, felt for an instant by sheer fascinated sympathy the cold spell, the ineffable prestige, of the thinker's voluntary death in life.
>
> But only for an instant. Then the natural sense of chill smote her to the heart.
>
> *RE*, p.218

It is a life which appears vast and open, full of wonders, as a twist of perception replaces numbed emotions by a mind freed from the distraction of feeling and sensory input, able to concentrate entirely on its chosen subject. It has power: for a few moments Langham seems to possess a passionate mind, in which thoughts act like emotions, bringing vitality to the thinker. The vividly alive, passionate Rose recoils, reminding the reader that the excessive self-control and self-repression required by such over-intellectualism are not 'life' so much as 'death in life':

> "Happiness is to be got from living, seeing, experiencing, making friends, enjoying nature! Look at the world, Mr. Langham! [. . . .] Oh, I cannot imagine it!" she cried. "I shall feel to my last hour"
>
> *RE*, p.218

Her words go straight to the heart of the issue: human feeling, human involvement in the world, and a balance of activities, are what count.

When Newman's insistence upon 'the laws of my nature', and Ward's upon the laws of character are remembered, one wonders if there was any way for Langham and Wendover to

avoid their respective fates, or whether their excessive intellectualism is innate and pre-destined. Certainly George Eliot does not represent character as wholly fixed:

> "But, my dear Mrs. Casaubon," said Mr. Farebrother, smiling gently at her ardour, "character is not cut in marble - it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do."
> "Then it may be rescued and healed," said Dorothea.[44]

Ward, too, uses Rose to indicate the possibility of escape:

> "We make our own destiny," she said impatiently. "We choose. It is all our own doing. Perhaps destiny begins things - friendship, for instance; but afterwards it is absurd to talk of anything but ourselves."
> *RE*, p.239

The key to this predicament is the freedom of individuals to choose whether or not to heed 'God's revelation', as appears in a careful reading of *Robert Elsmere*. Wendover, Langham, and Elsmere all share an innate trait of character in that they all enjoy, and have a talent for, intellectual work. The difference between Elsmere and the other two is that Elsmere is shown to use a range of traits, with his power of feeling and of establishing close human relationships counterbalancing the appeal of pure intellect. In addition, he has other pursuits besides study: he fishes, runs a nature society and a story-telling group for local children, and has a warm family life. Wendover and Langham, however, did not maintain such variety, but chose to follow one trait above all, and to let the others atrophy.[45] Langham at least recognises what he has done, as he finally decides to end his relationship with Rose:

> Slave as you are of habit, of the character you have woven for yourself out of years of deliberate living - what wild unreason to imagine that love can unmake, can recreate! What you are, you are to all eternity.
> *RE*, pp.433-4

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[44] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. W.J. Harvey [1872] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp.790-1; hereafter cited *Mid.*

[45] Their respective horrific fates recall that of Victor Frankenstein, wrapping himself in his studies until he creates the monster that eventually destroys him.

To recall Rose's words, he has indeed forged his own destiny, and has become fixed, without hope of change, hopelessly longing for more life just as the virtuous pre-Christians of Dante's Limbo hopelessly long to see God. His predicament can also be regarded as a small scale illustration of the freethinkers' understanding of dogma as causing increased rigidity. By contrast, Elsmere represents the Protestant ethos of free enquiry and balance: he never neglects any one side of his nature in favour of another, and so is safe from the dangers of excessive intellect.[46]

Nevertheless, despite Ward's examples of the dangers of excess and imbalance, and her demonstration of how to avoid them, the presentation of reason is still that of an extremely powerful force. Newman wrote that 'No truth, however sacred, can stand against it, in the long run' (*Apologia*, p.277). However, his own experience of conversion nearly twenty years before writing this comment argues precisely the opposite: as an Anglican he had studied ancient history, in particular the early Church Fathers, with the aim of reaching the original truths behind the accumulated dogma of orthodox Christianity. When this work satisfied him that only the Catholic Church showed an unbroken development of doctrine throughout, he concluded that Protestantism could not stand, but, instead of losing his faith, he famously converted. Newman is an exception, though, as over the century many people *did* leave the Church of England through loss of faith; although, like his, each case was individual. Their destinations, however, varied. To give a few examples: Blanco White, a friend of Newman, became a Unitarian; William Hale White (Mark Rutherford), originally a Bedford Congregationalist, lost his faith altogether; Stopford Brooke left 'on grounds of what we should now call Modernism' (*WR*, p.295), and Leslie Stephen 'realised that he could no longer conscientiously conduct the chapel services.'[47] Literary examples include *North and South*'s Mr. Hale, heading for a secular job in the north; and *The Nemesis of Faith*'s Markham Sutherland.

[46] Over-emphasis upon one trait appears in Charles Dickens' Scrooge, whose drive to acquire money led to a withdrawal from the human contact and warmth he had originally enjoyed. However, the approach of the four ghosts, working upon his emotions and imagination rather than upon his reason, broke through his conscious barriers and succeeded in bringing out his neglected faculties, to restore Scrooge to the man he always was, at bottom.

[47] Phyllis Grosskurth, *Leslie Stephen* (Harlow: Longmans, Green, 1968), p.9; hereafter cited *Grosskurth*.

The Process of Loss

Now that Mary Ward has been set in context, both of place and of ideas, I want now to examine the process and sequence of her loss of orthodoxy, and the role played by the faculties of reason and conscience, to distinguish the extent to which she responded to outside influence, and to which she was guided from within. Alongside this, since it is closely tied in with her experience, the question of sin will be discussed, as she debated it with the staunchly Anglican W.E. Gladstone after the publication of *Robert Elsmere*. She wrote to him:

> Does not the difference between us on the question of sin come very much to this – that to you the great fact in the world and in the history of man, is *sin*, - to me, *progress*?[48]

Was the abandonment of orthodoxy a sin, as orthodox believers thought, or was it, as Ward states, a sign of human progress? The question reached critical mass in the Bampton lecture of 1881, given in Oxford by the Rev. John Wordsworth:[49]

> it was the shock of indignation excited in me by the sermon which led directly - though after seven intervening years - to 'Robert Elsmere.'
> The sermon was on 'The present unsettlement in religion'; and it connected the 'unsettlement' definitely with 'sin.'
> *WR*, p.168

Wordsworth argued that unbelief came about due to a secret inclination to sin within a doubting individual. Ward was outraged: not only was Wordsworth preaching against the open minded, rational approach of herself and her friends, he was presenting it as sinful, contrary to God's will. This was unacceptable: 'My heart was hot within me. How could one show England what was really going on in her midst?' (*WR*, p.168) Although she does not identify the reference, Ward is quoting Psalms 39:3: 'My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue.' As the verse says, Ward spoke out. Her outrage would

[48] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to W.E. Gladstone 15 April 1888, *PH*.
[49] Great-nephew to the poet, Wordsworth was then a Fellow and Tutor of Brasenose, and later became Bishop of Salisbury.

eventually lead to the creation of *Robert Elsmere*, but it found initial expression in a pamphlet entitled, appropriately enough, *Unbelief and Sin*. Conceived in what became her habitual method of embodying her arguments (as William Peterson comments, 'she was primarily responsive to ideas embodied in human flesh' (*VH*, p.63)), the pamphlet makes its points by the means of two men called only A, who presents Ward's own beliefs, and C, caught up in the idea of sin.

Both men begin with the kind of blind confidence in their faith shown in the early preaching of Hale White's Mark Rutherford: 'No shadow of a suspicion of its truth ever crossed my mind, and yet I had not spent an hour in comprehending, much less in answering, one objection to it.'[50] Ward's Robert Elsmere would hold a similar position; having decided to take Orders, he declares that 'Christian theology is a system of ideas indeed, but of ideas realised, made manifest in facts.' Significantly, his tutor Langham's response is: 'How do you know they are facts?', and he concludes: 'He imagines he has satisfied his intellect, [. . .] and he has never so much as exerted it' (*RE*, p.68). In *Unbelief and Sin*, as for Ward herself, it is when study of orthodox Christianity begins that doubts arise. Through the contrast between A & C, 'the one carried by history and criticism into 'unbelief,' the other gradually stifling in himself the instincts and power of the free mind' (*US*, p.20), she demonstrates and justifies the process of losing faith.

Despite his Church upbringing, A displays determination and resilience, and maintains the all-important open mind; while C retreats with maximum haste away from his doubts, and back to the teachings of the orthodox church, as it was described by Wordsworth and Hale White:

> The risks on all hands of free scientific inquiry are felt to be too great, the mind cannot face them, and the conscience is soon taught that there is no need to face them. Orthodox friends are at hand to assure him that the inquiry is itself sinful, and that to make it is merely to waste the forces of his moral and spiritual life.
>
> *US*, p.20

[50] William Hale White, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, ed. William S. Peterson [1881] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1990), p.18; hereafter cited *Rutherford*.

He cannot tolerate the turmoil of challenging his long-held beliefs, cannot face such a leap into the unknown. The latter part of this passage, though, is the most important for Ward's argument: C quite clearly cannot stand alone,[51] cannot rely upon either his conscience, the voice from God, or upon his own feelings and conclusions, so he smothers his doubts by dogma and retreats to orthodoxy. In Ward's terms, this means he is actually moving further from God, and from individual development, and the consequences are severe: 'Thenceforward nothing is less free to him than thought' (*US*, p.20). Or, to paraphrase John Morley from earlier: C will from now on lead a 'mutilated life':

> He is like a man who has lost a sense. [. . .] The power of free judgement and appreciation is gone, and he rejoices in its departure. Such a power is only compatible with 'unbelief,' and 'unbelief is sin'
>
> *US*, pp.21-2

C has lost a fundamental way of relating to the world, just as if he has literally been crippled. Mental and emotional qualities are just as important to the self as its physical form.

For A, however, the progression moves differently. As did Ward, he continues to apply his reason to Christianity despite his deep emotional attachment to it and the resulting turmoil of doubt. His study does not instantly shed new light – 'The process of this new intellectual operation is slow and often half conscious' (*US*, p.12) - but causes an inner stirring, the process which took place in Ward herself:

> a kind of far-reaching stir and rumination, if one may so put it, which gradually affected the whole mind. And it was this stir and rumination which, six years later, I endeavoured to reproduce in *Robert Elsmere*.[52]
>
> *Aut. RE*, p.xix

[51] C recalls the lines of Arthur Hugh Clough: "If this pure solace should desert my mind, / What were all else? I dare not risk the loss. / To the old paths, my soul!" 'Dipsychus', Arthur Hugh Clough, *Selected Poems*, ed. J.P. Phelan (London: Longman, 1995), p.215; hereafter cited *Clough*.

[52] Mark Rutherford is shown to have a similar response to *Lyrical Ballads*: 'it excited a movement and a growth which went on till, by degrees, all the systems which enveloped me like a body gradually decayed from me and fell away into nothing. Of more importance, too, than the decay of systems was the birth of a habit of inner reference', *Rutherford*, p.22.

As study continues initial doubts spread, and new insights arise, until the whole attitude is affected, even though only at an unconscious level. As Robert Elsmere, reflecting the experience of A, which reflects Ward's own story, later tells his wife Catherine:

> if I had wished it ever so much, I could not have helped myself. The process, so to speak, had gone too far by the time I knew where I was.
>
> *RE*, p.351

Since the process of change happens below the level of conscious awareness, it cannot be stopped, it cannot be controlled or directed from outside, and by the time the individual realises what is happening, it is already too late: the change has progressed too far. Newman's comment that nothing can stand against reason is not, then, strictly accurate, at least as far as this process is concerned:

> For the ultimate answer to the critical intellect, or, as Newman called it, the 'wild living intellect of man,' when it is dealing with Christianity and miracle, is that reason is *not* the final judge - is indeed, in the last resort, the enemy, and must at some point go down, defeated and trampled on.[53]
>
> *WR*, p.261

At this unconscious level, reason is no longer relevant, and change grows outwards from deep within.

This brings us back to one of my opening quotations, Ward's statement that 'character is inexorable', which relates to this process in several ways. Firstly, character provides the aptitude and determination for study, and its innate inclinations help to determine the choice of subject: Ward began with early ecclesiastical Spanish history, but quickly focussed more precisely upon testimony, according to her imaginative personality, and her interest in people and their ideas or, most particularly, ideas embodied in personalities. Secondly, character affects the approach taken to that study; whether the individual is able to work open-mindedly or chooses to adhere to certain doctrines. Thirdly, when unsettling doubts appear, it is

[53] The quotation from Newman concerns critical treatments of the Bible: 'a book, after all, cannot make a stand against the wild living intellect of man', *Apologia*, p.278.

character again which determines how the individual reacts: C retreated, A, Elsmere, and Ward kept going. The trait is repeated in her later article 'The New Reformation', written to defend *Robert Elsmere* against an attack by W.E. Gladstone in *The Nineteenth Century*, and once again structured around the contrast between two characters, one retaining orthodox beliefs, and the other offering character as his defence for having lost them:

> 'I believe it is very much a matter of temperament. I could not master the passionate desire to think the matter through, to harmonise knowledge and faith, to get to the bottom.'[54]

John Stuart Mill would agree with this statement of the power of character in study:

> No one can be a great thinker who does not recognise, that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead.[55]

Similarly, Elsmere continues to work on early testimony, 'in obedience to certain inevitable laws and instincts of the mind' (*RE*, p.310). The combination of 'obedience' with 'inevitable' emphasizes how his own nature makes it impossible for him to draw back.

These factors lead to the conclusion that innate character traits such as persistence and hunger for truth are a major factor in religious change, whether the individual moves towards the order and authority of the Catholic Church, as Newman, or towards loss of belief in miracle, and independence of view, as Ward, and as she demonstrates through Elsmere:

> Faith that is not free - that is not the faith of the whole creature, body, soul, and intellect - seemed to me a faith worthless both to God and man!
>
> *RE*, p.351

To have any value, faith must be freely given, and come from both the inner self (soul) and the conscious reasoning mind (intellect). Here a new factor enters the argument: that of integrity.

[54] Mrs. Humphry Ward, 'The New Reformation: A Dialogue,' *Nineteenth Century* 25 (June 1889), pp.454-80 (p.461).
[55] John Stuart Mill, 'On Liberty', *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford: World's Classics, 1991), p.39; hereafter cited *Liberty*.

To follow one's own nature and its needs, to go where character and conscience dictate, without restriction or denial, is to live with integrity. For Elsmere, with his wife just as much as with his God, integrity counts most, and the consequent strains upon the Elsmeres' relationship reflect the young Mary Arnold's own experience of the trauma caused by such a force.

But to consider that now would be leaping ahead. For now, we are at the point where stirrings deep within the self have built up until the individual must become aware of them, and deal with them consciously. In Ward's work this leap occurs in one sudden moment, with the speed and power of a dam bursting, and with a consistency which indicates that she is transcribing her own experience. Of A in *Unbelief and Sin* it is said that 'after long pondering, he awakes to find a new, and as it seems to him, bewildering and terrible light breaking upon life' (*US*, p.14). In *Robert Elsmere* the revelation is equally sudden and violent, beginning as Elsmere reads a book written by Squire Wendover on the latest biblical criticism, in which he expertly points out the fallacies in orthodox Christian belief:

> Suddenly it was to Robert as though a cruel torturing hand were laid upon his inmost being. His breath failed him; the book slipped out of his grasp; he sank down upon his chair, his head in his hands. Oh, what a desolate intolerable moment! Over the young idealist soul there swept a dry destroying whirlwind of thought. Elements gathered from all sources - from his own historical work, from the squire's book, from the secret half-conscious recesses of the mind - entered into it, and as it passed it seemed to scorch the heart.
>
> *RE*, pp.274-5

It seems at first a deliberate attack on Elsmere by some external force, its immense power shown both by the instantaneous physical effect (he can't breathe, he collapses), and by the concomitant vision of his vulnerability. Young and idealistic, he is at risk from any intrusion of harsh reality. The juxtaposition of 'destroying' and 'soul' is also frightening: since the soul is supposedly immortal, indestructible: to threaten it, this attack must be powerful indeed.

But it is *not* an external attack: it is a 'whirlwind of thought', internal, the action of Elsmere's own mind. Thoughts and insights rise from his inner self, swift and irresistible as emotion, beyond reasoned weighing of arguments, and the effect is instantaneous. It is thought envisaged as a destructive, desiccating force - it 'scorches the heart', traditionally the

seat of emotion – as in the Biblical text (particularly loved by the Evangelicals): 'When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.'[56] Elsmere's intellectual studies have led to this violent moment of revelation and trauma, and so comply with Newman's definition of reason as a force more likely to destroy faith than to support it.

The components of the whirlwind, a mixture of external influences and inner mental forces, are directly relevant to its effect. The first-mentioned influence is Elsmere's own work on testimony reinterpreted in the light of modern understanding, and fittingly so, as Wendover and his library merely provided material for the studies which he was already undertaking. They were catalysts only, triggers, not initiators - 'The Squire's influence is described as only the match which ultimately lights the mine' (*Six Letters*, p.592)[57] – and the main action, the last-mentioned factor, arises within Elsmere's own self. But for all its power, the whirlwind is still merely a precursor of the complete loss of orthodoxy which will soon follow.

Slow accumulation of ideas and arguments, followed by sudden release of pent-up force to sweep the old ones away, giving a wholly deceptive impression of sudden and arbitrary change, appears elsewhere in literature of the time, whether fictional or autobiographical (or both), and is, as in *Robert Elsmere*, typically triggered by some seemingly insignificant event. In Geraldine Jewsbury's *Zoe*, Everhard reacts to the story of a friend's error in vowing himself to the priesthood;[58] and John Henry Newman was overcome by one particular phrase in St Augustine's *Confessions* (*Apologia*, pp.174-5). It is William Hale White, in *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, who perhaps conveys most poignantly the trauma of such moments:

> It often happens that a man loses faith without knowing it. Silently the foundation is sapped while the building stands fronting the sun, as solid to all appearance as when it was first turned out of the builder's hands, but at last it falls suddenly with a crash.
>
> *Rutherford*, pp.65-6

[56] Proverbs I: 27.
[57] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Meredith Townsend 26 March 1888.
[58] 'we see for an instant, then the veil which shrouds us from ourselves is again drawn, and we know not what we are; but the insight of that moment works within us, like an instinct, leavening our character and actions for years to come.' Geraldine Jewsbury, *Zoe* 2 vols [1845] (New York: Garland, 1975), v.1 p.112; hereafter cited *Zoe*.

Unconscious developments are viewed as undermining in an extremely literal sense, and the image of the resulting pile of rubble vividly conveys the sense of devastation caused.

The immediate moment of revelation, however, is far from the end of the process. Individuals such as A, and Elsmere, will continue to wrestle with the issues until they finally attain a new point of balance. As for Ward herself, an examination of her letters, and of *A Writer's Recollections*, shows hardly any evidence of her suffering during this time, but her articles and fiction provide abundant evidence of how painful the process can be. She writes of Elsmere's 'anguished mental struggle' (*RE*, p.315), and in *Unbelief and Sin* of 'a time of struggle and of blankness, when all the landmarks of life and conduct appear to waver, and the bitterness of lost certainty makes itself felt' (*US*, p.15). She gave to Elsmere's mentor, Henry Grey, some of her friend T.H. Green's words on the subject: 'The parting with the Christian mythology is the rending asunder of bones & marrow'.[59] Of them all, her most detailed exposition of such trauma appears through the character of Robert Elsmere.

The whirlwind of thought is only the beginning of Elsmere's troubles; he has still to deal with the aftermath. As he is, like A, 'the character that fights its stormy way to truth' (*WR*, p.169), he continues to study, now fully aware of his own mental and emotional predicament. This awareness means that there can be no more whirlwinds, and the next stage Ward presents is completely different in tone:

> Long before the critical case was reached, he had flung the book heavily from him. The mind accomplished its further task without help from outside. In the stillness of the night there rose up weirdly before him a whole new mental picture - effacing, pushing out, innumerable older images of thought. It was the image of a purely human Christ - a purely human, explicable, yet always wonderful Christianity. It broke his heart, but the spell of it was like some dream-country wherein we see all the familiar objects of life in new relations and perspectives. He gazed upon it fascinated, the wailing underneath checked a while by the strange beauty and order of the emerging spectacle. Only a little while! Then with a groan Elsmere looked up, his eyes worn, his lips white and set.
>
> *RE*, p.314

[59] *RE*, p.345. She admitted that these 'were words of Mr Green's to me; & I have known the same wrench in other cases.' Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Mandell Creighton 13 March 1888, *PH*.

As with the previous moment of crisis, he is reading as it begins, but this time the book does not drop unawares, it is deliberately rejected as irrelevant, as rising inner forces take precedence. Elsmere sees a vision full of stillness and silence, beyond reason and intellect, irresistibly replacing his former beliefs. After all, as he remarks later, trying to share his new understanding of Christ with freethinkers in London:

> an idea cannot be killed from without - it can only be supplanted, transformed, by another idea, and that one of equal virtue and magic.
>
> *RE*, p.476

The stillness within and without - it is the middle of the night - increases the strangeness of the moment; Elsmere seems caught in a trance, or under a spell (note the 'magic' in the second quotation), separated even from his own emotions: the statement that his heart is broken seems unreal and impersonal. Yet the vision, arising from Elsmere's innermost self, fits his character as previously established by Ward: he was originally drawn to the Church by 'the stateliness and comely beauty of the Church order', which 'touched his inmost feeling, and satisfied all the poetical and dramatic instincts of a passionate nature.' Attracted by the 'system behind the sight' (*RE*, p.65) as he is, it is no wonder that this first view of the solution to his turmoil should be characterised by pattern and harmony.

Only when the trance breaks does emotion enter the scene, but even as Elsmere groans, and his inner pain appears in his eyes, Ward shows through his 'white and set' lips that he will not abandon his chosen path, that his need to know will carry him through. He has, in fact, reached what A.O.J. Cockshut describes as the second part of religious conversion.

> There are usually (not quite always) two aspects of religious conversion. There is change and growth of conviction; and there is a struggle to accept in the heart what has already been perceived and understood by the mind.
>
> *Cockshut*, p.178

Elsmere's vision above is only a brief illustration of this theory, but it is one which is shown to be a microcosm of the whole process, as over the weeks that follow Elsmere searches, traumatised, for something to replace the order and system he has lost. At first:

> Feeling was untouched. The heart was still passionately on the side of all its old loves and adorations, still blindly trustful that in the end, by some compromise as yet unseen, they would be restored to it intact.
>
> *RE*, p.320

Intellect has been forced to accept the changes from within, but emotions are slow to follow suit. However, the pressure of Elsmere's need for integrity and order soon proves too strong. Typically of development originating within the self, the actual moment of change passes unperceived, and is only recognised after the fact, when he suddenly realises that he no longer has sympathy with arguments that he would formerly have endorsed:

> Suddenly the disintegrating force he had been so pitifully, so blindly, holding at bay had penetrated once for all into the sanctuary! What had happened to him had been the first real failure of *feeling*, the first treachery of the *heart*.
>
> *RE*, p.331

He is now well advanced on the path towards a new integration.

One criticism levelled at *Robert Elsmere* on publication was that the process is completed too quickly for complete credibility. No sooner, it seems, has Elsmere lost his orthodoxy, than his vision provides a framework for his new beliefs, and at once rebuilding begins: 'faith emerged as strong as ever, only craving and eager to make a fresh peace, a fresh compact with the reason' (*RE*, p.393). Ward does, however, make it clear that Elsmere suffers during this time, and his torment is exacerbated by foreknowledge of the problems it will cause between himself and his wife Catherine:

> Oh, could he keep her love through it all? There was an unspeakable dread mingled with his grief - his remorse. It had been there for months. In her eyes would not only pain but *sin* divide them?
>
> *RE*, p. 334

The risk is that the strictness of Catherine's old-fashioned religious views may lead her to follow John Wordsworth's argument in the Bampton lecture, and view what she will interpret as unbelief, as sin. One major theme of the rest of the novel is, in fact, the effect upon the Elsmeres' marriage, and the struggle to resolve it.

W.E. Gladstone's article on the novel comments that although Ward mentions 'the long wrestle' between Wendover and Elsmere, Wendover's arguments are allowed far more space. There is some justice in this, but the imbalance was not caused by any intention on Ward's part to weaken Elsmere in the eyes of the reader (she claimed that he 'was not really weak but only exceptionally sensitive & responsive'[60]). The actual reason was far more prosaic: the first draft of the novel was massively overlong, and had to be greatly cut to render it publishable. Many of these excisions came from Elsmere's objections to Wendover's arguments, and Ward attempted to justify this by arguing that her readers' own upbringing in the Church of England meant that great eloquence by Elsmere was not necessary ('It was the eternal *sous-entendu* of the story, and really gave the story all its force' (*WR*, p.260)). Her emphasis upon his determination and integrity throughout can be viewed as a way to demonstrate his inner strength, and to defend him against charges of inconsistency.

The apparent speed of Elsmere's development can also be attributed to the fact that his belief in God is not questioned; there is, for instance, never any question of his becoming an atheist, or even an agnostic. Elsmere's development leads him to a fresh interpretation of the religion he already has, which in turn means that he never reaches the point of despair: 'The soul had been stripped of its old defences, but at his worst there was never a moment when Elsmere felt himself *utterly* forsaken' (*RE*, p.337). Since he never lost what Ward believed to be the most crucial parts of Christianity, he developed his new beliefs with apparent ease.

Human Christianity and Moral Questions

[60] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Meredith Townsend 23 March 1888, *Six Letters*, p.592.

The nature of Ward's, and her creation Elsmere's, beliefs after such change includes denial of the miraculous in religion. Further details emerge from Elsmere's vision, of a 'purely human Christ - a purely human, explicable, yet always wonderful Christianity' (*RE*, p.314). For Ward, as she presented consistently through *Unbelief and Sin*, *Robert Elsmere*, and 'The New Reformation', once miracles were stripped away from Protestant Christianity as being the best efforts of ancient people to express their own experience and understanding, what remained was Christ viewed simply as a man, and as a great teacher and example:

> Every human soul in which the voice of God makes itself felt, enjoys, equally with Jesus of Nazareth, the divine sonship, and '*miracles do not happen!*'
>
> *RE*, p.332

For Ward, a human Christ is the child of God just as all people are children of God, with inborn traits to help determine their path, and the inner voice of God's revelation as further guide. All are equally worthy, and all share the same duties of self-reliance and self-development.

She had reached this conclusion early: her serious study began when she was about seventeen; at twenty-two she informed her father: 'Of dogmatic Christianity I can make nothing. Nothing is clear except the personal character of Christ'.[61] She may seem young to undergo such religious crisis, but was not unusually so for the time. To give a few examples: Frances Power Cobbe, born in 1822 and brought up Evangelical, began to doubt at sixteen, and by age twenty had become what she later recognised (after T.H. Huxley coined the word) as agnostic. George Eliot broke with orthodox Christianity in 1842 at the age of twenty-two. In any case, by July 1876, two years later (and just weeks before her father's final return to Catholicism), Ward's orthodoxy was completely gone: Mrs Johnson, an artist painting her portrait, summed up her beliefs as follows:

> I was surprised at the full extent of her vague religion. Jowett is her great admiration and Matt Arnold her guide for some things. She is great on the rising Dutch and French and German school of religious thought, very free criticism of the Bible, entire denial of miracle, our

[61] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 13 January 1874, *PH*.

> Lord only a great teacher. I felt as if I had been beaten about, as I always do after the excitement of such talks. And yet it is all a striving after righteousness, sincerity, truth.'
>
> *Tr*, p.28

Her religion might well seem vague to an outsider, since it was almost totally lacking in generally accepted dogma. Benjamin Jowett's advocation of open-minded, rational questioning was mentioned earlier; the other name mentioned here is that of Ward's much-admired uncle, Matthew Arnold. Arnold had also lost his orthodox Christian faith although, unlike his niece, he remained within the fold of the Church of England. Elsmere's denial above - '*miracles do not happen*' (*RE*, p.322) – is taken from the ending of Arnold's 1883 preface to *Literature and Dogma*, a book in which he aimed 'to re-assure those who feel attachment to Christianity, to the Bible':[62]

> Christianity is immortal; it has eternal truth, inexhaustible value, a boundless future. But our popular religion at present conceives the birth, ministry and death of Christ, as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle; - *and miracles do not happen.*
>
> *LD*, p.xii

The crucial point in Mrs Johnson's passage, though, comes at the end: Tom Arnold's desire to live with integrity according to his conscience was equally strong in his daughter, and she could not but follow her inner nature. In this she resembles her uncle's description of those able to make the 'great change' from miracle to what he called natural Christianity: 'It can only be brought about by those whose attachment to Christianity is such, that they cannot part with it, and yet cannot but deal with it sincerely' (*LD*, p.viii). Ward had become unable to reconcile her human Christianity with the Church of England's insistence on miracle by her mid-twenties, and so left it, a decision that makes Matthew Arnold's decision to remain despite his own loss of orthodoxy seem rather hypocritical, particularly when juxtaposed with his appeals to individuals to follow the self-imposed authority and control of the 'best self' he is sure exists within them.

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[62] Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma* [1873] (London: Smith, Elder, 1891), p.vii; hereafter cited *LD*.

Rather than following Christ as the miraculous saviour of humankind, as orthodoxy demanded, Ward, and those like her, felt free to follow Christ as the peak of what humans might achieve:

> the man in whom the universal spirit of humanity has found its fullest expression; [. . .] he is the ideal or typical man, the Son of Man who reveals what is in humanity, *just because* he is the purest revelation of God in man.[63]

There was no longer any need for liturgy or dogma, which might get in the way of the individual's understanding of, and relationship with, God, as Ward demonstrated through the character of A:

> No perfecting of the historical method, no comparative handling of religions, can cut the ground from under this faith. Other men, he feels, are free to disbelieve it. But he feels also with joy unspeakable that he is free to believe it, and the kernel of the inner life thus saved, he begins to construct its whole anew.
>
> And as the reconstruction proceeds he recovers all that is permanent in Christianity. He finds again the Master, no longer disguised from him by the veils, whether of ignorant love or of intellectual subtlety, but living, true, intelligible, the man Christ Jesus.
>
> *US*, p.17

Since this religious belief rests on truth, as far as it can be ascertained, rather than upon stories of incredible events, it is sure and certain; a religious rock, indeed. It brings a sense of wholeness and integration, of intense delight and confidence: for example, Elsmere feels 'a new inrushing sense which seemed to him a sense of liberty, of infinite expansion' (*RE*, p.322-3). In real life, Leslie Stephen, a Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, regarded his decision to cease conducting services in 1862 (he was ordained in 1855) not as 'separating him from a cherished security, but rather as the lifting of an onerous weight of insincerity and doubt' (*Grosskurth*, p.9). Also, since the process of development has been so inner-directed, so personal, it brings self-reliance, a security that does not need the support of others.

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[63] Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion* (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1893), v.2 p.233; hereafter cited *Caird*.

In this elevation of the role of conscience and the inner self, Ward's views directly opposed the submission and sense of worthlessness taught by the church. She echoed rather those expressed by John Stuart Mill in his essay 'On Liberty':

> if it be any part of religion to believe that man was made by a good Being, it is more consistent with that faith to believe, that this Being gave all human faculties that they might be cultivated and unfolded, not rooted out and consumed, and that he takes delight in every nearer approach made by his creatures to the ideal conception embodied in them.
>
> *Liberty*, p.69

For Ward, as for Mill, individuals were not miserable sinners to be saved only by the miracle of Christ's atoning death and resurrection: on the contrary, they had value and dignity. She was by no means the only member of her family to think so, although she was the only one to depart from the Church entirely. Her uncle Matthew Arnold has already been mentioned, but her grandfather, Dr. Arnold of Rugby, also distrusted the church's teachings concerning miracles:

> She argued, of course, that her position was merely a logical development of his: once elevate the role of the inward witness, and it must then become the only possible arbiter of religious systems in an age when the entire fable of the Bible is under attack.
>
> *VH*, p.21

Dr. Arnold, however, worked for reform from within the Church, trying to broaden its views on doctrine, in order to enable it to accommodate many widely differing shades of opinion, with the aim of 'constructing of a truly national and Christian Church' (*VH*, p.22), as he explained in his famous pamphlet, *Principles of Church Reform*. Ward's final beliefs were those known as rational theism, and were shared, among others, by her friend T.H. Green, who emphasised the need to follow Christ's human example, to demonstrate Christian faith to practical effect out in the real world. Ward wrote that 'there is nobody whose thought inspires & grasps me as his does [. . .] I think my main mission in life will be to popularise his thought.'[64] Her former

[64] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to T. Humphry Ward 18 October 1888, *PH*.

Evangelicalism was now a distant memory, and she might say, with Gissing's Cecily Doran: 'I followed where my nature led, and my thoughts about everything altered.'[65]

In her independence and self-reliance Ward formed part of another trend of her times, that of the rise of the individual: 'leading intellectual currents all stress selfhood in one or another way,'[66] as in the writing of John Stuart Mill:

> In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others.
>
> *Liberty*, p.70

Mill's insistence upon liberty, and statements such as Newman's 'My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature' (*Ass*, p.273) had, however, another side, of which the late Victorians were only too well aware. At the time, there was a widely accepted link between religious belief and moral behaviour, with religion understood to maintain 'the idea of God as a living spiritual power, whose influence guides and sustains the moral life of man' (*Caird*, v.2 p.70). Moral, in this case, meant according to the generally accepted standards of society, which were assumed to correspond to Christian precepts. Emphasis upon individual conscience, individual integrity, and an individual relationship with God, could be viewed as selfishness, as a way of following personal desires regardless of the wishes and needs of others, and of society as a whole. In short, it was feared that abandonment of orthodoxy would lead to abandonment of morality, since without adherence to Biblical precepts, such as that of punishment for sins, there would no longer be any compelling reason to behave well. This is the attitude reflected in John Wordsworth's Bampton lecture, and also in several works of fiction spaced throughout the latter half of the century. For example, in J.A. Froude's *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849):

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[65] George Gissing, *The Emancipated* [1890] (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1977), p.146.
[66] Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), p.111.

> religion, reduced to a sentiment resting only on internal emotion, is like a dissolving view, which will change its image as the passions shift their focal distances.[67]

If orthodoxy and dogma are gone, and religion is linked only to the emotions, then as an individual's emotional state changes, so will his religion, moving from one kind to another as easily as the succession of views projected by a magic lantern. The novel illustrates this idea through the protagonist, Markham Sutherland, who loses his faith, then his moral standards, and has an affair with a married woman. The debate was still current in 1895, when George Moore's Evelyn Innes is told by Monsignor Mostyn:

> I have always noticed that when a Catholic begins to question the doctrine of the Church, his or her doubts were preceded by a desire to lead an irregular life.[68]

John Stuart Mill was so well aware of the issue of morality that he took pains to emphasize the force of social conscience as a means of control: humans should have the liberty 'of doing what we like, subject to such consequences as may follow: without impediment from our fellow creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them' (*Liberty*, p.17).

It is no surprise to find freethinkers throughout this period making great efforts to prove their continuing morality, and to place any religious belief they retained in the foreground for all to see. George Eliot was a leading example of how lost religion need not also mean moral collapse, through her replacement of religion with duty, and with bonds of sympathy, as appears in the language used by Maggie Tulliver in her rejection of Stephen Guest:

> the real tie lies in the feelings and expectations we have raised in other minds. Else all pledges might be broken, when there was no outward penalty. There would be no such thing as faithfulness.[69]

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[67] J.A. Froude, *The Nemesis of Faith* [1849] (Trowbridge: Redwood Burn, 1988), p.180-1; hereafter cited *Nemesis*.
[68] George Moore, *Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa*, [1898 and 1901] (New York: Garland, 1975), p.331; hereafter cited *Innes*.
[69] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Gordon S. Haight [1860] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.449; hereafter cited *Floss*.

Maggie insists upon 'obeying the divine voice within us - for the sake of being true to all the motives that sanctify our lives' (*Floss*, p.477), following inner morality rather than Stephen's external argument that there are no official ties to prevent their being together. In real life, Frances Power Cobbe was reassured to find words in Stopford Brooke's writings which exactly expressed her own attitude:

> this at least is certain. If there be no God and no future state, even then it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be true than false, better to be brave than a coward.[70]

For Cobbe, even after religion has gone, morality remains to give life value, and to provide standards to live up to. Matthew Arnold similarly clung to the moral content of Christian teaching in his argument that conduct, not culture, is three-fourths of human life.[71] Even those who criticised Ward's novel could not deny that she had retained her spiritual, religious side. W.E. Gladstone saw her aim in the book as being 'to expel the preternatural element from Christianity, to destroy its dogmatic structure, yet to keep intact the moral and spiritual results',[72] and concluded his article by admitting that:

> if the great and continuous creed of Christendom has slipped away from its place in Mrs. Ward's brilliant and subtle understanding, it has nevertheless by no means lost a true, if unacknowledged, hold upon the inner sanctuary of her heart.[73]

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[70] Frances Power Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe. By Herself* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1894), v.1 p.94; hereafter cited *Cobbe*.

[71] David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p.195; hereafter cited *Newsome*.

[72] W.E. Gladstone, 'Robert Elsmere and the Battle of Belief', *Nineteenth Century* 23 (May 1888), pp.766-88 (p.773); hereafter cited *Gladstone*. W.H. Mallock wrote that 'the popularity of Robert Elsmere is mainly the expression of the devout idea that the essence of Christianity will somehow survive its doctrines.' W.H. Mallock, 'Amateur Christianity', *The Fortnightly Review* 57 (May 1892), pp.678-703 (p.678).

[73] *Gladstone*, p.788. Ward reported that in conversation with Gladstone about the novel: 'He said that he had never read any book on the hostile side written in such a spirit of 'generous appreciation' of the Christian side.' *WR*, p.238.

She claimed that she still followed the teachings and example of Christ, and Elsmere demonstrates the same pattern; indeed, the possibility of continued morality was an issue which *Robert Elsmere* was, in part, specifically written to tackle:

> "Once loosen a man's *religio*, once fling away the old binding elements, the old traditional restraints which have made him what he is, and moral deterioration is certain." How often has he heard it said! How often he has endorsed it! Is it true? His heart grows cold within him. What good man can ever contemplate with patience the loss, not of friends or happiness, but of his best self? What shall it profit a man, indeed, if he gain the whole world - the whole world of knowledge and speculation - and *lose his own soul*?[74]
>
> *RE*, p.338

She raises the question in deliberately frightening terms, in order to answer it through the details of Elsmere's career. Once again, it was Gladstone who recognised her intention: 'It is impossible indeed to conceive a more religious life than the later life of Robert Elsmere, in his sense of the word religion' (*Gladstone*, p.777).

The question is answered most particularly through Elsmere's dominant character traits, and through his relationships with others. He has Ward's integrity and sincerity, and her uncompromising conscience. After his change of belief, his resolve to give up his living follows naturally; he never considers remaining and merely saying the words of services, as so many others did: 'for himself it would be neither right nor wrong, but simply impossible. He did not argue or reason about it' (*RE*, p.334). His moral certainty is instinctive and instant, beyond questioning. In the real world, Ward's mentor Stopford Brooke, who left the Church in 1880, had expressed the same view: 'Others may stay in her fold, and deny the miraculous - I cannot. It is a question of individual conscience'.[75]

Ward's need to live with integrity, and her insistence upon speaking the truth, most closely reflect another of her mentors, John Morley, a member of Pattison's college, and also a follower of J.S. Mill. She praised his book *On Compromise*, 'the fierce and famous manifesto of 1874' (*WR*, p.183), in the highest terms:

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[74] Mark 8:36

[75] Letter from Stopford Brooke to his sister, Honor 13 July 1880. Lawrence Pearsall Jacks, *Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke* (London: John Murray, 1917), p.325; hereafter cited *Jacks*.

> The will to look the grimmest facts of life and destiny in the face, without flinching, and the resolve to accept no 'anodyne' from religion or philosophy, combined with a ceaseless interest in the human fate and the human story, and a natural, inbred sympathy for the many against the few, for the unfortunate against the prosperous: - it was these ardours and the burning sincerity with which he felt them, which made him so great a power among us his juniors by half a generation. I shall never lose the impression that 'Compromise,' with its almost savage appeal for sincerity in word and deed, made upon me - an impression which had its share in 'Robert Elsmere.'
>
> *WR*, pp.183-4

I quote at length since the passage expresses Ward's own views: the determination to seek out the truth, and the self-reliance to deal with it once uncovered, the need for sincerity and integrity, combined with human sympathy and bonding. These traits appear not only in Ward, but in many of her major characters besides Robert Elsmere. In addition, the effect of personal magnetism appears here, so important in the impression made upon Elsmere by Henry Gray's sermon.

Nevertheless, Ward is not blinded by admiration, and does not follow all of Morley's views, particularly in the area of morality in personal relationships. Morley insists upon total honesty:

> No fear of giving pain, no wish to soothe the alarms of those to whom we owe much, no respect for the natural clinging of the old to the faith which has accompanied them through honourable lives, can warrant us in saying that we believe to be true what we are convinced is false.
>
> *Morley*, p.130

Ward certainly agreed with the need for honesty, as demonstrated by her openness concerning her own religious unorthodoxy, and by her alter ego Elsmere's insistence upon leaving the Church. She would also have concurred with Morley's reason for his opinion, that 'No softness of speech will disguise the portentous differences between those who admit a revelation and those who deny it' (*Morley*, p.122). She differs in her perception of the effect of such difference upon a relationship. Morley claimed that since dissent and freethinking were becoming more and more common:

> dissent from the current beliefs is less and less likely to inflict upon those who retain them any very intolerable kind or degree of mental pain
>
> *Morley*, p.127

For Ward, after her parents' years of conflict and final separation after Tom's second conversion to Catholicism, this was simplistic and unfeeling, and in her novel she allows Robert and Catherine Elsmere the happy ending which never occurred in reality. The second half of the novel charts the deterioration of their marriage in detail, showing how both husband and wife contribute to their predicament, then demonstrates how such a situation may be resolved, and the couple remain close. This was part of her plan from the start:

> I wanted to show how a man of sensitive and noble character, born for religion, comes to throw off the orthodoxies of his day and moment, and to go out into the wilderness where all is experiment, and spiritual life begins again. And with him I wished to contrast a type no less fine of the traditional and guided mind - and to imagine the clash of two such tendencies of thought, as it might affect all practical life, and especially the life of two people who loved each other.
>
> *WR*, p.230

The conflict of *Robert Elsmere* is that of two very different world views. Elsmere's inner direction and self-reliance clash with the strict, Bible-directed religion of his wife until it hardly seems that a successful outcome can be possible. Since Elsmere's beliefs and developments have already been examined, it is to those of his wife that I now turn.

Conflicting World Views

It is made clear from the start that Elsmere, 'talking the natural Christian language of this generation', represents modern religious attitudes, while Catherine is 'still thinking and speaking in the language of her father's generation', following a simpler, already old-fashioned, form of Christianity (*RE*, p.85). She adheres to the practices of her father, who died when she was sixteen, and whose excessive religious rigour leads the local vicar to describe him as 'a

fanatic - as mild as you please, but immovable' (*RE*, p.78). For Richard Leyburn, and so for Catherine, only adherence to orthodox belief, without distraction, matters, and she tries to suppress her personal impulses, and the natural passion of her nature, as coming between her and God:

> To her life always meant self-restraint, self-repression, self-deadening, if need be. The Puritan distrust of personal joy as something dangerous and ensnaring was deep ingrained in her. It had no natural hold on him.
>
> *RE*, p.158

Again, she is contrasted with Elsmere, whose views appear far more natural than hers: Catherine seems rather to run the risk of leading a 'mutilated life', unable to understand or accept other views:

> why, ardent as his own faith was, would he talk as though opinion was a purely personal matter, hardly in itself to be made the subject of moral judgement at all, and as though right belief were a blessed privilege and boon rather than a law and an obligation?
>
> *RE*, p.85

Elsmere's approach to religion is one of tolerance of, and sympathy for, many valid forms of belief, with each individual free to find that which suits him or her best. For Catherine there is only one correct form of belief, and the novel leads towards the question of whether, 'Hidden in Catherine's nature, was there, or was there not, the true stuff of fanaticism?' (*RE*, p.363) Elsmere's fears during his period of trauma that she will view his change as sinful are only too justified.

Catherine's reaction to her husband's confession is an emotional appeal, as if it is merely a temporary aberration:

> Be patient a little, and He will give you back Himself! What can books and arguments matter to you or me? Have we not *known* and *felt* Him as He is - have we not, Robert? Come!
>
> *RE*, p.354

Her appeal to his feelings functions as a symbolic opposite to Wendover's appeal to his intellect, as she argues that emotional knowledge and experience are more valid, and should take precedence. As his beloved wife, she is also able to emphasize their shared experience, and shared habits, to draw him back to what she sees as the correct path. Ward also makes it clear that Elsmere is in real danger of yielding to her plea, as apparently he has yielded to similar ones in the past:

> the protest that steals into your heart, that takes love's garb and uses love's ways - *there* is the difficulty!
>
> *RE*, p.399

The warmth, sympathy and openness of his nature not only draw others to him, and enable him to be an influence for good, but also render him vulnerable to outside influence. Ward's description recalls George Eliot's presentation of the power of ideas embodied in individuals: 'Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion' (*Scenes*, p.364), and also Newman's comment that 'Persons influence us, voices melt us' (*Discussions*, p.293). She demonstrates, however, that Elsmere's integrity gives him the ability and strength to resist Catherine's powerful plea, and in any case, having viewed his progress so far, the reader knows that surrender is impossible.

Catherine's appeal is rooted in Ward's design for her character, that is, in her tremendous need for love – a need which overrides her conscious convictions and prevents her from leaving her husband despite his 'sin', just as Julia Arnold's love for Tom kept her with him despite his first conversion to Catholicism. Catherine's behaviour is thus far more truly Christian in nature than her opinions. She tells Elsmere:

> I could think of nothing as I lay there - again and again - but '*Little children, love one another; little children, love one another.*' [. . .] I will never give up hope, I will pray for you night and day. God will bring you back. You cannot lose yourself so.
>
> *RE*, p.362

In keeping with Christ's injunction to his disciples,[76] she resolves to love her husband, and to trust in God, while in no way accepting his change of belief. It is ironic that just as to her he appears lost to all right belief, from his point of view he has just discovered it.

Ward's verdict on Catherine's view of her need for love as a weakness is unambiguous: 'in that weakness, or rather in the founts of character from which it sprang, lay the innermost safeguard of her life' (*RE*, p.121):

> Without that determining impulse of love and pity in Catherine's heart the salvation of an exquisite bond might indeed have been impossible. But in spite of it the laws of character had still to work themselves inexorably out on either side.
>
> *RE*, p.362

Ward here drops a hint to the reader that there may be a happy ending to come, but does not encourage optimism: such conflict between man and wife cannot easily or quickly be resolved. The reason for this is made clear: it is rooted in their differing characters, Elsmere's thinking and reasoning against Catherine's mystical stubbornness, 'and character is inexorable'. If there is to be a solution, it must be equally firmly rooted in Elsmere and Catherine's innermost selves.

Initially the situation worsens, as the Elsmeres' bond of communication, love and sympathy begins to break down. Ward even-handedly demonstrates that both partners are at fault: to blame only Catherine's rigid religious views, or Elsmere's behaviour as he puts his new beliefs into practice, would be simplistic and therefore unreal. Initially, the breakdown is caused by Elsmere, after the pattern described by George Eliot:

> the fuller nature desires to be an agent, to create, and not merely to look on: strong love hungers to bless, and not merely to behold blessing.
>
> *DD*, pp.531-2

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[76] John 13:33-5. 'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'

Mordecai's irresistible urge to pass on his beliefs is presented as entirely natural and normal. Elsmere similarly finds a new purpose in the foundation of his New Brotherhood, through which he can pass on his new beliefs. As this becomes established,

> his longing for a new union was overpowering that old dread. The proselytising instinct may be never quite morally defensible, even as between husband and wife. Nevertheless, in all strong, convinced, and ardent souls it exists, and must be reckoned with.
> *RE*, pp.387-8

He wants more and more to regain closeness to Catherine by having her share the joy of his experience, and proportionally his fear of her distress, and of the risk inherent in any attempt to convert her, begins to fade. However, as John Morley wrote, even through the need for honesty is paramount:

> If a man systematically intrudes disrespectful and unwelcome criticism upon a woman who retains the ancient belief, he is only showing that freethinker may be no more than bigot differently writ.
> *Morley*, p.140

There are ways and ways of communicating beliefs. Ward shows clearly how Elsmere's drive to bring Catherine to a fuller understanding makes him act in a selfish, cruel manner, as if, in his new sense of wholeness and integrity, he is losing his former sensitive sympathy and tolerance. He expects Catherine to change to meet him, and seems unwilling to reciprocate. In sum, Ward indicates that Elsmere's moral character has deteriorated under his new beliefs. When he speaks to Catherine, unlike Mordecai towards Daniel Deronda, he does not suit his presentation of the message to his audience, but frames it as reasoned argument, which finds no point of contact with Catherine's emotional cast of mind: 'He was speaking a language she did not really understand. What were all these critical and literary considerations to her?' (*RE*, p.352)

Ward makes Catherine's response the other source of breakdown in the Elsmeres' relationship. Her lack of education means that she has no tools with which to fight back, and

Elsmere no longer seems to recognise her feelings, so she channels all her effort into self-protection:

> She feared that fiery persuasive quality in Robert she had so often seen at work on other people. With him conviction was life - it was the man himself, to an extraordinary degree. How was she to resist the pressure of those new ardours with which his mind was filling - she who loved him! - except by building, at any rate for the time, an enclosure of silence around her Christian beliefs.
>
> *RE*, p.386

Elsmere's very nature has become a threat to her, as he has the kind of magnetism seen in his mentor Henry Grey. Catherine has become a fortress under siege, maintaining her defensive barriers at all costs, in a manner recalling Pater's Marcus Aurelius:

> No man can be hindered by another: What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it; hold to this, and you are safe.
>
> *Marius*, p.193

Her silence is both her protection and her weapon.

Ward does not allow matters to rest there, but shows how the Elsmeres' predicament worsens: Elsmere's patience begins to fail, and he turns to criticism of his wife, in a tone of voice he has never previously used to her:

> "Do you ever ask yourself," he said presently, looking steadily into the night – "no, I don't think you can, Catherine - what part the reasoning faculty, that faculty which marks us out from the animal, was meant to play in life? Did God give it to us simply that you might trample upon it and ignore it, both in yourself and me?"
>
> *RE*, p.390

He disparages her intellectually, because her mental processes do not resemble his. Essentially, his argument is Ward's own, and arises from his belief in the value of human abilities, but here Ward casts it in the opposite of her usual tone: instead of exalting reason, his words are violent, reflecting his anger, and cast in a negative tone, as if to illustrate the failing of his hope that their relationship can be saved. To him, Catherine now resembles the fanatical

Newcome, trampling (even the verb is the same) progress underfoot. More and more, he seems ugly, and morally undermined.

Ward does not allow the reader to dwell on this, however, and makes it clear that there are still faults on both sides: Catherine too is becoming impatient:

> Do what she would, wrestle with herself as she would, there was constantly emerging in her now a note of anger, not with Robert, but, as it were, with those malign forces of which he was the prey.
> *RE*, p.460

Earlier, when Elsmere first confessed his doubts to her, Catherine's strength of will was described as unable to suppress the strength of her love for him; here it proves inadequate to hold back another powerful primitive emotion, and the intensity of her inner struggle is well reflected in the twisting syntax of this sentence. Her long years of reliance upon orthodoxy and the Bible also appear in the framing of her anger in terms of other-direction, in contrast to Elsmere's emphasis upon personal responsibility and action. In her anger, and the aggression that has entered her resistance, Catherine too has become morally undermined.

At this point the relationship has reached deadlock, with both partners locked into their respective positions, just as Ward's parents were – and for Tom and Julia Arnold there was no eventual solution. Elsmere abandons the struggle and turns to his work: 'Robert, taxed to the utmost on all sides, yielded to the impulse of silence more and more' (*RE*, p.492); and the strain affects Catherine too:

> The fight into which fate had forced her was destroying her. She was drooping like a plant cut off from all that nourishes its life. And yet she never conceived it possible that she should relinquish that fight.
> *RE*, p.496

Her peace of mind is gone, her health is failing, but Catherine's strength of will still holds: she refuses to surrender. Ward has used the laws of character to trap the Elsmeres in a vicious circle, unable to effect their own escape, and it seems that they must either surrender, or fall

sick and die.[77] Yet in spite of all, just as her parents' love remained throughout all their problems, so the Elsmeres' love is still there. What is needed is a way to break the circle, and to remind them of their deepest ties.

Ward emphasizes the need for outside intervention at this point through the simple method of having each character's moment of revelation occur through this means, and strengthens the pattern by having both occur simultaneously. Suitably enough, given that each partner has lost sight of the other's full nature, in each case the 'trigger' for this revelation operates in an area previously treated as more familiar to the opposite partner: Elsmere, the reasonable, receives an emotional shock, while Catherine, the emotional and mystical, is triggered by a tale of reason grounded in reality.

Elsmere finds himself confronted one evening by a declaration of love from the society hostess Mme de Netteville, whose house he has frequently visited, and who knows the state into which his marriage has fallen. She does not care that he is married - 'I am not responsible to your petty codes. Nature and feeling are enough for me' (*RE*, p.507) - and Elsmere is utterly appalled by her lack of morals, by her forwardness, by her insults to his wife, and most of all by what he quickly realises is his own negligence:

> Elsmere dived to the very depths of his own soul that night. Was it all the natural consequence of a loosened bond, of a wretched relaxation of effort - a wretched acquiescence in something second best? Had love been cooling? Had it simply ceased to take the trouble love must take to maintain itself? And had this horror been the subtle inevitable Nemesis?
>
> *RE*, p.509

In keeping with his character as depicted from the start, the shock pushes Elsmere into examination of his own actions and feelings, and he quickly perceives what the reader has long understood, that instead of concentrating upon his marriage, he had directed his warmth and sympathy towards outsiders, which has led to Mme de Netteville's action. In this new

[77] With modern understanding of the link between personality, stress, and illness, it is hard not to see a parallel here with the cancer that afflicted Julia Arnold for so many years, and finally killed her in 1888, just after the publication of *Robert Elsmere*. It is possible that part of Ward's motive in the novel was to show others how they might avoid the same fate.

emotional turmoil he finally recognises that the way to lead Catherine to understand him is not through reason, but through emotion: 'Oh! let him go back to her! - wrestle with her, open his heart again, try new ways, make new concessions' (*RE*, p.509). He will finally be able to speak a language that she can understand.

Catherine's moment of revelation comes through one of the factors that originally affected her husband: through personal testimony, that of Hugh Flaxman, a suitor of Rose's, as he describes incidents from her husband's work in London, most particularly the fatal injury of Elsmere's right-hand man in the New Brotherhood, and Elsmere's subsequent tending of him. He tells of the dying man's certainty that Elsmere is truly religious - 'You've been - God - to me - I've seen - Him - in you' (*RE*, p.498) – and emphasizes the point through further details of his work: 'he spoke of his own impressions, of matters within his personal knowledge' (*RE*, p.499). Flaxman does not speak of beliefs, or personalities, or abstractions of any kind, but of facts, of actual events, of aid to the poor, of sermons delivered in working men's halls, and this hard realism forms Catherine's trigger. He gives her information of which, in her determined avoidance of everything associated with her husband's new beliefs, she was ignorant, and she sees that her husband's work is not in fact strange to her, it is the kind of work which she used to do before her marriage, and which she and Elsmere shared during their time at Murewell.

Ward has previously demonstrated Catherine's fascination with talk of sincere, selfless, striving through an occasion when Newcome, who had previously alienated her by gloating over petty triumphs ('piously circumventing a bishop' (*RE*, p.162)), was led to speak of his ten years working in the London slums:

> Stroke by stroke, as the words and facts were beguiled from him, all that was futile and quarrelsome in the sharp-featured priest sank out of sight; the face glowed with inward light; the stature of the man seemed to rise; the angel in him unsheathed its wings.
>
> *RE*, p.162

Flaxman's tales of Elsmere trigger the same kind of reverence in Catherine, and as he talks, as 'gradually the whole picture emerged, began to live before them' (*RE*, p.500), her previous image of her husband is replaced by a new one, echoing Elsmere's opinion that this is 'the only

way in which opinion is ever really altered - by the substitution of one mental picture for another' (*RE*, p.473). She sees him afresh, as worthy of her praise and support. Against this picture, so familiar to her, she has no defence, and it breaches her 'circle of thought', allowing her swamped emotions to sweep back into conscious awareness.

Afterwards, Catherine, like her husband, turns her attention deep within, re-examining her hitherto strict beliefs: 'wrestling with herself, with memory, with God' (*RE*, p.500). Use of the same verb – wrestle – also brings out the parallel nature of their experience. She too, attains a crucial insight:

> 'My Lord is my Lord always; but He is yours too. Oh, I know it, say what you will! *That* is what has been hidden from me; that is what my trouble has taught me; the powerlessness, the worthlessness, of words. *It is the spirit that quickeneth.*[78] I should never have felt it so, but for this fiery furnace of pain. But I have been wandering in strange places, through strange thoughts. God has not one language, but many. I have dared to think He had but one, the one I knew. I have dared' - and she faltered - 'to condemn your faith as no faith.'
>
> *RE*, pp.510-11

She has come a vast distance to recognise that there can be more than one acceptable form of Christianity, unbelief does not necessarily equate to sin, and that therefore her husband's faith, although unorthodox, can still be valid. The quotation she uses, 'It is the spirit that quickeneth', is entirely apt: Elsmere's words, so full of reason, could not touch her, but once Flaxman's familiar visions reached through her barriers, growth was triggered within her innermost self. The process of realisation has been intense and painful, as it was for Elsmere, even, as she describes it, hellish, although perhaps a better analogy would be the Old Testament tale of the furnace from which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walked safe and unharmed.[79] In fact, Catherine's mental and emotional journey through the novel has arguably been even greater than her husband's: while he remained close to his own temperament throughout, Catherine has had to break through long-held barriers to a fuller understanding of herself as well as of religion, and a lifetime's rigidity has been shaken.

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[78] John 6:63.
[79] Daniel 3:20-27.

Ward uses these moments of revelation to show that, no matter how far apart different beliefs take people, the possibility of resolution and reconciliation remains: the Elsmeres once again become close, as the key factors of openness, tolerance and sympathy come to the fore, and morality is restored.

The ending of the novel, however, with Elsmere's early death from overwork, could be said to undermine this reconciliation and recovered happiness, as Ward does not show them being tried and tested over time. Instead she attempts, not entirely successfully, I feel, to use his death for two purposes. The first and primary one is to validate Elsmere's religion by presenting him in as saintly a light as possible, and his death as the culmination of a holy life. There are difficulties with this, however, associated with the nature of Elsmere's beliefs: if there are no miracles, there can be no heavenly afterlife, and Elsmere cannot die in the expectation of reward for his religious zeal. To a readership accustomed to inspiring, visionary deathbed scenes such as those of Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth Hilton ('"I see the Light coming," said she. "The Light is coming"'[80]), and Charlotte Yonge's Guy Morville ('it was 'another dawn than ours' that he beheld, as his most beautiful of all smiles beamed over his face, and he said, "Glory in the Highest! - peace – goodwill"'),[81] this could only be a disappointment. To get around the problem, Ward retains a moment of glorious vision, but gives it to Catherine, awed by her husband's 'heavenly look' (see below), and uses Elsmere's memory of his daughter's birth as his own holy vision. Unfortunately this rather unsatisfactorily divides the reader's attention and so detracts from her overall religious point: Elsmere will live on both through his child, and through the religious movement he founded, the New Brotherhood, but it would perhaps have been more impressive for Elsmere to have died childless, wholly devoted to his work.

The second purpose in this scene is to bring about Catherine's final acceptance that her husband's beliefs are genuine and lasting. Throughout his final illness she has clung to 'the belief in a final restoration, in an all-atoning moment, perhaps at the very end of life, in which the blind would see, the doubter be convinced' (*RE*, p.512). Old habits die hard. Matters come

[80] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth*, ed. Alan Shelston [1853] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1997), p.448.
[81] Charlotte Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, ed. Barbara Dennis [1853] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1997), p.468.

to a head in a reworking of the earlier scene where she tried through emotional appeal to entice him back to orthodoxy. This time, as she prays, and urges him to reconsider, Elsmere responds differently:

> "My weakness might yield - my true best self never. I know Whom I have believed.[82] Oh, my darling, be content. Your misery, your prayers hold me back from God - from that truth and that trust which can alone be honestly mine. Submit, my wife! Leave me in God's hands."
>
> She raised her head. His eyes were bright with fever, his lips trembling, his whole look heavenly. She bowed herself again with a quiet burst of tears, and an indescribable self-abasement.
>
> *RE*, p.572

He now speaks to her in her own emotional language, using endearments to keep their love prominent in both their minds, and this framing of his message gives his commands irresistible force over her, striking as they do directly upon her long habits of relying upon dogma from outside herself. His order to leave him to God also fits with her belief in God as the ultimate judge.

His influence has lasting effect, as, although remaining loyal to her old faith, Catherine is no longer so rigid in her opinions. She has, as Ward wrote elsewhere, 'undergone that dissociation of the moral judgement from a special series of religious formulae which is the crucial, the epoch-making fact of our day' (*RE*, p.534), and Ward illustrates this through her continued attendance at the New Brotherhood services. This was part of her original plan for the novel:

> I meant to leave her possessed by two forces, the force of faith & the force of memory. Faith would take her to church, memory, which with her would be all love would take her to those scenes where Elsmere had spent his lifeblood & where his presence would seem to be still lingering. She would be silent, she would take no part, but if she had been a true wife she would go. So at least I conceive it.[83]

[82] Timothy 21:12: 'For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

[83] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Mandell Creighton 3 March 1888, *PH*.

Catherine's silence is not intended to indicate disagreement, but to show her love: she has not abandoned her former religion, merely expanded her range of tolerance. Her mere presence is enough to convey the change in her, and to show that what seemed before to be, in both herself and her husband, a loss of moral standards, has become a wider, continued state of sympathy and consideration for others.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have combined discussion of Ward's early life, beliefs, and inner development, with their expression through her first best-seller, *Robert Elsmere*. This covered a range of areas, from childhood trauma due to the irresolvable religious differences of her parents, to her inadequate education and rush to embrace Evangelicalism through affection for others, to her subsequent delight and mental expansion on arrival in Oxford, and concomitant developing independence of mind and opinion through her studies, to her loss of belief in the miraculous and rush into print following the all-important Bampton Lecture.

I examined how Ward reused these experiences in her writings, in *Unbelief and Sin* and 'The New Reformation', as well as in *Robert Elsmere*. The process of change in religious opinion, as she documents it, follows a precise pattern: study, that is, new ideas and understanding, cause an inner stir below the level of conscious awareness, which grows until a critical point is reached, when it bursts forth into the conscious mind and emotions. The process is intimately related to character: to the independence of mind required to follow new ideas and the rushing flood of inner development through to the end, and to the integrity that insists this must be done. Elsmere, for instance, aims at a 'plain sincerity of act and speech - a correspondence as perfect as could be reached between the inner faith and the outer word and deed' (*RE*, p.398). Such forces of character were also compared with the writings of John Henry Newman and Walter Pater, with their diverse understandings of whether, and how, influence over another person is possible. The conclusion was that it is possible in the Newmanic sense only, with the innate, God-given self filtering influences and ideas from

outside, so that only those in tune with the individual's character can gain admittance and have an effect. The framing of the message that was mentioned in my overall Introduction was also relevant, most particularly in the personal effect of Henry Grey upon Elsmere, and in the intellectual writings that strike such a chord in this Oxford-educated young clergyman, whose religion, as was said, had never previously engaged his brain.

But the process of change has effects far beyond individual recognition of new ideas, and emerging, previously unknown, driving forces. Ward documents the effect upon Elsmere's marriage of his change, from the purely physical – they move away to London – to the emotional and the moral. She demonstrates the risk that loss of orthodox religion may lead to lower moral standards, so feared at the time, and shows how it may be overcome, through love, understanding, and effective communication (framing of the message, again). The Elsmeres' story serves as an illustration for others who face the effects of inner change, that it is possible to maintain successful lives and relationships.

The weakness of the novel, I feel, is the death scene, which is intended to glorify Elsmere's life as an example of the embodied idea, but does not entirely succeed due to its split focus. However, the abiding memory of the novel is not this, but the story of the process, of the resulting struggle, and of its resolution.

In my next chapter, I will continue to study Mary Ward's life, in chronological order, but with a change of focus. Although I begin with discussion of the fictional New Brotherhood, and its relation to her real life, the discussion quickly moves to wider social considerations, and the issue of philanthropy and the poor. Ward's work in this area was intense and innovative, and just as she reflected her religious changes and understanding in *Robert Elsmere*, so she reflects social concerns, and associated political issues, including the role of women in society, through her second alter ego, the title character of her 1894 novel, *Marcella*.

Ferments of Mind: Social Problems, New Women, and Marcella

To Wear and Work

Part of Mary Ward's purpose in *Robert Elsmere* was to demonstrate that high moral standards can still exist outside orthodox Christian belief, and the Elsmeres' struggle towards a new marital relationship was only part of this argument. The other part was wider in scope, and concerned with practical social work for others, beginning with Catherine's work among the poor near her Westmorland home, and Elsmere's exhaustion through over-participation in Oxford charitable work. At Murewell there are details of the societies Elsmere runs for local children, and of his work to set right the deplorable state of the village on Squire Wendover's land; then finally, in London, there is the founding and running of the New Brotherhood. At the time Ward wrote, charitable work was popular among her class, serving as an example to others of caring, spirituality, duty, and moral standards, and thereby extremely appropriate for individuals who no longer believed in orthodox Anglicanism. To illustrate this, Ward uses two Biblical quotations as the basis for the creed of Elsmere's New Brotherhood (*RE*, p.553), quotations which she had originally used in *Unbelief and Sin* in relation to A's approach to life after the acceptance of a human Christ:

> life is summed up for him in two relations, his relation to God, and his relation to this ideal Christian society. '*In thee O Lord have I put my trust*,' expresses the spirit of the first, while the second, which contains his practical every-day life, with its work, its charities, its tolerances, will be regulated and inspired by words long known to him and now infinitely widened in meaning, '*This do in remembrance of Me*.'
>
> *US*, p.18

Continuing spirituality and reverence for Christ as an example are contained in the first quotation, but it is the second that is more important at this point. Through her portrayal of the New Brotherhood, Ward describes how Christ's life can serve as a guide through the modern world, directing individuals' energies towards practical aid for others, rather than towards helping only themselves. This understanding is aligned in her work with a sense of

responsibility and duty towards society and its needs, as was memorably expressed back in the 1870s by George Eliot:

> On a famous occasion when George Eliot mentioned the three words which had so long been 'inspiring trumpet-calls of men, - the words *God, Immortality, Duty* - , she 'pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable was the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*.' It is partly because the first two words have lost their meaning that the third is given such passionate affirmation, in her novels and in contemporary society.[1]

With God, miracles, and religion all called into question by Biblical criticism, belief in heaven and hell became more difficult, and the only remaining certainty was duty, closely connected with morality. In a book greatly admired by Ward, Edward Caird wrote that:

> as is a man's religion, so is his morality. As he conceives of his relation to the power which determines his place in the world - and especially his place in relation to other men who with him are the members of one society - so also he conceives of the duty which he owes to them.
>
> *Caird*, v.1 p.237

While an orthodox believer might regard himself and all humanity as 'miserable sinners', those such as Ward believed that all people had value, and should be treated accordingly. As she wrote to her father: 'If we are the servants and children of God we have God's work to do and every good cause is God's work'.[2] Knowledge and understanding gained through intellectual work were important, but only if put to good, practical use for the benefit of all: as Elsmere tells Wendover, 'You look upon knowledge as an end in itself. It may be so. But to me knowledge has always been valuable first and foremost for its bearing on life' (*RE*, p.488). Ward made this idea explicit in her discussions with W.E. Gladstone of the causes of moral evil, arguing that 'the more one thought of it the more plain became its connection with physical and social and therefore *removable* conditions' (*Tr*, p.59). In this, she echoed the theories of Charles Kingsley's Muscular Christianity:

[1] Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), pp.238-9; hereafter cited *Houghton*.
[2] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 13 January 1873, *PH*.

> it is one of his most vigorously emphasized doctrines that the soul suffers from continual exposure to bad physical conditions. Hence it is the duty of a parson to press for social, political and economic reforms, and problems of wages and sewers are as much his business as those of sacraments and prayers.
>
> *Maison*, p.127

In 1859 Kingsley even went so far as to write that 'Of sanitary reform I shall never grow tired'.[3] Whatever one's opinion of such obsession, he formed a model for others, and Elsmere's striving to improve conditions in Mile End village, riddled with damp and diphtheria, is very much in the Kingsley mould:

> Dirt and drains, Catherine says I have gone mad upon them. It's all very well, but they are the foundations of a sound religion.
>
> *RE*, p.169

His work in London serves to illustrate that practical philanthropy, despite its origins in the intent to make all men into good Christians, was worthwhile for all. W.E. Gladstone admitted to Ward that:

> With the decline of the Church and State spirit, with the slackening of State religion, there has unquestioningly come about a quickening of the State conscience, of the *social* conscience.
>
> *Tr*, p.58

Philanthropy and duty towards others thus became more and more important for freethinkers, not only to demonstrate their continuing moral standards, but as an outward expression of character and worth:

> As the difficulties of belief increased, the essence of religion for Christians - and for agnostics the 'meaning of life' - came more and more to lie in strenuous labour for the good of society. That was not only a rational alternative to fruitless speculation but also a practical means of exorcising the mood of ennui and despair which so often accompanied the loss of faith.

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[3] Kingsley, F.E. (ed.), *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, 2 vols (London: Kegan Paul, 1880), v.2 p.88.

Houghton, p.251

Philanthropic work filled time, leaving little opportunity to indulge in regrets for lost certainties, and also provided consolation through a sense of usefulness and value. As Benjamin Jowett wrote to Ward after the publication of *The History of David Grieve* (1892): 'We are coming back to the old, old doctrine, 'he can't be wrong whose life is in the right' (*WR*, p.299).

It seems odd, then, that as far as the New Brotherhood is concerned, Elsmere is not Ward's alter ego: *she*, arguably, is *his*. Passages in *Robert Elsmere* about the movement's founding express not reality, but theory, and it was the novel's success that enabled her to attempt her own demonstration of high morality and social concern:

> the New Brotherhood of *Robert Elsmere* had become in some sort a realised dream; so far as any dream can ever take to itself the practical garments of this puzzling world. To show that the faith of Green and Martineau and Stopford Brooke was a faith that would wear and work - to provide a home for the new learning of a New Reformation, and a practical outlet for its enthusiasm of humanity - were the chief aims in the minds of those of us who in 1890 founded the University Hall Settlement in London.
>
> *WR*, pp.289-90

Her opportunity came though the Settlement movement of the latter half of the century, which meant, roughly, the provision of what we would now call Day Centres, staffed by volunteers, and offering education, cheap meals, childcare, entertainment, religious instruction, and a sense of community for the poor of the surrounding district. The movement had begun in the 1860s when a group of young clergymen, J.R. Green and Edward Denison among them, came to believe that simply distributing money and supplies would not solve the poverty problem, and that closer involvement with those in need was the only way forward; but it was not until 1883, after J.R. Green, and Arnold Toynbee,[4] after whom the 1885 Toynbee Hall was named, were both dead of illnesses exacerbated by overwork, that the movement really took off.

The idea to found her own Settlement along the lines of Toynbee Hall first occurred to Ward in 1888, the year of *Robert Elsmere*, and she spent much time during 1889 exploring its

[4] On whom Edward Hallin in *Marcella* is based: he was a protégé of J.R. Green and Benjamin Jowett.

possibilities. The result, University Hall Settlement, opened in November 1890, in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, the area in which the Wards were living at the time. Ward intended it to be primarily religious in orientation; by 'religious', meaning her own 'rational theist' beliefs: this was the main reason for founding her own Settlement rather than offering her assistance to an existing one. Also, the immensely successful Bedford Chapel, run by Stopford Brooke along similar lines, was already in the area, so she had a ready-made audience for her teachings. Besides this, existing Settlements such as Toynbee Hall tended to be socialist in attitude, and to favour women's suffrage: Ward strongly disapproved of both. Above all, she founded her own Settlement because of character: her strong personality made her a leader, not a follower, and through her own Settlement she could gain personal power and satisfaction while providing a living example of her own beliefs, remaining in full control of the ideas taught.

Her primary aim for University Hall was 'To provide a fresh rallying point' for those for whom Christianity had become 'a system of practical conduct, based on faith in God, and on the inspiring memory of a great teacher'; and to 'endeavour to promote an improved popular teaching of the Bible and of the history of religion' (*Tr*, p.82). Social assistance followed after. Unfortunately for her, the volunteer residents of University Hall disagreed with these priorities, and formed a breakaway Settlement of their own, Marchmont Hall, to render more immediately practical forms of aid. Ward was unable to reconcile the two sides, and so drew back, allowing the two buildings to concentrate upon the work that they preferred. She had learned her lesson: the beliefs she so wanted to share were unacceptable unless offered as part of a total package. She determined upon a fresh attempt, and seven years later, in October 1897, the Passmore Edwards Settlement was opened in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury.

Ward swiftly withdrew from day-to-day control of the Settlement, and concentrated upon, firstly, fundraising, at which she was both adept and indefatigable, raising vast sums, and secondly, upon direction of Settlement policy, at which she proved both innovative and practical. Soon after the Settlement opened she organised the first Saturday Play Centre, and, by the end of the year, weekday evening play sessions, for what would nowadays be termed 'latchkey' children. In 1899, the Passmore Edwards School for Invalid Children, another of

Ward's inspirations, opened; in 1902 the first vacation school. In 1905 her work spread wider, as the Settlement opened eight new evening Play Centres elsewhere in London. Her capability and practicality were recognised by the Boards with whom she did business; this tribute from Graham Wallas is typical:

> She brought to the task not only imagination and sympathy, but a steady and systematic industry, which is the most valuable of all qualities in public life. She was never disheartened, and never procrastinated.
>
> *Tr*, p.141

This wide-ranging organisational talent, and her ability to inspire others to work towards her aims, were talents of character first expressed back in her Oxford days, when work as part of a team to further women's education led to the founding of Somerville College. They remained throughout her life, even near its end, when during WWI, at the age of sixty-five, and in very poor health, she visited the trenches in France as preparation for a series of articles on Britain's War Effort, suggested by President Theodore Roosevelt, and ultimately aimed at bringing American assistance into the war. Her efforts in all fields - fiction, education, philanthropy, and journalism - were recognised with the award of the CBE in March 1919. In February of the following year she became one of the first women magistrates, although she was too unwell to actually serve, then in March she was awarded an Honorary LLD from Edinburgh University, shortly before her death on the 24th of that month.

Suffrage, Education and Women's Independence

Such biographical details present a picture of Mary Ward as a creative, talented, practical woman, full of drive, independence and innovation in many directions. It is all the more surprising, then, that she was adamantly opposed to one particular form of advancement, that of women's suffrage; and was a major female voice in the campaign against the vote. As early as 1889, at the very time when, working to find real-life expression for her ideas, she

might have been expected to be at her most freethinking and independent, and to encourage others to be the same, she wrote the first major anti-suffrage document: 'An Appeal against Female Suffrage'. This was presented as an appeal to 'the common sense and the educated thought of the men and women of England',[5] and was signed by 104 prominent women, including Ward herself, her friend Mrs. Mandell Creighton, and Beatrice (Mrs. Sidney) Webb. Also signing were Lady Randolph Churchill, Mrs. J.R. Green, and Mrs. Matthew Arnold, but the first three were the most important:

> for all these three were well known as supporters of the movement for women's education, and as being themselves very active in philanthropic and public life.[6]

Their opinion, therefore, would carry weight. The document had its origins in a January 1889 dinner conversation with Lord Justice Bowen and J.T. Knowles (editor of the liberal periodical *The Nineteenth Century*) concerning the lack of organised opposition to the suffrage. On publication, it was swiftly followed by a similar document issued by the pro-suffrage side, with many more signatures, but Ward's work meant that, from the 'Appeal' onwards, the 'Anti' side were able to argue that women themselves didn't want the vote.

But from Ward's point of view, why should they want it? After all, her literary success gave her power with no need for official status, and it is easy to oppose something of which you personally do not feel the lack. Ward had power also through her social connections: her Thursday at-homes were always crowded:

> The political hostess, like many well-born and/or talented upper-class women, enjoyed extensive influence without the vote: indeed, woman suffrage would merely raise up rivals to her influence and she had no reason to support it. For her, class loyalty was far more important than loyalty to sex.[7]

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[5] Mrs. Humphry Ward, 'An Appeal against Female Suffrage,' *Nineteenth Century* 25 (June 1889), pp.781-88 (p.781); hereafter cited *Appeal*.
[6] Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Woman's Movement in Great Britain* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1928), p.285; hereafter cited *Strachey*.
[7] Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), pp.81-2; hereafter cited *Harrison*.

Brian Harrison's comment above implies a selfish aspect to the 'Anti' side, rather than any wider social concern. The list of prominent women who signed the 'Appeal' is also undermined by the even more glittering list of those who did not sign. Refusing to declare for either side were George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Florence Nightingale, Octavia Hill, and Charlotte Yonge (*Newsome*, p.253). Openly on the 'Pro' side were Harriet Martineau, Josephine Butler, Emily Davies, and, later, both Beatrice Webb and Louise Creighton.

Given such divisions it seems worthwhile to look briefly at the suffrage campaign during the period of Ward's career. It was not a new issue; debate over the position of women had been going on for decades. John Stuart Mill had been among the first to seriously raise the issue of women's emancipation, and it was he who brought about the first Parliamentary debate on Women's Suffrage in 1867. It was easily defeated. Mill's 1869 essay, 'The Subjection of Women', was a plea for female equality before the law, for women's freedom to work, and for equal status and power within marriage. It also demonstrated how women were restricted not just by law and custom, but also by psychological factors instilled from an early age, such as 'the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others.'[8] Mill's wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, had argued even more strongly, back in 1851, the year of Ward's birth, for the removal of restrictions upon women:

> We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their 'proper sphere'. The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to. What this is cannot be ascertained without complete liberty of choice.[9]

This was fighting stuff. But even as writers began to treat the subjection of woman as a legitimate matter for concern, a counter movement began: in 1868, Mrs. Lynn Linton's *Saturday*

[8] 'The Subjection of Women', *Liberty*, p.486.
[9] Harriet Taylor Mill, 'The Enfranchisement of Women', *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill: Essays on Sex Equality*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1970), p.100.

Review article, 'The Girl of the Period', portrayed the 'modern' woman as fast, indifferent to traditional duties, and frightening to men.

The suffrage movement during this period was merely a slow-growing shift of opinion, largely confined to the middle classes, who had leisure to consider such matters. A major setback came in 1884 when the efforts of W.E. Gladstone kept women's suffrage out of the government's Reform Bill: it would not become a major political issue again until early the next century, when the first formal anti-suffrage organisations were founded. Ward's 'Appeal' was considered influential on its appearance, yet it 'failed to produce any continuing movement against woman suffrage' (*Harrison*, p.117). There was no organised campaign for her to join. In fact, it was only after disruption caused by the suffragettes that the 'Anti' side began to organise, and in 1908 Ward was a founder of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League. The 'Anti' side would remain in the political ascendant right up to 1914.

The last decade of the nineteenth century was, for female emancipation, a period of slow growth and consolidation, of a gradually widening acceptance of new ideas, and also of fears that the rules gluing society together were breaking down. More and more women gained qualifications, worked at an increasing variety of jobs, and led more independent lives than there had ever been opportunity to do before. One by one, the signatories to Ward's 'Appeal' joined the 'Pro' party, until Ward herself became a figure of ridicule, somewhat ironically, given that one of her favourite campaign quotations was her old hero John Morley's: 'For Heaven's sake, don't let us be the first to make ourselves ridiculous in the eyes of Europe!' (*Tr*, p.229) Why, then, did she not change *her* mind? Why was the woman who was such a rebel and individualist in religious terms, so keen to further women's education and to improve their lives, so rigid?

Ward claimed in her memoir, *A Writer's Recollections*, to have been anti-suffrage as far back as her early married life in Oxford, even as she, and others, worked hard to gain better educational opportunities for women:

> My friends and I were all on fire for women's education, including women's medical education, and very emulous of Cambridge, where the movement was already far advanced.
>
> But hardly any of us were at all on fire for woman suffrage, wherein the Oxford educational movement differed greatly from the Cambridge movement.
>
> *WR*, p.152

This sounds conclusive, but it is possible that, looking back from 1918, Ward is, whether deliberately or accidentally, adjusting her memories of the 1870s, to present her views as she would like them to have been. There is no doubt that she was genuinely concerned about the state of women's education; the issue appears in several of her novels, most notably through Laura Fountain in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, and through her suffragette, Delia Blanchflower:

> Why should every Balliol boy - years younger than me - have been taught his classics and mathematics, - and have everything brought to him - made easy for him - history, political economy, logic, philosophy, laid at his lordship's feet, if he will just please to learn! - while I, who have just as good a brain as he, have had to pick up a few scraps by the way, just because nobody who had charge of me ever thought it worth while to teach a girl? But I have a mind! - an intelligence! - even if I am a woman; and there is all the world to know.[10]

Her own inadequate school career made education a personal issue for Ward. It was also part of her perceived role as an Arnold, member of an educational caste. Education was also a current issue: in 1872 the National Union for Improving the Education of Women formed the Girls' Public Day Schools Company which, in its first five years, founded and equipped fifteen schools, offering education at a cost of roughly fifteen pounds per year. In 1874 (the year her first child, Dorothy, was born), Ward, along with Louise Creighton & Mrs. T.H. Green, became secretary to the Lectures for Women Committee in Oxford. The lectures had much support among the dons, among whom were Mark Pattison, Prof. T.H. Green, Benjamin Jowett, Prof. Nettleship, and Arnold Toynbee, and were a great success (paraphrased from Strachey, pp.247, 256). The following year the establishment in Cambridge of Newnham Hall set an example which Ward and her friends could not ignore, and Somerville College, Oxford opened in October 1879. Ward was joint secretary of the Committee, sat on the Somerville Council

[10] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Delia Blanchflower* (London: Ward, Lock, 1915); hereafter cited *Delia*, pp.64-5.

between 1881 and 1898, and did not break her last ties with the College until 1909, when her anti-suffrage views rendered her unacceptable there.

Education and female emancipation were linked in the popular mind; the New Women,[11] as they were first termed in May 1894, in an exchange between the writers Sarah Grand and Ouida in the *North American Review*, were generally deemed to have emerged from the new Higher Education. Walter Besant wrote that, by the time she left Newnham College, a girl would have:

> changed her mind about the model, the perfect, the ideal woman. More than that, she will change the minds of her sisters and her cousins: and there are going to be a great many Newnhams; and the spread of this revolution will be rapid; and the shrinking, obedient, docile, man-reverencing, curate-worshipping maiden of our youth will shortly vanish and be no more seen.[12]

It seems a little unlikely, given the small numbers involved: Martha Vicinus has calculated that 'By 1897 there were in all, nine women's colleges, based in the universities of London, Oxford and Cambridge with, altogether, 784 students in them.'[13] However, among the close-knit world of the intelligentsia, the opinions and actions of a few people could indeed make a great difference, and the panic in Besant's voice begins to seem less unreasonable. To the world in general, and particularly in the eyes of men, women were becoming far too independent, and they thought they knew exactly where to place the blame:

> "Education was what the slave-owners most dreaded for their slaves," Josephine Butler wrote, "for they knew it to be the sure way to emancipation."[14]

[11] Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* [1977] (London: Virago, 1999), p.xxix; hereafter cited *Showalter*.
[12] Walter Besant, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* [1882] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.8; hereafter cited *Besant*.
[13] Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985), p.166.
[14] Rosamund Billington, 'The Dominant Values of Victorian Feminism', *In Search of Victorian Values. Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Thought and Society*, ed. Eric M. Sigsworth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.119.

Possibly such a notion was behind Ward's refusal to send either of her own daughters to University, although her son did go.[15] It cannot have been from any doubt of family ability, given her own success; and her youngest sister, Julia,[16] gained a First from, of all places, Somerville. Possibly, however, her motive was more prosaic: the view of Helena Pitstone's mother in *Cousin Philip* (1919), who insists that Helena delay going to college in order to give her a chance to marry, may have been Ward's own: 'Love, and a child's clinging mouth, and the sweetness of a Darby and Joan old age, for these all but the perverted women had always lived, and would always live.'[17] It is a typical piece of anti-New Woman rhetoric all the more remarkable for its timing: women over thirty would be granted the vote in early 1920.

In any case, better education and more jobs meant that women could earn their own living, and they thrived on their new independence. Training in the skills they needed was quickly made available: the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women was founded as early as 1859. George Gissing provided an illustration of such an organisation in *The Odd Women* (1893): the owner and lead teacher, Mary Barfoot, claims that qualifications make a woman 'a complete human being. She stands on an equality with the man. He can't despise her as he now does.'[18] Debate over such changes in the position of women continued both in reality and in fiction. Gail Cunningham comments on how:

> Heroines who refused to conform to the traditional feminine role, challenged accepted ideals of marriage and maternity, chose to work for a living, or who in any way argued the feminist cause, became commonplace in the works of both major and minor writers and were firmly identified by readers and reviewers as New Women.[19]

To traditionalists, this was deeply shocking. Even more disturbing than women working to support themselves was the notion that they might choose to work for personal fulfilment.

[15] Though it should be mentioned that Mary Ward was a very protective mother, and wouldn't send the girls to school either: even Arnold only started school at the age of thirteen.
[16] Julia married Leonard Huxley, son of T.H. Huxley, and was the mother of Aldous Huxley.
[17] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Cousin Philip* (London: W. Collins, 1919), p.48; hereafter cited *Philip*.
[18] George Gissing, The *Odd Women*, ed. Elaine Showalter [1893] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p.111; hereafter cited *Odd*. Mary trains women in a range of skills: 'two girls were preparing themselves to be pharmaceutical chemists; two others had been aided by her to open a bookseller's shop; and several who had clerkships in view received an admirable training at her school in Great Portland Street' (*Odd*, p.60).
[19] Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p.3.

George Gissing's character Rhoda Nunn knows herself to be one such, even when contemplating marriage: 'the impulses of her heart once satisfied, these things would again claim her.' When her love affair ends, Rhoda turns to her work for comfort: 'This was the only way of salvation. Idleness and absence of purpose would soon degrade her' (*Odd*, pp.309, 324). Portrayal of independence as strong as Rhoda's was rare, but nevertheless faithfully reflected the real attitudes of some working women - the novelist Geraldine Jewsbury wrote that: 'one's work is an 'ark of refuge', into which one flings oneself on all occasions of provocation.'[20] For the first time, work could be seen as valuable and worthwhile for women as well as for men, and traditionalists leaped to their arms: what would become of traditional marriage, if women had a viable, enjoyable, alternative?[21]

Ward's contribution to the debate was the bildungsroman *Marcella*, whose heroine Marcella Boyce displays the New Woman traits of involvement in issues outside the home, independence of opinion, and challenge to accepted ways. Ward wrote that it contained 'a general ferment of mind, connected with much else that had been happening to me' (*WR*, p.289). Much indeed: although the novel does not deal with religious questions, philanthropy, social concern, politics, work for women, and the New Woman all appear, alongside high society figures and romance, combined with the emphasis upon personal integrity, morality and inner growth familiar from *Robert Elsmere*, and localised in the figure of the heroine, her personal relationships, and her own 'ferment of mind'. As John Sutherland comments: '*Marcella* is neatly confined within the evolving mental, spiritual, emotional, social, and moral conflicts of the heroine' (*Suth*, p.146). So neatly confined, in fact, that it is difficult to pull out any single thread of the novel for separate discussion. Nevertheless, I aim to examine the process of Marcella's development, to determine the factors affecting it, and to relate this

[20] *Selections from the Letters of Geraldine Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle*, ed. Mrs. Alexander Ireland (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), p.427. Jewsbury's character Bianca reflects her creator's attitude: 'I was leading a life of my own, and was able to acquire a full control over my own faculties: and I have always had a sense of freedom, of enjoyment of my existence.' Geraldine Jewsbury, *The Half Sisters*, ed. Joanne Wilkes [1848] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1994), p.249; hereafter cited *Sisters*.

[21] John Stuart Mill argued that men 'might be supposed to think that the alleged natural vocation of women was of all things the most repugnant to their nature; insomuch that if they are free to do anything else - if any other means of living, or occupation of their time and faculties, is open, which has any chance of appearing desirable to them - there will not be enough of them who will be willing to accept the condition said to be natural to them'. 'The Subjection of Women', *Liberty*, pp.499-500.

process to Ward's real-life development, and to that expressed elsewhere in her fiction, most particularly in *Robert Elsmere*. I argue that Marcella follows a similar path to Elsmere, with differences due partly to her being female and so having less education, and partly due to character: his intellectuality contrasting with her passionate emotions. Finally, I will discuss Ward's conclusions, through the recommendations she makes to women through the novel about morality and conduct.

Flawed philanthropy

Marcella, like Robert Elsmere, is her creator's alter ego: her physical appearance, tempestuous personality, part-foreign ancestry,[22] early poverty, rebellious childhood, poor education and passionate crushes on Evangelical mentors, are all Ward's. Such deliberate parallels suggest that Marcella's insights and conclusions are also Ward's, lent credibility and weight by this correspondence with reality. However, while in *Robert Elsmere* she accurately reflected her own progression from orthodoxy to rational theism, in *Marcella* she adopts a different approach: Marcella Boyce begins with opinions far removed from Ward's, which are shown gradually to move towards, and merge with, her own (the implicitly correct position). This progression determines the structure of the novel, which falls into four clearly defined stages, each allocated its own book. The first presents the position from which Marcella must develop: her initial opinions and schemes, while the second shows how and why these fail. Book 3 then details Marcella's process of growth and rebuilding, until she reaps her final reward at the end of Book 4.

Right from the start, Marcella is shown to have a passionately felt, totally sincere, commitment to improving the lives of the poor:

> "I feel that the whole state of things is *somehow* wrong and topsy-turvy and *wicked*." Her voice rose a little, every emphasis grew more

[22] Marcella is part-Italian, where Ward's mother's family were said to be part-Spanish.

> passionate. "And if I don't do something - the little such a person as I can - to alter it before I die, I might as well never have lived."
> *Mar*, p.131

Whatever else changes, this commitment never wavers; rather, Marcella's understanding of how to set about it changes focus. Initially, she fits Sally Ledger's description of New Women as 'heavily implicated in socialist politics, and as a force for change';[23] she is a Venturist, a member of a fictional socialist group modelled upon the Fabian Society founded by Beatrice and Sidney Webb in 1884.[24] As such, she wants instant, sweeping social reform, including a complete redistribution of wealth. This is where Marcella's career diverges from Ward's own: Ward rejoined her family on leaving school, but in the novel Marcella instead spends two years living under strict economy as a 'half-Bohemian student' of art in London (*Mar*, p.36). During this time she is introduced to Venturist lectures and meetings by her friends the Cravens, most particularly by Anthony Craven, for whom she feels: 'a profound admiration - nay, reverence - which influenced her vitally at a critical moment of life' (*Mar*, p.47). The combination of a 'critical moment' and 'vitally' indicates that Venturist material has triggered something deep inside Marcella, and that her passionate social concern is part of her nature, and will last. However, her initiation also recalls her (and Ward's) previous adoption of Evangelical beliefs through affection for people who held those beliefs, particularly as it is positioned immediately after mention of this fleeting Evangelicalism phase. Will her Venturism prove equally short-lived? Since Ward quickly reveals several flaws in Marcella's beliefs and approach, the reader is encouraged to think so.

The first flaw is that Marcella's opinions, accepted unquestioningly from Anthony Craven and the other Venturists, are rigid and oversimplified:

> 'Blessed are the poor' - 'Woe unto you, rich men' - these were the only articles of his scanty creed, but they were held with a fervour, and

[23] Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.6; hereafter cited *Ledger*.
[24] They worked to reform Britain's poor law system, developed the education system in London (laying the framework of the Education Acts of 1902 and 1903). In 1895 they helped establish the London School of Economics. They also advanced British trade unions, and were instrumental in the formation of Britain's Labour party.

> acted upon with a conviction, which our modern religion seldom commands.
>
> *Mar*, pp.47-8

The references are Christian, but there is no associated tolerance and caring in the interpretation: the poor are innocent and suffering, exploited by the selfish, grasping rich, and change cannot come swiftly enough. There is a lack of rationality and reflection here, borne out by Marcella's extreme reactions: for example, she refuses to sympathise with the plight of the pregnant widow of a murdered gamekeeper, because her loyalty is given to the man accused of the crime. Instead, she declares: 'I will think of the tyranny and the revolt' (*Mar*, p.269). There is little Christian charity here!

As seen in *Robert Elsmere*, Ward condemns imbalance and rigidity in individuals as leading inevitably to trauma and pain: excessive intellectualism sent Wendover mad, and caused Langham's retreat into passivity and isolation. In the novel that followed, *The History of David Grieve*, the over-dedicated artist Elise ended in obscure poverty, and David's sister Louie's unregulated passions drove her to suicide. Marcella's extremism can, however, be explained to some extent, though not excused, by her youth (she is still only twenty-one), and her poor education: 'she was very clever in some ways - and very unformed - childish almost - in others' (*Mar*, p.87). Such comments as this hint both that experience will bring moderation, and that Marcella, like the young Mary Arnold on arrival in Oxford, has a long way to grow.

The second major flaw in Marcella's beliefs and approach is her egotism. Since arriving at her father's recently inherited and long-neglected family estate, Mellor, she has dedicated herself to helping its poverty-stricken villagers, speaking of them:

> with a freshness, a human sympathy, a freedom from conventional phrase, and, no doubt, a touch of egotism and extravagance, which rivetted attention.
>
> *Mar*, p.64

She is dedicated and sincere, but her motivation is clouded by self-gratification and the love of power: she found among the London Venturists 'the sense of a hitherto unsuspected power' over others, and came to believe that 'she was destined in time, with work and experience, to

great things and high place in the movement'. She is proud not of the help she has given, but that the villagers 'like me, and that already I can influence them'. Her assistance is not given from equal to equal, but from a superior footing as 'the new Squire's daughter', with the villagers as 'her new subjects', to be controlled and improved according to *her* interpretation of Venturist doctrine, and she revels in her 'Lady Bountiful[25] pose' (*Mar*, pp.47, 48, 71, 108, 62). However, Ward shows how Marcella's egotism undermines her practicality: she wants the prestige of reviving the traditional local craft of straw-plaiting, but cannot guarantee the high rates of pay she offers, since her family are still poor for their social status.

Ward also shows how egotism blinds Marcella to the consequences of her actions: she preaches politics to the villagers, and lends them socialist newspapers, in the happy certainty that she thereby works towards the social reorganisation she craves. Ward uses the main action of this part of the novel to shatter this certainty in several ways, and so initiate Marcella's process of personal growth. The situation is as follows: Marcella has spent much time and care on the Hurd family, whose crippled father has been unemployed for months. Under pressure to feed his sickly dependants, and to regain some self-respect, Hurd returns to his former poaching habits. Having read Marcella's literature, he believes his actions are justified since they strike a blow against the rich: 'A curious ferment filled his restless, inconsequent brain. The poor were downtrodden, but they were coming to their rights' (*Mar*, p.153). One night he and his companions are caught in the act by Westall, the Maxwells' gamekeeper, who is killed in the ensuing struggle. Hurd claims to have fired instinctively in self-defence, but their long-standing mutual hatred renders his claim unbelievable; he is arrested, and taken away for trial. Unable to recognise her own culpability, Marcella leaps to his defence, seeing him as the victim of an unfair system which criminalises him for trying to feed his family, as a symbol of all injustice to the poor, and Westall as an embodiment of the oppression inherent in that system. Her passionate rigidity precludes any kind of calm judgement of the matter: 'how can one feel for the oppressor, or those connected with him, as one does for the victim?' (*Mar*, p.268)

[25] Lady Bountiful is a charitable but patronising landowner in George Farquhar's 1707 comedy The Beaux' Stratagem.

Ward's story of John Hurd reproduces the controversy of a real-life incident. In 1892, the Wards had bought the estate of Stocks, in Hertfordshire, upon which the Boyces' estate, Mellor Park, is modelled. On 12th December, 1891, two gamekeepers were found murdered in a field near Stocks. Two poachers were executed for the crime, despite great efforts to obtain a reprieve, and a third received twenty years' transportation. The case caused much debate about the role and attitudes of English landowners, and Ward, now a landowner herself, reflects this by means of Marcella's recent engagement to Aldous Raeburn, the grandson of Lord Maxwell, the major landowner of the area, whose estate borders that of Mellor. The family is well-respected, conservative and Conservative: Raeburn is an MP, whose political standing increases steadily over the novel. He has clear conceptions of right and wrong, of law and order (he is also a magistrate), and genuinely wishes to work for the good of all. He is hard-working, kind, self-sacrificing, and slightly dull. At the same time, he is by no means a slavish follower of the traditions of his class:

> One thing only was clear to him - that to dogmatise about any subject under heaven, at the present day, more than the immediate practical occasion absolutely demanded, was the act of an idiot.
> *Mar*, p.77

Raeburn understands that knowledge can depend upon one's point of view, and he therefore tries to maintain an open mind, and to consider each issue on its merits. In short, he has been set up as the opposite of the rigidly prejudiced, dogma-accepting Marcella. At the same time, though, Ward makes it clear that Raeburn, despite his traditional role in society, is also dedicated to social reform: he tells Marcella of 'the desire of his heart to make his landowner's power and position contribute something towards that new and better social order, which he [. . .] believed to be approaching' (*Mar*, p.145). He has begun a profit-sharing experiment on part of his land, with some success, an activity more associated with Socialists (his rival in the love-triangle in which Marcella is caught, Harry Wharton the rising politician, has tried a similar scheme) than Conservatives, and his closest friend is a well-known Socialist, Edward Hallin. In

short, Raeburn appears as a man desirous of social improvement, but only when brought about with moderation and balance; he exemplifies the approach Marcella should be taking.

A marriage to Raeburn is all the more suitable since Marcella and he are of the same class - 'In birth and blood she had nothing to yield to the Raeburns' (*Mar*, p.123) - and class consciousness runs throughout Ward's work, notwithstanding her own middle-class origins. Her Society characters always marry among their own. Despite her father's past disgrace (he lost all his money and was imprisoned for swindling in the attempt to retrieve it), Marcella is still the 'inheritress of one of the most ancient names in Midland England' (*Mar*, p.36), and proud of her antecedents:

> she felt herself in her place, under the shelter of her forefathers, incorporated and redeemed, as it were, into their guild of honour.
> *Mar*, pp.60-1

At Mellor, their family seat, the Boyces have returned to the position to which they were born, and Marcella has truly come home. Ward's choice of words invests the event with a certain mysticism: Marcella has been delivered as if from exile, made a member of an ancient and noble order (guilds were first created in medieval times), and thereby validated as if an isolated self is deprived in a manner far beyond mere shortage of money. This inherited social status also serves to undermine her politics: she belongs to the very class which would be destroyed in the reform she craves.

Marcella's egotism is a major factor in her engagement to Raeburn, and renders it, like her politics, flawed from the start. Accepting his proposal despite not loving him, as illustrated by her consistent shying away from physical demonstrations of affection, she dreams not of their future life together, but of uses for the wealth and position she will gain as the future Lady Maxwell: 'What new lines of social action and endeavour she might strike out!' Determined to have 'a married life in which she was always to take the lead and always to be in the right' (*Mar*, pp.137, 541), she is here cast firmly in the mould of the independent New Woman.

The Hurd case serves to bring all these issues to a crisis, as Marcella throws herself into Hurd's defence, believing that she alone fully understands the situation and, forgetting her

own social status, casting Raeburn in the role of enemy. She refuses to recognise that he shares her distress, even when he frames the issue in terms which echo her own, those of the responsibility of his class for: 'the conditions which made such an act possible [. . .]. It troubled me much before. Now, it has become an oppression - a torture' (*Mar*, p.271). Instead, she confuses his attempt to stand back and reach a fair judgement with the superiority that she attributes to great landowners in general. His bitter assessment is all too correct:

> "because of Maxwell Court - because of my *money,"* - she shrank before the accent of the word – "you refused me the commonest moral rights. *My* scruple, *my* feeling, were nothing to you."
>
> *Mar*, p.313

Even this insistence upon his own individuality and integrity fails to shake her classification of people according to their roles: in her passionate partisanship she does not care enough for him to let it truly touch her.

The crisis comes with Marcella's failure to bring Raeburn and his grandfather Lord Maxwell, who both believe Hurd to be guilty, to sign a petition urging clemency. In their refusal, both assert, gently but firmly, their right to their own opinion:

> It was a heavy blow to her. Amply as she had been prepared for it, there had always been at the bottom of her mind a persuasion that in the end she would get her way. She had been used to feel barriers go down before that unique power of personality of which she was abundantly conscious. Yet it had not availed her here - not even with the man who loved her.
>
> *Mar*, p.295

Even Raeburn's love for Marcella will not sway his considered opinion, which seems to give the lie to my earlier argument that affection for others lays individuals open to influence. Yet this is not so, and the difference lies in the stage of growth of the individuals concerned. Ward's, and Marcella's, Evangelical periods, and Marcella's Venturism, indeed originated through personal affections, when they were young, and without previous strong convictions. Raeburn is older, in his late twenties, his character already formed, and his convictions firmly established, both intellectually and emotionally. For the first time Marcella confronts a force stronger than her

own; her 'unbounded confidence in her own power and right over Mellor, her growing tendency to ignore anybody else's right or power' (*Mar*, p.194), are shattered; and her personal and political fantasies for the future fall apart. Egotism and prejudice blinded her to the true nature of events and relationships, and now her flaws have come back upon her. Under the shock it is not long before Marcella asks Raeburn to release her from their engagement, and Book Two of the novel ends with their separation, and her collapse.

Character and Growth

Ward has designed the novel so that this shattering experience serves as the starting point for Marcella's process of growth and rebuilding in Book Three, and this process is closely connected with her innate drive to help others. To be strictly accurate, it was triggered back in Book Two, as it results from the emotional intensity and ferment of mind of the traumatic weeks spent nursing the Hurd family and fighting to save Hurd himself: 'Marcella had gone down into reality, and had found there the rebellion and the storm for which such souls as hers are made' (*Mar*, p.284). There is no one moment of triggering here, no swift, violent 'whirlwind of thought' as for Robert Elsmere. Instead, in keeping with Marcella's passionate nature and lack of intellectual attainment, the trigger and the process are emotional and only slowly acquire definition:

> I am a changed creature. Certain things in me are gone - gone - and instead there is a fire - something driving, tormenting - which must burn its way out. [. . .] The poor have come to mean to me the only people who really *live*, and really *suffer*. I must live with them, work for them, find out what I can do for them.
>
> *Mar*, p.313

As in Elsmere's experience, Marcella's insight is fiery and painful, scouring and purifying like the torments of purgatory, and impossible either to control or to resist; integrity demands that she follow it, and that she will find no peace until she uncovers its significance. Already it is clear that out of her shattered state a new emphasis is rising: her commitment to the poor

remains, but they are no longer *subjects* to dominate from above; they must be lived *with*, and worked *for*. She no longer wishes to dictate, but, in a new humility, to learn, to do penance for her past mistakes.

Ward picks up the story after Marcella has been working as a district nurse in the London slums for several weeks. This was a job taken by more and more women of her class at the time, but was no sinecure; it required a full year's hospital training, with long hours and hard work. Marcella has buried her turmoil in work just as many of those losing orthodox religious belief buried themselves in philanthropy. Nevertheless, she emerges as a talented nurse, always competent, and unafraid to follow her own judgment over treatments – at a time when nurses were supposed to obey doctors without question. Marcella summarily dismisses a drunken doctor whose condition has endangered his patient: 'Every word she said lay absolutely within her sphere as a nurse' (*Mar*, p.344). Ward's choice of nursing thus enables her to show Marcella's independence and strength of character in a new practical and worthwhile light. It also brings Marcella closer to the poor, so that she may, as her insight guides her, come fully to understand their needs:

> The middle-class charity worker who enjoyed the greatest prestige in the slums was the district nurse. The nurse's uniform offered middle-class women special protection in public, transporting them beyond gender.[26]

Back at Mellor, Ward had described how Marcella's social status had been another factor in her inability to provide effective aid, as the villagers could neither behave naturally before her, nor risk offending her by asking her to leave. As Stephen Gwynn noted: 'What, indeed, she indicates with most truth is Marcella's inability to pass this invisible barrier,'[27] and the barrier was never so apparent as with the Hurds:

> She never suspected that her presence was often a burden and constraint, not only to the sulky sister-in-law but to the wife herself.

[26] Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Night: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), p.58.
[27] Stephen Gwynn, *Mrs. Humphry Ward* (London: Nisbet, 1917), p.44; hereafter cited *Gwynn*.

> While Miss Boyce was there, the village kept away; and Mrs. Hurd was sometimes athirst, without knowing it, for homelier speech and simpler consolation than any Marcella could give her.
>
> *Mar*, p.300

Status, egotism, and passionate commitment blinded Marcella, so that while believing herself to be useful and supportive, she was in reality the opposite. As a district nurse, by contrast, she is primarily defined by function rather than by class. Her uniform gives her protection in the slums she visits - the only time she is injured is by a man who is hopelessly drunk – but, more importantly, gives her acceptance by the poor. It also forces her to abandon egotism, to focus her attention not upon her own problems, but upon *their* needs and *their* lives: 'A hospital nurse, if her work *seizes* her, as it had seized Marcella, never thinks of herself.' Her former claim that the villagers 'like me, and that already I can influence them', has already become: 'I am *in* their world - I live with them - and they talk to me' (*Mar*, pp.342, 71, 399).

Ward's choice of job was also wise in that it requires Marcella to live among her patients, in social as well as professional contact with them. She shows how Marcella makes full use of this opportunity, regularly inviting those living in the same building to spend the evening in her flat, and encouraging free, open discussion. The main focus here is upon the effect of this close contact upon Marcella's political views; for example, she defends the agrarian experiments of landowners such as Aldous Raeburn and Harry Wharton to a group of Socialists, and to do so she uses material learned back at Mellor, 'under Wharton's teaching, with so much angry zest, and to such different purpose.' In short, Ward demonstrates that Marcella no longer accepts what she is told, nor adheres blindly to Venturist dogmas, but has begun to think for herself, and to interpret facts for herself. This appears through a new impatience with party literature, most particularly an article by Wharton which condemns Raeburn's friend Edward Hallin for his moderate views: 'it is *we* who talk of justice, of respect, and sympathy from man to man, and then we go and blacken the men who don't agree with us' (*Mar*, pp.368, 400). Such tolerance illustrates how far Marcella's political views have already moderated; so far, in fact, that her old friend Anthony Craven accuses her of no longer being a Socialist. Her reply is significant:

> No! - so far as Socialism means a political system - the trampling out of private enterprise and competition, and all the rest of it - I find myself slipping away from it more and more. No! - as I go about among these wage-earners, the emphasis - do what I will - comes to lie less and less on possession - more and more on character.
>
> *Mar*, p.377

As Elsmere did, Marcella abandons doctrine in favour of independent conclusions based upon personal experience. Abandoning her own individuality to the role and uniform of district nurse has helped free her from egotism to recognise for the first time the individuality of others: given identical living standards, identical care, and identical opportunities, people do not respond identically – some will work and rise in the world, others will sink deeper into poverty. Following the demands of her own character and inner insight, then, leads to admission of the same forces in others: as Ward wrote in the novel's sequel: 'It is character that makes circumstance, and character is inexorable' (*GT*, p.343). The idea recurs throughout discussion of her work: individuals make decisions according to the bias of their innate character (which may or may not have been reinforced by habits as in the case of Langham), and these decisions in turn affect the events around them, to which the individuals will then react again according to their inner drives.

Ward was not alone in her association of character with circumstance: debate over their relative power appeared in other fiction of the decade, for example in the explicit summary provided by Hadria, in Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894):

> A man may make a thing - circumstance included - but he is not a sort of moral spider; he can't spin it out of his own inside. *He wants something to make it of.* The formative force comes from within, but he must have material, just as much as a sculptor must have his marble before he can shape his statue. There is a subtle relation between character and conditions, and it is this *relation* that determines Fate.[28]

[28] Mona Caird, *The Daughters of Danaus* [1894] (New York: The Feminist Press, 1989), p.10; hereafter cited *Danaus*.

In Caird's novel, character is not enough if external factors are unfavourable, and people do not stand alone. Hadria, a talented composer frustrated by the constant demands of her duties as wife and mother, attempts to abandon her unhappy marriage and carve out a musical career in Paris. Lack of money and family pressure force her to return, and life becomes a slow torment as her talent ebbs away for lack of use. Arguably, however, Hadria's return is not due to circumstance, but to character: she cannot bear the pain her independence causes to others.

Similar conflict occurs in the work of George Eliot, whose later novels seem to tip the balance in favour of circumstance: 'For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it' (*Mid*, p.896). The ending of *Middlemarch* demonstrates the power of external factors, as Dorothea must find definition and purpose not for herself, but through helping her husband Will Ladislaw in his political work.[29]

For other writers, as for Ward, inborn characteristics drove the decisions of individuals. George Egerton's Gipsy blames inborn weakness and gentleness for the suffering of women under the demands of men: '"We forge our own chains in a moment of softness, and then" (bitterly) "we may as well wear them with a good grace."'[30] Present circumstances, in other words, are determined by character-based past choices, as Eliot indicates: 'Our deeds carry their terrible consequences'.[31] Ward agrees, writing of Marcella, restless in her engagement to Raeburn: 'the chain that galled and curbed her was a chain of character' (*Mar*, p.222). Marcella's characteristics of ambition, passion and love of power led to her acceptance of his proposal, and the characteristic of honour holds her to it, until the drive to follow her new insight enables her to free herself. Her new recognition of the power of character-based choice to determine the lives of individuals is thus an extension and conscious admission of its power over herself.

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[29] It seems poor reward for the dreams with which she began, but actually the novel's ending is deceptive: the first Reform Bill was indeed defeated, but Ladislaw's party would eventually prevail, bringing the reform which Eliot regarded as one of the most momentous events of the period. Paraphrased from Kathleen Blake, *Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: the Art of Self-Postponement* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983), p.48; hereafter cited *Blake*.

[30] 'A Cross Line', George Egerton, *Keynotes and Discords*, intr. Martha Vicinus [1893 & 1894] (London: Virago Press, 1983), p.28; hereafter cited *Egerton*.

[31] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. Stephen Gill [1859] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.217.

Recognition of the individuality of others inevitably renders her previous 'one size fits all' dreams of sweeping social revolution untenable:

> A year ago at any rate the world was all black - *or* white - to me. Now I lie awake at night, puzzling my head about the shades between - which makes the difference.
>
> It seems so *near* coming right - one guesses a hundred ways in which it might be done! Then after a while one stumbles upon doubt - one begins to see that it never *will*, never *can* come right - not in any mechanical way of that sort - that *that* isn't what was meant!
>
> Ma, pp.400, 432

Her previous plans for social change involved imposing Draconian solutions upon people without understanding of their true requirements, treating them as objects without feeling.[32] This was Ward's own opinion of Socialism, as expressed in *The History of David Grieve*:

> Socialism, as a system, seems to *me*, at any rate, to strike down and weaken the most precious thing in the world, that on which the whole of civilised life and progress rests – the spring of will and conscience in the individual.
>
> *DG*, p.522

Ward viewed Socialist theories as opposed to the very quality that she considered most important, the freedom of the individual. Through her protagonist Marcella, she documents how experience of so many individual poor, and their varied needs and situations, teaches that change needs to come slowly, arising from and adapted to the complexity of the world and to those most directly concerned. As a result, Marcella struggles to formulate new, more valid, useful, realistic conclusions, and her position gradually shifts towards that of Aldous Raeburn, and, of course, towards Ward's own.

Mary Ward had not always been Conservative; at Oxford, she and her friends had been firmly in the Liberal camp. If one single issue could be said to have triggered her progression towards Conservatism (aside from the popular notion that people do become more

[32] See also Walter Besant's Angela Messenger, voicing her scorn of Political Economy: 'It treated of men and woman as skittles, it ignored the principal motives of action, it had been put together for the most part by doctrinaires who lived apart, and knew nothing about men and less about women'. *Besant*, p.10.

Conservative as they get older), it would be the predicament of her uncle by marriage, William Forster. In the early 1880s, Forster was Chief Secretary for Ireland, which was in a state of crisis: the Land League had just been formed, Parnell was starting to organise political resistance to English rule, and there was resistance in the streets - civil war threatened. Forster's view that order could only be restored by force was opposed to that of his leader, W.E. Gladstone, and their differences led to Forster's resignation in May 1882. His replacement, Lord Frederick Cavendish, was murdered almost at once by Irish terrorists,[33] leaving Ward convinced that her uncle had been the real target. She believed that the stress of his time in Ireland led to his early death in April 1886, and John Sutherland concludes that:

> It began a drift towards the Conservative Party, one of whose most powerful women spokesmen she was eventually to become; and this in turn led to her becoming an anti-suffragist. Militant feminists and militant Fenians were equally abhorrent to her.
>
> *Suth*, p.78

While I dispute the conclusion that her new Conservatism lay at the root of Ward's anti-suffragism, since this aspect of her views had appeared years before, I agree that she detested any kind of extreme opinion or action. Her abhorrence of the destruction of property caused by suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union, led by the Pankhursts,[34] is entirely in keeping. In her 'suffrage' novel, *Delia Blanchflower* (1915), she argued that suffragettes set back rather than advanced their cause, through the character of the fair-minded and well-respected suffragist Lady Tonbridge, who is prepared to wait for the vote:

> till the apple is ripe and drops. And meanwhile these wild women prevent its ripening at all. So long as they rage, there it hangs - out of our reach. So that I'm not only ashamed of them as a woman - but out of all patience with them as a Suffragist!
>
> *Delia*, pp.111-2

[33] In Phoenix Park, Dublin, in May 1882. His permanent undersecretary, Thomas Burke, was killed with him.

[34] It is worth making clear the difference between a suffragist and a suffragette: both wanted women to have the vote, but a suffragist was willing to wait until the time was right, while a suffragette believed in militant action to achieve her ends.

It was not a new argument; as much as forty-five years previously, the feminist Frances Power Cobbe had objected to the suffragettes' actions because: 'the more women shriek for the franchise, or for anything else, the less will men be disposed to open their ears to that extremely unpleasant sound'.[35] Cobbe argued that women should demonstrate their worthiness for the vote through more civilised manners and behaviour. Ward presented the suffragettes as a threat to the established order, using the burning of Monk Lawrence, a beautiful old house, to symbolise the wanton destruction of England's heritage and treasures. To return to *Marcella*, the heroine's strong sense of heritage is combined with her increasing moderation to change her opinion of the previously vilified rich. Ward declares that Marcella now sees 'how wealth may be a true moral burden and test, the source of half the difficulties and pains - of half the nobleness also - of a man's life' (*Mar*, p.537). The rich are preservers of beauty, guardians of England's treasures, retaining the best, and working to improve the remainder.

Marcella's new understanding and tolerance for others, however, is shown to plunge her into even deeper ferment of mind through its revelation of her own inner deficiencies. This time the triggering occurs after the pattern of *Robert Elsmere*, by one incident in particular: before the emotional agony of an alcoholic patient, Marcella suddenly finds herself inadequate:

> Between the feeling in her heart which might have reached and touched this despair, and the woman before her, there seemed to be a barrier she could not break. Or was it that she was really barren and poor in soul, and had never realised it before? A strange misery rose in her too, as she still knelt, tending and consoling, but with no efficacy - no power.
>
> *Mar*, p.385

Her competency as a nurse counts for nothing before the woman's emotional troubles. Marcella has channelled her intense commitment to help others into her job, and now recognises that this is not enough: 'She is one more stage on the way to her recognition that professionalism no less than absolutist social philosophy might do harm to the people she

[35] Frances Power Cobbe, *Our Policy: An Address to Women Concerning the Suffrage* (London: National Society for Women's Suffrage, 1870).

intends to help.'[38] A trained nurse can help with physical problems, since treatments and techniques can be taught. What is needed in this particular situation, however, is a flow of feeling between nurse and patient, or rather, between woman and woman, to create an emotional bond between them, and allow effective support and comfort. After she has invested so much of herself in her work, and in her changing politics, this discovery finishes the destruction of Marcella's certainty and egotism, leaving her only self-doubt and unhappiness. Like her first, fiery insight, and, again, unlike the experience of Elsmere, this recognition is inexact, merely an instinct, an intuition, but it must be followed. Her process of growth so far smoothes the way, as Elsmere's studies did for him, and the answer rises swiftly to her conscious awareness, in a vision equivalent to that of Elsmere's 'human Christ'. That very evening, memories of people she has encountered over the last couple of years (that is, during the time-span of the novel) combine with knowledge of her past mistakes and beliefs, to provide the solution:

> "what, indeed, are wealth and poverty?" cried a voice, which was the voice of them all; "what are opinions - what is influence, beauty, cleverness? - what is anything worth but *character* - but *soul*?"
>
> And character - soul - can only be got by self-surrender; and self-surrender comes not of knowledge but of love.
>
> *Mar*, p.386

Her vision, or rather, her auditory revelation, takes the importance of character to its basics: what counts above all is what an individual truly *is* at the core, and this deepest self is equated for the first time in the novel with the eternal, God-given soul. In *Robert Elsmere* and *The History of David Grieve* Ward had argued that the power to help others is directly related to the individual's following the decrees of the deepest self with all possible integrity; in *Marcella* this appears through the moderate socialist Edward Hallin:

> he had a singular unity of soul - it had been the source of his power - and every economical or social conviction was in some way bound up

[36] Judith Wilt, *Behind Her Times: Transition England in the Novels of Mary Arnold Ward* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), p.92; hereafter cited *Wilt*.

> with the moral and religious passion which was his being - his inmost nature.
>
> *Mar*, p.370

Hallin's beliefs arise from his deepest self, and he follows them even in the face of rejection by his increasingly extremist party, until ill health forces him to cease.

Marcella's revelation not only shows the importance of this deepest character, but also shows how it can be accessed by the conscious mind, and so followed. This is through 'self-surrender', abdication of ego. Simply, Marcella had smothered her innermost self with layers of egotism and doctrine, which are only slowly being peeled away. She needs now to blend feeling with her professionalism to allow the process to complete. Since the deepest self comes from God, such self-surrender becomes surrender to God, and to God's purpose, just as Ward's writings about conscience as 'God's revelation' indicated in the past.[37] In short, Marcella's revelation is also a religious experience, and Ward uses Hallin to emphasize the point: 'There is one clue, one only - *goodness - the surrendered will.*' Self-surrender allows the levels of love and care found in the example of Christ. Previously in the novel, blinded by Venturist dogma, Marcella was shown to be scornful of religion - 'How long will the poor endure this religion - this make-believe - which preaches patience, *patience*! when it ought to be urging war?' (*Mar*, pp.500, 303). This scorn moderated during her nursing work to an awed silence when she encountered it in her patients:

> Marcella stood shy and wondering in the presence of words and emotions she understood so little. So narrow a life, in these poor rooms, under these crippling conditions of disease! - and all this preoccupation with, this passion over, the things not of the flesh, the thwarted cabined flesh, but of the spirit - wonderful!
>
> *Mar*, p.382

As Ward comments: 'Now all her standards were spiritualised'. Marcella has come to detach her perception of individuals from their material circumstances, and, although her religious beliefs are never closely defined, to recognise the continued presence of God's grace in the world as 'the motive-power of life' (*Mar*, pp.537, 387).

[37] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to T. Humphry Ward 19 July 1881, *PH*.

Ward's portrayal of Marcella's process of change makes its origins deep within the self paramount: she does not achieve enlightenment or self-surrender through following any external doctrines, political or religious. On the contrary, it is continually related to her passionate need to improve life for others, as a true expression of the love that forms the core of her nature:

> From every act of service - from every contact with the patience and simplicity of the poor - *something* had spoken to her, that divine ineffable something for ever 'set in the world,' like beauty, like charm, for the winning of men to itself. "Follow truth!" it said to her in faint mysterious breathings – "the truth of your own heart."
>
> *Mar*, p.466

Her insights become more precise as time passes: the importance of individuality combines with the need to abdicate the demands of ego and concentrate upon self-surrender to form Ward's main message in her fiction of this period: individuals should follow the demands of their inmost selves. As Ward wrote elsewhere, 'It is the business of each one of us to obey what we have',[38] and as Newman wrote: 'I am what I am, or I am nothing. [. . .] My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature' (*Ass*, pp.272-3). Outside influences do not, in the final analysis, count for much. For this reason the instruction Marcella perceives – to follow 'the truth of your own heart' – is apt. The reader may expect that a spiritual instruction would explicitly command adherence to God's will, or to the truth as revealed in the Bible; here, Ward shows that the heart, the inner self, and God's will are all the same. The instruction is also apt since it fits with Marcella's process of growth throughout the novel: Elsmere, the intellectual, followed the demands of his rational, reasonable self; Marcella, the emotional, is told to follow her emotions; each protagonist develops in ways appropriate for his character as previously established.

Marcella's extremism and imbalance have gone, replaced by 'a true devotion, a true thirst for social good', and by a new receptivity to the world and the people around her: 'she prayed always for the open mind, the listening heart' (*Mar*, p.538). No longer rigid and blinded

[38] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to T. Humphry Ward 19 July 1881, *PH*.

by dogmas and ego, she will reach out open-mindedly to others, surrendering herself to them and thereby putting her abilities to best use.

There is one more hurdle yet to jump, however, since before Marcella can fully move forward, she must settle an issue that has been ongoing throughout the novel: who she will move forward with. Ward has documented her growing desire for, 'the power to *love*.' Not to *be* loved, which would be a return to egotism, but to *give* love, to surrender herself to the man she loves and so satisfy her most personal need. Her nature, 'in love at any rate, will give all or nothing - and will never be happy itself, or bring happiness, till it gives all' (*Mar*, pp.387, 496), as Aldous Raeburn tells Edward Hallin. But to whom will that love be given: to Aldous Raeburn, or to Harry Wharton?

The Importance of the Past

Wharton has hardly been mentioned in this chapter as yet, other than to say that he is a Socialist, that he instructed Marcella in political and economic theory, and that he is Raeburn's rival for her hand, deliberately designed by Ward to be so. In the structure of the novel, Marcella's progress towards understanding and a new dedication corresponds to a growing independence from, and rejection of, this mentor and suitor – as she progresses upward, so he moves downward, and the reasons behind his fall are closely allied to those behind Marcella's growth.

The very timing of Wharton's first appearance in the novel is portentous: no sooner have Raeburn and Marcella become engaged than his young, handsome, charming,[39] articulate figure enters the scene, just as the curtain falls at the end of Book 1. He has come, invited to Mellor by Marcella's father, to campaign against the Maxwells' Tory candidate for the local seat in Parliament. Inevitably brought into close contact with Marcella, there is truth in his

[39] Tamie Watters describes Wharton as 'the best of Mary's stock charmers, and a descendant of Jane Austen's Henry Crawford'. Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Marcella*, intr. Tamie Watters [1894] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p.xiii; hereafter cited *Watters*.

claim: 'you have given me your mind, your heart to write on, and I have written' (*Mar*, p.239). He affects her both emotionally and intellectually. Listening to him speak:

> It seemed to her that, among these cottagers, she had never lived till now - under the blaze of these eyes - within the vibration of this voice. Never had she so realised the power of this singular being. [. . .] "Here," she thought, while her pulses leapt, "is the leader for me - for these. Let him call, I will follow!"
>
> *Mar*, p.215

As Robert Elsmere to Henry Grey's sermon, so Marcella resonates to Wharton: his words and arguments match her beliefs, and his personal magnetism draws her sexually: she vows herself to the speaker as much as to the cause: 'her pulses were still swaying under the audacity - the virile inventive force of the showman' (*Mar*, p.231). In comparison, Raeburn's measured judgements seem colourless and staid.

However, along with her fiery insight that she must work *with* the poor, comes recognition that in following Wharton, she had not been choosing her own path:

> I began to see things very soon, not in my own way, but in his way. [. . .] I thought it was just friendship, but it made me critical, impatient of everything else. I was never myself from the beginning.
>
> *Mar*, p.314

Wharton knows how to frame his message, to sway people to his will; Marcella's perception of this enables her to begin to resist: her departure for London and nurses' training is not only in order to learn for herself, but also an attempt to put distance between herself and such a persuasive influence.

Ward is careful to undermine Wharton for the reader, to make it clear that Raeburn is the better man, and Marcella's true partner. In every comparison between them other than the superficial ones of good looks and facility with words, Wharton comes off worse: *his* profit-sharing experiment is a failure, *he* is respected only by his London colleagues and not by his dependants, who would know him best, and *his* political convictions are deeply flawed:

> We have no drama in England at the present moment worth a cent; so I amuse myself with this great tragi-comedy of the working-class movement. It stirs, pricks, interests me, from morning till night. I feel the great rough elemental passions in it, and it delights me to know that every day brings us nearer to some great outburst, to scenes and struggles at any rate that will make us all look alive.
>
> *Mar*, p.185

Wharton's motivation is not to improve society at all, but is essentially trivial; he wants entertainment, and is not above provoking events simply to amuse himself, and regardless of consequences: for example, he does not care that he causes division between Raeburn and Marcella: 'he was prodigiously tickled - entertained - by the whole position' (*Mar*, p.219). He is also keen to be accepted into high society, to become one of the rich he supposedly would abolish; while Marcella is at least sincere, Wharton does not practise what he preaches. Marcella's main appeal for him, apart from her beauty and desirability, is the social kudos he could gain from his association with this striking woman of such distinguished ancestry.

Marcella's growth is illustrated by her reaction to one of Wharton's speeches in the House of Commons. She listens:

> with all her passionate heart. Yet, at the same time, with an amount of intellectual dissent every now and then as to measures and methods, a scepticism of detail which astonished herself! A year before she had been as a babe beside him, whether in matters of pure mind or of worldly experience. Now she was for the first time conscious of a curious growth - independence.
>
> *Mar*, p.394

Wharton's magnetic effect still operates, he can still 'play upon her pulses', but this time Marcella is able to stand back and appraise what she hears, to understand the implications of his theories, and to see their flaws – in fact, to respond more after Raeburn's manner. The point is emphasized by her verdict: 'I don't believe in your Bill – and I am *sure* you will never carry it!' (*Mar*, p.399).

As she becomes increasingly inner-directed, Marcella's independence from Wharton grows, exemplified by her request for time to consider his proposal of marriage: 'you must please wait till the inner voice speaks so that I can hear it plainly.' Once it does speak, she

writes her letter of rejection without delay; and gives Wharton the response she should have given Raeburn back at Mellor: 'I see my way! *I do not love you*' (*Mar*, p.477). Her earlier error thus corrected through this parallel relationship, the way is clear for her reunion with Raeburn.

Marcella's rejection of Wharton, then, shows her to have learned the lesson of her past experiences, and is thus another measure of the distance she has travelled. At the beginning of the novel, she wanted 'to put the past - the greater part of it at any rate - behind her altogether' and start afresh at Mellor. Ward, however, instantly undermined her intention: 'in the very act of putting her past away from her, she only succeeded, so it seemed, in inviting it to repossess her' (*Mar*, p.36). The past cannot be dismissed: Marcella's determination to forget only throws her into the flurry of memories which fills the first few pages of the novel, and which Ward uses to acquaint the reader with her background, feelings, and ambitions. Even on the night of Hurd's execution, she still wishes to be free of the past:

> every day, every hour had been grinding, scorching her away - fashioning in flame and fever this new Marcella who sat here, looking impatiently into another life, which should know nothing of the bonds of the old.
>
> *Mar*, p.308

It is only gradually that Marcella learns to value the past, to accept tradition, and to understand that true progress can only be achieved by building upon it, rather than by tearing it down.

Wharton's function is to serve as a warning of the dangers inherent in disregard of the past. He presents himself as the modern man, the progressive, unfettered by the shackles of tradition that bind men such as Aldous Raeburn. Recalling his past, he tells Marcella:

> what I did then does not matter a straw to me now. To all practical purposes I am another man. [. . .] if we ever meet again in life, you and I, and you think you have reason to ask humiliation of me, do not ask it, do not expect it. The man you will have in your mind has nothing to do with me. I will not be answerable for his sins.
>
> *Mar*, p.238

This quotation reveals a discontinuity in Wharton, as if he exists only in separate periods of time which have no connection with each other, and Ward is quick to show the moral implications of such division.

Wharton's need for excitement and stimulation, already presented as a flaw, is explicitly associated with his upbringing: 'My mother taught me to see everything dramatically'. In itself this indicates that he is more controlled by the past than he would like to accept; as in the case of Marcella, the past is not so easily dismissed. His moral weaknesses are also emphasized: once a company director, he has been only too eager to forget 'that during his directorate he had devised or sanctioned matters that were not at all likely to commend themselves to the shareholders, supposing the past were really sifted.' There is no mention of regret for his actions, nor of any resolve to behave better in future; all he wants is to forget. Then, desperately in need of money for Parliamentary expenses, and for the Socialist newspaper he owns, Wharton accepts a large bribe to change the paper's stance from support to condemnation of a strike in the north. Although clearly aware that such action is morally wrong – he tries to distract himself from his resulting sense of shame by proposing to Marcella – he shows no sign of reform: 'He had done this doubtful thing - but why should it ever be necessary for him to do another?' (*Mar*, pp.185, 440, 455, 464) It is evident that if he should find himself short of funds in the future, he will very likely do another 'doubtful thing'; and his political fall in the novel follows swiftly upon public revelation of these dealings, as if in retribution.

Wharton's story, then, can be seen as a reversal of Marcella's: while she develops from lower to higher states, he moves in the opposite direction. Her progress has been a parallel to that of Eliot's Silas Marner:

> to ponder over the elements of his old faith, and blend them with his new impressions, till he recovered a consciousness of unity between his past and present.[40]

[40] George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, ed. Q.D. Leavis [1861] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p.202.

In contrast, Wharton provides an illustration of how, without a sense of progression from past to present, the individual is, as John Henry Newman put it, 'at the mercy of the winds and waves' (*Loss*, pp.15-6), unable to learn from experience, unable to recognise that acts have consequences – in short, without any incentive to behave morally. As Eliot's Maggie Tulliver says: 'If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment' (*Floss*, p.475). Individuals' sense of self comes not only from character, and from heredity, it seems, but also from the past, from comparisons with how they used to be.

All through the novel Ward has maintained Raeburn's presence in the reader's mind. After the breaking of their engagement, Marcella does not see him for well over a year, and by the time she does, her political and personal opinions have already moved far from their original position. She bitterly regrets her past conduct towards him: 'she, whose main achievement so far had been to make a good man suffer!', and this pain makes her distress at her inability to help the woman alcoholic all the more intense, and so speeds the insights that follow. When they do finally meet, it is on Raeburn's territory, in the House of Commons among his colleagues, where ability counts for more than noble birth, and where Raeburn 'was beginning to be reckoned upon as a man of the future by an inner circle of persons whose word counted and carried'. Perceiving this, Marcella cannot but be drawn towards him: 'Above all things did she love and admire power - the power of personal capacity' (*Mar*, pp.379, 424), and as she watches, her new understanding of individuality is confirmed on this personal, intimate level:

> One thing at least was clear to her - the curious recognition that never before had she considered Aldous Raeburn, *in and for himself*, as an independent human being.
>
> *Mar*, p.391

She recognises that in her earlier blindness and adherence to sweeping dogmas she had not recognised that, as George Eliot put it, 'he had an equivalent centre of self' (*Mid*, p.243). Raeburn is initially cold to her, and their rapprochement only begins when he overhears her

speeches about black-and-white politics and the impossibility of imposed, mechanical solutions, and recognises that she is maturing, and moving closer to his own position. Their convergence not only confirms that Raeburn's position is the correct one, but reinforces Ward's message that tradition, heredity, and past experience are not limiting factors, any more than the inborn traits of one's own character are limiting: they are, rather, springboards leading towards what she considered to be properly balanced lives, in which self-development goes hand in hand with concern for others less fortunate. Marcella's growth towards moderation enables her to understand and appreciate Raeburn better, and once she learns that he still cares for her, she puts her lessons of self-surrender into practice - 'Her whole rich being was wrought to an intoxication of self-giving' (*Mar,* p.539) – and the novel ends with their renewed engagement, presented as the ideal happy ending: social forms implicitly supporting moral decisions.

Self-Surrender and the Position of Women

Marcella's self-surrender to Raeburn is in keeping with her character and development as Ward has presented them: for all her independence, her search can be viewed as a search for the man to whom she can submit. This theory is reinforced by the mutation of her attitude to Wharton from 'Let him call, I will follow!' into '*I do not love you* - that is the simple, the whole truth - I could not follow you' (*Mar,* pp.215, 477). Similarly, Ward's emphasis upon Raeburn's fine qualities throughout the novel is a way of building him up into the kind of man worthy to be loved and followed by such a woman.

For the modern reader, however, her self-surrender is likely to prove problematic, since it seems that Ward's New Woman is throwing away self-definition and independence in favour of the traditional notion of a woman's subservience to her husband. In the novel's sequel, *Sir George Tressady* (1896), set several years after the original work, Ward's claim that Marcella and Raeburn both benefit from 'the equal comradeship of marriage' (*GT,* pp.121-2) is somewhat at odds with Marcella's apparent loss of independence of mind: 'She could argue better and think better; but at bottom, if the truth were told, they were Maxwell's arguments and

Maxwell's thoughts.'[41] In fact, such portrayal of a woman's role in marriage in Ward's fiction never altered; as William Peterson remarks:

> Repeatedly her most intelligent and aggressive heroines are brought to a state of humility and self-understanding by their trials; the lesson they invariably must learn is that a woman's role, no matter how brilliant she may be, is one of submission and dependence upon her husband and God.
>
> *VH*, p.49

In Ward's work, independence can only go so far: 'Duties, not 'rights': that was Ward's unheeded rallying-cry to the women of her day' (*VH*, p.8). Her women, however they begin, finish with the traditional duties of husband, home, family, and, should any time be remaining, philanthropy.

Such self-surrender seems particularly strange when advocated by a matriarch and breadwinner such as Mary Ward, who preached anti-suffragism on a national scale, trying to wield power over the country 'without any apparent sense of discrepancy between what she was saying and what she was doing' (*Sanders*, p.158). It was also out of step with the general trend of New Woman fiction in the eighteen-nineties, with its reflection of women's increasing independence and autonomy, and casting off of past subservience. To place *Marcella* and *Sir George Tressady* in context, then, it seems worthwhile to briefly examine this trend.

In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot represented female self-surrender as due to the traditional male perception of marriage as an institution designed primarily for their own comfort and power, in the attitude of Casaubon to Dorothea Brooke:

> The great charm of your sex is its capability of an ardent self-sacrificing affection, and herein we see its fitness to round and complete the existence of our own.
>
> *Mid*, p.73

Women were expected to support their husbands, not to make demands of their own. Eliot's presentation of Dorothea's character, however, desirous of self-development and learning,

[41] *GT*, p.126. Raeburn is now Lord Maxwell, but for clarity I shall continue to refer to him as Raeburn.

intoxicated by high-minded ideals of service to a great intellect, serves as indication that Casaubon's selfishness sets his marriage at risk from the first. The point is reinforced by its echo in Lydgate's view of Rosamond Vincy as a beautiful figure who will make home a restful haven for him, and in their subsequent marital troubles. The New Woman writers condemned accepted notions of female self-sacrifice far more explicitly, and from several angles.

The main feature of a New Woman in fiction was her independence, often presented as the determination to make decisions for herself, and to have unrestricted access to knowledge and to experience in order to do so: in Ward's anti-suffragette novel *Delia Blanchflower* they are described as 'determined, apparently, to know everything, however ugly, and to say everything, however outrageous' (*Delia*, p.69). In reality, such searching and plain-speaking led to accusations of immorality, and of the desire to be free from traditional ties such as marriage: New Woman issues such as the impossibility of a knowing whether love for one's partner would last, with its concomitant risk of rendering the marital relationship a prison rather than a haven, were easily twisted by critics into an advocation of free love. This was somewhat wide of the mark, both in reality and in fiction, as usually a New Woman's aim was still to have one main love relationship in her life. The difference lay in the demand for equality of status between the partners in such a relationship, whether within legal marriage or not. One fictional attempt at such equality appears in Grant Allen's Herminia in *The Woman Who Did* (1895): believing a love relationship to be an entirely private, personal matter, she chooses not to marry her lover, but after his death is forced to pretend widowhood in order to avoid social ostracism as an unmarried mother. The novel was criticised as anti-marriage because of this refusal, but as one early reviewer, W.T. Stead, pointed out, Herminia's lonely subsequent life, and her unhappy end (she commits suicide by drinking prussic acid), preach a different sermon: 'in the final analysis *The Woman Who Did* (1895) promotes rather than undermines marriage.'[42]

Far from their perceived demand for freedom to be promiscuous, New Women fought against self-sacrifice in a different way, through campaigns to make sexual restraint and purity as important for men as they had long been for women. Their cause, and the struggle, are

[42] *Ledger*, p.16. Referring to W.T. Stead, 'The Book of the Month: The Woman Who Did, by Grant Allen', *Review of Reviews* 11 (1895), pp.177-90.

perhaps most vividly illustrated by Sarah Grand's novel *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), whose heroine, Evadne Frayling, refuses to sleep with her husband on discovering immediately after their wedding that he has a dissolute past. For taking this stand, unheard of in a traditionally submissive wife, she is condemned by almost everyone, including her parents, but does not waver:

> I cannot act otherwise and preserve my honesty and self-respect. It is conscience, and not caprice, that I am obeying; I wish I could make you realise that.[43]

Evadne's integrity, self-worth, and reliance upon conscience align her closely with Mary Ward's characters, and her course of action (or, rather, non-action) is proved entirely justified through comparison with the submissive Edith, who in the same circumstances makes no such refusal, and dies of venereal disease caught from her husband, and which has been inherited by her baby. Grand thus presents female submission to traditional mores as positively dangerous.

Traditional submission was also rejected through a new openness and honesty in woman about their aspirations, both in real life, and in fiction, as for the first time women writers began to look within themselves for their source material: 'It is only lately that woman has really begun to turn herself inside out, as it were, and to put herself into her books.'[44] Such self-assertion was in itself shocking to many men, and led to further accusations of immorality, particularly due to the frankness and passion of the feelings expressed, and their disregard of convention. No woman writer exemplified this tendency more than George Egerton (i.e. Mary Chavelita Dunne), with her first two volumes of short stories, *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894), and her claim that women were trapped into conventionality by men:

> At heart we care nothing for laws, nothing for systems. All your elaborately reasoned codes for controlling morals or man do not weigh a jot with us against an impulse, an instinct. We learn those things from you, you tamed, amenable animals; they are not natural to us.
>
> *Egerton*, p.28

[43] Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins* (New York: Cassell, 1893), p.93.
[44] Hugh Stutfield, 'The Psychology of Feminism', *Blackwood's Magazine* 161 (Jan 1897), pp.104-17 (p.104).

Egerton's women are honest, sensual, and natural to the point of wildness, but their restlessness has been forced inwards by social conventions, leading them into hypocrisy and inner rebellion, while at the same time placing a concealing layer over their true nature which renders them mysterious and baffling to the male characters, with only the reader seeing the whole. The thought that such might be the true state of their own closest relationships was deeply disturbing to traditional Victorian men, especially as one feature of these characters' lawlessness is a sexuality unheard of in earlier fiction, such as appears in the fantasies of perhaps Egerton's best-known character, Gipsy, in 'A Cross Line':

> She bounds forward and dances, bends her lissom waist, and curves her slender arms, and gives to the soul of each man what he craves, be it good or evil. [. . .] And the men rise to a man and answer her, and cheer, cheer till the echoes shout from the surrounding hills and tumble wildly down the crags.
>
> *Egerton*, pp.19-20

When women were portrayed as imagining themselves, far from the accepted notion of decorous wives and mothers in the home, dancing scantily clad before an audience, and that audience entirely male, it is not surprising that accusations of immorality should abound.

Egerton's wild women were, however, at the extreme of New Woman fiction. More often, women were presented, as in *The Heavenly Twins*, facing moral issues, or attempting to find new forms for traditional relationships, on a more day-to-day level. Where female self-sacrifice does occur during the fiction of the nineties, as in *The Daughters of Danaus*, it usually ends badly, particularly in fiction of what Hugh Stutfield, in his 1897 essay 'The Psychology of Feminism', termed the 'neurotic' school, which examined the mental and emotional processes of its heroines as they made their attempts at emancipation. The most famous example is probably Sue Bridehead, in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), the self-proclaimed freethinker who nevertheless remains bound by convention, as Jude tells her: 'under the affectation of independent views you are as enslaved to the social code as any woman I

know!'[45] Sue leaves her husband Phillotson to attempt a new way of living with Jude, but like Herminia, once children arrive, she is forced back into convention, and must pretend marriage or face social condemnation. The crisis of the children's deaths forces her to recognise the difficulty of throwing off such long-standing moral codes, and leads her to return to convention by returning to her husband. Hardy shows how her attempt to fit herself into the mould of submissive wife results only in mental instability under the stress of resuming a sexual relationship with a man she finds repulsive. Although an independent relationship brought Sue unhappiness, submission to the external rules of religion and society carries a far worse fate: as Jude points out, 'We are acting by the letter; and 'the letter killeth'!'[46] Hardy's message thus echoes that given seven years earlier by Ward in *Robert Elsmere*, in which following inner needs rather than outer rules ultimately brought integrity and growth, as expressed in Catherine Elsmere's realisation that: 'It is the spirit that quickeneth' (*RE*, p.510). In Hardy, however, there is no opening for a happy outcome. In fact, in New Woman fiction generally, it was not until the next century, as optimism grew that women could and would achieve independence, and that society would change, that such unconventional relationships were allowed to succeed, even in fiction.

Despite criticisms and opposition, however, the campaign for independence and equality spread. By August 1893, the journalist Clementina Black, as reported by Elaine Showalter, was actually disappointed that Everard and Rhoda's love in *The Odd Women* was not allowed a happy outcome:

> We feel, as we read, that between two persons so clear-sighted, so outspoken, and so fully aware of the pitfalls of married life, the natural end would be a real marriage - that is to say, an equal union, in which each would respect the freedom and individuality of the other, and in which each would find the completest development.[47]
>
> *Odd*, p.xix.

[45] Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. C.H. Sisson [1896] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p.305; hereafter cited *Jude*.

[46] *Jude*, p.468. Quotation is from Corinthians 2, 3:6. Verses 5-6 read: 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'

[47] *Odd*, p.xix.

Ms. Black does not deal in questions of submission or limitation, but views marriage as a base for individual growth of both partners, secure in their emotional bond and mutual respect; a description which brings to mind 'the equal comradeship of marriage' (*GT*, pp.121-2) said to be enjoyed by Marcella and Raeburn. It begs the question of how such equality, and such emphasis by Ward upon internal dictates, can be reconciled with her equally strong recommendation to women of submission and duty.

Close examination of *Marcella* and *Sir George Tressady* does reveal that Marcella's self-surrender is less absolute than it may appear to the modern reader. Her nursing career and independent schemes have been abandoned, but far from retreating into mere housewifery, she now works alongside her husband towards the achievement of their mutual goals. At the end of *Marcella*, her vision of her future life with Raeburn places them in partnership:

> She would always be for experiments, for risks, which his critical temper, his larger brain, would of themselves be slow to enter upon. Yet she knew well enough that in her hands they would become bearable and even welcome to him.
>
> *Mar*, p.538

With her, Raeburn can achieve more than ever before, and since her political and social opinions now coincide with his, there can be no question of her being overridden, or of her acting in any way against her new, inner-oriented convictions. This is reflected in the work Ward shows them doing: Marcella helps Raeburn to draft the new bill he will put forward in Parliament for a Factory Act to prohibit 'sweating', intensive and poorly paid home work, in certain industries. The bill will cause much debate, as any restriction in hours of necessity brings with it a restriction in money earned, so while Raeburn argues his position among his colleagues and in Parliament, as he is best suited to do, Marcella uses her 'unique power of personality' as a political hostess to drum up support. She even speaks in favour of the bill at a workers' meeting, risking her own safety in the process. In short, she acts as Raeburn's partner, not his subordinate, and, far from being restricted by her marriage as she once feared,

she retains 'the full liberty to make her own sacrifices, to realise her own dreamlands!' (*Mar*, pp.295, 538) It is even possible to see her supreme moment of self-giving at the renewal of their engagement as an expression of independence: in line with the assertiveness of the New Woman, it is *she* who proposes to *him*.

Since the expression 'New Woman' was only coined in the year that *Marcella* was published, there is no significance in its absence from the novel. More notable is the sparseness of reference to the campaign for women's suffrage, which is only mentioned once in the published version, as Mr Bateson, a manufacturer, claims that although Wharton's motion for an eight-hour working day may get a lot of votes, it is unlikely to pass:

> it's like women's suffrage. People will go on voting for this kind of thing, till there seems a chance of getting it. *Then*!
> *Mar*, p.322

The campaign is mentioned, only to be cast aside. Elsewhere in the text Ward deliberately removed references she had earlier included, for example during editing of a conversation between Marcella and Wharton on the terrace of the Houses of Parliament. In the earlier version quoted below, he comments on the difference between Marcella's new, more moderate, social opinions, and her former ones:

> Now confess, you have given me good reason for voting on the Women's Suffrage Question next week - which I had blissfully meant to shirk.[48]

The implication is, of course, that he will oppose the motion. Marcella herself never once mentions the issue of suffrage, somewhat surprisingly, given her opinions and behaviour in the novel. The removal of such references, fleeting as they are, may have been because although Ward wanted Marcella to fit the New Woman mould, she did not want her to be an extreme example of the type; it is thus of a piece with her general rejection of extreme viewpoints. More probably, it fits with her presentation of Marcella as an embodiment of her conception of the

[48] The proofs are in the Honnold Collection, Claremont, California. If this segment had been retained, it would fit in *Mar*, pp.400-1.

ideal woman for the modern world. In *Marcella*, I believe that Ward is trying to find, and to promulgate, a synthesis between old and new, working simultaneously as reactionary and progressive, anti-suffragist and feminist.

This latter sounds at first an impossible combination, but Brian Harrison, in *Separate Spheres*, disagrees:

> It would be as wrong to equate anti-suffragism with anti-feminism as to equate suffragism with feminism, though on both sides there was an overlap between the two. Even discounting the Antis' eulogies of woman, many of them made important contributions towards women's freedom within the family.
>
> *Harrison*, p.55

As in the case of Ward herself, in her role as breadwinner and matriarch, a woman could oppose the vote and still want women to lead more fulfilling lives. Another such was Mrs. Lynn Linton, an independent working woman herself (the first woman journalist to draw a fixed salary), who originally wrote vehemently against New Women, but later 'favoured extending women's rights to divorce and guardianship over children' (*Harrison*, p.55), and married women's property reform (*Sanders*, p.133), all great steps forward for female emancipation.

Françoise Rives has rightly remarked that in her fiction Ward approves, as in the case of Marcella, of wives who are 'their husbands' true partners, able and willing to share their interests and pursuits, able to live at the same level, though usually in a different mode.'[49] Partly this is achieved through praise and happy endings for such characters, and partly through contrast with the fates of those unable to attain this ideal. Among these are Letty Tressady, whose selfishness and spite almost wreck her marriage, and Kitty Ashe, in *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1905), who repents too late of abandoning hers, and is punished right unto her rather pathetic death. Even in Ward's last novel, *Harvest* (1920), the heroine and former battered wife Rachel Henderson is punished for an extra-marital affair that lasted only three days, and was nothing if not provoked, by being shot to death quite gratuitously, just as she attains happiness and acceptance at last.

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[49] Françoise Rives, 'The Marcellas, Lauras, Dianas. . . of Mrs. Humphry Ward', *Caliban* 17 (1980), pp.69-79 (p.77).

Such condemnation runs right through Ward's fiction. As early as age fifteen, in her tale 'Lansdale Manor: A Children's Story', she had written:

> what *is* blameable, what *is* worthy of censure is the reckless indulgence of any one taste or inclination be it intellectual or otherwise, to the utter oblivion of those obligations and responsibilities to the rest of the human race which no member of it can escape from.
>
> *Peterson*, p.51

'Duties, not rights', and moderation, not extremes, from the start. She never wavered from this view: self-development goes hand-in-hand with awareness of duty to one's fellow human beings, whether the person developing is male (Elsmere) or female (Marcella). For females, though, the combination is given a greater importance, as also appears in the work of George Eliot, here with reference to *Daniel Deronda*:

> Daniel is able to achieve 'the blending of a complete personal love in one current with a larger duty'. His feeling for Mirah does not interfere with his leadership of his race, for, as Alcharisi sees, he will never let himself be merged in a wife. The son and husband can include love with vocation; for the mother and wife they are mutually exclusive - Alcharisi lets love go, while Mirah relinquishes her singing career for Daniel.
>
> *Blake*, p.194

For women it is not possible to have both a happy family life, and a career, although for men no such choice is necessary. Alcharisi chooses career, Mirah chooses love, Daniel is permitted both. Similarly, in Ward's work, it is always the woman who must choose: Robert Elsmere continues to work after his crisis, Catherine has to endure or leave.

The quotation above also hints that one category of women may be exempt from the general rule of submission to men, the category of artist, whether in music, writing, or painting. There are, however, differences in the treatment of such women between authors. Eliot's Alcharisi refused to submit to the traditional life of marriage and childbearing which was laid out for her - 'you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl' – and chose instead to give away her son in order to be free to pursue the artistic career she feels she was born to: 'My nature gave me a charter' (*DD*,

pp.694, 728). This is following the dictates of one's inner nature with a vengeance! A less extreme example is the prima donna Armgart, in the poem of the same name, who rejects Graf Dornberg's proposal of marriage because he wants a traditional wife, and regards her desire to shine as unnatural: 'Too much ambition has unwomaned her.'[50] Armgart's response is that of Alcharisi: her artistic talent is inborn, therefore natural, and to be used to the full: 'I am an artist by my birth - / By the same warrant that I am a woman' (*Armgart*, p.129), and her rejection of him is firm and decided:

> I will not take for husband one who deems
> The thing my soul acknowledges as good -
> The thing I hold worth striving, suffering for,
> To be a thing dispensed with easily,
> Or else the idol of a mind infirm.
>
> *Armgart*, p.132

Eliot demonstrates that Armgart's independent spirit and refusal to be belittled by the opinions of others arise from her deepest self, since even after illness deprives her of her voice, the instrument which brought her such fame, she still refuses to accept a traditional role, and maintains her integrity through a new career in the teaching of music. The only change in her is that suffering has worn away her former egotism, and she now devotes herself to the assistance of others. Teaching was, of course, a far more respectable line of work, which is a neat compromise on Eliot's part, but Armgart remains free.

Arguments based upon innate talent and character were not found only in female writers; the eponymous heroine of George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* (1895) justifies her operatic career in this way: her wonderful voice:

> could not have been given to her to hide or to waste; she would be held responsible for it. Her voice was one of her responsibilities; not to cultivate her voice would be a sort of suicide.
>
> *Innes*, p.91

[50] 'Armgart', George Eliot, *Collected Poems*, ed. Lucien Jenkins (London: Skoob, 1989), p.117; hereafter cited *Armgart*.

In all these characters, integrity is maintained, and all achieve the success they desire,[51] although the price they pay for such success is also made clear. In Ward's work, by contrast, the attempts of artistic, talented women to gain independence and freedom for themselves by such expression of their inner nature – which she should, if consistent, applaud – are not presented either as natural, nor as reasonable (provided the woman is willing to miss out on other aspects of life, as in Eliot). Quite the opposite, they appear either as temporary expedients to be abandoned upon marriage, or as arrogance, presumption and hubris.

One good example of the first type is Rose Leyburn in *Robert Elsmere*, originally portrayed as an extremely talented violinist, whose music 'was the mere natural voice of her inmost self', and is eager to study it in depth, filled with what her sister terms 'this modern gospel of the divine right of self-development' (*RE*, pp.237-8, 209). In the novel's sequel, *The Case of Richard Meynell*, Rose is defined twenty years later by her personal relationships as Hugh Flaxman's wife, and Catherine Elsmere's sister: 'In her youth she had been an eager and exquisite musician; in her middle life she was a loving and a happy woman' (*RM*, p.187), as if the woman and the musician are different beings. Ward's good friend Henry James was among several who considered this an error: 'I can't help wishing that you had made her serious, deeply so, in her own line, as Catherine, for instance, is serious in hers',[52] but Ward, evidently, thought otherwise.

An artist of the second, hubristic, type, indeed, Ward's main example of a woman artist, appears in her second bestseller, *The History of David Grieve* (1892). In the stirring words of the ambitious young painter Elise Delaunay:

> *Art* breaks all chains, or accepts none. The woman that has art is free, and she alone; for she has scaled the men's heaven and stolen their sacred fire.[53]

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[51] Evelyn's later decision to become a nun is taken from a position of success, and presented as an expression of another, slowly emerging, side of her nature.

[52] Letter from Henry James to Mrs. Humphry Ward 5 July 1888, *VH*, p.152.

[53] *DG*, p.319. Sarah Grand presented a similar feeling in her portrait of an artist who finds his inspiration returning with a new model: 'there is no joy like this joy, nothing else which is human which so nearly approaches the divine as the exercise of this power.' Sarah Grand, 'The Undefinable: A Fantasia', *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*, ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1993), p.287; hereafter cited *Daughters*.

Elise's dream of freedom is magnificent, and 'in truth the earnest, the reality of her existence,' but is also said to be a facet of 'the real vulgarity of her nature - its insatiable vanity, its reckless ambition'. In Ward, such ambition is a presumptuous usurpation of male territory which must be punished, just as in Greek mythology Prometheus was tormented in retribution for his own theft of fire from the gods of Olympus; a reference which pervaded Victorian culture, and which serves to indicate the enormity, as Ward sees it, of Elise's crime. She is duly punished, and late in the novel is discovered living in poverty, supporting an invalid husband by painting mere trifles, her splendid talent crushed by the pressures of survival. It seems rather severe, particularly as Elise's talent was originally shown to be her only escape from the poverty of her background: 'The woman is always the victim, say what you like. But for some of us at least there is a way out!' Ward does, however, provide another justification for Elise's fate: she repudiates restrictions not only in art, but in all areas. Elise belongs to Bohemia, she has grown up among artists, outside the world of convention and social conformity, and 'if the occasion were but strong enough she had no instincts inherited or acquired which would stand in the way of the gratification of passion' (*DG*, p.313, 313, 321, 310): she enters into a love affair with David Grieve. Ward is thus able to condemn her for immorality as well as presumption. But she does not leave Elise completely without hope: her only remaining happiness is said to rest in the continued life of the husband for whom she cares. The free-spirited artist has been forced into the acceptable, selfless role of woman as nurturer. The other woman in Ward's fiction who longs for a career in art is Lydia Penfold, in *The Mating of Lydia*, who chooses to abandon her career and marry instead; implicitly making the correct choice in line with Ward's theories.

Ward's treatment of male artists is less consistent. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (1898), the effeminate artist Williams has to give up his art on becoming a Jesuit:

> His superiors thought it necessary to cut him off from it entirely. And no doubt during the novitiate he suffered a great deal. It has been like any other starved faculty.
>
> *HB*, pp.258-9

To deny inner talents and needs is, as Ward had argued back in *Robert Elsmere*, to lead a mutilated life, and it is no surprise that Williams later leaves the Jesuits. He is not a pleasant character, but is never condemned for being an artist. Rather, condemnation is reserved for the Jesuits who deny him, who are consistently viewed as hostile to any expression of individuality and emotional attachments outside religion.

Where Ward takes a male artist for her protagonist, as in *Fenwick's Career* (1906), her approach echoes that towards women artists. John Fenwick's story is based upon that of the real-life portrait painter George Romney, who left his wife to pursue his career, and became infatuated with the young Emma Hamilton. Fenwick abandons his wife and daughter to pursue his artistic career in London, where one initial misunderstanding leads to his posing as a bachelor. His wife then leaves him, mistakenly convinced that he loves a lady who is actually only a close friend. The key point lies in Fenwick's reason for leaving: he is consumed with selfish ambition, with advancing his career, and his family is a distinctly secondary consideration. This character flaw, combined with his hasty and argumentative personality, and the accumulating guilt resulting from his masquerade, undermine the success he achieves, until he nears bankruptcy, his talent and health all worn away. Only when he is reconciled with his wife and daughter does his talent revive, to reinforce Ward's overall point that selfishness and ambition are always to be condemned, since they lead to disruption of primary relationships: when relationships are sorted out, so the whole of life falls into its correct place and proportion. Nevertheless, a comparison with the treatment meted out to Elise Delaunay is revealing: Fenwick is allowed a second chance at artistic success, Elise is not. Ambition, no matter how selfless, is allowable only in men, and artists, no matter how talented, are not special cases.

Later messages

From the turn of the century, Ward's message to women, condemning selfishness and ambition while recommending selflessness and support, became more simply, it might be said, more

crudely, expressed. The best example is *Daphne, or Marriage à la Mode* (1909), in which the American Daphne, believing (wrongly) that her English husband is unfaithful, divorces him. Ward wrote that 'The idea in my mind was to show both the temptation and the cruelty of a lax marriage law,'[54] but she overstated her case. Not only is the capricious, jealous Daphne mistaken, but the punishment allotted her is out of all proportion: her child dies suddenly, her ex-husband turns to drink and will die young, and she herself realises the truth only too late: 'She did not suppose she ever would be happy again'.[55] Ward emphasises and exaggerates her point by description of Daphne as pursued by the Furies, the merciless avengers of Greek mythology:

> do what she would, she was still in a world governed by law; a world at the heart of which broods a power austere and immutable; a power which man did not make, which, if he clash with it, grinds him to powder.
>
> *Daphne*, pp.287-8

This comment presents Daphne's action as an offence to God, but the reference is unlike any previously seen in her work. This God does not urge individuals towards growth and learning, but seems far closer to a pagan deity, more implacable and more thorough in retribution even than the God of the Old Testament. Ward may have intended such reference to indicate the severity of her judgment of those who, in her eyes, placed the law of man above that of God, but, again, has overstated her message. A similar severity appears in *Eltham House* (1915), which also discusses divorce. Before the action of the novel begins, Caroline Marsworth divorced her husband in order to marry Alec, Lord Wing. As the couple attempt to make a social success in London, and win Alec a career in Parliament, Carrie finds herself ostracised by society women, even though 'all the advanced feminists'[56] support her: 'Caroline Marsworth had ceased to care for her husband - the immorality, in their opinion, would have lain in staying with him.' Ward uses the novel partly to demonstrate how some social customs have

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[54] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Daphne or Marriage à la Mode, The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.15 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p.xiv.
[55] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Daphne or Marriage à la Mode* [1909] (London: Cassell, 1912), p.288; hereafter cited *Daphne*.
[56] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Eltham House* (London: Cassell, 1915), p.134; hereafter cited *Eltham*.

progressed, in that Alec is also rejected, as part of 'the general tightening up - for men - of the connection between public service and private morals. [. . .] In previous generations the unfaithful wife has always been tabooed; the seducer has always got off scot free' (*Eltham*, pp.134, 134-5). It is the kind of progress for which Evadne had hoped in *The Heavenly Twins* over twenty years earlier. Ward's judgment is unbending: the Wings' marriage fails under this social strain, and Carrie dies soon afterwards.

The pagan quality of the novel appears in Carrie's last letter to her husband. She compares their situation to that of Socrates, who remained in Athens, knowingly facing certain execution, because to flee would be to break the law, regardless of the fact that the law in question was unjust. Carrie may describe the love she shared with Alec as 'akin to heaven? Is not such love sacred? Does it not ennoble - redeem?' (*Eltham*, p.335), but in the end she, like Socrates, accepts her fate:

> I submit. We did wrong; we broke a law which is there to defend men and women from themselves; there to save the State; and that City of God which is within the State; and greater than it.
> *Eltham*, p.335

In both novels Ward indicates that the laws in question, the laws of marriage, are laws valid for all times and all peoples, sacred beyond the tenets of any particular religion; and to break them is to invite commensurate retribution. The Socrates reference hints that the law is unfair, but Ward admits no such doubt.

It is easy, in the light of the last few pages, to say that Mary Ward wants women to be homemakers and philanthropists, to live for their families, and to subsume their own ambitions into these areas, and that she ruthlessly condemns those who step outside these limits, rationalising this condemnation by treating the laws of marriage as ancient and spiritual rather than as strictly secular. However, this is too simple a verdict. Marcella gives up nursing, true, but her political and social work does not cease after her marriage, even though she has a child as well as a husband, any more than her creator's did. In fact, Marcella is a prototype in

Ward's fiction; the first illustration of an independence which she would not document fully until forced to recognise it by changes due to the First World War.

Ward's early response to the war was the attempt to use her fiction as a means of escape, as she admitted in March 1916:

> Once, - last spring – I tried to base a novel on a striking war incident which had come my way. Impossible! [. . .] I fell back upon my early recollections of Oxford thirty or forty years ago – and it was like rain in the desert.[57]

The novel she produced was *Lady Connie*, a romance set in the Oxford environment that she had loved so much as a teenager and young married woman, and she longed to write more novels that could provide relief for her readers: 'I wish with all my heart I could write a detective -- or mystery -- novel! That is what the wounded and the tired love' (*Tr*, p.290). Nevertheless, the war would force her range of acceptable tasks for women to expand. In *Delia Blanchflower*, published in 1915, although not set in wartime, she had Mark Winnington comment on the need for women to play their part in the preservation of England:

> No need for women in the home tasks – the national house-keeping of this our England? He laughed – like France – at the mere suggestion of the doubt. Why, that teeming England, north and south, was crying out for the work of women, the help of women!
>
> *Delia*, p.342

When war broke out, suffrage societies suspended militant action and ceased their pressure for the vote; the Government also gave an amnesty to all suffrage prisoners. There was no time for militant protests when women were so needed to fill men's places in the world of work, in a far wider range of jobs than ever before, in business, in factories, and on the land, to keep the country going while the men were away fighting. Such women are wholeheartedly praised in Ward's fiction, and appear in most detail in her novels *The War and Elizabeth* and *Harvest*, which:

[57] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *England's Effort* (London: Smith, Elder, 1916), p.1-2; hereafter cited *Effort*.

> portray women in the ordinarily male, public-sphere activities of large-scale agricultural production. Both novels demonstrate Ward's admiration, also expressed in her non-fiction accounts of the Great War in Europe, for the women on the home front who moved from private life into traditionally public masculine activities.[58]

She was possibly all the more willing to praise them since although they were doing men's work, and thereby stepping outside what she regarded as their proper sphere, it was often men's work 'diluted', a practice whereby one skilled job would be broken down into smaller tasks which could be reclassified as unskilled. For Ward, this meant that working women could still be regarded as traditional, as desirous of marriage and children above all, rather than as New Women who risked overthrowing society. She was afraid that such new experiences would lead women to 'forget the old needs and sweetnesses?',[59] and used her writing to portray wartime working women in such a way as to demonstrate that this need not be so. To provide examples of Ward's praiseworthy wartime women: Helena Pitstone in *Cousin Philip* (1919), drove an ambulance in the Voluntary Aid Detachment, a rare skill for women at the time, and one which she applies to good effect in peacetime, bringing aid to a village where a riot is occurring: 'Here was the 'new woman' indeed, in her best aspect' (*Philip*, p.113). In *Harvest* (1920), set in autumn 1918 but written after the granting of the vote to women over thirty, women's work on the land features largely. Rachel Henderson (the woman who is shot at the end) and Janet Leighton own and run a farm, managing two girl employees, a bailiff, and two male labourers, and the farm prospers. Rachel's training in farm management, and her business acumen are emphasized (a legacy from an uncle 'had enabled her to get her year's training, and to take this farm with a proper margin of capital' (*Har*, p.8)) and there is never any hint of incapability about her work:

> Socially, *Harvest* offers an astute analysis of how scientific farming was altering the old ways of rural England – something that Mary Ward had been in touch with at Stocks since 1892. In one aspect, the story is a homage to what Dorothy Ward and her corps of land girls had achieved on the Wards' land over the war years.

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[58] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.147; hereafter cited *Dust*.
[59] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Missing* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1917), pp.395-6; hereafter cited *Missing*.

Suth, p.367

As so often, Ward was writing of what she knew from real-life experience. In late 1915 the American ex-President Theodore Roosevelt suggested that she write a series of articles to explain the British War Effort to the American market, and she travelled widely, with assistance from the highest level, to carry out the required research:

> While not the first or the only woman writer to visit the front from England (Katherine Mansfield, May Sinclair, and Edith Wharton were all there before her), she was the only one to do so with the backing of the government and the co-operation of the military. As a result, she had, for a woman, what was probably a unique education in the official conduct of the war.[60]

To give just one example: inspecting British industry and munitions in the North of England, she reports on one company which is employing three times as many people as before the War, mostly women, all of whom are described as immensely committed, and happy to work the longest of hours: 'they're saving the country. They don't mind what they do.'[61] The Works Superintendent tells her that 'the experiment of introducing women has been a complete success' (*Effort*, p.41). Of course, it must not be forgotten that the articles (published in the UK in book form as *England's Effort* (1916), *Towards the Goal* (1917), and *Fields of Victory* (1919)) are propaganda, designed to show how thoroughly and effectively the British were coping, but the praise given to such working women in her fiction of this period is consistent with that in her articles, and in the light of her honesty concerning other areas of life can be taken to illustrate her genuinely held opinion.

The commitment, willingness and efficiency shown by women during the War earned them more than praise; it was a demonstration of worth and steadiness which fought the battle for suffrage far more effectively than any speeches, protests, or militancy could do. As Herbert Asquith, the Prime Minister, admitted in 1916:

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[60] Helen Small, 'Mrs. Humphry Ward and the First Casualty of War', *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, ed. Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.15; hereafter cited *R&T*.

[61] *Effort*, p.41. The comment is echoed by Ward in the high opinion a farmer has of one of the girls assigned to him: 'Ee says there ain't nothing she can't do. Ee don't want no men while he's got 'er. They offered him soldiers, and ee wouldn't have 'em.' *Har*, p.90.

> when the war comes to an end [. . .] and when the process of industrial reconstruction has to be set on foot, have not the women a special claim to be heard on the many questions which will arise directly affecting their interests? [. . .] I say quite frankly that I cannot deny that claim.
>
> *Strachey*, p.354

By this date, indeed, most of the 'anti' party had switched sides; only die-hards such as Lord Curzon and Mary Ward remained obdurate and, with the exception of *Delia Blanchflower* (1915), she continued to present strong, independent women who have no desire for the vote.

The culmination of this sequence is Elizabeth Bremerton, of *The War and Elizabeth*, published in December 1918 (women's suffrage had been finally granted in January of that year), but set during the war. The novel focuses upon how estates should be managed, through the slow reform of Squire Mannering under the aegis of Ward's most capable, confident female protagonist, Elizabeth Bremerton. Elizabeth is highly intelligent, highly educated (she has a first class degree from Oxford), and an experienced accountant and secretary. She comes to Mannering Park as secretary to the Squire, to assist him with his collection of Greek antiquities, but soon becomes de facto housekeeper, accountant and land agent, working hard to bring the long-mismanaged estate out of debt: 'I can't bear the muddle and waste of this place. It gets on my nerves' (*WE*, p.62). Squire Mannering has been obstructing the Country War Agricultural Committee, whose insistence that he plough up fifty acres of his land for food production, provide timber from his woods, and evict three slovenly farmers who are letting their farms go to ruin, he regards as an intrusive infringement upon his freedom. Elizabeth hands in her notice on the grounds that her conscience will not allow her to work for a man who does not seem to care for the country at all despite the extremity of England's situation. The risk of losing her leads Squire Mannering to recognise how much her presence has improved, not only his estate, but his whole life - 'he confessed her comradeship, her friendship, had begun to mean a good deal to him' (*WE*, p.160) - and he withdraws his opposition. This surrender enables Elizabeth to further demonstrate her efficiency by taking all matters relating to the War off his hands, and becoming a valued member of the local War

Committees into the bargain. Throughout it all she receives nothing but praise from Ward; in fact, the novel as a whole endorses women's new freedoms, and the changes they have brought in relations between the sexes. It seems a far cry from Marcella's submission.

Ward shows too how Elizabeth herself benefits from her efforts at Mannering Park. Although paid a good salary, and offered more, she declines since she is not mercenary; and she also refuses the Squire's proposal of marriage. The benefits Elizabeth gains are of another order:

> Was it the consciousness of successful work - of opening horizons and satisfied ambitions, that had made a physical presence, always attractive, so much more attractive than before - that had given it a magnetism and fire it had never yet possessed?
> *WE*, p.188

Using her talents to their maximum gives her a degree of fulfilment and happiness that pervades her whole being. She is feminine as well as hard-working and successful, Ward's proof, as I remarked earlier, that capability and independence need not lose women 'the old needs and sweetnesses' (*Missing*, pp.395-6).

Closer examination of these characters and their stories, however, reveals that Ward is consistent after all. Helena Pitstone's driving skills, and Rachel Henderson's farming talent are both used in the assistance of others. Elizabeth Bremerton's talents, too, are never used for self-aggrandisement: she works for Squire Mannering not to please herself (she would prefer to be nursing in France), but to support her invalid mother, and her sister. At Mannering Park she looks beyond the gates and aims to help the local people as well as her immediate employers, and, through the War Effort, to help her country. *This* is a New Woman who lives and works exactly as Ward would like others to do, according to the standards she first laid down in *Marcella*. That is, Elizabeth's work differs enormously from that of Marcella, but her approach to this work is essentially selfless and domestic, as if England has become one enormous extended family in need of care in the face of the cause that overrides all. What need for the vote when so much can be achieved without it? Ward's portrayals of Elizabeth Bremerton and

Rachel Henderson show women succeeding in a man's world, but without compromising the feminine ideals and attitudes of which she approved.

She also hints that the combination of such 'house-keeping' work and such capable yet feminine women might have wider benefits, as Beth Sutton-Ramspeck argues: 'Ward portrays its manifestation as creating a fundamental social revolution affecting both gender and class' (*Dust*, p.147). As an illustration, despite the reader's expectations, and despite Squire Mannering's longing for such a change, he and Elizabeth Bremerton do not marry. For the first time Ward admits the possibility of a friendship between equals, of the kind longed for by Marcella Boyce, and unsuccessfully attempted by Lydia Penfold:

> For twenty years he had lived in loneliness. Now, it seemed, he had found a friend, in these days when the new independence of women opens a thousand fresh possibilities not only to them, but to men also.
> *WE*, p.160

Ward's portrayal of women's involvement in work, then, may deny them the vote, insist in the main upon love, marriage and children as most important, yet is also progressive in attitude, opening up not only new forms of employment, but also new kinds of relations between men and women.

Unfortunately, *The War and Elizabeth* is an exception, as Ward continued to present male attitudes that do not, and maybe cannot, change in line with the progress made by women. Captain Ellesborough, shown over Rachel's farm, is 'amused by her technical talk and her proprietor's airs. It seemed to him a kind of play-acting, but it fascinated him' (*Har*, p.78).

> His whole heart approved and admired her when he saw her so active, so competent, so human. And none the less the man's natural instinct hungered to take her in his arms, to work for her, to put her back in the shelter of love and home - with her children at her knee
> *Har*, p.117

He cannot accept that Rachel's independence and competence might be fulfilling and lasting, and would far rather place her back in the traditional woman's role. Equally, when Delia Blanchflower protests to Mark Winnington about restrictions placed upon her and her fortune,

'Winnington, as he surveyed her, was equally conscious of her beauty and her absurdity' (*Delia*, p.86). Women want more, and are capable of more, but Ward's men still cling to the old ways.

There was one career, however, that Ward never permitted a woman character to succeed in, and in this she was not alone, as Valerie Sanders remarks:

> it is odd, perhaps, that women novelists do not choose to show their heroines succeeding as novelists, the one area where spectacular achievement was a possibility.
>
> *Sanders*, p.58

Only Kitty Ashe publishes a novel, and attention is focussed not upon the novel as fiction, but upon its power to embarrass and undermine her husband. Nevertheless, her novel does serve as a reminder of another stumbling block in Ward's presentation of herself as a selfless moral example: no matter how much she claimed to write didactically, with the aim of improving society, she was, as a novelist, herself a kind of artist, and therefore, according to the tenets of her own fiction, to be condemned. More generally, even after the success of such writers as George Eliot, the Brontës, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Elizabeth Gaskell, 'there remained a deeply engrained sense that no normal, happy woman would have either the time or the inclination to write a novel' (*Sanders*, p.75). New writers like Rhoda Broughton, Charlotte Yonge, and Mrs Craik 'strenuously suppressed awareness of how their own professional work called into question traditional female roles.'[62] Mary Ward's own refusal to follow the traditional womanly stereotype herself, and her public prominence as author, philanthropist, critic and anti-suffrage campaigner laid her open to the charge of 'unwomanly' ambition.

It was rare to find a woman novelist who denied that conflict was inherent in the choice of such a profession, and offered instead the opinion that the writing of fiction could give women a more balanced life, in which the domestic enriched the artistic, while the artistic prevented any boredom with the domestic (*Showalter*, p.69). Elizabeth Gaskell was one such:

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[62] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p.169.

'I have no doubt that the cultivation of each tends to keep the other in a healthy state.'[63] Tony Tanner, in his Introduction to *Villette*, places Charlotte Brontë in the same category, arguing that when Robert Southey wrote to her that writing literature had no part in a woman's life, he was mistaken:

> writing for Charlotte Brontë was literally the way she held her life together while performing the most melancholy and exhausting duties connected with all the illness and deaths in her ill-fated family.[64]

The prejudice against women writers was such that many chose, not only in the mid-century, but also in the 1880s and 1890s, to write under pseudonyms, including George Eliot – Mary Ann Evans; Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell – Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë; and George Egerton – Mary Chavelita Dunne. No surprise, then, to find New Woman fiction re-examining such assumptions: 'There is a close association in this fiction between novel-writing and feminist activism: writing itself is seen as a liberatory activity' (*Ledger*, p.27). Fictional women novelists wrote under their own names, and openly used their fiction to argue their cause, as does Valeria Du Prel in *The Daughters of Danaus*, whose latest work is said to feature a woman who chooses to leave her husband. In an early novel of emancipation, Florence Wilford's *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (1869), an extremely unusual balance in marriage is presented, through the example of a woman who, after being banned from writing by her husband, then uses her talent successfully to support him after illness deprives him of the power to work: the novel ends with their having developed a truly equal marriage, he researching and she writing amicably together (*Showalter*, pp.150-2). Writers such as Mona Caird, Ménie Muriel Dowie, and Sarah Grand were real-life examples of the type.

Yet Valeria du Prel, although fictional, does exemplify other problems brought by the independent, creative life: although she is successful, she is single, and regrets remaining so:

[63] A. Pollard and J.A.V. Chapple (ed.), *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), p.106; hereafter cited as *Gaskell*.
[64] Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. Tony Tanner [1853] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.44; hereafter cited *Villette*.

'it does not answer to pit oneself against one's race, to bid defiance to the fundamental laws of life' (*Danaus*, p.71). Sally Ledger points out that with Valeria's unhappiness:

> it is as if we are being told, implicitly, that only in fiction - only in Valeria du Prel's novel, Caterina - can women be free; outside the pages of fiction women's lives are altogether more circumscribed.
> *Ledger*, p.28

Relationships such as that offered by Florence Wilford were rare, if not impossible.

Becoming a writer was, then, very stressful for women, whether single or married: it brought them into a prominence forbidden by traditional standards of female conduct, and so invited criticism of their conduct as well as of their work. Worldly success could be viewed, by other women as well as by men, in a similar way to Graf Dornberg's view of Armgart, as rendering the writer in some way unwomanly and, as Norma Clarke describes, the resulting emotional strain could emerge through physical symptoms:

> The propensity to mental and physical collapse characteristic of so many women writers in the nineteenth century, the failure of bodily health following, with grim regularity, on the completion or success of a piece of work (a projection of an assertive self, no matter how self-effacingly dressed up) reflect the workings of this reversal of success and failure in women's lives.[65]

Clarke is writing here of Maria Jane Jewsbury, poet and elder sister of the successful novelist Geraldine Jewsbury, but the alternating pattern of work and prostration applies equally well to Mary Ward.

Ward began to suffer from what sounds like a kind of writer's cramp as early as November 1882, and this cramp worsened with each novel she wrote, until it would affect her whole right arm and side. At such times her handwriting, never particularly easy to read, would become almost totally illegible, with pencilled words sprawling right across her paper, and she would be forced to have her companion/secretary/housekeeper Gertrude Ward (Humphry's sister) take dictation. As the years passed her ailments increased: severe toothache, eczema,

[65] Norma Clarke, *Ambitious Heights: Writing, Friendship, Love - the Jewsbury Sisters, Felicia Hemans, and Jane Welsh Carlyle* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.51; hereafter cited *Heights*.

kidney stones (which she called 'side'), and finally the heart disease, a weakness of the Arnold family, which killed her. On completion of a novel she would collapse, take a holiday abroad to recuperate, then begin the whole cycle again with a new work. Her physical frailty may have been proof to her that she was a true woman, unable to step outside her submissive role without suffering, as Elizabeth Barrett Browning's was evidence to her of the strength of her poetic talent. It also, however, allowed her to maintain her dominant position in the Ward household: all revolved around her comfort, leaving her free to concentrate on her first interest, the articles and novels that brought in the money.

Worldly success bought women novelists another kind of suffering, of the kind illustrated by the troubled relationship of George Eliot's Armgart and Graf Dornberg. Perhaps the best real-life case is that of Geraldine Jewsbury in mid-century, whose hopes of marriage to the explorer, scientist and administrator Walter Mantell ended with the trauma of his rejection. She wrote to him:

> I cannot alter anything in the past. I can only give you the results of what that past has made me - In outward position my present life is fortunate - I am independent - I can earn my own living and if I want more money I could get it - I have friends who are far better to me than I deserve - I have a good position I have a certain success in my profession. Matara I do not speak as boasting or valuing myself for these things but it is something to give you one who belongs to you should not be unaccredited in the world. If I could gain ten times as much worldly reputation or success I would do so because it would be so much more to give you.
>
> *Heights*, p.221

Jewsbury is a rare example of a Victorian woman who broke with tradition and proposed to the man she loved. In the letter above she details her worth and her advantages much as a man of the period would be expected to do when proposing to a woman, presenting her successes not as the fruits of her own ambition, but in the selfless aspect of valuable gifts with which to honour him. She addresses him by the nickname 'Matara', a Maori word meaning 'chief' (Mantell had spent sixteen years working with Maoris in New Zealand), but her style is direct and confident, the voice of an independent, self-supporting woman. There is no 'womanly'

submissiveness here; Jewsbury envisages marriage as a true partnership of the kind achieved in Florence Wilford's Nigel Bartram and his wife.

Unfortunately, Mantell was not of the same mind: *his* attitude resembled rather that of one of Jewsbury's creations, Conrad Percy in *The Half Sisters* (1848), towards the dedicated, strictly moral, and highly successful actress, Bianca:

> he had most rigid ideas of what women ought to be; and Bianca, who had taken care of herself all her life, and had a frank decided manner of bearing herself and expressing her own opinions, was constantly warring against the ideal female standard which he was constantly preaching up to her - being most unreasonably dissatisfied because she continued to be - *herself!*
>
> *Sisters*, p.181

Conrad wants to be in control in his relationships, and is unable to control Bianca, whose straightforward confidence and integrity he finds off-putting, so he reframes them as departures from accepted womanly conduct. In the same manner, Jewsbury's success, and the self-confidence and sense of value it brought her, were off-putting to Mantell. In the attempt to help him in his career, she gave him advice borne of her own experience, and he resented it, all the more for its practicality and common sense, because what he really wanted was a woman who would look up to him, and not challenge him in any way. Geraldine Jewsbury was rejected for the very qualities which, to her, made her most valuable:

> Her strengths, her achievements, her substance, which in a man would have increased his eligibility, decreased hers. They were an obstacle; for *being taken* in marriage she was to *be given* a new identity, and she was too old and too assured (quite apart from the fact that she was not willing) to give up the one she had earned.
>
> *Heights*, pp.222-3

She was caught in a classic double-bind: she was unwilling to compromise her integrity just to attain the married state, but it seemed that no one would want her unless she did. In the end, like Mona Caird's Valeria du Prel, Geraldine Jewsbury maintained her independence, and remained single throughout her life.

Such fear of rejection led many woman writers to belittle their own talent, deny their ambition, and to excuse their work on the grounds of necessity. If they wrote not for pleasure, but to support their family, they could still be perceived as suitably feminine, occupying themselves with work for others as women should. Possibly for this reason, Ward published her fiction throughout her career only under her married name of Mrs. Humphry Ward, while other writing went out under the names Mary A. Ward, M.A. Ward, or M.A.W.[66] Such protestations appear even more necessary when her success is compared with that of the man to whom she should, traditionally, have been subservient, her husband Humphry.

The Wards had moved to London in 1881 after Humphry's career in Oxford had stalled, and he was offered a six months' trial period at *The Times*. When he first met Mary Arnold, he was a progressive young don, who had taken the advanced step of not taking orders, and during the early years of their marriage they seem to have had a fairly equal partnership, sharing the little money they earned, and studying happily together: they produced a joint article, 'A Morning in the Bodleian', about the experience of study. The shift in the balance of power occurred around the time of the Wards' move from Oxford to London, even though Ward's great success was yet to come. As John Sutherland remarked:

> Her letters to Humphry at the same period reveal a perceptible shift in their relations. Increasingly it was she who was now the powerful partner, the source of the family's resolve and sense of mission.
> *Suth*, p.76

It was *her* supportive, reassuring letters that helped *him*, it was *she* who made all the decisions about what was to be done for her mother Julia, already suffering from the breast cancer which would eventually kill her, and it was also *she* who decided which house they would take when they moved from rented accommodation to somewhere permanent. Unfortunately, Humphry Ward's attempt at becoming a political journalist failed, leaving him as the paper's art critic for the rest of his career. He produced articles in many areas, but his greatest success was the

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[66] Anne M. Bindslev, *Mrs. Humphry Ward: A Study in Late-Victorian Feminine Consciousness and Creative Expression*, PhD Dissertation, University of Stockholm (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International,1985), p.10.

four-volume anthology, *The English Poets* (1880), which was popular enough to bring him a regular £100 per year for life. Compared to his wife's earnings, however, this was less than peanuts: between 1888 and 1893, her novels *Robert Elsmere* and *The History of David Grieve* between them earned roughly £16,000, an immense sum at the time (*Suth*, pp.189, 65, 140).

It is also possible that Mary Ward's intensive fundraising for philanthropic causes, which brought in roughly the same amount that she earned by her novels, was another way of salving her conscience by demonstrating her selflessness, and thereby her womanliness. Even her anti-suffrage stance fits with this argument: Elaine Showalter has commented upon how women novelists of the time:

> publicly proclaimed, and sincerely believed, their antifeminism. By working in the home, by preaching submission and self-sacrifice, and by denouncing female self-assertiveness, they worked to atone for their own will to write.
>
> *Showalter*, p.21

From this angle, Ward's role as breadwinner could be viewed as a burden as well as a position of power; she was forced to write bestseller after bestseller merely to maintain the status quo, after the dictum of Lewis Carroll's Red Queen: '*here*, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place.'[67] Did she sometimes have to stifle the wish to stop the treadmill and get off? Was her belief that Charlotte Brontë happily ceased writing once she was married a reflection of her own desire?

> She had battled with the world, and she dreamed of rest; she had been forced to exercise her own will with so strong and so unceasing an effort, that the thought of dropping the tension for ever, of handing all judgment, all choice, over to another's will, became delight[68]

Was writing an honourable means of achieving independence and self-worth, or was it a burden from which women longed for release? The overall impression left by Ward is one of

[67] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, ed. Hugh Haughton [1865 & 1871] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), p.143.
[68] Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, The Haworth Edition, with Preface by Mrs. Humphry Ward (London: John Murray, 1899), p.xxiv.

ambivalence: part supporter of women's emancipation, part upholder of the old patriarchal values. The strong women in her fiction use their talents to the full, yet in a strictly selfless manner, and with no desire for the vote. In this, they reflect Ward's own life, and the values she preached during the suffrage campaign.

In her work for the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League Mary Ward was not content with the purely passive role of mere opposition to the suffrage; instead, the manifesto that she helped to frame has not one, but two main aims:

> (a) To resist the proposal to admit women to the Parliamentary Franchise and to Parliament; and
> (b) To maintain the principle of the representation of women on municipal and other bodies concerned with the domestic and social affairs of the community.
>
> *Tr*, p.231

Ward claimed that the League wanted 'primarily to resist the imposition on women of the burden of the parliamentary vote.' This would leave them free to work for their country in other ways, specified by the League's second aim; she was happy for women to work on Committees, on School Boards, on all kinds of official bodies, just not in Parliament. The presentation of women such as Elizabeth Bremerton, caring for the community as if for a family, fits well with these aims: Ward saw women performing what she termed 'the 'enlarged housekeeping' of the nation' (*Tr*, p.231), in a kind of mid-point between outright rejection of the suffragists' arguments, and capitulation to them. This interpretation of a woman's role was based upon:

> the Antis' central belief that a separation of spheres between the sexes had been ordained by God and/or by Nature. The Antis were by no means purely defensive in their outlook: their position rested on a clear view of the male and female temperament, physique and intellect.
>
> *Harrison*, p.56

That is, Ward's theory goes back to her understanding of character and talent as innate, and God-given. She and her fellows understood themselves to be on firm ground in their division of

careers and government along lines of sexual difference and in no way intended their recommendations to be belittling to women, as modern readers are likely to assume: 'In her eyes women were neither better nor worse than men, but different' (*Tr*, p.225). Sex difference had been the criterion behind the division of roles proposed by Ward in 'An Appeal against Female Suffrage' back in 1889:

> we would give [women] their full share in the State of social effort and social mechanism; we look for their increasing activity in that higher State which rests on thought, conscience, and moral influence; but we protest against their admission to direct power in that State which *does* rest upon force - the State in its administrative, military and financial aspects - where the physical capacity, the accumulated experience and inherited training of men ought to prevail without the harassing interference of those who, though they may be partners with men in debate, can in these matters never be partners with them in action.
> *Appeal*, p.782

It seems an odd distinction: if England as a whole is viewed as family, and women as carers, then surely women are needed in Parliament to apply their special talents to its nourishment? Her argument above seems especially weak in that Members of Parliament do not need to be fine physical specimens when their main task is to discuss, plan, and make laws. Physical factors are surely relevant only in war, for situations in which the British Empire needs to be maintained by force. Women's lack of experience is thus made to redefine the campaign for suffrage as 'an unpatriotic demand' (*Tr*, p.232). However, lack of experience can easily be remedied; wider opportunities for women in public life would in themselves cause development of experience and expertise, and if training can be inherited, as stated above, then surely women could inherit it as readily as men: surely her own organisational capabilities would have told her that? Her failure to even give women the chance to prove themselves seems odd; after all, the point at issue had been debated for many years – here, it is well stated by Olive Schreiner's 1883 heroine Lyndall:

> Nature left to herself will as beautifully apportion a man's work to his capacities as long ages ago she graduated the colours on the bird's

> breast. If we are not fit, you give us to no purpose the right to labour; the work will fall out of our hands into those that are wiser.[69]

Ward's arguments about following one's God-given nature now seem less liberating than their presentation in *Robert Elsmere* and *Marcella* originally indicated; they are not the absolutes they appeared, but have been conditioned by her strict notions of what that God-given nature entailed. For Schreiner, innate talent would emerge, given suitable opportunity; Ward denied that certain capacities were innate in women at all.

Despite this, the range of work she does advocate for women demonstrates a surprising feminism, although Ward would not have called it that. There were many local bodies to work for. School Boards had been created back in the 1870s by Ward's uncle Forster's Education Act. The Local Government Board was created in 1871, and soon afterwards, in 1873, a Mrs. Nassau Senior was appointed under it as the first woman Poor Law Inspector. County Councils appeared in 1888, and that same year Lady Sandhurst and Miss Cobden were returned to London County Council with good majorities, with a Miss Cons also being selected as an Alderman.

Ward was even prepared, in support of her views on participation in local government, to be a rebel against her own side, as in one notable incident. In September 1911 she founded the Local Government Advancement Committee, affiliated with the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage, which aimed 'to support qualified anti-suffragist woman candidates at municipal elections, and if necessary help with election expenses'. Subsequently, in a local government election in West Marylebone, she committed the League to supporting a *pro*-suffrage woman candidate, according to her belief that the most able candidate should be elected. To make matters worse, the 'pro' candidate was actually standing against one of their own 'antis'. In consequence, during a meeting of the League on 8 February 1912, a resolution was passed forbidding Ward's Committee to involve the League in support of particular candidates (*Harrison*, p.134). But Ward's position was clear: it was a woman's talents and ability to work to improve society which counted.

[69] Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, ed. Joseph Bristow [1883] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1992), p.159; hereafter cited *Schreiner*.

Ultimately, of course, her position of dividing the work of the country according to distinctions of sex, and of local versus national, was unsustainable, since 'Women could hardly wield influence in local government if it was known that they could not back up their policies at national level with the vote' (*Harrison*, p.136). Ward's close friend Louise Creighton had already converted to the 'pro' party for this very reason: 'since women had already, for good or ill, entered the political arena with their various Political Associations, it would be more straightforward to have them inside than outside the political machine' (*Tr*, p.240). Mrs Fawcett, leader of the 'pro' side, agreed, pointing out that the 'caring' issues reserved for women by the 'antis' at local levels only, actually required organisation at the national level, and that therefore if women were truly to have a voice in them, they needed the vote. She did not deny that there were differences between the sexes, but believed that both would benefit from the involvement of women at high levels, not least from the higher moral tone it was assumed they would bring:

> Instead of rejecting a separate spheres ideology, they turned its notion of female moral superiority into a justification for women's suffrage. If the family benefited from women's purity, then bringing women into the public sphere should elevate the moral tone of public life too.[70]

In this way, the traditionally higher moral standards of women could be, it was argued, brought into the influential position they required for greatest effect.

Both 'pro' and 'anti' parties, then, claimed to work for improvement in women's lives, proving, one could say, that 'feminist' and 'suffragist' were not synonymous. Other organisations took an even more equal approach to the sexes, among them the Christian Socialists who, Ray Strachey claims, 'did not care whether it was men or women for whom their experiments were tried. They saw that the improvement of either would be good for society as a whole'. Another famous example was the Salvation Army, founded in 1875, and designed from the start on radical lines: 'in its ranks, from the very top to the very bottom, absolute sex equality has always prevailed'. One of its founders, Catherine Booth, had it written into the

[70] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1998), p.7.

regulations, and strictly enforced, that the Army 'opens the highest positions to women as well as to men'. Inevitably, there were men who objected to being given orders by women, but the Army's position was clear: they must accept, or leave, and its speedy growth testifies to the success of her policy: within twelve years of its founding, it employed nearly 50,000 people, and spent an annual income of over half a million pounds (*Strachey*, p.48, 214, 214, 215). Against this, Ward's consistent exclusion of women from the national, 'male' areas of society seems more and more unreasonable: the woman who had only a few years earlier been regarded as a dangerously progressive religious radical, had fallen herself into the kind of rigid position she had so warned against, and while she stayed still, national opinion moved on.

Yet was it really so surprising that she should remain the same? Close examination of the different areas of her life reveals her to have been truly radical and shocking in her religious opinions only. In education, she had worked for wider opportunities for women since the first years of her marriage; in philanthropy, after the mistaken religious emphasis in her first Settlement, her pattern of work remained steady, all her innovative schemes being in line with her constant aim of practical aid and support for the poor and their children. In politics, admittedly, there was a change: a Liberal while in Oxford, she gradually became more and more Conservative, as she shows Marcella Boyce to become; partly due to her own Irish experiences, but possibly also in the way that people often do become more conservative as they get older - in 1908 when the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League was founded, Ward was already fifty-seven years old. Even her anti-suffrage views had altered little since her Oxford days: her war-time characters may work in a wider range of jobs than ever before, but even in *Marcella* women were already working out in the world, and Ward's own life is one continuous demonstration of female administrative and managerial talent. In fact, seen as a whole, her life and work are remarkable for their constancy: even her religious changes are less startling than they appear: once she had come to believe in a 'human Christ', her opinions never wavered on this point in after years. Throughout her life, she found out her position, according to character and conscience, and, having found it, did not waver from it. In terms of this discussion, she ceased to uncover fresh aspects of her inner self. Was this because,

having obeyed her innermost needs once, she felt that her own growth was complete, and that there was no need to re-examine herself again? Such an attitude could indeed lead to adherence to particular beliefs beyond their natural span, and thus to a fall into the dogma trap. Her perception of herself as a guide to others, in life and through her novels, would have given her additional incentive for constancy: to demonstrate her continued morality after religious controversy, to act as the embodiment and exemplar of her own beliefs, she had to remain both static, and visible. John Sutherland writes of her growing need for respectability over the years, arguing that her anti-suffrage position was connected with this, but I believe that she had already long demonstrated a reluctance to change which was largely responsible for the increasing perception of her as old-fashioned and irrelevant as the years passed. In my next chapter I will demonstrate that her constancy extended into her fiction in other ways, through the portrayal of character, and of the possibility of personal change as presented in her greatest novel, *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. The discussion then broadens out from the religious conflict of that novel, to Ward's own religious beliefs and their effect upon her later life.

Character is Inexorable: Religious Conflict and Helbeck of Bannisdale

> this 'I will not' of the soul - haunted me when the conversation was done.[1]

> Catholicism has an enormous attraction for me, - yet I could no more be a Catholic than a Mahometan.[2]

> Year after year the simplest and most crying reforms in the liturgy of the Church of England are postponed, because nobody can agree upon them. And all the time the starving of 'the hungry sheep' goes on.[3]

In the previous chapter I discussed how Mary Ward's attitudes remained constant over much of her life, after early periods of development and growth. In this chapter her constancy will be examined in relation to her fiction: if her life and opinions did not alter greatly after the publication of her first few novels, is this reflected in those that followed?

So far I have argued that Ward's novels of ideas document the process of personal growth in her protagonists, whether in the area of religion, as for Robert Elsmere, or of politics and society, as for Marcella Boyce. In the case of *The History of David Grieve*, which I have not space to examine in detail, she documents continuous growth throughout the title character's life until he reaches her own understanding that God is active in the world, and that we are all striving towards His plan. Rather than adhering to any single brand of religion or philosophy, David 'forms his own synthesis, a compromise appropriate for the modern world',[4] and is offered by Ward as an example of how life can be holy even outside orthodox religion.

However, all these novels contain a parallel movement, or rather, lack of movement: alongside the protagonists are many characters that do not develop, indeed, that cannot develop. And just as the protagonists' growth arises from their innate character, so this lack of growth is connected to inner traits rather than to external factors. Lacking sympathy with others, David Grieve's sister Louie remains closed within herself, and no growth can be triggered in her ('Is there *any* other slavery and chain like that of temperament?'). Only death

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[1] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, *The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.9 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p.xiii; hereafter cited *Aut. HB*.
[2] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to George Trevelyan (her son-in-law), *Tr*, p.151.
[3] *WR*, p.367. 'The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed', John Milton, 'Lycidas', *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: World's Classics, 1991), p.42.
[4] Howard Andrew Mayer, *The Cost of Compromise: Studies in Five Novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward* (Unpub. PhD Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1983), p.51; hereafter cited as *Mayer*.

can break the trap: after her suicide she is said to be 'freed at last and for ever from that fierce burden of herself.' (*DG*, pp.555, 570) In *Marcella*, as was discussed in the previous chapter, the politician Harry Wharton is shown to live a life of discontinuity, forever disowning his own past deeds, and reacting to the moment only, allowing no moral considerations to guide him. With no base for knowing who he is, he too is unable to grow, and comes to ruin.

All these 'fixed' characters can be aligned with Ward's statement in *Robert Elsmere* that 'the laws of character had still to work themselves inexorably out' (*RE*, p.363), and with John Henry Newman's 'to change me is to destroy me' (*Ass*, p.273). Even among those characters that are able to grow, there are limits: Catherine Elsmere does not go so far as to join her husband in rational theism. Ward's characters develop only within the limits of their nature, and no further. In this chapter I will examine how awareness of limitations increases in Ward's life and fiction during the late eighteen-nineties, and how this change is connected with her perennial issue of religion.

Outside the Church

Mary Ward never abandoned the position of rational theism that she had come to adopt in Oxford, but her determination to live with integrity in this way did not make her path easy. She had chosen to abandon the Church of England on the grounds that continued attendance would be hypocrisy, since her rejection of miracles meant, for instance, that she could not in good conscience recite the Creeds, or take Communion, but the position of outsider brought its own difficulties: it was hard to stand alone. Her father had found himself unable to do so - 'I am unfit to be my own guide'[5] - and had turned for security to the authority of the Catholic Church. The need for support was so well-understood as to appear in several fictional works of the time: George Moore's Evelyn Innes tells the Prioress of the convent to which she wishes to be admitted: 'I cannot live without faith, without authority, without guidance. I am weak, I require authority' (*Teresa*, p.133). Catholicism offered security since its adherents do not need to

[5] Letter from Thomas Arnold to Julia Arnold 25 June 1855, *LTAY*, p.64.

worry about moral questions, or the interpretation of God's will, because priests explain everything, and any misdeeds or backsliding are dealt with by the process of confession, penance, and absolution.

Those such as Ward had a more difficult time, as Olive Schreiner's Lyndall describes:

> But we, wretched unbelievers, we bear our own burdens; we must say, "I myself did it. Not God, not Satan; I myself!" That is the sting that strikes deep.
>
> *Schreiner*, p.177

Self-reliance was a demanding path to follow, indeed. However, it was not this aspect of her situation that the strong-willed, naturally independent Ward found hardest to bear. In leaving the Church of England she had brought a more painful isolation upon herself; she had excluded herself from the sense of fellowship that it provided. As Henry Grey tells Robert Elsmere: 'to cut ourselves off from common worship is to lose that fellowship which is in itself a witness and vehicle of God' (*RE*, p.344). Yet at the same time her deprivation did not lessen her determination to obey her conscience. Back in 1881 she had written of the character A, in *Unbelief and Sin*:

> The loss of common worship he will feel simply and seriously as a loss and a privation, but it will appear to him his duty to bear it. Only by perfect sincerity, by such consistency as it is in his power to reach, can he advance the future he desires.
>
> *US*, pp.18-9

Her emotional pain was outweighed by wider considerations, such as the consolation of knowing that she worked to improve the world for others, whether through her fiction or her philanthropy.

Her distress at having no community of like-minded people to share worship with was mitigated in the early nineties by discovery of the Bedford Chapel in Bloomsbury, run by the famous preacher Stopford Brooke. After his wife's death in 1874, Brooke had lost his orthodox faith, and come to believe, like Ward, in a 'human Christ'. He seceded from the Church of England in 1880. In his services, which drew huge congregations, he used mainly the Anglican

order of service, and the Book of Common Prayer, but omitted the Creeds, and anything involving the doctrine of the Miraculous Incarnation (*Jacks*, p.355). This meant that Ward need have no qualms about receiving Holy Communion from him. She began attending his services in 1891, by that autumn was a regular, and wrote feelingly of the experience in *A Writer's Recollections*:

> a dozen jarring, intolerable things left out: but for the rest no needless break with association. And the relief and consolation of it! The simple Communion service, adapted very slightly from the Anglican rite, and administered by Mr. Brooke with a reverence, an ardour, a tenderness that one can only think of with emotion, was an example of what *could* be done with our religious traditions, for those who want new bottles for new wine, if only the courage and imagination were there.
>
> *WR*, p.296

Brooke's retention of as much of the services' traditional form as possible satisfied Ward's sense of continuity between past and present, and her understanding of progress as being rooted in and arising from, the past. Another attractant was Brooke's 'strong and magnetic personality' (*WR*, p.295), which she claimed brought her totally under his spell, as, fictionally, Henry Grey entranced Robert Elsmere. As was her habit, she used real-life experience as source material; Brooke's services provided the model for those of Richard Meynell in her 1911 sequel to *Robert Elsmere*.[6] Unfortunately, the Bedford Chapel lease expired in 1895, and Stopford Brooke, who was in poor health, gave it up, leaving Ward once again isolated.

Around the time that she became a regular at the Chapel Ward had begun to demonstrate a greater tolerance towards the Church of England, once so adamantly rejected. This probably arose from her relief at the spiritual sustenance she gained from the Bedford Chapel, which made areas of disagreement seem less important, and is exemplified by her attendance at morning service while on a visit to her son Arnold at Eton in October 1891:

> And I was happy in chapel too. In spite of all the words that sound so alien to us now, I never felt a keener sense of discipleship to Jesus of

[6] Made all the more telling by being reported by the secular Rose Flaxman (née Leyburn): 'It was all poetic - and mystical - and yet practical. [. .] the spirit of it was the wonderful thing.' *RM*, p.47.

> Nazareth. It was never plainer to me that we are meant to love him and follow him[7]

Whether or not she took Communion is not recorded, but she was certainly much impressed by the occasion, although her words locate that enjoyment in her understanding of Jesus rather than in the form of service. Her sense of tradition and of England's heritage was also satisfied when the Wards moved to their new estate, Stocks, the following year. Adopting the traditional landowner role, and attending church with the local community also gave her a great sense of fellowship, leaving aside any qualms over dogma.

Ward's sudden wish to 'fit in' with the established church, rather than continue to stand so ostentatiously outside, caused some turmoil within her family, especially with her children, all of whom had been brought up to follow her unorthodox beliefs. In 1891, for example, when her son Arnold fell due for confirmation, he began to rebel against Eton's conventional religious instruction. Despite Ward's pleas that he should behave well until of an age to choose rules of religious conduct for himself, he continued to cause trouble, and in 1894, when he was seventeen, only a visit from his father saved him from being sent down. Ward's advice to Arnold shows how far her tolerance had grown: 'Many differences of opinion - although not all - can be rightly avoided, and put aside, without loss of truth'.[8] It is a glossing over that recalls the trauma in the Evans family when the young George Eliot refused to attend church, eventually resolved by a compromise: she would satisfy her father's notion of correct behaviour by attending services, but maintain her integrity by retaining her altered beliefs in silence.[9] Arnold Ward, though, must have been rather confused to be faced with a notoriously freethinking mother who yet urged conformity and concealment. There was more family trouble in 1904 over the arrangements for Ward's younger daughter Janet's wedding to the historian George Macaulay Trevelyan who was, as Ward put it, 'wholly non-Christian'.[10] Trevelyan and Janet wanted a civil ceremony, while Ward preferred Church of England: they eventually

[7] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Arnold Sandwith Ward October 1891, *PH.*
[8] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Arnold Sandwith Ward 24 June 1894, *PH.*
[9] As Kathryn Hughes puts it: 'Far from giving up the authority of private conscience, she was stripping it of all its worldly rewards, including the glamour of being thought a martyr.' Kathryn Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), p.54.
[10] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Dorothy M. Ward 20 May 1903, *PH.*

compromised on Unitarian. Yet this drive to belong did not mean that Ward's belief in a 'human Christ' had faltered in the slightest, she was merely maintaining a discreet silence on the subject. Her attempt was successful, as when she died in March 1920, aged sixty-eight, she was buried according to Church of England rites, at St John the Baptist Church, Aldbury, near the Stocks estate.

Ward's outward tolerance for traditional forms of worship could also be viewed as a greater acceptance of another traditional form of religion, the Roman Catholicism of her father. Excerpts from her letters bear this out. From being adamantly opposed to it as a child, she displayed understanding and tolerance as early as 1876, when Tom's return to Catholicism cost him his chance of promotion at Oxford, and brought renewed financial difficulties upon the family:

> I think I understand your step dear one as well as an outsider can. Starting from your premises all seems natural enough. But as you know the impossibility is to me to see any sufficient ground for granting those premises to start with. But whatever happens you and I are more one in heart than we know![11]

This was only three months after Ward had declared her 'entire denial of miracle' (*Tr*, p.28) to Mrs Johnson the portrait painter, but her letter displays no hostility towards her father; rather, she seems far more insistent upon a deeper harmony they share beyond religious differences. After all, Tom had acted sincerely, following his conscience and his own nature, exactly as she thought an individual should, and she respected him accordingly. I have found no evidence that she ever condemned him for his Catholicism, or that she tried to turn him towards her own beliefs. In fact, his happiness at being openly settled as a Catholic could well have been a powerful example to Ward:

> 'if there is any consolation in Christ', if that is not a fantasy, or if it is, - then I have known that consolation, real or fantastic, since I obeyed the law of my conscience.[12]

[11] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold, 16 February 1876, *PH*.
[12] Letter from Thomas Arnold to Mrs. Humphry Ward 21 October 1876, *LTAY*, pp.184-5.

His mention of the 'law of my conscience' recalls both her 'laws of character' and Newman's 'laws of my nature'. Their shared spiritual streak, love of tradition, and stubborn integrity in the face of the world outweighed all religious differences. In 1891 (which seems to have been a busy year for religious matters) she wrote to him that 'you & I have long ago agreed to differ, & I don't believe we do differ so much at bottom, as it would seem.'[13] His comment to her in Autumn 1895, concerning an introduction she had written to her brother-in-law Leonard Huxley's translation of Hausrath's 'New Testament Times', 'I think Newman would have gone with you a long way – farther than you think!',[14] also indicates a certain sharing of views. This was more than a mere agreement to differ over religion; on the contrary, as Ward's daughter Janet Trevelyan reports: 'She loved to discuss these matters with her father, from whom she had no secrets, in spite of their divergences of view' (*Tr*, p.146). Despite the long separation and distance of her childhood and school career they had become close as adults, and remained so until Tom's death in 1900.

In the light of this closeness, and of her isolation after the closure of the Bedford Chapel, it comes as no surprise that Ward should find herself inspired in 1896 to write a novel which centred upon the encounter of Catholic and freethinker: 'I have got a really good subject in my head for the next book - romantic, and haunting and original.'[15] The timing of this inspiration, during this period of emotional turmoil and isolation could indicate that she was using the subject as a means of finally coming to terms with the trauma of her early life, and her parents' religious differences. Such a personal stake would account for her unusual absorption in the writing: 'Except perhaps in the case of *Bessie Costrell*, I was never more possessed by a subject, more shut in by it from the outer world' (*WR*, p.316). She spent the remainder of that year, and all the next, researching and writing - the first draft was completed by January 1898, was greatly revised, and the novel was published in June that same year.

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[13] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 25 April 1891, *PH*.

[14] 'But as my dear father who is a Catholic read it the other day, & spoke to me cordially about it afterwards I trust that it is not aggressive or violent. His remark struck me. "I think Newman would have gone with you a long way" - he said – "farther than you think!" He knew Cardinal Newman well.' Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to W.E. Gladstone 16 September 1895, *PH*.

[15] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to William Thomas Arnold (her brother) 30 October 1896, *PH*.

Ward's research for the novel was extremely thorough, and in order to ensure she made no mistakes in her portrayal of Catholic practice, she had the manuscript checked by William Addis, a Catholic theologian and Oxford professor. Tom Arnold also received many requests for information, as Ward was worried what his opinion of the finished novel would be. Only a few days after writing to her brother Willie of her new subject for a novel, she wrote to her father for his approval:

> I won't do it if you dislike it, but though of course my point of view is anything but Catholic, I should certainly do what I had thought of doing, with sympathy, & probably in such a way as to make the big English public understand more of Catholicism than they do now.[16]

Although she admits, even emphasizes, the distance of her own beliefs from Catholicism, it seems that her intent is far from hostile: she plans to write with her habitual fairness, and with the sympathy she had always shown to Tom, although her ultimate aim, as always, is to educate others.

Much of the work was done with her father in mind, particularly at the revision stage: 'I have re-written it almost entirely for your dear sake – though now I am sure that what I have done is also a literary improvement'.[17] In spite of her efforts, though, he seems to have stopped replying to her letters during the last few months, so that she had to send off the revised proofs for publication without his final approval. Tom Arnold's opinion of the finished work remains unclear. Was he simply neglectful in replying to her, or does his apparent silence (there may be letters yet unfound) indicate opposition to publication, as John Sutherland believes?[18] It is hard to say.

Sutherland also comments that:

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[16] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 15 Nov 1896, *PH*. 'I consulted my father, my Catholic father, without whose assent I should never have written the book at all; and he raised no difficulty.' *WR*, p.314.

[17] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 20 April 1898, *PH*.

[18] 'She clearly hoped that it was indifference that accounted for his silence (something that she had always found difficult to read in her father.) As clearly, he was intimating that she should not publish.' *Suth*, p.157.

> Although Mary Ward masked it as 'research', it is clear that, while writing *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, she was studying Catholicism with a view to possible conversion.
>
> *Suth*, p.194

Although the timing and circumstances of Ward's interest in Catholicism could suggest a desire to convert, rooted in her need to belong, I have found no other evidence to support this theory. Her letter quoted above, for instance, holds no indication of intent to convert, or even of interest in conversion; instead, she is mainly interested in the impression she wants her work to give, to her father as much as to the reader. Later, during the writing of the novel, she expressed no change in her religious beliefs, as indicated by this letter to her daughter Dorothy, a few months into the project: 'It seems to me part of the cross that is laid upon us at the present moment, this feeling of outsiderness, and we must just go on & bear it.'[19]

Another factor in Ward's interest, which seems to me the most likely one, was that as she began to work on *Helbeck of Bannisdale* a demand for inclusiveness had arisen within the Catholic Church. It began around 1890 and was to last roughly until 1945. In its origins, the movement attempted to bring Roman Catholic thinking into harmony with the latest philosophical and scientific theories, and was known as Liberal Catholicism. Ward was fascinated:

> But what interests & touches me most – in religion – at the present moment is Liberal Catholicism. It has a bolder freedom than anything in the Anglican Church, & a more philosophic and poetic outlook. It seems to me at any rate to combine the mystical and scientific powers, in a wonderful degree. If I only could believe that it could last, & had a future![20]

Later, the movement became known as Modernism, and encompassed Anglicans as well as Catholics. For all, though, the question at issue was the same: 'how to maintain religion without sacrifice of intellectual integrity, or, to put it another way, how to reconcile Modern knowledge with the Old faith.'[21] However, each side took a different approach:

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[19] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Dorothy M. Ward 15 March 1897, *PH*.

[20] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Louise Creighton 29 September 1907, *PH*.

[21] A.N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* (London: Little, Brown, 1999), p.445; hereafter cited *Funeral*.

> The Liberal Protestant wanted to adapt the old religion and make it more in tune with the sensible, moderate-minded men and women of nineteenth-century Europe and America. The Catholic Modernist, by contrast, was much more likely to accept the whole tradition, from Virgin Birth to Judgement Day, but to understand it in a modern way.
>
> *Funeral*, p.447

Generally, Catholic Modernists wanted to change the church as a whole, without diminishing its authority. Protestants, as might be expected, placed greater importance upon the individual: religious dogma should give way to more humanistic concerns; freedom of conscience and of inquiry was paramount. This, of course, would include the kind of critical approach to the Bible taken by Ward in her Oxford work.

Ward researched Catholic ideas and practices old and new for her novel, following her habitual practise of maintaining as open a mind as possible, determined to respond as honestly as she could to whatever emerged. Some of what she learned she found good:

> The deep personal piety of good Catholics, and the extent to which their religion enters into their lives, are extraordinarily attractive. How much we, who are outside, have to learn from them!
>
> *Tr*, p.146

Since she strived so hard to live her own life with integrity according to the religious convictions she had developed back in Oxford, her approval of the same qualities in others is not surprising. The areas that she found disagreeable are equally predictable:

> As for me I am steeped in Catholic literature sometimes attracted, but more often repelled! When one enters upon it, it is as though the whole world of knowledge, of ordered & rational effort upon which human life and ultimately human character really depend, no longer existed. And after a while this seems to suffocate one.[22]

Her own approach to research was founded upon rationality, intellect, common sense, and the search for facts. Tales of saints and miracles seemed to sweep away the intellectual world to which she belonged, leaving her swamped and desperate for a sure foothold. Accounts of the

[22] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Humphry Ward 12 March 1897, *PH*.

suffering voluntarily endured by Catholics who were considered especially holy repelled her, as she wrote to her father: 'I cannot for the life of me see anything in the austerities, say of the Blessed Ward Alacoque, but hysteria and self-murder' (*Tr*, p.146).

As in her previous fiction, the views closest to her own are clearly the ones her readers are intended ultimately to agree with, and her need for intellectual foothold, and her dislike of extremes combine (along with other factors which I discuss later in the chapter) in an ultimate condemnation of Catholicism. Nevertheless, she was intensely concerned to maintain as balanced a set of views as possible, for example countering a perceived attractiveness on the Catholic side by vehemence of argument on the opposing side:

> I have been anxiously softening down a number of passages that seemed to me too violent. As I told you the character of Helbeck has so far proved so attractive to the readers of the book [. . .] that I felt bound for the completeness of the picture to let the other side of thought have here & there its full & even fierce expression.
> But I have softened Friedland's paragraph about Scaliger & the Jesuits[23]

Alan Helbeck is the Catholic hero, while Dr. Friedland is a Cambridge professor and freethinker, deeply opposed to Helbeck and equally supportive of the heroine, Laura Fountain. Yet despite such efforts as she describes above, Ward remained worried that in her efforts to please her father, she had erred too far on the side of caution, and weighted her novel against her own beliefs:

> I do not think that granting the non-Catholic position of the writer, & the dramatic characters of the book, there is anything in it which should now give <u>offence</u>. In fact I believe that it will be all the other way! – and so does Humphry who is dreadfully afraid that it will be taken as a Catholic <u>plaidoyer</u> by half the world![24]

She even admitted that in her presentation of Helbeck, 'I – who am not a Catholic, who have a whole alternate belief to Catholicism – am almost afraid that I have fought against my own

[23] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 13 April 1898, *PH*.
[24] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 20 April 1898, *PH*.

side!'[25] She need not have worried: one early Catholic critic of the novel, George Mivart, wrote that although: 'I, indeed, have been fairly astonished at the carefulness and fidelity with which Ward has represented things Catholic',[26] Helbeck is never presented as 'a type of Catholics generally' (*Mivart*, p.650),[27] and so will not serve as an incentive to others. (This was true, as Helbeck follows an old form of Catholicism, as is discussed later.) Other reviewers actively condemned her portrayal of their religion: Mivart's article was written in response to one by a certain Father Clarke, a Jesuit, whose opinion was that: 'never was a more absurd travesty of all things Catholic put before the English reader.'[28] So what precisely does the novel say? How was it structured? How did Ward present her conclusions? And how does it reflect her own life and religious career?

Her imagination had originally been triggered when she was told the story of an impoverished Catholic family who lived at Sizergh castle,[29] near Kendal, in her beloved North of England:

> an ancient stock that had held it unbrokenly, from father to son, through many generations.
>
> The relation between such a family, pinched and obscure, yet with its own proud record, and inherited consciousness of an unbroken loyalty to a once persecuted faith - and this modern world of ours, struck me as an admirable subject for a novel.
>
> *WR*, p.314

Here are encapsulated the seeds of the main conflict of the novel: old, tradition-bound family, and old faith, against new theories and modern attitudes. Such opposition would allow full play to Ward's familiar topics of faith, conscience, and character, the whole framed within a single intense love relationship in which the protagonists struggle to overcome utter religious incompatibility. It is a structure similar to that of both *Robert Elsmere*, with Elsmere the modern

[25] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 2 April 1898, *PH*.
[26] George Mivart, 'Another Catholic's view of *Helbeck of Bannisdale*', *Nineteenth Century* 44 (Oct 1898), pp.641-55 (p.655); hereafter cited *Mivart*.
[27] *Mivart*, p.650.
[28] Father Clarke, 'A Catholic's view of *Helbeck of Bannisdale*', *Nineteenth Century* 44 (Oct 1898), pp.455-67 (p.460); hereafter cited *Clarke*.
[29] While writing the novel in March 1897 Ward rented Levens Hall, close to Sizergh Castle, for three months, to get authentic atmosphere. Bannisdale Hall is a mixture of Sizergh and Levens.

believer facing Catherine the traditional, and *Marcella*, in which the landowning Conservative, Aldous Raeburn, opposes the modern politician Harry Wharton. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale* it is the man, Alan Helbeck, whose family have followed an old form of Roman Catholicism, and the woman, Laura Fountain, who is the freethinking modern.

Another strand of the old/new conflict can be found in the question of heredity, described by Ward in *Robert Elsmere* as 'the moulding force of circumstance, the iron hold of the past upon the present' (*RE*, p.462). The past is an anchor, a stabiliser, it allows individuals to learn from their mistakes, to progress, and to act morally. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale* heredity merges with upbringing and character to create tension between the enabling aspects such grounding brings, and the need not to become hidebound by making past events and beliefs into a prison. I will approach the novel briefly through the two main characters, before examining how their interaction and conflict exemplify Ward's own developing attitudes, both towards Catholicism, and towards the nature and force of character itself.

Inspiration, Nature, and Catholicism

Ward declared that 'the real centre of the book is the character of Helbeck.'[30] An old Catholic family, the Helbecks have owned Bannisdale Hall for generations, and although poor now, remain proud, both of their ancestry, and of their survival despite religious persecution. The only remaining Helbecks are Alan and his elder sister Augustina. Alan Helbeck is in his mid-thirties, and tall, dark and handsome as the traditional romantic hero. He is intelligent, well-educated, ascetic, and Catholic by inclination and conviction as well as by family tradition and heredity:

> he exulted in being a Helbeck - the more stripped and despised, the more happy - with those maimed generations behind him, and the triumph of his faith, his faith and theirs, gilding the mind's horizon.
>
> *HB*, p.229

[30] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 2 April 1898, *PH*.

Religion has been Helbeck's priority for many years; he is a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, an Order founded in 1221 as a kind of halfway-house between the cloister and the world for those with commitments preventing removal to a monastery or convent.[31] Nevertheless, it is a full religious order, and its members live under strict rules of prayer, humility and self-denial, practising moderation in eating, drinking, and dress, studying the Gospel, and avoiding distractions from spiritual progress.[32] Daily prayers, attendance at Mass, and examination of one's conscience are encouraged, as is charity towards others, and spreading of God's Word (Helbeck's refusal to try to convert Laura is thus in conflict with his vows as a member of the Order).

Originally the Third Order was known as The Brothers and Sisters of Penance, a name which gives some clue to Helbeck's behaviour and religious practice as seen in the novel. But he takes the rules to extreme levels: 'you'd think he was already under a rule. [. . .] the house is like a desert since he came.' As the sole Catholic of any standing in the area, he is asked to contribute a disproportionate amount of money to support a local orphanage. In itself, this is innocuous enough, except that Helbeck has turned self-denial into self-deprivation: Bannisdale Hall is run down, and has little furniture remaining: 'The priests just suck us dry – and he hasn't got it to give.' He is equally extreme in personal relationships, having broken off relations with Augustina on the occasion of her marriage to the freethinking Stephen Fountain, father of Laura, the novel's heroine. Such rigidity will in itself be recognised by any reader of Mary Ward's previous works as a condemnation, particularly when linked to mention of previous 'maimed generations' (*HB*, pp.53, 53, 229), recalling as it does John Morley's belief that adhering to strict dogma by keeping the vows made when taking Orders forced clergymen 'to lead mutilated lives' (*Morley*, p.30), and Ward's description of the fanatic Newcome's instruction to Robert Elsmere to 'mutilate and starve the rebellious intellect' (*RE*, p.323). Even Helbeck's pride in his heritage has fierceness: he is more than proud, he 'exults' in his and his family's hardships for their faith. Sixteen years older than Laura, he is 'wound round with the habits and

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[31] The first two orders are the Friars Minor, and the Poor Ladies, or Poor Clares as they are also known.
[32] He refuses to go to the theatre with Laura: 'Theatres are not wholly forbidden us; but the exceptions must be few, and the plays such as a Catholic can see without harm to his conscience.' *HB*, p.273.

friendship and ideals which had been the slow and firm deposit of those years'. The question is whether this long focus upon one area of life at the expense of others has rendered him incapable of growth and change, or even of simple moderation. Certainly, falling early in the novel as these descriptions do, they do not present an appealing portrait of Catholicism, and one wonders at Ward's concerns of being over-favourable towards it, particularly as Helbeck does not seem happy in his life: 'A stranger watching [his face] might have wondered, indeed, whether it could smile with any fullness or spontaneity' (*HB*, pp.249, 36).

By contrast, the heroine, Laura, has 'the most surprising gift for happiness' (*HB*, p.51), and Helbeck is drawn to her as if she can supply the very quality he most lacks. Yet if Helbeck is the representative of Catholicism, Laura represents Ward the modern, and illustrates her creator's own reactions to the fruits of her research. She was designed to oppose all that Helbeck most stands for:

> But what of those forces against which this Catholic family had so stoutly held its own? - the main forces of our English civilisation? What had *they* to say for themselves - the life and thought of Protestantism and the free mind?
>
> *Gwynn*, p.62

> But, if the woman were the modern? - representative of the critical, scientific mind?
>
> *Aut. HB*, p.xiii

Even so, the novel is not merely about the effect of modernity upon tradition; the shock of their encounter was planned to work in more than one way: 'The story in fact is the story of the effect of a Catholic life & household upon such a nature as Laura's.'[33] So what, then, is Laura's character?

The main figure in Laura's life was her father, a Cambridge University don whose death has led to her and her stepmother's arrival at Bannisdale. In religious terms, Stephen Fountain was more than just a freethinker; he was a non-believer, who dismissed Alan Helbeck simply as 'That young fanatic'. His beliefs held him back in his University career, which has caused an

[33] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 7 April 1898, *PH*.

extreme distaste for religious matters in Laura: 'From her childhood it came natural to her to hate bigoted people who believed in ridiculous things. It was they stood between her father and his deserts' (*HB*, pp.55, 58). Deeply attached to her father, she has absorbed his lack of religious belief, from natural inclination as well as from love and loyalty:

> he made a partisan of her - he expected her to echo his hates and his prejudice - he stamped himself and his cause deep into her affections
> *HB*, p.316

In this she resembles Catherine Leyburn, another young girl deeply influenced by a much-loved father. Or, to put it another way, like Harry Wharton in *Marcella*, the modern is not as thoroughly modern as she first appears, but is rooted in the past as much as is Alan Helbeck. She is equally rooted by her family: Stephen Fountain was born in the Bannisdale area, and Laura's cousins the Masons own and run a local farm. Laura's reactions to the Catholicism she encounters at Bannisdale are thus intimately linked with her heritage, and her love for her father, as on her first entry into the family chapel, where Helbeck and the others kneel before the Blessed Sacrament on the altar:

> What a gross, what an intolerable superstition! – how was she to live with it, beside it? The next instant it was as though her hand clasped her father's - clinging to him proudly, against this alien world. Why should she feel lonely? - the little heretic, left standing there alone in her distant corner. Let her rather rejoice that she was her father's daughter!
> She drew herself up, and coolly looked about her.
> *HB*, pp.74-5

Surrounded by alien beliefs that represent everything she most detests, she opposes her own heritage to the long generations of Helbecks, and, like Helbeck, takes pride in the attitudes that caused her father so much hardship. They are more alike than might first appear.

Ward gave her representative of the new freedoms of the mind one crucial flaw: Laura's education is as inadequate as was her own, leaving her with no means of justifying her religious position by argument, or of using reason and intellect to oppose external pressure. As a family friend, Dr. Friedland, says of Stephen Fountain:

> He makes Laura a child of Knowledge, a child of Freedom, a child of Revolution - without an ounce of training to fit her for the part.
> *HB*, p.315

However, unlike her creator, Laura has made no attempt to remedy the situation through self-study and so, also like Ward herself (and her predecessor Marcella) 'She remained childishly immature and backward in many things.' Ward has thus left her heroine with only one way to relate to the world around her, and that way is through her emotions: Laura is guided by her passions and instincts above all: 'She was a creature of excess; of poignant and indelible impressions' (*HB*, pp.59, 277):

> She was a personality; that was clear; one could hardly say that she was or had a character. She was a bundle of loves and hates; a force, not an organism
> *HB*, p.59

All Laura's feelings are intense and immediate; she feels, and she acts. And this passion must resist the distilled power of Alan Helbeck, whose years of study, of religious practice, of intellect, education, heredity, pride, and, yes, passion too, combine into what seems unstoppable strength. It seems that Ward has set up a hugely unequal contest.

If Alan Helbeck is extreme, Laura Fountain is equally so. Since Ward has consistently demonstrated a dislike of extremes, this implies hostility towards her own heroine. It is easy to see why this should be so: Laura's lack of intellectual interests means that she has no principles or ideas by which to order her life, whereas Ward believed that ideas were what drove people. The description above also implies that she is not a fully-rounded person, that something is lacking within her. Its primitive nature also serves to bind her to the Mason family, her cousins, whose extreme Protestantism sets them up in direct opposition to the Helbecks. It is Laura's cousin Hubert who provides an example of this extremism by telling her the story of how Helbeck was attacked by a gang of Chapel people, Primitive Methodists, for having converted one of their own, Teddy Williams, to Catholicism, or Papism as they term it (*HB*, p.94).

Primitive Methodism was a major off-shoot of Victorian Methodism, a religion of 'intense emotional force' (*Maison*, p.187), whose adherents saw themselves as guardians of the original, or primitive, form of Methodism. It was basically a simpler but more extreme form of Methodism, emphasising the role of lay people, and stressing simplicity of chapels and worship. Unlike mainstream Methodism, however, it operated mainly among the rural poor, the kind of people who populate the Bannisdale area. Their preaching and services often showed a fanatical zeal, such as appears in *Wuthering Heights*, from whose pages the Masons might have stepped: Laura's cousin Elizabeth particularly resembles the servant Joseph, who makes Cathy and Heathcliff endure an improvised service lasting three hours one day when the weather is too bad for them to attend Church.[34] Helbeck describes her as 'a specimen of the ordinary English Bible-worship run mad' (*HB*, p.80), and she appears as fiercely independent, passionate and extreme as Laura herself: 'Yes, she did understand Cousin Elizabeth - she *did!*' (*HB*, p.104) Ward uses the Masons to indicate that, although Laura does not follow their dogma any more than she follows Helbeck's, her convictions will indeed turn out to be as immovable and extreme as her cousins'.

So Laura and Helbeck's relationship is not to be merely an attraction of opposites; their shared passion, pride, and extreme reactions also serve to draw them together. And Alan Helbeck is passionate, as his home symbolises: even though Bannisdale Hall is bare and poor, it is still warm and welcoming, as on the occasion of Laura and Augustina's arrival: 'the big fire of logs piled upon the hearth filled it all with cheerful light, and under her indifferent manner, the girl's sense secretly thrilled with pleasure' (*HB*, p.42). Such moments recall the Earnshaw family home in *Wuthering Heights*,[35] filled with extreme (even more extreme) passions and actions, yet at the same time well-supplied with fire and food.

Comparison with Brontë's novel also brings out the intense love of the wild landscape of the area shared by the protagonists of both works. Heathcliff and Cathy roam the moors,

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[34] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. David Daiches [1848] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.62; hereafter cited *Wuth*.

[35] Ward's admiration and enthusiasm for the Brontës is well-documented, and in 1898, the year *Helbeck of Bannisdale* was published, she agreed to write new prefaces for all the Brontës' novels.

Alan Helbeck is alive to the movements of wildlife around him, and Laura feels an immediate kinship with the area:

> Instinctively she felt something in her own lot akin to the wilder and more tragic aspects of this mountain land, to which she had turned from the beginning with a daughter's yearning.
>
> *HB*, p.275

Her lack of intellectuality is emphasized, and her habitual emotional response to her surroundings, but a new note is sounded by the mention of tragedy and yearning, an intimation of events that are yet to come (as will be discussed later). Love of nature is another trait by which she reflects her creator, although in Laura there is none of the unease that it caused Ward:

> the delight in natural things - colours, forms, scents - when there was nothing to restrain or hamper it, has often been a kind of intoxication, in which thought and consciousness seemed suspended - 'as though of hemlock one had drunk'. [. . .] I have often felt that there is something inhuman, or infrahuman in it, as though the earth-gods in us all - Pan, or Demeter - laid ghostly hands again, for a space, upon the soul and sense that nobler or sadder faiths have ravished from them.
>
> *WR*, p.90

Ward's love of nature was at times so intense as to leave her oblivious of anything except the feeling of the moment, and for such a cerebral person this was not necessarily a feeling to be welcomed: Pan the earth-god is also the god who induces extreme, intense fear, Pan-ic fear. Her choice to link her own intoxication with the poison hemlock (which paralyses so you cannot run away) also indicates fear, yet at the same time this quotation, from Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale', calls to mind a poet caught in a state of vision and inspiration, just as Ward was while working on *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. Her response becomes yet more problematical with references to old pagan gods associated with natural forces; primitive, ancient gods who have supposedly been forgotten since the coming of Christianity. Ward implies that their original strength and power still remains for those who are able to perceive them. Her uneasiness over the virtue of such experience may arise from recognition that her devotion to the 'human Christ'

did not preclude such pagan influences. Helbeck's complex relation to nature may therefore have its roots in Ward's own reactions:

> He loved such things; though with a silent and jealous love that seemed to imply some resentment towards other things and forces in his life.
>
> *HB*, p.37

It is unclear, however, what precisely Helbeck resents: the denial imposed upon him by his religion? Or the worldly ties that prevent his devoting himself to it absolutely? His profound tie to the land undermines his desire to leave it and become a Jesuit, and it seems over-simplistic to assume that his resentment arises from awareness of pagan forces; they seem, rather, natural ties of home and family. The pagan references in Ward's quotation are specifically associated with Laura; the description of her as a 'force' implies that she is primeval, earlier than character, more basic, closely associated with the unconscious drives within individuals. It is she who partakes of the pagan gods' wilder aspects, and she who, like Ward, responds to nature with recollections of Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale'; the poem is called to her mind by the sight of a tapestry of the pagan huntress Diana in her room on her first morning at Bannisdale: "Enchanted casements' - 'perilous seas' - 'in fairy lands forlorn.' The lines ran sleepily, a little jumbled, in her memory.'[36] The quotations imply that Laura herself is in peril, but that it is a glamorous peril. (Keats' poem is important in the novel, and recurs later, still under 'pagan' circumstances, as will be shown.)

For the present, Laura's freethinking heritage, and the pagan overtones to her character – *she* feels no unease when outside the house among natural things, but revels in them - render her hostility towards the Catholicism at Bannisdale inevitable. She refuses to display any warmth towards those who practise it, excepting only the gentle, weak Augustina, and deliberately separates herself from it:

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[36] *HB*, p.63. The nightingale's song 'oft-times hath / Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.' John Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), pp.346-8 (p.348); hereafter cited *Keats*.

> She yielded herself to no one, was touched by no one. She stood apart, and through her cold, light ways spoke the world and the spirit that deny - the world at which the Catholic shudders.
>
> *HB*, p.137

She opposes Catholicism simply by what she is; there is no need for her to argue over points of theology. Only in letters to a close friend does her reaction find expression in words, for example over what she views as Catholics' excessive preoccupation with sin:

> You are greedy, or selfish, or idle, or ill-behaved. Very well, then – nature, or your next-door neighbour, knocks you down for it, and serve you right. Next time you won't do it again, or not so badly, and by degrees you don't even like to think of doing it – you would be 'ashamed,' as people say.
>
> *HB*, p.141

Laura's impatient common sense shows her to be thoroughly grounded in the real, rather than the mystical, world, and the references she uses reinforce this understanding, as when she refers to Darwinism and eugenics when discussing really wicked people: 'by-and-by we shall have weeded them out, or improved the breed'; and to geology: 'Why doesn't Mr Helbeck go and learn geology? I vow he hasn't an idea what the rocks of his own valley are made of!' (*HB*, pp.142, 141) Despite her lack of formal education, Laura thus serves as representative and advocate of the modern world and the latest scientific developments.

Laura is more complex than the brisk practicality above indicates, however, and her initial 'passionate repulsion' (*HB*, p.74) at the Blessed Sacrament is swiftly qualified:

> Oh! that droning in the chapel – there is it again! I will open the window and let the howl of the rain in to get rid of it. And yet I can't always keep myself away from it. It is all so new – so horribly intimate.
>
> *HB*, p.142

The practices of Catholicism are strange and repellent to her, yet what is strange may also be fascinating, particularly if, as in the case of sincere religious faith, it carries an emotional charge. A heroine who lives by instinct and emotion therefore has an inbuilt vulnerability to the very thing she detests, and can be used to illustrate both the appeal of Catholicism and its

unacceptable (to Ward) aspects. She also serves to indicate the need for education in the Aarsleff sense of "to draw out' and not 'to put in" (*Aarsleff*, p.244). Rather than imposing upon Laura, or perverting her character away from its natural bent, education would aid her to develop a deeper awareness and understanding of herself and her needs, which in turn would strengthen her against influences such as the 'intimacy' that makes her so uneasy.

The association of 'intimacy' with religion and with Helbeck occurs repeatedly in the novel, and great emphasis is laid upon the importance of the family chapel:

> But when Mr. Helbeck is at home, the place becomes, as it were, the strong heart of the house. It beats through the whole organism; so that no one can ignore or forget it.
>
> *HB*, p.192

Far more than just a room in which to hold services, the chapel, holding the Sacrament as it does, is the sustaining force behind Bannisdale Hall. And the Hall is an extension of Alan Helbeck himself, as if the man embodies his religion as much, or even more, than he embodies his heritage. This is far stronger and far deeper than either Elsmere or Marcella's strength of integrity and adherence to their beliefs, and inner nature, as if Ward is taking the concept of embodiment to its limit. Catholicism permeates the very fabric of Helbeck and his family's Hall: 'This is my body',[37] indeed. Yet there is also a conflict here: Helbeck has inherited character traits that predispose him to religion, to the old form of Catholicism followed by his ancestors, yet he has also inherited the family obligations and home that deny him the possibility of following that religion to its conclusion. In this sense, Helbeck's denuding of Bannisdale Hall for charitable purposes can be seen as a reflection of his denying himself by remaining in the world.

Such ideas and conflicts emphasize the intensity and importance of the religious experience at Bannisdale, and locate it precisely in Alan Helbeck. When he is there:

> A sense of unity and law comes back into the house - a hidden dignity and poetry. The Squire's black head carries with it stern reminders,

[37] Luke 22:19.

> reminders that challenge or provoke; but 'he nothing common does nor mean,' and smaller mortals, as the weeks go by, begin to feel their hot angers and criticisms driven back upon themselves, to realise the strange persistency and force of the religious life.[38]

There is sternness in Helbeck, and high standards, but no littleness or insincerity: in this, he is his own best example. There is attraction in such integrity, so it is credible for Laura to be drawn to Helbeck as a man, and as a kind of extension of this, also drawn to certain aspects of his religion. Part of her wants to fit in, to belong, to share in this system of belief that brings those around her such satisfaction, just as Ward longed to belong to the Church of England again. As Laura notices Helbeck's mystical happiness on Easter Day: 'A momentary thirst seized her – an instant's sense of privation, of longing, gone almost as soon as it had come' (*HB*, p.148). There is wistfulness mingled with her determined self-exclusion. Yet at the same time the implied inferiority felt by others in his presence does not bode well for their future relationship.

In order to maintain her fairness of approach, and after the pattern of her previous novels, Ward surrounds Helbeck with other Catholics.[39] A positive impression is made by the introduction of his friend and mentor Father Leadham, initially presented simply as an intelligent and educated man. On the other side are the local priest Father Bowles, with his 'slyness and absurdities', and the nuns who run the orphanage, 'with their unintelligible virtues, and their very obvious bigotries and littlenesses' (*HB*, p.277). These are Laura's opinions, but are borne out by events and speeches given in the text.[40] Her reaction to the Catholic community as a whole, however, is typically extreme: they are 'so many disagreeable automata, moved by

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[38] *HB*, p.192. The allusion is to the line 'He nothing common did or mean', from Andrew Marvell's 'Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland', where it refers to Charles I at his execution.

[39] According to J. Hillis Miller, this kind of portrayal is typical for the time: 'Victorian fiction, like fiction in general, has a single pervasive theme: interpersonal relations. It does not investigate these by isolating two people from their fellows and concentrating on the dialogue between an I and a thou, but sees them in the context of the community. Investigation of one is therefore also an indirect investigation of the other.' J. Hillis Miller, *The Form of Victorian Fiction: Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, Meredith, and Hardy* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p.94; hereafter cited *Miller*.

[40] See Father Bowles' hunting down of flies and his love of the smell of candle wax; his inane conversation at dinner; references to the pious stories told to the orphans by the nuns; and the nuns' gossiping about Laura's conduct (*HB*, pp.77, 127, 131, 160-2).

springs she could not possibly conceive, and doing perpetually the most futile and foolish things' (*HB*, p.277).

When the novel is taken as a whole, in spite of Ward's fears of pro-Catholic bias, it is clear that the reader is intended to reject Catholicism. A large part of this rejection originates from the strictness and extremity of Alan Helbeck, and is facilitated by Ward's decision to have him follow an old, strict form of religion. It is an odd choice, given her declared aim to help the public to understand Catholicism, and explains the disappointment in some contemporary Catholics' criticisms; after all her research, and her conversations with her father, she would have been well aware that by her day its rules and practices had changed. However, her choice does fit well with the gothic, passionate aspects of the novel, and with Alan Helbeck's character: it is credible that pride in his lineage should lead him to adhere to the religious practices of his forebears.

The reader is also repelled by Helbeck's rigidity to the point of bigotry in relation to non-Catholics. In need of funds for the local orphanage, he tries to sell some land, then rejects an offer made by Anglicans who wish to build a church on it: he calls them 'a schismatical and rebellious church', who 'have filched enough from us Catholics in the past.' Suddenly he seems as bigoted as Elizabeth Mason. There is also the unpleasant incident of his gloating and laughing with the artist Williams over tales to the discredit of Anglican missions which, to Laura, 'revealed a new element in his character, something small and ugly, that was like the speck in a fine fruit, or, rather, like the disclosure of an angry sore beneath an outward health and strength.' It seems that Ward's reference 'he nothing common does nor mean' (*HB*, pp.255, 255, 264, 102) was not entirely accurate. At least Elizabeth's Mason's hostility is honest and open, rather than concealed and all the more repulsive for the rareness of its appearances.

The main symbol of Helbeck's excessive devotion to the demands of his Order is a family heirloom, a painting by Romney of his and Augustina's great-grandmother: 'a dazzling portrait of a girl in white, a creature light as a flower under wind'. The description brings to mind Laura's frequent appearance in white dresses in the novel, and Laura is immediately drawn to

the painting: 'It was as though she felt some hidden link between herself and it – as though some superstitious feeling attached to it in her mind' (*HB*, pp.70, 260).

> Its sweet confiding air, - as of one cradled in love, happy for generations in the home of her kindred and the shelter of the old house, - stood for all the natural human things that creeds and bigots were always trampling under foot.
>
> *HB*, p.71

The violence she associates with bigoted people recalls Newcome's exhortation to Elsmere - 'Trample on yourself!' (*RE*, p.322) and the use of such a violent verb makes the picture, and by extension Laura, seem threatened, in danger of being trampled themselves by rigidity and dogma. The picture is, however, worth a lot of money and, since his land deal has fallen through, Helbeck decides to sell it, against Laura's protests:

> "But she belongs to you," said the girl, insistently. "She is your own kith and kin."
>
> He hesitated, then said, with a new emphasis that answered her own:
>
> "Perhaps there are two sorts of kindred – "
>
> The girl's cheek flushed.
>
> "And the one you mean may always push out the other?"
>
> *HB*, p.131

It is a crucial, very Gothic, moment in the novel, as Laura is forced to recognise that Helbeck's devotion to his religion outweighs any natural, human connections, even those of the ancestors in whom he exults. Religious duty comes first, human bonds are merely 'other'; and once again the treatment of the painting implies similar treatment in store for Laura.

As far as the scheme of the novel is concerned, this incident is part of a gradually increasing portrayal of Catholicism as intrusive, controlling, and unnatural, in which the use of an old form of Catholicism is key. To begin with, though, Ward uses another aspect of Catholicism to unsettle the reader, stating of Alan Helbeck: 'For years he had desired to be a Jesuit; the obligations of his place and name had stood in the way.'[41] Of all Catholics, the

[41] *HB*, p.229. It is possible that another of Ward's inspirations for the novel was Henry James's play *Guy Domville* (1895), whose title character, last of his line, is pressured to remain in the world rather than enter

Jesuits were popularly viewed as the most predatory and dangerous. A typically immoderate example is Arthur Hugh Clough's description of Jesuits in Italy:

> Pseudo-learning and lies, confessional-boxes and postures, -
> Here, with metallic beliefs and regimental devotions, -
> Here, overcrusting with slime, perverting, defacing, debasing,
> Michael Angelo's dome[42]

Clough's description, amongst its extremity, touches on the Jesuits' most despised and feared trait, the strength of their dedication and obedience to authority:

> Their motto was obedience to their head - their secret was obedience, and their success was the result of it. What a precision and certainty was there in all they undertook! To this hour the idea of a Jesuit impresses me with the idea of a darker and stronger power than I can express!
>
> *Zoe*, p.115

Geraldine Jewsbury's protagonist Everhard is supposedly writing in admiration of the Jesuits, wishing that he could become one himself, but the words emphasize rather their passionless, almost robotic unity of action. The association of 'darker' and 'power' sounds almost Satanic. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale* Laura is struck by a similar force within Helbeck's friend Father Leadham:

> a will that makes itself felt - even by so cool a listener - as a living tyrannous thing, developed out of all proportion to, nay at the cruel expense of the rest of the personality. Yet it is no will of the man's own - it is the will of his order, of his faith.
>
> *HB*, p.191

While individuals in Ward's understanding, and as presented in her fiction, follow God's will by becoming self-reliant, hearkening to and following their own inner drives and voices, 'God's revelation', Jesuits are viewed as entirely other-directed, dogma-directed, rigid and extreme. In

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a religious order: 'Your duty is nearer at hand – it's first to the name you bear. Your life, my dear sir, is not your own to give up. It belongs to your position – to your dignity – to your race.' Henry James, *Guy Domville*, ed. Leon Edel [1895] (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), Act 1, p.116.

[42] 'Amours de Voyage', *Clough*, p.84.

a sense, this is not exceptional: both Catholicism and Anglicanism require acceptance of and adherence to doctrine, and surrender of the individual will to that of the Church's decrees. However, Leadham's power of will dominates his whole personality, and thereby renders him warped and unnatural after the manner of Ward's character C in *Unbelief and Sin*, whose rejection of free enquiry renders him 'like a man who has lost a sense' (*US*, p.21), and who now leads, to paraphrase John Morley, a 'mutilated life' (*Morley*, p.30). Yet such dedication lends him strength and purpose, thus increasing the threat to the freedom of mind and heart represented by Laura.

Ward emphasizes the Jesuits' unnatural aspect through the story of Williams, the gifted artist whose work decorates the Chapel in Bannisdale Hall. Williams, inspired by Helbeck's fervour, joined the Jesuits, who made him give up his art. Laura is horrified:

> The girl's instincts rose in revolt. She cried out against such waste, such mutilation. The Catholic tried to appease her; but in another language. He bade her remember the Jesuit motto. "A Jesuit is like any other soldier - he puts himself under orders for a purpose."
>
> "And God is to be glorified by the crushing out of all He took the trouble to give you!"
>
> "You must take the means to the end," said Helbeck steadily. "The Jesuit must yield his will - otherwise the Society need not exist. In Williams's case, so long as he had a fascinating and absorbing pursuit, how could he give himself up to his superiors?"
>
> *HB*, p.259

Laura cannot bear to hear of such deprivation, understanding instantly and instinctively the suffering Williams would have endured as a result. In response she offers the humanist view, Ward's own, that individuals have innate worth, and through development of their God-given abilities and understanding they move closer to God and God's plan. But to Helbeck, who regards humanity as sinful and the self therefore as something to be denied rather than developed, her argument is incomprehensible. Like Elsmere and Catherine, they do not speak the same language, or think in the same terms. His view that the individual counts less than the whole to which he belongs is valid in a way, after all, society would fall apart if no one ever considered anyone else, but his opinions cast aside any human considerations in favour of an

external, abstract system, after the manner of Marcella Boyce's early insistence upon socialist dogma – a restricted vision which was discredited over the course of the novel.

The story of Williams closely parallels that of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, who gave up writing on joining the Jesuits, having come to view his urge towards self-expression as coming between him and his devotion to God. He only returned to poetry (with 'The Wreck of the Deutschland') when requested so to do by his superiors in the church. This justified indulging his creative impulse; if he wrote in the service of religion, he could define his poetry as selfless, to the glory rather than to the neglect of God. But until then he suffered greatly, although unlike the fictional Williams, he did not eventually leave the Jesuits. The question for the novel is how far this predatory, sinister side to Catholicism is embodied in Helbeck, and his approval of Williams' sacrifice is not a good sign.

A conflict of attitudes gradually develops within Alan Helbeck as he and Laura become closer. He struggles hard against his growing love for her, mainly because, as in the case of Williams and his art, 'She would come first – the Church second. Her nature would work on mine – not mine on hers.' It seems odd that a man so committed, rationally and emotionally, to his religion, over so many years, should feel such apprehension. Surely *he* would be more likely to influence *her*? It could be that, after such long asceticism and isolation (he has few friends in the area, since the Helbecks are the only remaining Catholic family) he has been caught unawares by the strength of his passion for her, and all his certainties are shaken as a result; his later confession to Laura will demonstrate that he is only too well aware of his capacity for passion. Possibly he also lacks confidence in his ability to influence her; speaking with Father Leadham he declares: 'I too, have never influenced, never tried to influence, anyone in my life' (*HB*, pp.183, 119). His statement directly opposes the habitual fear of Anglicans that Catholics, and particularly Jesuits, are forever on the hunt for converts; and is reinforced by his telling Laura, early in their engagement:

> that he would not attempt to disturb her inherited ideas - so long as she herself did not ask for the teaching and initiation that could only, according to his own deepest conviction, bear fruit in the willing and prepared mind.

HB, p.249

This is the key. Leaving aside recognition of the strength of heredity, which this last scion of the Helbecks understands all too well, Ward demonstrates here, as in her earlier fiction, her belief that influence can only take place through the triggering of traits and abilities already latent within the person to be influenced. There is little point in attempting to influence an individual of strong existing convictions; only where the other party is willing can there be any effect, as in the case of Henry Grey upon Elsmere, and of George Eliot's Mordecai upon Daniel Deronda.

However, as time passes, Helbeck's attitude changes: Laura's nature will not allow her to simply ignore their religious difference, as she wants their union to be a true union in every way. And, 'since she suffered – since she felt the need of that more intimate, more exquisite link', he begins to hope that she may come to share his faith. With this hope, he ceases to fear her intrusion between him and God; instead, 'He felt his own life offered for hers. So that the more he loved her, the more set, the more rigid became all the habits and purposes of religion.' It is as if his strictness can compensate for her 'wild pagan self' (HB, pp.261, 262, 183), and, so to speak, balance the books, perhaps eventually earn God's assistance in her conversion. His restraint is gradually undermined by an urge to push towards such conversion, particularly as he is well aware that her lack of education means that she has few resources in her armoury:

> Instinctively he felt the weakness of her intellectual defence. Once or twice he let himself imagine the capture of her little struggling soul, the breakdown of her childish resistance, and felt the flooding of a joy, at once mystical and very human.
>
> *HB*, p.261

Ward's presentation is deliberately ambiguous: on the one hand there is natural delight at the prospect of his future wife sharing the prime motive force in his life; yet on the other, the image of Laura as a helpless animal, hunted down and forced to submit to his controlling strength, is Gothic, deeply sinister, and moves him back towards the traditional image of the predatory

Catholic. Or, given Laura's pagan associations, and recalling the scene on the tapestry in her bedroom, is he also the Christian trying to conquer the pagan, free, virgin goddess Diana?

Even his refusal to directly influence Laura, tolerant as it appears, is coloured for the reader by a particularly powerful moment earlier in the novel, which this hunting image recalls. Watching her in the chapel, he feels tenderness for the young fatherless girl, but is at the same time annoyed by 'her defiance, her crude disapproval of his house and his faith' (*HB*, p.126):

> Conscious for the first time of a new conflict of feeling within himself, he looked steadily towards her across the darkness.
>
> It was as though he had sought and found a way to lift himself above her young pride, her ignorant enmity. For a moment there was a curious exaltation and tyranny in his thought. He dropped his head and prayed for her, the words falling slow and deliberate within his consciousness. And she could not resent it or stop it. It was an aggression before which she was helpless; it struck down the protest of her pale look.
>
> *HB*, p.126

The passage is filled with violence in both vocabulary and action. Prayers become an instrument of intrusion, of rape, and the scene is all the more horrifying for the control and coldness with which Helbeck acts. Since he does not yet know Laura at all well, it is also an incident hinting that such is his usual attitude towards unbelievers, a 'normal' state of mind, a predatory state of mind.

The horror increases further when other references of the time are considered, for example in Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*:

> Such as are a man's thoughts and dispositions, such is his God; so much worth as a man has, so much and no more has his God.[43]

If Helbeck is a reflection of his God, and his God a reflection of him, then Laura's resistance seems more and more justified; after such a moment as this, the kindness that Helbeck shows Laura later that same evening cannot but ring false, and his protestations of restraint seem doubtful. Indeed, there is a pattern of similar attitudes and outbursts throughout the novel,

[43] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, tr. George Eliot [1841] (New York: Prometheus, 1989), p.12; hereafter cited *Feuerbach*.

building until, inevitably, Laura's continued and open defiance provokes Helbeck at last to strike out into open argument: 'His own hidden self rose at last to the struggle with a kind of angry joy, eager at once to conquer the woman and to pierce the sceptic.' (Or, recalling the prayer scene, is it not to 'conquer the sceptic and pierce the woman'?) Deep down, it seems, he does not so much want to share his religion with her, as to have her submit, whether to him or to his religion seems immaterial – in his mind, perhaps, there is no difference between the man and the prospective Jesuit. Once released, this predatory side cannot be concealed again: after Laura's eventual flight from Bannisdale, Helbeck, though hurt by her accusations of tyranny, still manages to think 'that if, at the right moment, he had coerced her with success, they might both have been happy.' It is an attitude in which Father Leadham concurs: 'if ever, I will even venture to say, violence - spiritual violence, the violence that taketh by storm - could have been justified, it would have been in this case' (*HB*, pp.300, 360-1, 361). It is an attitude which serves only to confirm any anti-Catholic prejudice of the reader.

In Ward's terms, such violence would not have succeeded, since a forced Laura would be a Laura with a broken will, no longer truly herself, after Newman's 'to change me is to destroy me' (*Ass*, p,273), although from the Catholics' (Jesuits') point of view this would not have been destruction, but a proper change in the right direction. Overall, though, the verdict is clear: there are valuable aspects to Catholicism, but these are outweighed by its more sinister aspects.

Questions of influence and control run right through Ward's work: Helbeck's desire to control Laura, to force her to surrender, is only an extreme version. Religions are continually portrayed as controlling: Elsmere had to leave the Church when his beliefs altered, Catherine submits herself to her father's strict Anglicanism, and later Sir Edward Newbury tries to bring Marcia Coryston to accept his High Anglicanism. Ward demonstrates how all such attempts at control fail before the force of individuality and self-reliance. Influence, however, is a different thing. It can slide into attempts at control, in cases of persuasion to accept a particular idea, such as Elsmere speaking to Catherine of his new form of Christianity. Yet in Ward's main novels, influence operates in a different manner: external material may trigger a response

within an individual, but the form that response takes is outside such control, conditioned as it is by the individual's internal, unconscious traits. By the time it reaches the individual's conscious awareness, it is too strong to be controlled: Elsmere and Marcella follow their internal promptings and develop their own new ideas of living in spite of all outside attempts to redirect them. To sum up, influence is possible yet uncontrollable, and control is only possible if it encompasses destruction.

Resistance, Laura, and the Free Self

What, then, of the other side of the question? Does Ward present the modern point of view, as personified in Laura Fountain, as favourable in every way? Laura's intellectual weakness, her strength of instinct and emotion, and championship of human relationships and values have already been noted, but her personality and progress through the novel are far more complex than such a brief summary would indicate.

One of her major traits can be traced back to Ward's own well-documented religious views, and can be inferred from the story of Williams:

> The tendency of Catholicism we saw to be to depress the external character of man; that, the deeper he believed it, the more completely he became subdued. Protestantism, on the contrary, cultivated man outwards on every side, insisted on self-reliance, taught every one to stand alone, and depend himself on his own energies.
>
> *Nemesis*, p.150

These words come from J.A. Froude's 1849 novel *The Nemesis of Faith*, but fit Ward's attitude well. Her earlier protagonists, Elsmere, David Grieve, Marcella and Raeburn, all share a belief in the worth of the individual and the duty to be inner-directed, which Ward believed was not merely her own view, but part of a growing movement:

> for half our race, the old terrors and eschatologies are no more. We fear evil for quite different reasons; we think of it in quite different ways. And the net result in the best moderns is at once a great

> elaboration of conscience – and an almost intoxicating sense of freedom. –
> Here, no doubt, it is the *personal abjection* of Catholicism, that jars upon us most - that divides it deepest from the modern spirit.
> *HB*, p.332

The words above, given to Dr. Friedland, express her own views: other-direction was outdated, and focus upon sin and inferiority was mistaken; inner-direction was modern, and led to the glory of God and His creation. Ward was not alone in this attitude; for example, William James wrote that:

> We have now whole congregations whose preachers, far from magnifying our consciousness of sin, seem devoted rather to making little of it. They ignore, or even deny, eternal punishment, and insist on the dignity rather than on the depravity of man.[44]

It was also Unitarian tradition. In this light, Laura's shock at the concentration upon sin encountered at Bannisdale is readily explained; she has never before encountered such a thing. Her experience places her more in line with the impatience of outside control found in the work of writers such as Charlotte Brontë, whose Protestant Lucy Snowe, a precursor of Laura Fountain, stoutly declares, in the face of criticism by Paul Emanuel, (who calls himself 'a sort of lay Jesuit',) 'Whatever my powers - feminine or the contrary - God had given them, and I felt resolute to be ashamed of no faculty of His bestowal' (*Villette*, pp.457, 440). Self-worth also lies at the core of Laura's resistance:

> For she had been bred in that strong sense of personal dignity which in all ages has been the alternative to the abasements and humiliations of religion. And with that sense of dignity went reserve - the intimate conviction that no feeling which is talked about, which can be observed and handled and measured by other people, is worth a rush. It was what seemed to her the spiritual intrusiveness of Catholicism, its perpetual uncovering of the soul - its disrespect for the secrets of personality - its humiliation of the will - that made it most odious in the eyes of this daughter of a modern world, which finds in the development and dignifying of human life its most characteristic faith.
> *HB*, pp.277-8

[44] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. Martin E. Marty [1902] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.91; hereafter cited *W James.*, p.91.

Laura's sense of self-worth arises from within, and is bound up with her determination to remain free of external control. Arising from such innermost depths, it is so intimate a part of her that her desire for privacy comes as no surprise. Her disgust at the chanting she overhears at Bannisdale is partly disgust at such open display of feelings so intimate that they should be kept to oneself – all the more so as they relate to such alien concepts as inferiority and of sin. Laura, it is made clear, only confides in those she chooses: 'nobody had ever yet solved the mystery of Laura's inmost feeling against her will'. This, of course, places her in direct opposition to Catholic belief and practice as seen in the novel, with its demand to know everything about an individual, no matter how private, as if the wish to maintain privacy implies the presence of some dirty secret. To Laura, others have no right to such knowledge: 'Was she - by submission - to give these people, so to speak, a right to meddle and dabble in her heart?' (*HB*, pp.200, 277) The choice of words here implies a kind of gossiping, prurient curiosity about Catholics, along with a disregard of human dignity that is anathema to her.

It could be argued that by putting her own beliefs, opinions and feelings into her work, Ward herself is talking about matters that should remain private. Such an argument, however, does not take circumstances into account. Ward writes didactically, to teach her readers, to hopefully trigger a process of personal growth within them and so bring them closer to God as she understands Him and His creation, and her revelations are voluntary. Those demanded of Laura are not, and words such as 'intrusiveness', 'disrespect', and 'humiliation', indicate that this is unacceptable. It all returns to the question of control: Catholic practice is aimed at ensuring the individual's submission to the external authority of the church; Ward's practice aims to ensure the individual's freedom of choice and action.

The battle of self-worth and privacy against intrusion and indignity is central to Ward's conception of the relationship between her Catholic and her freethinker:

> What I am really anxious about now is the points - in addition to pure jealous misery - on which Laura's final breach with Helbeck would turn. I *think* on the terror of confession - on what would seem to her the inevitable uncovering of the inner life and yielding of personality that

> the Catholic system involves - and on the foreignness of the whole idea of *sin*, with its relative, penance.
>
> *Tr*, p.147

For Ward, the rite of Confession became a symbol in the novel of all the intrusion and abasement she saw in Catholicism: once agree to become a Catholic, and your very self is forfeit. Reading about the procedure for reception of a convert, which finishes with the confession of sins, Laura feels: 'the shiver of an invincible repulsion [. . .] All she knew were the two words - 'I can't'' (*HB*, p.296). But is this repulsion Ward's own, or is it confined to her heroine, and presented merely for artistic purposes? John Sutherland places it firmly within Ward herself, in what he sees as her attempt to convert to her father's faith:

> This 'uncovering of the inner life and the yielding of personality' constituted a last step she could not take. There was something buried deep in her that no other person must know.
>
> *Suth*, p.194

My belief is that Mary Ward researched Catholicism for her fiction rather than for possible conversion, despite the occasional attractions she found in it. Her resistance was rooted in her understanding of character as inborn, God-given, and largely unconscious, only gradually to be revealed and integrated, and never to be surrendered to external direction. What Ward describes in Laura as 'that fiery, tameless something that was the girl's distinguishing mark, her very soul and self' (*HB*, p.145), is therefore beyond definition and, of necessity, private. Ward's tone in the letter to Mr. Addis above supports this theory: if Laura's 'terror of confession' was her own, surely she would not refer to it in such a detached way, as if considering it only in relation to the character she is creating – 'what would seem to her' – rather than to herself. The idea of Ward having to 'work out' where the breaking point would come is further reinforcement: if Laura was simply a projection of her own views, Ward would not need to 'work it out', she would already know.

At first glance it seems, as Laura and Helbeck's love deepens, that Laura has no chance of long resisting the pressure to convert to Catholicism. After all, the weapons are all ranged on Helbeck's side: 'He had been trained by Jesuit teachers; he had lived and thought;

his mind had a framework' (*HB*, pp.276-7). Laura's does not. However, Laura's resistance to Helbeck and to Catholicism is not based upon either knowledge or argument:

> Laura was the pure product of an environment. She represented forces of intelligence, of analysis, of criticism, of which in themselves she knew little or nothing, except so far as they affected all her modes of feeling. She felt as she had been born to feel, as she had been trained to feel.
>
> *HB*, p.277

Her resistance is founded, like Helbeck's, upon 'a kind of inheritance' (*HB*, p.229), both of blood and of early upbringing and examples. In Laura's case, this inheritance is a mixture of her devotion to her father and his early teachings, thoroughly absorbed by her as Richard Leyburn's by his daughter Catherine; and of her innermost self, the inborn, most primitive, pagan part of her. She feels:

> a revolt and repulsion that seemed to be more than and outside herself - something independent and unconquerable, of which she was the mere instrument.
>
> *HB*, p.276

As do Ward's other heroes, Laura follows the dictates of her inner self, but differs from them in that her following is often against her conscious wishes – there are times when she desires to give in to Helbeck, to share his religion and bring an end to their conflict and turmoil: 'Her whole soul thirsted to submit; and yet could not submit' (*HB*, pp.275-6). The forces of heredity and of inborn character are irresistible, and must be followed. There is no question here of choosing to follow them, as in the cases of Elsmere and Marcella. Laura thus presents to the centuries-old system of Roman Catholicism a form of resistance so ancient as to be lost in history, so powerful that she has no need of either reason or intellect with which to counter Helbeck's pressure.

In this portrayal of instinctive independence Ward was, as so often, drawing upon her own experience and memories, in this case of her mother's opposition to her father's

conversion to Catholicism. She is explicit on the matter: Laura has been given Julia Sorell's 'instinctive dread of Catholicism' (*WR*, p.21):

> in writing *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, I drew upon what I remembered of it in describing some traits in Laura Fountain's inbred, and finally indomitable resistance, to the Catholic claim upon the will and intellect of men.
>
> *WR*, p.21

Laura herself has some inkling of how strong her resistance may be, telling Helbeck, even as they become engaged, to 'Make me afraid to mock at your beliefs!' But no matter how they dispute, and how jealous Laura becomes of the time and attention he devotes to religion, this cannot happen: 'There's something in me that fears nothing - not even the breaking of both our hearts' (*HB*, pp.235, 257). Her inner force and passion are so strong that nothing can stop them; in her own way she is as extreme as Helbeck. Even her language is extreme, belying her youth and physical smallness, and reflecting her passion in a manner reminiscent of the declaration of Jane Eyre[45] that she will accept any torture in the name of love, or of the storms of emotion that rage through *Wuthering Heights*.[46]

The kind of submission required of Laura by Helbeck and the Catholics around him is, then, far other than that submission seen in *Marcella*: this is no 'surrendered will' giving up selfish, egotistical concerns in order to open itself to sympathy and the needs of others. Marcella's kind of surrendering is not submission to outside control, but surrender to one's own deepest nature. Even her submission to Raeburn at the end is presented as submission to a man worthy of such an act, and takes place in an atmosphere of homecoming, of being united with one's ideal mate. For Ward, self-surrender must be willing and joyful, an act of liberation, of truly accepting and building upon one's own true nature.

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[45] 'I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest', Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Michael Mason [1847] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), p.81; hereafter cited *Eyre*.

[46] 'I'll not lie there by myself: they may bury me twelve feet deep, and throw the church down over me; but I won't rest till you are with me . . . I never will!' *Wuth*, p.164. As in Ward's work, extremity is linked with destruction: both Cathy and Heathcliff die before their time.

Laura, however, is faced with a man whose outer asceticism has been shown to conceal a primitive desire for conquest. Surrender to him, and to his religion, would move her not into truer accord with her own nature, but into an alien world, such as that which St John Rivers wants to impose upon his cousin Jane Eyre: 'I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death.' Charlotte Brontë's juxtaposition of words emphasizes the horror of this: 'efficiently' jars against 'influence', and 'absolutely' is downright scary in its relentlessness. Just as Jane must resist, since submission would mean that she would 'disown half my nature' (*Eyre*, pp.452, 444), and her suppressed passion would eventually and inevitably consume her, so Laura must remain true to herself, or be destroyed.

Under continuous pressure, and becoming exhausted under the stress of their religious disputes, Laura is only too well aware of how the lines are blurring for Helbeck, how religion and male pride combine, particularly as he begins to think, in spite of all denials, that her opposition is weakening: 'But the strange look of power - almost of triumph - on Helbeck's face remained unaltered. She shrank before it.' Her eventual flight from Bannisdale occurs when at last she understands: 'the fatality under which she must still resist, and he must become gradually, inevitably, her persecutor, and her tyrant!' (*HB*, pp.306, 342) Recall of the prayer/rape scene in the chapel indicates what torment such a life would be. It is an understanding brought about, however, not by attempts at religious control, nor by any cruelty on Helbeck's part, but when he is finally driven to the point of revealing the experiences and emotions that underlie his religious fervency and rigour.

Even during the first days of their engagement, Laura resented the letters that Helbeck received from fellow-Catholics:

> For they were the evidences of forces and influences not hers - forces that warred with hers, and must always war with hers.
>
> *HB*, p.250

His religion, in her mind if not in his, is inimical to her, as if she must conquer it or else be worn out by a never-ending struggle. Her intuition seems extreme: it is only natural to want to have the full attention of a fiancé, especially so early in the relationship, but to express jealousy so

quickly in terms of violence and combat does seem unusual. However, Laura is right: unless one or both of them bends a little, Catholicism will continue to be a barrier: faced with Helbeck's intention to continue with the strict observances of the Third Order of St Francis after their marriage, she comments:

> Can't you realise how it would divide us? I should feel outside – a pariah. As it is, I seem to have nothing to do with half your life - there is a shut door between me and it.
>
> *HB*, p.273

What kind of marriage could she and Helbeck have, if she was forever excluded from the very community she lives among, just as she is isolated now at Bannisdale: among all those who visit during her stay there, there is not one who is even Anglican, let alone freethinking. Laura's only support comes from the Masons, who are extreme in their own way and as incapable of intellectual argument as she is; and from her letters to the Friedlands in Cambridge, who are too far away to help her. Ward's free-thinker has to fight alone, and under the strain, her jealousy, distress, and insecurity become ever stronger:

> Where could she feel secure? In Helbeck's heart? But in the inmost shrine of that heart she felt the brooding of a majestic and exacting power that knew her not. Her jealousy – her fear – grew day by day.
>
> *HB*, p.294

The crucial conversation that triggers her flight comes at a time when, after weeks of dispute and torment, she discovers the story of St. Francis Borgia, who in the mid-sixteenth century became Vicar-General of the Jesuits, and was famed for extreme asceticism. As Ward recounts it, before becoming a Jesuit Borgia was married, with eight children. However, when his wife lay dying he did not pray for her recovery, having heard a mystical voice saying that it was not 'expedient' for him that she survive, although if he wished, she could be healed. Borgia prayed instead that God's will be done, and his wife died. It was after this that he joined the Jesuits, abandoning his children to do so. It is a story that must have had painful resonances for Ward: she was the eldest of eight children, and her father's second conversion

to Catholicism in 1876 damaged their standard of living[47] along with his financial prospects. In her novel Ward pushes the conflict between duty to God and duty to family to its ultimate, and St. Francis Borgia's story initiates the final phase of Helbeck and Laura's relationship. Ward uses it to provoke Laura's most agonising outburst: if she were dying, she asks, and Helbeck heard just such a voice as Borgia had: 'would you just let go? – see me drop, drop, drop, through all eternity, to make your soul safe?' (*HB*, p.299) Would she, tied to him as closely as one human being can be to another, be abandoned for an abstract such as religion? Would he put his own soul before anything else, even her? The very question horrifies Helbeck, but she drives on, pushing her point home:

> It is that horrible egotism of religion that poisons everything! And if - if one shared it, well and good, one might make terms with it, like a wild thing one had tamed. But outside it, and at war with it, what can one do but hate - hate - *hate* it!
>
> *HB*, pp.299-300

Laura views the self-denial and self-submission of Catholicism not as selfless, but as the ultimate in selfishness, concerned with the salvation of one's soul above all else. To her, it is about closing oneself off to all others, to all other ideas, and adopting habits of mind designed to prevent any true, deep, bonds with other human beings. Surely religion should involve a fellowship of individuals working together to achieve a joyful shared aim? As presented in the novel, though, it becomes just one more unreachable, isolating aspect of Alan Helbeck, an aim unique to himself and jealously guarded. Suddenly the reader sees that she has begun to view religion in the way that Helbeck has long viewed her, as something to tame; and, like her, if it were tamed, it would be irretrievably altered. She and religion are indeed pitted against each other, and her outburst is filled with frustration and repulsion, childish in its repetition, yet undeniably passionate and powerful, more so than any other speech she has made so far. How can Helbeck possibly respond in a way that will make her understand, that will satisfy her need for sharing and bonding?

[47] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Mary Ward and the Claims of Conflicting Feminisms: Literary and Political Ideologies at the Turn of the Century* (Unpub. PhD Dissertation, University of Indiana, June 1985), p.215.

It is at this point, when he is provoked beyond endurance, and all his religious restraint towards Laura in the matter of conversion is shattered, that Ward finally provides the reader with the emotional history of this most restrained of characters: for the first time Helbeck truly opens up to Laura on an intimate level, and tells her how his devotion to religion came about; 'the only story that a man truly knows – the story of his own soul. You shall know – what you hate.' It is a tremendous risk for him to take - what if his soul turns out to be the very thing that Laura hates? – but nothing less will suffice. His story is a surprise: this extreme ascetic, it appears, was once passionately in love and neglected his religion for a woman, Marie, who managed to resist his overtures. On her deathbed, Marie asked an old Jesuit master of Helbeck's to take him away on a retreat in the hope of helping him. At first he gained little benefit from this, unable to focus upon the state of his soul due to thoughts of his beloved Marie dying alone and, being outside the church, damned. Then, during a service, he undergoes his own version of the experience of St. Francis Borgia. The priest has been speaking of Christ's plea for men to choose 'between the world and Me, between sin and Me, between Hell and Me' (*HB*, pp.300, 304). It is a stark choice, equating as it does worldly matters with sin and with Hell, as if everything not directly to do with religion is damnable, and it shakes Helbeck, who is still lodged in the world by thoughts of Marie, until a Voice, coming as if from the altar, tells him that her soul is in fact saved:

> That night I crept to the foot of the crucifix in my little cell. "*Elegi, elegi: renuntio!*" – "I have chosen: I renounce." All night long those alternate words seemed to be wrung from me.
>
> *HB*, p.304

The mystical reassurance clears Helbeck's way; with Marie saved, and his worry over, he does not grieve, but quickly makes his choice: 'I came home here, to do my duty if I could – and save my soul' (*HB*, p.304). There is something abject about the manner of his choice; he creeps, he dare not stand before the crucifix; and the words seem to come from him at the direction of some external force, as if he has already handed over all control over his own life. His choice is framed in terms of rejection and self-denial rather than of the aim he will work towards. From

this time on, he has devoted all that he has and all he is to God. His confession, for that is what it is, is self-revelation of a kind described by Feuerbach:

> God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man, - religion the solemn unveiling of a man's hidden treasures, the revelation of his intimate thoughts, the open confession of his love-secrets.
>
> *Feuerbach*, pp.12-3

Helbeck unveils his story as if he is a woman with a lover for the first time, but its effect is far other than he hopes:

> Laura knew well that his life was poured into each word. She herself did not - could not - speak. But it seemed to her strangely that some spring within her was broken - some great decision had been taken, by whom she could not tell.
>
> *HB*, p.305

She has seen his life, his soul, and all it has taught her is their incompatibility: as a result she will end their engagement. (The further 'breaking' within her when the Romney portrait is sold is merely an addition to this key moment.) Just as her resistance springs from deep within her, so does this shift in her perspective; she is aware of it only on an intuitive level, in a manner resembling that of Marcella Boyce's instinctive imperatives for change. What she has seen is that, for Helbeck, God and his soul will always come first, not through the selfishness and egotism that she thought she recognised, and of which she accused him, and not merely through love of religion, but in payment of the debt that he believes he owes to God: if Christ could sacrifice Himself to expiate the crimes of humanity, how can any of those for whom he was crucified do less? It is a depth of commitment that equals Laura's own instinctive allegiance to independence, dignity, and freedom of thought, and as such, she sees that it will never, *can* never, change:

> Amid the emotion, the overwhelming impressions of his story of himself, that conviction had risen in her inmost being - a strange inexorable voice of judgment - bidding her go! In a flash, she had seen the wretched future years – the daily struggle – the aspect of

> violence, even of horror, that his pursuit of her, his pressure upon her will, might assume – the sharpening of all those wild forces in her own nature.
>
> *HB*, p.342

Laura recognises that if they remain together the pressure upon her to submit will only increase, and that he will end as her tyrant instead of her lover. Shortly afterwards she flees Bannisdale for Cambridge and her friends the Friedlands.

More than Elsmere or Marcella, or any of Ward's previous characters, Laura, the creature of emotion and instinct, obeys her inner promptings: there is no need to apply reason to the problem, she knows, instantly and irresistibly, what she must do. And her flight is not only an escape from Helbeck/Catholicism, and from outside pressure; it is also a flight from what *she* would become in such a milieu. The tameless nature which so attracted Helbeck would not merely resist, it would strike back, with greater and greater ferocity in proportion to the perceived threat to its integrity. During the months of separation that follow, this insight is shown to remind Laura that, as Ward says, 'she had obeyed a higher law', no matter how much she suffers – 'She was broken with the anguish of separation'. Her act is also presented as selfless: while Helbeck's life is focussed upon saving his soul, Laura has disregarded her own pain in concern for him: 'She had done it for him, first of all. He must be delivered from her' (HB, pp.342-3). Ward's pagan has thus acted with a more human Christianity than can be found in any of Helbeck's rules and rituals.

Unfortunately, circumstances conspire against Laura, as only a few months later she is summoned back to Bannisdale to Augustina's deathbed. At first she stays with her cousins the Masons, but as Augustina weakens she moves back to Bannisdale to be near her. In spite of all her distress, and the continued pain of separation from Helbeck, she still manages to appreciate some of the good points of Catholic practice, as the deathbed routines do bring comfort to Augustina: 'she realised the force of the saying that Catholicism is the faith to die in.' Yet this renewed contact with Catholicism also reminds her of the impossibility of surrender, and Ward describes how she becomes more and more worn down under the strain - 'Ah! This aching of the whole being, physical and moral - again she asked herself, only with a wilder

impatience, how long it could be borne' (*HB*, pp.363, 358-9) - until Augustina's description of Helbeck's suffering over the months of her absence strikes her as:

> a tale of grief so profound and touching that, by the time it ended, every landmark was uprooted in the girl's soul, and she was drifting on a vast tide of pity and passion, whither she knew not.
>
> *HB*, p.371

Laura's 'feeling' nature now proves to be her weakness: too exhausted to resist, she has fallen into a passive state that makes her a precise illustration of one of the factors required for influence to take place: those who have no secure sense of self or of purpose are open to any external influence that offers them form and direction; they are, as Newman wrote, 'at the mercy of the winds and waves' (*Loss*, pp.15-6). Laura has lost all references; all her previous sense of belonging to Bannisdale and its environs has vanished, and only emotion remains. Previously in the novel there had been moments of temptation for her:

> when she had seemed to feel her whole self breaking up, dissolving in the grip of a power that was at once her foe and the bearer of infinite seduction. But always the will, the self, had won the victory, had delivered a final *'No!'* into which had rushed the whole energy of her being.
>
> *HB*, p.276

Her deepest instincts had always saved her without any need for conscious thought, so that she had flung her defiant Everlasting No after the manner of Thomas Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh.[48] Now, vulnerable, filled with love and longing, further hurt by Helbeck's sharpness to her when she shows distaste for a relic that has been sent to comfort Augustina, she drifts helplessly into submission. She tells Helbeck that she will become a Catholic, and even asks that Father Leadham should instruct her: given her former detestation of him and everything he represents, this in itself indicates the magnitude of her alteration. Helbeck, while overjoyed at her request, is also confused: 'It was like stepping from the firmer ground of the moss on to the softer

[48] 'Thus had the EVERLASTING NO (*das Ewige Nein*) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then was it that my whole ME stood up, in native God-created majesty and with emphasis recorded its Protest.' Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, ed. Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor [1833] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1987), p.129.

patches where foot and head lost themselves' (*HB*, p.377). Where he thought to be most certain, he too becomes unsure: a malleable, submissive Laura is something quite outside his experience, and he cannot but sense that something is very wrong. He is correct: she is not herself.

Nevertheless, there is still a part of her that remains apart and watchful - Helbeck's delighted cry at her request 'was a cry under which she shuddered' (*HB*, p.376), and Ward's description of him is sinister:

> As he stood there he was the embodiment of his race, of its history, its fanaticisms, its 'great refusals' at once of all mean joys and all new freedoms. To a few chosen notes in the universe, tender response and exquisite vibration - to all others, deaf, hard, insensitive, as the stone of his old house.
>
> Laura looked at him with a mingled adoration and terror.
>
> *HB*, p.379

Helbeck's bond with the past in all its senses is made explicit, in both its greatness and its poverty. He follows the chains of blood, of property, and of religion, seeking what is noble, yet self-limited by refusal to face new ideas. Ward's reference is distinctly pejorative: the 'great refusals' refer to the decision of Pope Celestine V to abdicate, which resulted in the papacy of Boniface VIII, regarded by Dante as disastrous. The phrase used is: 'che fece per viltà il gran rifiuto',[49] that is, Celestine abdicated due to cowardice and littleness of soul, and is shown among the Neutrals in Hell, those who cannot die because they never truly lived. Ward's use of the phrase condemns Helbeck for his ability to accept only a very restricted selection from the vast wealth that life has to offer; he seems first crippled, then rigid, and finally, inanimate and inhuman as the stone of which his Hall is built. That he resembles his house is a further illustration of this 'embodiment'. Laura may love him for his greater qualities, but it is her terror that remains in the reader's mind.

Indeed, that very night Laura realises that her submission was a mistake: when Augustina dies before they can tell her the news, it seems to Laura as if God took her away

[49] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy 1: Inferno*, translated John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 3 l.60 p.48.

deliberately. Alone with the body, in a parallel to the mystical voice heard by Helbeck, Laura too hears a voice, the resolutely secular voice of her father:

> I was back in the old life - I heard him speaking quite distinctly. "Laura, you cannot do it - you cannot do it!" And he looked at me in sorrow and displeasure. I argued with him so long, but he beat me down. And the voice I seemed to hear was not his only; it was the voice of my own life, only far stronger and crueller than I had ever known it.
>
> *HB*, p.387

Her father's voice is the voice of Laura's past, her inheritance and her upbringing, combining to tell her that she is mistaken in the persuasion that she can convert. It is reinforced by Laura's own past life; her history of rejection has strengthened her inborn independence and self-respect, until they cannot permanently be set aside. She agreed to convert only in a period of weakness, when her sense of self was in abeyance; now she returns to herself, and what Ward termed 'this 'I will not' of the soul' (*Aut. HB*, p.xiii):

> the priests want my inmost will - want all that is I - and I know when I sit down to think quietly, that I cannot give it.
>
> *HB*, p.387

Conversion would entail surrendering entirely to external control, which for Laura is impossible: she must remain herself. As Newman wrote: 'I am what I am, or I am nothing' (*Ass*, p.272).

To be 'what I am', though, is too painful to endure, and Laura's last act of self-affirmation and self-preservation is to choose the second of Newman's options by drowning herself in the river Greet. All through the novel she has been associated with water; her surname, Fountain, bringing to mind the continuous circling of water, and by extension, the cycles of life. Now that circling ceases, as she joins the flow of her feelings with the current of the river – and once caught in the current, as Eliot's Romola and Maggie Tulliver discovered, there are no more choices: 'death puts an *end*' (*HB*, p.387). Yet even at this extremity she remains selfless, and tries generously to protect Helbeck from the knowledge of what he, as a

Catholic, must call sin; she pretends to go out simply to gather cherry branches to lay by Augustina's body.

Of course, Anglicans as well as Catholics view suicide as sinful, and refuse to bury suicides in consecrated ground. For Laura, however, surrounded as she has been by pagan references, this view has no relevance. Besides her association with old gods and with nature there are, for example, Helbeck's words: 'it is her wild pagan self that I love – that I desire' (*HB*, p.183), and even her dog is named Fricka, after the Norse goddess of love and fertility. Most importantly, she is pagan in her denial of an afterlife, in which she follows her father's belief:

> Poor, poor papa! - he would not say, even to comfort her, that they would meet again. He had not believed it - and so she must not.
> *HB*, p.49

For daughter as for father, death is indeed the end. But the most important point here is that for pagans suicide was not sinful, but was a legitimate and acceptable act. Laura's choice is, in this sense, perfectly valid. Reviewers of the novel varied in their reactions to it: the Jesuit Father Clarke wrote that her death marred the 'artistic beauty' of the book, that it was a 'cowardly, vulgar, selfish crime' (*Clarke*, pp.455, 456). George Mivart then called Clarke's castigation of Laura 'ludicrously exaggerated', being liberal-minded enough to admit that special circumstances applied: 'She was a Pagan, and as such had a full right to conform to Pagan ethics' (*Mivart*, p.645).

Examination of the novel reveals numerous hints that Laura's life will end in this way. The river Greet is introduced on only the second page: as Alan Helbeck walks towards Bannisdale Hall: 'beside him roared the tumbling Greet, with its flood-voice'. The river's name may offer a friendly welcome, but the mention of flood waters hints at potential violence. The husband of the woman in the Romney portrait, a gambler and drinker, drowned himself in the Greet: Helbeck tells Laura: 'He had half-killed his wife, and ruined the property – so it was time' (*HB*, pp.36, 252) (surely an odd attitude for such a fervent Catholic). On arrival at Bannisdale, Laura is quickly drawn to the river, as indeed to the whole landscape, and it is to nature that she turns in her distress during Augustina's last days:

> The leaping river, the wide circuit of the fells, the blowing of the May wind! - to them, in a great reaction, the girl gave back her soul, passionately resting in them. They were no longer a joy and an intoxication. But the veil lifted between her and them. They became a sanctuary and refuge.
>
> *HB*, pp.363-4

The wildness and openness of nature is her escape from the artificiality of the deathbed, with its candles and cut flowers, but her former delight in nature has changed emphasis; she seems more 'at one' with it even than before, as the reference to a 'veil' indicates. Lifted veils can appear in literature as symbols of revelation, but also signify the barrier between life and death: a veil may lift at the moment of death, that is, of movement into a new state. Placed here, while the reader still remembers Laura's wishing, while journeying from the Masons' farm to Bannisdale with Helbeck, 'to cease upon the midnight with no pain',[50] the implication is disturbing; there is no longer any barrier between her and nature, between her and death.[51] It is a strange combination, since nature normally indicates life, not death, yet the method of Laura's suicide, welcomed by the Greet as if in a parody of its first appearance in the novel, can be seen as her becoming truly one with nature, and by extension, with life. Her death is, then, life-affirming – is not life from death at the centre of Christianity? – and not to be regarded as a defeat. Laura is as Ward designed her: 'the woman, who yet, as standing for modern civilisation, and the ideas on which it is built, would have in truth the strong and conquering role' (*Aut. HB*, p.xiv).

But if Laura manages to maintain her wholeness, even at the expense of her life, Helbeck has no such triumph: at the end of the novel it is said that he will soon enter the Jesuit Novitiate. Friedland comments:

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[50] *HB*, p.354. Quoting *Keats*, p.347. This second reference to 'Ode to a Nightingale' poem recalls the earlier hints of magic and forthcoming pain seen on Laura's first awakening at Bannisdale.

[51] It recalls the peace of the scene surrounding Thrushcross Grange shortly before Cathy's death: 'Gimmerton chapel bells were still ringing; and the full, mellow flow of the beck in the valley came soothingly on the ear. [. . .] At Wuthering Heights it always sounded on quiet days, following a great thaw or a season of steady rain – and, of Wuthering Heights, Catherine was thinking as she listened'. *Wuth*, p.193.

> I have hardly seen him. He seems to live a life all within. We must be as shadows to him; as men like trees walking.
>
> *HB*, p.388

Alan Helbeck has already withdrawn from the world, but seems not so much to move towards the Jesuits, as to retreat from life itself; as if Laura has taken with her all the vitality he had,[52] and left him only half alive, or as if his capacity for passion has been exhausted, and all that remains are intellect and religion.

Tragedy, Character and Fate

Another pagan aspect of *Helbeck of Bannisdale* that was commented upon by several reviewers is the concept of tragic fate: that the novel's ending is inevitable, given the situation and the characters concerned. For example, George Meredith wrote: 'I know not another book that shows the classic fate so distinctly to view', and Lord Crewe commented: 'I have something of the *Wuthering Heights* sense of coming disaster' (*Tr*, p.143). Ward's biographer, Esther M.G. Smith, argued that: 'the characteristically balanced fairness of her presentation and the remarkable welding of faith to character make *Helbeck* a modern Greek tragedy.'[53] The ending was planned by Ward from the beginning, and lay behind her designs for the characters of Helbeck and, most particularly, Laura: 'Let her bear in her frail hands the torch of freedom - and let her sink and perish under the weight of it!' (*Gwynn*, p.64) This casts Laura as a kind of reversal of those Catholic Helbeck martyrs of whom Helbeck is so proud, as if to demonstrate that modern attitudes have equal worth, can be held with equal tenacity, and can be just as destructive. The tragedy arises in part, then, from the novel's juxtaposition of ancient religion and modern scepticism:

[52] He resembles Heathcliff, who shows a similar focus upon mental vision in the days before his death: 'The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her!' *Wuth*, p.353.

[53] Esther Marian Greenwell Smith, *Mrs. Humphry Ward* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), p.51; hereafter cited *Smith*.

> It is in these conflicts between old and new, as it has always seemed to me, that we moderns find our best example of compelling fate, - and the weakness of the personal life in the grip of great forces that regard it not, or seem to regard it not, is just as attractive as ever it was to the imagination
>
> *Tr*, p.150

This comment reveals links between Ward and Thomas Hardy, whose characters are often presented as the victims of forces far beyond themselves: consider the ending of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: 'the President of the Immortals [. . .] had ended his sport with Tess.'[54] For Ward, though, the tragedy of Laura and Helbeck arises ultimately from character. Laura is a pagan symbol, but an individual too, with her love of nature, her capacity for joy, her instincts and her passion, and her lack of education. This last was a crucial trait, as Ward told her close friend Mandell Creighton:

> Of course you have seen the point of *Helbeck*, which so many people have missed. Life cannot be lived safely without guiding ideas, - and education, in any lesser sense is nought without them. That, on the side of thought, was what Laura meant to me.[55]

Both Helbeck and Laura regard Bannisdale and the land around as home and security, but Ward shows that this is not enough, that ideas and beliefs are equally, if not more, important. Alan Helbeck may be rigid in his views, and joyless, but his life does have a purpose and a framework. Laura's does not. In her, a woman who believed that ideas above all were what drove people created a character with no 'guiding ideas', and the result is ruin and fatality, demonstrating to the reader the truth of Friedland's cry: 'Educate! Educate!' (*HB*, p.316)

Yet for all her suffering and physical weakness, Laura leaves behind an impression of indomitability: she is the one woman in Ward's work who takes her creator's beliefs to the ultimate: she does not, cannot, submit, either to other people, or to abstract ideas, and refuses to be manipulated or to betray her own integrity. She is not alone, as such refusal to bend to outside pressure can be seen in other works of the time. For instance, Olive Schreiner wrote:

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[54] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. David Skilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p.489; hereafter cited *Tess*.
[55] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Mandell Creighton 9 August 1898, *PH*.

> No woman has the right to marry a man if she has to bend herself out of shape for him. [. . .] Character will dominate over all and will come out at last.[56]

This is the most important point: to change in order to fit someone else's conception of how you should be is to betray your own integrity, and is in any case doomed to failure, since innate character will eventually triumph over the most strenuous efforts of will. The best illustration of this idea comes, as so often with *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, from the work of the Brontës, in Jane Eyre's resistance to her cousin St. John Rivers' proposal that she marry him, and work as a missionary in India beside him:

> Nothing speaks or stirs in me while you talk. I am sensible of no light kindling - no life quickening - no voice counselling or cheering.
> *Eyre*, p.449

Rivers' words do not touch Jane because they are alien to the natural bent of her character. For Ward, such instinctive reaction provides reason enough for her refusal, but Charlotte Brontë takes the time to demonstrate what the consequences of acceptance would be, and they match well with Schreiner's statement above:

> I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself to the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation.
> *Eyre*, p.444

Jane's eventual rejection of her cousin is based, like Laura Fountain's resistance to Catholicism, upon her sense of self and of integrity, and of her own rights: a woman should maintain her own individuality, even if that insistence means that she may never marry (as discussed previously through the case of Geraldine Jewsbury). The problem for Laura is that since she has no education, no guiding ideas, she does not consciously know her true bent, and is left to rely upon intuition and instinct. Ward's insistence upon the need for education through the character of Friedland thus serves an important purpose in the novel: education

[56] Olive Schreiner, 'The Buddhist Priest's Wife', *Daughters*, p.91.

would make Laura more aware of her own nature, and more able to follow it with sureness and deliberation. Even wider experience would help: Marcella was poorly educated, but learned from her experiences, and built her own guiding ideas out of the insights triggered thereby in her inner self. Elsmere, the well-educated, was able to understand and develop his inner promptings with far greater speed. Yet Laura seems consistently unable to do this, and the reader cannot but wonder why.

In Ward's earlier novels, the main characters all underwent a process of inner growth, of discovery, understanding, and adoption of the dictates of the God-given, innate self, leading to new self-reliance and integrity. Each chose freely to follow these dictates. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, however, Ward's presentation of character has altered: innate character has become all-important, irresistible as well as unalterable: the individual cannot refuse to be what he or she has been born to be, and experience of life merely reinforces inner directives. Her description of Laura that: 'one could hardly say that she was or had a character. She was a bundle of loves and hates; a force, not an organism' (*HB*, p.59) aligns with the pagan references associated with her to indicate that her nature is somehow primeval, deeper than character, rising from the deepest, most instinctive aspect of the individual. She cannot alter because she already operates entirely from within according to her nature's demands. As far as Helbeck is concerned, one might expect development to be possible: he is educated, intelligent, conscious of his own desires and choices. Yet rather than grow and change over the novel, what occurs is a gradual revelation of the littlenesses and predatory traits that lurk within.

Rather than a novel of change and personal growth, then, *Helbeck of Bannisdale* might more aptly be termed a novel of fixedness. While in earlier novels it was only minor characters that did not grow, for example the fanatical Newcome, and Squire Wendover in *Robert Elsmere*, and Louie Grieve in *The History of David Grieve*, in this novel no character, minor or major, undergoes such a change. Edward Williams leaves the Jesuits and returns to art, unable to suppress his need to paint; similarly, Augustina returns after her husband's death to the Catholicism of her youth – both characters abandon temporary aberrations for their original,

underlying bias. No character develops in any way that resembles the progress made by Elsmere, Catherine or Marcella, no new sets of beliefs arise within them to amend their patterns of behaviour: the laws of character are the laws of nature, the laws of God, and remain fixed: 'character is inexorable' (*GT*, p.343). Character is fate. Ward makes this point explicitly on several occasions in the novel; Helbeck and Laura's conflict is described as 'a conflict of instincts, of the deepest tendencies of two natures', and she writes of 'those facts of character and individuality which held them separated! - facts which are always, and in all cases, the true facts of this world' (*HB*, pp.277, 359). For her protagonists to be happy, at least one of them would have to change in the most fundamental way, and as Langham recognised in *Robert Elsmere*, this cannot be done: 'What you are, you are to all eternity' (*RE*, p.434). This is what lies behind that "I will not' of the soul' (*Aut. HB*, p.xiii) that so haunted Ward when she first heard of the Catholic family of Sizergh Castle. Both will break rather than bend, and Augustina is right when she comments on Laura's criticisms of Catholicism: 'She can't help saying them - thinking them - it's in her. No one will ever change her' (*HB*, p.236), and Helbeck's belief that love will alter her has been shown to be utterly wrong. Their tragedy comes from the fact that the very inner direction previously shown to be characters' most liberating force has become a liability, restricting individuals like the dogma to which Ward was so opposed, and denying any possibility of compromise.

Fixed Beliefs

Ward's major characters over her novels of the decade 1888 to 1898, then, undergo a process of discovery of their own nature and of their own limits: they undergo great turmoil, and overcome intense pressure, intellectual and emotional, religious and secular, but throughout it all their basic selves remain intact. In parallel with their increase in understanding comes a corresponding diminishment in the power of outside influence and persuasion over them. Elsmere's growth was triggered by Henry Grey's words, by his own studies, by contact with Squire Wendover; Marcella's by her friends the Cravens, by Harry Wharton's teaching, above

all by her own nursing experience: both are shown to grow into fuller, more sympathetic life, and to become more effective in their work, more involved with the needs and concerns of others. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, though, Laura and Helbeck's love for each other triggers turmoil that might lead to development, but Mary Ward has lost her belief in flexibility; she takes her theory of character to its conclusion, and no happy ending is possible. The inexorability of character is not necessarily beneficial. It is perhaps not surprising that after *Helbeck of Bannisdale* Ward should turn away from novels of ideas, to write novels of society and the political instead, in which no such delving into the nature of character takes place: she had no more to say on the matter.

Since Ward's presentation of character in her novels has consistently reflected her real-life opinions, it is not unreasonable to assume that this novel does so too. The fixedness of character appearing here, then, indicates that, even if Ward had been studying Catholicism with conversion in mind, she could never have gone through with it, never have been persuaded, never have followed her father. Margaret Woods, an old Oxford acquaintance of Ward's, expresses this view in relation to Tom Arnold's temporary return to Anglicanism between 1867 and 1876:

> It might be said that, had he not done so, had the sensitive, as yet intellectually undeveloped girl, come under the charm of Newman, the whole course of her career would have been different. I think not. Hers was not a mind to crave for, or even at all admit, authority in religious matters. Affection and admiration might have drawn her into the fold, but she would not have remained there.[57]

Ward's youthful Evangelical phase had arisen through her affection for Evangelical people; the most that could have happened was that her affection for her father might lead her into a temporary involvement with Catholicism, but, as in the case of Williams, it could not have lasted. As she admitted herself: 'Catholicism has an enormous attraction for me, - yet I could no more be a Catholic than a Mahometan' (*Tr*, p.151). Her great period of growth and religious understanding had taken place years before, and Catholicism, like St. John Rivers' words to

[57] Margaret L. Woods, 'Mrs. Humphry Ward: A Sketch from Memory', *Quarterly Review* 184 (July 1920), pp.147-60 (p.148); hereafter cited *Woods*.

Jane Eyre, could strike no chord within her, and so could trigger no further revelations. She remained true to her rational theist beliefs until her death.

However, there was one shift in her attitude towards religious matters after the period of writing that produced *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. Ward had long been aware that, although normal to her, her beliefs were still regarded as shocking by people in general:

> With me the belief in miraculous occurrence is so entirely gone that I know I must often fail to realise how such a state of mind appears to other people who do not share it.[58]

Nevertheless, she refused to change her beliefs. Her satisfaction in living with integrity, though, did not mean that she no longer suffered: her exclusion from the community and fellowship of the Church was still a constant pain to her: 'A great task is in our hands, first to understand our own message, & then to live it. And it is not we who wilfully stand outside.'[59] This feeling of rejection combined with her developed understanding of the inexorability of character to initiate her next project. She could not change her views, they arose from her innate self, they came from God; and if she could not change in order to be accepted into the Church, then the Church must itself change. Mary Ward began to wish for reforms that would create a broader, more tolerant, Church of England, to which those of unconventional belief could belong without offence to their conscience; whereas before she had gladly stood apart and independent, now she began to blame the Church for her exclusion, not herself.

Her desire for a broader Church was not new. In the past, for instance, James Martineau, who she much admired, had tried to obtain acceptance for liberal Dissenters, such as Unitarians. Ward's grandfather, Dr. Thomas Arnold, had also advocated a Broader Church in his famous pamphlet, 'Principles of Church Reform':

> If a man will not let me pray to and praise my Saviour, he destroys the exercise of my faith altogether; - but I am no way injured by his praying to him as a glorified man, while I pray to him as God. The conclusion to be drawn from the known fallibility of human judgments is, not that

[58] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 13 October 1899, *PH*.
[59] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Dorothy M. Ward 15 March 1897, *PH*.

> we should be sceptical ourselves, or compromise our own practice, but that we should bear with our neighbour's thinking as he judges right, so long as he will bear with our acting as we judge right.[60]

A Church that demonstrated Dr. Arnold's kind of tolerance, and refusal to restrict acceptable belief to certain dogmas only, would not only encompass other religious sects, but would, as the match of Arnold's 'glorified man' and Ward's 'human Christ' shows, allow Ward herself to belong. As matters stood, however, her sense of injustice and desire for reform increased until she was driven to give them open expression:

> Every year I live I more & more resent the injustice which excludes those who hold certain historical & critical opinions from full membership in the National church, above all from participation in the Lord's Supper. Why are we <u>all</u> always to be bound by the formularies of a past age [. . .] Why should there not be an alternative baptismal & Confirmation service, to be claimed under a conscience clause by those who desire it?[61]

She discussed the matter freely among her circle, including, as above, her old Oxford friend Mandell Creighton, recently created Bishop of London, and in 1899 wrote letters to *The Times* newspaper about it. It is here that her great interest in religious Modernism comes into play.

She described the movement as 'the attempt of the modern spirit, acting religiously, to refashion Christianity, not outside, but *inside*, the warm limits of the ancient churches' (*RM*, p.69), and declared that 'The strong assertion of individual liberty within them, as opposed to the attempt to break them down from without: - that seems to me now the hopeful course' (*WR*, p.236). Unfortunately, as far as Catholicism was concerned, the Pope disagreed, and in 1907 openly condemned the movement, and excommunicated many Modernist clergy.

Religious Modernism placed great emphasis upon the communal and mystical aspects of worship, of precisely the kind illustrated by Ward in the strongly social New Brotherhood of *Robert Elsmere* (*VH*, pp.187-8). Several writers have commented on how this novel fits with its tenets; to give a couple of examples, in 1903, Ward was told by the critic Ferdinand Brunetière, editor of the *Revue des deux Mondes* since 1893, that '*Robert Elsmere* is a study in

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[60] Thomas Arnold, *Principles of Church Reform* [1833] (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), p.156.
[61] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Mandell Creighton 9 August 1898, *PH*.

Modernism' (*WR*, p.253), and in 1961 Margaret Maison wrote that it 'may be viewed as the first great Modernist tract in English fiction' (*Maison*, p.255).

Ward's interest in religious Modernism culminated in her 1911 novel *The Case of Richard Meynell*, whose original title, recorded in a memo to her publisher Reginald Smith in late 1909, was 'An English Modernist' (*VH*, p.192). The novel was billed as a sequel to *Robert Elsmere*, and certain characters from that novel, such as Catherine Elsmere and her sister Rose, now married to Hugh Flaxman, do appear, but it is a very different kind of novel. It is not, for instance, a novel about the process of developing beliefs, since Richard Meynell's change from Anglicanism to Elsmere's human Christ has occurred before the novel begins. Unlike Elsmere, however, Meynell and his fellows do not leave the Church of England but remain to work for reform from within, on the basis that they believe themselves still to be Christian, merely growing towards a truer Christianity than that of those who adhere strictly to dogma. They therefore reject the Church's argument that they have broken the vows they took at ordination: Ward has Meynell answer this very point: 'What does our personal consistency - which, mind you, is a very different thing from personal honesty! - matter?' (*RM*, p.517) It is an illustration of her belief that individuals should act openly and honestly according to their beliefs at any one time, rather than remain hemmed in by the demands of unchanging dogma. Meynell is even shown to claim a kind of divine inspiration for this action:

> I took those vows sincerely, in absolute good faith; and all the changes in me have come about, as it seems to me, by the inbreathing of a spirit not my own - partly from new knowledge - partly in trying to help my people to live - or to die. They represent to me things lawfully - divinely learnt.
>
> *RM*, p.106

He describes his changes as arising from several areas of his life: from God, from his intellectual learning, and from his practical experience in helping others (Marcella Boyce is not the only character of Ward's to find spiritual growth through selfless acts in the world). In short, they blend the divine, the spiritual, and the human to form an imperative that he cannot ignore:

'There is something in me that asks something of me' (*RM*, p.35). Conscience, for Meynell as for his creator, is 'God's revelation'.

Ward uses every technique she can to emphasise the justice of the demands of Meynell's party in their struggle for acceptance by the Church. She insists, for instance, upon the moderation of their aims: '"Give us our portion!" - we say, - "in Christ's name. But *only our portion.*"' They do not want to replace existing forms of worship, but to add to them: 'we ask to live side by side with the old - in brotherly peace, in equal right - sharing what the past has bequeathed!' (*RM*, p.104) Such a presentation is intended to make the Orthodox Church appear extreme in its obduracy and its insistence that Meynell's party must either conform, or depart – and by extension lead to questioning of the Church's real-life position. Ward also tries to make Meynell's views more acceptable by casting them in terms of reconciliation between long-established oppositions within the Church, in particular those that had most affected her own life. To this end, she endows Meynell with her grandfather's desire that each church should hold several different types of service on Sundays, so that all people could find a form of worship acceptable to them:

> a church of free men co-extensive with the nation, gathering into one fold every English man, woman and child, that was Arnold's dream, just as it is Meynell's.
>
> *RM*, p.460

However, she also found it within herself at last to pay tribute to John Henry Newman, the bogeyman of her childhood because of his influence over her father, for his insight that the ritual of the Eucharist is at the centre of church services. The reconciliation of the two is made explicit near the end by the remarks of the Bishop of Dunchester, who says of Meynell's speech to the Church court which will judge his case:

> "though the voice, the large heart, the fearless mind, and the broad sympathies were Arnold's, some of the governing ideas were Newman's. As I listened, I seemed" - the old man's look glowed suddenly – "to see the two great leaders, the two foes of a century ago, standing side by side, twin brethren in a new battle, growing out of the old, with a great mingled host behind them."

RM, p.460

Mary Ward had finally found a way of making peace between the views of the two men who personified the forces that had pulled her father to and fro over so many years, as if over time she had arrived at her own personal resolution. If openness of mind, freedom of inquiry, spirituality and mysticism could be combined, maybe a new kind of Church could develop. To indicate the need for such a church, her portrayal lends Meynell's faction the power of an army, much in the manner of her description of the liberal faction during her early years in Oxford, to indicate that it should sweep all before it. In reality such an event was far from a foregone conclusion, and Ward had no way of knowing whether her wishes for greater inclusiveness within the Church would ever be granted: this is why the novel ends the day *before* the verdict of Meynell's trial is due: its lack of resolution reflects Ward's own.

Seven years later, however, as she finished work on *A Writer's Recollections*, Ward was still outside the Church, and still longing for change:

> the ideal of a common worship is an infinitely noble one. Year after year the simplest and most crying reforms in the liturgy of the Church of England are postponed, because nobody can agree upon them. And all the time the starving of 'the hungry sheep' goes on.
>
> *WR*, p.367

Her personal distress had grown until it seemed to her the deprivation of a basic human need, and her loneliness was not diminished by the fact that it was, in the end, self-chosen. But it can equally well be argued that Ward's action was inevitable, that she too was trapped by the laws of character, by the very inborn traits that had led her to research testimony in the first place. In this light, her rigidity over other issues, such as female suffrage appears as part of the same understanding of the limitations of inner reliance and inborn characteristics as well as their freedoms. Her situation arose from her own innate, God-given traits, and could not have developed any other way – she had to maintain her integrity, to follow her conscience, no matter what the personal anguish involved. It is not a cheery conclusion, but then suffering for one's convictions seems to have been an Arnold family trait: her uncle Matthew had observed

that 'his father's high-minded commitment to Truth, with an implied disregard for any theological consequences, inevitably meant a lonely and arduous journey through life' (*VH*, p.29). Dr. Arnold's granddaughter endured a similar struggle.

I commented earlier that *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, last of the novels of Ward's strongest period, brought her theory of character in relation to personal change to a concluding point, and that after it she ceased to write novels of ideas. I want now to examine how her changes of ideas, and her increasing fixedness, appear over the whole course of her fiction, through the form that she gave to her novels, to see how it reflects, or does not reflect, the developments of her real life.

Some Intellectual End: How Mary Ward Formed Her Fiction

> The fact is that I was brought up with people in whom the strongest emotions of life were generally combined with some intellectual end, & I suppose this reflects itself in the books.[1]

The quotation above refers to Mary Ward's status as a member of the Arnold family, famous for their educational work, for teaching, instructing and advising others. These are people for whom intellect and emotion combine in the desire to improve others or the world around them, in the impact of Dr Arnold upon his pupils at Rugby School, in the influence of the critical and poetical works of his eldest son Matthew, and in the teaching work of Ward's father Tom. Ward's own work in education and philanthropy shows a similar desire, which was reflected, as I have shown, in her novels. It was generally recognised, both in her own time and after her death, that her fiction was more than just entertainment, that she had 'some intellectual end' in writing, that her works are didactic. To mention just a few: Malcolm Elwin refers to her in 1939 as: 'Mrs. Humphry Ward, the problem novelist of moral purpose';[2] and Stephen Gwynn wrote in 1917 that she made her gift for fiction-writing 'subserve the purposes of an intelligence deliberately bent to the task of moulding and directing contemporary thought' (*Gwynn*, p.23). This is a key insight, as Veneta Colby in 1970 also recognised, arguing that despite the impression she gave of lecturing from above:

> Readers recognized in her high-mindedness and didacticism not a patronising contempt for their ignorance, but an earnest respect for their desire for enlightenment and self-improvement.[3]

Her aim was to assist and improve, to make people think, 'airing their questions, marshalling pertinent evidence and information, and finally guiding but not pushing them to a more rational, enlightened position' (*Colby*, p.115). Of course, the 'rational, enlightened position' was that

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[1] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to George Smith 6 October 1896, *Honnold.*

[2] Malcolm Elwin, *Old Gods Falling* (London: Collins, 1939), p.43; hereafter cited *Elwin*.

[3] Veneta Colby, *The Singular Anomaly: Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p.113; hereafter cited *Colby*.

which she herself held, as exemplified in her character Marcella Boyce's development from extreme socialism to her creator's more conservative standpoint.

In this chapter I will examine how Mary Ward set about achieving her aim through the framing of her message, that is, the form that her fiction took, including her use of embodiment of her own ideas in her characters. Closely tied up with this is the construction of her characters: are they mere types, mouthpieces for her ideas, or are they more complex, and if so, are they all constructed in the same manner? Her method of narration will also be examined, along with such matters as the pace of her novels, their length, her use of description from the scenery that surrounds her characters right down to specifics such as their homes, clothes, and other possessions. All this will then be placed in the context of when it was written, both relating to her own life, and to the people and writers around her, to bring out her harmony with or her difference from her times. Alongside this will be consideration of the development shown in her fiction over time: did her novels become as predictable as she did, and were they too increasingly viewed as old-fashioned?

When Mary Ward began to write novels she was already known, albeit to a select few, as a historian, an educator, a critic, and a religious radical; that is, for factual work rather than fictional, and the stories she had written as a schoolgirl were long forgotten. In May 1881 she published a children's story, *Milly and Olly*, based upon a family holiday taken two years previously. Her practice of using her own life as source material for her fiction therefore began early. However, *Milly and Olly* is merely an entertainment, as is the novel for adults that followed, *Miss Bretherton* (1884), which documents the development and training of a young actress. In neither are the characters handled with the internal detail that would later appear in *Robert Elsmere*. Neither work had any great success, possibly because Ward had not yet adapted her writing technique to fully suit the fictional mode; her friend Mandell Creighton informed her: 'You are a critic in your novel.'[4] Ward's next choice of work seemed to hint that she agreed with the criticism; it was a factual work, a translation into English of Henri-Frédéric Amiel's *Journal Intime* (1885), most interesting to her for the insights she gained from it: Amiel's

[4] Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mrs. Humphry Ward 9 December 1884, *PH*.

melancholy, an 'inbred tendency, which was probably hereditary and inevitable',[5] appears in Edward Langham, and his recognition that 'A man only understands what is akin to something already existing in himself' (*Amiel*, p.34) clearly resonated within her, appearing in all the novels of her strongest period, most notably *Robert Elsmere*, *Marcella* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale*.

The main trigger for Ward's career in fiction was, as stated earlier, the Bampton Lecture of 6th March, 1881. Her first response to it, the pamphlet *Unbelief and Sin*, was not a novel, even though its arguments are presented through the medium of two characters, A & C. These characters are rudimentary in the extreme, mouthpieces for opposing arguments rather than fully defined personalities, and always described from the outside. But then Ward herself admitted that her aim was 'to show that what the Bampton Lecturer had denounced as 'unbelief' was simply a 'particular way of judging' a series of documents and events' (*Aut. RE*, v.1 p.xxv), rather than to create any kind of coherent story.

Why, then, after her ideas had been fermenting within her for so long, did she choose to present them in novel form? The answer can perhaps be found, not only in a resurgence of her original interest in fiction-writing, but also in attitudes to the novel at the time, illustrated here by Walter Besant:

> The modern novel converts abstract ideas into living models; it gives ideas, it strengthens faith, it preaches a higher morality than is seen in the actual world; it commands the emotions of pity, admiration, and terror; it creates and keeps alive the sense of sympathy; it is the universal teacher; it is the only book which the great mass of reading mankind ever do read; it is the only way in which people can learn what other men and women are like; it redeems their lives from dullness, puts thoughts, desires, knowledge, and even ambitions into their hearts: it teaches them to talk, and enriches their speech with epigrams, anecdotes and illustrations.[6]

The 'universal teacher': this sums it up exactly. As Besant argues, the novel is a tool which can present ideas in an accessible and stimulating form in order to interest readers in the issues presented as well as in its characters and plot, and so can educate and improve them. The

[5] Mrs. Humphry Ward, Translation and Introduction of Henri-Frédéric Amiel, *Journal Intime* [1885] (London: Macmillan, 1906), p.xv; hereafter cited *Amiel*.
[6] Walter Besant, 'The Art of Fiction', *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: A Critical Reader*, ed. Stephen Regan (London: Routledge, 2001), p.64.

sympathy and support readers felt for novels' characters would also add to stories' inspiring effect: Besant's description is close to the kind of emotional impact that Ward considered most likely to trigger personal change in others.

Mary Ward combined her urge to educate, to use art 'as the torch for exploring life' (*Aut. DG*, v.1 p.xx), with her interest in fiction, in a potent combination:

> one comes again and again upon books that have broken bounds so to speak, and that have owed both their motive-power and their success to this desire [. . .] of 'reforming the world,' or, as I should put it, to the expression of 'a criticism of life,' which may advance, whether in the hearts of the many or the few, thoughts and causes dear to the writers. 'Think with me!' 'See with me!' 'Let me persuade you!' they seem to say, and again and again the world, or rather the world which belonged to the book, has let itself be persuaded, gladly.
>
> *Aut. DG*, v.1 p.xviii

She would cast her message in fictional form, as if in parable form, to engage the reader's mind's eye, and so fulfil Joseph Conrad's aim: 'to make you hear, to make you feel, it is, before all, to make you see'.[7] Presentation of ideas in this manner, if read by a person predisposed, albeit unconsciously, towards her arguments, could trigger moral growth within that person, and allow her to feel, gratifyingly, along with George Eliot's Mordecai, 'I am lord of this moment's change, and will charge it with my soul' (*DD*, pp.531-2). But producing fiction capable of such influence was not easy, as a survey of dates reveals: – there are seven years between the Bampton lecture and the publication of *Robert Elsmere*. Her inward processing of ideas and techniques, with *Miss Bretherton* in the middle, almost as a form of practice, only slowly transmuted into powerful fiction.

Ideas Embodied

[7] Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, ed. Jacques Berthoud (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p.xlii.

Ward needed, she knew, to establish an emotional and imaginative bond between herself and her readers which would make them enter willingly into her story and thereby open themselves up to her ideas. She had a clear understanding of how this might be achieved:

> Surely the only way was through imagination; through a picture of actual life and conduct; through something as 'simple, sensuous, passionate' as one could make it. Who and what were the persons of whom the preacher gave this grotesque account? What was their history? How had their thoughts and doubts come to be? What was the effect of them on conduct?
>
> *WR*, p.168

She writes here about *Robert Elsmere*, but the theory also applies to her other novels: she aimed to present her ideas in as vivid and realistic a manner as possible, to *embody* her ideas in her characters as she did in herself, to make them accessible to all. After all, as William Peterson comments, she herself 'was primarily responsive to ideas embodied in human flesh' (*VH*, p.63). This is why Ward tried to make herself into a living example of her beliefs: 'The saintly life grows to be a beacon, a witness. Men cling to it as they have always clung to each other, to the visible and the tangible' (*RE*, p.513).

Using fictional characters to embody her ideas meant that Ward had to weave those ideas into the very fabric of her novels, by making her plots dependent upon those ideas/characters. It was difficult to achieve; George Eliot had described it as: 'the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me first in the flesh and not in the spirit.'[8] To see how far Ward succeeded in her attempt, I will examine some of her major characters, contrasting those from *Robert Elsmere* to *Helbeck of Bannisdale* with those from her later works. (Minor characters will be considered later in this chapter.)

Embodiment of ideas was built into the structure of *Robert Elsmere* from the start, and at the deepest level, through the two main characters of Elsmere and Catherine:

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[8] Letter from George Eliot to Frederic Harrison 15 August 1866, *The George Eliot Letters* ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), v.4 p.300; hereafter cited *Eliot Letters*.

> I wanted to show how a man of sensitive and noble character, born for religion, comes to throw off the orthodoxies of his day and moment, and to go out into the wilderness where all is experiment, and spiritual life begins again. And with him I wished to contrast a type no less fine of the traditional and guided mind - and to imagine the clash of two such tendencies of thought, as it might affect all practical life, and especially the life of two people who loved each other.
>
> *WR*, p.230

The novel was designed as a conflict of two world views; Elsmere's openness, honesty, and drive to discover the truth, against the strict Bible-oriented and exclusive religion of his wife Catherine. Both forms of belief are presented as valuable and useful in their own way, in order to render the Elsmeres' predicament all the more gripping and suspense-laden for the reader: for much of the latter part of the novel it is unclear whether any successful outcome is possible for their relationship.

Elsmere and Catherine are made more realistic by Ward's method of character delineation, presenting them from the inside, and so allowing the reader to follow each character's changes of thought and emotion through the story. That is, these two characters are developed slowly over the course of the novel, so that only at the end can they be fully known and understood, with extra immediacy and verisimilitude arising from Elsmere's process of development being that which Ward had previously undergone. Equally, the tumultuous school career of Marcella Boyce was Ward's, and she grows slowly towards Ward's own political opinions.

Ward did not draw only on her own experiences in her fiction but also, surrounded as she was, both in Oxford and in London, by people of ideas, based characters upon other real people. In *Robert Elsmere*, Henry Grey was based upon T.H. Green, Langham upon Henri-Frédéric Amiel, and, although she denied it, it was believed that Squire Wendover, with his intellectualism, his atheism and his great work left incomplete on his death, was based upon Mark Pattison:

> The only portrait in *Robert Elsmere* is that of Professor T.H. Green. This is patent to all who know Oxford, and I meant it to be so. But with regard to Elsmere himself I never had the idea of J.R. Green in my head. The only real person who may have helped me with him is

> Kingsley, whose life, a very favourite book of mine, suggested I think some of the *colouring* of the country parish part – nothing else. The historical experience is my own. [. . .] The Squire is in no sense a portrait of Pattison, whose real nature was essentially different. And Langham is merely an attempt to realise under English forms, some traits, - the most forbidding ones – of men like Amiel and Senancour, with whom I had naturally been occupied during my translation of Amiel's journal.[9]

Here she admits her debts to those around her, and goes on to claim that her main character, Elsmere, 'is a figure of pure imagination, inspired and coloured, as all such figures are, by the actual human experience amid which he was conceived' (*Aut. RE*, v.1 p.xlii). Ward's practice when creating her characters was to take and use, from herself and from those around her, whatever fitted best with her plans for the novel she had in hand: she would find a theme first, and then design characters to express it, at least until her move away from novels of ideas at the turn of the century. Her major fictional characters of this period, then, are both embodied ideas, and are based upon real personalities, although she used every technique she possibly could to make them appear real as well as representative:

> Until the stuff of what we call real life has been re-created and transformed by the independent, possessive, impetuous forces of imagination, it has no value for the artist, and in so far as it remains 'real,' i.e., a mere literal copy of something seen or heard, it represents a dead and lifeless element in an artist's work.[10]

It can be difficult to find a consensus on which, if any, characters, appear truly real, truly integrated, into a novel, but one useful method of assessment is to combine discussion of character with discussion of plot. If the character is truly integrated, then it will be intimately bound up with the novel's story.

In Ward's best works, the character traits of the protagonists drive the plots. Elsmere's character, combining religious temperament with the drive to study and learn, alongside integrity and a firm moral sense, drives the plot of *Robert Elsmere* forward, both causing his spiritual crisis, and determining the path that he follows afterwards. Langham's withdrawal into

[9] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Hugh R. Haweis 8 May 1888, *PH*.
[10] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Marcella, The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.5 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p.xii; hereafter cited *Aut. Mar.*, p.xii.

intellect is made complex and interesting through his collision with the life-affirming temperament of Rose, and their opposing characters determine not only their relationship's initiation and development, but its eventual collapse:

> And their marriage, potentially catastrophic in its binding of a craving heart to a sterile one, a fountain to a funnel, is maturely cancelled by Ward's plot as a caution, to parallel in romance the precept, despairing and enabling, of Robert's religious modernity: '*miracles do not happen!*'
>
> *Wilt*, p.52

Rose and Langham's trauma, in other words, indicates to the reader that there are no easy answers, that the Elsmeres will have further turmoil before any resolution could become possible, and that, as Ward states, 'the laws of character had still to work themselves inexorably out on either side' (*RE*, p.363). In fiction as in life, character and ideas are intimately commingled, and cannot be lightly dismissed as powers determining a life's path.

Rose and Langham also serve as sometimes much-needed relief for the reader from the heavy religious issues of the main action, and so help to maintain the reader's interest. As W.E. Gladstone wrote: '*Robert Elsmere* is hard reading, and requires toil and effort. Yet, if it be difficult to persist, it is impossible to stop' (*Gladstone*, p.767). Others found the novel too slow-moving and intellectual to be entertaining: '*Robert Elsmere*, like most of Ward's subsequent novels, may be reckoned a novel of moral purpose, but it is rather a thesis thinly larded with fiction' (*Elwin*, p.308). As if to make up for this, Ward's next novel, the bildungsroman *The History of David Grieve*, while still driven by the character and choices of the title character, 'introduced considerably more passion, stark suffering, and violent action. It is packed with lurid and morbid detail' (*Colby*, p.146). Ward titled it 'History', and in her Preface referred to herself as David's biographer, implying that she presented his thoughts, dilemmas and growth as if they are those of a real person (*Aut. DG*, v.1 p.xii). He is certainly the best-defined character in the novel. Yet at the same time he too embodies an idea: the growth of an ordinary man, learning from his mistakes, into a moral force, an example to others, working to

improve life for those around him, because 'We are not our own - we are parts of the whole' (*DG*, p.523).

In her next novel, *Marcella*, Ward focussed attention mainly upon the experiences and developments of the title character, and it is her choices that drive the novel:

> the experiences are of significance only so far as they force the undeveloped qualities of character into action and so become part of the very substance of the drama.[11]

In order to achieve this effect, Ward planned the novel's structure with extreme care: Marcella, with her mixture of socialism and tradition, stands at the apex of a triangle whose other points are Aldous Raeburn, the apparently traditionally conservative, yet actually forward-thinking scion of the landed gentry, and Harry Wharton, representing the new socialism. She must choose between the two men and the lifestyles they represent, and her growing understanding of them, and of her own needs, drives the novel's action.

Even Marcella, though, can be viewed as an embodied idea, as Charlotte Perkins Gilman noticed in her review: 'Marcella is the new woman with all personal limitations and personal charms, drawn from life, rich in characterization, vivid in her humanity - yet the new woman still'.[12] She considered Marcella to be successful both as an embodied idea, and as a character. Ward believed that in the novel's sequel she was less so:

> The fact is I was too anxious about her, and far too much in love with her. She should have been seen with irony and detachment, - a friendly irony, but resolute. [. . .] She is too beautiful, too disinterested, her very faults are too supernal.[13]

In *Sir George Tressady*, Ward's enthusiasm for Marcella led her to depart from her normal practice of detachment and balance: the plot does not arise strictly from the characters as

11 Appendix D, *Mar*, p.563. Quoting Hamilton W. Mabie, 'A Notable New Book – Mrs. Ward's *Marcella*', *The Forum* 17 (April 1894), pp. 249-56.

12 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'Review of *Marcella* by Mrs. Humphry Ward', *The Impress* 1.9 (July 1894), p.6.

13 Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Sir George Tressady, The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.7 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p.xi; hereafter cited *Aut. GT*.

written, most particularly at the unlikely moment when Tressady, who has fallen in love with Marcella, votes against his party at a crucial moment in an attempt to please her. Ward herself admitted that: 'The intrigue of the second volume is too slight, too thin-spun, and moreover hurried in time and development'. Overall, she regretted having agreed to write it: 'The defect of 'sequels' is that they do not and cannot spring from the true story-telling impulse in its freshness' (*Aut. GT*, pp.xii, ix).

She returned to form with *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, centred around two evenly-matched protagonists caught in an unresolvable predicament, driven by character rather than by plot. Ward's sense of balance has also returned, yet although Laura and Helbeck are surrounded by minor characters reflecting the issues at hand, there are unusually few characters overall. By this means the conflict of Laura and Helbeck is kept always to the fore. Also to avoid distraction, these two are the only fully internally delineated characters in the novel, with all nuances of their thoughts and feelings laid before the reader: 'The conflict between Alan Helbeck and Laura Fountain is strong because both are more sharply characterized' (*Colby*, p.151). The reality given to them draws readers into the novel, makes them care about the protagonists, and read on to find out what happens.

In her novels of this period, then, Ward deliberately presented a range of characters, each relevant for a different aspect of her theme:

> it always leads to a better understanding of a thing's significance to consider its exaggerations and perversions, its equivalents and substitutes and nearest relatives elsewhere. Not that we may thereby swamp the thing in the wholesale condemnation which we pass on its inferior congeners, but rather that we may by contrast ascertain the more precisely in what its merits consist, by learning at the same time to what particular dangers of corruption it may also be exposed.
>
> *W James*, p.22

William James' comment here is exactly to the point; this balanced aspect to Ward's work avoids the trap of alienating readers from her message by over-obviousness, and allows them to use their brains, implicitly complimenting them through her assumption that they are capable of so doing. As Mandell Creighton told her, 'You have tried to enter into manifold views and

shades of opinion, and you have sneered at none' (*Aut. RE*, v.1 p.xxxvi). This was one more aspect of her work that led to comparisons with George Eliot, of whom Charles Bray wrote that 'She saw all sides, and there are always many, clearly and without prejudice'.[14]

Among Ward's minor characters, some are internally delineated in part, but none with the detail of the major ones. In general, the more minor the character, the simpler he or she is shown to be: Squire Wendover's night-terrors and fear of madness are the exception that traditionally proves the rule. In the main, though, minor characters are presented externally, and the reader is not privy to their feelings or to the inner workings of their minds. Such a mix of internal and external was commonly used by writers; after all, a reader might easily become bored or overwhelmed by the plethora of detail in a novel filled with 'internal' characters, and the chance to communicate ideas would be lost. As it is, the use of simple minor characters casts the major ones into sharper relief. *Simple*, however, is not synonymous with *uninteresting*.

> just because a character is a recognisable *type* (another of Dickens's grotesques, one of Dostoyevsky's eccentrics) does not necessarily mean that he or she cannot also be a realised individual personality in the work.[15]

For example, Jane Austen's Mr Woodhouse in *Emma*, is a simple character, but also a vivid example of a man in the grip of an obsession, in this case about his health, and that of those who surround him. Examples from Ward's novels would include Newcome, with his dramatic decrees to Elsmere to subdue his unorthodox thoughts, and Father Bowles, irresistibly driven to catch every fly that comes near him. They are simple characters, yet they have their own kind of reality and vitality too.

Did Ward, then, succeed in her aim to make her ideas accessible by embodying them in vivid, realistic protagonists, or did her work remain overly didactic, and her characters mere types? Among her reviewers and critics, opinions are divided. Malcolm Elwin opted for the

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14 Charles Bray, *Phases of Opinion and Experience during a Long Life: An Autobiography* (London: Longman, 1884), p.75.
15 Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel* (London: Arnold, 1992), p.86.

latter theory: 'her characters are always primarily the puppets of a theory rather than human beings' (*Elwin*, p.309). Another stated more generally that the characters were: 'cut out of paper; often very dexterously cut, let it be granted, but, - snip-snap, one hears the scissors going throughout.'[16] One reviewer of *The History of David Grieve* damned Ward by comparison with the work of Jane Austen, claiming that 'The actors of the one are complex characters, those of the other are personifications of single virtues or vices.'[17] As evidence, he mentions Louie's passion, Hannah's greed, and Purcell's vindictive bigotry. However, these are all minor characters, which are expected to be less complex; and the title character is conspicuous by his absence from the list.

On the other side, however, many of her contemporaries praised Ward's characterisation, and thought that she had succeeded in her aims. Among them was the critic André Chevrillon, referring here to *Helbeck of Bannisdale* in particular:

> The main forces that drove the characters like Fate were Ideas. She could dramatise ideas. I do not know of any novelist that gives one to the same degree the feeling that Ideas are living forces, more enduring than men, and in a sense more real than men - forces that move through them, taking hold of them and driving them like an unseen, higher Power.
>
> *Tr*, p.309

Since I have discussed the novel's 'fated', inevitable quality in a previous chapter, I will not repeat myself here. Suffice to say that this integration of ideas into fiction was one reason why Ward was compared with George Eliot, of whom U.C. Knoepflmacher wrote: 'George Eliot successfully transmuted ideas into the form and structure of her novels; it is seldom sufficiently

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16 Anonymous review, 'The History of David Grieve', *Quarterly Review* 174 (April 1892), pp.317-44 (p.332). William Makepeace Thackeray exulted in the idea that his characters were artificial, expressing himself as 'proud to think that his Puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire.' William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, ed. J.I.M. Stewart [1848] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p.34.

17 Anonymous review, 'The History of David Grieve', *Edinburgh Review* 175 (April 1892), pp.518-40 (p.527).

emphasized that this transmutation is in itself a key to her 'art.''[18] Stephen Gwynn, in his study of her work published in 1917, agreed about Ward's facility with ideas:

> Mrs. Ward also will go down to posterity as the writer who has known how to dramatise in an interesting fashion, not so much the life as the intellectual tendencies of her own generation. The historian will turn to her to understand not what people were like [. .] but rather (in an age marked by speculation) what they thought about.
>
> *Gwynn*, pp.12-3

Her friend Henry James, reviewing *Robert Elsmere*, wrote that 'she accomplished the feat, unique, so far as I remember, in the long annals of the novel with a purpose, of carrying out her purpose without spoiling her novel' (*Watters*, p.viii). Opinions, then, remained divided.

I now wish to consider those novels Ward wrote after *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and, remembering that she is a writer who puts much of herself and her life into her fiction, relate developments in her writing to events in the real world.

Judith Wilt provides a succinct summary of the great change in Ward's circumstances after the family's move to London in 1881 with little money and less status: 'she was by 1900 a *Times*-column-writing, mass-market-fiction-writing, salon-directing, country-estate-owning cliché, and a terrible mother' (*Wilt*, p.1). She continues:

> After *Eleanor*, Ward's work and life moved into a different register. She was at the top of her fame and game, dining out and hosting dinners, wired into intellectual and political Society with a capital S, and it was this territory she began to mine more deeply and more often – especially the capital S part.
>
> *Wilt*, pp.17-8

Ward had, in short, joined the kind of society she would begin to write about, the people who, like her Lady Connie Bledlow, read *The Times* newspaper because '*The Times* is all about people I know!'[19] At first, this proved useful to her, as Enid Huws Jones remarks:

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[18] U.C. Knoepflmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p.25.
[19] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Lady Connie* (London: Smith, Elder, 1916), p.90; hereafter cited *Connie*.

> Feeling less need to 'improve' by her novels she develops her craftsmanship, tightens her plots, describes with energy her sophisticated heroines, her disastrous wives and mothers who turn the hair of their splendid men grey in their thirties. From *Helbeck of Bannisdale* to *The Marriage of William Ashe* her novels are, for a good proportion of their length, hard to put down.[20]

As Huws Jones indicates, her fiction was built less around ideas and more around character, and she began to take real-life historical events, relationships, and characters, for her inspiration, re-inventing them for her own time. For example, *Eleanor* (1900) is based on the love-story of the French writer and diplomat Chateaubriand and Mme Pauline de Beaumont; her infatuation with him, her support for his literary gift, and his subsequent abandonment of her. In Ward's version, Eleanor Burgoyne supports her cousin Edward Manisty, who, like Chateaubriand, is working on a book about religion. Into their Italian villa comes the young American Lucy Foster. She and Manisty fall in love, and the novel is concerned mainly with Eleanor, her growing unease, distress and jealousy, and her attempts to keep the couple apart, using her physical condition (she is dying) as a tool for blackmail. Finally, Eleanor recognises the wrongness of her behaviour, abandons her resistance, and the novel ends happily. Henry James praised it highly, after all: '*Eleanor* is the most Jamesian of Mrs. Ward's novels. The essence of the novel is that same bloodless inner struggle of refined people so common to James' (*Smith*, p.86). By his standards, it was Ward's best novel.

The novel that followed, *Lady Rose's Daughter* (1903), was based upon the story of Julie de Lespinasse and Mme du Deffand. Julie passed as Mme du Deffand's paid companion, but actually was the illegitimate half-sister of Mme's brother's wife. After the two women parted, Julie took over her former benefactor's salon, and eclipsed her in Parisian society. The novel is one example among many in Ward's work of how women can attain great power despite lacking the vote, simply through influencing the men around them. Ward's Julie le Breton obtains appointments for her friends, and for the man she loves, by just such a method. However, Ward did not stick exactly to her source. Julie de Lespinasse ultimately committed

[20] Enid Huws Jones, *Mrs. Humphry Ward* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), pp.133-4; hereafter cited *Jones*.

suicide, but Ward was so physically and mentally exhausted when she reached this point in the story that the suicide:

> presented itself to me, as the thought of another rock-face to climb might present itself to one already worn out in a wrestle with the mountains. I simply felt that it could not be done. The very thought of it haunted and terrified me.[21]

She took the easy way out, married Julie to the novel's hero, and the novel ends with the prospect of a happy life for them. Ward remained dissatisfied, however: 'Both she [Julie] and I ought to have 'endured hardness.' For the 'hardness' was in the subject, was in truth inevitable. And to trifle with it, to put it aside, was, in so far, to miss one's highest mark' (*Aut. Rose*, p.xi). As with *Sir George Tressady*, she had no doubt what her artistic decision should have been. It was not the last time that such regrets would occur.

Ward's historical sequence continued with *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1905), based upon the life of William Lamb (Lord Melbourne), and the flirtation of his wife Caroline with Lord Byron, her writing of the novel *Glenarvon* about this affair, and her early death. John Sutherland comments that 'The novel, which is often regarded as Ward's last significant work of fiction, is remarkable for the density of its socio-political descriptions' (*Suth*, p.242). It is more centred in the upper levels of British politics even than *Sir George Tressady*. Nevertheless, the story is dominated by the characters of Ashe's wife, Kitty, and his mother, Lady Tranmore, who are locked in conflict after the manner of Letty Tressady and her mother-in-law. But already the quality of Ward's work was deteriorating: '1900 sees the onset of a gradual decline which becomes precipitate after 1905 and vertical by 1913' (*Suth*, p.242). In the main, the novels that followed were neither novels of ideas, nor based on any interesting or important historical lives, they were, rather, society romances; entertaining, but leaving few traces in the reader's mind afterwards. Even her sequel to *Robert Elsmere*, *The Case of Richard Meynell* (1911), although an attempt at one more novel of ideas, is uneasily married with an extremely melodramatic

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21 Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Lady Rose's Daughter*, *The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.11 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p.x; hereafter cited *Aut. Rose*.

subplot involving an illegitimate girl, long-kept family secrets, an elopement, and the girl's death from exposure. In these later novels:

> The characters no longer embody the theme in the natural and effective way of *Elsmere* and *Helbeck*. Mrs. Ward is not loathe to bully these later, weaker creations of her imagination into assuming roles required by her themes at some violence to their natures.
>
> *BW*, p.187

For example, in *Daphne* (1909), Ward's anti-divorce novel, there is no motivation behind the constant chatter about divorce: Daphne Floyd and Roger Barnes argue about it on the day they meet, and later the topic comes up at a White House dinner. When they arrive in England, an Archdeacon calls, and for no reason attacks US divorce laws (*BW*, p.189). Daphne divorces Roger on totally inadequate grounds, which she makes no attempt to verify, and Roger deteriorates into alcohol in an equally unlikely manner. All this forms part of a generally simpler presentation of character in these later novels. Character no longer drives plot, but vice versa, and so characters have far less room for development. This can be readily seen through the changes in Ward's use of blood, meaning heritage (of whatever kind), in her characterisations.

In early novels, such as *Marcella*, blood has importance in the sense of pride in family bloodlines, and associated worldly inheritance. Marcella, although poor, is of good family, and so feels herself worthy to associate with the Maxwells despite their far greater wealth. Raeburn also feels a duty to his family, particularly where marriage is concerned: 'it behoved him to see that 'the family' – that carefully grafted and selected stock to which he owed so much – should suffer no loss or deterioration through him' (*Mar*, p.83). The family lines form part of an overall picture of wealth, society, its traditions, and its concomitant duties, and are to be cultivated and improved just as wine-makers carefully work on their grape-stock.

Along with this concept of 'good' blood which implies inherited high moral standards, comes its opposite, as foreign blood is often presented as 'bad'. The artist, Montjoie, speculates about Louie Grieve: 'In her, at least, there was some wild blood' (*DG*, p.334), and David feels something similar after learning the story of his and Louie's French mother:

> it was to him as though he felt her wild nature, her lawless blood, stirring within him, and realised, in a fierce, reluctant way, that he was hers as well as his father's.
>
> *DG*, p.225

Louie and Montjoie's elopement, and David's love affair with the artist Elise, are thus linked to their half-foreign inheritance and the low moral standards associated with it. However, David's affair is shown ultimately to be merely one stage in his ongoing development, and not a final verdict upon him. Blood counts, but other traits of character can override it. Louie, the creature of passion, is doomed, but the more controlled and educated David's choices are his own.

In later novels, however, blood seems to become a kind of shorthand for character. When William Ashe first expresses interest in Lady Kitty Bristol, partly foreign, he is told: 'She comes of a bad stock.'[22] Daphne Floyd is also half-foreign: 'Her mother was a Spaniard – a South American – from Buenos Ayres.' Her southern blood is used to explain away her reckless actions as something which she cannot help, for example in her jealousy of Chloe Fairmile: 'It was the clutch of something racial and inherited – a something which the Northerner hardly knows' (*Daphne*, pp.19, 150). Ward was not alone in this kind of presentation, however: in a similar manner Thomas Hardy's Angel Clare judges Tess: 'I cannot help associating your decline as a family with this other fact – of your want of firmness. Decrepit families imply decrepit wills, decrepit conduct' (*Tess*, p.302).

The last novel in which Ward succeeded in fully integrating the notion of blood and its inheritance into the story and characters was *The Testing of Diana Mallory* (1908). Diana, who is engaged to Oliver Marsham, is revealed to be the daughter of a murderess. Regardless of the many extenuating circumstances, Marsham's mother, Lady Lucy, wants the engagement broken since she fears inherited traits: 'Character – and the protection of character – is not that what we have to think of – above all – in this world of temptation?'[23] Yet Lady Marsham is in the same trap as her creator; she treats 'blood' as if it alone determines character, whereas

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[22] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *The Marriage of William Ashe*, (London: Smith, Elder, 1905), p.39. Marcella Boyce is partly Italian, but the relationship is a remote one, and Ward is not yet using blood as shorthand.
[23] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *The Testing of Diana Mallory*, *The Writings of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Autograph Edition)* v.14 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p.248.

Diana herself is presented as totally free from any criminal or murderous tendencies, being notably open and generous of temperament.

Overall, then, Ward's presentation of character moves from complex to simple, from character as embodied idea determining plot, through, briefly, a hybrid of character and plot based upon real events, which shades into a much simpler, plot-driven narrative. I wish now to examine whether such a progression appears in any other aspects of her fiction, beginning with one outcome of her early concentration upon character development through ideas.

Matters of Technique

The internality and detail of Ward's earlier characterisation resulted in novels that were both complex and long, particularly *Robert Elsmere*, of which Henry James perceptively wrote that:

> It suggests the image of a large, slow-moving, slightly old-fashioned ship, buoyant enough and well out of water, but with a close-packed cargo in every inch of stowage-room. One feels that the author has set float in it a complete treasure of intellectual and moral experience, the memory of all her contacts and phases, all her speculations and studies.[24]

Because Elsmere's experience was Ward's own, and his conclusions also her own, she was able to present them in vast detail. The novel's length, though – 576 pages in the World's Classics edition used in this thesis - can also be attributed to her inexperience as a novelist (*Miss Bretherton* had been her only previous novel for adults). Even so, the novel as published was actually a greatly pruned version of the original draft, particularly where the section set at Murewell is concerned:

> The description of the Squire's influence on Robert, the conversations on Christian evidence, were originally much fuller. But as the human interest of the story gained upon me I began to shorten these sections

[24] Henry James, *Essays in London and Elsewhere* [1893] (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), p.256; hereafter cited *James*.

> of the story, until in the third year, immediately before publication, I desperately reduced them
>
> *Aut. RE*, v.1 pp.xxviii-xxix

This is slightly disingenuous; the main reason for the cuts was the unfeasible length of the draft, and they are made in this section since it contains the greatest quantity of background material. The cutting process was difficult for Ward, not only because her personal involvement, but because of the nature of the story itself: 'what provoked the human and emotional crises – what produced the *story* – was an intellectual process'. The reader needed to understand the intellectual issues at stake, yet too much intellectual background would render the book unreadably dull: 'I had to learn that, having read a great deal, I must as far as possible wipe out the traces of reading'. Not everyone was as expert on religious matters as Mary Ward. She tried to allow the ideas behind the action to emerge more naturally from her characters and their interaction, so that they could be absorbed almost incidentally as the plot advanced. The intention was to leave enough detail to allow more knowledgeable readers to retrace her process of thought, while others should be able to understand her points without becoming overloaded and alienated. More detailed exposition of her arguments was saved for her essay 'The New Reformation': 'Into that dialogue I was able to throw the reading and the argument which had been of necessity excluded from the novel' (*WR*, pp.231, 233, 259).

In her inexperience, Ward took time to find the correct balance of character, idea and plot for her novels. *The History of David Grieve* was also long and complex: 'like its predecessor *Robert Elsmere* it suffers from being too many novels rolled into one' (*Suth*, p.136). Also like *Robert Elsmere*, this length is tied in with the novel's theme, to document David's growth through various experiences and intellectual influences until in the end he becomes a moral example to those around him (including the novel's readers). Even so, there were still some critics who managed to condemn these lengthy tales because of material that Ward had omitted. Further examination, however, reveals that in each such case she had good reason for her choice. For example, there is no text given of Henry Grey's Oxford sermon, because the words themselves are less important than their effect upon Elsmere. Marcella's plea to Raeburn and Lord Maxwell to sign the petition to reprieve John Hurd would

merely repeat material already known, and it is their refusal and its effect, that is important. Ward's omissions are, in the main, carefully targeted. Nevertheless, a few lapses can still be detected. As John Butterworth noted, Dyson's sermon in *The History of David Grieve* is too long, even considered as an illustration of the revivalist manner of preaching. In *Eleanor*, extracts from Manisty's book are provided, and although they are said to affect Lucy greatly, I agree with John Butterworth that they are dull to read (*BW*, p.310), and the reader is far from impressed with Manisty's knowledge and skill.

Ward did learn to balance detail/length and omission/brevity, most particularly in *Marcella* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, by focussing tightly upon the main characters, their developments and their conflicts. This resulted in more compact and more emotionally intense work. Over time, though, the proportion of intellectual material and other kinds of detail (as will be discussed later) decreased. Partly this was through greater experience and control as a novelist, and partly due to her abandonment of the novel of ideas. Tales of high society and romance do not require high volumes of explanation or supporting material.

Another reason for the decrease in detail was external to the fiction itself: the demise of the three-volume novel in 1895, a development largely attributable to *Marcella*. Previously, new fiction had been purchased by circulating libraries such as the famous Mudie's, who preferred the expensive three-volume format: if few people could afford to buy novels, there would be greater custom for the libraries. They used their power as the main bulk-buyers of new works to delay cheaper editions for as long as possible. However, when Ward saw how quickly copies of *Marcella* were borrowed, she sprang into action and persuaded George Smith, her publisher, to bring out a cheap reprint:

> The reprint of Marcella was the torpedo that sunk the three-decker and by so doing stripped Mudie of his dictatorial powers. George Smith had a 6s. copy out by early July – just three months after first publication.
>
> *Suth*, p.148

The cheap copy flew out of the shops, business at Mudie's decreased, and other authors leapt swiftly onto the bandwagon. With the requirement to fill the three-volume novel's word quota

removed, they could allow their fiction to assume its natural length rather than have to pad it out with unnecessary material. This in turn allowed for faster writing, which was all the better since publishers had to sell more copies of cheap editions in order to make the same profit as they had from the libraries.[25]

Another reason for the increasing brevity of Ward's work, and an important one, was serialisation. Her first serialised novel was *Sir George Tressady*, noticeably less verbose even than its predecessor, *Marcella*. John Sutherland speculates that this was due in part to the haste with which it was written; at the time the Wards were busy buying their country house, Stocks, and Ward was also heavily involved in the setup of the Passmore Edwards Settlement (*Suth*, p.150). She had no time to research and plan the novel with the same thoroughness as previous ones. In addition, she was restricted by serialisation's requirements:

> The *Century*'s tighter wordage made her unload her style - cutting out habitual descriptive flights and essayisms. What remained looked awkwardly rushed, depending stylistically on short paragraphs, dashes, and exclamations. She sensed that the narrative was somehow jerky and unleavened.
>
> *Suth*, pp.150-1

It was a style that would stay with her, and become more and more common in her later novels.

Sadly, there was yet another reason for her use of a more hurried style, and the accompanying frequency of publication of her novels, as appears in Virginia Woolf's diary entry describing a 1917 conversation with Ward's nephew, Aldous Huxley:

> These are partly explained by Arnold who brought them near bankruptcy four years ago, and she rescued the whole lot by driving her pen night and day.[26]

The Wards lived lavishly up to their income, and Arnold's debts strained the family finances to the utmost; Ward needed to earn as much as she could, as quickly as she could. Her increased frequency was all the more noticeable as it bucked the trend for the period:

[25] David Trotter, *The English Novel in History 1895–1920* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.64.
[26] Virginia Woolf, *Diaries*, ed. A.O. Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), pp.61-2.

> It was usual for novelists to slow down as they aged. Dickens, George Eliot, Thackeray who all fired off their early books in quick succession took at least a two-year interval between books in later life.[27]

Ward took four years between *Miss Bretherton* and *Robert Elsmere*, four more years until *The History of David Grieve*, and another two years until *Marcella*. Later, from 1915 through to 1919, she published two books each year, both fiction and non-fiction (including her three books on World War I, which required large quantities of research). However, her increasing brevity *was* in keeping with the general trend of the period:

> According to Richard Ellmann, the Edwardians wrote more tightly than the Victorians: 'Their sentences grew more vigorous and concentrated.' Certainly the taut prose of Shaw, Wells, Kipling, and Bennett contrasts sharply with the ornate, decorated language of Dickens, George Eliot, Arnold, Pater, and Wilde. In fact, English novels generally became more concise at the end of the nineteenth century[28]

Alongside this greater concision came an increase in the pace of Ward's novels. The early ones progressed slowly: *Robert Elsmere* begins with a view of the main characters in action, then pauses for some fifty pages while Elsmere's past history is given, and later his religious crisis at Murewell takes seven days spread over eight chapters (*BW*, pp.134, 247). In *The History of David Grieve*, since David and Louie are children when the novel begins, there is, obviously, little background to give beyond the story of their parentage. In *Marcella*, the reader is given a brief view of Marcella, then thirteen pages covering her history to date, as if Ward sets out a solid base for the action to spring from.

Time in these novels moves in clumps; that is, periods of development occur in patches divided by passages of time described in summary. In *Robert Elsmere* the fourteen months between the initial Westmorland section and the story's continuation at Murewell are summarised. By *Marcella*, Ward had become more skilled, and the eighteen months that pass

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[27] John Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists and Publishers* (London: Athlone Press, 1976), p.157; hereafter cited *Publishers*.
[28] Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament 1895-1919* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1986), p.146.

between Books One and Two are covered simply by brief comments by Wharton to the effect that she is nursing, a view of her in action, and one short paragraph about her training, conveying all relevant information without slowing the story. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale* details are also brief; Helbeck is given seven pages, and Laura one chapter, of background. John Butterworth, whose thesis on Form in Ward's novels contains a wealth of information, rightly comments:

> the handling of pace is admirable – the slower flow of *Elsmere* permitting time for changing thought, the more rapid pace of *Helbeck* culminating in tragedy because change was impossible.
> *BW*, p.361

In her later novels, Ward tends on the whole to plunge straight into the action, pause for a few pages of background, then continue onwards. *Sir George Tressady* begins with Tressady's reaction to having won a seat in Parliament 'Well, that's over, thank Heaven!' (*GT*, p.1), and *Lady Connie* with the preparations for Connie's arrival at her aunt's house:

> "Well, now we've done all we can, and all I mean to do," said Alice Hooper, with a pettish accent of fatigue. "Everything's perfectly comfortable, and if she doesn't like it, we can't help it. I don't know why we make such a fuss."
> *Connie*, p.1

The scene is set straight away and the action begins in lively style. Alongside this increase in pace comes a decrease in background, continuing the trend already begun, and also a decrease in the time period covered in each novel. *Robert Elsmere* covers four years from Elsmere's arrival in Long Whindale to his death in Algiers, *Marcella* covers three years, while *The History of David Grieve* wins the prize at sixteen years. Of the later novels, *The Marriage of William Ashe* is an exception, covering a six-year period, but all the others cover roughly one year, with the single exception of *Harvest*, which covers mid-July to mid-November of the same year. Again, this is partly due to Ward's abandonment of the novel of ideas for the novel of Society or of Romance, requiring little space for inner deliberation and character growth.

In contrast to all these changes, some aspects of Ward's writing did not alter, such as her narrative stance. J. Hillis Miller points out that 'The basic mode of narration in Victorian fiction is neither dialogue nor internal monologue, but indirect discourse' (*Miller*, p.3), that is, the novelist plays the role of a narrator who sees the thoughts and feelings of each character and presents them in his own words, which are sometimes mingled with the character's own. This is the type of narration used by George Eliot in all her novels, and the type used by Ward. It was ideal for her, since this omniscient narrator position allowed her to comment on the action, and to present her various characters' changing attitudes and emotions turn by turn, and so to control the response of the reader as far as possible. She never wrote a novel in the first person. In fact, first person narration was rare at the time, and a few minutes' thought yields only a few examples: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847); Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850), part of *Bleak House* (1853), and *Great Expectations* (1860); and Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868).

Mary Ward is an intrusive as well as an omnisicient author, particularly before serialisation necessitated adherence to shorter word limits. As so often, this trait is most prominent in *Robert Elsmere*, in which there are many comments on the action, often combined with moralising, as when Mme de Netteville attempts to seduce Elsmere:

> For after all there is an amount of innocence and absent-mindedness in matters of daily human life, which is not only niaiserie, but comes very near to moral wrong. In this crowded world a man has no business to walk about with his eyes always on the starts. His stumbles may have too many consequences. A harsh but a salutary truth!
>
> *RE, p.507*

This is a rare occasion upon which Ward criticises Elsmere; for his 'niaiserie', that is, his silliness and simpleness in concentrating upon his own concerns to such an extent that he becomes blind to the needs and interests of others, and thereby risks doing harm, whether to himself or to others. This criticism by extension applies also to his relationship with Catherine; particularly as this episode serves as motivation for Elsmere to make one more attempt to heal his marriage. In later novels, always with the exception of the polemical *Daphne*, Ward is much

less intrusive, but then she had less space to be so, and less cause: novels that are not ideas-based, or even character-based, give limited scope for such intrusion.

However, a strong authorial presence could be risky, as too much analysis could outweigh strength of characterisation and plot, thus inadvertently distancing the reader. To avoid this, Ward mainly intrudes where character presentation needs to shift from external presentation to internal in order to show action that may be taking place only inside a character's head. The use of a range of characters representing different aspects of an issue was also useful, since it allowed her as narrator to provide the reader with a full, objective understanding of events. As A.I. Shand commented, reviewing *Marcella* on publication:

> Marcella makes a fool of herself, preserving a semblance of dignity all the time, and only freely confiding the full extent of her follies to the readers who are let into her innermost secrets. For Mrs. Ward, in a running commentary of analytical exposition, very cleverly plays the part of the Greek chorus.[29]

She habitually comments upon, explains, and judges all her protagonists' actions, not just Marcella's. For example, of *Helbeck of Bannisdale* she wrote: 'I have alternately felt with Helbeck & with Laura, & have loved them both',[30] and this presentation allows the reader to understand intimately the insoluble nature of the characters' predicament.

Perhaps only someone as strict and precise about the rules of his art as Henry James could construe Ward's variety of points of view as a weakness, but he certainly did, most surprisingly in the case of *Eleanor*, which was praised as the most Jamesian of her novels. He thought that Eleanor herself should have been kept constantly before the reader as the novel's focus:

> "keep her at the 'centre,' make her consciousness full, rich, universally prehensile and *stick* to it – don't shift – and don't shift *arbitrarily* – how, otherwise, do you get your unity of subject or keep up your reader's

[29] A.I. Shand, 'Marcella', *Edinburgh Review* 180 (July 1894), pp.108-30.
[30] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Thomas Arnold 13 April 1898, *PH*.

> sense of it?" He concluded his letter with: "Do let me have more of *Eleanor* – to rewrite!"[31]

When he wrote this, James had only seen the first instalments of the novel, as Ward's reply to him pointed out, but she did not amend her method of narration: for her, the indirect, omniscient stance was ideal, and she never abandoned it.

Ward uses much dialogue, particularly in her later novels; it is one of the few aspects of her fiction to increase rather than decrease over time. She argued that dialogue-writing was a particular strength of women novelists, as 'in the art of speech, elegant, fitting, familiar speech, women are and have long been at home. They have practised it for generations, they have contributed largely to its development.'[32] An excellent example appears in John Butterworth's thesis on form in Ward's novels, where he compares a speech from *Marcella* with one from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and not to Eliot's advantage (where not otherwise stated, the discussion below is my own). Dorothea and Marcella are both speaking emotionally about the condition of the villages on the respective family estate:

> "Think of Kit Downes, uncle, who lives with his wife and seven children in a house with one sitting-room and one bed-room hardly larger than this table! – and those poor Dagleys, in their tumble-down farmhouse, where they live in the back kitchen and leave the other rooms to the rats! That is one reason why I did not like the pictures here, dear uncle – which you think me stupid about. I used to come from the village with all that dirt and coarse ugliness like a pain within me, and the simpering pictures in the drawing-room seemed to me like a wicked attempt to find delight in what is false, while we don't mind how hard the truth is for the neighbours outside our walls. I think we have no right to come forward and urge wider changes for good, until we have tried to alter the evils which lie under our own hands."
> Dorothea had gathered emotion as she went on
> *Mid*, p.424

Dorothea is speaking to her uncle Mr Brooke, and to Will Ladislaw, in Mr Brooke's library, yet the informality of situation is not reflected in her language. Her speech is formal in structure, it forms coherent, complex sentences, and she diverts attention away from the villagers' situation

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[31] Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Treacherous Years 1895 - 1901* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), pp.283-4; hereafter cited *Edel*.
[32] Mrs. Humphry Ward, Preface, Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, The Haworth Edition V.3 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899), p.xxiv.

to make comparisons with her uncle's pictures. As Butterworth comments, it is Eliot who tells the reader that Dorothea's emotion is gathering, and necessarily, because there is little in the speech to indicate any such thing. Marcella's speech is very different:

> She turned to Lord Maxwell, half appealing –
> "It is when I go down from our house to the village; when I see the places the people live in; when one is comfortable in the carriage, and one passes some woman in the rain, ragged and dirty and tired, trudging back from her work; when one realises that they have no *rights* when they come to be old, nothing to look to but charity, for which *we* – we who have everything – expect them to be grateful; and when I know that every one of them has done more useful work in a year of their life than I shall ever do in the whole of mine, then I feel that the whole state of things is *somehow* wrong and topsy-turvy and *wicked.*" Her voice rose a little, every emphasis grew more passionate. "And if I don't do something - the little such a person as I can - to alter it before I die, I might as well never have lived."
> Everyone at table started.
>
> *Mar*, p.131

Marcella's speech is far less formal, far less grammatical, and far less complex. It is made up of only two sentences (Dorothea uses four), and the first sentence occupies most of the speech. It begins by recounting what she sees, then clause builds on clause, and event upon event, each tacked on to her sentence as if she is seeing and reacting afresh as she speaks, until she reaches the climax of the sentence, with its heavy emphasis upon this situation being '*wicked*'. Her second sentence, expressing her determination to do something about the situation, is also informal, dramatic – 'I might as well never have lived' – and passionate. Ward tells the reader that Marcella is appealing to Lord Maxwell, and that her voice is rising, but it is obvious anyway from the speech's spontaneous structure, as Butterworth notices. In contrast, Dorothea's speech seems more of an academic exercise. And Marcella's words are all the more shocking to her hearers, as the short comment at the end reveals, because *she* speaks so informally in a formal situation. She is lunching for the first time at Maxwell Court, meeting her prospective in-laws, Raeburn's grandfather Lord Maxwell, his great-aunt, and Lady Winterbourne. Of the two passages, then, it is Ward who uses speech in an apparently more natural, and so more convincing, manner.

This is true of her dialogue generally; each speech arises naturally from the preceding one, as if her characters talk with rather than at each other. She often uses dialogue as a means of revealing her characters' attitudes to the issues at hand, as part of her dramatisation and embodiment of ideas. This example comes from *Robert Elsmere*:

> "I seem all at sea," she said in a choked voice, her face hidden, - "the old landmarks swallowed up! I am always judging and condemning, - always protesting. What am I that I should judge? But how - how - can I help it?" She drew herself away from him, once more looking into the fire with drawn brows.
>
> "Darling, the world is full of difference. Men and women take life in different ways. Don't be so sure yours is the only right one."
>
> He spoke with a moved gentleness, taking her hand the while.
>
> "*This* is the way, walk ye in it!"[33] she said presently, with strong, almost stern emphasis.
>
> *RE*, p.410

Catherine expresses her feeling of being lost in a strange city, far from the certainties and simplicities of her Westmorland home, surrounded by people who do not believe as she does, and whom her strict religion urges her to condemn. Elsmere's response is to urge her towards tolerance, towards acceptance of wider views, and for a moment it seems as if they may come together, then Catherine's habitual views and ways come back; her stern, stark Biblical quotation stops the momentary closeness, and its brevity seems to echo the slam as her defensive walls fall back into place. Each character's speech fits exactly with their personality and beliefs as previously delineated by Ward in the novel.

The only exceptions to this pattern fall in later novels, in which, as I have already said, she imposes plot and action upon her characters. Here, the proportion of dialogue increases, but this seems mainly to be because that of other details had decreased rather than because of any attempt by Ward to increase it. It is this decrease that I will turn to now.

Decreasing Details

[33] Isaiah 30:21.

Arnold Bennett described Ward's method in 1896 as: 'Realistic by dint of laborious & carefully ordered detail',[34] and given the wealth of details he provided for his readers in his own novels, he should know. Ward's own opinion was that:

> Mr. Bennett's work seems to many readers to be choked by detail. But a writer of a certain quality may give us as much detail as he pleases
>
> *WR*, p.363

A love of detail, and by this I mean external details, not the internal workings of characters' minds, was certainly manifest in several late-Victorian and Edwardian writers. Besides Bennett, another well-known example is John Galsworthy in his *Forsyte Saga*, in which Soames Forsyte, the 'Man of Property', title character of the first volume, views everything in terms of ownership - his house, his furniture, his pictures, and also his wife Irene. Yet in complete contrast there was always Henry James, who does not provide many external details, although his protagonists' internal workings are made abundantly clear. So where did Mary Ward fit along this scale? The character delineation I have already discussed, particularly in the earlier novels, seems to push her towards the Jamesian end, and yet these early novels were also the ones most packed with external detail. But what kind of detail? What did she consider important to tell her readers? In my discussion, I will mimic Ward's own method in the opening passages of *Robert Elsmere*, by starting on a wide scale and slowly zooming in.

To begin, then, with the widest possible canvas, Ward's use of landscape:

> one of the special merits of the novelist she certainly possessed: the gift of rendering landscape-setting faithfully and imaginatively, and of blending not merely its appearances, but also its spiritual essence, with the actions and thoughts of her characters[35]

Although referring specifically to *Robert Elsmere*, this comment sums up Ward's approach in many of her early novels. Landscape had greater significance for her than merely providing

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[34] Journal entry for Tue September 29, 1896, Arnold Bennett, *The Journals of Arnold Bennett 1896 - 1910* ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell, 1932), p.16.

[35] Basil Willey, 'How *Robert Elsmere* Struck Some Contemporaries', *Essays and Studies* 10 (1957), pp.53-68.

pretty backdrops for action; it was, as stated above, bound up with her methods of character delineation. Where her characters live, and how they react to and bond (or do not bond) with the landscape, is an important factor, occurring throughout her work. For Mary Ward the most important landscape of all was that of her childhood home in the north of England, in Westmorland. This is where *Robert Elsmere* begins:

> with a long establishing shot of a country landscape in spring, adds a gentle soundtrack of wind and water, then moves towards a single human house, commanded there by the vigorous notes of a violin andante played by 'a hidden artist' whose gender is uncertain but whose genius and speed 'conquered and banished' the natural view and its sound.
>
> *Wilt*, p.70

The passage has the effect, to a modern reader, of a television camera zooming in at the opening of a new programme, as the wide view of the valley of Long Whindale narrows in to a specific building - Burwood Farm – then to the sound coming from that building, which prepares us for the emergence of Rose Leyburn from within. Rose's music seizes the reader's attention, and so demonstrates her own desire for attention, and her alienation from her home and surroundings, before she even comes into view, when her 'aesthetic'[36] dress reinforces the idea. She does not belong in this country setting. In contrast, her elder sister Catherine, in simple white and grey, seems: 'a true daughter of the mountains, partaker at once of their gentleness and their severity' (*RE*, p.10). For both sisters, landscape, appearance, and character are intertwined, and illumine each other.

Later landscape descriptions in the novel are briefer, but still attuned to events and characters. The Elsmeres' first home, Murewell Rectory in Surrey, is set in what seems a generic description of a fertile country area: 'the general softness and lavishness of the earth and all it bears, make these Surrey commons not a wilderness but a paradise.' Yet this paradise contains a serpent, in the form of the intellectual Squire Wendover, and the snake-headed statue of Medusa, appropriately kept in his library; and indeed Wendover serves as

[36] *RE*, p.7. Marcella Boyce is also said to dress in the aesthetic style, in 'art serges' and velveteens. The style involved extensive flowing draperies, rather than stiff tight-fitting garments; art serges are loosely woven twilled material, of the kind sold by Liberty. See *Mar*, p.96.

catalyst for Elsmere's loss of belief in miracle, and consequent expulsion from Eden/Murewell. Later, hardly any description of London is necessary: Catherine, so at home among the mountains, has become 'like a plant cut off from all that nourishes its life' (*RE*, pp.150, 496). It is the effect of the city that is important, not its details.

The northern landscape also functions as more than scenery in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, initially in the shared love of nature that forms part of the bond between Alan Helbeck and Laura Fountain. As befits Laura's passionate personality as compared with the austere Helbeck, her reaction to the land is far more vibrant:

> The north spoke to her, and the mountains. It was like the rush of something passionate and straining through her girlish sense; intensifying all that was already there.
>
> *HB*, p.49

The intensity of her response to landscape prepares the reader for intensity in other areas of her life, and so for that of her struggle with Helbeck. Later, after her flight to Cambridge, Laura's traumatised state is reflected by a new inability to respond to nature:

> That past physical ecstasy - in spring - in flowing water - in flowers - in light and colour - where was it gone? Let these tears - these helpless tears - make answer!
>
> *HB*, p.343

Later still, back at Bannisdale to care for her dying stepmother Augustina, Laura's response changes once more; the river and the valley 'became a sanctuary and refuge' (*HB*, p.364) before her suicide by drowning.

In contrast to this highly organised integration of nature into fiction, *The History of David Grieve* seems at first a retreat to mere landscape. A whole chapter treats of a visit to Haworth, whose only result is to obtain some books for David, which surely could have been managed by some other method. Ward's fondness for the Brontës' work seems to have run away with her. Elsewhere, she has reason to describe the farm where David and Louie live, as its isolation and poor condition are part of the life from which David escapes, but in general, the

landscape descriptions are present purely as background. However, it could be argued that this lack of integration of David into his surroundings also has a purpose: he was not born into them, and the novel is about his progress away from them; even at the start he is 'as one who lends himself, without reluctance, to a life not his own' (*DG*, p.63). The centre of David's existence is not in his location, but in his head, in his imagination: descriptions of his response to books are more vivid than any description of scenery in the novel, including that of the exotic city of Paris. Nature does not bring inspiration or rest or excitement to David, but rather provokes him to turn inwards:

> He stood gazing; that inner life of his, of which Louie, his constant companion, knew as good as nothing, asserting itself.
>
> For the real companions of his heart were not Louie or the boys with whom he had joked and sparred at school; they were ideas, images, sounds, imaginations
>
> *DG*, p.53

When Ward's own aim to trigger others through her writing is borne in mind, it is significant that David's development should be triggered by books: he is shown reacting to Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*, and a life of Benjamin Franklin:

> In measuring himself with the world of *Shirley* or of Dickens, he began to realise the problem of his own life with a singular keenness and clearness. Then - last of all - the record of Franklin's life, - of the steady rise of the ill-treated printer's devil to knowledge and power - filled him with an urging and concentrating ambition, and set his thoughts, endowed with a new heat and nimbleness, to the practical unravelling of a practical case.
>
> *DG*, p.81

David illustrates Ward's aims not only through his enjoyment, but through his use of novels as a spur for future action in the real world. As the novel progresses, each stage of his development is related to his main reading material at the time. For example, his trip to Paris is partly inspired by his reading of French fiction, particularly George Sand's literature of passion and illicit love, and while there he embarks upon his own illicit affair with the painter Elise Delaunay. In this novel, the landscape of the mind is what counts.

Ward's use of landscape is thus intimately linked with the kind of novel she is writing, and while an emotional response to nature is generally the norm, it may disappear under certain conditions. In later novels, however, there is less integration; landscape becomes mere backdrop, and characters' responses to it indicate simply whether they are a 'good' or 'bad' person. The miserly collector Edmund Melrose in *The Mating of Lydia* does not notice landscape, and has also ruined his beautiful Georgian house, treating it simply as storage space:

> Everywhere the seemly lines and lovely ornament due to its original builders were spoilt or obliterated by the sordid confusion to which some modern owner had brought it. It was not a house apparently, so far as its present use went, but a warehouse.[37]

Melrose also neglects his tenants, and their cottages are in a dreadful state of repair. Response to landscape thus indicates an overall sensitivity to external things, whether inanimate or human, and becomes a form of shorthand, after the fashion of the use of blood discussed earlier.

The poor condition of Melrose's house is an example of how Ward's treatment of houses echoes her treatment of the landscapes in which they sit; in the earlier novels they are intimately linked with character, and in the later become mere backdrops for the action. The most notable example of house and character intertwining comes in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, in the oldest part of Bannisdale Hall:

> But the whole structure seemed still to lean upon and draw towards the tower; and it was the tower which gave accent to a general expression of austerity, depending perhaps upon the plain simplicity of all the approaches and immediate neighbourhood of the house.
>
> *HB*, p.38

The tower's austerity and plainness, reflecting the bareness of the dwelling within, resembles its owner, Alan Helbeck, and the strict, self-denying life he leads. In *Marcella*, the significance of houses is less of character than of wealth and status. The beautiful but neglected and

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[37] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *The Mating of Lydia* (New York: Doubleday Page, 1913), p.4.

tumble-down Mellor Park indicates the high status but restricted finances of the Boyce family (their status is also shown by the presence of family tombs in the village church), while the 'splendid pile' (*Mar*, p.73) that is Maxwell Court, and its vast surrounding lands, emphasize the scale of the Raeburns' wealth.

Poorer dwellings have significance too: the rundown village and cottages of the Mellor estate demonstrate the previous owner's abdication of responsibility - it is axiomatic throughout Ward's work that wealth and status bring duties towards others. In London, the rich houses that Marcella visits emphasize the poverty of the 'insanitary tenements, miserably provided with air, water, and all the necessaries of life' (*Mar*, p.341) where she works, as does Raeburn's shock at her presence there. The state of the houses also explains Marcella's drive to improve matters without need for further comment from Ward.

In later works houses tend not to have such layers of meaning. Sir George Tressady's home, Ferth, is discoloured by smoke from the nearby coalpits, and the associated village is ugly, but these details are no indication of Tressady's character, merely a reminder of the source of his wealth (and one more factor in his wife's discontent with her marriage). There are many elegant houses, and Ward records the presence of fine furniture, expensive carpets, paintings by famous artists, within them,[38] but generally they have little significance other than as backgrounds for the conversations and events that take place within. For example, the description of George Washington's house in *Daphne* is not relevant to the action, and the gothic appearance of Philip Meryon's home, Sandford Abbey, in *The Case of Richard Meynell* merely provides a background for the novel's melodramatic sub-plot of secrets, seduction and illegitimacy.

Ward does not rely upon houses alone as indicators of wealth, but is also specific about financial details. Daphne Floyd has a lumber fortune of more than £1,000,000 (*Daphne*, p.42), and Caroline Wing looks around Eltham House and remarks: "No use trying to live in this house under twenty thousand a year" (*Eltham*, p.7). To put these figures into context, the

[38] 'The doors of smart Mayfair townhouses and fine old country houses are opened wide for her readers: the furnishings, the pictures on the walls, the menus, the smallest details of social behaviour – nothing that would intrigue and delight the 'common' reader escapes her camera eye.' *Colby*, p.121.

Hooper family in Oxford are glad to receive Lady Connie's £300 a year rent, 'which was a substantial addition to an income which, when all supplemental earnings – exams, journalism, lectures – were counted, rarely reached seven hundred' (*Connie*, p.27). The life savings of John Bolderfield the labourer amount to a mere 'Seventy-one pounds! It seemed to him an ocean of gold, never to be exhausted.'[39]

High wealth is also linked with the use of developing technologies, although these tend to be mentioned in passing only (which in itself indicates when a technology has become well-established). Marcella goes to lunch and to balls in a carriage, but twenty years later, in *Eltham House*, Caroline and Alec Wing arrive in London in a motor car, and by the time of the war novels, petrol allowances are a part of life, and women such as Helena Pitstone are driving professionally themselves. The Falloden family's vast wealth is illustrated by their improvements to Flood Castle - 'They have copied the Americans and given every room a bathroom. Absurd extravagance!' (*Connie*, p.143) – and indeed, the collapse of the family's fortune soon follows. On the other hand, Elizabeth Bremerton's use of an electric bell to summon her clerk, and of a telephone, is mentioned casually, partly as being well-established and ordinary, but also as a sign of her improvements to the Mannering estate (*WE*, p.190). Ward tends to give just enough technological details to be in keeping with her time of writing, but no more.

But in Ward's work houses have a wider symbolic significance beyond the money they cost, the treasures they contain, and the events that occur within them.

> In Ward's books, houses frequently symbolize a past that must be recovered or preserved for future generations[40]

Mellor Park needs to be renovated not merely for the comfort of Marcella and her parents, but for their prestige, and for the future. Delia Blanchflower is horrified at suffragette plans to burn

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[39] Mrs. Humphry Ward, *The Tale of Bessie Costrell* (New York: Macmillan, 1895), p.21.
[40] *Dust*, p.129. Ward's concern for the nation's heritage was shared by others: The National Trust was founded in 1895 by Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter, and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, to protect threatened buildings, countryside and coastline from the ravages of industrialisation and the uncontrolled developments it brought with it.

Monk Lawrence, the home of a Cabinet Minister who opposes Women's Suffrage, because the house is not simply a house – it has a symbolic value:

> it's a national possession! Lang's only the temporary owner - the trustee. We've no right to destroy what belongs to *England*.
> *Delia*, p.219

Ward held, as she first expressed in *Marcella*, that lasting social improvement must come gradually, and must retain what is valuable, rather than tear all down and begin again. This view developed from her study of ancient testimony - 'A human society which has no record of its past is robbed of its future. It is savage: it cannot go forward, because it cannot look back'[41] - and is expressed throughout her fiction as:

> the desire to see England as simultaneously the guardian of a proud old aristocratic tradition and the leader of vigorous progressive reform. Her most sympathetic characters are crusaders but not rebels. They fight valiantly to correct, improve, ameliorate, but they cherish their old country houses, they marry within their social class, and they have no intentions of upsetting tradition.
> *Colby*, p.116

In line with this theory falls the marriage of Marcella the reformer with Aldous Raeburn; and that of Delia Blanchflower the suffragette with Mark Winnington. In fact, although Ward did create characters from many levels of society, these are most often the tenants, neglected or otherwise, of the landowning class upon whom her attention mainly focuses. She writes of the powerful, of the movers and shakers of society, whether they work officially, through politics, or privately, through personal influence or charitable works. It is, overall, a conservative picture.

As part of Ward's concern for the maintenance and progress of England, her characters are often involved in politics, whether as politicians themselves, or behind the scenes, most commonly as wives and mothers, supportive or otherwise. The general axiom is that wealthy landowners should go into politics, as if managing the country is an extension of managing an estate. For example, Lord Maxwell is an ex-Home Secretary, and his grandson

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[41] 'Faith', *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, ed. Charles Gore (London: John Murray, 1904), p.30.

Raeburn not only becomes an MP, but within the novel's timescale is appointed Under-Secretary to the Home Department (*Mar*, p.356), a somewhat meteoric rise. Sir George Tressady, William Ashe, and the mother-dominated Oliver Marsham and Edward Coryston are also landowners. Events in the House of Commons are vividly described, but equal if not greater emphasis is laid upon the national work that takes place outside Parliament, in salons such as that of Lady Henry in *Lady's Rose's Daughter*, and in great houses. The country-house weekend is no holiday in Ward's works, as John Sutherland remarks of *The Marriage of William Ashe*: 'It embodies in its depiction of Ashe's career Ward's belief that England is ruled by 'government of country house" (*Suth*, p.242). This is one reason for the decreasing integration of landscape and houses with characters: people stroll in beautiful gardens and sit in richly decorated rooms, but their conversations and relationships are what matter.

If landscapes and houses are used as tools for character delineation to a greater or lesser degree, then so also are more specific details, for example the clothes worn by the characters, and the women characters in particular (there are few details of men's clothing[42]). This is, predictably enough, most prominent in her Society novels:

> Her heroines' clothes are from Worth, described down to the last ribbon and bit of expensive lace. Their jewels, their furs, their coiffures – all conform to a conventionally romantic scheme.
>
> *Colby*, p.121

Expensive clothes reflect the wealth and status of their wearers. Nevertheless, Ward does use dress as a means of illustrating character, although less symbolically and more simplistically in line with other decreases in description and detail that I have discussed. The rebel musician Rose Leyburn first appears as 'a slim creature garbed in aesthetic blue, a mass of reddish brown hair flying back from her face' (*RE*, pp.7-8). Her dress, in a style of flowing draperies rather than restrictive tight-fitting garments, reflects her impulsive, freedom-seeking character. When Louie Grieve poses in Greek dress, Ward comments that 'the wild hybrid creature had

[42] One notable exception is the attire of Radowitz, the foreignness of which, along with his extravagant manner, provokes Falloden and his group to carry out the assault which cripples him: 'the frilled dress-shirt, and the two diamond studs, much larger and more conspicuous than Oxford taste allowed, which added to its criminality.' *Connie*, p.157.

risen, as it were, for the first time, to the full capacity of her endowment - had eclipsed and yet revealed herself' (*DG*, p.295). The clothing brings out Louie's pagan, unrestrained nature, but no more – Louie is a creature of passion, not of intellect or education or morality.

Dress is also used to point out a woman's deficiencies, as when Lucy Grieve doesn't dare 'to venture on the undisguised low neck and short sleeves of ordinary fashionable dress' (*DG*, p.468), and finds herself mocked for her provincial style. Letty Tressady also lacks a sense of appropriate dress, as Marcella's young son's question - 'Are you going to a party?' (*GT*, p.207) – reveals: Letty is overdressed for an afternoon at a country-house. In a similar manner, Daphne's initial simplicity of dress is replaced by increasing gaudiness to reflect her increasing vulgarity of manner and action as consciousness of her wealth and the power it gives her comes to dominate her.

Yet with all the details that Ward provides, of settings, houses, furnishings, money, and dress, one subject is rarely described, that of food. What was eaten and drunk at the many dinner parties in her work? What did Marcella eat at lunch with the Maxwells? Or when she dined in the Houses of Parliament? Arguably it does not matter, since on all these occasions, as on visits to country-houses, it is what is said that is really important: the characters' minds are supposedly on higher things, such as the affairs of the nation.

Where food *is* mentioned, it is for a specific purpose: for instance, David Grieve's economising appears in his choice of cheap, vegetarian food, and the poverty of Bessie Costrell, even in her decent cottage, is illustrated by the family's evening meal of bloaters and beer. Only in the war novels do many details of food appear. Since Edwardian Britain imported three-fifths of its beef, mutton and lamb, and three-quarters of its wheat and cheese,[43] dietary restrictions were vital during the war, and with imports restricted, food production was of necessity an essential part of the war effort. Hence Elizabeth Bremerton looking at a deserted tea table - 'Far too many cakes – too much sugar, too much butter, too much everything!' - and her plotting with the butler: 'How to set up a meatless day for the household, minus the Squire, and not be found out'. As the butler remarks back in the kitchen: 'Every bit of bread you don't

[43] A.N. Wilson, *After the Victorians: 1901-1953* (London: Hutchinson, 2005), p.42.

eat is helping to kill Boches' (*WE*, pp.41, 52, 52). Comic, but to the point. It seems that food, for Ward, is not something with importance in and of itself.

To sum up so far, the general trend throughout Mary Ward's fiction is of decreasing, whether concerning her novels' length, descriptions and ideas, or complexity and realism of characterisation. Other factors remained constant, for example her position as narrator, use of naturalistic dialogue, and insistence upon women's selfless, 'house-keeping' role. Those which increased were the proportion of dialogue, and of Society figures, the one simply because of the decrease in other factors, and the other because of the changing nature of her novels.

Despite all this detail, it still seems that a full verdict on Ward's success or failure in creating the all-important emotional and spiritual bond with her readers for which she aimed has not yet been reached. Instead, she appears rather like Marcella in her nursing work: totally professional yet unable to find that extra spark which would enable her to truly comfort her patients. Where, then, is the extra factor that enables her to, as E.M. Forster put it, 'connect':

> Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its highest. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.[44]

To put it another way, if the form of her novels, and the ideas expressed within them, are the prose, then what, and where, is the passion? Where is the trigger? How could Ward's written words have the effect of Lord Wotton's spoken ones to Dorian Gray, which 'touched some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses.'[45] How could she resemble Henry Grey with Robert Elsmere, and prove her message upon her readers' pulses? (*RE*, p.61)

Bypassing Reason: Personal Connections

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[44] E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass [1910] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p.188.
[45] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Isobel Murray [1891] (Oxford: World's Classics, 1981), p.18.

Mary Ward was well aware that bypassing an individual's conscious reason to make contact with the inner self is not easy: in *Robert Elsmere* more than one character refers to the difficulty of using words to achieve anything. Langham's progressive withdrawal from life is accompanied by a growing sense of 'The uselessness of utterance, the futility of enthusiasm, the inaccessibility of the ideal' (*RE*, p.55). Later, Catherine speaks of:

> the powerlessness, the worthlessness, of words. *It is the spirit that quickeneth.* [. . .] I will learn to hear the two voices, the voice that speaks to you and the voice that speaks to me
>
> *RE*, pp.510-11

By spirit, she indicates the deepest part of the self, the part from which Ward has shown Elsmere's new insights to arise, but her words illustrate another point; that there are 'two voices', that the same message is understood differently by each individual who hears it, that subjectivity is an overriding force. How, then, can she evoke the desired response when, as Walter Pater put it, experience 'is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us' (*Ren*, p.151). The answer lies in a combination of factors.

The first factor involves Ward's approach to the creation of fiction, progressively refined through discussions with her close friend Henry James. Their approaches could hardly have been more different. Percy Lubbock explains James's approach:

> though the *method* could scarcely be more devious and roundabout, always refusing the short cut, yet by these very qualities and precautions it finally produces the most direct impression, for the reader has *seen*. That is why the method is adopted. The author has so fashioned his book that his own part in the narration is now unobtrusive to the last degree; he, the author, could not imaginably figure there more discreetly.[46]

For Henry James, characters and meanings should be built up slowly through successive glimpses and events, and the narrator should remain in the background to force the reader to attain full comprehension through his own perceptive effort. It was a technique akin to that of a

[46] Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* [1921] (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), p.164.

dramatist, removing extraneous detail in order to focus attention upon what is said and seen on the stage. Ward, however, wished to retain the option of commenting on the issues and character she presented, and saw James's attitude as altogether too remote:

> it seemed to her that James' position represented a retreat to the selfish isolation of Tennyson's Palace of Art, whereas she clung fiercely to the Victorian ideal of an indissoluble marriage between art and 'life'
>
> *VH*, p.105

Their dispute reached its height over *Eleanor*. Leon Edel, in his biography of James, writes of James's belief that: 'The story must get its unity not from the personality of the author – as apparently Ward had argued – but from the nature of the subject' (*Edel*, p.284). Ward, however, insisted upon the value of an author's personal concerns, beliefs, developments, feelings and experiences, and this emphasis upon personality is reflected in her love for the work of the Brontë sisters:

> The Brontës are searching personalities. They challenge no less than they attract. Their vigorous effect upon the reader's sympathies and judgment has been always part of their ascendancy, and one great secret of their enduring fame.[47]

Her verdict upon Emily's writing in particular - 'We passionately accept her, or we are untouched by her' (*Brontës*, p.xii) – that *she*, rather than the *work*, is of prime importance, indicates that Emily achieved the kind of triggering effect that she hoped for herself. Personality is also a key factor in testimony, in bearing witness, and so Ward's novels can be understood as her own form of testimony, of self-revelation. J Hillis Miller argues that 'The words of a novel objectify the mind of an author and make that mind available to others' (*Miller*, p.1), that is, the reader of Ward's novels is reading Ward herself as much as the fictions she has created, as if she is herself 'embodied' in the pages, clothing her ideas in her own 'living

[47] Mrs. Humphry Ward, Preface to Charlotte Brontë, *Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey*, The Haworth Edition V.5 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899), p.xi; hereafter cited *Brontës*.

human soul'.[48] This is why I disagree with John Butterworth's statement that: 'Knowledge of her life is not essential to an understanding of and appreciation for her fiction' (*BW*, p.iv). It may not be essential in order to simply enjoy her stories, but it is vital for full understanding of the issues she presents (although admittedly this argument applies to her earlier novels of ideas rather than to her later society works).

It seems strange that the use of immensely personal material should contribute to those novels that enjoyed the widest success, that resonated with the greatest number of individuals, until one considers that this very specificity brings the work alive, making it more vivid and interesting, and so more likely to achieve influence.[49] As Samuel Butler wrote, great works 'always have something of the 'de profundis' about them. They must be written with heart's blood and with tears as well as laughter.'[50] That is, they must come from the deepest self, and Ward is therefore charging her message, like Eliot's Mordecai, with her soul.

That Ward regarded other techniques as inadequate appears in her fiction through one villager's apparent praise of Marcella's political talk: 'The young lady speaks beautiful, just like a book she do' (*Mar*, p.110). The words actually show that Marcella's hearers have not been triggered, have not been convinced, because Marcella is repeating theories she has studied, rather than speaking directly from her heart and her experience (*Mayer*, p.111). The opposite effect can be illustrated by the reaction of John Henry Newman's character Bateman to the words of a recent convert to Roman Catholicism: 'I declare his touch has made my heart beat; how catching enthusiasm is!' (*Loss*, p.293) As Bernard Hollander put it in his work on hypnotism:

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[48] 'Janet's Repentance', *Scenes*, p.364.

[49] This view is still current, as in the work of modern psychologist Carl Rogers: 'I have almost invariably found that the very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal, and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is a resonance in many other people. It has led me to believe that what is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if it were shared or expressed, speak most deeply to others. This has helped me to understand artists and poets as people who have dared to express the unique in themselves.' Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (London: Constable, 1961), p.26.

[50] Geoffrey Keynes and Brian Hill (ed.), *Samuel Butler's Notebooks* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), p.220. Similarly, Eliot claimed that *Romola* had been 'written with my best blood'. Letter from George Eliot to John Blackwood 30 January 1877, *Eliot Letters*, v.6 pp.335-6.

> Words in themselves are not really suggestive; they possess no magic power. All their force and efforts depend upon the associated feeling.[51]

Alone, words are indeed as powerless as Ward had stated in *Robert Elsmere*; only when associated with emotion and personality do they stand any chance of success. In this, she would agree with Newman: 'Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us' (*Discussions*, p.293).

Even when infused with personality, words still lack power if they are not arranged in such as way as to express that personality to best effect, after the manner of Mordecai's rhythmic 'What reaches him, stays with him, rules him' (*DD*, p.561). Ward uses a similar effect in her documentation of the developments of Elsmere and Marcella, presenting their intuitions with memorable phrases such as Elsmere's 'whirlwind of thought' (*RE*, p.275) and her own 'ferment of mind' while writing *Marcella* (*WR*, p.289).

Mary Ward also felt that she wrote at her best, that is, at her most personal, when she became so engrossed by her work that she entered a strange, trance-like state of mind, as if writing down material arising directly from her inner self. Other novelists shared this feeling: Mrs Gaskell wrote of *Mary Barton* that 'The whole tale grew up in my mind as imperceptibly as a seed germinates in the earth',[52] and George Eliot talked of being possessed by something 'not herself' when writing *Middlemarch* (*Publishers*, p.84). Charlotte Brontë argued that:

> When authors write best, or, at least, when they write most fluently, an influence wakens in them, which becomes their master – which will have its own way – putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature[53]

The author's mental state is described as both involuntary and irresistible, as the author is controlled by the demands of the unconscious self as if by an outside force. It is a paradox:

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[51] Bernard Hollander, *Hypnotism and Suggestion in Daily Life, Education and Medical Practice* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1910), p.19.

[52] *Gaskell*, p.74.

[53] Letter from Charlotte Brontë to George Henry Lewes 11 January 1848, Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p.336.

work arising from the most intensely personal levels of a writer is simultaneously created by a force that wipes out personality in the drive to express its own truth. And this force is powerful and fierce; 'crushed' is a very violent verb. However, it could also recall Hopkins' 'ooze of oil crushed' in 'God's Grandeur' (*Hopkins*, l.3-4, p.128), where the violence in the crushing of olives in fact brings out the purest and most precious oil of all. The result is that the writer becomes totally focussed on expressing the truth he perceives to the best of his ability:

> What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.[54]

As T.S. Eliot describes, only the inner vision, and the intense emotions it arouses, have importance. The writer is totally committed and sincere, reaching out from his own core of self to that of his reader. In this strange 'tranced, absorbed state' (*Aut. Mar*, p.xiii) there is no calculation, just vision and feeling; the act of writing itself seems mechanical, 'outside' of the main event. Ward herself, particularly during her earlier works, experienced this feeling of serving rather as a conduit for material arising from within, than as an artist in full narrative control. The only scenes in *Sir George Tressady* that she judged to be successful were the three that:

> were composed with the same imaginative rush, the same sense of a waking dream, of a thing not invented but merely reported – imposed as by a vision and breathlessly written down – that I have described in a preceding Introduction, in the case of *Marcella*.[55]
>
> *Aut. GT*, p.x

Nevertheless, even when the author feels most helpless, it is still his self and imagination that is at work, producing this most personal material of all. It seems strange that a chapter concentrating upon the form of Ward's work should conclude that the most powerful aspect of it is an unconscious, emotional, form-*less* one, but so it is. As with any kind of influence, the

[54] T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* [1920] (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp.43-4.

[55] The three scenes are: 'the scene of the home-workers' meeting in the East End; the interview between Marcella and Letty at the crisis of the book; and the whole scene in the mine ending with Tressady's death.' *Aut. GT*, p.x.

strongest trigger, the most immediate and direct method, is the personal one. Perhaps it is only right that it should be so. And it should always be remembered that not even the strongest influence can have an effect where the person on the receiving end either refuses to cooperate in the author/reader complicity, or is incapable of receiving the message transmitted.

As far as Ward's work is concerned, though, the trance-writing effect seems to vanish over time, perhaps because of her move from novels of ideas towards Society romances in which she had far less of a personal stake, or because of outside factors such as her need to earn as much as possible as quickly as possible. Or, perhaps, it was because she had already said everything she felt herself driven to communicate.

Ward In Her Times

To conclude this chapter, I will examine the form and style of Ward's novels in relation to the times in which she wrote, not forgetting that this spans a period from Victorian Britain through Edwardian to and through World War I, a period during which writing standards and customs developed quickly. In his history of the social novel, Peter Keating remarked that Ward's novels of the 1890s:

> revealed an author in touch with some of the most disturbing areas of British life – religious doubt, philanthropy, urban slum conditions, the decay of rural communities – but they also showed so little sensitivity to the changes taking place in the theory and practice of fiction that they might have been written a generation earlier.[56]

An emerging experimentalism in fiction made Ward's work seem increasingly old-fashioned as the new century began. Delineation of characters' mental processes became more detailed through the technique known as stream of consciousness writing, which aimed to show the innermost workings of a character's mind, moment to moment. Where the mental processes were complex, the syntax that expressed them was equally so, and the resulting fiction was

[56] Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989), p.177; hereafter cited *Keating*.

increasingly challenging to read. Ward, of course, was no longer writing the novels of ideas and of personal growth which this technique suited. Another innovation was the greater use of open endings, 'as if to assert the impossibility of the stable resolution which is normal in earlier fiction'.[57] Ward used open endings sparingly; the only examples that spring to mind are the question of whether Nelly Sarratt will marry Sir William Farrell after the ending of *Missing*, and whether Elizabeth Bremerton will ever marry Squire Mannering. Basically, her writing style remained Victorian: direct, easy to read, with plot strands neatly tied off, and didactic, with endings that clearly indicate the consequences of the characters' actions (such as the fall of Wharton), and so she slipped increasingly out of step with her times.

Many features of Ward's writing indicate her lack of modernity; for instance she likened *Robert Elsmere* to past works such as J.A. Froude's *The Nemesis of Faith*, and Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke*, both published several decades previously, admitting that 'Elsmere's change, though I think the nature and elements of it are typical, is not as a story typical of the present day.'[58] Henry James's image of the novel as 'a large, slow-moving, slightly old-fashioned ship' (*James*, p.256), laden with Ward's memories and experiences, that is, with her past, implies the same. The plots of her later novels, with their questions of marriage and inheritance, also seem Victorian, despite the superficial modernities of motor cars and electricity. Members of her own family, while praising her achievements, held conflicting views about her. Her nephew, Aldous Huxley, said that:

> My aunt, Mrs. Humphry Ward, was a kind of literary godmother to me. I used to have long talks with her about writing; she gave me no end of sound advice. She was a very sound writer herself, rolled off her plots like sections of macadamised road.[59]

[57] Douglas Hewitt, *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period 1890-1940* (London: Longman, 1988), p.112.
[58] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to Mandell Creighton 13 March 1888, *PH*.
[59] Van Wyck Brooks (ed.), *Writers at Work, The Paris Review Interviews*, Second Series (London: Viking, 1963), p.167.

He had been very close to Ward, and was deeply upset by her death, but their intimacy did not prevent him from turning a critical eye upon her work, for example upon *Lady Connie* (1916), her 'escaping the war' novel of a past Oxford world:

> – this makes about the tenth of the kind in the last few years. I think I shall write one of Oxford in war and peace – quite a good subject. I see the inevitable earls' daughters, with the usual appendages, butlers and footmen and heavy dinners, are coming into Aunt M's book again. Why can't she resolutely keep them out.[60]

He was not the only person to have concerns about Ward's Society novels, as she herself reports of *Eltham House* (1915): 'When it was done, I asked an old friend to read it, who returned it with the criticism that there was 'too much beauty and too much wealth' in it' (*Eltham*, p.ix). The lack of depth, and the old-fashioned quality of these later novels in particular was summed up by Vineta Colby in *The Singular Anomaly*:

> She kept pace with progress and change, yet we read her today more as a Victorian than as a modern writer. [. . .] Thus even while she kept pace with change, shortening her heroine's skirts, turning carriages into motor cars, introducing telephones and electric lights in her country houses, her work was so superficially modern that it was outdated almost as soon as it appeared.
>
> *Colby*, pp.161-2

In other words, it was her very focus upon current fashions and behaviour that caused her work to date so quickly, particularly when combined with her Victorian plots, form and style. Nowadays, since her strongest novels and biggest sellers were written during the Victorian period, there is a natural tendency to regard her as primarily a Victorian writer, even though she continued to work up to her death in 1920.

Another reason to consider her old-fashioned was her presentation of women, and her unchanging advocation of love, marriage and children as a woman's natural and primary destiny. However, there was one area in which Ward could be considered more advanced than other women writers:

[60] Letter from Aldous Huxley to Leonard Huxley November 1915, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, ed. Grover Smith (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), p.86.

> Ward, more than Yonge, Linton or Oliphant, or indeed many of the other Victorian novelists, shows that straightforward sexual attraction is an important element in her characters' lives – in the form of a crucial look or an electrifying touch.
>
> *Sanders*, p.118

For example, Marcella Boyce is drawn to Harry Wharton, and Marcia Coryston to Sir Edward Newbury. Most importantly, there is Rachel Henderson's attraction for Captain Ellesborough: she is described as 'a vision of youth and lustyhood' (*Har*, p.106). The crimes of her ex-husband, Roger Delane, arise partly from his jealousy at seeing her with Ellesborough:

> *Harvest* is her most 'modern' work in terms of its frank interest in sexual desire; as John Sutherland notes, it is also her most extended analysis of violent crime (at certain points it comes close to fulfilling Bennett's fantasy of what 'ought to happen' to Mrs. Ward's heroines).[61]

Arnold Bennett famously fantasized about Ward's heroines being gang-raped as retribution for 'That skittishness! That impulsiveness! That noxious winsomeness!'[62] Leaving that to one side, in *Harvest* Ward did at least demonstrate her greatest awareness of the trend of the times towards more sex, and more explicit sex in fiction:

> Where most Victorian theorists had hypothesized an essential and appropriate female 'passionlessness,' modernist thinkers assumed an essential and somewhat alarming female passion. They knew, too, that women were now freer than ever before to act on that passion, for the dissemination of birth-control information and equipment in the 1910s and 1920s disengaged reproduction from sexuality, removing one major impediment to female erotic freedom.[63]

Examples from the time include the notorious seduction of Paul Verdayne by an older woman on a tiger-skin rug in Elinor Glyn's *Three Weeks* (1907), and the guardian who sleeps with her ward to save him from possible infection by prostitutes in Hubert Wales' *The Yoke* (1908). One

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[61] Helen Small, 'Mrs. Humphry Ward and the First Casualty of War', *R&T*, p.39.
[62] Arnold Bennett, 'Mrs. Humphry Ward's Heroines', *Books and Persons: Being Comments on a Past Epoch, 1908-1911* (New York: Doran, 1917), pp.47-52.
[63] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, v1: The War of the Words* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), pp.34-5.

interesting theory argued by U.C. Knoepflmacher is that D.H. Lawrence was inspired by Ward's work,[64] and used the plot, setting and characters from *Lady Connie* in his creation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). Just as Lady Connie leaves the artistic, crippled pianist Radowitz for the fine physical specimen Douglas Fallodin, so Lady Chatterley leaves her crippled husband for the gamekeeper Mellors, as Lawrence reshaped Ward's material to fit his own preoccupation with what Esther Marian Greenwell Smith described as 'the cult of procreation, characterized by masculine virility and feminine submission' (*Smith*, p.112). Smith similarly theorised that 'Lawrence had read Ward's novel *Harvest* (1920) shortly after it appeared, and then set forth his refutation of her philosophy in his novella *The Fox*' (1923) (*Smith*, p.137). Both stories deal with two young women running a farm, one of whom is killed during the events presented. Rachel Henderson resists Captain Ellesborough at first because of her past, and he hungers to take care of her; Lawrence's Nellie March resists submitting to Henry Grenfel, but they do eventually marry. Roger Delane roams the night terrorising Rachel, just as the titular fox roams, dominating Nellie's dreams, until Henry Grenfel kills it, and takes its place. Lawrence's changes to the material, Smith argues, involved removing Ward's specificity of time and situation, near the end of WWI, and weakening the women characters: in *The Fox*, they are in no way competent at running their farm, as Lawrence slants the material towards male superiority. Both theories are persuasive, but it is hard to determine their exact significance. They could indicate a continued relevance in Ward's fiction, and that her nephew Aldous Huxley was not the only writer who continued to respond to it. Alternatively, they could indicate that her old-fashioned quality required redesign and rewriting to make her material palatable in modern terms, even in the case of *Harvest*, her most advanced novel. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of Mary Ward and D.H. Lawrence does make Lawrence suddenly appear strangely retrogressive.

This discussion about Ward's continuing Victorianism may give the impression that she was already well on her way to being forgotten even by the time the war began, long before her death in 1920, but such is not the case:

[64] U.C. Knoepflmacher, 'The Rival Ladies: Mrs. Humphry Ward's Lady Connie and D.H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover', *Victorian Studies* 4 (December 1960), pp.141-58.

> Between 1916 and 1919, Mary Ward was one of the most visible and successful writers in Britain; but almost as soon as hostilities ended, her version of the war was displaced by that of younger writers whose approach was generally more critical, more ironic, and above all more 'modernist'.[65]

Between 1914 and 1918 sales of her novels averaged 35,000 copies per volume. H. G. Wells, at the height of his career, managed only 15,000.[66] These are not insignificant numbers. Her decline came swiftly in the *aftermath* of war, as new attitudes came to the fore. In his early short story 'The Farcical History of Richard Greenow' (1920), Aldous Huxley caricatures his 'Aunt Marooe', as he called her, as Richard's Aunty Loo, then has Richard himself develop a split personality; during the night he unconsciously writes romances as 'the florid female novelist Pearl Bellairs' (*Suth*, p.201), a parody of Mary Ward. This second personality grows stronger and stronger until:

> Dick – who has kept his split personality unknown to the world – dies deliriously raving anti-German war propaganda (a clear hit against Mrs. Humphry Ward's war writing).
>
> *Suth*, p.201

Enid Huws Jones writes that a copy of the story was found by Ward's bedside in 1920, and that she had not liked it (*Jones*, p.164). It is not surprising. Huxley was later to caricature his aunt again as Mrs Foxe in *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936).[67] This time, however, his mockery conceals an underlying resemblance, as, in this book and in others, Huxley discussed ideas and issues, as Virginia Woolf noticed, writing here on *Point Counter Point*: 'A descendant, oddly enough of Mrs. H. Ward: interest in ideas; makes people into ideas'.[68] It seems that he was, like D.H. Lawrence, in some ways at least, Ward's literary heir, and so that she was not as much at odds with her times as sometimes appears.

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[65] Helen Small, 'Mrs. Humphry Ward and the First Casualty of War', *R&T*, pp.20-1.
[66] Harold Orel, *Popular Fiction in England, 1914- 1918* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.49.
[67] 'This lady is clearly intended as his Aunt Mary; allusions to Stocks . . . cripple schools, and Mrs. Foxe's physical mannerisms make the identification – which is satirically edged – unmistakeable. Mrs. Foxe 'adopts' the narrator, Anthony, after his mother dies early in life (as Julia Huxley had). Mrs. Foxe is even made to talk like Mary Ward, her favourite epithet being "splendid".' *Suth*, p.339.
[68] *Aldous Huxley: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Donald Watt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p.16.

Conclusion

> In the countless letters received by her family on the occasion of her death nothing was more dwelt upon than her power of inspiring others.
> *Woods*, p.159

This document has considered at length Mary Ward's aim to educate and improve her readers through didactic fiction, to trigger new growth and understanding within them, and to make them actively follow her advice on moral conduct and the duties and responsibilities that she believed all people owe to others and to society. The quotation above, a comment by Margaret Woods, who knew Ward in Oxford around the time of her marriage, testifies to her success. To achieve this success, she used methods which fit well with the three criteria for successful influence that I defined in my Introduction.

The first comes from her concept of an inborn, God-given deepest self which operates as an irresistible force in the attitudes and actions of the individual, as had previously appeared in the writing of John Henry Newman. In both Newman and Ward, an individual's duty is to uncover the needs and drives of this inner self, which exists mainly on an unconscious level, in order to follow them, and thus, by becoming more what he was born to be, to draw closer to God. Conscience is posited as 'God's revelation to each one of us',[1] the carrier of God's messages to the individual of moral conduct and of how to achieve such growth. The only way to influence someone is to find a way to trigger a reaction below conscious awareness, in this deepest self; that is, to bypass the barriers of the conscious, reasoning mind.

Ward understood that since the innermost self is the force that drives individuals, they will only amend their ways if such change is desired deep inside: 'the better life cannot be imposed from without - it must grow from within' (*DG*, p.521). However, such change may not be forced, as the consequences of such extreme action are the opposite of the aim they wish to achieve; they cause destruction of the self. Newman states this directly – 'to change me is to destroy me' (*Ass*, p.273) – and Ward illustrates it through such characters as the fanatic Newcome, trampling upon the self; and the artist Williams, leading a mutilated life when deprived of his art by the Jesuits, until his inner nature reasserts itself. Since forced change is

[1] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to T. Humphry Ward 19 July 1881, *PH*.

counter-productive, then, the only outside influence that stands a chance of success is that which is in harmony with, and therefore acceptable to, the target individual's innate traits and inclinations.

Ward documents the process that follows when such harmony occurs, particularly through Robert Elsmere and Marcella Boyce, one as an educated intellectual, whose insights are clear and precise, and the other as a poorly-educated individual guided by emotion, whose perceptions are vaguer but no less insistent. Both, however, share a determination and a strength of integrity that drives them to follow their insights through to their conclusion, whatever it may be, without regard to inconsistencies with any previous positions they held, and thereby to uncover their true needs in life, and take action to satisfy them. In doing so, both follow Ward's understanding of drawing closer to God through use of their innate selves: 'It is the business of each one of us to obey what we have'.[2] When the innermost self is triggered, growth is initiated within it, which gradually builds up until it bursts forth into conscious awareness. At this point, the individual may or may not choose to act upon the insights gained. Elsmere and Marcella are strong enough to do so, and become wiser, fully integrated individuals as a result.

The second factor required for influence to take place was described in the Introduction as a lack of purpose, a lack of self-awareness and of inner-direction, in the individual to be influenced. Newman's description of such a person being 'at the mercy of the winds and waves' (*Loss*, pp.15-6), likely to go anywhere and do anything, was useful here, as was George Eliot's portrait of Daniel Deronda, drifting through life until his encounter with Mordecai. Such a condition appears in Ward's character Robert Elsmere, 'born for religion' (*WR*, p.230), but following orthodox Anglicanism which engages his emotions, but not his mind, and so does not fully satisfy his inner drives. Similarly, Marcella Boyce follows her drive to help others, but her understanding of how to do this, egotistical and extreme, is shown to be flawed, and again, does not satisfy her inner nature. Ward documents how, once triggered, Elsmere and Marcella acquire new understanding, which they follow through to develop new wholeness, and new

[2] Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward to T. Humphry Ward 19 July 1881, *PH*.

direction in life. In contrast, the plight of Laura Fountain, exhausted by emotional stress, losing all landmarks and temporarily drifting to Catholicism before her inner nature reasserts itself, serves as an example of the dangers of lack of purpose, lack of education, and lack of guiding ideas and conscious understanding of one's own nature.

The third and final factor defined as crucial for successful influence is the framing of the message, the form that the influencer's attempt takes. This was associated firstly with technical details, such as the words and syntax used and the rhythms of speech, as in the words of Mordecai to Daniel: 'What reaches him, stays with him, rules him' (*DD*, p.561), but also appears in memorable phrases such as Ward's 'whirlwind of thought' (*RE*, p.275) for the intellectual Robert Elsmere, and 'ferment of mind' (*WR*, p.289) during the creation of *Marcella*. Ward's most important books are novels of ideas, built around ideas embodied in her protagonists, who were surrounded by supporting characters and material to shed extra light upon them by providing contrasts and parallels in character relationships, and to point up certain desirable or undesirable traits and actions in the protagonists. She uses an intrusive, omniscient narratorial presence to strengthen the presentation of her points. The detailed construction of these novels allowed her readers more than one level of reception and enjoyment. That is, those readers who did resonate with Ward's emotional and imaginative triggers could use the detailed arguments and relationship patterns in her novels as material illustrating and reinforcing her arguments. Those who did not, could use the same material as a springboard for mental discussion with the author, to absorb her work on a more rational basis. This dual appeal of feeling and of argument allowed her best novels to be read and reread, each time with enjoyment.

The ideas in Ward's work, and the form in which they were expressed, were strongly coloured by personal material. This appeared in several forms, such as recounted memories and experiences: she used her early life and education to add verisimilitude to her characters, for example her schooldays, looks, and early evangelicalism are given to Marcella Boyce, while her own process of study at Oxford belongs to Robert Elsmere, and her parents' religious differences are played out in the conflict between Alan Helbeck and Laura Fountain. Her own

religious progress to rational theism was documented through Elsmere's journey, and her continued morality and social consciousness, demonstrated through her Settlement work, also appeared in her subsequent novel of social concern, *Marcella*, all commented upon by her prominent narratorial voice.

The most personal aspect of Ward's work, however, was her concept of embodiment. As both Eliot and Newman argued, when ideas are expressed through an individual they acquire power – 'they shake us like a passion' (*Scenes*, p.364), and 'Persons influence us' (*Discussions*, p.293), - and Ward illustrated this through Elsmere's 'fiery persuasive quality' (*RE*, p.386) and Marcella's 'unique power of personality' (*Mar*, p.295). Her main protagonists embodied her own opinions and experiences, or grew to do so, while minor characters embodied different facets of the matter at hand. She even used her real life to make herself the embodiment of her beliefs, a living example to others that her ideas 'would wear and work' (*WR*, p.289), trying her best, as George Eliot wrote, to be 'lord of this moment's change', and to 'charge it with my soul' (*DD*, p.532).

Ward also admitted that influence through triggering and the choice to follow insights gained was not easy; that there were limitations to the process. One has already been mentioned; that triggering could only happen in those open to the ideas presented. Another lies in the nature of the process itself. Influence is not synonymous with control. Once the innermost self has begun to grow, the changes are entirely internal and below conscious awareness, until the moment that the dam breaks; and they are therefore beyond the reach of outside control or direction. There is no way to tell what form an individual's development may take. Ward presents such growth as leading to greater wholeness and fulfilment, but does not shrink from its dangers, as the near-collapse of the Elsmeres' marriage goes to show. Change in one individual of necessity requires adjustments in those around, and this can be painful.

She also illustrates limits to the individual's ability to change, which are linked to the position her books habitually recommend: a balanced, open-minded stance, associated with detestations of extremes of all kinds, from Marcella's passionate Venturism to Delia Blanchflower's work for the suffragettes. Lack of balance is shown, when combined with force

of long habit, to restrict an individual's ability to grow until it diminishes beyond the point of no return, as demonstrated through the progressive withdrawal from life of Edward Langham in *Robert Elsmere*. Ideas and practices learned when very young may have a similar effect, as in the old-fashioned religion to which Catherine Elsmere clings, or the anti-intellectualism of Laura Fountain.

Over the sequence of novels from *Robert Elsmere* in 1888 through to the end of the century, Ward emphasises the importance of the individual's innate character traits, and their power to condition personal growth, until by the time of *Helbeck of Bannisdale* in 1898 these forces are shown to be so strong that growth is no longer possible, and the love of two such opposed characters as Alan Helbeck and Laura Fountain can only end in tragedy. Ward has lost her confidence in the power, even the possibility, of influence. It seems no coincidence that the novels which followed were no longer novels of ideas, but tales based upon historical events, and stories of Society: she had no more to say on the question of influence.

Her greater immovability of opinion could also be linked to her role as a living example. To embody her beliefs for others to see and understand, she had to remain constant, but this constancy worked against the very personal development she preached. As time passed, Mary Ward fell into the trap which George Eliot, through refusal to make public pronouncements of her beliefs, managed to avoid, that of 'sinking into an insistent echo of myself. That is a horrible destiny'.[3] Her life settled into a pattern of ever faster production of fiction, of conservative opinions, of philanthropic work through her Settlements, and of opposition to women's suffrage. She even sought to make accommodation with the Church, although she never abandoned her rational theist position. Nevertheless, although the quality of her work certainly declined over time from the dizzying heights of *Robert Elsmere*, *Marcella* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, general opinion was slow, and relatively late, to condemn her. Only after the war did the poor quality of her later works serve to point up her old-fashioned style and attitudes, to leave her classified in the minds of many as purely a Victorian writer. But her early works in particular do not merit such neglect, as John Butterworth rightly remarks: 'her vitality

[3] Letter from George Eliot to Frederic Harrison 15 January 1870, *Eliot Letters*, v.5, p.76.

and importance when she was at the peak of her powers is often overlooked' (*BW*, p.26). Perhaps the writings that have begun to emerge over the last few years will begin a process of rehabilitation for Mrs. Humphry Ward; it would be a shame to forget such 'a striving after righteousness, sincerity, truth' (*Tr*, p.28).

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