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## **A Woman's Thoughts about Men: Malthus and Middle-class Masculinity in Dinah Mulock Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman***

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Abstract:

From its publication in 1856 to the present-day Dinah Mulock Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* has intrigued readers in its representation of masculinity and potential to be read 'aslant', offering a divergent model of manliness, or even the 'split consciousness' of the woman writer's self-image refracted through her depiction of a cast of male characters (Showalter, 1975). Most recently Karen Bourrier has discussed the novel's exploration of industry and invalidism as told through the narrative framework of an 'intense homoerotic friendship between a strong man and his disabled friend' (Bourrier, 2015), and, in a 2007 article, Silvana Colella uses gift theory to demonstrate the intrinsic codes of gentlemanliness inherent in capitalist economics faithfully embodied in the text.

This article considers Craik's representation of men in the novel as a lens through which Craik could engage with, and question, some of the largest theoretical areas of nineteenth-century, male-dominated intellectual life: economics, science, and politics. The article begins with an examination of the novel in relation to Malthus's economic theories of population and the tensions between Lamarckian and Malthusian ideology in the field of evolutionary theory in the works of Robert Chambers, George Drysdale, and others. The article will then explore the effect of Malthusian theory on discourses that emphasised masculine self-control as articulated in the symbiotic relationship of the two male protagonists, before concluding with Craik's intervention in the history of the woman writer as woman writer. I will demonstrate how this enormously popular novel interrogated and intervened in the assumptions of sentimental fiction by contextualising Craik's construction of a male narrative voice and an interdependent male relationship in terms of nineteenth-century economic, scientific and political theoretical debates.

Keywords: masculinity; Malthus; class; evolution; domestic; fiction.

## A Woman's Thoughts about Men: Malthus and Middle-class Masculinity in Dinah Mulock Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman*

We are neither goddesses nor slaves; they are neither heroes nor semi-demons: we just plod on together, men and women alike, on the same road, where daily experience illustrates Hudibras's keen truth, that

“The value of a thing  
Is just as much as it will bring.”

And our value is-exactly what we choose to make it.

Dinah Mulock Craik, *A Woman's Thoughts about Women* (1859)

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### Introduction

In his review essay “Novels by the Authoress of ‘John Halifax’”, published in the *North British Review* in 1858, the journalist R. H. Hutton, began his remarks on the author we now refer to most commonly as Dinah Mulock Craik, thus: ‘It is clear that, hitherto at least, feminine ability has found for itself a far more suitable sphere in novel-writing than in any other branch of literature.’<sup>i</sup> The reason, Hutton declared, why the novel form suits the woman writer so well is because it deals with ‘the purely human interests of life, the daily incidents, the circumstantial joys and sorrows’. And, we are informed, these are the things that ‘occupy [...] the thoughts of women’.<sup>ii</sup> If we could peer into the minds of the men and women of ‘England’, a woman’s mind would be:

found filled [...] with pictures, memories, or hopes of *visible* human life,—men, women or children, in actual or possible costume, with faces sad or happy, in the midst of daily wants or luxury, in the crisis of some great or little emergency, or the enjoyment of some long-desired blessing.

But men:

in their minds a curious *mêlée* of interests half abstract, and where they were not abstract, often at least less about persons than about things. You would find in them queer visions of books, ballot-boxes, 3 per cents, bank-reserves, railway regulations, cotton bales, rights of electors, race-courses, courts of chancery, points of evidence, and again, considerations about kings, and wars, and statesmen, past

and present, telegraph-cables, attractions of gravitation, planetary orbits, laws of metre, laws of thought, and laws of harmony.<sup>iii</sup>

Dinah Maria Mulock, latterly Mrs. Craik, was a novelist associated, by her contemporary critics such as Hutton, Margaret Oliphant, and Henry James, with a particularly womanly brand of domestic fiction and the accompanying charge of ‘excessive sentimentality’.<sup>iv</sup> So, it is easy to see why Hutton might have felt justified in making his broader commentary on the abilities of the woman novelist via the associations he, and other critics, imposed upon Craik’s works. Prior to the publication of *John Halifax, Gentleman* in 1856, Craik (then Mulock) had published six novels and shorter works of fiction: *The Ogilvies, a Novel* (1849), *Olive* (1850), *The Half-Caste* (1851), *Bread Upon the Waters, a Governess’s Life, The Head of the Family, a Novel* (1852), *Avillion and Other Tales*, and *Agatha’s Husband, a Novel* (1853).<sup>v</sup> As Karen Bourrier notes, the themes of these texts were domestic, primarily concerned with the marriage plot and the experiences of young women.<sup>vi</sup> Thus again we understand all the more the contemporary reviewer’s justification for positioning Craik as a writer of sentimental, ‘womanish’ works.<sup>vii</sup>

Having previously worked at a rate of at least one novel a year (plus various other literary outputs) there is a gap of three years between Craik’s publication of *Agatha’s Husband* and *John Halifax, Gentleman*, the novel by which she is best known today, and a bestseller in her own time.<sup>viii</sup> This signals a change in Craik’s working patterns, and, more significantly, her subject matter. Despite R. H. Hutton’s insistence to the contrary, *John Halifax, Gentleman* contains many of the ‘things’ from his list of items that occupy the male mind, and where, as in the case of the telegraph-cable, it falls outside the purview of the novel’s carefully plotted historical framework, we find no anachronistic slippages.<sup>ix</sup> In Craik’s enormously popular novel we see: ballot-boxes and a critique of rotten boroughs; a run on the town’s bank-reserves and the panic of 1825; those ‘new and dangerous things called railways’ (355); ‘cotton lords’ (294); war with France and ‘Lord Wellington’s entry into Madrid’ (248); smallpox, and debates

about vaccination; legal disputes and the ill-treatment of Nonconformists; historical figures, including the early-modern poet Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650), and the actor Sarah Siddons (1755-1831); the abolition of slavery; and discussion of natural phenomena such as tidal surges or ‘eagres’ (36).<sup>x</sup> But, more importantly, and in direct contrast to Hutton’s claim, we find everywhere apparent are the ‘laws of thought’, diffused throughout the novel in the views and feelings of the narrator Phineas Fletcher. Craik’s novel is not only concerned with the issues and interests raised by Hutton in his list, it has what Hutton believes you can only find in a novel written by a man: ‘a kind of intellectual framework’.<sup>xi</sup> Craik’s framework, this article argues, is: a popular distillation of some of the most significant economic, scientific, and political ideas of the period; an attempt to recodify an idealised form of masculinity in relation to these ideas; and, an intervention in the history of the woman writer as *woman* writer.

Since Sally Mitchell and Elaine Showalter’s recovery of Craik in that immensely fertile period of feminist revisionary studies in the 1970s and ’80s, scholars such as Silvana Colella, Kathryn Ledbetter, and in particular Karen Bourrier, have expanded our critical understanding of Craik in relation to the careers of women writers in the nineteenth century, both as novelists and as contributors to periodicals; in relation to disability studies; and as a writer of works for children.<sup>xii</sup> Showalter’s foundational 1975 article ‘Dinah Mulock Craik and the Tactics of Sentiment: A Case Study in Victorian Female Authorship’—produced as it was in the context of recovering the work of forgotten women writers—takes as one of its tasks the correction of a ‘flowery’ version of Craik’s life propagated by Margaret Oliphant’s obituary of the writer, published in *Macmillan’s* in December 1887, two months after Craik’s death in October of that year. It probes at the codes of gentle(wo)manly performance of authorship as ‘heroic necessity’ foisted upon the woman writer by economic necessity. Showalter argues that whilst it is the case that financial family difficulties were the ‘catalyst’ for Craik’s move into the field of authorship, after marriage in 1864, and ‘in spite of her husband’s objections’, Craik ‘came to

accept the need to write as essential and primary’, and continued to write into the last decade of her life.<sup>xiii</sup>

Despite this, Showalter detects an ‘obsession’ ‘with the role of the unmarried woman in society’ in the novels written by Craik prior to her marriage, and she uses Henry James’ scornful review of *A Noble Life* (1866) to argue that when Craik depicts invalids, ‘afflicted characters of both sexes’, she is in fact representing unmarried women: ‘freaks in a society that had no use for them’.<sup>xiv</sup> Whilst this is a forceful and convincing reading of characters like Phineas Fletcher—who, elsewhere in his essay on Craik, Hutton declares ‘is really an aunt’ when ‘he professes to be an uncle’—it negates one of Craik’s most powerful feminist interventions: her decision to focus, in multiple novels, on the interiority, the psychic life, of male protagonists.<sup>xv</sup>

In her biography of Craik Bourrier demonstrates, via the author’s letters to her brother Ben, that writing *John Halifax, Gentleman* was a creative process unlike Craik’s first four novels, which each had taken a year or less to write. The three years between *Agatha’s Husband* (1853) and *John Halifax* are attributed by Bourrier partly to Craik’s ‘frequent headaches’, but also, crucially, to a ‘conscious decision on her part to try to improve her writing’.<sup>xvi</sup> We must add to this that Craik was constructing a radically different text: a historical novel related from a male perspective, about male friendship, about masculinity, and representing the impact of one of the most dominant pieces of masculinist theory of the nineteenth century.<sup>xvii</sup>

### **The influence of *An Essay on the Principle of Population***

A common reading of Craik’s hugely popular novel, criticised and lampooned for its ‘wholesomeness’, can miss the way in which the novel engages with the cultural diffusion of Malthusian ideology, interrogating what we might now, albeit somewhat awkwardly, refer to as the proto-Darwinian, intellectual mood of the decade in which it was published.<sup>xviii</sup> In 1856

Thomas Robert Malthus had been dead 22 years, but the influence of his pamphlet *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, which first appeared anonymously in 1798, and was popularised through many editions, including *A Summary View* (1830), continued to expand, not unlike his theory of population growth.<sup>xix</sup> The influence of *An Essay on the Principle of Population* on works of politics, economics, scientific theory, moral philosophy, and many other branches of intellectual endeavour in the first half of the nineteenth century, has been well documented, often by the authors themselves, most famously by Charles Darwin.<sup>xx</sup> Malthus's writings on population growth, and the 'difficulty of subsistence' if growth increased 'unchecked', helped to promote John Rickman's advancement of a 'general enumeration of the people of the British Empire' which led to the 1800 Census Act and the 1801 census: the first Census of England, Scotland and Wales to be undertaken.<sup>xxi</sup> The work of Malthus and Rickman raised awareness of the very idea that there could be such a thing as a problem of overpopulation, so much so that by 1851, as Showalter explains, when the population return showed 'a full 30 percent of women over the age of twenty were unmarried, and another 13 percent were widowed', this was interpreted as a 'surplus in the population of 750,000 adult women without male protection [...].'<sup>xxii</sup> Craik was well aware of this statistic, as her 1857 contributions to *Chambers's Journal*, then collected as *A Woman's Thoughts about Women* (1859), demonstrated: 'It is the single women, belonging to those supernumerary ranks, which, political economists tell us, are yearly increasing, who most need thinking about.'<sup>xxiii</sup> Craik was cognisant of the popularity of Malthusian-inflected discourse circulating in the dominant form of cultural dissemination, the periodical press, and she was of the class of men and women who discussed such topics at dinner parties, in print, in private correspondence, and in other social situations such as the one Craik found herself in during the winter of 1854, whilst taking the water cure at Moor Park in Surrey, where patients, at various times, included Charles Darwin and Alexander Bain.<sup>xxiv</sup>



In her biography of Craik, *Victorian Bestseller*, Karen Bourrier provides details of the ‘Malthusian’ environment of Moor Park, where Craik spent her time during a period of recuperation, whilst also working on *John Halifax*. As Bourrier charts, each day, from lunch onwards, Craik engaged in lengthy dialogues with George Drysdale, until retiring for the evening. This meant that in November 1854, whilst Craik was in a crucial period of writing with *John Halifax*, she was engrossed in daily intellectual debates with Drysdale, who had recently completed his book *The Elements of Social Science; or, Physical, Sexual and Natural Religion* (1855). Drysdale’s book was a mostly positive recapitulation of Malthusian doctrine, including a review of ‘Malthus’s influence both in England and abroad’, but he departed from Malthus in advocating the use of contraception, in contrast to ‘Malthus’s recommendation of celibacy as a check to population growth’.<sup>xxv</sup> In their ‘four hours of conversation [...] daily’, Bourrier suggests, Drysdale and Craik ‘may well have been discussing Malthus’s ideas about population control, or the consequences of new research into geology and the transmutation of species for religious faith’. As I will show in the next section of this article, in *John Halifax, Gentleman* Craik was employed in a form of transmutation of her own, exploring these ‘revolutionary’ theories of population management, and evolution, whilst simultaneously taking on, for the first time in her literary career, a detailed exploration of masculinity and the male psyche.<sup>xxvi</sup>

At the same time as Malthusian ideology was permeating nineteenth-century critical discourse, insisting upon the ‘grinding law of necessity’ that: ‘Man cannot live in the midst of plenty. All cannot share alike the bounties of nature’, working in contradistinction were Lamarckian theories of evolutionary biology, as Piers J. Hale has demonstrated in *Political Descent: Malthus, Mutualism, and the Politics of Evolution in Victorian England*.<sup>xxvii</sup> In his 2014 book Hale:

contend[s] that from 1859 there existed two rival traditions of evolutionary politics in Victorian England: the one, deeply Malthusian, which focused upon the

adaptation of the individual through struggle as a means to a progressive social evolution; the other, radical and predominant[ly] Lamarckian and anti-Malthusian, that tended to emphasize the role of social cohesion as a means to the social evolution of a society in which individual interests tended to be subordinated to the welfare of the group.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Craik's novel, and in particular the relationship between her narrator Phineas, and hero John, can be read as an exploration of the tensions between these two rival traditions which predate Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* in 1859. Lamarck's theory of evolution described in his 1809 work *Philosophie Zoologique* was influential for Robert Chambers, Craik's publisher and friend, who caused a sensation with his anonymous contribution to the evolutionary debates of the 1800s—*Vestiges of Natural Creation*—in 1844, the same year that the *Chambers's Journal* launched Craik's career.<sup>xxix</sup> Robert Chambers and his brother William were part of the same social network as the phrenologist George Combe, medically-trained brothers George and Charles Drysdale, and the hydrotherapist Edward Wickstead Lane, whose treatment Craik was undergoing at Moor Park.<sup>xxx</sup> These men were Craik's peers, socially as well as in print, and, as Karen Bourrier has shown: 'When Dinah visited Edinburgh, she often stayed with Robert Chambers [taking] extended visits to the Chamberses' home at 1 Doune Terrace in Edinburgh's Georgian New Town.'<sup>xxxi</sup> From at least the 1840s onwards, therefore, Craik existed in an intellectual milieu of men and women who were heavily invested in debating the two 'rival traditions' described by Hale, as so many of their contemporary societal concerns seemed entangled in a negotiation of these theories about population control, about men and women, about class, and about heredity.

Joel S. Schwartz, in his article on the influence of Chambers's *Vestiges* on Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Thomas Henry Huxley, has demonstrated the importance of the 'ventilation of evolutionary ideas in the 1840s and 1850s' and the way in which they 'shaped the debate that followed the appearance of Darwin's work in 1859.'<sup>xxxii</sup> Craik's novel *John Halifax, Gentleman* has yet to be read as a text that intervenes in discussions of evolutionary

biology and population checks, despite the fact that the central study of the novel is a mutualistic relationship between two male characters: one physically weak, but socially powerful, the other physically strong, but socially impotent. I want to suggest that, in a decade Tracy Seeley has identified as ‘one of the most significant periods in women’s essay writing [...] inaugurated by the 1851 census’, Craik made a deliberate departure from the topic of her previous novels to focus her critical faculties on, not what to do with those ‘supernumerary’ women, but a vision of two ostensibly superfluous men, made meaningful by cooperation.<sup>xxxiii</sup> As Craik was surrounded by discussions about the future of social and societal relations, this departure can, in part, be explained by Hale’s assertion that:

Competition or cooperation, self-interest or altruism—across the history of our species, and certainly across the history of our study of our own evolution, [...] have become key issues in how we make sense of ourselves, of how we might live, and ultimately, of how we think about what it means to be human.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The relationship between our protagonist-narrator Phineas Fletcher, and protagonist-hero John Halifax, is one of self-interest and altruism, of successful survival as a negotiation of the limits of male cooperative relations.

The tension between competition and cooperation, self-interest and altruism, in *John Halifax* has hitherto been read as a piece of middle-class propaganda: a cloying celebration of the capitalist economic principles of individual endeavour. Many critics have acknowledged the influence of Craik’s novel in relation to the ‘ideology of upward mobility, self-help [...] success’ and self-interest that marked mid-century.<sup>xxxv</sup> In her 1983 critical biography, Sally Mitchell argued that Craik ‘distilled the ideals of the new commercial and industrial middle class’ in the novel’, and that the book ‘echoed the mood of the 1851 Great Exhibition with its celebration of British technology, industry, and commerce.’<sup>xxxvi</sup> Joseph A. Kestner reiterates Mitchell’s point in his work on reform narratives, similarly situating *John Halifax* within ‘the mid-century consciousness that found expression in the Great Exhibition of 1851’.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Silvana Colella’s exploration of *John Halifax* and gift theory emphasises the historical significance of

the fact that the novel ‘articulates the pursuit of self-interest’ as *not* ‘stigmatized or considered vulgar’.<sup>xxxviii</sup> One reason why so many scholars have found the link between the novel and the commercial middle class compelling is because Craik’s presentation of self-restraint, self-improvement, and self-respect, as noble qualities of idealised masculinity, prefigured another enormously popular non-fiction text also published first in 1859: Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help*.<sup>xxxix</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, in 1977, described Craik’s novel as ‘one of the most interesting of the midcentury novels celebrating the triumphs of middle-class industry’ in another reading of the text as focused on the elevation of the individual, or more precisely: the evolution of *homo economicus* to the Carlylian ‘captain of industry’.<sup>xl</sup> All these readings concentrate, as our narrator does, on what Henry James termed the ‘awful perfection’ of John Halifax: the supposedly ‘self-made man’, rendered heroic, in stark contrast to Charles Dickens’ vulgar Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, [...] ‘a man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man’, but who is revealed to be nothing but a ‘self-made Humbug’ and *is* stigmatized thereafter.<sup>xli</sup>

### **A Symbiotic Arrangement: John Halifax and Phineas Fletcher**

In their focus on Craik’s story as an ‘industrial success’ narrative, Brantlinger and others perform the surface reading of the novel presented to us by our narrator Phineas Fletcher.<sup>xlii</sup> In fact, what sits directly beneath this ostensible celebration of middle-class industriousness portrayed as ultimate heroic masculinity, is the very ‘intellectual framework’ that Hutton claimed women writers were incapable of creating, cursed as they are with an inability to separate themselves ‘from the visible surface and form of human existence.’<sup>xliii</sup> Subcutaneous to ‘John Halifax, the hero of the people’ (150), who Brantlinger compares to George Eliot’s *Felix Holt* (1866)—arguing that in both novels there is a ‘displacement of focus from social to personal forces’, and thus the potentially ‘radical’ social message is lost—is Phineas Fletcher.<sup>xliv</sup>

What emerges, if we bring Phineas's role in *John Halifax, Gentleman* to the surface, is the kinship model put forward by the text, very particularly articulated so as to enable Craik to normalise the symbiotic relationship between John Halifax and Phineas Fletcher.

Unlike Josiah Bounderby, John Halifax, our 'tradesman hero', has no bashfully proud parent skulking in the shadows of his narrative.<sup>xlv</sup> His single possession is a copy of the Greek Testament inscribed with the only record of his parentage: 'Guy Halifax, gentleman, married Muriel Joyce, spinster, May 17, in the year of our Lord 1779' (10). Beyond this our narrator insists:

'[John] was indebted to no forefathers for a family history: the chronicle commenced with himself, and was altogether his own making. No romantic antecedents ever turned up: his lineage remained uninvestigated, and his pedigree began and ended with his own honest name—John Halifax.' (11)

From the very opening pages of this story the narrator, Phineas Fletcher, is setting up an opposition, a challenge, to understandings of the relationship between male lineage and value, apparently positioning John as familially beholden to no one. Craik too, is setting up a secondary challenge to her literary forebears, like Dickens, whose plots regularly revolved and resolved around the revelation of a character's provenance.

In contrast to John Halifax, Phineas Fletcher is named by his father Abel Fletcher, as a reminder 'of the advantages of good descent', and therefore after a forefather 'not unknown—Phineas Fletcher, who wrote the "Purple Island."' (5-6) Phineas not only has a traceable ancestral line but an ancestor who lived outside the pages of Craik's fictional narrative, from 1582 to 1650, and who attended Eton and Cambridge before being ordained to the priesthood in 1611.<sup>xlvi</sup> Craik deliberately enhances the difference between orphan John, and invalid Phineas, by providing Phineas with a real historical figure of secure social standing for an ancestor, while John has only his 'word' from which to project 'a mind and breeding above his outward condition' (6). Despite Phineas's *real* familial evidence of being from 'good stock' (6) his only tangible advantage over John is a comfortable home provided for him by his father

and his father's struggling (we learn later), tanning business. Born with an unnamed condition, our narrator tells us he will not live to see adulthood (12) and that his body is 'puny and diseased', plagued by a 'succession of sicknesses' (26). Upon meeting John, vulnerable in his homelessness, poverty, and lack of family, Phineas recognises an opportunity in this 'tall and strongly-built' boy. To Phineas, John radiates physical health, and in observing his: 'muscular limbs,' 'square, broad shoulders', 'healthy cheek', 'even [...] his crisp curls of bright thick hair' (2), Phineas forms a 'plan' (9) to ensure his future and John's simultaneously. Phineas appeals to his father to get John work at his tan-yard, judging John's character to be of a grateful and loyal nature, and his father complies. This is a calculated move. We learn that Abel Fletcher has hopes that Phineas will one day be his 'assistant and successor' in the business, but his son is 'a sickly creature', 'as helpless and useless to him as a baby.' (2) Phineas therefore must find alternative means of performing his duty, securing the future of the business, and his own existence. Our narrator informs the reader that he feels pain at 'deceiving' his father in his 'project' of embedding John in the tan-yard (John does indeed sleep there at first), with its 'deep fosses of abomination' (25), but we begin to understand that Phineas has taken inspiration from the legend of Dick Whittington and is plotting for John to succeed his father in the tanning business (27-8).

At the surface level of the narration Phineas's health prevents him from ever assuming the role his father would wish for him, or so we are told by our narrator. Yet, deliberately, Craik reveals Phineas's aversion to his father's trade is not simply an issue of poor health. Phineas 'mentally and physically' 'revolts' from the tanning trade. He does not hold back his vehement feelings of 'abhorrence' for the place which 'to enter [...] made [him] ill for days' (24).<sup>xlvi</sup> Unable and unwilling to become a tanner then, the future of Phineas's safety and comfort is a concern that necessitates the pecuniary-minded behaviours of the marriage market, and a woman's dependency upon it for survival, as depicted in so many novels of the period. With

the practical mindset of Jane Austen's Charlotte Lucas, whose frank considerations of marriage as 'the pleasantest preservative from want' leads her to a match with Mr. Collins, Phineas must find some way of securing his financial future after his father's death.<sup>xlviii</sup> Thus, Phineas is inspired by John's circumstances, and his own, to engineer a symbiosis: a fusing together of their existences which emboldens him to seek lodgings for John without asking his father's permission or advice. The reader is told 'it was astonishing how bold I felt myself growing, now that there was another beside myself to think and act for.' (30) In his review of Craik's novels, Hutton takes this as evidence that in portraying Phineas Craik drew on 'the experience of a mother, or at least a sister.' He argues:

It is scarcely possible to persuade one's self that the tender, devoted manner in which courage comes for the first time in thinking and acting for another, and the self-sacrificing resignation with which all monopolising desires are resigned on the glimpse of that other's dawning passion,—are not taken from the experience of a mother, or at least a sister, very thinly disguised under the masculine pretensions of Phineas Fletcher.<sup>xlix</sup>

Hutton's explanation for Craik's depiction of Phineas is a biological one, and in that respect it is not entirely wrong, but he argues that the character's sympathies must be the thinly veiled instincts of a mother or sister, transposed unrealistically into a male narrator.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the 'devoted manner', as Hutton phrases it, in which Phineas commits himself to the advancement of John Halifax, is in fact explained entirely by his self-interest. This is a matter of survival. Phineas tells the reader 'brotherless, sisterless, friendless as I was [...] I had [...] one sole aim and object, to keep near me this lad [...]. To say that what I projected was done out of charity or pity would not be true; it was simple selfishness [...].' (9) This is the Malthusian ethos of self-interest, as dictated by the logic of life as a struggle, justified by an absence of 'kin assistance.'<sup>li</sup>

As well as being unable to take on the family business due to ill-health and 'abhorrence' of the work, 'stricken with hereditary disease', Phineas has also come to the conclusion that he 'ought never to seek to perpetuate it by marriage' (45). Our narrator admits that this decision

was not an easy one, and Craik uses the language of the evolutionary debates to demonstrate that fact:

[...] weak invalid as I was. I was, nevertheless, twenty years old; and although Jael and Sally were the only specimens of the other sex which had risen on my horizon, yet once or twice, [...], I had had a boy's lovely dreams of the divinity of womanhood. [...] Soon dawned the bare, hard truth, [...] one sickly as I was, stricken with hereditary disease, ought never to seek to perpetuate it by marriage. I therefore put from me, at once and for ever, every feeling of that kind; and during my whole life—I thank God!—have never faltered in my resolution. Friendship was given me for love—duty for happiness. So best, and I was satisfied. (45)

Here Phineas demonstrates to the reader that he has internalised Malthusian ideology in his 'moral restraint' from marriage.<sup>lii</sup> In her analysis of Malthus's influence on women writers of this period Ella Dzelzainis demonstrates just how much 'Malthusianism ha[d] shifted in popular meaning in the 40 or so years since the *Essay*'s original publication', and 'had become shorthand, in the literary arena and beyond, for an emphasis on reason and a denial of the needs of the body.'<sup>liii</sup> Phineas represents an alternative, but equally heroic idealisation of the middle-class gentleman in Craik's depiction of him as 'the incarnation of an ascetic regimen, an elaborately articulated program of self-discipline.'<sup>liv</sup> He describes reaching this decision as a 'hard struggle' and stresses it is 'natural' that it should have been so. (45) His attraction to John Halifax and subsequent scheme to form an alternative kinship model with him—where John becomes the head of the Fletcher family business and Phineas takes on the role of nonbiological 'uncle' to John's children, living in the family, and providing a supportive parental role—can be seen as a rationalisation of what Joseph Carroll and others have termed 'kin assistance'. In

*Literary Darwinism, Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature*, Carroll explains:

The logic of selection at the level of the gene has shaped our motivational systems, and as a consequence [...] [we] now recognise "kin assistance" as one of the elementary human behavioural systems. In order to account for social interaction beyond the kin group, evolutionary social scientists invoke the principle of "reciprocation" or "reciprocal altruism". This is simply the principle of mutual back-scratching. [...] As Darwin himself recognised, social animals can often benefit themselves through cooperative effort with others.<sup>lv</sup>



In order to effect his plan of reciprocal altruism, after establishing John in the tan-yard and finding him lodgings, Phineas turns his attention to improving John in other ways: he teaches John to read via ‘printed letters’, and ‘a book or two’, which he manages to send to him on ‘rare’ occasions despite fear of his father’s disapprobation (31-32). Slowly, by ‘hint’ (47), and by nudge, and by virtue of the family doctor’s intervention, which puts an end to Abel Fletcher’s ‘last lingering hope of having a son able to assist, and finally succeed him in his business’ (47), Phineas is able to plant in his father’s mind the suggestion that John Halifax be taken on as a surrogate son and inheritor in Phineas’s place.<sup>lvi</sup>

Elaine Showalter reads this symbiosis as a demonstration of Craik’s ‘split consciousness.’ Phineas, Showalter argues, ‘crippled, gentle, domestic—clearly had the attributes of one kind of Victorian woman’, while Halifax ‘was also a projection of a different kind of female experience, much closer to Craik’s own’. In this reading of Halifax he is ‘the epitome of Christian gentlemanliness, a manliness stripped of all virility’ as one side of Craik’s ‘self-image’, and Phineas is the ‘crippled looker-on at other people’s happy marriages and lives, permanently disbarred from such joy’.<sup>lvii</sup> And yet, even if we put to one side the fact that Halifax’s virility is such that he has five children, at the novel’s end, Phineas, our ‘sickly creature’ (2), has outlived John Halifax, his wife Ursula, and their first-born child Muriel. It is Phineas’s restraint, restraint from ever trying to ‘win any woman’s reverence or love’—which came after that ‘hard struggle’ (45)—that the novel ultimately rewards. By internalising Malthusian population anxiety, exercising ‘Moral restraint’, and fulfilling one of the possible checks to population growth in ‘abstinence from marriage’, Phineas is rewarded with a long and meaningful life.<sup>lviii</sup>

### **Conclusion: Writing Men**

At a time when Elaine Showalter and Tracey Seeley have shown there to have been deep cultural anxiety about the future of the single woman in society, Dinah Mulock, unmarried as she then was, chose to write a novel in which she imagined the life of a male spinster whose being is given meaning through the process of achieving a symbiosis with another male character whose needs coalesce with his own.<sup>lix</sup> In her essay on Craik's nonfiction writings Seeley argues that Craik's best abilities were in presenting a 'popular distillation of the arguments employed by her contemporaries'.<sup>lx</sup> I have attempted to show in this article how Craik also achieved this 'popular distillation' in her fiction - fiction that was, if not dismissed, at least diminished in its claims to 'genius' by reviewers who felt threatened by her daring to adopt a male narrative voice, and perhaps even more so, by her depiction of a male co-dependent relationship.

In his review of *A Noble Life*, Craik's third novel after *John Halifax* to focus on the psychic life of a male protagonist, Henry James argued 'since, indeed, the history of a wise man's soul was in question, a wise man, and not a woman something less than wise, should have undertaken to relate it.'<sup>lxi</sup> This echoes a sentiment in Hutton's 1858 review article where, comparing Craik to Charlotte Brontë, Hutton tells his reader, both authors demonstrate a 'curious inability to conceive of men as they are in relation to each other'.<sup>lxii</sup> In Mrs Parr's contribution to Margaret Oliphant's *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign: A Book of Appreciations* she quotes another review of Craik from 1866 where the writer declares it 'impossible for women to describe a man as he is' because "'they are ignorant of the machinery which sets the thing going, and the principle of the machinery"'.<sup>lxiii</sup>

Both Brontë and Craik were aware of this resistance to women writing men. In Brontë's 1849 novel *Shirley* we are treated to a wry inversion of the complaint levelled against her, and other women writers:

“If men could see us as we really are, they would be a little amazed; but the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women. They do not read them in a true light; they misapprehend them [...]”

Shirley goes as far as to make an outright challenge to the reviewers, telling Caroline:

Women read men more truly than men read women. I'll prove that in a magazine paper some day when I've time; only it will never be inserted. It will be 'declined with thanks,' and left for me at the publisher's.<sup>lxiv</sup>

Craik would have recognised the humour here. Writing at the end of her life, in an article entitled 'Concerning Men' (1888), she acknowledged: 'I have shared with many other female writers the accusation that all my men are 'women's men'.<sup>lxv</sup> Craik was often pitted against George Eliot as the 'feminine' novelist of sentimental, domestic fiction, to Eliot's 'masculine' novelist of intellectual fiction, of wider, more ambitious frame, and both authors made use of this gendered comparison to stake claims for themselves in the crowded literary marketplace.<sup>lxvi</sup> Eliot, perturbed by a French reviewer's comparison of *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) to Craik's work, wrote: '[...] the most ignorant journalist in England would hardly think of calling me a rival of Miss Mulock—a writer who is read only by novel readers, pure and simple, never by people of high culture. A very excellent woman she is, I believe—but we belong to an entirely different order of writers.'<sup>lxvii</sup> Craik, for her part, in an article entitled 'To Novelists—and a Novelist' took issue with Eliot's world vision in *The Mill on the Floss*, asking the reader: 'what good will it do?' Craik saw Eliot's depiction of Maggie's isolation as unrealistic in its 'doctrine of overpowering circumstances.' Provoked by her reading of Eliot's version of the struggle for existence, so lacking in cooperative opportunities, Craik lamented 'we cannot help asking—what is to become of the hundreds of clever girls'? Perhaps for her, as a woman who had lived independently—in multiple senses of the word—for some time by this point in her career, it didn't ring true to Craik that a girl as clever as Maggie Tulliver would sink under the tide of society's inequities.<sup>lxviii</sup>

What a strange, unnerving creature that woman writer must have been who knew 'the value of a thing' she'd written, and negotiated terms herself; who saw herself as equal to—

enough to critique—her contemporary George Eliot; who wrote, despite assertions to the contrary, because she chose to; and whose ability to distil complex ideas into popular fiction was so skilled it remained undetected by many of her contemporary critics.<sup>lxi</sup> More unnerving still that woman writer who dared to look at masculinity aslant, depicting male protagonists in ways that unsettled received notions of the male character, and cemented in popular consciousness a form of middle-class masculinity that promoted a cooperative, non-combative alternative for male relationships.

Craik was a highly intellectual person who at one time in her life was actively learning at least five languages including French, Italian, ‘Latin, Greek, and Irish’.<sup>lxx</sup> Like Eliot, she took on a variety of literary work including translation: indeed her ‘first recorded publication’ in *Chambers’s* was a ‘little [...] translation [...] from the Italian’.<sup>lxxi</sup> In producing novels for ‘novel readers’ that contained, in Hutton’s words ‘a whole outlying world of thought which cannot be introduced *into* the tale, and which is yet suggested to the writer by the story told,’ Craik was doing precisely what Hutton said the woman writer could not.<sup>lxxii</sup> She was that ‘really cultured woman’ of Eliot’s now famous essay, ‘Silly Novels by Lady Novelists’, first published anonymously in the same year as *John Halifax*. Craik’s fiction ‘is all the simpler and the less obtrusive for her knowledge’ of the word-wars that were being waged in conversation, in the periodical press, in pamphlets, and in books written by her peers, in those crucial years of the evolutionary debates and anxieties about the future of population management. In *John Halifax, Gentleman* Craik ‘does not give you information, which is the raw material of culture—she gives you sympathy, which is its subtlest essence.’<sup>lxxiii</sup> Her lasting achievement in depicting the sympathetic, symbiotic relationship of Phineas Fletcher and John Halifax is a domestication of the complex, masculinist debates about the future of societal cohesion provoked by Malthus’s *An Essay on the Principle of Population* and developed in the evolutionary works of Robert Chambers,

George Drysdale, Charles Darwin and others. In Craik's most enduring work of fiction, 'a whole outlying world of thought' is popularly distilled into a study of idealised masculinity, cooperative yet self-interested, altruistic yet competitive: a hopeful vision of life not as a struggle but as reciprocation.

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<sup>i</sup> R. H. Hutton, "Novels by the Authoress of 'John Halifax'", *North British Review*, Vol. 29, (1858), pp.466-481; p. 466. The article includes subsections: 'the imaginations of men and women', 'the framework of masculine novels', 'the plot in men's and women's fictions', 'the old school of lady-novelists', 'women's portraiture of male friendships', 'the abstract side of the imagination', 'the power of portraying the growth of character', and 'the didactic novel and the purposeless novel'.

<sup>ii</sup> Hutton, 'Novels', p.467.

<sup>iii</sup> Hutton, 'Novels', p.467.

<sup>iv</sup> Henry James, 'A Noble Life', originally published in *The Nation*, March 1, 1886, in *Notes and Reviews* (Cambridge, Mass: Dunster House, 1921), pp.167-172; p.169.

<sup>v</sup> As well as fiction for adults Craik had also published numerous stories for children by this point: *Michael the Miner* (1846), *How to Win Love; or Rhoda's Lesson* (1848), *Cola Monti; or the Story of a Genius* (1849), *Alice Learmont: A Fairy Tale* (1852), *A Hero, Philip's Book* (1853), and *Little Lychetts, an Autobiography* (1855). This was in addition to the articles, poems and other tales placed in publications such as: *Bentley's Miscellany*, *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine*, *Fraser's* and *Household Words*.

<sup>vi</sup> Karen Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller: the Life of Dinah Craik* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), p.87.

<sup>vii</sup> Hutton, 'Novels', p.478.

<sup>viii</sup> Lynn M. Alexander notes, in her introduction to the Broadview Press edition of the novel published in 2005, that 'by 1858 Craik's publishers, Hurst and Blackett, had run through four editions of the novel, with over 250 thousand copies sold by 1897, 80 thousand sold in the six-penny edition during the final six months of the year, and by 1898 the novel was listed by eleven English publishers and there were forty-five different pirated editions in America.' Dinah Mulock Craik, *John Halifax, Gentleman*, ed. and intro. by Lynn M. Alexander (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2005), p.24.

<sup>ix</sup> *John Halifax, Gentleman* begins in 1794 and ends in 1834. It is, as Sally Mitchell states, 'precisely dated'. Sally Mitchell, *Dinah Mulock Craik* (Boston, Mass: Twayne, 1983), p.41. All references to Craik's novel *John Halifax, Gentleman* will be to the Everyman's library edition: Dinah Maria Mulock (Mrs Craik), *John Halifax, Gentleman*, intro. by W. M. Parker (London: Everyman, 1961). Page references given as in-text citations.

<sup>x</sup> For more on the financial panic of 1825 see Larry Neal, 'The Financial Crisis of 1825 and the Restructuring of the British Financial System', *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, May/June 1998, pp. 53-76.

<sup>xi</sup> Hutton writes: 'You can always see a kind of intellectual framework, of some sort, in a man's novels, which tells you that the unity is given rather by the mind and conception of the narrator, than by the actual evolution of the story. Feminine novelists never carry you beyond the tale they are telling [...].' Hutton, 'Novels', p.468.

<sup>xii</sup> See: Mitchell, *Dinah Mulock Craik*; Elaine Showalter, 'Dinah Mulock Craik and the Tactics of Sentiment: A Case Study in Victorian Female Authorship,' *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 2/3 (1975), pp.5-23; Kathryn Ledbetter, 'Taking the Multitudes Abroad: Dinah Mulock Craik's Travel Narratives in Victorian Family Magazines', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 50, No. 2, (2017), pp. 295-316; Silvana Colella, 'Gifts and Interests: John Halifax, Gentleman and the Purity of Business,' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (2007), pp.397-415; Bourrier: *Victorian Bestseller* (2019); *The Measure of Manliness: Disability and Masculinity in the mid-Victorian Novel* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2015); Special Issue of *Women's Writing* on Dinah Mulock Craik, Vol. 20 No. 2 (2013); 'Finding the Transatlantic Audience: Dinah Craik's Mistress and Maid in Good Words and Harper's', *Victorian Periodical Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2016), pp.100-122; 'Dinah Mulock Craik and Benjamin Mulock: Re-reading the Role of the Male Relative in the Woman Writer's Career', *Prose Studies*, Vol. 33 No. 3 (2011), pp.174-187; and 'Narrating Insanity in the Letters of Thomas Mulock and Dinah Mulock Craik', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2011), pp.203-222.

<sup>xiii</sup> Showalter, 'Tactics of Sentiment', p.9.

<sup>xiv</sup> Showalter, 'Tactics of Sentiment', p.11.

- <sup>xv</sup> Hutton, 'Novels', p.475.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Bourrier: *Victorian Bestseller*, p.91.
- <sup>xvii</sup> In 'Thomas Malthus and Maternal Bodies Politic: Gender, Race, and Empire' Randi Davenport looks at how 'Malthusian discourse re-gendered the early nineteenth-century social body so that it became a silent, passive space upon which discursive expressions of the masculine could act.' *Women's History Review*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (1995), pp.415-439; p.415.
- <sup>xviii</sup> W. M. Parker reports that upon publication one commentator remarked: 'It does not rank among the great masterpieces of fiction; and yet it lives on, admittedly one of the wholesomest novels in the language, inspired by the noble ideals of a good woman whose enthusiasms had not been stunted by a spurious intellectuality'. 'Introduction', Craik, *John Halifax, Gentleman*, p.viii. As Bourrier notes in her biography Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of Natural Creation* (1844) argued for the transmutation of species fifteen years before Darwin published *Origin of Species* (1859). Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller*, p.91.
- <sup>xix</sup> References in this article will be to the Penguin Classics edition: Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. and intro. by Antony Flew (London: Penguin 1985).
- <sup>xx</sup> The first published edition of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859) announces that chapter three 'Struggle for Existence' 'is the doctrine of Malthus, applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms.' p.5. For recent work on Malthus's influence see: Gregory Claeys, 'The "Survival of the Fittest" and the Origins of Social Darwinism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 61 (2000), pp.223-40; Piers J. Hale, *Political Descent: Malthus, Mutualism, and the Politics of Evolution in Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); James P. Huzel, *The Popularization of Malthus in Early Nineteenth-Century England: Martineau, Cobbett and the Pauper Press* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); *New Perspectives on Malthus*, ed. by Robert J. Mayhew (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- <sup>xxi</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, p.71; John Rickman, 'Thoughts on the Utility and Facility of a General Enumeration of the People of the British Empire', *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine*, June 1800, pp.391-399. For more on Rickman and his original memorandum, of which this was a version see: D. V. Glass, *Numbering the People: the Eighteenth-century Population Controversy and the Development of Census and Vital Statistics in Britain* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1973).
- <sup>xxii</sup> Showalter, 'Tactics of Sentiment', p.12.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Dinah Mulock Craik, *A Woman's Thoughts about Women* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1859), p.2. See also Tracy Seeley, 'Victorian Women's Essays and Dinah Mulock's Thoughts: Creating an Ethos for Argument', *Prose Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1996), pp.93-109.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller*, p.88.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller*, p.90. In Antony Flew's introduction to *An Essay on the Principle of Population* he notes 'contraception within marriage first began to win currency in England in the 1820s.' p.26. In keeping with this, in a 1975 article, William L. Langer charts Malthus's influence on social reformers like Francis Place, who published *Illustrations and Proofs of Population* in 1822, as an advocacy of contraceptive methods. Langer, 'The Origins of the Birth Control Movement in England in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1975), pp. 669-686; p.685. Langer's article suggests that by the 1870s contraception was a well-established practice for the middle and upper classes. p.686.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller*, p.90; p.91.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, pp.133-4.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Hale, *Political Descent*, pp.7-8.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller*, p.17; p.44.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Tomo Sato, 'E.W. Lane's Hydropathic Establishment at Moor Park', *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1978), pp.45-59; Kate Summerscale, *Mrs Robinson's Disgrace: The Private Diary of a Victorian Lady* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p.35.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller*, p.45.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Joel S. Schwartz, 'Darwin, Wallace, and Huxley, and *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*', *Journal of the History of Biology*, Vol. 23, No.1 (1990), pp.127-153; p.128.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Seeley, 'Victorian Women's Essays', p.93.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Hale, *Political Descent*, p.3.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Joseph A. Kestner, *Protest and Reform: The British Social Narrative by Women, 1827-1867* (London: Methuen & Co., 1985), p.187.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Mitchell, *Dinah Mulock Craik*, p.39.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Kestner, *Protest and Reform*, p.187.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Silvana Colella, 'Gifts and Interests: John Halifax, Gentleman and the Purity of Business', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2007), pp. 397-415; p.398.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> In *Self-Help* Smiles declared: 'the power of self-help, of patient purpose, resolute working, and steadfast integrity, issuing in the formation of truly noble and manly character [...] enabling men of even the humblest

rank to work out for themselves an honourable competency and a solid reputation.’ Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* [revised and enlarged edition] (London: John Murray, 1860), p.5.

<sup>xi</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, *The Spirit of Reform: British Literature and Politics, 1832-1867* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1977), p.119. For a detailed discussion of *homo economicus* see Sarah Comyn, *Political Economy and the Novel: A Literary History of “Homo Economicus”* (London: Palgrave, 2018).

Thomas Carlyle coined the phrase ‘captains of industry’ in *Past and Present* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843). See in particular pp.231-236.

<sup>xli</sup> James, ‘A Noble Life’, p.168; Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.26; p.258. Dickens’ novel was first published two years before *John Halifax, Gentleman* in 1854.

<sup>xliii</sup> Brantlinger, *Spirit of Reform*, p.123.

<sup>xliiii</sup> Hutton, ‘Novels’, p.467.

<sup>xliv</sup> Eliot’s novel’s full title is *Felix Holt: the Radical* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1866).

Brantlinger, *Spirit of Reform*, p.123.

<sup>xlv</sup> Mitchell suggests *John Halifax* ‘was one of the first novels to have a tradesman as hero.’ Mitchell, *Dinah Mulock Craik*, p.39.

<sup>xlvi</sup> See Abram Barnett Langdale, *Phineas Fletcher: Man of Letters, Science and Divinity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937); R. G. Baldwin, ‘Phineas Fletcher: his Modern Readers and his Renaissance Ideas’, *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (1961), pp.462–75; and Frank S Kastor, *Giles and Phineas Fletcher* (Boston, Mass: Twayne, 1978).

<sup>xlvii</sup> There are a number of snobbish remarks throughout the novel about the unsavoury nature of tan-yard work. In chapter two Phineas reports: ‘he [Abel] knew too well how I disliked the tan-yard and all belonging to it’. (17) In chapter three Phineas confesses: ‘Mentally and physically I alike revolted from my father’s trade [...] sometimes for months and months I never went near it.’ (24). In chapter five Phineas cries to John: “‘how I wish you were something better than a clerk in a tan-yard.’” (46). And so on. The relationship between the tan-yard and Phineas’s strange, unnamed illness could be read psychosomatically.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), p.83.

<sup>xlix</sup> Hutton, ‘Novels’, p.475.

<sup>1</sup> Craik was not yet a mother in the 1850s. In 1869 she would adopt a foundling baby girl who she named Dorothy. She was, however, a sister to Tom (1827–1847), and Benjamin (1829–1863).

<sup>li</sup> Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature* (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), p.156.

<sup>lii</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, p.250.

<sup>liii</sup> Ella Dzelzainis, ‘Malthus, Women and Fiction’ in *New Perspectives on Malthus*, ed. by Robert J. Mayhew (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 155-181; p.173.

<sup>liv</sup> James Eli Adams writes in *Dandies and Desert Saints* that self-discipline: ‘is of course a fabled Victorian attribute, whose extraordinary prominence in nineteenth-century culture historians have explained as a function of the conjoint rise of Evangelicalism and an increasingly pervasive market economy, as well as the Malthusian logics common to both arenas.’ James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.2; p.4.

<sup>lv</sup> Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, p.156.

<sup>lvi</sup> On effecting the surrogacy Abel Fletcher apostrophises to John: “remember, thee hast in some measure taken that lad’s place. May God deal with thee as thou dealest with my son Phineas—my only son!” (84).

<sup>lvii</sup> Showalter, ‘Tactics of Sentiment’, pp.17-18.

<sup>lviii</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, p.250.

<sup>lix</sup> I use the term spinster deliberately here. Phineas figures his character as such, describing himself several times as ‘womanish’ (45; 106). Craik saw gender as to some extent fluid, commenting in *A Woman’s Thoughts About Women* ‘do we not continually find womanish men and masculine women?’ Craik, *A Woman’s Thoughts*, p.25.

<sup>lx</sup> Seeley ‘Victorian Women’s Essays’, p.96.

<sup>lxi</sup> James, ‘A Noble Life’, p.170.

<sup>lxii</sup> Hutton, ‘Novels’, p.475.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Mrs Parr, ‘Dinah Mulock (Mrs. Craik)’, in *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria’s Reign: A Book of Appreciations*, ed. by Margaret Oliphant, pp.217-248; p.223.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley: a Tale* (London: Collins, 1953), pp.284-5.

<sup>lxv</sup> Dinah Mulock Craik, *Concerning Men and Other Papers* (London: Macmillan, 1888), p.2.

<sup>lxvi</sup> See J. Russell Perkin, ‘Narrative Voice and the ‘Feminine’ Novelist: Dinah Mulock and George Eliot’, *Victorian Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1992), pp. 24–42.

<sup>lxvii</sup> George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters* Vol. III, ed. by Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p.302.

<sup>lxviii</sup> Dinah Mulock Craik, ‘To Novelists—and A Novelist’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, April 1861; pp.441-448; p.444; p.445. Multiple scholars have suggested a relationship between *John Halifax, Gentleman* and *The Mill on*

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*the Floss*. See: Mitchell, *Dinah Mulock Craik*, p.51 who references Robert A. Colby, *Fiction with a Purpose* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967).

<sup>lxi</sup> Craik, *A Woman's Thoughts*, p.37; Margaret Oliphant, in her autobiography refers to the publisher Henry Blackett turning 'pale at Miss Mulock's sturdy business-like stand for her money.' *The Autobiography and Letters of Mrs M. O. W. Oliphant* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1899) p.85; Craik, 'To Novelists—and a Novelist', pp. 441-448; Showalter, 'Tactics of Sentiment', p.9.

<sup>lxx</sup> Bourrier quotes Craik writing to a friend: 'I must tell you that I have been studying French, Italian, and Latin very hard during the winter, and now I am learning Greek with my brothers, who have a tutor at home to finish them, and a nice old gentleman, and more than all an old friend of Papa's, one Thaddeus Connellan, is teaching me Irish. Did you ever know such a learned young lady as I shall be, in time? [I] shall be enough to frighten all the young gentlemen with my Latin, Greek, and Irish! Irish is very difficult, much more so than Greek, but I don't care; I shall be a walking Polyglot Lexicon, by-and-by, don't you think so?' *Victorian Bestseller*, p.35.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Bourrier, *Victorian Bestseller*, pp.47-48.

<sup>lxxii</sup> In "Novels by the Authoress of 'John Halifax'" Hutton proclaims: 'there is rarely any wide background to a woman's tales.' p.469.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> George Eliot, 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', *Westminster Review*, October 1856, pp.442-461; p.455.