

TRANSATLANTIC IDENTITIES



8. FAMILY VALUES

November 8, 2023

FAMILY VALUES

MIDDLE-CLASS VICTORIANS regarded morality and etiquette as badges of belonging. Proper British decorum was something they carried with them into the colonies and assiduously practiced at home—at least in public. Victorian art is full of paintings warning of the consequences of lapses from these standards, especially for women; men, as so often, enjoyed a double standard.

For whatever reason, American art of the period offers few such examples, perhaps because the still-new nation faced more existential dilemmas. Also while Victorian moral art was mainly situated within a bourgeois urban milieu, Americans hankered after the simpler values of the country and distrusted distinctions of class. Their morality derived from Bibles read at home, from the *McGuffey Readers* studied at school, and from an increasing sense of civic responsibility.

The second hour of the class will look at novels, in which authors worked through moral issues with equal intensity in both nations. Each will be illustrated through text excerpts and videos. *rb.*

A. UNHAPPY FAMILIES

Aspects of the Victorian preoccupation with the Fallen Woman.

Winterhalter: *Family of Queen Victoria* (1846, Royal Collection)

Egg: *Past and Present* (1858, Tate)

Watts: *Drowned* (1859, Watts Gallery, Compton, Surrey)

♪ **Hood:** *The Bridge of Sighs* (read by Jonathan Jones)

Hunt: *The Light of the World* (1854, Keble College, Oxford)

Hunt: *The Awakening Conscience* (1853, Tate)

Rossetti: *Found* (1853–, Wilmington DE)

Redgrave: *The Outcast* (1851, Royal Academy)

Collier: *The Prodigal Daughter* (1903, Lincoln)

♪ **Hardy:** *The Ruined Maid* (reader unknown)

B. COUNTRY COUSINS

The relative lack of moralities on the British model from American artists, as opposed to their hankering after a vision of rural simplicity.

- ♪ **Kilburne**: *Poor Relations* (1875, Liverpool)
- ♪ **Johnson**: *The Pension Claim Agent* (1867, San Francisco)
- ♪ **Johnson**: *The Corn Husking* (1860, Syracuse)
- ♪ **Edmonds** : *The New Bonnet* (1858, NY Met)
- ♪ **Mayer**: *Leisure and Labor* (1858, Washington NGA)
- ♪ **Mayer**: *Independence / Squire Jack Porter* (1858, Smithsonian)
- ♪ **Perry**: *Talking it Over* (1872, NY Met)

C. LESSONS FOR THE YOUNG

The importance of the *Eclectic Readers* of William McGuffey in shaping the moral sense of young people, and what the differences between his original edition of 1836 and the revised publication in 1879 tell us about the changes in the American ethic.

- ♪ **Alexander**: "Do no sinful action" (Daphne Houston)
- ♪ **Video**: *McGuffey Readers* (Henry Ford Museum)
- ♪ **Video**: *McGuffey Readers*, differences between editions
- ♪ **Berlin**: "God bless America" (Ed Sullivan Show, 1962)
- ♪ **Brumidi**: *Apotheosis of Washington* (1865, US Capitol)

D. MORALITY IN FICTION

There are numerous novels with a moral bent to choose from, and our selection is somewhat arbitrary. Two authors (Eliot and Hardy) are English, the rest (Hawthorne, Twain, and Melville) are American. Two (Hawthorne and Hardy) deal with the familiar figure of the Fallen Woman, and the Eliot also features an unacknowledged girl child. The moral issues in the Twain and Melville—one a comedy, one a relentless tragedy—are both tied to their specific place and time, but also universal. The fuller context of each scene will be given in class.

- ♪ **Hawthorne**: *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Dimmesdale's confession
PBS miniseries, 1979; Rick Hauser, *director*. Meg Foster, *Hester*;
John Heard, *Dimmesdale*; Kevin Conway, *Chillingworth*.

- ♪ **Eliot**: *Silas Marner* (1861), Eppie is offered a choice
BBC miniseries, 1985; Giles Foster, *director*. Ben Kinsley, *Silas*;
Patsy Kensit, *Eppie*; Patrick Ryecroft, *Godfrey*; Jenny Agutter, *Nancy*.
- ♪ **Twain**: *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Huck protects Jim
Film 1974; J. Lee Thompson, *dir.* Jeff East, *Huck*; Paul Winfield, *Jim*.
- ♪ **Hardy**: *Tess of the Durbervilles* (1891), Tess's confession
BBC miniseries, 2008; David Blair, *director*. Gemma Arterton, *Tess*;
Eddie Redmayne, *Angel Clare*.
- ♪ **Melville**: *Billy Budd* (1891, unfinished), the death of Claggart
Film 1962; Peter Ustinov, *director*. Terence Stamp, *Billy*;
Peter Ustinov, *Vere*; Robert Ryan, *Claggart*.

Cecil Frances **Alexander** (1818–95, *British poet*), Irving **Berlin** (1888–1989, *American songwriter*), **Constantino Brumidi** (1805–80, *Italian American painter*), John **Collier** (1850–1934, *English painter*), Francis William **Edmonds** (1806–63, *American painter*), Augustus **Egg** (1816–63, *English painter*), George **Eliot** (Mary Ann Evans, 1819–80, *English novelist*), Thomas **Hardy** (1840–1928, *English poet*), Nathaniel **Hawthorne** (1804–64, *American novelist*), Thomas **Hood** (1799–1845, *English novelist and poet*), William Holman **Hunt** (1827–1910, *English painter*), Eastman **Johnson** (1824–1906, *American painter*), George Goodwin **Kilburne** (1839–1924, *English painter*), Frank Blackwell **Mayer** (1827–99, *American painter*), William Holmes **McGuffey** (1800–73, *American educator*), Herman **Melville** (1819–91, *American novelist*), Enoch Wood **Perry** (1831–1915, *American painter*), Richard **Redgrave** (1804–88, *English painter and designer*), Dante Gabriel **Rossetti** (1828–82, *English painter and poet*), Alexis de **Tocqueville** (1805–59, *French writer*), Mark **Twain** (Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835–1910, *American novelist*), George Frederick **Watts** (1817–1904, *English painter*), Franz Xavier **Winterhalter** (1805–73, *German painter*)

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