Bushnell stresses, is dramatic, privileging the oral over the written, urging acts of human rather than divine faith – much as the Pastor's narratives do in Book V.

The last chapter, VII, "Narrative Memory," refers to both the memorising and the positioning of stories, "spots of time," and then sharing/renewing them over time. In the end, the community is to be seen as one of poets, the Poet one among them, speaking out and yet listening, recording the "oral" world in writing, to "celebrate the good man's deeds and purposes" (*Excursion* VII, 375-76) – to write what A. Hickey has called "a social or collective entity – community, culture, England." For Wordsworth is peculiarly the poet of his country for an age when so much was in flux.

Clearly *The Excursion*, in the last analysis, is a representative yet personal experience narrative, following certain traditional norms for performance, providing in depth a revelation of the social life and values of its community, drawing on the experience of a particular person, the poet, telling of the functional/moral norms of a small community, in a remembered period. Yet this narrative memory is not for a specific audience, since the Poet has here transformed the spoken records for a timeless audience, and, in Books VIII and IX, for a national one.

This cogent and dynamic interpretation by Sally Bushnell, one both cogently argued, and irresistibly persuasive, shows the poem to be powerfully aware of natural life and to project an essential optimism, to counter the very real suffering of so many. In short, both the critic and the poet have succeeded brilliantly in their task of reading poetry back into real life, and in illumining the soul of man in a time of so much martial and social tumult.

J.S.Ryan

Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature, by Andrew Dowling. The Nineteenth Century Series. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

Identifying male deviancy in a patriarchal society intent on displaying a united front of proper masculinity might seem like a difficult task. However, Andrew Dowling sets himself this assignment in his exploration of how ideals of manliness related to literary portrayals of men in Victorian culture. The book's opening chapters set out the central argument, which reacts against the "monolithic view" of male domination found in early feminist theories, but also responds to Queer Theory's equally limited notion of heterosexuality (4). Dowling situates his theoretical approach within Gender Studies, but acknowledges his indebtedness to feminism and gay studies, and suggests that Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) marks the beginning of an erosion of limited constructions of masculinity, by dividing homosociality from the homosexual "other." Ruskin's ideology of separate spheres (19), in "Of Queen's Gardens"

(1865), is used to contextualise Victorian gender rules, but Dowling also sees a counter-side to the ideal man in the "the bestial man" (19). The wild male domain exists outside of the domesticated female setting, and suggests that "the separate spheres [...] consolidated a split not simply between men and women, but also *within* the individual man: between the 'public' and the 'private' man" (19-20). Through a brief analysis of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Dowling shows how this duality prompted a construction of masculinity based on control as "the antidote to an anarchy that lay at the heart of all individuals" (21).

The feminisation of the novel "in the mid-Victorian period through its content, its readership, its separation from the commercial fray, and its alleged intellectual inferiority" (38), Dowling argues, made male authors anxious about the manliness of their pursuit. He continues, "the Victorian male novelist offers an excellent view of social anxieties about manliness [...] because of the potential threat he presented to manliness" (35). This premise leads into analyses of Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850), Thackeray's *Pendennis* (1850), Trollope's *An Autobiography* (1883), and Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891), and a search for signs of the authors self-fashioning themselves as manly writers. Dowling's conclusions are interesting, ranging from Dickens's failure to define the male writer, through Thackeray's more robust, yet still unconvincing statement of his manliness, to Trollope's identification of his writing with the manly pursuit of work, and, finally, Gissing's rejection of the commercial aspect of his writing in reclaiming the myth of the suffering Romantic artist.

For Dowling, *David Copperfield* illustrates how the figure of the "other" could be used to re-affirm masculinity. He calls this process "hegemonic deviance," referring to the manner that the "other" is defeated from within the gender divide, or proper manliness is confirmed by way of contrast with improper male models. David's infancy is centred by motherly love, while the man is self-created as a result of the deviant father-figure, Murdstone, forcing him out of his home. The fatherless child returns at the novel's end as an archetypal patriarch, shaped through his battles with other men in the outside world. However, Dowling sees in David's relationship with Steerforth "homosocial desire; a type of male bonding that is often violently homophobic, is based on the exchange of women, and yet is in a close relationship with homosexuality" (56). But, what of David the writer? Dowling suggests that the character of "David is partly empty because Dickens could not find a single adequate figure for what the male novelist is, only for what he is not" (59).

A "bohemian" voice is recognized by Dowling in the narrative of Thackeray's *Pendennis*, which seems at odds with the trajectory of the novel's hero. He charts Pen's travels to a state of manly control already occupied by the philistine writer Warrington, who acts as an "emblem of hegemonic masculinity" (69) and announces his creator's own masculinity. Dowling reveals, however, that anxieties are still visible, as "Thackeray [...] oscillates between a public face of contained silence and a private realm of hidden emotion" (78-79). In Trollope's *An*

Autobiography the "bohemian" becomes an "other" to the manly writer, whose identity is shaped by his work and status as provider for his family. Trollope's concern to seal the breach between social ideals of manliness and the feminised occupation of novel writing, nevertheless, for Dowling, confirms "the presence of a rift" (92). The "rift," it must be stated, only seems apparent in the internal logic of Dowling's argument, and the self-fashioning that he sees in all of the texts might not have been as consciously performed as he seems to imply.

These chapters seek more for the writers' constructions of manliness than offer deep analyses of the novels, and the method used does not vary much from the comparison of proper and improper maleness, creating a tight but narrow argument that, perhaps, betrays the book's Ph.D. thesis origins. The argument closes, however, with a more thorough analysis of *New Grub Street,* in which manhood is again represented "through multiple images of men" (96), although Gissing also "provides a graphic illustration of what it means to fail as a man" (96). Dowling identifies Gissing with Reardon, whose failure, along with that of the representative of male sensitivity, Biffen, "focuses the theme of 'high-culture' dying out in a modern, commercial world" (101). The intellectual writer is superseded by the machine-like writer, Milvain. There is a sense of inevitability connected to this reading however, in that the attempts to construct the male author identified in the previous novels are, in a way, deconstructed by Gissing's writer, who too neatly proves the book's central premise by dividing the socially acceptable version of manhood from that of the male novelist; this argument appears a little overly-deterministic. Dowling believes that gender identity is not natural, but the texts he discusses exaggerate a sense of breakdown in concord between social constructions of masculinity and the attempts at self-construction made by male writers. The argument, nevertheless, is interesting and, although the occasional repetition and careless proof-reading can be distracting, the aim of recognising "complexity within the category of 'Men'" (117) is ably achieved.

Ian Wilkinson