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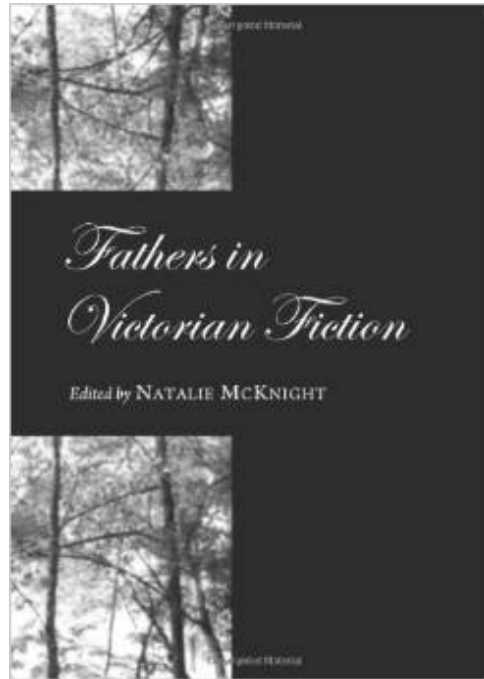
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Fathers in Victorian Fiction is a collection of essays which study the fictional fathers presented by Brontes, Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy in the context of historical social changes in Victorian age and the twentieth and twenty first century representation of Victorian fathers.

In the introduction Natalie McKnight asserts that the shifting and rapidly changing role of father and its reflection in literary works is fascinating. She accounts some reasons of this shift including industrial revolution which took fathers away from home to work places; scientific discoveries textual studies of Bible, and absolute faith in God the father popped up the authority

of domestic father while the “Evangelical Christianity’s emphasis on a stern, judgmental God had led to similar expectations of male head of the household.”(p-4) The legal changes such as Infant Custody Act of 1839 which allowed mothers to have custody of her children also contributed to the declination of fatherhood.

Chris Alexander’s study of Patrick Bronte tries to eliminate his stereotypical Victorian image showed by earlier studies. She calls him a “man of courage and conviction” who used both Romantic and Victorian extracts which were best for his children’s creative and spiritual developments. As a Victorian, he embodied the pursuit of self-improvement, a reforming zeal, a cultural confidence, an evangelical social conscience and an interest in technology and natural science. (p-14) As a Romantic he has sense of a “cultivated education” which “cultivates the mind and nourishes the imagination”. (p-15) it was his commitments to the power of education that he tried to provide best schooling. He was not remote and distant father as many other Victorian fathers. He had interaction and closure to his children by giving them instruction as daily lessons and told stories, as a Romantic tradition, to enrich the imagination of his children. His religious training to his children can be seen in Anne’s “Agnes Grey” and “The Tenant of Wildfell Hall” which strengthen the faith of others. (p-22) Patrick gave a systematic education to enable his children to support and earn their own livings. Alexander concludes by calling Patrick a Victorian who used “Romantic nurturing of the creative imagination, and his Victorian energy and engagement with the realities of the social and natural world”.(p-31)

Michel Hollington explores the place of fathers in the Victorian circus families with reference to Dickens’ *Hard Times*. She asserts that the circus families were “notable for strong bonds of affection and love inside and outside the family”, but there was no hearth or household and they were “internal strollers.”(p-35)

Hillongton places the subject in the European literary and visual context of sad clown. In *Hard Time* Dickens dismantles the accidental death and disability where Signor Jube “compelled to attempt to win favor through physical humiliation in the ring”. He examines these clown father’s strong bond and calls the circus families a “kind of utopian democracy”, because there is absolute confidence during dangerous balancing acts not only between fathers and children but also between fathers which is ideal “perfect harmony in social relationships.” (p-37-8)

Natalie also subjects Dickens in her essay where she explores his philosophy of fatherhood, “which is shaped by his experience as a father, as a son and as an author and his observation of changes in Victorian parenting ideal and practices. ”(p-51) He had tendency to make his most appealing “male-parents non biological fathers” but all his biological fathers do not fail rather his biological parenting shows his philosophy of “how not to do it” as in *Barnaby Rudge*, *Dombey and Son* and *Little Dorrit*, where Dickens criticizes too much involvement and control as well as distance and freezing children. She regards Micawber in *David Copperfield* as Dickens’ philosophy of “how to do it”. His philosophy shows that if it is impossible to father

perfectly it is possible to father well. He advocates for fathers to be affectionate, solicitous and available. Natalie sees Dickens' novels as "informal and extended conduct books for fathers." (p-54) She sees Dickens advocating for fathers for being loving, accessible, playful and controlling.

Elizabeth Bridgham studies Victorian fatherhood in relation to Church where a pastor fills a patriarchal role because he, besides the representative of Church, is also a "paternal figure to his congregation" (p-63) which required authority, affection, regulation, judgment, guidance and forgiveness. To fulfill these roles a clergyman was to be educated, gentleman and socially acceptable. Victorian men of the cloth, "were expected to combine their spiritual vocation and professional with the private vocations of husband and father". (p-64) Elizabeth examines that Gaskell's *North and South* shows that within Hale family the traditionally gendered paternal roles are reversed. Mrs. Hale is ambitious to her husband's advancements but on the other hand Mr. Hale himself "pleads incompetence as an excuse for his more serious crises of religious conscience." (p-65)

Cronin in her essay asserts that in many Victorian novels female character's morality is often measured "against the nature of her father's guidance and the strengths of his authority." (p-93) After over viewing some of the studies about the relationship of women and Catholicism in nineteenth century Cronin sees Swell's and Ward's novels among those novels where female protagonists "go over" to the Catholic Church. (p-102) In *Margaret Percival* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, the female character survives the threat of conversion by a profound sacrifice because multiple fathers complicate the conflict of emotional and spiritual development.

Monica studies "lost fathers" in *Bleak House*, where she finds three orphans and failed and dead father while surrogate fathers determining to "resolve the question of British authority, privilege and responsibility." (p-129) She examines that Dickens "inscripted" and "encrypted" a system that could not handle the problematic legal, financial, and social conundrums. She concludes that ...

Natalie Cole subjects fatherhood and masculinity in George Eliot's novels where fathers are "absent, distant, ineffectual and tyrannical". (p-153) She sees Eliot's novels as a critique of fathers and seeking of a perfect father in "relation to well being of communities and nation." (154) Melissa Jenkins studies the challenge to fatherhood in Hardy's novels which is foreshadowed by Phillotson in *Jude*, who says, "I don't see why the women and children should not be the unit without the man." Jenkins highlights the Hardy's emphasize on the distance and disparity between the child and parents because there is no continuity and connection. Jenkins sees this disconnection the same as text written over the text or palimpsest image. Regina Hansen studies the representation of Victorian fathers especially intimate fathers in Dickens' novels in films. She asserts that the depiction and admiration of intimate and domestic fathers by Victorian writers shaped modern understanding of what a good father can be. The concluding part looks that the contemporary trends in fathering is deeply affected by the Victorians. There are

benevolent, involved even the stern fathers but modern digital age and technology are taking back fathers to home.