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"TO BE INDIFFERENT AND TO BE YOUNG": DISRAELI, *SYBIL*, AND THE PRESERVATION OF AN AMERICAN "RACE," 1879–1912

By Gordon Fraser

ON NOVEMBER 16, 1918, A LITTLE more than two weeks after an armistice officially ended World War I, an editorial in the *Idaho Statesman* offered advice about the future of the world economy. Lifting the title of its editorial directly from Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil, or The Two Nations*, the *Statesman* argued only the political philosophy espoused by that novel and its author could show the world a way forward. Quoting from the novel's final paragraph, the newspaper declares: "'To be indifferent and to be young can no longer be synonymous.' Those words were true when Disraeli penned them just 73 years ago, but they apply with striking force to the problems of today and to the problems which will be certain to develop in the years just ahead" ("Trustees of Posterity" 4). The newspaper wasn't only advocating political involvement by the nation's youth, nor was Disraeli. *Sybil* proposes a particular kind of economic and political order, a union between a "just" aristocracy, led by the young and ambitious, and the laboring classes. It proposes that great statesmen take up the mantle of responsibility just as Thomas Carlyle, in Disraeli's day, advocated great captains of industry take up that mantle (Houghton 328). The newspaper's argument implies this seventy-year-old British novel will be critical to America's political future. But this vision of responsibility belongs in the nineteenth century – it is rooted in the conflict between republicanism and aristocratic oligarchy – and the timing of the *Statesman* article at first seems wildly inappropriate. As the First World War ended, the *Statesman* expected the world would face the kind of threats Americans had perceived before the war. The editorial warns that "mobocracy" still "holds nearly half of the area of Europe and much of northern Asia in its bloody and irresponsible grip." If there is any doubt about who is behind this "mobocracy," the newspaper clears that matter up, answering: "Bolshevists, Socialists and all of the disciples of unrest who may be roughly grouped as 'The Reds'" ("Trustees of Posterity" 4). And when the *Statesmen* warns about "Reds," it can easily expect its readers to remember that, only seventeen years earlier, President McKinley had been shot by just such a "Red": Leon Czolgosz, an alleged anarchist and the child of Polish immigrants.

The *Statesman*'s editors weren't alone in thinking Disraeli's novel offered lessons for an America besieged by social unrest, although the newspaper editorial came several years after a kind of diminishment in the widespread belief that Disraeli's political philosophy could be transported, unchanged, to America. Between Disraeli's death in 1881 and about 1912, *Sybil* rose to cultural prominence in the United States largely because it embodied anxieties about immigration, labor uprisings, and internal political strife. It also took advantage of the sudden resurgence of cultural importance in America of British literature. As Alex Zwerdling points out in his book, *Improvised Europeans*, the intense cultural rivalry Americans felt toward the British in the nineteenth century gave way to a collective sense that "the English race" was under siege by teeming hordes of Eastern Europeans who threatened to destroy its culture (22, 32, and 43).[1]

Sybil – published in 1845 as the second of Disraeli's Young England trilogy – developed a significance based essentially on three elements. Firstly, the book's plot dramatized the class violence of the Chartist movement of the 1830s and 40s, which was taken, by extension, to dramatize American fears of racial and class violence in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. When socialist violence broke out in Belgium in 1886 and 87, for instance, a reporter for the *Sunday Inter Ocean* of Chicago wrote: "Perhaps no such scenes of popular violence had been witnessed during the last half century anywhere else than in fiction" ("Hungry and Angry" 9). The fiction he referred to was *Sybil*. In Max Beer's *History of British Socialism* – published in New York after the First World War but written almost a decade earlier – descriptions of the Chartist movement from *Sybil* are taken at face value. At one point, Beer instructs anyone interested in the actual meetings of the Chartists agitators in England to look at the torchlight meeting scenes in *Sybil* (v and 16). Secondly, Disraeli the man – who became the titled aristocrat Lord Beaconsfield and the British prime minister, despite having been born the son of a Spanish Jew – offered hope that teeming hordes of immigrants could be folded into the "Anglo-Saxon race," and thus be made fully American. In 1890, an American biographer would describe Disraeli's move away from his Jewish identity and toward a more conventionally "British" one as an "earnest vindication of his lineage" (Brewster 1). This idea – that men and women of other "races" could be merged into a single "Anglo-Saxon race" – was hugely popular. In his 1915 book *America: The Land We Love*, Francis Trevelyan Miller argues that the United States is particularly well-suited to the racial improvement of immigrants. He writes: "Everywhere outside of Europe have the European races tended to deteriorate, except in America where they have markedly improved on the old stock" (45). Thirdly, and lastly, *Sybil*'s offer of a political solution – that heroes, like the young protagonist Charles Egremont, would seize the reins of power and guide the teeming masses to a just future – was particularly appealing to people worried about anarchy and social unrest. As America faced unprecedented immigration and nursed a genuine fear of social conflict and violence, the notion that great leaders would simply end political strife by the force of their will and the quality of their character must have been attractive.

And while *Sybil* has remained a relatively important book – its position in the canon has periodically waxed and waned – the praise Disraeli received as an author and as a statesman in this period was of a unique character. *Sybil*'s reception in these three decades was animated by an often sincere belief that the novel had answers for a society in crisis, and that, because it contained so much "truth," as one biographer would describe it, the novel was great literature (Brewster 53). A full review of *Sybil*'s reception in America in the decades after 1912 is beyond the scope of this project, but it is important to note that, after the First World War,

Disraeli's economic prescriptions would no longer be accepted in their paradoxical totality by Americans, even by those who essentially approved of his writing. And Disraeli the man would no longer be taken to represent the possibility of racial transformation in the United States in quite the same way. In 1955, writing in the *Antioch Review*, Peter Viereck would explain that Disraeli's essentially feudal vision of economic reform was never a good fit for Americans, even conservative ones. Viereck writes: "In contrast with Europe, America has always lacked those feudal roots . . . which England under Disraeli possessed at least in the literary imagination, even if not in economics" (220). While Disraeli would remain a significant figure – even for writers like Viereck – wholehearted belief by Americans in his political philosophy, and by extension in him as a great author and statesman, a model for emulation, probably reached its high point in the first decade of the twentieth century.[2]

Sybil's rising importance, 1879–1892

IN 1879, TWO YEARS BEFORE Disraeli's death, the future British MP Thomas Power O'Connor published *Lord Beasonsfield: A Biography*.[3] The book was successful enough that, a year later, it came out in a cheaper "People's Edition." To say O'Connor is not particularly generous with his subject is to develop the gift for understatement neither Disraeli nor O'Connor seemed to possess – the final chapter of the biography is entitled "Dictator" (602). And O'Connor acknowledges that an earlier book he wrote about Disraeli was attacked "with some violence" (ii). But O'Connor represented a strain of opinion common while Disraeli was a living political figure – the premier was partisan and open to attack, after all. On the matter of *Sybil*, O'Connor dismisses most of the book as "flunkeyism and nonsense" (246). The biographer draws particular attention to the fact that Disraeli gave a speech in Parliament in support of the Chartists, but ultimately abstained from the vote. And, O'Connor notes with disgust, Disraeli's "novel attitude," in arguing for something but not voting for it, is essentially omitted from *Sybil*. Disraeli, he tells us, is a hypocrite. The biographer was not alone in his opinion. Not only did *Lord Beaconsfield* sell enough copies to make its way into a cheap edition and into the hands of an American audience, it also received favorable reviews. In New York's *International Review*, George Barnett Smith writes: "Just now, when Lord Beaconsfield is the object of so much unreasoning adulation, Mr. O'Connor's courage, in expressing his views in the opposite direction, deserves recognition" (593). Smith would have to wait a few years to see what "unreasoning adulation" really looked like, though. In 1879, Disraeli still had plenty of critics. The previous year, the Boston-based *Littell's Living Age* ran a series of articles entitled "The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield." A mixture of horrifying anti-Semitism and political commentary, the articles attributed Disraeli's alleged shortcomings – he was a narcissist who wrote books like *Sybil* to glorify himself – to his ethnic background: "That the Jews have imbibed servile vices in nineteen centuries of bondage is as obvious in fact as it was certain in theory. . . . Their persons have been enfranchised, but not their minds" (137–38).[4] This same attitude, with the racism somewhat more veiled, was even visible shortly after Disraeli's death. After the obituaries appeared in American newspapers, tastemakers began the process of deciding how the former prime minister and his books would live on in posterity. Less than a month after Disraeli's death, George C. Noyes penned an article in the *Dial*, an American literary magazine, panning the prime minister and author as a forgettable fraud. The work of his life had been "worthless and shameful" (3). Disraeli's novels, Noyes writes, "secured the public applause for a day and then were forgotten" (1).

The article concludes with the following observation: "That Lord Beaconsfield possessed talents of the very highest order cannot be denied; but it is equally true that he so employed them as fairly to entitle him to be called the prince of showmen" (3). If these opinions were not universally held, they were at least widespread. Disraeli's novels, including *Sybil*, were linked directly to Disraeli the man. And the man, as a political figure, had plenty of enemies and critics.

But there was another strain of opinion about Disraeli, one that would very soon dominate any appraisal of the man and his political novel. Close to the time of Disraeli's death, Alexander Charles Ewald's *Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield, K.G., and his Times* appeared in print.[5] The British biography maintains a tone of reverence and seriousness throughout, but is mainly a catalogue of events and important people. Ewald has little to say about Disraeli as a novelist, except to point out that *Sybil* and *Coningsby* are Disraeli's greatest works and that, despite "brilliant dialogue" and "shrewd and sarcastic observations" in *Edymion*, the later book can't compare to the earlier two (561). The tone here is a far cry from O'Connor's dismissal of Disraeli, but Ewald's book doesn't seem to have had the same cultural importance as O'Connor's. Whereas O'Connor was lauded by supporters and attacked by critics, Ewald seems to have been ignored by the press on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1888, Thomas E. Kebbel dismissed Ewald's biography in the "Prefatory Note" to his own *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*. Like other, earlier biographers, Kebbel wrote, Ewald relied too much on the published material available to everyone (ix). But while Kebbel dismissed Ewald's source material, he adopted the earlier biographer's tone of reverence for the statesman and his literary work. This is important because Kebbel – who writes that he knew Disraeli personally – published his work in America (ix). The Kebbel biography marks the first move to present Disraeli as an important figure for emulation to a primarily American audience.

And one can see American periodical writers struggle with this new interpretation of Disraeli, an interpretation radically at odds with O'Connor's vicious attack on the man. One of Kebbel's reviewers, in the *Philadelphia Record*, seems to change his opinion of the prime minister from paragraph to paragraph. The review begins by pointing out that many criticize Disraeli because "he was too apt to adjust public questions as to suit the temporary exigencies or prejudices of his own party." Kebbel, the reviewer chides, "occasionally . . . allows his prejudices to color his judgment." But the reviewer seems ultimately to be won over, calling Disraeli "one of the most romantic figures in English history" and ending with praise for the former prime minister's "daring political courage, the strength of his character and the greatness of his intellect" ("England's Premier" 6). Kebbel's case for Disraeli's importance, it seems, is ultimately persuasive.

And Kebbel sets the tone for the coming decades of *Sybil* scholarship. Ewald only mentions *Sybil* in passing and O'Connor simply mocks Disraeli's main character, Egremont, as proof of the author's narcissism, but Kebbel spends considerable time reconstructing *Sybil*'s development as a novel. Aside from the book's romantic plot, Kebbel argues, the novel represents the lives of actual people. While *Sybil*'s descriptions of living conditions among the poor were "ridiculed when they first appeared," Kebbel argues those descriptions were more accurate than most readers would believe. He writes: "We would refer the reader to an authority that will be allowed to be unimpeachable: the Report, namely, of the Commission for Enquiry into the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture" (53). Look, Kebbel argues, here is documentary proof that *Sybil*'s descriptions of the poor are accurate and fair.

And, if the descriptions are accurate, it follows that the novel has merit even if the characters seem flimsy and the plot pedestrian. Kebbel also makes the case that Disraeli wrote the novel out of genuine feeling for the plight of the poor. The biographer describes a visit Disraeli made to Manchester factories in 1844, explaining how Disraeli was confronted not only by deplorable conditions, but also by factories where laborers were treated with dignity and respect. That, according to Kebbel, drove him to attempt the abolition of the former and the promotion of the latter (49–55).

Disraeli's importance, then, rests on his position as an avuncular statesman – the wise political leader who sees suffering among the people and develops a plan to alleviate it. Kebbel ends his book with a prediction: "when all the difficulties and all the jealousies which impeded him on the threshold of his career shall be clearly understood: then, indeed, we will think that the life of Benjamin Disraeli will be recognized as one of the most 'wondrous tales' which sober truth has ever told" (212). This image of Disraeli stuck. Beginning in the late-1880s, *Sybil* and its author inspire a new measure of respect.

The year Kebbel published his biography, 1888, the New Zealander William Lee Rees published *From Poverty to Plenty; Or, The Labour Question Solved*. The book is significant here for two reasons. First, it expresses an anxiety that grumblings among laborers – grumblings associated with socialism, anarchy, and other radical politics – could destabilize the English-speaking world. Rees seems to bend over backward to say that English-speaking peoples will continue to dominate the planet well into the next century: "The English tongue and English influence must prevail.. . . Especially is this the case in the three branches of the English people, the United Kingdom, the United States and the colonies of Great Britain" (3–4).[6] But this expansion of the English peoples can only happen if political leaders in England allow the "pauperized multitude" to leave Great Britain and travel to Australia, Rees argues. This, he says, is how the "labour question" will be solved (7).[7] The second reason Rees is worth considering here is that he pauses in his political argument to offer several assessments of *Sybil*, a book he looks to for evidence that British laborers are suffering and might lash out. Rees writes: "*Sybil*, as a novel or romance, is commonplace; its literary merits are not great; the language of its characters and their conversations are stilted and unnatural; but the fire of sympathy burns upon every page, and the spirit of a leader of the English people breathes through it from the beginning to the end" (325). There's no evidence Kebbel's assessment influenced Rees's – their books were, after all, published in the same year – but the two men agree in their assessment. To judge *Sybil* as one might judge an ordinary novel is to miss the point, both men argue. *Sybil* is a novel with an important political purpose, and to dismiss it is to dismiss the suffering of thousands and the political leaders who tried to end that suffering.

This thinking was explicit among social scientists and theorists writing about America, although there wasn't yet much consensus about whether *Sybil* offered a useful solution to contemporary labor problems or merely dramatized them. Writing in 1886, the American social scientist Charles D. Kellogg argued that children were being allowed to degenerate in America's major cities – languishing without proper educations, without proper nutrition, and without a proper upbringing. The cities – which, as Zwerdling might point out, were the homes of immigrant communities (45) – were hotbeds of "incest and infanticide," Kellogg writes. He looks to *Sybil* for an explanation of deplorable city conditions. Misquoting (and perhaps misunderstanding) the novel, he writes: "Disraeli in *Sybil* emphasizes that 'incest and infanticide are far more prevalent in the city, and there the domestic principle wanes

weaker and weaker, year by year, – nor can we wonder at it when there is no comfort to cheer and no sentiment to hallow the home.'" (Kellogg "Child Life" 212). Here, Kellogg has taken Disraeli's hyperbole out of context. When Walter Gerard, in *Sybil*, talks about incest and infanticide, he isn't only talking about the decline of English cities. He is talking about the decline of the English "race." Gerard actually tells Egremont: "Incest and infanticide are as common among [English laborers] as among the lower animals. The domestic principle wanes weaker and weaker every year in England; nor can we wonder at it, when there is no comfort to cheer and no sentiment to hallow the Home" (172; bk. 3, ch. 5). Gerard complains about conditions in the cities here, but his larger complaint deals with the depersonalization of English society and the movement of that society – in the 1830s and 40s – away from the church. Kellogg, on the contrary, is writing about educational laws in the city of New York. There *is* a connection here: Kellogg sees the conditions of city life – its poverty and lack of opportunity – as the cause of degradation among those who live in the cities, particularly children. But whereas Disraeli was concerned with a notion of Anglo-Saxon decline, Kellogg has taken a much more politically progressive approach – ascribing the decline of family life to depersonalizing urban conditions and ignoring entirely notions of race. Unlike the work of many of his contemporaries, Kellogg's analysis shows that the deplorable conditions in America's cities had more to do with the cities themselves than with the "race" of those living in the cities. In a prefatory note to a *Hand-book for Friendly Visitors Among the Poor* (1883), Kellogg writes that he hopes to foster "self-reliance" among the poor and "aid them in the unusual and unavoidable emergencies that befall them" (iii). This contrasts sharply with writers who blamed poverty in America's cities on a tide of degenerate "races" sweeping into the country.

In *The Alien Invasion* (1892), for instance, William Henry Wilkins argues that the worst members of inferior races were adding to the overall degeneracy of America's urban population. Wilkins, an Englishman writing about American cities, is Kellogg's ideological opposite. Wilkins writes: "There is an abnormal representation of the foreign poor in the workhouses and penitentiaries of the United States; there can be little doubt that the effect of deporting to America the destitute, the worthless and the criminal, has largely added to the burden there of pauperism, vice, and crime" (133). Wilkins's book is obsessed with the notion that America – the great hope for the preservation of "Anglo-Saxon" hegemony – will decline because of racial pollution. His book seems to have been written for an American audience, an audience he believes must close the door to immigration. Wilkins's opinions, in and of themselves, are hardly unique, but he is significant because, like Kellogg, he feels the need to cite Disraeli. Wilkins writes: "The contest which is gathering will not be around 'exhausted factories and obsolete policies,' as Mr. Disraeli said in 1852.... Labour legislation is the legislation of the future; and it needs no prophetic eye to foresee that one of the leading measures in the labour programme of the future will be to protect the English working-men [in America] against the perpetual pouring in of destitute foreigners" (83–84). Wilkins writes that there is a need to improve working conditions for the American laboring classes, but, unlike Disraeli, he thinks these improvements need to benefit *certain* workers – namely, those of "English" descent. In some ways, Wilkins argument is closer to Disraeli's than either man would probably acknowledge. In *Sybil*, Disraeli draws artificial distinctions between good laborers and bad – Mr. Nixon and his miners are dangerous and crude, while Gerard and his followers are noble and "decorous" (91; bk. 2, ch. 10 and 369–70; bk. 4, ch. 6). Disraeli makes these distinctions based on personal character, which is connected

to a sense of natural nobility, which is loosely connected with the English "race." Early in *Sybil*, Walter Gerard tells Egremont: "Ay, we have some English blood in our veins, though peasants and the sons of peasants. But there was one of us who drew a bow as Azincourt" (174; bk. 3, ch. 5). Both Disraeli and Wilkins point to the superiority of the "English race," but where the struggle of Disraeli's day was over working conditions and representation, the struggle in Wilkins's was over the availability of jobs and a vague sense of declining cultural life. It's clear that 1892 is still early in *Sybil*'s rise to prominence, though, largely because Wilkins doesn't make the connection between Disraeli's vague, paradoxical sense of Anglo-Saxon racial privilege and his sense of social justice. It is Kellogg, who believes simply in doing charitable work for the urban poor, who looks most to Disraeli.

Sybil *as masterpiece, 1890–1911*

In 1890, the second American biography of Disraeli was released. Former Pennsylvania Attorney General Frederick Carroll Brewster's *Disraeli in Outline* attempts what one reviewer called a "scientific" approach to studying Disraeli's life, one in which "the author has refrained from presenting his own idea of Disraeli" ("New Publications" 6).[8] Essentially, Brewster condenses Disraeli's own writings and adds brief commentary. The work hardly refrains from offering an assessment of its subject, though. In an inscription to the reader, Brewster writes:

> No excuse will be required for the effort, however humble, to perpetuate the name and fame of one who endeared himself to Americans by his eloquent denunciation of free trade, and his touching appeals against the oppressions of the poor by the rich. His earnest vindication of his lineage, and his indomitable perseverance, commend him to all true men; whilst his purity of style and his glowing rhetoric will always endear him to the student. (Brewster 1)

The praise here is distinctly American. Brewster has re-envisioned Disraeli as a kind of Horatio Alger figure – one whose "indomitable perseverance" will "commend him to all true men." This Disraeli overcame setbacks – like "his [Jewish] lineage," obliquely referred to here – in an improbable rise to become prime minister, and yet has still managed to empathize with the poor and downtrodden. Beyond that, in this version of Disraeli's life, he became a great writer – the kind whose "purity of style" should be emulated by students of the English language. This notion of Disraeli is critical because it highlights his Anglo-American qualities and virtually erases earlier fears that the former premier's Jewish origins somehow made him un-British. Brewster's implication is that the man who isn't Anglo-Saxon can, through an "indomitable perseverance," eventually lift himself out of his own racial identity and become a great English writer, an embodiment of English "purity of style." Even as conservatives like Wilkins, in *The Alien Invasion*, were writing that the flood of immigrants needed to be stopped, there was another strain in American racial thinking, one Brewster seems to embody. This strain of thought held out the hope that people of other races could eventually become English-speaking Anglo-Americans. This is what Francis Trevelyan Miller argues in *America: The Land We Love* (1915), when he writes that Europeans have "markedly improved on the old stock" in America (45). This is the argument Theodore Roosevelt made in a lecture at Oxford University in 1910, when he said:

> When [Oklahoma] was admitted a couple of years ago, one of the two senators, and three of the five representatives in Congress, were partly of Indian blood. In but a few years these Indian tribes will have disappeared as completely as those that have actually died out; but the disappearance will be by absorption and transformation into the mass of the American population. (Roosevelt 18–19)

The hope of another way forward, not by blocking out other races but by absorbing and transforming them, was widespread in America. And Disraeli seemed to be proof that this effort could succeed. Disraeli was a Jew, and yet he came to fully and completely embody Anglo-Saxon identity and language. This is at the root of Brewster's praise for Disraeli the novelist, the man who so overcame his Jewish origins that those origins are now virtually unmentionable. Like the Native Americans Roosevelt hopes to absorb into the (white) American population, Disraeli was absorbed so fully as to erase his previous racial identity. But there is also a kind of incoherence in Brewster's praise. The biographer draws attention to Disraeli's protectionism. Disraeli was no free-trader, but his support of tariffs could be considered a local, British issue. Brewster is concerned with it, I think, because protectionism depends on the notion of closed borders, of blocking out foreign competition and perceived ethnic pollution. Brewster is able to overcome his distaste for Disreali's foreignness, his otherness, in large part because the British statesman was thoroughly anglicized. But while Brewster holds Disraeli up as an example of successful racial transformation, he is not ready to throw open the doors for waves of new immigrants and trade with other nations.

Brewster's gushing praise continues throughout the biography, especially when it comes to *Sybil*. He writes: "Altogether apart from its dominant humanity, *Sybil* would be immortal – its grace, its tenderness, and its truth would place it very high in the ranks of English fiction – but *Sybil* is something more than a novel. It is an appeal to the great sentiment of human brotherhood" (53). Brewster repeats the assessment made by Kebbel and Rees: *Sybil* is a great novel because it is politically important; it promotes empathy and a belief in "human brotherhood" to the level of a political solution. But, unlike the two earlier writers, Brewster is not willing to dismiss *Sybil* as poorly written. Instead, it is a novel with "grace" and "truth." Even as Disraeli's novel did "brave and masculine work" on behalf of the poor, it still managed to make a place for itself in the canon of great literature (52–53).[9]

It is around this time, too, that *Sybil* slips into educational guides. In 1892, Mary Alice Caller published *A Literary Guide for Home and School*, which recommends *Sybil* as literature representative of the time in England when "humanitarian sentiment increases" (155).[10] Caller, who taught "English classics" at the Alabama Conference Female College, writes in her preface that she had to write the *Literary Guide* because her "desire [was] strong to contribute somewhat toward the spiritual uplift of the times" (6). This notion – that the classic books she has chosen will contribute to general spiritual uplift – was championed by one of her reviewers, as well. Writing in Chicago's *Sunday Inter Ocean*, an anonymous reviewer praised Caller's choice of books, which included *Sybil*. The reviewer writes: "The great bulk of the literature of the times is trash. Much of it is worse than trash, for it is vicious" ("Current Literature" 14). This reviewer's attack on the current literature isn't just a curmudgeonly jeremiad, although it certainly is that. The review expresses real anxiety about the values children learn from the "trash" they are exposed to. The reviewer writes: "There is nothing in which the young child should be more carefully instructed than what to read and how to read" (14). The *Inter Ocean* writer is concerned with the development of the young in America. Caller's list of books, the reviewer implies, represents a step toward

Anglo-Saxon cultural preservation. In "'Charming and Sane': School Editions of *Cranford* in America, 1905–1914," Thomas Recchio points out that the promotion of English "classics" in American education in the early part of the twentieth century constituted a "powerful, if not fully coordinated, eugenics project." The goal of this educational movement, Recchio writes, was to "replace [immigrants'] cultural memory with the 'events' and sensibilities embodied in [a British literary] canon" (600). When the reviewer in the *Sunday Inter Ocean* complains about "trash" literature, he is not merely expressing a personal affection for Disraeli, Dickens, and other British writers. He is explicitly approving of Caller's preference for British literature, literature meant to perpetuate an Anglo-American acculturation process.[11]

As *Sybil*'s value rose among educators, literary critics, too, argued for a re-evaluation of Disraeli – one that would firmly establish his position in the canon. An October 1894 article in the American literary journal *Forum* argues for just such an assessment. Frederick Harrison, the article's author, writes: "it is hardly a paradox to augur that in a few generations more the chief of the new Tory Democracy may have become a mere name, whilst certain of his social satires may still be read" (192). In some ways, this argument is radically at odds with the assessments that had been growing throughout the 1880s. Suddenly, Disraeli is an author to be compared with "Swift, Sheridan and Macaulay" (192). It might seem Harrison is dismissing the political in Disraeli's work, the aspect of Disraeli's novels Rees and Kebbel found so compelling. But Harrison's choice of praise-worthy novels resists this reading. He writes: "the books on which Disraeli's reputation alone can be founded are *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Lothair*" (197). Had Harrison added *Tancred* to that list he would have gathered the most politically motivated collection of Disraeli's very political books. Harrison acknowledges this. *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, he writes, were written "with an avowed purpose of founding a new party in Parliament." But the political purpose gave the novels "vitality," he writes (198). Harrison's argument relies on the notion that the political and the literary are intimately related in Disraeli's work, that Disraeli used political passion to lend his literary efforts "vitality." Instead of dividing Disraeli – asking whether he was a great statesman *or* a great author – Harrison wants his readers to understand that the man could not have been one without the other.

This push to make *Sybil* into an important part of the canon was expressed in other ways during these years, as well. Jehiel Keeler Hoyt's *Cyclopedia of Practical Quotations* – published by Funk & Wagnall's in New York in 1896 – is filled with quotations from *Sybil*. Much like *Bartlett's* today, the *Cyclopedia* wrenched pithy lines from their original context and presented them as glittering, unfixed rhetorical gems. *Sybil*, it seems, had much to say on a number of themes. On ignorance: "He had only one idea, and that was wrong" (qtd. 313). On principle: "Principle is ever my motto, no expediency" (qtd. 491). On knowledge: "To be conscious that you are ignorant is the greatest step to knowledge" (qtd. 337). And on love: "We are all born for love" (qtd. 357). Aside from reminding the reader that Disraeli was capable of a few wonderful rhetorical flourishes – I absolutely love the line about ignorance – these quotations point to a genuine respect for the novel's power to instruct. Disraeli, the great statesman and writer, offers wisdom and guidance on matters of profound importance: love, principle, ignorance, and knowledge.[12]

Even when *Sybil* is criticized, a turn-of-the-century writer would be well-advised to criticize carefully. Sherman Adams Hill's 1899 *Principles of Rhetoric* – a kind of precursor to Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* – uses sentences from Disraeli's novels as examples a total of twenty-one times. Usually, Disraeli's literary work is held up as evidence of its

author's concision and clarity (49–57, 71, 85, 99, 138–39, 147, 154, 172, 178, 188, 206–07, 211, 214). And Hill virtually apologizes when he finds Disraeli's prose wanting. After pointing out that sentences with "but which" should be excised, Hill offers an example of the awkward phrase from *Sybil*: "Stephen, with a glance serious *but which* indicated intimacy, caught the eye of a comely lady" (qtd. 138). But, Hill cautions, this construction is "found, at least occasionally, in many good authors" (138). Once again, *Sybil* is given a measure of deference – this American rhetorician, at least, won't be caught maligning Disraeli's prose.

And this argument – that *Sybil* is great literature because of its political goals – continued to enjoy success into the twentieth century. In 1903, yet another Disraeli biography came out in America, this one written by the comparatively famous British biographer, essayist, and editor Wilfrid Meynell.[13] In the introduction to his book, *Benjamin Disraeli: An Unconventional Biography*, Meynell explains that his work is unconventional because it draws a "psychological" picture of Disraeli as a man.[14] But Meynell, too, waxes rhapsodically about *Sybil*'s virtues. Of Disraeli's books, *Sybil* has "exercised the greatest influence upon [British] national life" (352). For Meynell, *Sybil* offered the British an opportunity to atone for their sins:

> "Talk of heaven, why you are not fit for earth," Thoreau was crying out in New England against the desecrators of mere soil. It was a human as well as a physical deformation which manufacturing England had to answer for; and in the case of Christians surely it was something more. . . . Others, sick at heart at the sight of oppression of the Poor, prompted them to rebel; others sought in confusion, even in social peril, an escape from the thraldom [sic] of a life of inaction. [Disraeli's] was another rôle – that of teaching the Rich to make restitution; the Poor to be powerful in patience. (352–53)

Sybil here is not a mere satire, nor is it some kind of political pamphlet. The novel speaks to the national consciousness. The character of Sybil Gerard, in her selflessness, is an indictment of inequity and a call to national maturity. The British Meynell offers something that, at least in part, is meant for an American audience. The send-up to Thoreau tells his readers that the British sin was greater than those in America: nineteenth-century industrial might, pursued without a sense of mercy for the poor, brought England nearly to the point of revolution. But, as Meynell must be aware, America in 1903 is also in the midst of a struggle between capital and labor.

The year Meynell's book was published, D. M. Parry summed up the concern about labor conflicts in America when he spoke at the Chautauqua, NY, Conference on the Mob Spirit:

> The city of Chicago has been on the verge of an upheaval of anarchy a number of times and even during the midsummer dullness we find the labor cauldron boiling and bubbling there with many an ominous sound. Cities like Denver, Omaha, New York, Bridgeport, Lowell, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and many others have also attracted national attention by their strikes and the efforts of their citizenship to maintain law and order. (Parry 41)

Parry, the president of the National Association of Manufacturers and Employers, certainly had political and professional reasons to paint members of the labor movement as anarchists and thugs. Although the association was founded in 1895 to oppose the Wilson "tariff-for-revenue-only" bill, by 1903 it was perhaps the leading anti-labor voice in the country

(Gable 536–37). But Parry was not alone in fearing that strikes could lead to rioting and violence. There was widespread concern that capital-labor conflicts could get out of control. In an editorial (1902) arguing that a court injunction against a Boston strike would be wrong, the *Springfield Daily Republican*, of Massachusetts, nonetheless acknowledged that striking laborers had been responsible for widespread violence. One company, the *Daily Republican* reports, "has been meeting with trouble on the streets from rioters, who resort to intimidation, threats of violence and, in cases, actual violence, in order to scare off the company's employees and compel it to yield" ("The Strike and the Usual Injunctions" 6). While the editorial goes on to defend the strikers against what it regards as an overzealous court system, the newspaper expresses anxiety about "actual violence" perpetrated by strikers in language not unlike Parry's invocation of a need for "law and order." America, a rising industrial power, faced problems in some ways similar to those faced by England when Disraeli wrote *Sybil*. And Meynell's work synthesizes the anxieties across a political spectrum when he argues that Disraeli showed a different way forward. Disraeli, he tells his readers, taught "the Rich to make restitution; the Poor to be powerful in patience." One can almost hear him rejecting Parry's call for law and order in a time when the manufacturers might instead "make restitution," while at the same time calling for those Boston strikers to abandon violence and intimidation, to be more "powerful in patience." Disraeli has shown us in England a way forward, Meynell's work is saying, not in rebellion or confusion but in "patience" and "restitution."

And, again, there is a reimagining of Disraeli here: as the youthful, energetic, and very Anglo-Saxon leader of England. Just as Brewster pointed out Disraeli's "masculine" virtues, Meynell makes it clear that Disraeli refused to be "sick at heart" when he encountered suffering. Instead, Disraeli took action to solve the great problems of his time. Meynell presents a portrait of a British statesman who acts with resolve, maturity, and conviction. This vision of Disraeli comes clearly into focus when one sees the picture of the former MP in Meynell's *Benjamin Disraeli*: the man seems to have gotten younger. Perhaps unsurprisingly, O'Connor's scathing 1879 biography featured a grim-looking, elder Disraeli in the frontispiece. The sketch there was dated "1877" by the artist, which would mean it was drawn only four years before Disraeli's death. Ewald's hagiographic biography features not a picture of Disraeli the man, but a photographic plate of the J. E. Boehm marble statue which stood in Westminster Abbey. That Disraeli looks like middle age is behind him, but still stands majestically, shrouded in a great cape with epaulettes, with one hand on his heart. He looks like a Roman emperor. Kebbel's biography doesn't feature any picture of Disraeli at all, but Kebbel's 1880 book, *Selected Speeches of the Right Honorable Lord Beaconsfield*, featured an 1880 sketch in which the elder statesman looks positively geriatric. Only one year before death, the graying Disraeli sits slumped in a chair reading a newspaper. But, after that, Disraeli starts to age in reverse. Meynell's frontispiece comes from an 1852 portrait by Francis Grant. In that picture, Disraeli would be about forty-seven.[15] A year after Meynell's biography, a New York publisher released Walter Sydney Sichel's *Disraeli: A Study in Personality and Ideas* (1904). In that book, Disraeli has become downright boyish. The frontispiece, according to Sichel's guide to illustrations, is a "portrait of the young Disraeli," taken from a miniature by Kenneth MacLeay in the National Portrait Gallery. All this youth tends toward a reading of Disraeli as Brewster would have us read him in *Disraeli in Outline*, as "brave and masculine" (53).[16] This is the youthful, energetic leader readers imagine Egremont, the hero of *Sybil*, to be. As the *Idaho Statesman*'s editorial board might

remind us, "to be young and to be indifferent can no longer by synonymous" ("Trustees of Posterity" 4). This obsession with Disraeli's masculine energy can be read as an explicit repudiation of his Jewish identity. Jewishness, after all, was associated with "servile vices," "obstinancy," and "oriental imagination" ("The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield" 137 and "Was the Earl of Beaconsfield a Representative Jew?" 939). While earlier writers would dismiss Disraeli for his "Jewish" shortcomings, Sichel, Brewster, and Meynell hold Disraeli up as an example of Anglo-American leadership.

And Sichel, for one, doesn't relegate his sense of Disraeli's youthful energy to the illustrations. Sichel's book begins: "The power of imagination is essential to supreme statesmanship" (1). For him, Disraeli's ability as a novelist is linked explicitly to his ability to imagine a superior future for his people and then, through the sheer force of his will, call that future into being. It's a youthful enterprise, and one linked – for Sichel, at least – with the present-day suffering of people throughout the world. Disraeli, once again, should be thought of as a great novelist just as he should be thought of as a great statesman. "Dickens," Sichel tells us, "once lamented that politics had so long and often deprived fiction of a master" (289).[17] Sichel, and apparently Dickens, lament that the great Disraeli had a limited amount of time in his day.

This impossibly grand Disraeli was also prescient on the subject of America. "Disraeli was always intensely interested in America," Sichel writes, "and watched her development with vigilance. He predicted her imperial future" (246). Sichel was writing after the Spanish-American War had confirmed America's rise as a major world power, one that would continue the dominance of what both Sichel and Disraeli called the "Saxon race" (Sichel 251 and Zwerdling 23). And it is clear that Sichel's enterprise is designed to speak to an audience of the present day: to demonstrate that Disraeli in some ways improved the character of the English-speaking peoples, that he was aware of America's imminent rise to power, and that his political theories could be a guide to the future. He argues that the central idea of *Sybil* – that human beings are intrinsically unequal, and the strong and just should mercifully guide the weak and powerless – can and should guide political thinkers in the early twentieth century. In recent years, Sichel writes:

> [Nietzsche] has tried to make anarchy heroic. But a monster is not even a man, still less a hero. All such systems must fail, because, as Disraeli has finely said, "Man is born to adore and to obey." . . . The true Right of Man is to lead wisely and to be led loyally in public affairs. (59–60)

This is where we get to the crux of Sichel's argument. In a time of anarchy and chaos – of socialist riots in Belgium, of growing labor tensions in Chicago and Boston, of "Reds" in Europe and Asia and North America – one needs leaders with masculine virtues, youthful energy, and the wisdom to see that the world doesn't need new political systems, it needs order and justice. Disraeli doesn't just stand for the preservation of the "Saxon race" because he is an English prime minister. He stands for preservation because his political philosophy offers an alternative to chaos, and even to change. Sichel's version of Disraeli erases the former prime minister's perceived foreignness and replaces it with a youthful, aggressive vision of Anglo-Saxon leadership. This version of Disraeli offers the possibility of returning to a romanticized, and utterly invented, past.

Not everyone accepted Sichel's interpretation of Disraeli. A reviewer in an American literary journal, the *Arena*, was extremely critical of both Disraeli and Sichel's treatment of

him. The reviewer writes: "[Disraeli] was one of the most specious special-pleaders of his age" (Rev. of *Disraeli* 667). Despite this, times had changed for those criticizing the one-time Earl of Beaconsfield. Only two decades before the premier could be dismissed outright as "worthless and shameful" (Noyes 3). But, in 1904, Disraeli is treated with respect even when criticized. The *Arena* reviewer acknowledges, perhaps grudgingly, that Disraeli was "one of the most brilliant intellects of the political life of the last century" (Rev. of *Disraeli* 668).

The year Sichel's book came out, British educator J. S. Lindsey took another big step toward shoe-horning *Sybil* into the canon. Lindsey's *Student's Note-book of European History* has a particular agenda. The author writes that "the study of history is of little use unless the teacher at least goes outside the beaten track of the textbooks" (5). Lindsey argues students should do more than learn dates and facts. He wants them to get a sense of their cultural heritage. What he offers, then, is essentially a list of popular books teachers should use to teach European and British history.[18] Apparently, Disraeli's novels were an ideal choice. Under the heading "Contemporary Novels of Social Life" for the period of 1814–1848, four of the fifteen novels Lindsey suggests were written by Disraeli: *Sybil*, *Vivian Grey*, *Coningsby*, and *Tancred*. Charles Dickens has only three novels on the list. Jane Austen has two, as does Charlotte Brontë (Lindsey 7).[19]

The decline of Sybil as social solution, 1912 and after

THE ASSESSMENT THAT *SYBIL*'S political purpose necessarily made it a literary masterwork continued almost until the First World War. In 1907, Kebbel published his third book about Disraeli (the first was a collection of Disraeli's papers and the second a biography). Kebbel's *Lord Beaconsfield and Other Tory Memories* is basically a memoir of its author's personal relationship with the statesman. Kebbel had covered this ground before, and his third book essentially repeats the opinions of the second. But then, in 1912, the second volume of William Flavelle Monypenny's *Life of Benjamin Disraeli* was released.[20] In his introduction, Monypenny refers to the time in which Disraeli wrote *Sybil* as "the period when his genius was at its greatest height and vigour" (v). Monypenny's biography was praised at the time for its "complete objectivity" and, according to one reviewer, represented the most significant Disraeli scholarship since the premier's death in 1881 (Johnson 281).[21] But there are more important reasons to consider his biography here. While Monypenny avoids explicit references to the political conflicts of the early twentieth century, he puts forward an argument that *Sybil* is essential to understanding Disraeli's political philosophy, but only his political philosophy. Monypenny writes: "In all essentials, [*Sybil*] represents Disraeli's permanent conception of what may be called the Tory Idea, and of the background of history in which he found that idea" (267). While other critics and biographers had tried to defend the novel as a great work of literature, Monypenny bases the novel's importance exclusively on its historical and political role.[22] He writes: "*Sybil*, like *Coningsby*, has very little plot, but is a succession of scenes" (252). He is not trying to dismiss the novel, he writes. On the contrary, *Sybil* is "the foremost in interest both to the student of social history and to the critic of English literature – to the one for its picture of social conditions, and to the other for 'the high comedy of its social and political intrigue'" (252). But, Monypenny goes on to say, Disraeli's 1845 novel suffers from being a "novel with a purpose," hinting that the average reader really prefers *Coningsby* (252). After Monypenny, critics do not appear even to have attempted a defense of *Sybil* as great literature independent of its political context.[23]

Some critics, in fact, were outright hostile to the book. In the 1913 British book, *Disraeli*, Evelyn Baring Cromer writes that "a whole group of politicians has grown up of recent years who appear to take Lord Beaconsfield as their model. Their reasons for adopting this course fail to convince me" (v). Cromer, who relies almost exclusively on Monypenny's biography as source material, makes the case that Disraeli represents the antithesis of the "Anglo-Saxon mind." While Disraeli had for years been lionized as a great Anglo-Saxon, Cromer seeks once more to call attention to the politician's "Jewish . . . character" (7). In this dismissal of Disraeli, one can hear echoes of "The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield" (1878), criticizing Disraeli's "servile vices." But I don't think anti-Jewish sentiment ultimately doomed *Sybil* to obscurity. The change in *Sybil*'s reception was more evolution than extinction. Without making the argument himself, Monypenny inaugurated a rising critical consensus that *Sybil*'s paradoxes, while interesting, made it less than useful as a guide in contemporary politics. By 1919, it would become clear that *Sybil* was receiving different treatment than it had been given by the likes of Kebbel and Brewster. In a treatise on Victorian sensation fiction published that year, Walter Clarke Phillips writes: "If three persons were asked to name the least dramatic of Victorian novelists, at least one would be sure to answer Benjamin Disraeli" (204). Phillips concludes that "*Sybil* . . . is little more than a succession of dialogue." One can hear in this appraisal echoes of Monypenny, the elder scholar, writing that *Sybil* "is a succession of scenes" (252). Phillips is not completely dismissive of Disraeli as a novelist. Like Dickens and others, Phillips writes, Disraeli's books were representative of "utilitarian romance" (97). Phillips acknowledges the historical importance of Disraeli's writings, even as he devotes much more time to Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell. And he is not totally unsympathetic to Disraeli, whom he thought suffered from the demands of printers that novels be long enough to fill three volumes. Still, Phillips writes, Disraeli's literary work was marked by "endless political disquisition" (54). Phillips, it seems, had little patience for discursive passages explaining Disraeli's view of English history.

By the end of the First World War, many seemed willing to engage Disraeli's complexities and paradoxes: to point out, once more, that the statesman was capable of advocating for something without voting for it, that he could criticize the aristocracy but still seek to imbue it with great power, that he could sometimes think well and write badly. In Oliver Elton's 1920 *Survey of English Literature*, Disraeli gets seven pages of treatment under the heading "Earlier fiction" (181–88). Elton dismisses *Sybil* with the observation that "the romantic parts are unwontedly absurd" (181). Writing in 1921, Joseph H. Park points out that Disraeli's sympathy for the downtrodden stopped where democracy began. "It can be said that the People, as portrayed in *Sybil*, are not able, apparently, to carry on affairs successfully – the time for political democracy has not yet come" (241). Park is enthusiastic about Disraeli's efforts at reform, but seems keenly aware that they do not conform to the democratic expectations of his American audience. In 1928, Gerda Richards would take Disraeli's historical revisionism to task in an essay in the *American Historical Review*, arguing that criticisms in *Sybil* of "second rate squires" being elevated to peerage under George III are wildly exaggerated (48–49). In 1930, Gerald Hurst would point out the contradiction between Disraeli's sympathy for the poor and his support of a neo-feudal system, writing: "[Disraeli] never pretended to believe in democracy" (663). In 1937, Ruth Leigh Hudson would praise the "extravagant romance" of Disraeli's prose, but criticize the "falsities and the exaggerations" (403). And, writing in *PMLA* in 1941, Walter Francis Wright would explain that Disraeli's political philosophy was doomed by its own internal contradictions: "Disraeli's scheme was

. . . unsatisfactory, as it meant a return to the feudal ideal in a civilization where, industrially, feudalism was impossible" (1110–11).

Monypenny's declaration that *Sybil* is "so high and inspiring" because it is a novel of ideas, not of characters, seemed to guide the generation of critics who came after him (252). His criticism is echoed in Phillips – who claims that Disraeli only turned to writing novels like *Sybil* when he found "his political program [was] unpalatable to the public in pamphlet form" (*Dickens, Reade, and Collins* 5). Monypenny's work informs Park's assessments of Disraeli as a novelist, as well. Park cites the elder scholar dozens of times. Cromer's attack on Disraeli rests almost entirely on Monypenny's work – there is a citation nearly on every page. And Hurst – in a review of *Sir Robert Peel* (1929) – argues that Monypenny's approach to Disraeli's interactions with Peel are "probably fairer" than the biographer under review (Rev. of *Sir Robert Peel* by A. A. W. Ramsay 147).

But it was not only Monypenny's influence that led to a decline in *Sybil*'s popularity as a political and economic model for the United States. The animating forces that had granted *Sybil* the imprimatur of great importance in the first decade of the twentieth century – intense anxiety about racial degradation and anarchy on one end of the political spectrum; a sense that the nation's poor were languishing on the other – was suddenly forced to compete with other historical forces vying for the public's interest: the First World War and its aftermath, the global depression of the 1930s, and, ultimately, the catastrophic rise of fascism. Disraeli's novel had no answers here. And the political solutions *Sybil* offered – a return to a kind of feudal class structure – were never particularly appropriate for a society resistant to the concept of class. When, in 1918, the *Idaho Statesman* called for Disraeli's wisdom to guide America into the next decade, its editors were almost willfully ignoring the contradictions others had already begun to point out – that America had no formal aristocracy, that Disraeli's anti-democratic tendencies were at odds with America's ostensible founding principles, and that oligarchy seldom benefits the poor.

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NOTES

1. Between 1880, the year before Disraeli's death, and 1920, the population of the United States doubled. That doubling came largely through emigration by people from Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and other parts of Eastern Europe. By 1905, those immigrants made up about three-quarters of those arriving on American shores each year (Zwerdling 43–44).
2. Viereck was not the first American to point to Disraeli's imperfect fit with American politics. During the economic hardships of the 1930s, many Americans who looked favorably on Disraeli's compassion for the poor still viewed his vision of aristocratic leadership with some skepticism. In 1930, Gerald Hurst brought to bear an understanding of Disraeli's paradoxical political opinions, writing: "Although Tory democracy rightly sees in [Disraeli] the pioneer of the cause of social duty and social legislation, he never pretended to believe in democracy" (663). This nuanced view is almost entirely absent from earlier criticism. This trend in criticism – examining the man as a paradox, which he certainly was – doesn't really take hold until after the period examined in detail here. This points to a fundamental difference between Disraeli's initial, posthumous reception in the United States and later opinions about the man and his work, although more study should certainly be done in this area. As we will see, American writers between 1879 and 1912 tended to gloss Disraeli's paradoxical political views in order to use him for their own ideological purposes.

3. O'Connor, an Irishman and part of the Home-Rule League, would be elected to Parliament in 1880, and would go on to serve as an MP well into the next century. He would also go on to write a number of other books, including his 1929 *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian* (Townend 142; O'Connor, *Gladstone's House of Commons* iii).
4. Disraeli's father was Jewish, but the son was baptized Anglican. Questions about Disraeli's background often came up, particularly in the 1880s and 90s. Some books dismissed him outright, like the British *Bejameni de Israeli: Who is this Uncircumcised Philistine?* by David Oedipus. Other writers seemed to think the matter of Disraeli's Jewishness required on-the-one-hand-on-the-other objectivity. An 1881 article published in a San Francisco newspaper, before Disraeli's death, put it thusly: "A large class of Englishmen look upon Beaconsfield as the greatest living statesman, and acknowledge him as a leader whom they are willing to follow and support, while there are others who believe with Daniel O'Connell, that the name of the impenitent thief on the cross was Disraeli" ("Gladstone and Disraeli" 2). An article in the American *Century Illustrated Magazine* in 1882 put it even more soberly. The article was entitled "Was the Earl of Beaconsfield a Representative Jew?"
5. It isn't clear exactly whether the book appeared before or after Disraeli's death on April 19, 1881. In the "Prefatory Note" to Thomas E. Kebbel's *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, the author claims Ewald's biography of Disraeli was published in 1883, two years after the former premier's death. This is clearly a mistake, however. There are extant editions of the biography from 1881 and the *Independent*, a periodical in New York, published a reference to Ewald's biography dated Dec. 1 of that year ("Personalities" 8).
6. Note here that Rees focuses on the "English tongue" when addressing his British audience. By the end of the nineteenth century, leaders in the United Kingdom had come to recognize that the sun was setting on their empire just as it was rising on their former colony, the United States. This led to a kind of paternal fantasy: that English influence would live on through England's child, America (Zwerdling 24).
7. This idea was not new. An 1867 book – published anonymously in London by "a colonist" – argued "it's for a poor man Australia was made, for they never remain long poor when they set their foot in this land" (*Life's work as it is* 67). And this movement of the poor to the extremities of the English-speaking world was widely seen – by English elites, at least – as a boon to humanity. In 1886, Henry William Tucker made a prediction about English expansion: "in another century the English-speaking peoples of the world will number a thousand millions." Quoting John Richard Green's *History of the English People*, Tucker goes on to write: "The spirit, the influence of all these branches will remain one, and in thus remaining one, before half a century is over it will change the face of the world" (qtd. 213).
8. [8] Kebbel's *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, published in Philadelphia in 1888, had been the first American biography. While *Disraeli in Outline* was first released by a British publishing house, Cassell & Company, Limited, of London, I think it represents a distinctly American take on the former prime minister. Brewster – who had been a judge in addition to attorney general for Pennsylvania – was very obviously writing for an American audience. He frequently stressed that Disraeli's masculine attributes were a useful guide for Americans. His work was also reviewed, and obviously read, in the United States.
9. Brewster so admires his subject the praise in his book often sounds like satire. He writes: "There is, however, one quality of Lord Beaconsfield concerning which too little is heard, even amongst his professed admirers, and that is his remarkable and undeviating consistency" (Brewster 53). This kind of encomium might make one long for another biographer to point out Disraeli's habit of speaking on behalf of a cause before abstaining from the vote (O'Connor 246).
10. It was fairly common, it seems, to think of *Sybil* as a book appropriate for children. *The Catalogue of English Prose Fiction and Books for the Young* for the Boston Public Library nearly the same year, 1893, lists *Sybil* among children's books (44).

11. Caller seems to endorse this project herself. In writing about the value of the books she has chosen, she writes that "classical" literature is "nearer to children and the childhood of the race" than other, more contemporary literature (69).
12. *Sybil* is also cited in matters of fame and time (qtd. 200 and 600). Disraeli's other works are cited in relation to a number of other themes, among them age, circumstance, confidence, criticism, and authorship (qtd. 9, 96, 104, 124, 427).
13. Meynell was the author of *Journals and Journalism: With a Guide for Literary Beginners* (1880), *Some Modern Artists and their Work* (1883), *Cardinal Newman* (1907), *Shelley* (1909), *Aunt Sarah and the War: A Tale of Transformations* (1915), and others. I haven't been able to locate reviews of Meynell's *Unconventional Biography*, but there was a *Philadelphia Inquirer* advertisement, entitled "A New Book for a New Man," which appeared in December 1903. The ad offers a list of books "made by a man who knows what men like to read." Meynell's biography, offered for $3, is the second book on the list (9). Again, what Brewster would call Disraeli's "masculine" virtues are on display.
14. This bears some similarity to Brewster's "scientific" portrait of Disraeli in that both claims of a new kind of analysis are utter nonsense ("New Publications" 6). Like Brewster, Meynell wrote a fairly conventional – and hagiographic – biography. While Meynell claims to be interested only in drawing a psychological picture of Disraeli the man, he obsesses about the former leader's political and cultural significance.
15. Meynell's book does include a picture of Disraeli later in life, but that doesn't appear until page 319.
16. There are no illustrations in Brewster's biography, but there is plenty of prose to help us imagine the kind of Disraeli who embodies all the great masculine virtues.
17. Sichel does not tell his readers where this lament of Dickens is recorded, if at all.
18. Lindsey is also the author of *Problems and Exercises in British History* (1902), which he mentions in the introduction here. I haven't been able to locate a copy of that book.
19. Lindsey recommends *Martin Chuzzlewit, Dombey and Son*, and *David Copperfield* by Dickens. By Austen, he recommends *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. By Brontë, he recommends *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* (7).
20. The first volume, which covered the years 1804–1837, was published in 1910 by Murray. The second volume covered 1837–1846, the years in which *Sybil* was written.
21. While Monypenny certainly admires his subject, the tone of his work is – at least compared to the work of Kebbel, Brewster, and Sichel – fairly objective.
22. Sichel, in *Disraeli*, writes: "Whatever Disraeli wrote was always literature, never lecture" (289). Monypenny, I think, would disagree.
23. Monypenny died shortly after completing the second volume of his biography, which was published in 1912 (A.G.P. 585). The project was taken up by George Earl Buckle, who finished the final volume in 1920. Buckle, who credits Monypenny with beginning the project, takes essentially the same view toward Disraeli's literary work.

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