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Challenging customary female behavior: sisterhood and responsibility in the short fiction of Camilla Toulmin Crosland

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Challenging customary female behavior:
Sisterhood and responsibility in the short fiction of Camilla Toulmin Crosland

by

Suzanne Elizabeth Guess

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)
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Graduate College
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Suzanne Elizabeth Guess

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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"Done is good."
--Dr. David Roberts, Iowa State University
INTRODUCTION

Writing during the midst of oppressive Victorian social codes for women, Camilla Toulmin Crosland challenges the accepted codes of work, marriage, and education for women in her short fiction. Her address is mainly to the middle class on the behalf of the working class, but she specifically appeals to middle-class women, who she thinks have the opportunity and responsibility to better the condition of their sisters. This study is not all inclusive of Crosland's work, but is limited to an examination of "The Orphan Milliners: A Story of the West End" (1844), "The Tempters and the Tempted" (1853), and "Toil and Trial: A Story of London Life" (1849), because they deal specifically with issues of work, marriage, and education for working class women.

Crosland faded from literary examination even before her death in 1895. Her husband, Newton Crosland, remarks in his 1898 biography that most of her works were "out of print...[so] it is almost useless to call the reader's attention to [them]" (368). On the contrary it is useful to call readers' attention to Camilla Crosland's works, even though they are out of print, still. Her writings, especially those that focus on social problems, deserve reconsideration and inclusion alongside works by authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell and Dinah Mulock Craik.

Historical Background

Janet Murray asserts that most of what we know about the working class women
in Victorian England was "recorded for us by middle-class men, who brought to their accounts the prejudices of their own class and gender" (14). With the increase in feminist studies since the 1980's, the emerging picture of women's lives (whether they were working-, middle-, or upper-class) in Victorian England, as opposed to the mainstream perspective that Murray reveals, is one of oppression through social, legal, and economic inequities. Works by authors such as Boston, Broomfield and Mitchell, Drake, Levine, Murray, Pinchbeck, and Swindells present a very different perspective of women's experience in a "society which saw women as second-class citizens in every sense" (Boston 16).

The Industrial Revolution in England caused a shift from home-based manufacturing to the factory (Engels; Murray) with the introduction of man-powered and steam-powered machinery. These inventions enabled the creation of ready-made items that were previously produced at home. Population growth in manufacturing towns exploded as shown in Leeds, a manufacturing town with a population of 53,000 in 1801, and 123,000 in 1831 (Engels 57). With the migration to towns and cities like London, this population influx caused a surplus of cheap labor, a factor further complicated by Irish immigration (Engels).

Goods formerly produced in the cottage industry for the purpose of sale or trade were now being mass produced. Cut away from this income source, women were forced to find work outside the home in order to support themselves or their families. In fact, a large portion of the industrial workforce was composed of women, as
evidenced by statistics from 1828 showing that only 23% of textile workers in England were men (Boston 14). The other 77% were women and children, but mostly women, as legislation had restricted child labour.

The fact was that working class women had to work outside the home, and three big social dilemmas the Victorian middle class now had to deal with were the jobs women did, the wages they earned, and their living and working conditions. The division of labor debated by the middle class centered on what was appropriately "women's work." Janet Murray notes that:

[emptying slops, scrubbing grates, and carrying heaving buckets of coal and water up and down stairs were not considered unduly filthy or taxing to a woman's strength, but sorting coal at the head of a mine seemed scandalously masculine to many observers (327).]

In terms of wages, women were often paid half the wage for the same job as men, and those engaged in "women's work" were paid even less. An example of this discrepancy is the wages of women and men workers in the Lancashire cotton mills in 1833, as women aged 21-41 (considered to be at their maximum productivity) received less than half the wages of men for the same work. Women aged 21-26, on the average, earned 8s.5d. per week, as compared with men in the corresponding age group who earned 17s. 2 1/2 d (Pinchbeck 193). The remuneration gap widened for women in the 31-36 age bracket, as they earned 9s. 9 1/2d. per week, while men earned 22s. 8 1/2d (Pinchbeck 193).

The difficulties of living on 10 shillings (1 shilling = 12 pence), and most of
the time less, per week is exemplified by an accounting of weekly expenses made by Edith Simcox: 4 shillings for food, 3 shillings for minimum housing, and 1 shilling for utilities (qtd. in Broomfield and Mitchell 574). This left little or no provision for clothes, savings, or emergencies. Working-class women were expected to support themselves and often to be "the sole maintenance of a family" (qtd. in Broomfield and Mitchell 574) on these wages. Many worked overtime to earn extra wages.

The situation of overwork and underpay put working-class and poor women in a precarious position in terms of Victorian ideals of a respectable woman. Janet Murray notes that "[p]oor women were...often judged by the same standards of angelic, sheltered femininity as middle-class and upper-class women...[y]et their demanding lives mocked the ceremonial idleness of the household angel" (170).

Working women not only had to fight a battle for survival, but they also had to battle the hostility of working men. Many arguments were advanced by working and middle class men regarding working women, such as "unfair female competition" (Drake 6) which drove the wage rate down (Drake; Engels; Pinchbeck). Ironically, though, some justified the low wages of women by stating that "her low wages do not tempt her to abandon the care of her own children" (Pinchbeck 194). She may not abandon them, but she certainly couldn't care for them, either. Other arguments against women working included challenging the women's right to the job, not the wage paid for the job (Boston 16); the displacement
of male workers (Pinchbeck 196); and the destruction of the working class home and family (Boston; Engels; Murray; Pinchbeck).

Men were motivated to keep women out of the workforce not only because of these social arguments, but for economic reasons as well. Sheila Rowbotham maintains that "wage-labour in early nineteenth century capitalism brought not freedom, but a reversal of the economic position of men and women" (55). This economic reversal threatened the cultural infrastructure of male dominance both at work and at home, as "the working-class man's ownership of his woman was undermined by the wages the woman could earn outside the home" (Rowbotham 55).

Education for the working classes was also limited. Many learned to read in Sunday schools (Altick). A big question was what children "were taught to do with their literacy once they achieved it" (Altick 156). Altick argues that education was not to "enrich people's intellectual or emotional lives" (143), but rather to preserve the status quo of the class system. He goes on to state that there was "a line between literacy for the sole purpose of learning one's religious duties and ordained place in life, and literacy for undesirable ends...[such as questioning an] inferior situation of life" (143).

Education for men and women differed greatly. Middle- and upper-class boys studied languages such as Latin, Greek, and other subjects to prepare them for the university (Murray). Middle- and upper-class girls, on the other hand, were tutored in a "smattering of foreign languages, singing, drawing, dancing, and 'the use of globes'"
(Murray 197). Lessons were mostly rote memorization and limited to such conversation stoppers as, "Who always ended his speeches in the senate, with 'Delenda est Carthago'?...When was the Bank of England founded?...Name the chief places of historic interest in England..." (Murray 204). Educational objectives for working-class girls included instructing them to be "'improved servants of the rich' and 'wives of the poor'" (Murray 246) through learning domestic tasks such as laundry, cooking, needlework, and general housekeeping duties. Murray states that this educational catalog of trivia and domestic tasks was intentional, and "considered appropriate to women's limited powers and subservient condition" (197).

Marriage for Victorian women was both an escape and a prison. In a male-dominated household and society, young women could hope to marry and escape a sheltered, patronized life at home. However, their treatment as fragile, innocent children, no matter what their age, "left them ill-prepared to choose among suitors, to interpret the advances of men, or to comprehend matters of sexuality and childbearing" (Murray 81). Once these women married, their lot most likely didn't improve, as the economic and social system concentrated inherited wealth and the ability to earn a living in the hands of men (Murray 5). Most often, women escaped one prison (childhood home) only to enter another (husband's home), as "Victorian society...saw women as second-class citizens in every sense" (Boston 16), with no legal or civil rights.
Life of the Author

There is not much biographical information on Camilla Toulmin Crosland because of her obscurity. She was born in London in 1812 into a middle-class family; her father died when she was eight years old, leaving her and her mother no annuity or pension to live on. She spent the remainder of her single life (until 1848) struggling to support the both of them.

Toulmin’s autobiography, Landmarks of a Literary Life, 1820-1892, details accounts of some of her British and American friendships and acquaintances with whom, states her obituary in The Times, "she had been thrown into contact in the course of her career" (February 25, 1895). This comment suggests that her acquaintances were accidental and coincidental as she stumbled through her literary career. In fact, this was not the case. Many of her acquaintances were made through publishers and editors who encouraged and printed her work, such as William and Robert Chambers, with whom she had a business and personal relationship for more than fifty years. While there are few accounts of her personal struggles, the autobiography includes anecdotes about Toulmin’s contemporaries Elizabeth Barrett Browning (who had a great influence on her spirituality), Dinah Mulock Craik (who served as a bridesmaid in Toulmin's wedding to Newton Crosland), Mary Howitt, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The struggle to support Toulmin and her mother is largely absent from Landmarks of a Literary Life. For clues into this area of Toulmin’s life, one must turn
to her husband's autobiography, *Rambles Round My Life* (1898). The last two chapters of Newton Crosland's book are devoted to excerpts of Toulmin's diary manuscripts.

Toulmin's diary excerpts follow the pattern of what Julia Swindells calls "losing caste" (127), which describes the "woman born to affluence or relative affluence [and how she] copes with a personal history of personal descent" (127). Toulmin was born into a "'genteel district'" (N. Crosland 323) and recalled several occasions when her parents entertained their middle-class friends. The death of her father in 1820 "left [her] mother wholly destitute with two young children [one is a half-brother] to support" (N. Crosland 331), and Toulmin's fiction clearly resonates the personal struggles and difficulties she experienced.

In a prose essay, "Working Gentlewomen," Crosland attacks the accepted norm that ignorance and indifference to evil and the world outside a young woman's immediate circle is the best education for a "young woman's respectability and well-being" (Crosland, *English Tales and Sketches* 205). This type of education also determines what is considered "women's work" or "women's sphere" (Boston; Murray; Pinchbeck; Swindells). She says:

The end and aim of a girl's life is not, surely, to work Berlin slippers, play indifferently on the piano, sing out of tune, draw out a perspective, read bad novels...and to consider it an extreme point of usefulness to hem her brother's handkerchiefs, trim her own straw bonnet, and write, by 'Mamma's' directions, notes of invitation, when necessary (205).

An education that occupies the mind with "duties or pursuits that ennoble or expand it"
(206) will pay off in marriage, too, as a woman educated as such will not likely "be the slave of a sudden or unworthy passion" (206). Readers can see the effects of the former type of education for young women in "The Orphan Milliners," which makes Crosland's plea for educating young women that much more vehement.

Toulmin's actual education resembled what, in her fiction, she argued against. Until her father's death, she attended a good school, but was placed in a cheaper school in 1821, where she now had to borrow books to do lessons in French and geography, and where she also took the proverbial piano lessons, which she despised. She stopped going to school at age 14, and never attended school again.

The struggle to scratch out a living came in different phases for Toulmin and her mother. Mrs. Toulmin attempted to run boarding houses at least twice, with no success because she took on a larger house than she could fill with boarders. Her next scheme was a day school, which she established when Camilla was 14, making her a teacher. This endeavour failed too, and they appealed to distant cousins for contributions, but only "under the pressure of dire distress" (N. Crosland 348). Toulmin also addressed this convention of leaving female family members to their own suffering in her essay, "Working Gentlewomen."

Toulmin obtained a teaching position at a school in 1835, though her mother strongly discouraged her from accepting the position, based on the distance from their home and that the position did not pay very much. Toulmin accepted the position
anyway, and her diary excerpts recall that this was one of the happiest years of her life. She was released after one year not because of her performance, but because the school enrollment was small, and the school mistress could not retain her (N. Crosland 345). A year later, she obtained a position as a governess and began to "scribble verses" (N. Crosland 345).

Toulmin's half-brother Henry died in 1838, leaving her mother completely dependent on her. She recalls this period of her life as one of "gnawing anxiety" (N. Crosland 348) due to the constant threat of debt. Even though her first verses were published in the same year, this anxiety paralyzed her writing ability, because she believed her best work was always "done when my mind has been temporarily relieved from pain and anxiety" (N. Crosland 349). Her publishing career for the next few years was not lucrative.

One of Toulmin's themes is the responsibility and opportunity of middle-class women to alleviate the poor conditions of their sisters. In her diary manuscript, she writes about a servant in a boarding house where she and her mother lived from 1838-1842. The servant, Susan, was mistreated by her mistress and rarely had enough to eat or enough clothing to keep warm. Apparently the girl didn't want to complain about her circumstances, as it "would be treated as an offence" (N. Crosland 360). Toulmin and her mother recognized the savage treatment of Susan, and shared what they had with her.

When their situation improved, Susan became a servant to Camilla and her
mother. They parted after a disagreement which Toulmin later regretted, and about which she says, "I now think I was not free from blame...I ought to have made more allowance for her [Susan's] feelings than I did" (N. Crosland 360). Toulmin is not above self-reproach. Reading "The Tempters and the Tempted," there is a vague reference to Susan's history from Toulmin's diary manuscript. The mistress from the text, Mrs. Dixon, sounds much like Susan's former mistress, about whom Toulmin writes, "she never perceived...that I was pumping her to ascertain to what depths of meanness she could descend" (N. Crosland 361).

Curiously, Toulmin makes little mention of her marriage to Newton Crosland in 1848, when she was 36 years old. Her only mention of it in Landmarks of Literary Life is in connection with her friendship with Dinah Maria Mulock (Craik), who was a bridesmaid at the wedding. Mulock was then in the process of writing The Ogilvies, and Toulmin states that "her [Mulock's] mind must at any rate have been free enough to take a most affectionate interest in my marriage" (Landmarks 141). Newton Crosland's name is neither mentioned nor indexed in the book.

Newton Crosland gives readers a different perspective on the marriage in Rambles Round My Life (1898). He met Camilla Toulmin in 1846, when he "began to think seriously of getting married" (126). He "greatly admired" her (126), and was introduced shortly thereafter to Dinah Maria Mulock. Toulmin was six years older than Crosland, and Mulock was six years younger. Crosland then makes the "frank confession that [he] was captivated by both ladies at the same time, and paid them both
devoted attention, and both were favourable to [his] advances" (126). He decided to extend his affections to Toulmin, but later found out about a comment Mulock made to Toulmin:

One day we three went somewhere in a cab together, and on our return I got out first: Miss Mulock prepared to follow me, but she hesitated, turned round and whispered to Miss Toulmin, "If you don't have him I will." I did not hear of this little speech till I was married, but it was certainly the greatest compliment ever paid to me by a woman, and such a woman!...Miss Mulock was perfectly justified in supposing, and even knowing, what would have happened if Miss Toulmin had declined my overtures. That Miss Mulock did not think that I had trifled with her is conclusively shown in the circumstance that she became my wife's bridesmaid (127).

What persuaded Crosland to choose Toulmin over Mulock? At the time of their engagement, Crosland says, "I soon ascertained that her [Toulmin's] health was somewhat impaired and that she was involved in debt...she required to be rescued from a critical position" (363). Crosland was a successful wine merchant, and no doubt he rescued her from a perpetual stressor in her life--debt. Even though Toulmin makes only passing mention of her marriage, she pays her debt to her husband in the short fiction examined herein, as each has at least one male rescuer: Charles Morton's father in "The Orphan Milliners," Mr. Allen in "The Tempters and the Tempted," and Matthew Warder in "Toil and Trial."

In her obituary, The Times says that Toulmin's work "had a distinct bearing upon the trials of the poor and the political and social progress of the people" (February 21, 1895). Her fiction is not a middle-class account of what she perceives to be the problems and conditions of the working-class women. Those problems and conditions
were her lived experience, and her goal was to force the recognition and questioning of absurdly strict social and economic codes for women.
"THE ORPHAN MILLINERS:
A STORY OF THE WEST END"

Camilla Toulmin addresses all three issues of work, education, and marriage for women in "The Orphan Milliners." Working conditions and education are foregrounded in this text, as Toulmin addresses the contribution that middle class women make to the dismal conditions of their sisters, and how the lack of education keeps working class women in a subservient position. Marriage is tied to class here, and there are strict lines which cannot be crossed in order to preserve the class structure.

"The Orphan Milliners: A Story of the West End" was published initially in Illuminated Magazine in 1844, under the authorship of Camilla Toulmin (Winn and Alexander 338). A revised version, "A Story of the West End," was published in 1849 as one of the short stories in the collection Toil and Trial: A Story of London Life, published under the name of Mrs. Newton Crosland. A comparison of the two shows little revision, other than a title change and different character names: Annie and Charles Morton in "The Orphan Milliners," become Clara and Charles Weston in "A Story of the West End." For purposes of this analysis, I will refer to the 1844 version.

Henrietta and Annie Sandford are young women with little education who have survived, along with their widowed mother, on a meager pension provided after their father's death. Upon the mother's death, the young women are left on their own, and a
distant, wealthy cousin helps to settle them in London at the millinery establishment of the evil Madame Dobiere. Henrietta (Etty) excels in dressmaking, motivated by the "hope that dear Annie's opening youth might be passed more brightly than her own could be" (154). In the meantime, Annie grows weaker and more sickly, as the two girls suffer under the intolerable conditions of no salary for six months, unacceptable rations, and excessive work hours.

In a melodramatic twist, Etty becomes acquainted with Charles Morton and falls in love "with all the strength and fervour of a first and deep attachment" (159). Expecting a visit from a "wealthy relative" (160) one afternoon, she returns to the apartment she and Annie share to find none other than Charles Morton, who is that very same wealthy relative. As it turns out, Morton--we actually don't know who he really is because he tells Etty, "My name is not Morton" (161)--is the son of the wealthy relative who placed the young women at the establishment in London in the first place. He was sent to check on the girls' condition by his father, who had some suspicions of their trials. Neither Etty, Annie, nor Morton had any idea of their relation.

The near affair between Etty and Morton ends with his admonishment, "We know the truth--the very truth--'tis best we part--you cannot be my wife. I have never thought of you as my wife" (161, original italics). Etty and Annie are then situated with their own millinery establishment in a small town, yet the "pure country air, and proper food, and freedom from life-wearing toil, came too late to save poor Annie"
(Winn and Alexander 162), and she dies. Etty does not marry.

Toulmin makes several comments about the limits placed on women in this text. Education (or lack thereof) is a major concern, and Toulmin chastises the fictional Mrs. Sandford for her short-sightedness about the future of her daughters, thinking that they would get married, "and thus be provided for, and protected" (150). Toulmin responds to this with:

"Too many mothers, who think little, think thus; and so neglect to cherish in those they love a spirit of self-reliance, or to place within their reach the means of self-dependence. Woe to the helpless in this struggling world! (150)

Woe, indeed. The girls' lack of education makes them ideal candidates for employment with Madame Dobiere, whose "corps of dressmakers is commonly recruited from unsophisticated country girls" (153). What's the benefit in recruiting from these ranks? According to Richard Altick, the benefit is to preserve the status quo (143). Madame Dobiere, in her younger days, worked as a maid and has risen in the social class stratification to a middle-class shop owner. She works hard to protect herself from "the encroachments of the class [she has] lately left" (Altick 84), and relies on the limited education of Etty and Annie and the others to preserve her position. More educated workers might question their unsatisfactory lot, and thus be perceived as a threat (Altick 143; Swindells 134).

Richard Altick maintains that the upper classes in the nineteenth-century England saw education for the working classes as a double-edged sword. It was effective to use education to preserve "religious duties and [one's] ordained place in
life" (Altick 144), but too much education could lead to discontent with an "inferior situation of life" (Altick 143). Clearly, Etty and Annie come to Madame Dobiere's employ with the former educational background, as Etty is mortified to discover during her first night at the establishment that many of her fellow seamstresses hurried to bed, "without bending the knee to ONE. Let us hope that some murmured prayer to guide and bless, mounted to HIS throne" (152).

Women's economic dependency created by marriage is another issue for Toulmin, and this theme appears again later in *Toil and Trial*. Mrs. Sandford is wholly dependent on the skimpy pension provided at her husband's death, and she and her daughters live in a rural town "because the house rent was low, and the little income would go farther in such a neighborhood" (149). Toulmin is critical of short-sighted women like Mrs. Sandford, as "[i]t does not seem to have occurred to the mother, that it was possible to add to their narrow means by any exertion of her own" (149, original italics). "Marriage," Janet Murray states, "seldom relieved a·woman of the need to work" (326), yet Mrs. Sandford, following her own tradition, prepares her daughters for not much else besides marriage, which she thinks will protect and provide for them. Toulmin presents the ramifications of this attitude in the remainder of the text, as Mrs. Sandford's daughters are basically sold into slavery for lack of education and skills.

Marriage and class are also tangled for Henrietta in "The Orphan Milliners." They are soon separated, as class overrides any serious relationship that might develop between her and Charles Morton (before they discover they're related, anyway).
Charles is a doctor, and Henrietta is a poor, working-class milliner. The courtship, for Morton, begins as "folly". His continued association with Henrietta "had broken no code of man's moralities" (159), and when that folly began to evolve into a deeper feeling for her, readers are led to think there might be a chance for Henrietta to improve her station in life through marriage, with the added bonus of a loving relationship. Charles doesn't try to deny his feelings, but rather decides "to let things take their course, and to trust to the 'blind chance' of which fools talk, but which does not exist in the world" (159). With her sharp comment on the strict rules of class relations, Toulmin promptly removes Henrietta from the possibility of social mobility through marriage.

Henrietta knows all along, although she continues to dream, that a marriage between the two can never occur. She is very aware of Charles's "poor sophistries woven to mislead hearts such as hers" (159), the "words of passion, from one whom she knew had no thought of making her his wife" (159), yet is "ready to leap into the gulf of ruin" (159) for Charles at any time.

Henrietta experiences a rude awakening about the nature of her relationship after taking a wedding dress order from a young couple. She overhears the couple expressing their "deep heart love [in] many a sentence" (160), and she is shocked that her love is not expressed so with Charles. Should she really be shocked, though? She has previously been acutely aware of their class differences. In a tormented emotional state, she returns home and discovers that she and Charles are cousins, giving her a
convenient way out of a relationship that she knows can never be.

Toulmin cautions readers not to be too sympathetic where Charles is concerned. When the discovery of family ties is made, Charles blurts out that "[m]y name is not Morton" (161). This little confession renders his intentions toward Henrietta as suspect. Who is he? What's his purpose for lying about his name? What was he planning? Obviously, he was not planning to marry her, as he states, "I have never thought of you as my wife" (161, original italics). He was, in fact, manipulating and exploiting her, much as the upper and middle classes did the working class.

Toulmin is also critical of the conditions working women are forced into, and takes aim at uncaring business owners, especially women. Madame Dobiere serves as a case study here. Henrietta and Annie are thrilled on their arrival to see the splendor of Dobiere's establishment, only to have that enthusiasm squelched as their employ progresses. The girls, along with their co-workers, are nearly starved with "coarse dry bread and cheese...and...horrid fat cold mutton" (155) and tea that was distributed and withheld indiscriminately.

Little food and long hours (commonly twelve hours per day) finally take their toll on Annie, as she faints one day. Miss Smith, the supervisor, commands that no more attention be given to Annie than throwing water on her. Not reviving after her shower, Annie is taken into the fresh air where she comes to and says, "I am almost sure, that I am only faint for want of food" (155). Another seamstress lends Henrietta a shilling (the young women were to have no salary for the first six months of their
employment, possibly to foster total dependence on Madame Dobiere, and thus be wholly at her mercy) to bribe a servant to get something "hot and nice" (155) for Annie, whatever that might be. Toulmin takes pains to show these are common conditions for seamstresses, and "[i]n common parlance, 'the veil had dropped'" (155) from Henrietta's eyes regarding the circumstances of her and her sister. Toulmin hopes the veil has dropped from readers' eyes, too.

Madame Dobiere and her clients are severely chastised by Toulmin for contributing to the starvation, failing health, and premature death of seamstresses. A "fashionable looking personage" (156) makes her way into the shop one evening, intending to order a dress. She pressures Madame Dobiere to have the dress ready by the next day, but Madame hedges because of the time constraint. Fearful of losing business to a competitor, Madame agrees to the demand, assuring the skeptical customer that "we must work half the night" (156).

Toulmin points a finger at the female patron, stating "probably it never occurred to the thoughtless woman...that she had on such occasions done her part in wearing out not only silks and satins, but youth, health, and life," (156). She sees these women wrapped up in their own "'disgusting foolery of idiotic vanities'" (156) with "hard heart[s]" (156), and who are ultimately "thoughtless" (156). Edith Simcox, a union organizer and activist, makes the same charge some forty-three years later when she appeals to the "educated women of leisure" about their thoughtlessness toward working women: "What do they care if the cheapness [of a dress] is got by
starving women?" (qtd. in Broomfield and Mitchell 577).

Who bears more of the responsibility for the reprehensible conditions of working women--the shop mistress or the thoughtless client? According to Toulmin, we need to take a closer look at the woman client who "so often drives [the shop mistresses], certainly, to one sort of tyranny (156). Readers are not free from blame, however, as Toulmin writes that "those among us who judge ourselves the most considerate, have sins of this kind, both of omission and commission, for which we must answer" (156).

In "The Orphan Milliners," Toulmin raises the curtain in the dress shop so that readers are able to see the abuses that go on behind the scenes, as it were, to make them aware of the abuses milliners endured. She also confronts middle-class women about their part in the circumstances of working women, and the responsibility and duty to their sisters to help alleviate intolerable conditions.
"THE TEMPTERS AND THE TEMPTED"

"The Tempters and the Tempted" presents a variation on a theme introduced in "The Orphan Milliners": an indictment of middle-class women's responsibility for working women's suffering. Camilla Crosland borrows a line from Shakespeare's Measure for Measure as an epigraph for this text: "'The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most?'" (153). For her, the answer to this question is ambiguous.

"The Tempters and the Tempted" was originally published in 1853 as part of the collection of short stories and essays, English Tales and Sketches, under the name of Mrs. Newton Crosland. This text centers around the unfounded defamation of character of Mary, a house servant who is released from her position by the middle class tyrant Mrs. Dixon, and Mary's subsequent fall into deception and bad "character" in her efforts to obtain a new position.

Mary is not sure why she was fired, and she questions Mrs. Dixon repeatedly. Mrs. Dixon's only response is, "'I should think your own conscience must tell you'" (156), although she finally informs Mary that she suspects her of stealing. Mrs. Dixon is also resolute that she will tell any potential employer of the circumstances of Mary's dismissal, despite her protestations of innocence.

Desperate for a position after many months of unemployment, Mary agrees to a scheme concocted by an acquaintance, who will pose as Mary's former employer and vouch for her character. At this point, Toulmin states that Mary's heart had been
"warped by Temptation, [and] how sadly must her self-respect have been lowered" (161) in order to accept such a suggestion. She uses "Mrs. Smith" as a character reference and finds a position with a baker's family, who has just fired their servant for dishonesty. Luckily for Mary, Mrs. Allen is too busy to see Mrs. Smith immediately, so Mary gets a "respite of [her] sentence" (164) for three days.

The three days wear on, but the "Lie was a haunting Presence that seemed to banish even the hope of happiness" (165). Overcome by guilt, Mary finally breaks down with the truth about her situation. The Allens' demeanor changes as they tell Mary, "'We cannot help you,'" (166). Mary faints, and in their efforts to rouse her, the Allens discover that Mary has pawned everything she own, thereby testifying to the truth of her confession.

Mrs. Allen decides to hear Mrs. Dixon's side of the story, and returns to tell her husband that, in reference to Mrs. Dixon, "a great many people who call themselves ladies are no ladies at all" (167). It appears that Mrs. Dixon recovered the item she had accused Mary of stealing, and had no more remorse than to feel bad at her own loss of a good servant. Having gone through three servants since Mary's departure, Mrs. Dixon offers a position to Mary, who declines the offer, "with something like scorn, [for] the idea of a 'grander' place" (168).

Crosland focuses on Mr. Dixon and his son, Richard, as secondary accomplices in the crime against Mary. Mr. Dixon is a hen-pecked husband, whose "indecision of character had made him fall under the rule of his partner early in their married life"
(154), and when he tries to intervene on Mary's behalf, he is cut off by his wife as though he were questioning her authority on domestic matters. He consequently gives up his ground, as running the house is his wife's territory. Crosland points a finger at Mr. Dixon, who should have intervened, since he appreciated Mary's work and could not believe the accusation of theft.

Richard Dixon (the son) doesn't want to believe the accusation either, but for a different reason. Mary has handled his sexual harassment better than other servants, since he "never disguised his admiration..., even if the revealing it bordered on insult" (157), and even "received his idle compliments with a dignity that repelled further rudeness" (157). According to Murray, sexual harassment of female servants by the "boys of the household" (329) was common. For Crosland, this was just another of the abuses that working women suffered at the hands of the middle class.

Mrs. Dixon is characterized as a tyrant in this text. She "cannot 'keep her servants'" (155), and is "hardened against 'appearances'" (156), domineering, inconsiderate, unsympathetic, a conspirator with other middle-class mistresses, and has little remorse for her actions. She throws Mary out with no proof of dishonesty, reproaches her husband and son for questioning her judgment, vows to divulge the circumstances of Mary's dismissal to anyone who asks (even though they are false), and doesn't feel her "wickedness [one] bit" (167) when she later finds the article she accused Mary of stealing.

Perhaps we should give Mrs. Dixon more credit than she would seem to
deserve. Yes, she takes the role as the domestic angel in the home to new extremes of cruelty, but her behavior may be an unconscious reaction to the Victorian social code she is forced to accept as a woman. She takes her role very seriously, and she rebukes her husband for encroaching on her space regarding Mary's dismissal—"'Really I cannot see, Mr. Dixon, what you have to do with these arrangements'" (155). The home, "'its cares and its employments, [are] woman's true sphere'" (Pinchbeck 200). Mrs. Dixon feels threatened, as her husband ventures into the only realm of her life where she has control. Seeing the release of Mary as a small drama in her mundane life, Mrs. Dixon decides to "play a more interesting part in the drama" (157) and feigning distress, lapses into tears and bemoans the fact that her husband has doubted her over Mary's dismissal. As a result, Mr. Dixon "resolved never--never again--to interfere between two of womankind" (158).

We cannot ignore Mrs. Dixon's mistreatment of Mary, however. Crosland makes much the same plea to "thoughtless women" (161) employers on behalf of domestic workers in this text as she does to business people in "The Orphan Milliners": to recognize that they are contributing to the miserable conditions of the "hundreds and thousands of female servants" (158). She cites:

plain as the duty is of employers not to deceive one another, by giving an unjust character of a servant...there is a terrible responsibility in depriving a young woman of a situation, which is not, I fear, generally sufficiently felt (158).

Mary could not have subsisted much longer; and she realized the only way to
survive was to deceive potential employers, due to Mrs. Dixon's vow to relay her suspicions about Mary to anyone who asked. Readers might be tempted to look down their noses at Mary's deception, but as Mrs. Allen tells her husband, "none of us know what we should do if we were sorely tempted" (167). Crosland's criticism of the "thoughtless woman" (161) is emphatic here, as she says:

\[
\text{ye, whose breath can give or take away reputation--be merciful in your judgment of her [servant], and pause well ere, on some similar occasion, you drive a helpless female to desperation (161)}
\]

Mrs. Dixon, therefore, is in part responsible for Mary's "first breaking down of the barriers of integrity" (161).

Swindells spells out what Crosland implies in this text: that women's work was short term, low paying, and not secure (172), and that extreme circumstances called for extreme measures on the part of working women. Who is, then, more to blame--the tempters or the tempted? While Mary must take some of the blame for her deception, it is Mrs. Dixon who drove her to such measures.
"TOIL AND TRIAL:
A STORY OF LONDON LIFE"

"Toil and Trial" first appeared in 1849 as the first text of three in a collection of short stories published under the name of Mrs. Newton Crosland. In the Preface, Crosland tells readers that hers is "an endeavour to awaken sympathy for a class of persons . . . who appear to have been singularly neglected by writers of fiction" (vii). This text is not directed specifically toward exposing the reality of life for working class women, but to show the abuses experienced by both men and women. In this text, readers find a variety of characters from the middle and working classes, including women and men who increase their social position after marriage, sympathetic shopowners who earn the loyalty of their employees, unsympathetic shopowners who become "victims" (inasmuch as they can be victims) of embezzlement by employees, a tyrannical woman "angel" in the house, and the typical "benign and considerate 'older man'...[identified by Julia Swindells as functioning] to alleviate intolerable material circumstances" (Swindells 142).

The text centers around a young woman, Eliza (Lizzy) Dean, whose father dies when she is a child and leaves her mother a rich widow. Charles Denison, an opportunist, sees Mrs. Dean's wealth and marries her and starts his own business. Denison's first wife (Lizzy's mother) becomes aware of the deception, and dies of a broken heart while pleading with Charles to make sure that Lizzy is provided for, since
she will be orphaned upon Mrs. Denison's death. Half-heartedly, he agrees.

Mr. Denison moves on to his second wife, a "fine lady as she thought of herself" (3), who enjoys the lifestyle that Mr. Denison provides, even though his position is a result of fortune hunting. Lizzy makes a disappointing marriage choice, and is cast out by Denison because she wishes to marry Jasper Rivers, a member of the working class who has no money and no prospects of setting up his own shop.

Lizzy and Jasper marry anyway, and are able to procure positions in the same place as shopworkers, but their marriage must remain a secret because of a "prejudice as stupid as it is heartless, against married servants" (21). Jasper, rushing to defend Lizzy against the continued advances of a male customer one day, reveals the big secret (their marriage), and both Lizzy and Jasper are released from their positions.

In the process of finding another position, Lizzy is quite by accident reunited with an old family friend, Matthew Warder, who helps Lizzy get a job with a respectable milliner, Mrs. Forster. He also assists Jasper in getting another position in a shop, and introduces his son Frank to the couple. The three become friends, and Lizzy introduces Miriam Lowe, a former governess at the Denison house, to Frank. Miriam and Lizzy were great friends before she was expelled from her step-father's house, and now Miriam has met the same fate for continuing to have correspondence with Lizzy.

Miriam and Frank develop a friendship, and the two couples become companions. Lizzy, noticing the growing affection between Miriam and Frank, is
concerned about the class difference, because of Miriam's "want of fortune" (75).

Frank has already anticipated Lizzy's objections, and has received approval from his father regarding a more serious relationship with Miriam.

After a fire destroys the Lorrimers' shop (where Jasper works), the elder Warder establishes Frank in a shop, with Jasper as his "chief assistant" (91). Finally, Miriam and Frank are married. Although Jasper and Lizzy's daughter, Ellen, dies, they have another child--a healthy son. Denison goes bankrupt. All's well that ends well, readers can suppose.

Crosland sets up a cause and effect relationship early in this text with a conversation between Matthew Warder and Charles Denison on the treatment and conditions of shopworkers. She spends much of the remainder of the narrative showing the effects of ill-treated and well-treated workers on the middle class, and on the workers themselves.

Denison and Warder differ on a number of points regarding treatment of employees. First, Denison sees his employees as "impudent creatures" (10) who are childlike and need supervision with high-handed discipline. Six of his employees have raised objections to working late hours. In response, Denison fires them and treats the rest as rebellious adolescents who need to be taught a lesson: "I...have vowed to keep open till eleven o'clock instead of ten for the next six months" (10). Warder, by contrast, prefers to think of his employees and other workers as worthy of respect due to all people, regardless of their station of life. Indeed, the guests at Denison's dinner
party concurred that it "looked quite absurd for him [Warder] to rise and open the door when Miriam Lowe [the governess] was quitting the room" (15).

Second, Denison and Warder disagree about the extra time employees would have if they benefited from the early closing system. Denison argues that extra leisure time would leave more time for drinking, smoking cigars, and general debauchery. Warder counters by reminding Denison that at the time workers are finished for the day, reading rooms are closed, lectures are over, and most socializing is over, too, and the only amusements left open that late at night are the pubs. Warder rebukes Denison with the comment, "Let us not judge poor humanity by a standard beyond its grasp; but rather remove the temptation to evil, and give scope to the nobler faculties" (14). The early closing system would do just that.

Denison does not consider, or doesn't care about, the effects of his work environment on the physical and mental well-being of his employees. Crosland relieves some employers of responsibility for poor working conditions under the guise of ignorance, but not one second longer after the ignorance is exposed. Denison's establishment is, however, described as one that doesn't meet the sanitary codes of the day and he knows it. He has been told "season after season, that the health of his young men suffered from the myriad evils which swelled the train of his narrow system" (39). Warder cautions him to recognize the consequences of moral deterioration and physical exertion. "They work together," Warder says, "bringing death and destruction to tens of thousands" (15).
The largest disagreement between Denison and Warder, though, is about the responsibility and benefit of ameliorating the oppression and suffering of the working people. Warder expresses the opinion that the early closing hours system would not affect business in any way. He also mentions that those who have the power to make the first move to adopt a general early closing system are under a moral obligation to do so. Those who take this step are praised for being "warm and eager in their support of those who were fighting the battle of the oppressed" (12), and are capable of opening "their minds to common-sense arguments" (12). Denison's response is to shrug his shoulders, "having no wish for the honours of martyrdom" (12).

Warder's appeal is reiterated to women later in the text, in a direct address to readers. In a plea reminiscent of "The Orphan Milliners," Crosland describes the luxury of dress shops where the price for this luxury is paid for by little less than the "health, mind, life, [and] soul of your fellow-creatures" (52) in an "atmosphere [that] would strike you as fetid" (53). In a short set of scenarios intended to increase awareness about the oppression and suffering of the working poor, Crosland hopes to garner some of that "warm and eager support" (12) to benefit the workers; because as Warder says, "whatever positively and permanently benefits one class, is of service to several others more indirectly" (13).

Crosland makes a comparison between establishments run by the likes of Denison with that of another merchant, Lorrimer, to emphasize the correlation of physical overwork and its influence on the moral behavior of employees. The
Lorrimer's shop closed early, recreation outside the shop during off-peak business was recommended and even encouraged, married workers were not discriminated against but employed, and minds were engaged toward the development of "nobler faculties" (14). As a result, employees "worked really for love, as well as for money" (71), and when the shop was threatened by fire, employees risked themselves to salvage as much as possible.

In contrast, Denison punished his employees for rebelling against his late closing system. They lived and worked in seedy conditions, smoked, drank, and schemed to "cheat their masters" (14). Indeed, over-work led George Harris (a former associate of Jasper's) to embezzle property from Denison and subsequently be "sent out of the country...to labour in its service" (97). Married employees were terminated upon discovery. When fire broke out, employees didn't have any loyalty to their employer, but rather ran away like "frightened rats" (82).

Work, however, is not the only focus in this text. Marriage and class are again intertwined as in "The Orphan Milliners." The common thread was that the woman's status was always tied to that of some man. It is acceptable for him to increase his social status through marriage, but the woman who increases her social position through marriage is subject to a barrage of raised eyebrows and concerns about her worthiness.

Charles Denison is a fortune hunter, and takes advantage of a system that concentrates wealth, economic stability, and social privilege on him. He finds his rich
widow in Lizzy's mother, and she loses whatever independence she has when she
marries him. Because of his exclusive male privilege in Victorian society, her
inheritance becomes his property, a "right" he takes advantage of by setting himself up
in business. He is not obliged to provide for Lizzy after her mother's death, even
though it was Mr. Dean's fortune that made Denison's.

The second Mrs. Denison is a fortune hunter, too. She gains access to a
middle-class lifestyle through Charles, and is able to surround herself with all the
trappings of what any "thoughtful observer" would consider "ennui, idleness, and
caprice" (3). In Denison and his second wife, Crosland shows us a despicable couple
"whose Religion was the worship of self; whose Morality was a dread of the world's
opinion; and whose Sympathies had no wider range than the circle of their own
offspring" (3), if that. The second Mrs. Denison, for however long she's "made it" in
middle-class society through marriage, loses it when Denison goes bankrupt. Mrs.
Denison is a poor loser, and "instead of affording her husband consolation in his
reverses, she heaps on him reproaches" (97).

By far, the biggest marriage dilemma in this text is that of Miriam Lowe and
Frank Warder. Once a friendship has developed between Miriam and Frank, Lizzy
wonders about the impropriety of such a union and "shrank from encouraging their
meeting" (74). Lizzy and Jasper are fearful of appearing to be ungrateful to Matthew
Warder, who has been their benefactor, by encouraging a potentially unacceptable
match. It is revealing that instead of being excited that their friend Miriam has found a
potential life partner, they are concerned about the social codes of marriage and class. Jasper and Lizzy are acutely aware of their place in society, and even though they are sure that if "Mr. Warder but knew her worth as we do, [we] should have little fear of his objecting to her [Miriam's] want of fortune" (75), they are fearful of incurring the elder Warder's contempt.

Frank Warder, for all of his admirable qualities, is very aware of his social position, as well. While it is one thing to be social companions with Lizzy and Jasper, it is quite another to court a woman who is considered beneath his marriage prospects. Also wanting to avoid the contempt of his father, Frank asks for and receives approval to seriously court Miriam. Now that he has that approval, Frank makes a strange comment that reveals his hypocrisy about class relations. He hopes to offer "addresses to Miriam Lowe, if I dare hope to render them acceptable" (76), since she is now acceptable as a partner.

True love does not win out here. If it had, Frank would not have felt it necessary to seek his father's approval. Matthew Warder is also somewhat hypocritical. For all of his benevolent behavior toward the suffering and hardship of Lizzy and Jasper, he still makes inquiries about Miriam's character before he gives approval for Frank to pursue a serious relationship with her.

The significance of the title "Toil and Trial" should not go unexamined. Crosland uses Lizzy, Jasper, Miriam, and even George Harris to exemplify the intolerable conditions experienced by members of the working class, and the physical
and moral trials these conditions produced. The insidious rule against married shop employees causes stress for Lizzy and Jasper because they must keep their marriage a secret, and this secret ultimately costs them their jobs for no other reason than the fact that they are married and working class.

Excessive toil by her parents also costs Ellen (Lizzy and Jasper's daughter) her life. Crosland shows us the effects of Lizzy's abdication of the "woman's sphere" in order to work, while relegating the care of her daughter to a nurse, all the while enduring with "woman's courage" (24) the separation from her child. Ellen is "the victim of early neglect; orphaned by cruel circumstances--not death" (25). Even though Crosland urges independence for women, it is clear that she favors women remaining in their appropriate sphere, if at all possible.

The health of Lizzy, Jasper, and Miriam also suffers from severe treatment in the workplace. Lizzy's health, however, improves as Mrs. Forster allows her to work at home, and she is able to bear a second, healthy child. Jasper, after working a time at the Lorrimer's, is no longer "worn by over-toil, or his temper irritated by that perpetual tension of the nerves which must arise from too long-continued monotonous employment" (69). Miriam has enough food, leisure and respect as the governess for the Forsters' children. True to Matthew Warder's prediction, though, exhaustion due to excessively stringent work conditions takes its toll on the moral character of George Harris, who willingly and readily cheats Denison.

Excessive physical toil leads to moral and emotional trials, but according to
Crosland, "suffering always has a maturing hand" (17), a message repeated earlier in "The Orphan Milliners."
CONCLUSION

Paul Murphy notes the changing attitude toward the acceptance of fiction in working-class periodicals from 1816 to 1858. This change in public opinion supported "the many movements of a class first finding and then exercising its own power" (339). He cites three factors that contributed to this trend: the genre of fiction changed considerably, ideas about what readers should read changed, and working-class journalists recognized the value of fiction in terms of holding readers' interest (340-41).

Fiction itself underwent a transformation as working-class authors recognized that fiction was not necessarily "the common evil" (Murphy 347) that distorted truth, threatened the entire social system, and was particularly dangerous to women. Instead, by examining the ends to which the likes of Charles Dickens used fiction to expose societal hypocrisy, writers were able to see that fiction was capable of being put to more "relevant uses" (Murphy 340).

As a result of the transformation of fiction, ideas of what should be available to readers changed, also. Murphy contends that during the period of 1816-1858, "good fiction was equated with truthfulness" (357), and editors realized that "most writers [had] only been hirelings and entertainers of the rich, and [had] done little to correct the 'fearful perversion of nature and right'" (357). Fiction should instruct the working class about their own reality and abuses. Murphy maintains that writers were quick to
note that facts and political essays aimed at the working class were not effective enough
to evoke the desired reaction to lead to change, and so began to offer more diversity in
reading material.

It was during this time (1816-1858) that Camilla Toulmin Crosland first began
to publish. Her early endeavors included poetry (her first publication in 1838) and
publication in the annual Keepsake in 1838-39 (N. Crosland 347). She considered this
to be "'a feather in [her] cap,'" (qtd. in N. Crosland 347) as other authors in the same
editions included Mary Russell Mitford, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Charles
Dickens. After this brief debut in London's literary society, Crosland mentions that
"'alternating successes and disappointments [were] my lot for many years'" (qtd. in N.
Crosland 356). In fact, her husband states that "commercially speaking she was not
very successful" (N. Crosland 364).

Why is it that Camilla Crosland was not as successful as some of her
contemporaries such as Dinah Mulock Craik, with whom she had a friendship?
Crosland herself speculates on her lack of success by noting that she was constantly
plagued by the threat of debt which affected her creativity, and when she did feel
dynamic enough to write, "'the best part of [her] days was taken up in teaching'" (qtd.
in Crosland 346). Newton Crosland offers another perspective:

She wrote slowly, for she was often interrupted by headaches and general
ill-health, and the slightest discomposing incident at once put a stop to her
imaginative work (364).

For being considered somewhat of a mediocre writer, it is interesting to note
Camilla Crosland's hand in the work of Dinah Mulock. In 1845, Crosland accompanied William Chambers and his wife to Scotland. While there, Chambers presented Crosland with the proofs of a story to be printed in the *Miscellany of Tracts*. The piece was about five pages too short, and Chambers asked her to "look it through, and by inventing additional incidents, or by other means, bring it to the required length" (*Landmarks* 81). She did so, and discovered that the anonymous author of the piece turned out to be none other than Dinah Mulock. We can only speculate what other works carried the fingerprint of Camilla Toulmin Crosland during her fifty year association with the *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*. Her flexibility suggests that she was more successful as a writer than what her financial situation might reveal.

Another explanation for her relative lack of success might be Crosland's subject matter. According to Sally Mitchell, the middle class didn't want to read educational or moral tales. They wanted "stories that illuminated a thought instead of a moral, [and] romances that...suspended the rules of reality" (Mitchell 21). Murphy and Mitchell refer to these as "silver fork" novels that allowed readers to "savor the comfort, the independence, and the romantic freedom that a financially secure woman could afford" (Mitchell 28).

Crosland attempts this type of short fiction about middle-class women in stories like "Lady Lucy's Secret" (Lady Lucy goes into debt by overspending on clothes and must appeal to her benevolent husband to bail her out), "Geraldine" (who loses her love in young adulthood only to reclaim it later in life), and reconciled families in"The
Much of this work is sentimental and melodramatic, and not nearly as successful as her writing about working-class life.

Another possible reason for her lack of material success as a writer was precisely the fact that Crosland wrote about what she knew best—the struggles and difficulties of working-class women to survive in an industrializing society. People who favored "silver fork" novels didn't want to read about orphaned young women who were maligned by a system that satisfied the whims and wants of those same people. They didn't want to confront themselves over the mistreatment of servants and workers, and they certainly didn't want to read about deaths caused, directly or indirectly, by rules, customs, and establishments that they endorsed.

A different explanation for Crosland's lack of success was the fact that she identified her works as authored by a woman. Francoise Basch notes the frustration of many women writers of the time and the tendency to use a pen name because of the "clear awareness that a literary work signed by a woman would be judged by criteria irrelevant to the quality of the work" (107). An anguished Charlotte Bronte muttered, "'I wished critics would judge me as an author, not as a woman'" (Basch 108). Crosland used pen names, but they were all decidedly women's names: Emma Grey, Mrs. Macarthy, and Helena Herbert.

Much of Crosland's work is given over to a moral tone. Political struggles and legislation of the time are conspicuously absent from her writing. This does not, however, mean that she was oblivious to the outside world. She was merely operating
in the realm that society dictated to her. As a woman, she was "legally and economically subordinate" (Mitchell, *Fallen Angel* 102), but the upper hand that she did have was her "moral superiority" (Mitchell, *Fallen Angel* 102). Mitchell also notes that "Women's moral superiority would be endangered...if they were brought into contact with money or political power" (Fallen Angel xii). Damaging that moral superiority by showing any knowledge of politics and power could have compromised the audience's reception of Crosland's work, even though she was not a prominent writer (in terms of sales).

Crosland was, in fact, acutely aware of the political turmoil of the time. In *Landmarks of a Literary Life*, she states, "I could not rest or settle satisfactorily to mental employment until I had heard the latest news of the stirring events which were making history" (140). She notes a principal difference between herself and Dinah Mulock (Craik) in terms of the current news:

In contrast to my weakness [of not being able to settle into writing until knowing the current events] was Dinah Mulock's strength. She could abstain three days at a time from reading a newspaper, and when she did hear the latest intelligence she received it with apparent tranquillity (141).

Sally Mitchell notes Felicia Skene, Eliza Meteyard, Caroline Norton, Matilda Charlotte Houstoun, Dinah Mulock Craik, and Elizabeth Gaskell, among others, as contemporaries of Camilla Crosland. These writers, according to Mitchell in *The Fallen Angel*, focused on one aspect of the "woman question," which was an attempt to "enforce male chastity by the same standards as are and can be applied to women" (106). Much of the emphasis in Crosland's work is, again, on the conditions of
education, work, and marriage for working-class women; added to the perspectives offered by other women writers, her work helped to create a more complete picture of working-class women's experience in Victorian England.

Crosland's subject matter and characterizations, and the fact that many of her stories were printed in working class periodicals such as Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, show that Crosland's writing can clearly "be seen as producing working-class consciousness as well as being produced by that consciousness" (Swindells 122). There is somewhat of a desperate tone to the three texts analyzed here, a tone that reflects some of the hardships Crosland endured in her lifetime. This is perhaps most aptly stated in the third stanza of her poem "Minor Chords":

I might have better loved the world
    Had it to me been kinder,
But then my soul its wings had furled,
    Its sights been all the blinder (N. Crosland 371).

Crosland has been overlooked by contemporary scholars, just as she was overlooked by many readers of her time. She suffered a cool rebuke from the Princess of Wales in 1871 after sending a copy of The Diamond Wedding (a collection of poems), only to have it returned because "not being a diamond tiara, it was thrown back to the giver" (N. Crosland 374). Likewise, her writing was thrown back at her by middle-class Victorian readers who preferred to read a bright, shiny symbol of their good fortune rather than a record of the senseless rules, brutal work conditions, near-starvation, and death that produced that good fortune.

It is precisely because of the picture she draws that Crosland's work deserves
reconsideration as an important record of life from a working woman's point of view. Contemporary readers will recognize her unique perspective as lived experience (not speculation by a middle-class man) that adds to the constantly developing picture of working women's lives in Victorian England.
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