

Novels, Newspapers, and Global War: New Realisms in the 1850s

RACHEL TEUKOLSKY

Reading the morning newspaper is the realist's morning prayer.

G. W. F. Hegel

War, like other dramatic spectacles, might possibly cease for want of a "public."

George Eliot

Novels and newspapers, two major print phenomena of the nineteenth century, both played crucial roles in the rise of modern nationalism. In Benedict Anderson's influential account, both print items created a "community in anonymity" by giving readers the illusory sense of shared experience with innumerable unknown others. For Anderson, the imagined communities organized by print capitalism emerged from a new kind of temporal sense, a fiction of simultaneity. Newspaper readers performed a daily ceremony confident that numerous faceless others also performed the same simultaneous act. Likewise, classic novels portrayed characters who acted simultaneously, perhaps without even meeting each other, united by an omniscient narrator into a cohesive imagined world. Both novels and newspapers thus produced for readers a mirage, a "fiction [that] seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations" (36).

The link between novels and newspapers takes up only a few pages in Anderson's original study. While recent scholarship attuned to media history has looked to expand on the connection, surprisingly little work has been done to theorize broader interrelations between these two print forms. In the case of nineteenth-century Britain, most scholarship has focused on sensation novels and their roots in lurid crime reporting—hence their Victorian moniker, "newspaper novels" (see Altick). Matthew Rubery has recently explored how nineteenth-century novels incorporated newspaper forms into their plots, ranging from the shipping news to agony columns; but the heft of his argument lands on British fiction, tracing an important mode of media influence rather than making a media comparison.¹ Generally speaking, most scholarship on Victorian periodical culture has focused

I am grateful to Rachel Ablow, Lauren Goodlad, Daniel Hack, Ivan Kreilkamp, Richard Menke, and Dahlia Porter for their serious and thoughtful comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

¹ Dallas Liddle, by contrast, argues that Victorian fiction was defined by its conflict and competition with journalistic discourse.

on the vital arena of magazines and journals, where much fiction was serialized and where the line between novel and periodical often becomes difficult to draw.² A newspaper, though, is a distinct kind of periodical item and would seem to demand its own kind of material study.

One challenge to scholarship lies in the sheer diversity of the nineteenth-century newspaper. Early-century newspapers were often erratic, expensive, and provincial, while late-century papers were usually daily, cheap, and increasingly sensational. Meaningful comparison, then, would have to be historically specific in the choice of both newspaper and novel. In this essay, I look to the tumultuous years of the 1850s, when the *Times* of London gained unprecedented sway over public opinion through its reporting on the Crimean War (1853–56). During this decade, geopolitical events and imperial warfare provoked the formation of new imagined communities across various print cultures—including both the newspaper and the novel, where, I will argue, representational claims to “the real” worked to shape a powerful new vision of British national identity.

Literary scholars have long pointed to the 1850s as a crucial decade in the history of novelistic realism. It was during this decade that the term *realism* first entered the English language as a descriptor for literature.³ A famous manifesto of realist fiction was penned during this moment, in George Eliot’s 1859 novel *Adam Bede*, when the narrator pauses the story to deliver a lengthy, stirring statement of aesthetic principles. Yet critics have not really considered the relationship between novelistic realism and the major, traumatic international conflicts that galvanized middle-class reading publics during this decade, especially readers of newspapers.⁴ The Crimean War was the first to be documented by an independent press, as new media technologies gave the British public unprecedented access to the gruesome realities of war, especially the traumatic suffering of common soldiers. One reason that scholars have not connected novelistic realism to journalistic realism is that, though the war dominated media forums in the mid-1850s, surprisingly few novels appeared that portrayed the war directly. Most literary critics have thus approached aesthetic questions surrounding the war by analyzing the voluminous patriotic poetry it inspired.⁵ Here, however, I argue that the new war journalism shared complex representational norms with the realist novel, especially in realism as formulated by Eliot in the late 1850s.

² An important volume studying the relationships between literature and Victorian periodicals is John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten.

³ As Raymond Williams notes, the term *realism* first emerged in France in the 1830s before coming to Britain in the 1850s (*Keywords* 258).

⁴ One major international conflict not discussed in this essay is the Indian Uprising of 1857—an event whose discourses have been analyzed mainly for their sensationalism rather than their realism.

⁵ See Helen Groth and Natalie M. Houston, respectively. Stefanie Markovits argues that certain novels of the 1850s responded to the Crimean War more indirectly. She suggests that the war transferred ideas of heroism to women, as modeled by Florence Nightingale; hence novels of the 1850s that depicted female heroes in the midst of social turmoil—such as Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*—can be read as responses to the Crimean War. See Markovits 63–122.

I analyze Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), with its celebrated statement of realist principles and its panoply of small-time rural characters. The pacific English countryside, as it turns out, is also a traumatic space for working bodies; the reader is invited to see pastoral life anew in all its violent reality. Set at the turn of the nineteenth century against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars, the novel ties the military to the domestic by writing common people into a new kind of realist history. Eliot rewrites ideas of the nation and the world-historical, replacing triumphant narratives of metropolis, warfare, or empire with smaller tragedies of the domestic, rural, and provincial. In the realist novel, as in the journalism of the Crimean War, the suffering of private individuals becomes a public matter: nationhood is defined away from monuments or leaders and re-centered symbolically in working-class figures who become national touchstones for a middle-class reading public.

Rather than defining realism as a set of retrospective qualities that are inherently realistic, this essay looks back to the 1850s, to texts that made claims to realism while also displaying patent modes of fictionality. I am interested in the kinds of formal conditions and geopolitical interests that accompanied those claims. A significant recurring feature in both *Adam Bede* and the Crimean War journalism is found in the distinctive relationship between narrator and presumed audience. Though it might seem incongruous to align Eliot's novels, grounded in the insular localism of the English countryside, with journalistic accounts of a violent and harrowing international conflict, Eliot's realism in fact also invokes a presumed audience—united by education, reading habits, and a state of technological modernity—organized around the spectacle of the bodily sufferings of common people. The war journalist produces a mobile cosmopolitanism in detailed ethnographic comparisons of different nationalities, while universalizing the soldier's plight in the midst of bloody warfare. Eliot's narrator also takes an ethnographic view, providing newly realistic visions of working people in order to project, for a privileged audience, a mirage of British nationhood. Global warfare, as it turns out, is an important imaginative ground for realist claims in the 1850s because it allows for the ultimate juxtaposition of the local and the universal, as graphic details are faithfully reported, via new media channels, from the unfolding of a world-encompassing violent event. Despite the universalizing moves of realism in both novel and newspaper, however, in the end only certain people—more privileged, middle-class readers, narrators, and characters—are finally able to see the truths of working-class suffering, while also remaining distant enough to comprehend that suffering's structural causes.

War Journalism: Representing the Reality of War

When Hegel writes in his daily journal, "Reading the morning newspaper is the realist's morning prayer," he makes the newspaper—with its positive certainties about place and time—into a handbook for philosophical realism, with its belief in absolute, universal forms underlying the perceived world (247). That newspaper reading might be a kind of "prayer" lends a tinge of irony to Hegel's comment, undermining the absolutist assumptions of both worldviews. Hegel writes of a

philosophical realism that preceded aesthetic realism; the latter would come to emphasize the realness of the phenomenal world in a way that contrasted with the idealism of the earlier philosophy. Yet both realisms embraced the notion that representing reality could lead to the discovery of deeper human truths (Williams, *Keywords* 257–58).

Despite Hegel's assertion, realism was not an automatic association with newspaper journalism at the middle of the nineteenth century. It was not presumed that newspapers were organized around points of hard fact. The medium had been transforming itself since the early nineteenth century, moving from patchy news coverage, small print runs, high cost, and infrequent publication to a more genuinely mass phenomenon with broader news coverage, larger circulation, cheaper prices, and daily publication. Censorship and government control at the turn of the nineteenth century had given way to the ideal of a free press, subject to market forces (Hampton 25–34). The full-time profession of "journalist" only emerged in the 1830s; before this time, as Rubery writes, "there had been only a loose connection between journalists and the news" (86). Victorian newspapers continued an eighteenth-century tradition of expressing strong political opinions in editorial columns; but the invention of the electric telegraph in 1836 and Isaac Pittman's perfection of shorthand in the 1840s led to a new reportorial investment in immediacy, transcription, and the eyewitness account (Williams *Read* 100). Anthony Smith argues that a universalized system of shorthand, in particular, transformed reporting into a kind of observational science, promising readers "the complete recovery of some semblance of reality" (161).

These moves toward a more fact-based journalistic standard coincided, at mid-century, with newspapers' gaining an ever-widening sphere of influence, as is evident in the mantle of "the fourth estate."⁶ In particular, the British press gained unprecedented cultural power while covering the Crimean War (1853–56)—a power, I will suggest, that emerged from journalism's compelling handling of discourses of the real. Often referred to as the first "truly modern war" (Figs xix), the conflict in the Crimea pitted Russia against an unlikely coalition of Britain, France, and Turkey and featured the use of new war technologies that included rapid-fire artillery, ironclad ships powered by steam, and railways custom-built to supply troop lines.⁷ Historians have also described this conflict as the first "media war": events in the Crimea were covered by independent war correspondents who sent articles and sketches from the front using a combination of railway, ship, and telegraph.⁸ Readers back in England might learn of a battle in the pages of the *Times*

⁶ Newspaper historians often point to Thomas Delane, editor of the *Times* in the 1850s, as a spearhead for the idea that newspapers serve as an independent watchdog over government actions. Delane's editorials in the *Times* in 1852 strongly defended the right of newspapers to freely express commentary critical of government actions. See Kevin Williams 106–7.

⁷ Orlando Figs describes many of the new technological developments associated with the war.

⁸ The phrase "media war" appears regularly in analyses of the Crimean War, but it is explored in depth in Ulrich Keller.

or the *Illustrated London News* just a few weeks after its actual occurrence, lending a new sense of currency to “the news.”

The popularity of the war at its beginning created an insatiable appetite for news: “The excitement, the painful excitement for information, beggars all description,” wrote one government official (qtd. in Knightley 2). It was this demand that inspired the editors of the *Times*, the *Daily News*, and other papers to send their own civilian correspondents to the front. An 1855 commentator in *Blackwood’s* captures the sense of novelty surrounding the war’s new media landscape: “Fancy . . . the white-haired Nestor, and the sage Ulysses, reading, towards the close of the first year of their sojourn before Troy, the first book of the *Iliad*, to be continued in parts as a serial” (Hamley 531). The high-flown epic tradition is here deflated by the busy modernity of Victorian warfare and commercial print culture. In the new timescale of journalism, events and their media coverage might radically overlap—suggesting the way in which warfare in the nineteenth century gave rise to the modern “news cycle,” as world events were transpiring that commanded immediate public attention. Modern newspapers and modern warfare thus developed in tandem.

The Crimean War became a media sensation due to shocking revelations of mismanagement and incompetence by British leaders. This was the war that saw the infamous “Charge of the Light Brigade,” when a troop of British cavalry was sent on a foolhardy assault against Russian fortifications with disastrous results. Tennyson memorialized the event in his celebrated poem: “Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die.”⁹ More devastating, however, was the inability of British officials to properly clothe and feed the army during a harsh Russian winter, leading to heavy casualties from disease and starvation in numbers that far exceeded deaths in battle.¹⁰ These appalling conditions inspired the arrival of Florence Nightingale, who pioneered modern nursing practices at Crimean hospitals for the sick and wounded.

The unfortunate facts of this war created the conditions for a representational crisis. British leaders could no longer be portrayed in the epic mode as the heroic representatives of the nation. In previous conflicts—the Napoleonic Wars were the most recent in British memory—warfare was a matter of brave generals performing valiant deeds amid panoramic battle scenes. In paintings, portraits of celebrated leaders were set against sweeping hillsides with horses and puffs of smoke (Lalumia 57). In the literary realm, poetry in the Homeric vein captured the patriotic national feeling. And indeed, most of the literature composed about the Crimean War was poetry, especially derivative war sonnets. Yet the increasingly apparent failures of British leadership during the modern war—with news of the disastrous winter siege at Sebastopol arriving home in England—served to make the epic mode seem incongruous and hopelessly outdated. Poetry and painting

⁹ Most literary studies of the Crimean War focus on Tennyson’s famous poem. See, for example, Groth and Houston, respectively.

¹⁰ Estimates suggest that 21,000 British and Irish soldiers died in total, and as many as 80 percent of these deaths were attributable to disease. See Arnold 38.

fell into the background as the public was gripped by newspaper accounts sent by intrepid “special correspondents” back from the front. This representational shift followed on the heels of a broader conceptual transformation regarding the military: an older ideal had cherished the personal heroism of aristocratic officers, but this ideal came to seem obsolete when officers proved unfit for their appointed positions. Instead, as Olive Anderson has observed, the Crimean War ushered in a new era of warfare, one that would now value “technical knowledge, specialized experience, and powers of organization”—in other words, values associated with the commercial world of the British middle classes (101, 104).

Mid-Victorian political critiques of an antiquated military hierarchy emerged from numerous quarters. But the most vocal critiques were launched by a single newspaper, whose star correspondent became a renowned national figure. Already by 1853, the London *Times* was known as “the Thunderer” for its strongly worded editorial opinions and powerful circulation numbers. With the onset of the war, however, and with the riveting contributions of special correspondent William Howard Russell from the front, the *Times* became the preeminent newspaper in the nation. By 1855, to cite an oft-quoted statistic, the newspaper doubled the combined circulation of all of its rivals, achieving a daily print run of 61,000 (as compared with the 3,000 to 6,000 of other papers) (O. Anderson 71). Dallas Liddle finds evidence of the paper’s cultural ascendancy in the mid-1850s in a rash of periodical articles decrying the *Times*’ almost tyrannical influence; the *Saturday Review* summed up the situation as “thirty millions of *Cives Romani* governed despotically by a newspaper” (qtd. in Liddle 36).¹¹ As Liddle points out, it is no coincidence that in 1855 John Stuart Mill begins writing *On Liberty*, in which he warns against the lemminglike behavior of newspaper readers whose “thinking is done for them by men much like themselves, addressing them or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment, through the newspapers” (qtd. in Liddle 36). While these critics make what might be considered a progressive critique of media monopoly, they are also reacting against the *Times*’ own reform-minded politics, as the paper was using Russell’s uncensored reports to launch an unprecedented attack on the ineptitude of military and political leaders.

Russell’s coverage proved volatile because of its anti-epic revelations of wounds, cholera, hypothermia—inglorious elements of warfare that had never before been foregrounded so vividly. Russell takes pains to emphasize that much suffering could have been avoided had soldiers been better equipped to handle the war and the weather. He frames his observations of these awful conditions using a self-conscious language of “hard truths” that highlights the realism of his reports, especially in contrast to the false optimism of more official accounts. Thus he describes the British camp during the grueling 1854 winter siege of Sebastopol:

It is now pouring rain—the skies are black as ink—the wind is howling over the staggering tents—the trenches are turned into dykes—in the tents the water is sometimes

¹¹ Though Liddle notes the impact of the Crimean War on the *Times* circulation, his book does not actually study any Crimean War journalism.

a foot deep—our men have not either warm or waterproof clothing—they are out for twelve hours at a time in the trenches—they are plunged into the inevitable miseries of a winter campaign—and not a soul seems to care for their comfort, or even for their lives. These are hard truths, but the people of England must hear them. They must know that the wretched beggar who wanders about the streets of London in the rain, leads the life of a prince compared with the British soldiers who are fighting out here for their country, and who, we are complacently assured by the home authorities, are the best-appointed army in Europe. (279–80)¹²

Russell uses expressive dashes as punctuation to convey the extremity of the soldiers' storm-befouled existence. The "hard truths" of his observation contrast with the "complacent" attitude of British leaders and also serve to challenge an implicit complacency on the part of his readers back home. While those readers will be familiar with stories demanding their sympathy on behalf of the London poor, they will likely be astonished at the comparison between British soldier and urban pauper.

I use the term *realist*, in the first instance, to describe Russell's own claims to his readers. The very conditions for his realism are created by his desire to produce a counternarrative, one that contradicts customary war stories being told back home. When Russell goes on to detail the war's ravages on the common soldier's body, these too work as an implicit counternarrative to the more familiar patriotic hymns to war. As he describes "a case of frostbite," "the raw flesh and skin [were] hanging from [the man's] fingers, the naked bones of which protruded into the cold air" (319). Or, touring the corpse-strewn battlefield of Inkerman, he contrasts the pained frowns of men who had been bayoneted to death with the "eternal smile" of those who had been mercifully shot (256). The glory of battlefield self-sacrifice seems irrelevant in the face of the immediate fact of death, a truth of the body that Russell judges merely for being more or less painful when it occurs.

The "reality" of Russell's reporting, then, is grounded in the inarguable facts of suffering and physical injury visited on the bodies of unnamed, everyman soldiers. Russell's notice of the working-class body in the *Times* was adopted and amplified by *Punch* magazine, which produced numerous cartoons sympathetic to the common soldier's plight, and, in a pointed 1855 satire, directly contrasted the bodies of privileged leaders with those of the working men they had failed. Titled "Grand Military Spectacle: The Heroes of the Crimea Inspecting the Field-Marshals" (Leech), the image reverses traditional war imagery by depicting the common soldiers—many of them with crutches, canes, and missing limbs—as war "heroes" with manly bearing and a virtuous masculinity, in stark contrast to the seated, doddering field marshals, who are paunchy, antique, aristocratic, and effeminately dressed. The wounded yet heroic working-class body came to connote "the real" for middle-class readers back in England, as a new narrative came to challenge a previous myth that had been central to national identity.

¹² Russell was still in the Crimea when he published his *Times* columns in a single volume titled *The War: From the Landing at Gallipoli to the Death of Lord Raglan* (1855). All quotations from his reports refer to this edition.

John Peck suggests that Russell's reporting most resembles a mid-Victorian "realistic novel," one in which "the fighting is almost incidental" and the real enemy is within. "[E]ssentially, in the manner of a realistic novelist, what Russell sees is a social problem" (30). Stefanie Markovits offers reservations about this assessment, given Russell's indifference to plot and character psychology, and proposes instead that he writes in the mode of a travel narrative, peppering his account with descriptive details of exotic foreign locales (34–35). I would suggest that these two interpretations are equally plausible and not necessarily mutually exclusive—especially since the realist novel and the travel narrative share an interest in the concrete verbal rendering of specific place and time.

For Peck, the closest literary analog to Russell is Charles Dickens, another "realistic" writer who marshals details in order to attack a corrupt system oppressing working people (31). Indeed, Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1855–57) features a well-known response to the Crimean War in its Circumlocution Office, committed to the public study of "HOW NOT TO DO IT."¹³ Yet ultimately, I would point out, Dickens aligns his sensibilities with working people and small-time characters in ways that Russell does not. Russell takes the viewpoint of his elite *Times* readership, a privileged minority reflecting the 7 percent of the nation who were entitled to vote after the 1832 Reform Act (Lambert and Badsey 12). Russell was himself a Tory, and even while he describes war victims who are mostly working-class men, he also relishes describing the heartwarming spectacle of aristocratic men sharing miserable conditions with their lower-class compatriots—as when, after the "luxuries of dry ship stowage," "young lords and gentlemen [were] exposed hour after hour to pitiless storms, with no bed but the reeking puddle underneath the saturated blankets. . . . Sir George Brown slept under a cart tilted over" (167–68). The indignities imposed by the weather are amplified by the fact that lords and gentlemen are the ones who must undergo them.

While Russell's aristocratic officers are often named—as is Sir George Brown, above—the more common soldiers are almost invariably unnamed and generalized. When the Allied forces decide to move their cholera victims out of doors to open fields, Russell writes of this unfortunate choice: "[T]hese meadows nurture the fever, the ague, dysentery, and pestilence in their bosom. . . . [A]t night fat unctuous vapours rise . . . from the valleys and creep up in the dark and steal into the tent of the sleeper and wrap him in their deadly embrace" (143). This passage is typical of Russell's way of speaking in poetic aggregates and types, here making the hypothetical man into an unnamed "sleeper." The common soldiers are most often descriptively merged into the landscape they inhabit. The picturesque mode appears frequently in nineteenth-century war descriptions because the landscape comes to stand in as a kind of symbolic marker for the evocation of mass human experience, especially that of the working men fighting the war. Perhaps Russell's most famous poetic generalization comes in his coining of the resonant phrase "the thin red line"—originally, the "*thin red streak topped with a line of steel*," describing a narrow defensive line of Scottish soldiers in red coats with raised bayonets (227).

¹³ Despite her differences from Peck, Markovits ultimately agrees with him that Dickens "is the model for Russell's style" (36).

Russell's writing continually juxtaposes the horrors of war with the beauty of soldierly chivalry and patriotic feeling, especially among British officers, even though the realities of the war pointed in more nihilistic, myth-deflating directions.

In thinking through Russell's complex relationship to the different people he documents, it is worth remembering that his own role as a "special correspondent" was both unprecedented and strange. Independent of the British military establishment, he must struggle to find his own food and lodgings—not an easy task, given the officers' increasingly angry reaction to his writings. Russell is akin to the "Participant Observer" described by James Buzard in his study of the nineteenth-century novel's practice of "autoethnography." For Buzard, the Participant Observer looks at his own culture through the eyes of a "mobile authority," exerting "controlled self-alienation" in order to demonstrate "an *outsider's insideness*" or "simulated membership" (10). Russell presents an ethnographic account as he documents not only military maneuvers but also the vivid customs and trials of military life. Living among the British soldiers, he too suffers with windblown tents, soaked clothes, whizzing bullets, and thin rations. Performing an "outsider's insideness," Russell conveys the whole array of military life from the officers to the grunts, his bird's-eye view granting him a powerful status that aligns him with those at the top of the hierarchy even while he is critiquing the decisions of that class.

Russell's status as a privileged observer carves out a new space for an empowered middle-class sensibility that might be described as a British cosmopolitanism—cosmopolitan for being mobile beyond the nation, taking the higher view, eschewing narrow jingoism in favor of a globalized and comparative mindset.¹⁴ In one revealing scene, Russell mocks a group of drunken "hairy Hercules" Englishmen for not discriminating among nationalities, friend or foe: "Turk, Crim, Russian, or Greek are all the same to Jack, and he is certain to salute every foreigner who goes by . . . with the universal shibboleth of "Bono! Bowno! Johnny!" (213). Russell himself, by contrast, is constantly comparing the soldiers of different nations, focusing on the realistic details of their wartime behaviors. A transformation in Russell's attitudes can be traced as the war progresses: in his early dispatches, he confidently ridicules foreign peoples, such as the occupied "poor Bulgarian" whose Christianity is largely superstition and whose "mind" is "as waste as the land around you" (89). Later into the conflict, however, Russell is forced to acknowledge all the ways in which British soldiers suffer by comparison with other nationalities—as when, confronting the absence of any British ambulances, he complains: "The French—I am tired of this disgraceful antithesis—had well-appointed covered hospital vans, to hold ten or twelve men, . . . and their wounded were sent in much greater comfort than our poor fellows" (185–86). Even the Turks,

¹⁴ *Cosmopolitanism* is a complex term with varying definitions. I use it here following what I observe to take place in the writings of Eliot and Russell, defining it as a kind of roving bird's-eye view that transcends localized affiliations, including a limited nationalism. Having said this, I do not see cosmopolitanism as necessarily defining a completely abstracted, universalized subject, as is suggested by James Buzard. I discuss below how I see the term as harboring an ideology that is fully compatible with a certain privileged British identity.

Russell eventually admits, are “patient, hardy, and strong” amid great privations, and their expert trench digging exceeds any method that “the English soldiers would have thought of doing” (210–11). On the horrific battlefield after Inkerman, contemplating the dead of many nations, Russell can only note how the corpses are indiscriminately mixed, distinguishable only by the different colors of their coats (255). The devastation of war provokes a vision that transcends nationhood, recognizing the universality of death—even while it is Russell’s own privileged, roving, British eye that can capture this sentiment. He never goes so far as to question British involvement in an imperial war, and in this sense he remains a staunch supporter of the imperial program tied to a national imaginary. Part of his projection of “the real,” then, uses the details of physical suffering to go beyond traditional patriotic allegiance—indeed, to critique the behaviors of those representing the nation—while occupying a cosmopolitan view, entertaining a privileged sense of internationalism that is also still putatively British.

How, then, to evaluate a discourse that draws powerfully on a vision of “the real,” even while being laced throughout with romanticizing and generalizing depictions, especially of working-class men? Ulrich Keller provides a useful critical insight in his analysis of realism in the Crimean War’s visual culture. He argues that most images of the war, despite their moves toward realism and authenticity, in fact participated in the manufacture of realism and the faking of authenticity. “Perhaps Authenticity was only the specific form assumed by myth and ideology in the bourgeois age. . . . The middle class addiction to visual sensation was the motor which charged authentic reportage, in spite of itself, with volatile aesthetic surplus values” (38).¹⁵ Keller limits himself to visual representations and hence uses the notion of “spectacle,” with its connotations of visual staging, to describe the mythic realism of the war’s depictions. In a related vein, I have been arguing that Russell, too, participates in a kind of staging of reality, though one that is not necessarily dependent on visuality to create its illusion.

In fact, the public furor on the home front incited by Crimean War journalism would seem to have exceeded an “addiction to visual sensation.” When journalists like Russell provide British readers with a new ethnographic vision of war, siting “the real” in the wounded working-class body, that incendiary imagery becomes the rallying point for a new imagined community back home, one defined by alignment not with noble leaders but with the heroic common soldiers whose lives are fundamentally different from those of the reading public. That this new alignment can take place despite Russell’s romanticization of social hierarchies points to the complex politics underlying British sympathy for working-class people in the nineteenth century. The outraged public itself—the “you” addressed by Russell’s columns—takes on the qualities of Russell’s own cosmopolitan Britishness; this idealized community is knowledgeable about foreign affairs, internationalist in

¹⁵ Keller’s conclusions are very different from Matthew Lalumia’s, who argues that the visual art of the Crimean War achieved a new and unprecedented realism in war depictions, greatly contrasting the epic modes of the previous century. Lalumia uses the notion of visual realism in an uncontested way.

outlook, and comparative in mindset, and it rejects mindless jingoism in favor of a thoughtful national pride in competence and good governance.

The *Times* worked to bolster this new imagined community by translating Russell's dispatches into angry political protest using editorial leaders. The "leader" was the leading article found in the newspaper's centerfold, an editorial statement that in effect taught the public to read Russell's reports as real. Russell's political complaints were amplified into angry denunciations in the *Times'* leaders, as in this oft-quoted statement from December 1854: "The noblest army ever sent from these shores has been sacrificed to the grossest mismanagement. Incompetency, lethargy, aristocratic hauteur, official indifference, favour, routine, perverseness, and stupidity reign, revel, and riot in the Camp before Sebastopol, in the harbor of Balaklava, in the hospitals of Scutari, and how much nearer home we do not venture to say" (Leader). The paper's attack on the war's aristocratic officers codes itself as a harsh reality to be exposed by middle-class writers and readers—this is realism as class warfare, framed in geopolitical terms. Progressing ominously from Crimean sites to those "nearer to home," the leader makes international warfare into a threatening domestic problem. The newspaper packaged the accounts from its own special correspondent Russell as the event horizon of the real, producing sensational copy that, not coincidentally, helped to augment the newspaper's circulation.

It is no wonder that the *Times'* combination of reportage and editorial comment united to rouse British public opinion against the government. The extent to which Russell's reports touched a chord with British readers can be seen in the way they deluged him personally with care packages intended for suffering soldiers, addressed directly to "*Times* Correspondent, Crimea" (Atkins 1: 196). The *Times* created an unprecedented charitable fund for soldier relief that, over the course of a few days in October 1854, raised £10,000 from readers.¹⁶ This outpouring seems a testament not only to the cultural power of the newspaper but also to the virtual community that was forming in England around the idea of a charitable, sympathetic, and public Britishness.

A pointed irony in this production of national feeling comes in the fact that Russell himself was Irish—a detail often alluded to by biographers to explain his journalistic success, as his "natural" Irish cheer and hard-drinking bonhomie endeared him to soldiers and invited their confidences. Likewise, many of the working-class soldiers who fought and died in the war were born in Ireland; indeed, one-third of the British fighting forces were Irish (see Murphy). Despite these facts, Russell himself distinguishes among Irish, English, and Scottish soldiers only neutrally, to describe troop movements—even while his text, as we have seen, unifies the customs of "British" troops by contrasting them with those of France, Turkey, and Russia. In one unusual scene where a sergeant is actually singled out as Irish, his legs destroyed by enemy fire, Russell quotes him as saying to his superior officer, "Had I another pair of legs, the country and you would be welcome to them!" (499). The "country" to which the soldier refers is not really under question. Any

¹⁶ A detailed account of the *Times* charity funds in the 1850s appears in "People's Almoner."

fractures in the totality of the United Kingdom are thus elided in Russell's writings by a rousing narrative of national responsibility tied to a new meritocratic, commercial, and robust middle-class public. His reports generated powerful revisions to the imagined community of the nation, even while projecting a vision of a unified nation that was itself a mirage.

George Eliot's Realism: The Village, the Nation, the Globe

The move from newspaper to novel, in the first instance, aligns my argument with a familiar kind of novel criticism that sees novels as dialogic with other kinds of textual productions—"blue books," conduct guides, sanitary reports, and other Victorian commentaries on the condition of England (see Gallagher; Childers). Russell's war journalism certainly has its roots in the blue books, in the first-person testimonies revealing the physical suffering of working-class people in England. With the here-and-now immediacy of his brutal accounts, Russell's writing offers itself for comparison with the condition-of-England novels that began to document working-class life in Manchester and London in the 1840s.

Yet I am going to argue here that a more unusual and perhaps more revealing comparison can be made to George Eliot's early realism, as exemplified in this case by *Adam Bede*—which, in its own way, is also a novel about the condition of England. Before getting to the specifics of the novel, it is important to observe the larger context for literary "realism" in the 1850s, as writers first began to use the term self-consciously to describe a specific kind of literary mode. The first known usage came in 1851, when *Fraser's Magazine* described Thackeray as "chief of the Realist school" ("W. M. Thackeray" 86; Stang 148). In 1853, the *Westminster Review* printed a long, admiring review of "Balzac and his Writings," recognizing him as head of the realist school in France (Evans 202). George Eliot, reviewing John Ruskin's *Modern Painters III*, wrote in 1856: "The truth of infinite value that he teaches is *realism*—the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature" ("John Ruskin's" 368). Or again, George Henry Lewes, in the 1858 essay "Realism in Art," writes: "Realism is . . . the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but *Falsism*." As Lewes goes on to explain, "falsism" is what happens when "our painters represent peasants with regular features and irreproachable linen" (493). We might see all of these moments in the ferment leading up to Eliot's own famous chapter 17 in *Adam Bede* in 1859, when the narrator argues for "the faithful representing of commonplace things," as exemplified in Dutch paintings, and celebrates "those rounded backs and stupid weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world" (180).¹⁷

¹⁷ The literature on *Adam Bede* and realism is voluminous. Ian Adam looks carefully at Eliot's discursive moves through time and space to reveal the specific techniques by which the novel creates an illusion of reality. In an opposing vein, U. C. Knoepfelmacher argues that Eliot's realism "fails" because her early novels still work to abstract and idealize, despite their hard-nosed claims. Ruth Bernard Yeazell pursues a similar line, showing how Eliot's "realistic incarnations of moralized prototypes" share much with seventeenth-century Dutch painting (114). George Levine argues that nineteenth-century realism, for all of its investment in representing a con-

Though Eliot's examples in chapter 17 are grounded in the localized particulars of English and Dutch country life, I would suggest that the premises for her novel's realism are grounded in a broader, more cosmopolitan sensibility.¹⁸ In fact, Eliot's realist project depends on a triangulation of subject and audience similar to that found in the journalism of the Crimean War. The war coverage made global events "real" for British readers via the working-class body, thus redefining ideas of the nation away from traditional aristocratic models. In the same way, *Adam Bede's* realist claims serve to shift our admiration away from aristocratic characters and toward heroic working-class types whose virtues have previously gone unrecognized. In part, Eliot's literary turn can be aligned with a longer history of aesthetic realism stretching back to Wordsworth and earlier, valuing ordinary people and common life as a new subject for serious literary representation. Yet, as I will now explore, the specific realist claims and narrative practices in *Adam Bede* share certain representational norms with a new internationalist war journalism—a connection marked by the novel's depiction of suffering peasant characters self-consciously put forward for the consideration of middle-class readers.

In *Adam Bede*, the aristocratic Arthur Donnithorne is a military officer who carelessly impregnates a country girl and ruins her; his bad behavior is a foil to that of the stoic Adam Bede, a country carpenter whose coarse speech is belied by his kind deeds. As John R. Reed has noted, Eliot uses these characters to contrast two different types of military masculinity: Arthur is a gentlemanly officer of a type "well-washed, high-bred, white-handed," whereas Adam has the more tough, masculine "air of a soldier standing at ease" (*Adam Bede* 63, 8). A traveler visiting Hayslope marvels at Adam's martial bearing, praising the "tall broad-shouldered fellow with black hair and black eyes, marching along like a soldier. We want such fellows as he to lick the French" (18–19).¹⁹ The novel's preference for Adam corresponds with the realist principles outlined in chapter 17, diverting readers' sympathies away from idealized upper-class types and toward the more lowly, uneducated peoples of the countryside.

With its long paean to unheroic rural peasants, Eliot's famous digression would seem to accord with realism's reputation for widening the sphere of the novel. This broadened view would thus implicitly expand the imagined community of the novel, bringing together elite readers with a less privileged community of

crete external world, also inevitably entailed a self-conscious awareness of the fictionality of the realist project and the arbitrariness of the language that created it.

¹⁸ Amanda Anderson, in *Powers of Distance*, interprets Eliot's ambivalent relationship to cosmopolitanism via an analysis of Jewishness and *Daniel Deronda*. Anderson's focus on Eliot's late fiction reinforces a common understanding of Eliot's career as one that moves from provincial settings to more cosmopolitan worlds.

¹⁹ John R. Reed also ties *Adam Bede* to the Crimean War, focusing specifically on the novel's competing models of masculinity. Reed too sees the novel's preference for working-class Adam over aristocratic Arthur as a reflection of the political critiques that emerged from the war's mistakes. Reed's analysis differs from mine in that his article "Soldier Boy" is largely a close reading of Eliot's novel, looking specifically to issues of masculinity. He is not interested in Eliot's relation to nationalism, realism, or war journalism.

working-class people. If, as Benedict Anderson writes, the novel unites readers by describing familiar kinds of places—a “sociological landscape” of places in the novel that might blend with types of places in the reader’s world—those geographies after *Adam Bede* would now open to include rustic villages, farmhouses, pastures, orchards, wayside inns, and other rural locales (30). Yet despite Anderson’s account of realism’s inclusiveness, Eliot’s novel itself does not really work to unite the different English communities. Readers are not meant to identify, ultimately, with the rough Adam Bede. Though the novel is set in the English countryside at the turn of the nineteenth century, it invokes a readership embedded in and connected by a state of advanced technological modernity: readers who are presumed to have traveled abroad, to be knowledgeable about global events, and to be living in a world that is more urban, cosmopolitan, and fast-paced than the one depicted in the novel. Most of the characters in *Adam Bede* have never left the villages of their birth; Arthur, meanwhile, is introduced as an English type “whom you have met with in a foreign town, and been proud of as a fellow-countryman” (63). We might sympathize with the travails of Dinah, Hetty, or Adam, but the narrative asides presume a knowledge on our part that those characters themselves would never possess.

The internationalist references on the part of Eliot’s digressive narrator presume a globally aware audience, one that is familiar with Beethoven and French literature, in a way that differentiates Eliot’s realist narration from that of other condition-of-England novels. Raymond Williams, writing in *The Country and the City*, praises Eliot’s early fiction for expanding the “knowable community” of the novel to include previously unrepresented kinds of working-class characters; but he also ultimately faults Eliot for not individuating rural characters convincingly, for depicting them in collective, generalizing ways or “as a landscape” (168). Noting especially the stark difference between the high-flown language of the narrator and the uneducated dialect of the characters, Williams sees a divide between the knowable community of Eliot’s rural world and the “known community” of her actual middle-class readers—“an uneasy contract, in language, with another interest and another sensibility” (172–73).

Eliot’s peasant figures are types, rendered real by the details of their bodies and trade. Just as the common soldier became a sympathetic and newly real type during the Crimean War, so too these rural peasants become symbols of a beautiful Englishness rooted in the landscape. This intimate connection between people and land is a hallmark of realism, with its insistent localism. Yet, again like the war coverage, Eliot’s text moves from realism to archetype, from timeliness to timelessness. This is part of realism’s illusion—to speak specifically about history, time, and place while also invoking an authentic human condition more broadly. Global warfare offers a particularly compelling stage for realism’s reconciliation of local fidelity with universal truths, especially in the 1850s, when media technologies enabled the unprecedented, rapid communication of details set against an international panorama. It begins to make sense, then, that warfare and technology are also recurring motifs in the narration of *Adam Bede*, despite a remote rural setting that would seem to preclude these subjects.

The narrator of *Adam Bede* repeatedly interrupts the storytelling in order to speak directly to the presumed audience. In a crucial passage worth quoting at length, the narrator differentiates past from present by describing how new technologies have transformed leisure time:

Surely all other leisure is hurry compared with a sunny walk through the fields from "afternoon church"—as such walks used to be in those old leisurely times, when the boat, gliding sleepily along the canal, was the newest locomotive wonder. . . . Leisure is gone—gone where the spinning-wheels are gone, and the pack-horses, and the slow waggons. . . . Ingenious philosophers tell you, perhaps, that the great work of the steam-engine is to create leisure for mankind. Do not believe them: it only creates a vacuum for eager thought to rush in. Even idleness is eager now—eager for amusement: prone to excursion-trains, art museums, periodical literature, and exciting novels: prone even to scientific theorising and cursory peeps through microscopes. Old Leisure was quite a different personage: he only read one newspaper, innocent of leaders, and was free from that periodicity of sensations which we call post-time. He was a contemplative, rather stout gentleman, of excellent digestion—of quiet perceptions, undiseased by hypothesis: happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves. He lived chiefly in the country, among pleasant seats and homesteads, and was fond of . . . scenting the apricots when they were warmed by the morning sunshine. . . . Fine old Leisure! Do not be severe upon him, and judge him by our modern standard: he never went to Exeter Hall, or heard a popular preacher, or read Tracts for the Times or Sartor Resartus. (514)

This passage is complex in its allusions and in its ironic tone. On one level, the narrator defends the old way of life, of which the novel *Adam Bede* might be seen as one long celebration. The leisurely life of the countryside, with its homesteads and scented apricots, seems idyllic when compared with the feverish developments of modernity, in which newspapers, periodicals, and the new general "periodicity of sensations" create a lifestyle that seems superficial and meaningless. The passage is especially critical of modern religious controversies, which seem irrelevant in the face of rural physical pleasures. The organic unity of an older, more complacent religious sensibility contrasts with the fragmented, contentious modern religious battles between sects. And we might take that reference to a newspaper "innocent of leaders" as a specific jab at the controversies stirred up by the incendiary and influential leading articles in the *Times*, which, in this context, seem to be nothing but sound and fury.

At the same time, however, Eliot's ironic treatment of Old Leisure, personified as a dim-witted old man, works to imply that, despite the appeal of the old times, modern people are more knowing and more experienced: modernity has brought with it the rise of science, of hypothesis, of fast and furious thinking. Characters in Eliot's novel might be "happy in [their] inability to know the causes of things," but we must assume that, for Eliot herself, critical thinking is indeed a deeply held value—hence underlining one of the uncomfortable ideological cruxes of the novel, that even while country peasant life is celebrated, it is also idealized and

looked down on by a condescending narrator who draws the line between audience and characters by invoking a modern world of technological development and new media. The novel cherishes Adam's practical knowledge and admires his moral fortitude; but he seems to exist in an earlier, less developed phase of culture than that of the novel's more advanced presumed audience.

Eliot repeatedly marks the divides of *Adam Bede*—between past and present, country and city, ignorance and advancement, peasant and reader—by the advent of what Benedict Anderson calls “print capitalism.” Thus Seth and Dinah are old-world Methodists “not indeed of that modern type which reads quarterly reviews and attends in chapels with pillared porticoes, but of a very old-fashioned kind” (39–40). Here the narrator echoes the sentiment favoring newspapers “innocent of leaders,” again making periodical literature symbolize a kind of inauthentic modernity. Periodicals appeal to a literate, middle-class public and hence are suspiciously fashionable, as opposed to the more organic, predominantly oral spirituality of an earlier time. Eliot's hostile treatment of the modern print world in *Adam Bede* is ironic given her own deep engagement with periodical culture in the 1850s, both as a prolific reviewer and as an editor of the *Westminster Review*.²⁰ These attacks on the press reveal Eliot's equivocal relationship to her audience: she scolds them for their complacency and unrealistic prejudices even while drawing upon and indeed constituting a print community that could only exist in the new media landscape of the 1850s.

The political valences of the imagined community summoned by *Adam Bede* are made explicit in Eliot's 1856 essay “The Natural History of German Life,” in which she lays out the methodology that would serve her in the writing of the novel. Here Eliot praises the German ethnographer Wilhelm Riehl for his realistic study of German peasants, as he achieves a lofty, multivalent, and cosmopolitan view that transcends the more blinkered, ignorant, and abstracting views of traditional studies. What becomes evident is that, even while Riehl is praised for his newly real vision of German peasantry, he is able to achieve a cosmopolitanism to which his peasant subjects will never attain. Eliot goes on to call on statesmen, ethnographers, scientists, and artists to model a more realistic view of their peasant or working-class subjects:

[T]he most complete equipment of [abstract] theory will not enable a statesman or a political and social reformer to adjust his measures wisely, in the absence of a special acquaintance with the section of society for which he legislates, with the peculiar characteristics of the nation, the province, the class whose well-being he has to consult. In other words, a wise social policy must be based not simply on abstract social science, but on the Natural History of social bodies. (131)

²⁰ Liddle argues that Eliot renounces her journalistic self in 1857, evincing a hostility to the dogmatic, “standard-issue authoritative voice of the anonymous Victorian ‘man of letters’” (101). My argument, however, suggests that Eliot held a more equivocal view, since journalism was a key part of the enlightened public sphere defining a cosmopolitan Victorian readership.

The politician must use the discerning eyes of a scientist to truly *see* his subjects, in all their peculiar singularity. Eliot even compares the peasant world to a “private vivarium” studied by social theorists; the phrase is suggestive for our experience of reading *Adam Bede*, as we peer into an ecosystem of English peasantry from the perspective of a cosmopolitan reader looking down and in (“Natural History” 131). Buzard’s notion of autoethnography captures a similar divide between Eliot’s narrator and characters; the narrator is a Participant Observer who is “inside” enough to see the special uniqueness of a culture in a certain place but “outside” enough to present a privileged view-from-above of that culture as bounded and distinct (12).

In calling on statesmen and policy makers in “Natural History,” Eliot’s realism moves explicitly into the political realm. The essay brings together artists with a technocratic elite in its generalizing claims for a cosmopolitan view. Indeed, Eliot opens the review with a lengthy disquisition on the seemingly tangential topic of railway management, contrasting the viewpoints of a train expert versus a train amateur. While the expert admirably combines the multiple viewpoints of a “‘navvy,’ an engineer, a traveller, a railway director and a shareholder, and a landed proprietor in treaty with a railway company,” the train amateur seems comparatively naive: “He may talk of a vast network of railways stretching over the globe, of future ‘lines’ in Madagascar, and elegant refreshment-rooms in the Sandwich Islands”; ultimately, “if we want a railway to be made, or its affairs to be managed, this man of wide views and narrow observation will not serve our purpose” (107–8). These two ways of knowing—the educated expert versus the impractical, ill-informed amateur—go on to define the essay’s major terms, in praise of Riehl and in condemnation of unrealistic thinkers, whether artists or politicians. The comparison of ethnographer to railway builder suggests that the best kind of social observer is like a skilled engineer or competent manager—identities that were most prized in critiques that emerged from the Crimean War and its journalism. (In fact, knowing how to build a railway became a crucial point during the war when the Allies finally built a supply train to end the long, devastating winter siege of Sebastopol in 1855.) And, like the journalism that came out of the war, Eliot’s “Natural History” is also concerned with the repercussions that modes of representation have for governance and public policy. Realist observation, Eliot is telling us, will result in better leadership.

Adam Bede also launches a critique of blinkered, unrealistic views through its framing use of the Napoleonic Wars, which serve as a background to the novel’s local events. The global, imperial wars of the turn of the nineteenth century serve as an implicit link to the reader’s war-torn world at mid-century.²¹ Eliot’s narrative gently mocks the parochial viewpoints of villagers who are caught up in neighborhood dramas while only vaguely grasping distant geopolitical upheavals—as

²¹ Mary A. Favret has recently argued that the Napoleonic Wars offered a paradigmatic model of “war at a distance” for readers and artists back home in Britain. Favret highlights the affective toll wartime takes on those far from the battlefield, especially as voiced by Romantic poets. Favret insightfully shows how the Napoleonic Wars inaugurated our modern geographic notion of “total war,” stretching across large portions of the globe. Yet her analysis is deliberately ahistorical in much of its account, leaping from the early 1800s to the twenty-first century

when the farmer's wife, Mrs. Poyser, delivers a legendary tongue-lashing to the despised old tyrant, Squire Donnithorne: "The news that 'Bony' was come back from Egypt was comparatively insipid, and the repulse of the French in Italy was nothing to Mrs Poyser's repulse of the old Squire" (350). At the Harvest Supper near the novel's end, many characters voice humorous anti-French prejudices; Mr. Poyser is confident that "they ne'er ate a bit o' beef i' their lives. Mostly sallet, I reckon" (522). Adam Bede defends the French in this conversation—not out of any cosmopolitan principle of tolerance, however, but because he has heard from Pastor Irwine that they are excellent at building things. On a basic level, then, Eliot uses the global war to critique the narrow prejudices of ignorant characters, using an ironic tone to speak above her characters' heads to refined readers who have traveled to France, or can imagine doing so. Anti-French sentiment will also seem old-fashioned to certain mid-century readers inhabiting a new geopolitical climate in which the British and the French are allied. At this level, Eliot's ridicule of obtuse wartime nationalism works to challenge a major engine of national fervor, as warfare is a key producer of narratives of national belonging. In Linda Colley's classic account *Britons*, Great Britain was "an invented nation," "an invention forged above all by war"—especially war with the French (5). When Eliot mocks the crude jingoism of rural characters, she opens up a space between characters and narrator that implies a historical transition from local narratives into a more global system of reference, knowledge, and social organization.

Yet the war in *Adam Bede* also serves a more serious purpose for Eliot's realist project, creating an implicit correspondence between large-scale, international violence and small-scale, localized violence of similar tragic proportions. The juxtaposition suggests that the tragedy of a country girl's seduction and infanticide might have the same importance as that of global warfare, even if it did not have the same world-historical ramifications. The backdrop of the war becomes a figure for the lurking violence haunting the lives of seemingly mundane rural characters, especially in the violence suffered by Hetty. In *Adam Bede*, Hetty's pregnant body becomes the site of a disturbing reality, as depicted in the late section that follows her grim journey to find Arthur. Burdened with a "swift-advancing shame," Hetty feels starvation, terror, loneliness, and "agony," as she wanders the countryside and sleeps outdoors (364). She delivers a baby in secret far from her own home. This section inspired one reviewer of *Adam Bede* to recoil from "the startling horrors of rustic reality" depicted late in the novel (*Review of Adam Bede* 75). Hetty's

without describing the profound changes in media culture that have transformed our sensations of "war at a distance." I would point to two key developments in the 1850s that differentiate the mid-century British sense of wartime from that of the Napoleonic era. First, new media technologies speeded up reporting from the battlefield, lending a new sense of immediacy to war journalism and giving British audiences back home the ability to react to the decisions of leaders in real time. Second, writers like Russell and Eliot seem more self-conscious than Romantic writers about the class distinctions separating different kinds of soldiers or, crucially, separating the reading public from the mass of suffering bodies abroad. (By contrast, Favret suggests that Cowper's phrase "universal soldiership" expands to include "the poet who is holding a pen in his fingers" [67].) The Victorian writers studied here depend not on models of identification but on those of sympathy for a sufferer who differs from oneself.

story, capturing the brutal reality of class disparity and female oppression—in an aristocrat’s exploitation of a farm girl—reminds the narrator of a universalized kind of peasant suffering, “such things . . . hidden among the sunny fields and behind the blossoming orchards . . . the sound of the gurgling brook . . . mingled for your ear with a despairing human sob. No wonder man’s religion has much sorrow in it; no wonder he needs a Suffering God” (364). When Russell writes of Crimean War soldiers, he too makes working men into a universalized sign of human suffering within the landscape, even while emphasizing the distinction between sufferer and spectator. Similarly, Eliot universalizes Hetty’s suffering as a Christian “agony of the Cross” set amid a picturesque landscape, even while addressing the reader directly as the one who uncovers the hidden rural pain (363).

The physical trauma suffered by Hetty’s body, then, becomes a kind of event horizon of the real, a sign of the novel’s new subject matter and a type of newly sympathetic character for middle-class readers. It is significant that the narrator’s meditation on Hetty’s shame is focalized through the perspective of “a traveller” coming upon a crucifix posted on a country road: “if there came a traveller to this world who knew nothing of the story of man’s life upon it, this image of agony [i.e., the Cross] would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature” (363). Much of the novel’s opening, too, is conveyed through the eyes of a respectable traveler visiting Hayslope. The traveler’s point of view captures both the ethnographic and cosmopolitan nature of the narrative, its scientific and comparative tendencies—all qualities that then adhere to the imagined community generated by the novel. Even while the narrative mocks Hayslope’s parochial jingoism, *Adam Bede* invokes a readership whose knowing perspective is not so lofty as to be completely above national identity: the novel still grounds itself in an ethnographic realism that is predicated on a quintessentially British capacity to observe. Achieving the broadest view takes on a putative kind of Englishness, invisible, white, omniscient, interchangeable, and all encompassing, almost like an idea of empire itself.²² (Here I differ from Buzard’s analysis, which argues that autoethnography “de-globalizes” British culture against the forces of a universalizing, imperial cosmopolitanism. Instead, I think that the kind of cosmopolitanism modeled in *Adam Bede* offers itself—like Russell’s—as a different and better kind of Britishness, one that is globalized without being deracinated). Jonathan Culler, analyzing the relationship between novels and nationalism, suggests that novels do not literally create nations in a propagandistic way but instead, more obliquely, create a condition of possibility for an imagined community through formal means.²³ Culler’s analysis is useful in considering the complex narrative action in *Adam Bede*, which invites reader sympathy with peasant trauma while

²² Here I diverge from Nancy Henry, who argues that Eliot’s attacks on the romanticization of working-class Europeans translated into a general concern for faithful representation across the empire, making Eliot an author aware before her time of the pitfalls of colonialist prejudices.

²³ Jonathan Culler challenges claims that overstate the role played by novels in nation formation, writing, somewhat pointedly, “If, for instance, we ask what made Britons ‘Britons,’ it is more plausible to answer ‘war with France’ than ‘Jane Austen’” (37).

still keeping readers at a distance, and which condemns blind patriotism while simultaneously constituting an elite, national community of readers.

Nationhood is constructed in *Adam Bede* differently than in the typical historical novel. Eliot's novel does not feature an everyday hero unwittingly caught up in grand historical events, of the type characterized by Lukács in analyzing Walter Scott; nor does it portray two lovers from radically different backgrounds whose romantic bond symbolically unifies a nation and thus erases "historical unevenness," of the type described by Franco Moretti (Lukacs 33–34; Moretti 40). In the final union of Dinah and Adam, *Adam Bede* defuses a potentially explosive, rebellious Methodism by wedding Dinah to Adam, embodiment of a constructive Anglican gospel of labor. These two become ideal members of the industrious working classes, ruled over by the kindly Pastor Irwine, another moral center in the novel—and one whose class status more closely matches that of the novel's implied audience. Though flawed, Irwine is a de facto leader of the community, modeling a benevolent secular humanism that unites many different sects and classes. He is friends with both the lordly Donnithornes and the lowly Joshua Rann, village shoemaker; he also looks down somewhat condescendingly on his working-class parishioners and tolerates their foibles with good humor. It is Irwine who is the subject of the narrator's call for realism in chapter 17, despite that chapter's own more striking focus on humble peasant characters. Much of chapter 17 in fact goes toward defending Irwine's style of governance, which involves forgoing the letter of the law in favor of a more sympathetic, compassionate guidance (as opposed to the narrow-minded rigidity of his successor, Mr. Ryde). This clue suggests that the novel's realist project actually entails both kinds of characters—a newly real working-class community alongside another, more invisible yet omnipresent community in the novel, one centered around the multifaceted interactivity embodied by Irwine. As Adam Bede testifies, "he made folks love him and respect him" (183). The pastor emerges as an ideal kind of leader, respectable but not aristocratic, nonpartisan, nondogmatic, and able to see the "reality" embodied by all of the novel's characters.

I have been arguing that *Adam Bede* constitutes a powerful new imagined community through its realist claims—a community mirroring the one produced by similar claims in Russell's Crimean War journalism. Rather than seeing this national feeling emerge from a sense of sameness across people ("a deep, horizontal comradeship," in Benedict Anderson's terms [7]), this kind of Britishness is one that is careful to maintain class distinctions; indeed, it depends on those distinctions: the observation of class difference becomes a part of the realist, ethnographic project that defines the ideal qualities of the audience. Eliot's novel monitors class differences in its close rendering of shades of dialect; Russell's reportage, meanwhile, works by individuating more upper-class figures from a mass of generalized working-class soldiers. "Britishness" thus becomes a matter of affiliation across class, even while class differences are still strongly upheld.

While both novel and journalism are profoundly engaged in the problem of national identity, I do not go so far as to claim that they necessarily constitute that identity. Given the elite readership of both the *Times* and Eliot's novel, it seems difficult to make any large-scale generalizations about actual nation formation

here. (This conclusion follows on a critique launched against Benedict Anderson, in which some critics wonder to what extent exclusive print items like novels or newspapers can account for a widespread national affiliation.)²⁴ Having said this, though, it does seem important that both Russell's *Times* coverage and Eliot's novels achieved an outsized significance beyond their relatively small audiences: Russell returned from the Crimea a celebrity, and *Adam Bede* was so popular—the literary sensation of 1859—that it was quoted in Parliament. Generally speaking, this analysis builds on post-Anderson scholarship informed by an interest in transnational relations, considering how ideas of the nation and the national are formed on a global stage, amid a sense of international comparison available only to those in a privileged position of educated mobility. My conclusion points to the ambivalent politics of realism in both Eliot's novels and the new war journalism: both participate in democratizing and comparativist projects, opposed to local prejudices and pointed toward more tolerant worldviews, even while upholding existing class structures that ultimately exclude their working-class subjects from any claims to world citizenship.

My analysis of Eliot's realism thus moves beyond the quaint details of Dutch painting that are often taken to define her aesthetic project (see Yeazell). Instead, this analysis suggests that Eliot's techniques might better be described as "technologies of the real," as her mode of realism combines a pastoral, agrarian ideal with an implied cosmopolitan community of observers, figured in the novel as both narrator and presumed audience: a techno-enhanced viewership that is empowered by knowledge of the world to penetrate illusory prejudice and achieve a more real vision. Despite the implied contrast between the more authentic world of *Adam Bede* and the debased, technologized modernity of the reader, in fact, the novel offers its own realist technique as a potential avenue back to authenticity. The fragmentation of modern publics into warring, cacophonous sects is contrasted with the potentially seamless unity of a modern audience organized around the realist spectacle of the British peasant body. *Adam Bede* is set in 1799, one year before the dawning of a new millennium; the moment connotes futurity as much as antiquity, hinting at the novel's utopian aspirations encoded in the past.

This essay has brought together the discursive operations of newspaper journalism and realist fiction in the 1850s in order to show how they created similar imagined communities in pursuit of newly real representations. In leaping over the generic distinctions separating a novel, an essay, and a work of journalism, we can observe realism's multidimensional aesthetic, which extends beyond the bounds of fiction and photography.²⁵ Adhering too closely to generic study might prevent us from noticing the myriad slippages among genres. The war reports of Russell can be seen to overlap with the realist novel as modeled by Eliot, taking on the novel's moral tone, its critiques of entrenched institutional powers, its eye for

²⁴ Culler summarizes these critiques (26–27).

²⁵ For an important study linking British realist fiction to the advent of photography, see Armstrong.

detail, its comparativist mindset, and its determination to show scenes of suffering previously unrepresented. So, too, Eliot's novel shares a discursive world with a new kind of investigative journalism, reporting on trauma from a specific time and place with a larger, ethnographic project in mind.

Arguments for realism in the 1850s thus served a distinctive ideological purpose, asserting a cosmopolitan middle-class identity that could see more clearly than obtuse political leaders and beyond outmoded, idealized representational norms. Even while these calls for realism were grounded in the truths of the sensate and traumatized working-class body, they served to solidify the imaginative identity of a middle-class reading public, one that was itself neither fighting nor governing. The legacies of this new kind of seeing and new kind of imagined audience can be traced to radically divergent moral outcomes: pointing, on the one hand, to military reform and the broader emergence of meritocracy in Britain, to an ideal of a free press, and to a broad sympathy for labor across the nineteenth century; and, on the other hand, foreshadowing the hubristic expansion of ethnography, empire, and the efficient honing of the war machine.

Works Cited

- Adam, Ian. "The Structure of Realisms in Adam Bede." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30 (1975): 127–49.
- Altick, Richard D. *Deadly Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1986.
- Anderson, Amanda. *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 1991.
- Anderson, Olive. *A Liberal State at War: English Politics and Economics during the Crimean War*. London: Macmillan, 1967.
- Armstrong, Nancy. *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002.
- Arnold, Guy. "Casualties." *Historical Dictionary of the Crimean War*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002. 38–39.
- Atkins, John Black. *The Life of Sir William Howard Russell, C.V.O., L.L.C.: The First Special Correspondent*. 2 vols. London: John Murray, 1911.
- Buzard, James. *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.
- Childers, Joseph W. *Novel Possibilities: Fiction and the Formation of Early Victorian Culture*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996.

- Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992.
- Culler, Jonathan. "Anderson and the Novel." *Diacritics* 29 (1999): 19–39.
- Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1985.
- . "John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, Vol. III" (1856). *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1990. 367–78.
- . "The Natural History of German Life." *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1990. 107–39.
- Evans, Henry Sutherland. "Balzac and His Writings: Translations of French Novels." *Westminster Review*, n.s., 4 (1853): 202.
- Favret, Mary A. *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010.
- Figes, Orlando. *The Crimean War: A History*. New York: Holt, 2011.
- Gallagher, Catherine. *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832–1867*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985.
- Groth, Helen. "Technological Mediations and the Public Sphere: Roger Fenton's Crimea Exhibition and 'The Charge of the Light Brigade.'" *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30 (2002): 553–70.
- Hamley, E. B. "Poetry of the War: Reviewed before Sebastopol." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 77 (1855): 531–35.
- Hampton, Mark. *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950*. Champaign-Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*. Ed. Jon Stewart. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2002.
- Henry, Nancy. *George Eliot and the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Houston, Natalie M. "Reading the Victorian Souvenir: Sonnets and Photographs of the Crimean War." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14 (2001): 353–83.
- Jordan, John O., and Robert L. Patten. *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Keller, Ulrich. *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Knightley, Phillip. *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*. Rev. ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2004.
- Knoepflmacher, U. C. *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1968.

- Lalumia, Matthew. *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1984.
- Lambert, Andrew, and Stephen Badsey. *The Crimean War: The War Correspondents*. Dover, NH: Sutton, 1994.
- Leader. *Times* 23 Dec. 1854: 9.
- Leech, John. "Grand Military Spectacle: The Heroes of the Crimea Inspecting the Field-M Marshals." *Punch* 3 Nov. 1855: 180.
- Levine, George. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.
- Lewes, George Henry. "Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction." *Westminster Review* 70 (1858): 488–518.
- Liddle, Dallas. *The Dynamics of Genre: Journalism and the Practice of Literature in Mid-Victorian England*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2009.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Historical Novel*. Trans. Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983.
- Markovits, Stefanie. *The Crimean War and the British Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.
- Moretti, Franco. *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900*. London: Verso, 1998.
- Murphy, David. *Ireland and the Crimean War*. Dublin: Four Courts, 2002.
- Peck, John. *War, the Army, and Victorian Literature*. London: Macmillan, 1998.
- "The People's Almoner." *London Review* 21 March 1863: 300–301.
- Reed, John R. "Soldier Boy: Forming Masculinity in *Adam Bede*." *Studies in the Novel* 33 (2001): 268–84.
- Review of *Adam Bede*. *Saturday Review* 26 Feb. 1859: 250–51. Rpt. in *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. David Carroll. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971. 73–76.
- Rubery, Matthew. *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction after the Invention of the News*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009.
- Russell, William Howard. *The War: From the Landing at Gallipoli to the Death of Lord Raglan*. London: Routledge, 1855.
- Smith, Anthony. "The Long Road to Objectivity and Back Again: The Kinds of Truth We Get in Journalism." *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day*. Ed. G. Boyce, J. Curran, and P. Wingate. London: Constable, 1978. 153–71.
- Stang, Richard. *The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850–1870*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959.

"W. M. Thackeray and Arthur Pendennis, Esquires." *Fraser's Magazine* January 1851: 75–87.

Williams, Kevin. *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

Yeazell, Ruth Bernard. *Art of the Everyday: Dutch Painting and the Realist Novel*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008.