Popular Prosody: Spectacle and the Politics of Victorian Versification

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"Are we to go on for ever conjugating and declining, and gerund-grinding, and Latin-verse manufacturing . . . ?"

—F. W. Farrar, *On Some Defects in Public School Education* (1867)

$\mathcal{I}$N July of 1845, for the price of one shilling, visitors to the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly were invited to an exhibition of the *Eureka,* "a machine for making Latin verses," designed and built between 1830 and 1843 by a Somerset man named John Clark (see Figure 1). One of the many kinds of automatons and arithmetical-substitution devices that captured the popular imagination in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the *Eureka* can be seen in a well-established tradition of mechanized spectacles that included, among others, Jacques Vaucanson's *Flute-player,* exhibited in Paris in the 1730s; the 1774 Jaquet-Droz androids; and the Maillardet brothers' *Magicians,* dating from the early nineteenth century.[1]

[1] John Clark, in his *The General History and Description of a Machine for Composing Hexameter Latin Verses* (Bridgwater: Frederick Wood, 1848), pp. 19–22, acknowledges

EGYPTIAN HALL.

THE EUREKA,

A MACHINE FOR

Making Latin Verses,

Exhibited Daily, from 12 to 5 & 7 to 9;

WITH

ILLUSTRATIVE LECTURES.

ADMISSION - - - 1s.

FIGURE 1. Advertisement for the *Eureka* exhibition, Egyptian Hall, London, 1845.

The mid nineteenth century offered similar diversions: alongside the *Eureka* were Van Noorden's *Polyharmonicon,* a machine that composed polkas and capitalized on the "polkamania" of the mid-century, and Professor Faber's celebrated *Euphonia,* described by John Hollingshead, a contemporary observer, as a "weird figure, rather bigger than a full-grown man, with an automaton head and face" that "spoke," he remembers, "slowly and deliberately in a hoarse sepulchral voice" when its creator operated an attached keyboard.[2] But whereas the *Euphonia,* which was exhibited in the Egyptian Hall in 1846 and was at least once confused with Clark's mechanical versifier, was a "speaking-machine" (that is, a machine designed to produce sounds

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this connection, not only discussing in his prefatory remarks on the *Eureka*'s manufacture the relative difficulty of making a "Chess-playing Automaton," but also providing "An Account of Some of the Principal Androides [*sic*] and Automatic Figures, Which Have Hitherto Been Designed and Constructed." Frequently Clark refers to the *Eureka* as simply "The Automaton." For a more detailed account of some of these early androids, see Jessica Riskin, "The Defecating Duck, or, the Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life," *Critical Inquiry,* 29 (2003), 599–633.

[2] John Hollingshead, *My Lifetime* (London: Sampson, Low, Marstan and Co., 1895), pp. 68–69.

that mimic the human voice), the *Eureka* was properly a "permutation" or "composition" device.[3] While capable of making sounds, its primary function was not auditory but visual, generating in random order a sequence of words that together form a unique line of poetry.[4] Also, unlike the *Euphonia* and some of the earlier automatons, the *Eureka* did not have an outwardly anthropomorphic design; it was more conventional, even furniture-like, in appearance, as its designer explains: "The exterior of the Machine resembles, in size and shape, a small Bureau Bookcase, and in the front of which, through an aperture, the Verses appear in succession as they are composed . . ." (*General History*, p. 5) (see Figure 2).

Clark's "poetry-making machine" functioned thus: by pulling a lever, a visitor to the Egyptian Hall could engage the machine to "grind out" a line of verse that was in principle both grammatically and metrically correct.[5] According to the report in the *Illustrated London News*,

> The process of composition is not by words already formed, but from *separate letters*. . . . The machine contains *letters* in alphabetical arrangement. Out of these, through the medium of *numbers*, rendered tangible by being expressed by indentures on wheelwork, the instrument selects such as are requisite to form the verse conceived; the *components* of words suited to form hexameters being alone previously calculated, the harmonious combination of which will be found to be practically interminable. ("The Eureka," p. 37; emphasis in original)

[3] See [Anon.], "Latin Versification for the Million," *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 13 (1850), 205. The author confuses the *Eureka* and the *Euphonia*, discussing the functions of the former in relation to the creator of the latter.

[4] See [Anon.], "The Eureka," *Illustrated London News*, 19 July 1845, p. 37. This source claims that the *Eureka* "perform[ed] the National Anthem" while producing verses, and "as soon as the verse is complete, a short pause of silence ensues." It continues: "On the announcement that the line is about to be broken up, the cylinder performs the air of 'Fly not yet,' until every letter is returned into its proper place in the alphabet" (p. 37).

[5] See [Anon.], "Oddities in Music," *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts*, 12 (1859), 313. The verb "grind" here can, of course, denote the physical activity of pulling the machine's lever, but from the mid-1830s it had another meaning: "to work hard at a subject of study under the direction of a tutor or 'grinder'" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). As I demonstrate below, these two meanings are fused in the education debates that surround and incorporate Clark's *Eureka*.
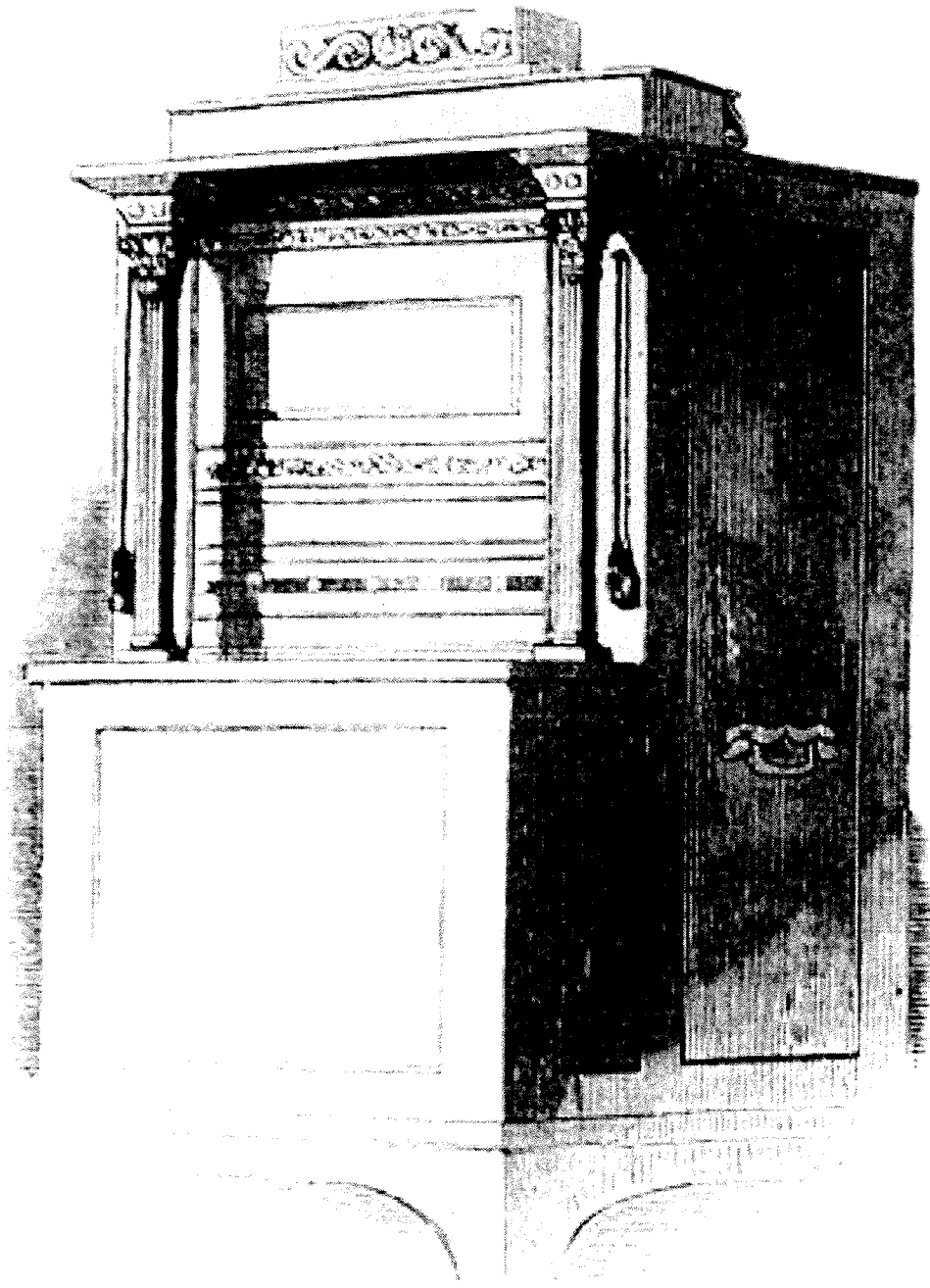
THE EUREKA

FIGURE 2. The *Eureka* as depicted in the *Illustrated London News*, 19 July 1845, p. 37.

This process is described in more detail, with particular attention to the specific mechanics of the machine and accompanied by helpful illustrations of the various parts, in a 1963 essay by D. W. Blandford:

> Externally the machine resembles an automatic vending machine, with a word appearing in each of six slots. The mechanism works like a grandfather clock, by weights, pulleys, and gear wheels. From time to time it needs winding up (with a clock key) but it does not require any further setting. Words are formed by a series of lettered staves which rest on stop wires projecting from revolving drums. . . .
>
> . . . There are six drums in all—one for each slot—resembling so many mechanical hedgehogs. . . .
>
> At present the six drums turn independently of each other, at different speeds, and irregularly. . . .
>
> To ensure that each line will make reasonable sense all the words on any particular drum must be of similar or interchangeable meaning.[6]

The *Eureka* machine's interconnected system of staves, wires, and drums was needed to produce "a large number of randomly worded" verses, with an estimated twenty-six million permutations.[7] But to ensure that "each line scans and makes sense" (Blandford, "The *Eureka*," p. 71), the *Eureka*'s "compositions" were of necessity "highly determined" ("The Latin Hexameter," p. 341). Lines were arranged in dactylic hexameter, such as the following:

MĀRTĬĂ CĂSTRĂ FŎRĪS PRÆNĀRRĀNT
PRŌELĬĂ MŪLTĂ.[8]

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[6] D. W. Blandford, "The *Eureka*," *Greece and Rome*, 10 (1963), 73–77. Blandford's description is based on his viewing of the machine subsequent to its restoration in 1950, so it may not precisely reflect the workings of the *Eureka* at the time of its 1845 exhibition.

[7] See A. S. Gratwick, "The Latin Hexameter," *Classical Review*, n.s. 40 (1990), 341; and Blandford, "The *Eureka*," p. 71.

[8] John Clark's own translation of this line reads: "Martial encampments foreshow many oppositions abroad." See John Clark, letter to his father, 24 May 1845. Clark Archive, Street, Somerset.

The machine permitted no deviations: "There is never any elision, and never any variation in scansion. The verb is always a molossus (e.g., *prōmŭlgānt*) and never a lesser ionic (e.g., *mănĭfēstānt*), which would be a possible alternative" (Blandford, "The *Eureka*," p. 77). Neither did the lines vary in syntax; the arrangement of words follows the same pattern in each line generated:

ADJECTIVE | NOUN | ADVERB | VERB | NOUN | ADJECTIVE

As a meter-making spectacle situated at the intersection of popular culture and scholarly specialization, however, the *Eureka* did not only supply uncannily "well-wrought" classical prosody to the masses.[9] Much more than just a curious amusement that existed freakishly at the margins of the mid-nineteenth-century discipline of prosody, the *Eureka* provided a material focus for popular interventions in Victorian prosodic discourse and a variety of overlapping contemporary debates—debates that, as we shall see, were not always rigidly confined within clearly demarcated institutional spaces.[10]

Around this time, a new prosodic science was emerging as a distinct discourse within the broader discursive framework of philology (both classical and English). This new prosodic science tended to have its preferred methods of scholarly and artistic dissemination—organs such as the *Classical Museum* (classical prosody and scholarship) and *Proceedings of the Philological*

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[9] As Joss Marsh reminds us, the Egyptian Hall was "the most successful of London's show-places throughout the century" (see Marsh, "Spectacle," in *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. Herbert F. Tucker [Oxford: Blackwell, 1999], p. 278). According to Steven Connor, the Egyptian Hall was "a venue which would establish itself as a home of wizardry and wondrous mechanics" (see Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* [Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000], p. 354). By and large, visitors to the Hall came in order to consume diversions, oddities, and mechanical curiosities, but while the context may encourage us to think of these devices as merely popular "amusements," Connor reminds us that at the same time they figure importantly in the development of more conventionally scientific technologies such as telephones, phonographs, and loudspeakers. Indeed, he traces Alexander Graham Bell's development of the telephone to the inventor's early attempts to reproduce the effects of Professor Faber's *Euphonia* machine (see *Dumbstruck*, p. 356).

[10] See Tony Crowley, *The Politics of Discourse: The Standard Language Question in British Cultural Debates* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 12.

Society (English language and prosody), for instance, but also learned tracts and treatises, as well as the ad hoc contributions made by many poets themselves.[11] By examining the *Eureka* and its mediating role in an intertext of prosodic debate (particularly as articulated in popular periodicals), we are able to witness the emergence of an alternative space for engaging with topical prosodic issues, notably debates about curriculum reform taking place in the universities and the public schools.

Some observers of Clark's machine were understandably dazzled by, and consequently content to limit their commentary to, the machine's rate and volume of data combination—with the *Illustrated London News* remarking that, if left running for "a whole week (Sundays included)," the *Eureka* would generate "about 10,000" verses ("The Eureka," p. 37). More often, however, it was the *Eureka's* relative *prosodic* sophistication that caused observers to marvel at—but also to engage dialogically with—its poetic transports. As such, the *Eureka* machine was much more than a show-place diversion: this kitsch device—at once the technological embodiment of and a parody of Victorian prosodic science—was a literally interactive discursive site, the focus of a popular prosodic discourse that existed alongside institutional debates. Not only was it, as A. S. Gratwick gleefully noted in the 1990s, a "more fun" way to engage with versification "because you got your hexameter one tantalizing word at a time" ("The Latin Hexameter," p. 341), but it also made otherwise circumscribed Victorian debates about, for example, Latin and English hexameters, the status of prosody as a specialized and rarefied academic science, and the function of prosody as a pedagogical tool at once immediately visible and accessible.

As Joss Marsh has shown in her survey of Victorian spectacle, the spectacular, the commercial, and the educational were closely linked.[12] The *Eureka* intertext—a constellation of commentary, particularly contributions to general-interest and educational miscellanies, in which we can situate the machine—clearly demonstrates that visitors to the Egyptian Hall

[11] See Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody, with a Metrical Appendix of Hardy's Stanza Forms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 18–48.

[12] See Marsh, "Spectacle," pp. 276–88.

were keen not only to remark with wonder on this prosodic device, observing it as mere entertainment, but also to engage intellectually and critically with it and by extension with the prosodic discourse in which it was curiously embedded. Popular periodicals such as *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* "made the benefits of science visibly tangible for the masses" (Marsh, "Spectacle," p. 285). Among the benefits made visible was the burgeoning science of prosody, whose laws and rules were made to function not only as and when visitors to the Egyptian Hall stepped up to pull the *Eureka*'s lever and "grind out" Latin hexameters, but also—for a much wider public, many of whom would not see Clark's mechanical versifier—when readers encountered the *Eureka,* or discussions that brought its mechanical composition process to mind, in the pages of *Chambers's* and other "popular improvement" publications that aimed at a mass or working-class readership.[13] Like the *Eureka* itself, these magazines effectively provided, as the title of one article put it, "Latin Versification for the Million," and, in the popular forum that they enabled, there emerged a parallel prosodic discourse that included the *Eureka* phenomenon. By engaging with the machine's principles of composition as well as its verse product, contributors—both paid journalists and interested readers— participated in topical, and often highly politicized, prosodic debates. As its Latin hexameters were transcribed, explicated, and aesthetically judged, the *Eureka* figured briefly as the material signifier of a popular prosody that was characterized by the reform agendas circulating not only in the improving pages of popular print media but also in Victorian society more generally. This popular prosody extended authorship to amateur prosodists well outside the specialized scholarly franchise, and, further, it constructed an imagined community of prosody consumers for whom entertainment was mingled with both ed-

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[13] See [Henry Brougham], "Progress of the People—The Periodical Press," *Edinburgh Review,* 57 (1833), 240. Brougham was involved in the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, which distributed Charles Knight's "improving" *Penny Magazine* (1832–45); another penny weekly was the *Saturday Magazine of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. Chambers's Edinburgh Journal,* a commercial and slightly more expensive periodical (1½d.), competed for roughly the same largely working-class market.

ucation and indoctrination in a politics that was, by and large, hostile to the centrality of prosody in Victorian pedagogy.

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    In order to understand how Clark's *Eureka* machine operates within and across discursive boundaries, it is worthwhile to place the year 1845, when the *Eureka* was "grinding out" hexameters for the masses, in the context of developments in nineteenth-century prosody. The 1840s, as Joseph Patrick Phelan has demonstrated, was a turbulent decade for prosody, and hexameters were central to the imbroglio.[14] In 1844 Lancelot Shadwell's translation of the *Iliad* into English hexameters had sparked a controversy regarding the possibility of reproducing classical metrical properties in English. This debate was thickened by the publication of experimental English hexameters such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline* (1847) and Arthur Hugh Clough's *The Bothie of Toperna-Fuosich* (1848). In 1850 Walter Savage Landor came out against English hexameters in his (hexameter) poem of that title, arguing: "We have a measure / Fashion'd by Milton's own hand, a fuller, a deeper, a louder."[15] In the 1860s these contributions to what was by then clearly a mounting "hexameter controversy" were complemented by Alfred Tennyson's "On Translations of Homer. Hexameters and Pentameters" (1863) and Algernon Charles Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpine" (1866).[16] In 1860–61 Matthew Arnold, then Professor of Po-

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[14] See Phelan, "Radical Metre: The English Hexameter in Clough's *Bothie of Toper-Na-Fuosich,*" *Review of English Studies,* 50 (1999), 173.

[15] Walter Savage Landor, "English Hexameters," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country,* 42 (1850), 62.

[16] Tennyson's poem expresses his worries about English hexameters—"a most burlesque barbarous experiment. / When was a harsher sound ever heard, ye Muses, in England?" (Alfred Tennyson, "On Translations of Homer, Hexameters and Pentameters" [1863], in *The Poems of Tennyson in Three Volumes, Second Edition, Incorporating the Trinity College Manuscripts,* ed. Christopher Ricks [Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1987], II, 651, ll. 2–3). On the "hexameter controversy," see the entry of that title in vol. 13 of the comprehensive *Cambridge History of English and American Literature: An Encyclopedia in Eighteen Volumes,* ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1907–21). Available online at <http://www.bartleby.com/cambridge>.

etry at Oxford University, weighed in with his *On Translating Homer*, and a heated exchange ensued between him and Francis W. Newman, whose 1856 "ballad-poetry" translation of the *Iliad* Arnold had dismissed as not "noble enough."[17] Volleys were lobbed back and forth, making the mid-century one of the most abundant and versatile, if also volatile, periods of prosodical activity. It was into this heated prosodic context that Clark introduced his mechanical hexameter machine.

The prosodic furor surrounding hexameters must itself be placed in context. Since the early 1830s there had been a clamor surrounding prosody, and classical prosody in particular. Domestically, Victorian prosody was embroiled in the politics of reform at Oxford and Cambridge and also, as we shall see below, in the public schools. The reforms were targeted at what was perceived to be a backward-looking, classically oriented Oxbridge curriculum where philology and its subdiscipline of prosody were firmly embedded—to the exclusion of subjects like modern history, chemistry, and natural science. Discussing this context, Phelan has suggested that at least one of the endowed or public schools, Rugby, guided by the reforms of Thomas Arnold, was actually "in advance of Oxford in classical studies at this time" ("Radical Metre," p. 172).[18] Amid this climate of education reform, the study of the classics—and of prosody as part of that study—became highly contested and thoroughly politicized, and as disciplines philology and prosody themselves became sites of political contest between the reformers who wanted to expand and modernize the curriculum and the *ancien régime*, for whom prosody was at the humanizing core of an anti-utilitarian idea of liberal education. How one pronounced or scanned lines of classical verse, whether one believed in the possibility of English dactylic hexameters, and what one thought about quantities versus accents—all of these

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[17] See Matthew Arnold, *On Translating Homer*, in his *On the Classical Tradition*, ed. R. H. Super, vol. 1 of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 124. See also Phelan, "Radical Metre," p. 174.

[18] See also R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1921), p. 36; Terence Copley, *Black Tom: Arnold of Rugby: The Myth and the Man* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 152; and H. C. Barnard, *A History of English Education from 1760*, 2d ed. (London: Univ. of London Press, 1961), p. 78.

prosodic questions were becoming deeply ideologically invested at the time the *Eureka* was exhibited in the Egyptian Hall.

The fractiousness of these debates both focuses on and extends beyond the immediate politics of Oxbridge and the public schools, however. We can detect in these debates the more comprehensive epistemological redistributions that Michel Foucault has traced to the nineteenth century.[19] Foucault's paradigm of "modern" historicity posits that from the end of the eighteenth century new disciplines emerged and organized knowledge into "new discursive fields" (Crowley, *Politics of Discourse*, p. 23). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, philology was just such a new field, and over the course of the century it set about demarcating its territory and establishing its own discursive taxonomies and methodologies in an attempt to confirm its existence as what Max Müller, first Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford, called a "science of language."[20] What is important to note here is the transitional nature of nineteenth-century philology; the whole of the philological franchise was, in fact, undergoing a series of discursive transitions in which disciplinary boundaries and subdivisions were being contested and reconfigured. Of course, prosody is among these subdivisions, and it too was in flux, moving, as Yopie Prins has noted, "toward the codification of numerical modes of analysis."[21]

During the 1840s, as Phelan points out, philologists like the University of Aberdeen's John Stuart Blackie were engaged in attempts to "rethink the whole subject of prosody from first principles" ("Radical Metre," p. 169). Blackie's reconsiderations

[19] See Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge, 1973).

[20] See Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language: Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in April, May, and June, 1861*, 2d ed., revised, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862), I, 23. See also Crowley, *Politics of Discourse*, pp. 13–90.

[21] Prins, "Victorian Meters," in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), p. 106. Drawing on the work of Mary Poovey and Regenia Gagnier, Prins locates the "formalization of metrical theory" within larger epistemological transitions taking place in the nineteenth century. See also Prins's remarks on the "visual abstraction" made possible by other forms of technology (Yopie Prins, "Voice Inverse," *Victorian Poetry*, 42 [2004], 43–59).

(themselves indicators of discursive transition) are threaded into the education debates taking place in and around the English educational establishment, and in this context they enable a prosody that for Phelan is "radical" in its borrowings from German philology, whose New-Humanist ethos—characterized by an attempt "to bring the Classics back into living contact with the real world"—was rejected by the Oxbridge establishment ("Radical Metre," p. 172). Of course, Blackie's "radical" prosody—which promoted the viability in English of so-called accentual hexameters in which the *ictus*, or stress, replaced the *longa* of quantitative Latin verse—played a significant part in the mid-century's hexameter frenzy. What becomes apparent is the interpenetrating nature of these debates: prosodical theories, reform politics, and disciplinary (re)organization are in fact complexly interrelated.

Phelan's research has highlighted some of these discursive linkages; in particular, he examines how scholarly journals such as the *Classical Museum*—which featured essays by Blackie, Francis Newman, John Oxenford, and Arthur Hugh Clough, among others—became sites of political contact, where discussions of prosodical issues merged with "the ongoing debate about the stultifying effect of the ancient universities on British intellectual life" ("Radical Metre," p. 166). In the 1850s, 1860s, and beyond, after the collapse of the *Classical Museum* in 1848, prosodical and related debates continued to circulate: in major philological organs; in the reports of the Newcastle Commission and the Taunton Commission, as well as in Matthew Arnold's school-inspector reports and his essays arising from these; in treatises on metrics published by Coventry Patmore and others; in a raft of putatively scientific enquiries into the principles of (increasingly English) versification, along the lines of Sidney Lanier's 1880 *Science of English Verse*, and in textbooks for use in schools and universities, such as John Ruskin's *Elements in English Prosody; for Use in St. George's Schools* (1880) and Francis Gummere's *A Handbook of Poetics, for Students of English Verse* (1885). The contributions of these works to prosodic debates have been well documented by Phelan and others, and the narrative that they construct is central to the institutional history of prosody. What is less well known is the popular narrative that existed

on the margins of the prosody and philology establishment. The politics of Victorian prosody was not confined exclusively to scholarly organs and professional manuals; on occasion it spilled over into more popular forums, such as "improving" periodicals. Here it came into contact with Clark's *Eureka* machine, which became a powerful material embodiment—and served as a useful anchor for indictments—of the institutional practice of Victorian prosody.

The commentary on the *Eureka* machine that featured in magazines such as *Chambers's, Littell's Living Age,* and the *Illustrated London News* constituted a popular intervention in prosodic discourse, one comprising not only aesthetic observations regarding syntactic and metrical explication but also politicized contributions to broader mid-century questions regarding the specialized, scientific nature of prosody, its rules or laws, and their role in Victorian society. The exchanges in these periodicals were not only comments on the *Eureka* machine itself, but they were also often the expressions of broader preoccupations with prosody that either invoked the *Eureka* as a convenient material anchor for their critiques or eerily anticipated its automatic versification. The event created by this particular spectacle, the focus of both earlier and later popular prosodic debates, enabled access to a discursive space that was otherwise institutionally regulated, restricted to scholars and other professionals. In the section below, I illustrate how the intertext of popular prosody emanating from and surrounding the *Eureka* extended to debates regarding well-established pedagogical practices and fundamental questions of nineteenth-century education reform. Specifically, I demonstrate how discussions of Clark's Latin Hexameter Machine overlap with a powerful improving agenda—the role of the classics in schools, where the consumption and production of Latin prosody was at the very heart of the curriculum. What becomes clear is that there existed an intertextual dialectic in which the *Eureka* can be seen to operate synecdochically. Much more than spectacle, the *Eureka* facilitated a link between the worlds of private diversion and utilitarian application, between the leisure space of the Egyptian Hall and the institutional space of the classical schools, where the science of prosody was becoming increasingly entangled in a na-

tional conversation about Greek and Latin instruction as well as more comprehensive education reforms.

It is not just in relation to topical debates in prosody's narrow corner of philological scholarship—like those surrounding English hexameters, for instance—that the *Eureka* machine mediates contemporary concerns. Regarded by some as "little better than a mere puzzle, which any schoolboy might perform by a simpler process,"[22] Clark's mechanical versifier figures also in another prosodic intertext, one that extends outward—beyond the immediate discursive radius of the science, that is, beyond abstract, theoretical questions surrounding such things as quantity and ictus—and into the more expansive Victorian social terrain, which was characterized, as Joseph Bristow demonstrates, by a culture of systemic reform.[23] Specifically, I want to consider how an alternative prosodic discourse that briefly flourished in popular periodicals is linked with reforms to a secondary-education regime grounded in the study of the classics. With its literally mechanical way of composing Latin verses (all of which, though strictly different from each other, conform to the same syntactical and metrical pattern), the *Eureka* functions metonymically as both parodic indictment of the classical or public schools' pedagogy and nightmarish technological fulfillment of an educational model that promoted mechanical prosodical exercises.

As Regenia Gagnier demonstrates, Latin and Greek in the mid nineteenth century were fundamental components of the public-school "pedagogical 'method.'"[24] At Eton, Harrow,

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[22] P. A. Nuttall, "The Eureka," *Littell's Living Age*, 7 (1845), 214.

[23] See Bristow, "Reforming Victorian Poetry: Poetics after 1832," *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, pp. 1–24.

[24] See Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832–1920* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), p. 177. In particular, Gagnier's chapter "The Making of Middle-Class Identities: School and Family" provides a helpful context for locating my arguments about a classics-oriented curriculum (see *Subjectivities*, pp. 171–219). Gagnier details the role of an "elite educational system" in the encoding of "the rules and conventions of upper-class life" (p. 171), and she notices the tensions,

Westminster, Shrewsbury, and other endowed schools, translating, composing, and metrically arranging Latin and Greek verses were tasks central to the curriculum, and as the "laws" of meter constituted, in the words of Theodore Watts-Dunton, "the first and only condition absolutely demanded by poetry," integral to this kind of instruction was what Francis B. Gummere's 1885 school handbook, drawing on Watts-Dunton's writing, called "the science of poetry."[25] For the schoolboy, then, this science, in its most reductive form, was unavoidable. In schools emphasis was placed on textbooks and pedagogical procedures that demonstrated the fundamental principles of Latin (sometimes Greek, and later English) versification. Indeed, in the Victorian period a flourishing industry of textbooks developed in order to meet the steady demand. Alongside other standard classical textbooks, such as the *Eton Latin Grammar* and subsequent grammars and primers, was the standard prosody manual, the *Gradus ad Parnassum*.[26] Published in various editions from

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particularly evident from the 1840s, between conformity to these conventions and pressures to initiate pedagogical reform.

[25] See Theodore Watts-Dunton, *Poetry and the Renascence of Wonder* (London: Kennikat Press, 1916), p. 30; and Francis B. Gummere, *A Handbook of Poetics for Students of English Verse* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1885), preface. Watts-Dunton's essay on "Poetry," first published in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1884, anticipates Gummere's *Handbook*, which reproduces Watts-Dunton's words verbatim and uses them to endorse its method of prosodic instruction. Gummere's book, intended for American secondary education, demonstrated the principles of English versification. Essentially, though, its subject matter takes its direction from a classical education that emphasized attention to prosody. In effect, *A Handbook of Poetics* is the English-language equivalent of the various Latin and Greek manuals in use in both English and American schools in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century.

[26] The *Eton Latin Grammar* was replaced first by Christopher Wordsworth's *King Edward the Sixth's Latin Grammar* (first published in 1841) and later by Benjamin Hall Kennedy's *Public School Latin Primer and Public School Latin Grammar* (which was core to the nineteenth-century public-school curriculum from its publication in 1866). For a thorough account of the role of Latin grammars in public-school education, see *Grinders and Grammars: A Victorian Controversy*, ed. Christopher Stray (Bristol: Colloquium on Textbooks, Schools, and Society, 1995); and Christopher Stray, "Paradigms of Social Order: The Politics of Latin Grammar in Nineteenth-Century England," *Bulletin of the Henry Sweet Society*, 13 (1989), 13–24. A. A. Markley calls attention to two earlier Latin grammars, both consulted by Tennyson and perhaps by a wider readership: William Turner's *Exercises to the Accidence and Grammar* (1815) and the anonymous *Exempla Moralia* (1815). See Markley, *Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece*

FIGURE 3. Example of scansion from C. D. Yonge's *A Gradus ad Parnassum for the Use of Eton, Westminster, Winchester, Harrow, Charterhouse, and Rugby Schools, King's College, London, and Marlborough College* (London, 1868).

the early eighteenth century, this tome comprises, as Dennis Taylor explains,

> a dictionary of synonyms, word usages, epithets, and most importantly lines of Latin verse with each of the syllables scanned. Many of the lines were typical examples from classical verse forms, like the dactylic hexameter. The schoolboy, told to write a Latin verse with the correct scansion, would use the gradus and select those words and lines with the needed sets of shorts and longs. (*Hardy's Metres*, p. 66)

In Figure 3 I have reproduced an extract from C. D. Yonge's *Gradus*, first published in 1850 and reissued several times.[27] Here examples of Latin scansion are visible. This textbook was compiled specially for use in the public schools, as well as King's College, London, and Marlborough College. Throughout the nineteenth century, elite boys and young men started out with

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and Rome (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 31. The title *Gradus ad Parnassum* translates as "the steps to Parnassus"—Parnassus being the mountain associated with Apollo, god of poetry.

[27] See C. D. Yonge, *A Gradus ad Parnassum for the Use of Eton, Westminster, Winchester, Harrow, Charterhouse, and Rugby Schools, King's College, London, and Marlborough College* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1868).

this or a similar textbook, and a number of poets—some of them classically educated, others merely classically interested—learned from the aids to scansion that the *Gradus* provided. In his comprehensive study of Thomas Hardy's prosody, Dennis Taylor has explicated the Victorian prosodic milieu's intersections, via the *Gradus*, with classical metrics;[28] further, the English hexameter experiments of Longfellow, Clough, and Tennyson evidence the degree to which the *Gradus* subtended the mainstream as well as the experimental margins of Victorian poetry. Tennyson's oeuvre in particular is a testament to classical education. This is underscored by the reactions of disapproving twentieth-century figures such as R. P. Blackmur and Ezra Pound, who scoffed at what they saw (and purported to hear) as a slavishness to classical versification in Tennyson's meters. Tennyson himself, unable to imagine just how out of fashion traditional prosody would become in the years following his death in 1892, famously boasted that "scissors" was the only English word whose quantity he did not know.[29] Clearly, the *Gradus* left its indelible, Latinate mark on generations of Victorians and Edwardians.

Though ostensibly designed to encourage an "appreciat[ion of] beauty"[30] and foster an awareness of the "mystery" of metrical "interplay" (Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, p. 67), more frequently the *Gradus* was regarded by schoolboys as merely the necessary decoder for unscrambling and reconstituting Latin verses. Gagnier draws on "a world of testimony to the futility of this 'method'"—citing the remembrances of Anthony Trollope, Charles Darwin, Edward Lyttleton, and others (*Subjectivities*, p. 177). Often the *Gradus* simply served to encourage what R. L. Archer in his 1921 book calls the "brick-puzzle concep-

[28] See Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, pp. 18–42, 63–70.

[29] See [Hallam Tennyson], *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897), II, 231. In *Stateliest Measures* Markley documents the extent of Tennyson's immersion in classical material, placing his writing in the context of nineteenth-century philology and prosody to show that the poet's "metrical experiments ultimately became an important part of the way he used his classicism to solidify his reputation as a poet of the nation" (*Stateliest Measures*, p. 87). See in particular Markley's chapter "Classical Prosody and the 'Ocean Roll of Rhythm'" (*Stateliest Measures*, pp. 87–120).

[30] See C. J. Ellingham, "Apology for the Practice of Latin Verse Composition," *Greece and Rome*, 4 (1935), 156.

tion of the way to piece together Latin hexameters and pentameters" (*Secondary Education,* p. 86). One example is C. J. Ellingham's (somewhat fanciful) depiction of the schoolboy at work, taken from his 1935 "Apology for the Practice of Latin Verse Composition":

> We can picture him, with Dictionary and Gradus and a small store of juvenile cunning, embarking upon a rendering of "Welcome, wild northeaster." He draws his seven vertical lines to mark the limits of the six feet, fills the last space with the obliging Eurus, eight points at most off the required bearing, consults the Gradus and helps himself to *turbidus* for the fifth foot and *ingenti strepitu* to start the line sonorously, pads the middle with *flabat iam,* and turns to the pentameter. He looks up "welcome" in the Dictionary and *gratus* in the Gradus, picks *amandus* as the most accommodating synonym, and in ten minutes, which is very good going, has produced his first couplet. . . . It looks somewhat diffuse, and he wishes he could hit upon a device for getting it into the present indicative, but at least it scans. (pp. 151–52)[31]

Ellingham's is an admittedly biased account—he claims to have enjoyed this sort of activity for its own sake; nevertheless, it adequately conveys the puzzle-like nature of the enterprise. Thus conducted classroom prosodic exercises bear more than a passing resemblance to the mechanical composition processes of the *Eureka.* The classical-school pupil, like the machine, executed his hexameters "one tantalizing word at a time," using the *Gradus* to select words of the requisite part of speech and meter in a manner similar to that of Clark's machine, whose system of staves and drums performed these calculations. Thus, when one P. A. Nuttall, writing in *Littell's Living Age,* comments on the *Eureka*'s "curious and instructive" relationship to the prosodic education of "school-boys and Latin students," his words resonate beyond the Egyptian Hall ("The Eureka," p. 214). One hears in the link that Nuttall establishes between school and

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[31] If there is a corrective to this view of *Gradus*-oriented prosody as deadening, then it is to be found in Taylor's erudite account in *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody* of Thomas Hardy's relationship with Victorian prosody. The variety and subtleness of Hardy's versification, which Taylor analyzes with care and precision, clearly attest to the benefits that Hardy derived from an attention to Latin metrics.

spectacle an indictment of a mechanistic pedagogy grounded in prosodic exercises. In this equation the *Gradus* provides a formulaic principle for composing Latin verses that "can be as readily performed . . . as by machine." Thinking along these lines, then, it is easy to recognize a set of prosodic "Tables"—compiled by an anonymous contributor to *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* in order to illustrate "the secret of the [*Eureka*] machine" ("Latin Versification for the Million," p. 205)—as not only a sort of homemade, popular *Gradus* but also as a send-up of this kind of (literal) verse-by-numbers.[32]

For many Victorians this kind of classroom procedure—with its fetishizing of Latin versification and promotion of an abstract, narrowly philological approach to syntax and meter—was anathema, and pedagogical reforms appeared urgently necessary.[33] In the decades between the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Education Act of 1870 (which confirmed the promise of the earlier Bill to provide a state school system), the place of prosody in the classroom was frequently debated and zealously assaulted by some of the most earnest Victorian reformers. As early as 1833 John Stuart Mill had made his position clear regarding the metrical dimensions of poetry. In his essay "Thoughts on Poetry

[32] It is probable that the author of the *Chambers's* piece has in mind a plan for "Artificiall Versifying" taken from Edward Manwaring's 1737 *Stichology: or, A Recovery of the Latin, Greek and Hebrew Numbers*. Nonetheless, his presentation of the table he "found" in "an old arithmetical school-book" reads very much as a sly swipe at institutional prosody, particularly his remark (an echo of Manwaring) that "any one of ordinary capacity, though he understands not one word of Latin, may be taught immediately to make hexameter and pentameter verses—true Latin, true verse, and good sense!" ("Latin Versification for the Million," p. 205). It appears that the author is suggesting that both the arcane, "arithmetical" system of rules and the machine that computes them are equally absurd and, consequently, of little practical use to "the million." Indeed, he concludes: "'What is the use of all this?' I can only reply, that the construction of these tables helped to wile away from me some tedious hours of lassitude and ill health" (p. 205). Effectively, they are to him the Victorian equivalent of a "Sudoku" puzzle. I wish to thank A. H. Wyllie for helping to elucidate this point.

[33] Reform platforms were of course multiple, and the role of prosody and more generally Latin and Greek in secondary education was only one among many areas of concern. In this essay there is no space to consider in any depth the other various reform agendas, but readers are advised to consult the following for more comprehensive and historically situated coverage: David Wardle, *English Popular Education, 1780–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976); T. W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982); and Crowley, *The Politics of Discourse*.

and Its Varieties" (1833) Mill adopts a quasi-Wordsworthian stance: "It has often been asked, What is Poetry? And many and various are the answers which have been returned. The vulgarest of all—one with which no person possessed of the faculties to which poetry addresses itself can ever have been satisfied—is that which confounds poetry with metrical composition."[34] With such a view in mind, Mill engaged actively in the educational reforms of the 1860s; his views are articulated in his *Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews* (1867) and elsewhere. Like Mill, the authors of *Essays on a Liberal Education*, published in 1867, would urge prosodic reform. Contributors to this volume, including Henry Sidgwick and volume-editor Frederic William Farrar, share Mill's outlook, advocating, among other things, the unequivocal dropping of "verses" from compulsory studies.[35]

In the early 1860s, when the Clarendon Commission's suggestions for public-school reform brought these debates to a head, attacks on classroom prosody and "sticklers for *Gradus ad Parnassum*" were not uncommon in popular periodicals. As one contributor to *Chambers's* remarks, a "young gentleman with his head full of Latin verses would lag behind the other [young man] (of equal powers), who has received a more general, although not necessarily a superficial education."[36] These positions, in fact, were very much in circulation over fifteen years earlier in the 1840s, when they converged with the intertext

[34] See John Stuart Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties" (1833), in his *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, vol. 1. of *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 343.

[35] See *Essays on a Liberal Education*, ed. F. W. Farrar (London: Macmillan and Co., 1867). For an overview of the contribution of *Essays on a Liberal Education* to these education debates, see John William Adamson, *English Education, 1789–1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1930), pp. 309–12. These debates should be read in the context of the Clarendon Commission of 1861, which assessed and criticized the existing public-school curricula. One material consequence of the Commission was Benjamin Hall Kennedy's *Public School Latin Primer*, published in 1866 and adopted almost universally in the public schools (as well as some preparatory schools). Though fiercely debated in the pages of the *Times*, the *Athenæum*, the *Monthly Journal of Education*, and elsewhere, Kennedy's book remained the core Latin primer in public schools during the second half of the nineteenth century.

[36] [Anon.], "The Public Schools *v.* Belvidere House," *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 15 (1861), 9, 10.

that incorporates the *Eureka.* The convergence is particularly visible in an anonymous 1840 article (again in the reform-minded *Chambers's*) titled "View of a Classical School," whose author staunchly indicts the fetishizing of Greek and Latin:

> The extent to which classical education, as it is called, has long been carried in this country, to the almost entire exclusion of instruction of every other kind, has been more than once commented on in this periodical, and the injurious consequences of the practice pointed out. While admitting the standard writings of Greece and Rome to be fair adjuncts to an elegant education, or, in other words, to constitute an agreeable branch of the belles lettres, the custom of imbuing the mind of youth with that species of knowledge alone, and neglecting all those departments of it calculated to be of use in after-life, was reprobated as alike absurd and deleterious.[37]

The emphasis on the neglect of "useful" knowledge in whose place one finds an "absurd and deleterious" training in the classics resonates with other reforms proposed around mid-century, most of which wanted to redress the narrow emphasis on Greek and Latin. Also, this "View" expresses criticisms that will reemerge later in the decade in relation to Clark's *Eureka* machine, described by one visitor as a device without "immediate utility."[38] Several commentators also suggest that there is something "absurd" about the machine's function, whose verses, which as Blandford later notes "never [accommodate] any elision, and never any variation in scansion," are rendered wonderfully empty—a kind of prosody for prosody's sake. There is a fitting irony, then, that "an inscription on the machine itself describes [the verses] as 'eternal truths'—such as might be found in a book of moral maxims" (Blandford, "The *Eureka,*" p. 77). Like the perceived impracticality of a classical education centered on mechanical prosodic exercises, the *Eureka*, with its randomly generated "truths," appeared to many commentators absurd in the extreme; its "moral maxims," likewise, are undoubtedly "deleterious" if acted upon.

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[37] [Anon.], "View of a Classical School," *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 9 (1840), 207.

[38] See [Anon.], "A Latin Hexameter Machine," *Littell's Living Age*, 7 (1845), 214.

Many Victorians shared the opinion of the author of "View of a Classical School" regarding the pointless or at best stiflingly pedantic approach favored in the classical schools, and even in the early decades of the twentieth century the problems of nineteenth-century classical education continued to exert themselves.[39] Timothy Steele has suggested that the Modernist rebellions against conventional meter in English verse were connected to the lingering presence of a classically informed approach to English poetry in schools and universities.[40] Dorrance S. White, writing in the *Classical Journal* in 1930, explains the protracted "practical process" of Latin textbook reform; in doing so she welcomes a series of what she calls "vitalizing" or "humanizing" improvements.[41]

It is a "vitalizing," if not exactly "humanizing," fervor that motivates the author of "View of a Classical School" (no doubt Arnold would label him a "Philistine"), who claims to see nothing but rote inculcation in the educational practice of "one of the most ancient and distinguished schools of England" ("View of a Classical School," p. 207). The curriculum in this institution, he maintains, is far from "liberal": in the exercises of the sixth form, "we find but one *half hour* (Thursday) given to modern history! . . . With the exception of a sprinkling of mathematics, all the rest is Latin and Greek, Greek and Latin, over and over again, without pause or change" (p. 208; emphasis in original).[42] But what is most troubling is the emphasis on Latin and Greek poetry: "Poetry! all this time spent upon poetry!" (p. 208).

In order to "enable . . . readers to judge for themselves," the author then quotes several weekly plans similar to the one reproduced below:

> "MONDAY.—Repetition of Friday's *Horace*, Satires or Epistles, 50 lines; *Latin lyrics* or *Greek verses* of Thursday looked over— hour for this half-past 7 A.M. . . . WEDNESDAY.—Repetition of

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[39] See Gagnier, *Subjectivities*, p. 175.

[40] See Steele, *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt against Meter* (Fayetteville: Univ. of Arkansas Press, 1990), pp. 59–60.

[41] See White, "Humanizing the Teaching of Latin: A Study in Textbook Construction," *Classical Journal*, 25 (1930), 507–20.

[42] See also Adamson, *English Education*, p. 239.

> Friday's *Greek* play, 30 lines; *verses* of Friday looked over—hour
> half-past 7. . . . *Musa Græca* (Greek verse), 40 or 50 lines, accord-
> ing to author chosen. . . . THURSDAY.—Repetition of Monday's
> *Horace,* odes, 60 or 70 lines. . . . FRIDAY.—*Latin verses,* hexameter,
> or hexameter and pentameter. SATURDAY,—." ("View of a Classi-
> cal School," pp. 207–8)

The (re)presentation of these schedules is rhetorically invested.
Clearly, they are included as evidential ripostes to proponents
of an anti-utilitarian conception of "liberal education" who
broadly believed that "the intellect . . . is disciplined for its own
sake," a view propounded in Newman's 1852 *The Idea of a Univer-
sity.*[43] That position at its most general is targeted in "View of a
Classical School"; more narrowly the author's rhetoric is leveled
at apologists for conventional prosodic instruction. As articu-
lated in 1935 by C. J. Ellingham in his "Apology for the Practice
of Latin Verse Composition," this position, roughly the same
then as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century, affirms
that "while [the schoolboy] is learning to write Latin verses he is
doing other valuable things, which are ignored in much of our
utilitarian curriculum" ("Apology," p. 156). This is certainly not
what the *Chambers's* schedule is meant to illustrate. On the con-
trary, the message that the author is sending is clear. Engaged in
a repetitive and potentially alienating educational regime that

[43] See John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University, Defined and Illustrated* . . ., ed.
I. T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 135. The anti-utilitarian position is of
course not simple and one-dimensional; Arnold's stance is not interchangeable with
Newman's, but it suffices to recognize the general thrust of the "View of a Classical
School" author's invective. Also not straightforward is the supposed utilitarianism of
this position. Isobel Armstrong has explored the complex relationship between the
utilitarianisms of Mill and W. J. Fox and the poetry of Tennyson and Robert Browning,
drawing attention to Fox's "conscious and deliberate effort to develop a *Utilitarian* and
radical aesthetics" that endorsed a poetics that is both dialogic and thoroughly en-
gaged with objective reality through its vivid images (Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry,
Poetics and Politics* [London and New York: Routledge, 1993], p. 142; see esp. pp. 112–
61). In this context we can understand the reactions of the author of "View of a Classi-
cal School" to *Gradus*-oriented prosody: the necessarily solitary pursuit countermanded
any democratic possibility, and, further, the acutely technical linguistic and prosodic
nature of the classical-school exercises precluded the pupils' ability to recognize or en-
gage with any potentially sustaining "physical experience of the senses" (Armstrong,
Victorian Poetry, p. 144). A similarly politicized assault on the insular narrowness of clas-
sical studies, this time in the universities, appears in J. S. Blackie's contributions to the
Classical Museum. See Phelan, "Radical Metre," p. 173.

included reciting, memorizing, scanning, translating, and composing with the aid of the *Gradus*, the pupils eerily anticipate Clark's *Eureka*. They perform "as by machine," churning out predetermined sequences of verses in formulaic repetition.

Even the week's plan itself, as arranged by "View of a Classical School," transmits the monotony and inflexibility of the pedagogical model it presents. Effectively, the densely typed schedules, containing sequences of Arabic figures and studded with Graeco-Roman diction, appear almost impenetrable (certainly difficult to scan). Their typographic layout suggests, in another echo of the *Eureka*, extreme mechanical compression and the generation of material on an industrial scale. Moreover, many readers of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* were likely also to have been readers of the *Penny Magazine*, which circulated from 1832 to 1845 and attracted roughly the same readership as *Chambers's*. If so, then they would have been familiar with Charles Knight's "The Commercial History of a Penny Magazine," published in 1833. Indeed, it is highly likely that, in what John Plunkett and Andrew King have demonstrated was a "media-saturated society,"[44] the graphic display of school exercises would have achieved resonance with Knight's descriptions of compositors, moveable types, "stereotyping," and other features of nineteenth-century printing technology. The schoolboys' routine, in fact, provides little to distinguish the pupils from compositors working in the *Penny Magazine*'s print-office, which Charles Knight describes:

> we enter a very long room, in which from fifty to sixty compositors are constantly employed. Each man works at a sort of desk called a frame, and in most instances he has the desk or frame to himself. . . . They are . . . intelligent-looking, active artisans; not much thinking about the matter of the work they have in hand, but properly intent upon picking up as many letters in the hour as may be compatible with following their copy correctly, and of producing what is called a clean *proof*,—that is, a proof, or first impression, with very few mistakes of words or letters.[45]

[44] Andrew King and John Plunkett, "Introduction," in *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*, ed. King and Plunkett (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 1.

[45] [Charles Knight], "The Commercial History of a Penny Magazine.—No. III," *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, 2 (1833), 466.

The points of correspondence between this process and that conducted in the classical schools are unmistakable, and though a gulf of class lies between the compositor and the public schoolboy, it is almost certain that the author of "View of a Classical School" intended readers to make the mental connection.

Thus, the education assessment offered in "View of a Classical School" clearly conveys its author's worry that a pupil in such an educational regime was in real danger of becoming, if he had not already been reduced to, a "calculating" machine—or, more precisely, to borrow the words of one *Eureka* observer, "an automaton Latin versifier" ("Oddities in Music," p. 313)—as a consequence of classical instruction that foregrounded not merely Latin and Greek but more specifically poetry and prosodic exercise. Indeed, as the rigid weekly schedule quoted above is constructed to suggest, there was very little by which to distinguish a week's prosodic exercises in the schoolroom from other forms of mechanical activity, from working at a compositor's frame to pulling the lever of Clark's apparatus in the Egyptian Hall.[46] (John Clark, the inventor of the *Eureka* machine, was himself a printer by trade.)[47] The difference is in the ratio of (relatively) comfortable physical exertion to stultifying mental exertion. As one commentator remarked in 1859, thinking retrospectively about the *Eureka*, "All inspired poets were invited to lighten their labours by merely putting a few words into a box, turning a handle, and grinding out a Latin hexameter ready made" ("Oddities in Music," p. 313). Little wonder, then, that P. A. Nuttall, unimpressed by the *Eureka* mechanism's ability to rapidly "shuffle" grammar and prosody, found little application for it outside of the classroom, where it might (and presumably

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[46] While these comparisons no doubt did not escape the author of "View of a Classical School," the complications that they introduce to the macro-dynamics of his argument—would it be better to labor repetitively and automatically with a *Gradus* or with a compositor's frame?—are never considered. In a highly class-conscious and market-driven society, however, there is no doubt about the relative drudgeries of the two tasks. Anyone who is familiar with Ruskin's contemporary assessment of the manufacture of glass beads will know that, though many varieties of task offer "the smallest occasion for the use of any single human faculty," some are more enervating than others. See John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), in *The Complete Works of Ruskin, Library Edition*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–12), X, 197.

[47] See Blandford, "The *Eureka*," p. 71.

should) constitute an "amusement—but nothing more" ("The Eureka," p. 214).

Given the context of educational reforms and debates regarding a classical curriculum that emphasized attention to meter and scansion, such textual engagements with the *Eureka* acquire a political resonance. With Clark's Latin Hexameter Machine, education-reform outlets like *Chambers's* had a grotesque parody of classical education, and in representations of the machine—in which it is cast as supremely useless, an "oddity"—it effectively serves as a convenient material anchor for their reform agendas. Accounts of the machine itself, as well as accompanying supplements like the knowingly arcane metrical computation "Tables" designed for someone who "understands not one word of Latin" ("Latin Versification for the Million," p. 205), went beyond engagements with the spectacle; they operated intertextually in contemporary debates about prosody and education, and as such they can be seen as instances of a potentially disruptive meta-prosody, whose aim was actually thoroughly to dismantle prosody in the name of utilitarian pedagogical reconfiguration. If that did not work, one imagines, then at least there was a ready-to-hand solution to the "pristine defectiveness" of the educational system ("View of a Classical School," p. 208): schoolboys "who are anxious to have their Latin exercises done with the least possible trouble" could have their poetic labors mechanically lightened.[48] As Clark relates in his *General History* of the *Eureka*:

> *the Rules of verse*, the measured syllables, and the measured time, of dactyls, spondees, trochees, &c., which act as fetters of confinement to the *writers* of verses, much increasing their difficulties, have an *opposite effect* when applied to *a machine.* . . . (p. 3; emphasis in original)

According to a *Punch* satire, such a device was just what was needed. The magazine humorously reports that following a display of the machine at work, "Several double-barrelled Eurekas were ordered for Eton, Harrow, and Rugby" ("The Eureka," p. 20). With the aid of their mechanical *Gradus*, then, school-

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[48] [Anon.], "The Eureka," *Punch*, 9 (1845), 20.

boys would be free to get on with instruction more immediately relevant to what the *Chambers's* school-reformer calls "the business of after-life, and . . . their worldly success or happiness" ("View of a Classical School," p. 208).[49]

Positioned on either side of this attack on classics in the classroom, both Knight's graphic rendering of the print industry and the *Eureka* spectacle provide a cultural context in which to locate contemporary preoccupations with prosody, reminding us that even an apparently sealed-off and ahistorical discourse is culturally and historically embedded. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the classroom, print-office, and showplace were threaded together spatially in an increasingly connected industrialized country, just as they were textually interwoven in the print media. Victorian cultural consumers—the readers of periodicals like *Chambers's* and the *Penny Magazine*, as well as the visitors to entertainment venues like the Egyptian Hall—were, with the spread of the railway and growth of the print industry, more and more able to range promiscuously in real and print spaces. And though these spaces, like others in Victorian society, were organized according to epistemological or discursive economies that erected boundaries between philology and prosody on the one hand and spectacle and popular reform on the other, they were capable of discursive conjunctions. The popular prosody that I have been examining arises from the fissure that the *Eureka* allows us to discern between these economies of knowledge. The *Eureka* curiosity demonstrates to us one of the available possibilities of discursive exchange, overlap, and interrogation. In this case, it is the cultural hegemony of the prosodic establishment—including both the academic science and the school subject of study— that is momentarily invaded and interrupted. The rarefied science of prosody is both divested of the aura that it is actively

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[49] Well into the twentieth century, public schoolboys still had the occasional encounter with the *Eureka*. See "Public Schoolboys Test Latin Verse Machine," *Clarks Courier*, 148 (1963).

attempting to consolidate and brought into a dialectic with its own means of mechanical reproduction—and, by extension, with spectacle, print technology, popular journalism, and the politics of education reform. Here is focused a fugitive, provisional taxonomy—a *popular prosody*.

In the end, however, this yoking of the popular and the prosodic served primarily to magnify the resilience and adaptability of the one while effectively foreclosing on the discursive currency of the other. The popular prosody is short lived, but ultimately so is its more ponderous academic counterpart. Victoria's reign—during which prosody exhibited and classified a bountiful variety of feet, forms, accents, and quantities—was the moment of both consolidation and obsolescence for the prosodic science, and George Saintsbury's three-volume *History of English Prosody* (1906–10) marked both the zenith and the nadir of prosody as a credible contributor to Anglophone academic or poetic discourse. Today Clark's *Eureka* machine is housed in a storeroom in The Shoe Museum, in the town of Street, Somerset. The science of prosody, whose apparatus appears quaint in the decades after the Modernist formal innovations and the putative linguistic advances of structuralism and poststructuralism, fares little better.

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ABSTRACT

Jason David Hall, "Popular Prosody: Spectacle and the Politics of Victorian Versification" (pp. 222–249)

In July of 1845 a Somerset man named John Clark exhibited an invention called the *Eureka*, "a machine for making Latin verses," at the Egyptian Hall in London. This mid-century spectacle was, I argue, much more than a showplace diversion; rather, it was at once the uncanny technological embodiment and a parodic indictment of the Victorian science of prosody, and it functioned, moreover, as an interactive discursive site where debates about the function of prosody as part of a pedagogical model in the universities and, more specifically, the public schools became immediately visible and accessible to a popular and reform-minded audience. As the Latin hexameters that it was capable of "grinding out" were transcribed, explicated, and judged in the improving pages of popular print media, the *Eureka* figured briefly as the material signifier of an education-reform agenda that was, by and large, hostile to the centrality of prosody in Victorian pedagogy.

Keywords: prosody; education; reform; spectacle; print culture