

Analytical Egalitarianism, Anecdotal Evidence & Information Aggregation

David M. Levy
Center for Study of Public Choice
George Mason University
Fairfax VA 22030
DavidMLevy@aol.com

Sandra J. Peart
Economics Department
Baldwin-Wallace College
Berea OH 44017
speart@bw.edu

22 January 2002

We have benefitted from conversations with Gib Bassett and Roger Koenker about elementary set methods of regression. Earlier versions were presented at the Public Choice seminar at George Mason, the Southern Economic Association and the joint History of Economics Society / American Economic Associations meetings. Comments by Steve Medema and Mary Morgan at the ASSA meetings have been most helpful. Discussions with Tyler Cowen have been instrumental in seeing the relationship between the technical machinery and the problem of modeling art. Discussions with Roger Congleton and Robin Hanson have been helpful in clarifying our thoughts. Thanks are due to Ken White for the customized beta release of Shazam 8 with which the simulations reported below were computed. We are responsible for the errors which remain.

Analytical Egalitarianism

When Adam Smith attacked the doctrine of innate differences of people, he singled out the “vanity of the philosopher” for his belief that he was somehow of a different species than a common porter.¹ Ordinary people, says Socrates in Plato’s *Republic*, cannot be philosophers because they remain content with many surface phenomena whereas the philosopher inquires after the one explanation.² Since Plato’s time, surface phenomena have acquired a label: anecdotal evidence. The difference in knowledge between philosophers and ordinary people is key to a class of criticism of democracy: ordinary people bring nothing to the political process other than their many anecdotes, evidently inferior to the expert’s model. Similar arguments have been made to immunize “science” from criticism by ordinary people: for, if ordinary people cannot abstract from surface phenomena, they have no basis (except anecdotes) upon which to criticize the scientist.³ Responding to this criticism in the

¹“The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature as from habit, custom, and education. When they came into the world, and for the first six or eight years of their existence, they were, perhaps, very much alike, and neither their parents nor playfellows could perceive any remarkable difference. About that age, or soon after, they come to be employed in very different occupations. The difference of talents comes then to be taken notice of, and widens by degrees, till at last the vanity of the philosopher is willing to acknowledge scarce any resemblance.” Smith (1976, 28-9).

²Plato *Republic* 493e: “Can the multitude possibly tolerate or believe in the reality of the beautiful in itself as opposed to the multiplicity of beautiful things, or can they believe in anything conceived in its essence as opposed to the many particulars?”

³ This argument is common in the nineteenth century; see the remarks on Jevons in the *Economist*: “Jevons’s best work is so original and abstract in character, as to go out of the way, and in some respects out of the reach, of the ordinary student.” (20 October 1883, p. 122). For evidence that the argument was often used to suggest that women were unable to participate in scientific discussions, see Peart-Levy 2000.

political theory context, workers in rational expectations politics suppose that while experts have a deeper understanding of the process, ordinary people can by heuristics act as if they understood the model (Wittman 1995).

We regard the Platonic principle as analytical hierarchicalism. In terms of knowledge, the expert dominates ordinary people. The valuable contribution of rational expectations is to show that in interesting and important contexts the expert only weakly dominates ordinary people. But we propose to go beyond the rational expectations point of view to demonstrate that information aggregation of anecdotal evidence can improve upon the expert's model in the case where the model is not exactly correct. Thus, neither the expert nor the ordinary people dominate the other. In the language of statistical decision theory, both the expert's model and the information aggregation process we sketch below are "admissible" estimators.

There are two pieces to the argument. The technical statistical part below is a demonstration that the median of anecdotal evidence is an admissible estimator. (Lehmann 1986, p. 16) What this proves is that the expert's model does not dominate the information aggregation possibility of ordinary people in a democratic political context where the policy is made by the median voter. Thus, we argue for analytical egalitarianism by providing a counter-example to analytical hierarchicalism. This is the first piece of the argument.

Elsewhere we consider why it might be in the interest of the theorist to propose a model which is not exactly correct. This we regard as a sustained argument against analytical hierarchicalism. We argue that the theorist is motivated by the same sort of desires which

motivate ordinary people (Levy 1988, Feigenbaum-Levy 1995, Levy 2001, Peart-Levy 2002). If the expert is not constrained to seek out a median anecdote or some other admissible estimate, but is instead allowed to choose any anecdote, then – as our cannibalism example below demonstrates – we find some extraordinarily awful “expert” arguments being made.

We propose to develop some machinery to make precise the difference between expert’s model and ordinary people’s anecdotes in the context of democratic politics. This machinery is then employed to cast light on two historical episodes: i) the exchange between Thomas Carlyle and J. S. Mill; and ii) the allegation of cannibalism in the events in Jamaica in November 1865 known as the Gov. Eyre controversy (Levy 2001, Levy-Peart 2001). In the first case, we find explicit recognition by the political economists of our technical egalitarian argument for the median anecdote. In the second, we find an example of the worst imaginable outcome of a failure of analytical egalitarianism – when an “outlier” is presented as “truth” about the negroes in Jamaica.

The signature of the analytical hierarchicalism with which we are concerned is the expert’s use of his model to persuade an ordinary person to disregard the evidence of her senses.⁴ By this we do not mean that the expert explains to the ordinary person that there is other sense evidence which outweighs hers, but rather what she sees does not exist because it is not in the expert’s model.

⁴The gendering is not random. Episodes will be described below in which the male theorists attempted to remove the participation of female onlookers.

Models and Anecdotes

Is there a more damning criticism than that a piece of evidence is “anecdotal”? Anecdotal evidence is promiscuous empiricism offered without recognition of randomness. The “welfare queen” is hardly a representative guide to policy; she is a story, not a model. “Anecdotes” as the dictionary tells us are narratives of episodes. We shall suppose these narratives offer evidence without the beneficent constraint of a model.

We propose to inquire into the informational properties of anecdotes. We venture out of well-explored ground because we believe that models and anecdotes, when organized into coherent works of art, are competing sources of information.⁵ Ultimately, we wish to explain what we take to be a fact: why works of art have such a compelling impact on ordinary people? This problem we postpone to ask the more tractable one: how can we model information aggregation of anecdotal evidence via the political process? How does such information aggregation compare with expert decision making?

The idea we exploit, that voting can be viewed as robust estimation (Gil Bassett and Joe Perksy 1999), is a continuation of that begun by Francis Galton in two long-forgotten papers published in *Nature* in 1907 (reprinted and discussed in Levy-Pearl 2002a) when he proposed decision-making by the median voter.

⁵As we read the historical record, the great debates in the 19th century found systematic opposition between British economists and their literary critics. It is this opposition which earned economists the “dismal science” tag (Levy 2001; Levy-Pearl 2001).

How to Fit a Regression by Anecdotes

Consider in Figure 1 below a stylized regression problem. We observe three points which represent an ordered pair of X and Y – \mathbf{a} , \mathbf{b} , \mathbf{c} – and we wish to know the relationship between X and Y for the purpose of making policy. One intuitively appealing method of determining this relationship is simply to find the slopes connecting $[\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}]$, $[\mathbf{b}, \mathbf{c}]$ and $[\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{c}]$ and take an average of the three. Such was precisely the first method of computing a regression in the 1750s by Roger Boscovich in what is now known as “elementary set methods.” (Farebrother 1997).

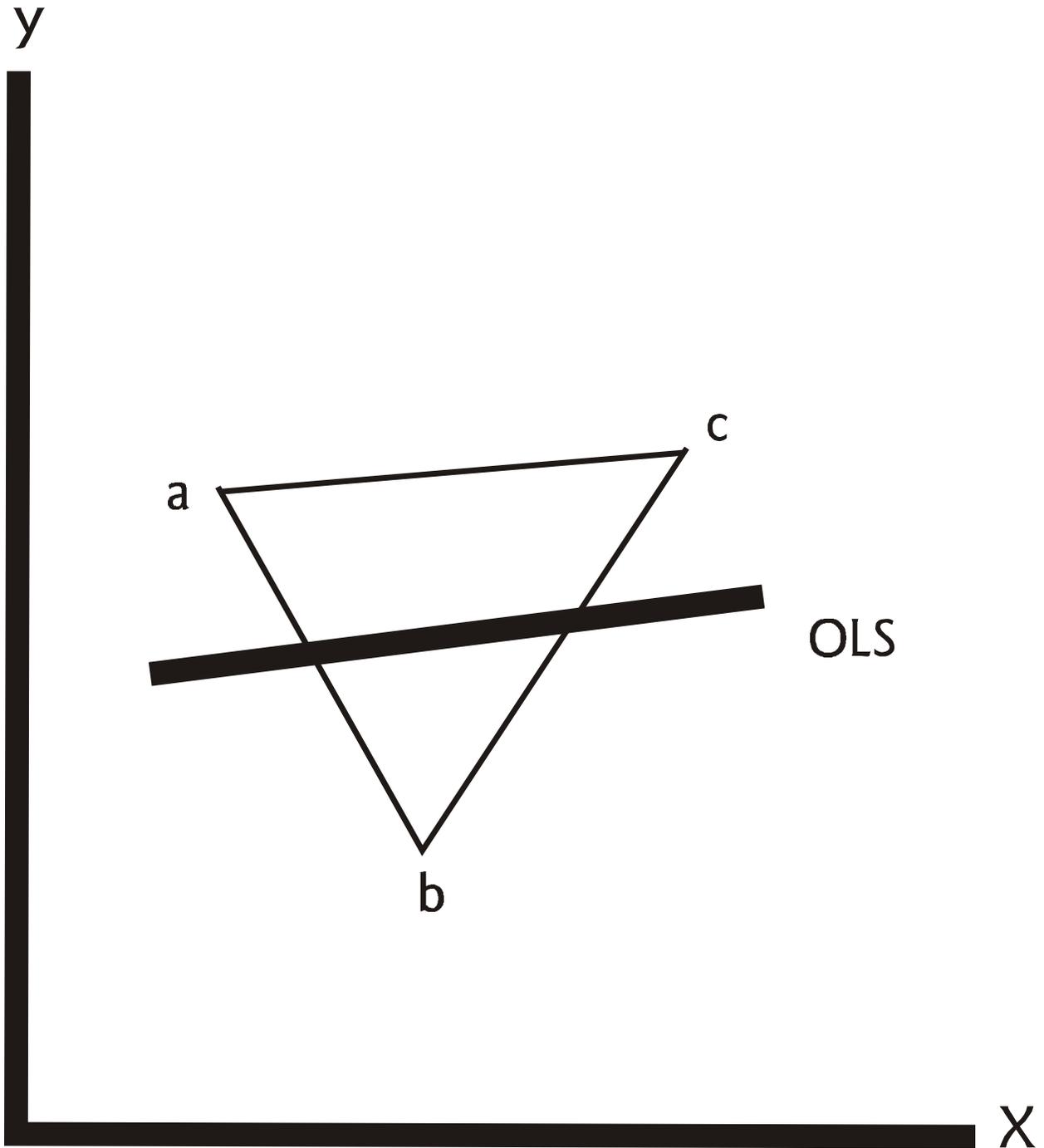


Figure 1. How to Fit a Regression

We propose that $[a, b]$, $[b, c]$ and $[a, c]$ are from the set of possible anecdotes from which ordinary people may draw. Each of these is a little story; none of these involves an explicit recognition of randomness and so each might appeal to those more comfortable with a determined world (Peart-Levy 2002). The only randomness will be that different people will have different stories to tell. Our method of information aggregation will be to select the median.

If the anecdotes of ordinary people can be aggregated by an elementary set method of regression then representing experts is trivial. Instead of simply taking phenomena at surface value the expert posits a model, an ordering relationship with fixed α and β – $y_i = \alpha + \beta x_i + \varepsilon_i$ – for which all $i=1..N$ of the empirical observations are subject. This too is illustrated in Figure 1 as the most popular of the standard regression techniques OLS. Only when the reliability of the expert’s ability to intuit an ordering relationship has been called into question have elementary set methods been revived. (Rousseeuw and Leroy 1987).

In terms of Figure 1 we allow the ordinary person access to a randomly selected pair of points – $[a, b]$, $[b, c]$ or $[a, c]$ – from which a slope can be deduced. The resulting slope will be the opinion of the voter on the policy issue.⁶ When we generalize beyond the simple regression we allow the voter access to a randomly selected k-tuple from which the appropriate slopes can be determined. The political decision will be made on the basis of the

⁶What if – as will happen – the randomly selected pair of points is $[a, a]$, $[b, b]$ or $[c, c]$? In one case we do not allow this to happen. In another case we suppose that the ordinary person cannot determine the slope and abstains from the vote. There is no difference in the results as far as the simulations could determine.

median of the voter's opinion. In terms of the statistical literature the resulting technique is known as the median of pairwise slopes as extended beyond the context of simple regression with a random-selection algorithm.⁷ This differs from Boscovich's 1750s approach mainly by the use of median instead of a subjectively-trimmed mean and a random select process instead of an exhaustive combinatorial approach.

What properties might we expect of this procedure? Bias? Suppose that the expert's model is true – there is some simple linear relationship connecting the pairs (k-tuples). In that case the randomly-selected pair (k-tuple) is an ordinary least squares equation with sample size K. Making the assumptions that i) the median of the true errors is 0 and ii) these errors are independent of the right hand side variables, least squares is a median-unbiased estimator (Levy 1992b). If the estimated slope is b_i then the median expectation $M(b_i) = \beta$, so trivially the mean-expectation is $E(M(b_i)) = \beta$. Thus the election procedure will be unbiased.

Variance? As an elementary set method, an estimation procedure is without benefit of the standard regression model. "The model" has a particular interesting status in the standard regression theory: it is supposed with hold with probability of 1 – the finite which we actually observe and infinite which we might potentially observe. This allows us to think about the model as a constraint added to a maximum likelihood method. Since it is

⁷Rousseeuw and Leroy (1987) systematically discuss in the median of pairwise slopes in terms of the contribution of Henri Theil and latter workers.

a constraint with probability 1, it can be imposed *without* reducing the joint probability; indeed in a world of finite precision a probability 1 constraint can increase the likelihood (Levy 1988).

Thus, when the model holds, we cannot reduce the joint probability by imposing it even had we a maximum likelihood method of elementary sets. As we do not have such a method at our disposal, imposing the constraint and employing standard regression methods which are maximum likelihood, will result in a more efficient procedure. Even if we had a method at our disposal – it would presumably induce the model from the data – it must be bound by finite computational capability which is less good than probability 1 insight. Thus, we have reason to believe that the best of all possible elementary set methods will be less precise than a standard maximum likelihood approach.

But what if the probability 1 claim is simple vanity? We draw a picture of what we expect to find in Figure 2. Our elementary set method is the median of anecdotal evidence – MAE – which we compare and contrast to two classical regression techniques with a model: Ordinary Least Squares [OLS] and Least Absolute Deviations [LAD].

If the model has probability 1 as tail mass gets thicker the efficiency of OLS falls relative to LAD and MAE.⁸ If the model has probability less than 1, then MAE will become more efficient than OLS or LAD. If Figure 2 is correct then we have shown that MAE is an

⁸There is a subtle interrelation between the truth of the model and the error term. We one can add to the model – perform exploratory data analysis – then the error distribution cannot be normal (Levy 1999/2000).

admissible estimator. It is therefore not dominated by either OLS or LAD. The evidence for Figure 1 will be presented after we consider two historical episodes which we claim to be illuminated by the machinery.

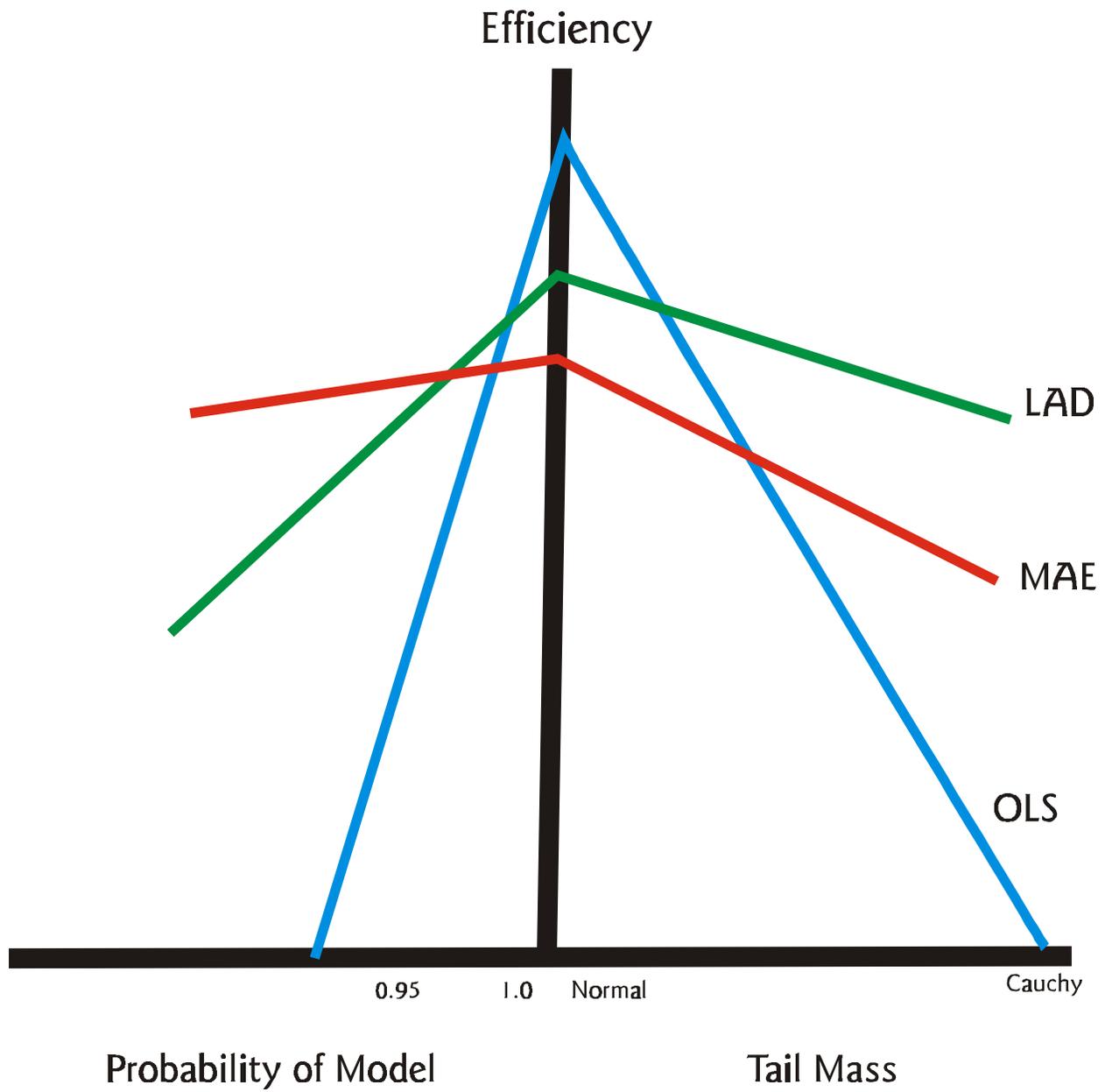


Figure 2. Admissibility of Median Anecdotal Evidence

On the Matter of Slave Happiness

We propose to employ this machinery to illuminate some ill-studied aspects of the history of economic controversy. Suppose we wish to compare two institutions. How do we know which is best? The foregoing suggests that when a theoretical specification is suspect, the votes or revealed preference of subjects is a preferred method of estimation.⁹ Consider Carlyle's argument that blacks are not subject to human desires and impulses: this might be a candidate for a suspect "theory." In the context of discussing the relative merit of slavery, Richard Whately made precisely the technical case we have outlined above: while individual instances of "happy" slaves might be found, the preponderance of evidence suggested otherwise.

Although we have discussed the Carlyle-Mill exchange at some length (Levy 2001, Levy-Pearl 2001), we may have under-emphasized the importance of the role of materialism in the debate. In Mill's *Principles*, he considers the (widely predicted) case of emancipation reducing *material* outcome, and points out that whatever judgment we might wish to make concerning the former slaves' level of civilization, they are evidently *happier*:

If the negroes of Jamaica and Demerara, after their emancipation, had contented themselves, as it was predicted they would do, with the necessaries of life, and abandoned all labour beyond the little which in a tropical climate, with a thin population and abundance of the richest land, is sufficient to support existence, they would have sunk into a condition more barbarous, though *less unhappy*, than their

⁹It is instructive that the economic models of central planning neglected to include the incentives facing the economists who might be central planners (Levy 1990).

previous state of slavery.¹⁰ (*Principles* Book I, ch. 7)

Mill takes it for granted that the former slaves are happier because they are now able to choose leisure.

Carlyle's hierarchicalism depends upon *his* specification of the goal of humanity: material income. Those who will not work, are not real people:

. . . manful industrious men occupy their West Indies, not indolent two-legged cattle, however 'happy' over their abundant pumpkins! Both these things, we may be assured, the immortal gods have decided upon, passed their eternal act of parliament for: and both of them, though all terrestrial Parliaments and entities oppose it to the death, shall be done. Quashee, if he will not help in bringing out the spices, will get himself made a slave again (which state will be a little less ugly than his present one), and with beneficent whip, since other methods avail not, will be compelled to work." (Carlyle 1849, 675).

This is Carlyle's "gospel of labour," to which Mill responds:

This pet theory of your contributor about work, we all know well enough, though some persons might not be prepared for so bold an application of it. Let me say a few words on this "gospel of work" ...

Work, I imagine, is not a good in itself. There is nothing laudable in work for

¹⁰This passage is critical, we believe, to the role of preference formation in Mill's thinking. Before the passage quoted Mill writes: "To civilize a savage, he must be inspired with new wants and desires, even if not of a very elevated kind, provided that their gratification can be a motive to steady and regular bodily and mental exertion." After the passage, Mill continues: "The motive which was most relied on for inducing them to work was their love of fine clothes and personal ornaments. No one will stand up for this taste as worthy of being cultivated, and in most societies its indulgence tends to impoverish rather than to enrich; but in the state of mind of the negroes it might have been the only incentive that could make them voluntarily undergo systematic labour, and so acquire or maintain habits of voluntary industry which may be converted to more valuable ends. In England, it is not the desire of wealth that needs to be taught, but the use of wealth, and appreciation of the objects of desire which wealth cannot purchase, or for attaining which it is not required. Every real improvement in the character of the English, whether it consist in giving them higher aspirations, or only a juster estimate of the value of their present objects of desire, must necessarily moderate the ardour of their devotion to the pursuit of wealth. There is no need, however, that it should diminish the strenuous and business-like application to the matter at hand, which is found in the best English workmen, and is their most valuable quality.*"

work's sake. To work voluntarily for a worthy object is laudable; but what constitutes a worthy object? On this matter, the oracle of which your contributor is the prophet has never yet been prevailed on to declare himself. He revolves in an eternal circle round the idea of work, as if turning up the earth, or driving a shuttle or a quill, were ends in themselves, and the ends of human existence. Yet, even in case of the most sublime service to humanity, it is not because it is work that it is worthy; the worth lies in the service itself

Mill goes on to ask, why are material goods so valuable as to overwhelm the goods of life and freedom?

In the present case, it seems, a noble object means "spices." "The gods wish, besides pumpkins, that spices and valuable products be grown in their West Indies"—the "noble elements of cinnamon, sugar, coffee, pepper black and grey," "things far nobler than pumpkins." Why so? Is what supports life, inferior in dignity to what merely gratifies the sense of taste? Is it the verdict of the "immortal gods" that pepper is noble, freedom (even freedom from the lash) contemptible? (Mill 1850, 27-8)

Two years after the Carlyle-Mill exchange, Richard Whately explained how we must distinguish the voices of the pro-slavery theorists from the choices of the slaves themselves.¹¹ Further, he argued, it is not sufficient to pick one particular individual as the basis of judgment. We must look at the majority of choices:

... we are told on every side that slaves are the happiest people in the world. ... Slaves, we are told, *like* slavery. And if this be meant to apply only to individual instances, we are ready to admit it to be true. But if it be meant to assert that such is the case universally, or even generally, we feel bound, before we can give our assent to the proposition, to make a few inquiries. What is the meaning of the countless advertisements, offering rewards for the apprehension of runaway slaves, to be recognised by marks sufficient to prove the 'happy' state they left, and which they were too dull or too ungrateful to appreciate? (Alicia Hill, Richard Whately and Samuel

¹¹Whately has been long recognized as one of the most careful admirers of Bernard Mandeville, e.g., Kaye (1924, 2:443) and Mandeville is one of the founding exponents of revealed preference.

Hinds 1852, 248-49)

As the American Civil War raged, J. E. Cairnes made the related point:

No African has ever voluntarily emigrated to the shores of the New World (1862, p. 99)

Each choice is an anecdote. What economists call a revealed preference approach, when aggregated, allows comparative institutional analysis by median of anecdotal evidence. MAE can be employed as an alternative to the model of theorists when one suspects that the theorists' model is selectively specified.

But the theorists were not silenced by anecdotes. We start with the theory that "All Negroes are unintelligent." A counter-example (an anecdote) is produced. The result? Here is what the anthropologist James Hunt said about such anecdotes:

The exhibitions of cases of intelligent Negroes in the saloons of the fashionable world by so-called 'philanthropists,' have frequently been nothing but mere impostures. In nearly every case in which the history of these cases has been investigated, it has been found that these so-called Negroes are the offspring of European and African parents." Hunt (1863, p. 16)

"What are you to believe, your eyes or me?" When Groucho Marx, *flagrante delicto*, said this, it was a joke.¹² Hunt's "mixed race" immunization strategy was not and as such has been much discussed (Young 1995, Levy 2001, Peart-Levy 2000). Hunt, notoriously, separated

¹²Krugman (1993, p. 27): "*Listen to the Gentiles*. What I mean by this rule is 'Pay attention to what intelligent people are saying, even if they do not have your customs or speak your analytical language. ... When I began my rethinking of international trade, there was already a sizeable literature criticizing conventional trade theory. ... Yet all this intelligent commentary was ignored by mainstream trade theorists—after all, their critics often seemed to have an imperfect understanding of comparative advantage, and had no coherent models of their own to offer; so why pay attention to them? The result was that the profession overlooked evidence and stories that were right under its nose."

himself from the Ethnology Society because it allowed the participation of women (Young 1995).¹³

Cannibalism in Jamaica

Our next instance is one that has not been widely discussed. This is the allegation of cannibalism in Jamaica when the initial news of the massacres reached England. We compare two literary magazines – the respectable *Punch*, and its underwashed rival, *Fun*. *Punch* was much influenced by the “science” of anthropology, exemplified by James Hunt, which held that black and white were species apart. *Fun* held to the Biblical literalism that Africans were man and brother. What is worthy of note is which magazine printed the cannibalism stories, and which did not: the respectable and “scientific” *Punch* did; while the disreputable *Fun* did not.

Suppose the cannibalism anecdote were true. What do we make of this? If blacks are separate species and we know almost nothing about them, then this anecdote is the regression line! If blacks are man and brother, then we know a good deal about them. We know, in particular, that starvation cannibalism happens in fairly predictable circumstances.¹⁴ Mainly,

¹³This is not, we believe, unrelated to the attempt by Galton to have women excluded from Section F of the British Association (Henderson 1994). Peart-Levy 2000 considers the impact of Hunt on Galton on other matters.

¹⁴Turner and Turner (1999, p. 459): “Hermann Helmuth (1973) prepared a brief but comprehensive, worldwide ethnographic review of cannibalistic motivations, in the hope of explaining prehistoric cannibalism. He ignored emergency cannibalism on the grounds that anyone starving could

though, we know that since we don't eat other people without something extreme occurring, other people don't either. Thus, this anecdote, even if true, is an outlier, like the happy slave whose potential existence Whately acknowledges. What is important about this from our perspective, is a darker point: what if an "expert" were allowed to violate our egalitarian principle with respect to anecdotes? What if the theorist – with a claim to "scientific" knowledge – were allowed to choose and present the anecdote as "truth"? This is precisely what happened as cannibalism stories were given the stamp of "scientific" truth by the Anthropological Society.

The "scientific racists" of the *Anthropological Review* associated with James Hunt defined themselves in terms of their subject matter, the "Cannibal Club." Here is what scholars tell us about those associated with the *Anthropological Review*:

These men, outsiders to respectable social and scientific circles, scorned Victorian values and beliefs and engaged the society in provocative discussions of controversial issues, at times in violation of the standards of good taste and decent behavior. Raigner (1978, pp. 65-6).

There was no ignoring the 'Cannibal Club,' as Hunt's rival dining élite dubbed itself. By the end of the Civil War they were a wretched power in literary London. Theirs was a phenomenal rise, with the notorious specialist in Arab erotica, Richard Burton aboard. They revelled in their repugnance. A savage's skeleton hanging in the window announced their rooms. Inside, meetings were brought to order with a negro's -head mace, and in an unsavoury reaction to the prudery of the age (and to the Ladies' nights at the Ethnological) their erotic excursions verged on the pornographic. They explored phallic symbols and sexual taboos with a freedom unknown elsewhere. Desmond (1990, p. 343).

eat human flesh out of simple necessity, without any ideological, cultural, or behavioral motivation." Turner and Turner (1999, pp. 460-461) are at pains to consider whether their evidence of cannibalism can be explained on starvation grounds.

Hunt has been the subject of intensive study in recent years.¹⁵ Nonetheless, for the most part scholars have tended to view Hunt and his group as isolated from respectable opinion.

Such was not the case. In fact, *Punch* was very much taken by Hunt and the Anthropological Society. Discussions of the goings-on at the Anthropological Society were a regular feature of *Punch*. Rather more interesting than another perfectly dreadful pun is *Punch's* assent to James Hunt's notorious *Negro's Place in Nature* (Hunt 1864) that comes in the following notice titled "The Relations of Black and White":

At the Anthropological Society's meeting recently a paper was read on the subject of the Negro's place in Nature; its argument, which seemed generally accepted by the philosophers present, tending to place him a little above the monkeys and very much below white men. In proof that too much importance is not to be attached to the structural analogies between SAMBO and JOCKO, the *Morning Post* observes that:--

"Our most eminent comparative anatomist, it is well known, once classed as a indubitable specimen of the negro type of skull, the cranium of a Scotch sergeant who was killed at Waterloo."

Yes; but may not that Scotch sergeant have been a Sergeant BLACKIE? (12 December, 1863, p. 243).

Here is a report on the meeting of the Ethnological Society, the group from which Hunt broke, entitled "Professors in a Passion":

Let dogs delight to quarrel over their bones; but Members of the Ethnological Society, do not fall out over yours. Cannot skulls be discussed by philosophers without the interchange of abuse? You should not let such angry passions rise as you did one

¹⁵Spencer (1986, p. 154) reports that Hunt's *The Negro's Place in Nature* served as the "model for 'scientific' writing on the subject for the remainder of the century." Hunt's importance is stressed in Curtis (1968), Banton (1977), Lorimer (1978), Rainger (1978), Stepan (1982), Desmond (1994), Young (1995). Levy (2001) links Hunt to Charles Kingsley and Peart-Levy(2000) argue that Hunt converted Galton on the anthropological nature of the West African negro.

evening last week at a meeting of your learned Association, when a Paper was read by Dr. Donovan "On Empirical and Scientific Physiognomy" ...

Mr. Punch is a decided phrenologist, because he has himself such a fine forehead. He believes that when an antiphrenologist is a violent antiphrenologist, it is simply because that antiphrenologist has a bad one. (4 June, 1864, p. 238).

The following note, "Ethnologists and Phrenologists", puts forward the interesting doctrine that the evidence for a system of belief can be judged only by those who profess the system. In particular, proposition α with respect to group A cannot be judged by those who merely know something about group A and proposition α , but who have not studied the subject in detail. Once again we find that the ordinary observer of the situation is said to be incorrect, and the scientific theorist is correct:¹⁶

At a meeting of the Ethnological Society the other day, a report of a Government Commission on certain Indian tribes inhabiting the region between Vancouver's Island and the Rocky Mountains having been read, a discussion took place on the particulars comprising in it, and amongst them, on a practice peculiar to a tribe of savages bearing the suggested name of Cowitchans, of flattening the heads of their children by artificial pressure in infancy ...

Without believing in the details of phrenology, and only supposing that the human brains have something to do with the human mind, most people would be inclined to share Dr. Donovan's opinion, that the effect of flattening the heads of the Indian children must have been that of the diminishing their intellectual faculties. But:--

"Colonel Hawkins, who was one of the Commissioners when appealed to by the Chairman on the subject, said they had observed no differences in the intellectual capacities of the Indians with the compressed heads."

This is the sort of answer which any physiologist, let alone phrenologist, may always expect to get to any question apparently asked with a view to obtain a confirmation of an opinion, from any such referee as an officer in the military or civil

¹⁶Not surprisingly, perhaps, *Punch* goes both ways on this: ridiculing (as it does here) those with knowledge of the situation and holding up the evaluation by "scientists" as exemplary; or poking fun at "scientists" whose theory blinds them to the detailed and exemplary knowledge supposedly possessed by ordinary folks.

service who has never studied the subject it relates to. (15 July, 1865 p. 20).

Then at a meeting of the British Association in September, 1865, *Punch* finds cannibalism amusing:

Cannibalism

Professor Rawlinson gave us to understand that he shouldn't like to be a cannibal. He didn't know any cannibals personally. (I had a joke about being acquainted with an "Eton boy," but couldn't get it ready in time.)

Mr. Crawford said that there had been Scotch cannibals and Irish cannibals. He insisted that cannibalism was merely a manner of taste. For his part—

Mr. Blanks asked why the subject hadn't been stuck to?

The President observed that it had been stuck to.

Mr. Dash, F.R.S., said he hadn't heard anyone define cannibalism. (I hate Dash.)

Dr. Camps replied that if Mr. Dash had only *listened*, instead of trying to make Professor Kenneth M'Kenzie laugh, by playing Punch and Judy dolls with his pocket handkerchief, he would have heard something very much to his advantage.

I rose and commenced my Mathematical Paper.

The President said it hadn't much to do with Cannibalism.

I explained that *that* was the fun of it.

The President said I couldn't read it.

I said I could. ...

The President explained that the sitting was over, and that my papers would be "taken."

I protested against their being taken, and proposed that we should play at cannibals.

The Meeting hastily adjourned. (23 September, 1865, p. 114).¹⁷

The mirth vanishes as *Punch's* first statement on the just breaking Eyre Controversy

¹⁷The subject provided numerous opportunities for humor early in the 1860s: "Appalling Self-Cannibalism" reports that the missing MASTER JONES, was found, "very much disfigured, in a confectioner's shop, where he had spent a considerable portion of the day over *eating himself*. No reason has yet been assigned for the rash act." (14 January, 1863, p. 70). "An isolated fact is no proof. It is questionable evidence. But what if that particular fact did prove cannibalism? Of itself it would establish nothing more than the existence of a pre-historic SAWNEY BEAN, no ancestor, necessarily, of MR. CLAY. At present cannibalism is unknown in the Land of cakes. Horse has been eaten by some Frenchmen; but no Scotch Sabbatarian has as yet dined off donkey." (31 December, 1864, p. 265).

contains the hideous report that the Jamaicans were eating the brains of whites as a prelude to an attack on egalitarians.¹⁸ To make certain that this point was not missed the report is titled “Last Case of Colour-Blindness”:

There has been fearful business in Jamaica. Blacks rioted, were fired upon, and the riot became madness. The blacks slew many whites, and the massacre was attended by incidents too revolting to be described in pages usually devoted to pleasantness. It must, however, be stated that *a young clergyman was hewn in pieces, and the blacks enacted hideous orgies, devouring the brains of their victims.* A terrible vengeance descended upon the savages, and shot, sheet, and cord came into stern use. A great slaughter was made.

All this is painful to tell, but it must be told, because it is right to show the spirit in which the story is treated by those who claim to be exponents of the feelings of people of England, but who by a perverse instinct set themselves, on all occasions, in opposition to those feelings. Those who found excuses for the Indian mutineers, those who advocate peace at any price, and hold honour not worth counting, are now loud in behalf of the Jamaica blacks. Nothing is said for a small white population, eight times outnumbered by the negroes, and suddenly confronted by the foulest horrors of savage warfare. Nothing is said of its natural terror for its wives and little children. All we hear is a howl about the severity exercised on the poor dear blacks.

The Reverend Dr. Burns is a shining light among the advocates of the blacks. We dare say that he is a good man, at all events he uses many words out of the good Book. He addresses a long letter to Mr. Bright’s organ, and thus begins:--

“I have read with feelings of indescribable horror the details of the late sanguinary doings in Jamaica. I am sure, as those deeds are unfounded, and the whole truth shall be published in this country, that an unparalleled feeling of intensified indignation will be produced. I enter upon no justification of the riots or of rebellion on the part of the misguided coloured people, but I do protest in the name of our common humanity against the precipitate destruction to which so many of our fellow creatures have been devoted.”

This Christian minister reserves, it will be seen, his justification of riots or rebellion, that he may at once relieve his mind by abusing those who defended themselves against raging savages. He has not a word of regret for his brother

¹⁸Semmel (1962, p. 26) seems to locate the first response of *Punch* in the December 23, 1865 poem “Two Sides to the Question” attacking Exeter Hall: “Then lay your suit of sables by,/Black predilections smother, And listen to the *white-man’s* cry– /“Am not I man and brother?” (23 December, 1865, p. 248.)

Christian minister who was chopped to pieces by the blacks. ... he means a protest against the whites who fought for their lives, wives, and babies. Mr. Bright's organ, of course, echoes this minister, and at a safe distance from anything blacker than its own misused ink, ridicules the terrors of white men who found themselves surrounded by a furious crowd, notoriously inflamed by belief—evidently not discouraged by certain religious teachers—that the negroes were the victims of tyranny. (2 December, 1865, p. 216). [Emphasis added]

The point ought not to be missed that *Punch* concludes from Dr. Burn's silence on cannibalism not that cannibalism did not happen but that Dr. Burns is pro-cannibal. We have seen this doctrine practiced in a less terrible context above.

On the same page the identity of black and Irish interests is asserted with a squib titled "Ultra Irish Fenianism":

We understand that in the Fenian "circles" addresses of condolence and sympathy are in course of being got up for presentation to the insurgent negroes in Jamaica who have been hanged. (2 December, 1865, p. 216).

We show (Peart-Levy 2002a) that this identity was reinforced by *Punch's* visual images.

Punch's next major statement on Eyre – "Wait and Hear" – is once again aimed at egalitarians who were asking questions about the legality of hanging people without benefit of a trial. In its inimitable manner *Punch* insinuates that the cause of the difficulties is egalitarianism which denies "white supremacy." *Punch* contrasts its "respectable" position with that of Bright's periodical, *Morning Star*:

Again, *Mr. Punch*, in the interest of the respectable portion of the community, protests against the way in which Mr. Bright's organ and Mr. Bright's parasites are treating the Jamaica business. ... It may also be that the seeds of sedition have been sown by the emissaries of religionists at home, and that instead of confining themselves to their tolerated work of propagating Calvinism, these emissaries have been imbuing the minds of demi-savages with belief hostile to white supremacy.

Again, it is possible that Gordon may have been a “martyr” or he may (as stated by a missionary in the *Scotsman*) have been endeavouring to revolutionise the island and aggrandise himself. But we have no knowledge on the subject, and for real knowledge England will wait. The not disinterested efforts of a section, and the foolish clamour of excited fanaticism, will not induce the people to prejudge the case; and it is not to the credit of a portion of the press that it departs from its legitimate province, and hounds on the unthinking. But the British public is not to be humbugged by cant, or led astray by prejudice. (16 December, 1865, p?).

We study the interesting use of “cant” elsewhere (Levy-Pearl 2002b) and we shall encounter *Punch’s* concern with the maintenance of state power below.

Punch seems to have shortly recognized once again that cannibalism is a laughing matter as we see from a report labeled “Scientific” where of course the “science” is that of anthropology:

At the last meeting of the Anthropological Society there was a delightful discussion of Cannibalism. Mr Carter Blake fired up over the subject to such an extent, and several members, noticing the presence of the “devouring element” in his speech, felt slightly uncomfortable. The learned Secretary, we need hardly inform our readers, has not suggested Cannibalism as an alternative if the cattle disease continues. We *have* heard of a gentleman, not a hundred yards from Charing Cross being “eaten up with pride,” but, with the unchristian old woman, let us hope, it isn’t true. (23 December, 1865, p. 253.)

What of the anthropologists themselves on cannibalism? *Punch’s* weekly publication schedule gave it an enormously rapid response advantage relative to those who published only in quarterly periodicals. However, beginning in January 1866 and lasting through October 1866, Hunt published *The Popular Magazine of Anthropology*. This seems to have been prompted by events in Jamaica: we find no evidence that it was planned when the 1865

Anthropological Review was printed.¹⁹ One article – “The Baptists and the Jamaica Massacre” – was announced as reprinted from the “Church Times” of 25 November, 1865. Here is how it begins:

Verily there are times and seasons for begging as well as for most other of the annoyances of life. But that this particular time should be chosen to send round little girls furnished with filthy cards embellished with smudged engravings of the declarations of “the gospel” to a lot of woolly-headed, thick lipped monsters of ugliness, and asking for money for dissenting missions to the West Indies, almost passes belief. (1866, p. 20)

And here we find the cannibalism story, brains and all, with the added attraction of gunpowder, rum and a Baptist chapel:

... the nation will not permit even a small white population like that of Jamaica to be left at the mercy of the bloodthirsty black ruffians, of whom Mr. Radcliffe well says “we have been petting panthers,” and whose celebration of their massacre consisted in the withdrawal to a Baptist chapel and the drinking of the brains of their victims mixed with gunpowder and rum! (1866, p. 23).

To answer the question of whether such reports were taken seriously, we have the testimony of John Addington Symonds of a dinner party of 8 December, 1865 in which Tennyson and Gladstone discussed the Eyre controversy. We read “tiger” as “man-eater”:

The conversation continued. They were talking about the Jamaica business. Gladstone bearing hard on Eyre, Tennyson excusing any cruelty in the case of putting down a savage mob. Gladstone had been reading official papers on the business all the morning, and just after I had entered said with an expression of intense gravity, “And that evidence wrung from a poor black boy with a revolver at his head!” ...

Tennyson did not argue. He kept asserting various prejudices and convictions. “We are too tender to savages; we are more tender to a black than to ourselves.”

¹⁹The advertising section of the *Anthropological Review* announced the provisional publication of journals without hinting at a *Popular Magazine*. Raigner (1978) discusses the various Hunt enterprises.

“Niggers are tigers, niggers are tigers,” Symonds (1893, p. 32).

The cannibalism allegation advanced in *Punch* and in the *Popular Magazine of Anthropology* seems to have served the same purpose for which W. Arens describes for allegations of medieval cannibalism:

Less well known today is the function of the cannibalism theme, which played an important part of the medieval definition of malevolence. Surprisingly, this trait was believed to characterize the behavior of witches, satanists, heretics and at times the Jews. ... The concordance between colonial Africa and the European Middle Ages is striking because the same symbols of homicide and cannibalism are used in the attempt to conceive of the ultimate in human depravity. Arens (1979, p. 95).

To destroy a man you first call him a cannibal?²⁰ And then a tiger?

Man, Brother and *Fun*

The difference between *Punch* and *Fun* is wonderfully explained by Gilbert’s recent biographer, Jane Stedman, as she describes the self-declared “*Fun* gang”:

Most of them lacked money; one or two needed soap. Some drank too much, and some died too early. ... To *Punch*, the *Fun* gang and their cheeky paper seemed racketty and coarse. The well-established, increasingly complacent Mr. Punch prided himself on taking ‘the gentlemanly view of things’ ... Stedman (1996, p. 14).

When we consider *Punch* in the context of its competitor we discover that it had a

²⁰Here is Carlyle’s passage on Irish cannibalism and emancipation through slavery– and failing, that genocide: “Work, was I saying? My indigent unguided friends, I should think some work might be discoverable for you. Enlist, stand, drill; become, from a nomadic Banditti of Idleness, Soldiers of Industry! I will lead you to the Irish Bogs, to the vacant desolations of Connaught now falling into Cannibalism

“To each of you I will then say: Here is work for you; strike into it with manlike, soldierlike obedience and heartiness, according to the methods here prescribed,–wages follow for you without difficulty; all manner of just remuneration, and at length emancipation itself follows. Refuse to strike into it; shirk the heavy labour, disobey the rules,–I will admonish and endeavour to incite you; if in vain, I will flog you; if still in vain, I will at last shoot you,–and make God’s Earth, and the forlorn-hope in God’s Battle, free of you.” (Carlyle 1850, pp. 54-55).

surprisingly sudden squeamishness to cannibalism when it came to the *English*. We know this because in autumn 1865²¹ *Punch's* editor, Mark Lemon, famously rejected W. S. Gilbert's "Yarn of the Nancy Bell" which was then published in *Fun* on 3 March, 1866.²² This is how Gilbert later described the episode:

It may interest some to know that the first of the series, "The Yarn of the Nancy Bell" was originally offered to "Punch" – to which I was, at that time, an occasional contributor. It was, however, declined by the then Editor, on the ground that it was "too cannibalistic for his readers' tastes." Gilbert (1970, p. 324).

The oddity of the *Punch* rejection has been pointed out because (first) this marked the end of Gilbert's contributions to *Punch* and (second) on 11 March 1865 *Punch* had published a poem which included the following lines: "We were talking of eating the skipper/ With winegar, mustard, and pippier." Ellis in Gilbert (1970, p. 324). Does the Eyre Controversy motivate this change in attitude toward indigenous, even light-hearted, cannibalism?

If as noted above all cannibalism is motivated by starvation then there are no "cannibalistic societies." The hypothesis that suggests itself is that a publication rejecting a poem about starvation cannibalism among the English, but publishing allegations about cannibalism in Jamaica, would be a statement in opposition to human homogeneity.

As Gilbert's "Nancy Bell" was published in the very same volume as the *Fun* writings on the Eyre controversy – New Series II, which ran from 16 September 1865 through 10

²¹The unfortunately vague "autumn 1865" date is given in Stedman (1996, p. 14). The definitive edition of the *Bab Ballads* produced with great care by Ellis (Gilbert 1970) offers nothing more precise.

²²The reprinted "Yarn" is titled "Yarn of the 'Nancy Bell'" a variation of no obvious consequence. We note below the substantial changes between the original publication in *Fun* and the later reprinting.

March 1866 – we set out the *Fun* position (positions?) on Eyre. Before the Jamaica events, of course, *Fun* had opinions on race and slavery. What strikes one immediately in the first volume is the play on the anti-slavery slogan “man and brother” given visual form by the Wedgewood cameo (Levy-Pearl 2001). Without pretense of systematic compilation here are instances.

Under the title “Gentle Gorilla–Wither Away” the following letter is quoted.

“This animal was perfectly tame, docile, and tractable,–far more so, indeed, than many negro children of the same age. ...”

The editor then responds:

You observe, sir, she was more tractable than many children, though being the father of seventeen, that does not so much surprise me; and she walked with her keeper like a faithful dog or a domestic cat. The last statement suggests to me the question, did she walk upon her hind legs only, or upon all four? This is, did she walk erect like a man and a brother,– I should say a gorilless and a sister ... (12 October 1861, p. 39).

Expecting perhaps the identification of misbehaving negro children with the gorilla, the editor’s identification of the behavior of *his* unruly children with African children catches one by surprise. In a cartoon of 16 November 1861 (p. 86) a “Cotton Lord” with hands upraised is asking a black man on a bale of cotton “Am I not a man and a brother?” The poem “Freedom of Opinion” printed 30 November 1861 starts this way:

I am a Yankee–yes, sir-ee!
I’d scorn the fact to smother,
I’d have each nation to be free,
And every man a brother
..... (30 November 1861, p. 104).

Fun seems fairly balanced in its abuse of the contending parties in the debates over slavery. A complicated satire of Thomas Carlyle, “Blondinism”, appears in the first volume on 15 February 1862 (p. 215).²³ The second volume has a satire of Froude apologizing for Judge Jeffreys (p. 89), one on Harriet Martineau (p. 94) and another on Charles Kingsley (p. 243). In the third volume J. S. Mill is noted (p. 28), Harriet Martineau has now become a man (p. 59), *Fun* is horrified by the threat of the Union general in New Orleans to turn white women over to the black population if the white men do not behave (p. 64)²⁴ and has two satires of Harriet Beecher Stowe (p. 164 and p. 183) who of course explained what happened when black women were turned over to their white masters.²⁵

We believe that the reading of plural positions on Eyre is a distinct possibility. The first three statements are found in the column “Town Talk” with the fourth statement in an official statement signed by *Fun*.

Here is the first shrill statement of 25 November 1865 which begins the column “Town Talk”:

And what will Exeter Hall think of its favourite nigger after the spectacle presented in Jamaica? The black has much of the wild beast in him it would seem, and neither slavery nor liberty can root it out of him. The Emancipation party in America

²³The piece opens “BLONDIN! Blondinism! For what Man finds to do—and does it—is an Ism. A Man, mind you, not a Monkey” It closes with “Then Awful Chattering. Then Scratching of Crass Heads. And breaking of them too! Lamed Misery, Sprawling Despair. SQUASH!” Is this a satire on Carlyle’s “Negro Question” in which “Quashee” plays such a prominent role. Levy (2001).

²⁴Gordon Tullock tells us that *Fun* completely misunderstands the threat. As prostitution was segregated, treating white women as prostitutes carries no connotation of interracial sexuality.

²⁵This theme common to Martineau and Stowe is discussed in Levy (2001).

will do well to pause in their career of mistaken humanity. They must educate SAMBO, and well too, before they turn him loose on the defenceless South, or they will be answerable for a recurrence of the same atrocities which make our blood curdle in the news from Jamaica. (25 November 1866, p. 102).

The savage cartoon on page 105 of a murdering black and his white female victims is titled “The Black Question. (Scene:– Jamaica). “*Am I a man and a brother?*”

By 9 December 1865 “Town Talk” had recovered his manners and attacked those who defended the Jamaicans as being more concerned with distant people than those nearby.²⁶

This paragraph is the third of seven:

EXETER HALL is up in arms on the Jamaica question, and is arguing that the blacks are no worse than the dangerous classes of London. All the more shame to those who neglect the souls perishing round them, and prefer the *éclât* of missions and the glory of their names in the subscription lists! (9 December 1865, p. 122)

Next week Governor Eyre is named in the fourth paragraph. He is not defended but his attackers are attacked:

If the men, who have been studiously belying GOVERNOR EYRE in his absence, possessed a spark of honour or manliness, they would blush to read the bold letter of that vilified man’s brave sister. But, having stabbed a man in the back, they cannot be expected to have much respect for a woman. There are certain men who are so deeply convinced that the negro is whiter than the white man, that they will sacrifice everything—from truth upwards—to their theory. But they must not feel aggrieved if their support of the negro through right and wrong earns for their conduct the title of

²⁶The fatuous linguistic claim put forward by Ellis in Gilbert (1970, p. 19): “ ... ‘niggers’ (the word commonly used in mid-Victorian times, quite often with no pejorative sense) ...” might be checked by noticing how “nigger” quickly becomes “black” and then “negro” in the *Fun* passages. The issue comes up when one asks why Carlyle’s 1849 *Fraser’s* “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question” acquired the coarser title when separately published in 1853. Perhaps Ellis neglected to provide his list of this word usage by members of the Jamaica Committee or the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*? After all if one checks the word usage of only the contributors to the Eyre Defense Fund – Carlyle, Ruskin, Kingsley, Tennyson, Dickens – and finds it commonplace then one has a certain obligation to explain the sampling procedure to justify the “non pejorative” conclusion.

black-guardly. (16 December 1865, p. 132).²⁷

In that same 16 December issue a *Fun* editorial – “In the Matter of Fair Play” – was published as “Being a letter to a member of the Society of Friends”:

MY DEAR JABEZ, – You are an excellent fellow. You are always ready to devote a large proportion of the Mammon of Unrighteousness that you have acquired by judicious dealings in the flour trade, to philanthropic purposes. ... You have pretty little societies for promoting universal peace, and for abolishing slavery. They never do any practically good; the most efficient emancipationist being GENERAL GRANT ...

But, my dear JABEZ, you have your little faults, and one of them is a passionate preference for the negroes over whites. *The African is, I am informed, a man and a brother; I am not particularly proud of the relationship myself, but, physiologically, I dare say you are right.* To shoot my black connexion, to hang him or to flog him, is a disagreeable task, but it is one from which I should not shrink if he attempted to murder myself, and MRS. FUN, and our charming babes. In such a cause, Sir, I would even hang MR. CHAMEROVZOW or yourself.

...

I don't discuss politics in these columns, and I have my own opinion as to the wisdom of some of GOVERNOR EYRE'S proceedings ... (16 December 1866, p. 138). [Emphasis added.]

The editorial continues, attacking an article in Bright's *Morning Star* that had attacked Eyre and his defenders.

While there is no doubt that *Fun's* “Town Talk” columnist is racist there is no whiff of the allegation of cannibalism. Moreover, just as the editor made no distinction between misbehaving African children and his own, the editorial position affirms, reluctantly, the fundamental humanity of blacks. And although the cartoon of 25 November is of a murderer, he is, for all that, human. Compare the *Punch* carton of 3 March 1866 on the Irish.

²⁷ *Fun's* editor is known for never blotting a pun.

Thus, publishing Gilbert's poem of English cannibalism and not publishing the Jamaica cannibalism allegations is a position on the Eyre controversy, one that contrasts with that of the more respectable and more scientific *Punch*. That more "respectable" implies more racist is something which needs to be recalled when one reflects upon the relationship between the "respectable" *Punch* and the "disrespectable" anthropologists. But *Fun* too wrote on the Hunt crew in its fourth volume 1 August, 1863 issue (p. 199) with what seems rather less reverence than *Punch's* report. We reproduce the article.

The Anthro-Fog-Ical Society.
(By our Special Reporter. *²⁸)

EVER-ESTEEMED FUN, –The Anthropophagi, or whatever they call themselves, met on the evening appointed, and MR. GREKE and CAPTAIN SPANT were there; and so was M. DU CHAILLU, who who [sic] was reported as just returned from Baboon, or the Gaboon, or some other *oon*, – it might have been Racocon. There were some capital speeches made, but as they did not interest me much, I didn't take any notes. I remember, however, that some one – I think he calls himself PROFESSOR OWEN, and he was g-owen it rather fast – said that man was clearly derived from the gorilla, because each of us has a n-ape to his neck. Then somebody else said that the traces of the monkey origin were most clearly discernible in novelists, because everybody saw their tales – at least, I think that was the argument. Another gentleman followed, who was not very intelligible, at all events, to me, and who said something about a "heap of scamps of majors" in people's heads – I suppose he meant girls' heads.

SPEKE and SHANT, or GREKE and GANT, or whatever their names were, had, it appeared discovered the source of the Nile, which, if I remember right, is called the White Nile, on account of the niggers on its banks. The two gentleman gave us a long description of these blacks, but as they didn't seem to me particularly different from other blacks, I will not burden you with details.

I'm thinking of joining the society. It is a great lark. You are expected to bring a friend, and it is desirable that he should be rather ugly, and the more like a monkey

²⁸[Note in original.] *Out of deference to our talented contemporary, the *Saturday Review*, which has lately pronounced that amateurs always do things much better than professionals, we appointed the member of our staff who knows least about science to attend this meeting. –ED.

the better. I shall be very happy to pass you in any night to hear the proceedings. I did not hear the end of them myself, for, finding the business flag, I went into a neighbouring hostelry, where, I regret to say, I inadvertently lit my pipe with the few brief notes I had taken. I shall feel obliged by an immediate remittance, as I am desirous of exploring the source of the an-'ighly spoken of ale in this neighbourhood.–Yours, etc.,

The Ape and Artichoke, July 16th, 1863.

G. O'REILLA

The line of argument of the apish Other has been inverted so that someone who calls himself an ape reports on the proceedings. If Africans are apish then so too are we all.

Models & Anecdotes: In Conclusion

Two conclusions follow from our argument above. First, we have shown the desirable properties of MAE. Political economists arguing against the Carlylian “theory” that an enslaved blackman was a happy blackman, called explicitly for evidence to suggest this was true in the majority of cases. Another, more recent, application of the MAE argument has occurred in the context of institutional change. During the illusionary period in which it was widely believed among economists that Soviet economies were growing considerably more rapidly than market economics (Levy 1993), it was a matter of common knowledge which way ordinary people chose to migrate. Such systematically organized anecdotes can give ordinary people sufficient information to confront the vanity of the philosopher who tells them to trust in what they cannot understand.

We have also seen examples where the vanity of the philosopher takes on dark properties – when the philosopher, cloaked in the garb of irrefutable science and unconstrained by choice of a median, chooses the anecdote that suits and presents it as truth,

with disastrous results. But the general point should not be lost as we reflect on cannibalism and the many “stories” that are told in similar contexts: the problem with the cannibalism case is not only the horrible nature of the anecdote which serves to dehumanize the subject; the case also reveals that the theorist who chooses to ignore the revealed evidence of the MAE, is an analytical hierarchicalist.

We began by suggesting that this analytical hierarchicalism was used in the nineteenth century to immunize “science” from evaluation by ordinary people. We close with a reminder that analytical hierarchicalists insisted that theirs was a method which only experts could master. Ordinary people, they held, were incapable of abstraction from surface phenomena. The mathematician, J. R. Mozley, made this point in his review of Mill’s various works, in the *Quarterly Review* of 1872:

Now be it observed that the very notion of equality involves the abstraction of all sensuous elements from our cognition. It follows, that in all mathematical science every sensuous element has to be excluded, or, as Mr. Mill would put it, ‘thrown into the shade.’ Let it be considered how vast a degree of abstraction this is, and how many are incapable of it. (1872, p. 100).

Earlier in the review, we learn who, in particular, cannot abstract: “Beasts, and even the lower races of mankind” (p. 99). It is surely no surprise that a major scientific finding of Hunt and his allies in the Anthropological Society, was that African negroes were (overly) emotional and incapable of controlling those emotions (Peart-Levy 2000). Four years later the attendance of women at the scientific societies became an issue, and the argument was made that women, being overly emotional, were unequipped for scientific pursuits (Peart 2001).

Reporting on these discussions, the *Pall Mall Gazette* wrote: “the natural philosophers have been frightened out of their wits by the ladies who flock to the Section of ‘Economic Science and Statistics’ and who insist on reading papers and starting discussions which are not only not scientific but which savour of the singular antipathy to science for its own sake common to all the feminine movements of the day” (Jevons 1972-81, vol. 4: 272-3).

Appendix: Monte Carlo Experiments

We give evidence for our claim that the MAE is an admissible estimator. We employ Galton’s idea that we can move between estimation and election so we present the argument as if we have a election to fit a regression. We consider a polity with 10,000 voters who form policy opinions by picking data points at random from 5000 observations and computing pairwise slopes. The decision is made by the median. The regression by voting is compared with two standard regression techniques which our imagined experts might employ. The first is the maximum likelihood procedure where the errors are independent normal, ordinary least squares. The second is not quite maximum likelihood when the errors are independent Cauchy, least absolute deviations.²⁹ Each experiment is replicated 10,000 times. All computations are carried out in Shazam 8.0 (White 1997).

²⁹Andrews, *et al.* (1972) compare the maximum likelihood estimate of location of a Cauchy with the median and find very little gain in precision to repay the computational complexity. The text presumes we can move from location to regression context.

There are three conditions which we study. First, the experts are exactly right: there is a model and the errors are normally distributed. Second, the experts are perhaps right: there is a model and the errors are distributed Cauchy.³⁰ Third, the experts are very frequently right. The model holds 95% of the time but 5% of the time the signs of the regression coefficients switch. And by happenstance when this 5% occurs, the population from which the right hand side is drawn changes for a standard normal to a normal with a variance of 100. Thus, the third condition is that characterized by influential observations, the favorite drilling ground for those who would revive elementary set methods. The voting results in Table 1 are taken by the median of pairwise slopes. The computations force the points to be different. The results are in accord with predictions when the model is true: voting is unbiased and less efficient than the expert techniques. When the model is only true 95% of the time and these observations are influential then voting is the least biased and most efficient technique. This is the appeal of elementary set methods.³¹

³⁰ The normality assumption in the context considered is inconsistent with the possibility of extending the model by exploratory data analysis (Levy 1999/2000). Other error distributions allow EDA.

³¹ Contrary to the suggestions in Rousseeuw and Leroy (1987) we find that LAD does not break down nearly as badly as OLS.

| Table 1. Expert and Ordinary People, Simple Regression N=5000; Replications=10000 | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Truth | $p=1: y=1+2x + \varepsilon$ $\varepsilon \sim \text{Normal}$ | $p=1: y=1+2x + \varepsilon$ $\varepsilon \sim \text{Cauchy}$ | $p=.95: y=1+2x + \varepsilon$ $p=.05: y=-1-2x + \varepsilon$ $\varepsilon \sim \text{Normal}$ |
| Expert Belief | $y=\alpha + \beta X + \varepsilon$ | $y=\alpha + \beta X + \varepsilon$ | $y=\alpha + \beta X + \varepsilon$ |
| Voter Belief | $y=\alpha + \beta X$ | $y=\alpha + \beta X$ | $y=\alpha + \beta X$ |
| OLS estimate β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.014 | Mean = 1.64 Std. Dev. = 34.96 | Mean = -1.36 Std. Dev. = 0.063 |
| LAD estimate β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.018 | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 1.37 Std. Dev. = 0.076 |
| Voting on β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.038 | Mean = 1.84 Std. Dev. = 0.026 |

We now leave the simple regression context and consider multiple regression estimation. To give the experts more of a chance, we cut the probability of contamination in half. The ordinary people pick a random 3-tuple and solve the equations. If there is no solution then the voter is assumed to abstain from the election. The results are as before.

Table 2. Expert and Ordinary People, Multiple Regression

N=5000; Replications=10000

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Truth | $p=1: y=1+2x+3z+ \epsilon$ $\epsilon \sim \text{Normal}$ | $p=1: y=1+2x+3z+ \epsilon$ $\epsilon \sim \text{Cauchy}$ | $p=.975: y=1+2x+3z+ \epsilon$ $p=.025: y=-1-2x-3z+ \epsilon$ $\epsilon \sim \text{Normal}$ |
| Expert Belief | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z+ \epsilon$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z+ \epsilon$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z+ \epsilon$ |
| Voter Belief | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z$ |
| OLS estimate β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.014 | Mean = 2.97 Std. Dev. = 161.89 | Mean = -0.86 Std. Dev. = 0.169 |
| OLS estimate | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.014 | Mean = 6.63 Std. Dev. = 394.71 | Mean = -1.29 Std. Dev. = 0.206 |
| LAD estimate β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.018 | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 1.85 Std. Dev. = 0.035 |
| LAD estimate | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.018 | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 2.78 Std. Dev. = 0.036 |
| Voting on β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.042 | Mean = 1.96 Std. Dev. = 0.023 |
| MAE | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.042 | Mean = 1.96 Std. Dev. = 0.023 |
| Voting on | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.042 | Mean = 2.94 Std. Dev. = 0.024 |
| MEA | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.022 | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.042 | Mean = 2.94 Std. Dev. = 0.024 |

Now we consider the real possibility that the expert's model gives superior insight into that variables to which to attend. That is to say the experts consider both X and Z to have

an impact on Y while the voters consider only X . The case of uncorrelated X and Z is from the arguments above trivial. Consequently, we consider only the case where $Z = .5X + .5Q$ where Q is independent of X . This allows the voters to at least detect the influence of Z on Y by means of its influence on X . Below (Table 3) the evidence is mixed as one might expect: the ignorance of voters and the arrogance of model builders generates offsetting errors.

It is perhaps unnecessary to emphasize the point that our construction assumes that anecdotal evidence is randomly selected. It is easy to what sort of bias can occur if the polity were, for one reason or another, to select amongst a few anecdotes. Peart-Levy 2002 consider the consequences of a large number of people obtaining their information about Y from the same visualization.

Table 3. Ignorance Enters

N=5000; 10000 Replications

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Truth | $p=1: y=1+2x+3z+\epsilon$ $\epsilon \sim \text{Normal}$ x and z correlated | $p=1: y=1+2x+3z+\epsilon$ $\epsilon \sim \text{Normal}$ x and z correlated | $p=.975: y=1+2x+3z+\epsilon$ x and z correlated $p=.025: y=-1-2x-3z+\epsilon$ $\epsilon \sim \text{Normal}$ |
| Expert Belief | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z + \epsilon$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X + \epsilon$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z + \epsilon$ |
| Voter Belief | $y=\alpha+\beta X + Z$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X$ | $y=\alpha+\beta X$ |
| OLS estimate β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.020 | Mean = 3.50 Std. Dev. = 0.025 | Mean = -0.20 Std. Dev. = 0.215 |
| OLS estimate | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.028 | | Mean = -1.64 Std. Dev. = 0.217 |
| LAD estimate β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.025 | Mean = 3.50 Std. Dev. = 0.032 | Mean = 2.11 Std. Dev. = 0.076 |
| LAD estimate | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.035 | | Mean = 2.46 Std. Dev. = 0.126 |
| Voting on β | Mean = 2.00 Std. Dev. = 0.031 | Mean = 3.50 Std. Dev. = 0.039 | Mean = 3.40 Std. Dev. = 0.042 |
| Voting on MAE | Mean = 3.00 Std. Dev. = 0.044 | | |

Bibliography

- Andrews, D.F, P. J. Bickel, F. R. Hampel, P. J. Huber, W. H. Rogers and J. W. Tukey. (2000) *Robust Estimates of Location*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Arens, W. (1979) *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology & Anthropohagy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Banton, Michael (1977) *The Idea of Race*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Bassett, Gilbert, Jr. and Joseph Persky. (1999). "Robust Voting." *Public Choice* **99**: 299-310.
- Cairnes, J. E. (1862) *The Slave Power*. London: Parker, Son, and Bourn.
- Carlyle, Thomas (1850) *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. London.
- Curtis, L. P., Jr. (1968) *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*. Bridgeport: Conference on British Studies at the University of Bridgeport.
- Desmond, Adrian (1994) *Huxley: The Devil's Disciple*. London: M. Joseph.
- Farebrother, R. W. (1997) "Notes on the History of Elementary Set Methods." *L₁-Statistical Procedures and Related Topics*. Edited by Yadolah Dodge. Institute of Mathematical Statistics Lecture Notes–Monograph Series. Volume 31.
- Gilbert, W. S. (1869) *The "Bab" Ballads: Much Sound and Little Sense*. London: John Camden Hotten.
- Gilbert, W. S. (1970) *The Bab Ballads*. Edited by by James Ellis. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Henderson, James (1994) "Section F from Whewell to Edgeworth." *Natural images in economic thought : "markets read in tooth and claw."* Edited Philip Mirowski. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Hill, Alicia, Richard Whately and Samuel Hinds. 1852. "American Slavery and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *North British Review* 18: 235-58.
- Hunt, James (1863). *The Negro's Place in Nature: A Paper read before the London Anthropological Society*. New York, 1864.

- Jevons, W. S. (1972-81) *Papers and Correspondence of William Stanley Jevons* Ed. By R.D.C. Black. London: Macmillan.
- Krugman, Paul. (1993) "How I Work." *American Economist* 37: 25-31.
- Lehmann, E. L. (1986) *Testing Statistical Hypotheses*. Second edition. New York: John Wiley.
- Levy, David M. (1988) "Increasing the Likelihood Value by Adding Constraints." *Economics Letters* **28**: 57-61.
- Levy, David M. (1988) "The Market for Fame and Fortune." *History of Political Economy*
- Levy, David M. (1989) "The Statistical Basis of Athenian-American Constitutional Theory." *Journal of Legal Studies* **18** : 79-103.
- Levy, David M. (1990) "The Bias in Central Planned Prices." *Public Choice* 67: 213-36.
- Levy, David M. (1992) "Public Capital and International Labor Productivity: Tests Based on Median-Unbiased Estimation." *Economics Letters* **39**: 365-368.
- Levy, David M. (1993) "The Public Choice of Data Provision." *Accountability in Research* **3**: 157-63.
- Levy, David M. (1999/2000) "Non-normality and Exploratory Data Analysis: Problem and solution." *Econometric Theory* **15**: 427-28; **16**: 296-97.
- Levy, David M. (2001) *How the Dismal Science Got Its Name: Classical Economics and the Ur-Text of Racial Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Levy, David M. and Sandra J. Peart. (2001) "Secret History of the Dismal Science." www.econlib.org
- Levy, David M. and Sandra J. Peart. (2002a) "Galton's Two Papers on Voting as Robust Estimation." *Public Choice*: forthcoming.
- Levy, David M. and Sandra J. Peart. (2002b) "Who are the Canters? Evangelicals, Economics and Other 'Parasites.'" Eastern Economic Association. Boston
- Lorimer, Douglas (1978). *Colour, Class and the Victorians*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

- Mandeville, Bernard. (1924). *Fable of the Bees*. Edited by F. B. Kaye. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press.
- Mill, John Stuart. [1848] 1965. *The Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Application to Social Philosophy*. Volume 2 of *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*. Edited by J. M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- [Mill, John Stuart.] (1850) "The Negro Question." *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 41: 25-31.
- Mozley, J. R. (1872) "Mr. John Stuart Mill and his School." *Quarterly Review* 133 (July): 77-118.
- Peart, Sandra J. (2001) "Theory, Application and the Canon: The Case of Mill and Jevons" in *Reflections on the Classical Canon in Economics: Essays in Honor of Samuel Hollander*. Ed. by Evelyn L. Forget and Sandra J. Peart, Routledge, pp. 356-77.
- Peart, Sandra J. and David M. Levy. (2000) "Denying Human Homogeneity." History of Economics Society. Vancouver.
- Peart, Sandra J. and David M. Levy. (2002) "Visualizing Anecdotal Economic Man: Victorian Anthropology, Punch & Piltdown." AEA/HES. Atlanta.
- Plato. (1980) *Republic*. Translated by Paul Shorey. Loeb Library.
- Rainger, Ronald (1978) "Race, Politics, and Science: The Anthropological Society of London in the 1860s." *Victorian Studies* 22: 51-70.
- Rousseeuw, Peter J. and Annick M. Leroy. (1987) *Robust Regression and Outlier Detection*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Smith, Adam. [1776] (1976). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Edited by W. B. Todd. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Spencer, Frank (1986) *Ecce Homo: An Annotated Bibliographic History of Physical Anthropology*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Stedman, Jane W. (1996) *W. S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Symonds, John Addington (1893) "Recollections of Lord Tennyson." *The Century* 46: 32-37.

Turner, Christy G. II and Jacqueline A. Turner (1999) *Man Corn: Cannibalism and Violence in the Prehistoric America Southwest*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

White, Kenneth J. (1997) *Shazam Version 8.0 User's Reference Manual*. New York: McGraw-Hill .

Wittman, Donald. (1995) *The Myth of Democratic Failure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Young, Robert J. C. (1995) *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. London: Routledge.

Periodicals

Anti-Slavery Reporter, London.

Fun, London

Punch, London.