

# The Victorian Newsletter

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Cover illustration: "Rebecca makes an acquaintance with a live Baronet," from *Vanity Fair*.

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## Déjà vu Inverted: the Imminent Future in Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*

William E. Buckler

*Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* is an extraordinary literary text, an apex-document, a mainliner in the efforts of the nineteenth century to convert itself into literature. In *Marius*, Pater continues to employ with unabated vigor the creative energy, the literary experimentalism, the confrontation of the genuine issue of the modern relevance of modern letters engendered by Carlyle, especially in *Past and Present*, where, according to Emerson, Carlyle converted an era into a style: "Carlyle is the first domestication of the modern system, with its infinity of details, into style."<sup>1</sup>

To some readers, perhaps, Pater's "infinity of details" will seem very different from Carlyle's, and *as details* they are very different. But both authors are working through that "infinity of details" to many of the same monitoring concerns: the character and usability of history, varieties of religious experience, the nature of man and his psycho-cultural linkages, perception and the barriers to reality that one's peculiar conventional heritage can impose upon his consciousness, the mythohistorical imperatives of imaginative literature and the indispensability of literature for casting a "white sunny Light"<sup>2</sup> into the dark spaces of human experience, the imperiousness for modern man of a subjective affirmation of perceived truth, and thus the special urgency for modern letters to discover new imaginative structures that will enable the modern reader to participate experientially in the writer's evolving apprehensions in a way analogous to his own participation in them. That these are central concerns of both Carlyle and Pater is a fact not to be disguised by the very different imaginative structures through which they draw their readers close to their insights-in-the-making. Both were "rhetoricizing the conspicuous objects" (another of Emerson's phrases about Carlyle)<sup>3</sup> for England and Europe, and both had as their object the transformation and salvation of post-Enlightenment man.

*Marius the Epicurean* embodies a thoroughly new imaginative structure, and in that respect it represents a clear advance upon the bold experimentalism of *Past and Present*. Pater has distanced his style from the strategic rhetorical inflations of Carlyle, from the florid rotundities of Ruskin, even from the crisp ironic surenesses of Arnold; and he has done this largely through imaginative structure. Since his subject is the human understanding in a state of directed motion, consciousness negotiating history, he creates in *Marius* a

structure of awarenesses that carefully dislocates all possibility of a dogmatic center and places the protagonist, the narrator/commentator, and the reader in a state of spiritual community in that they are all on their own, all fallible, and all engaged (while the book lasts) in a conscientious effort at personal renewal. Even if one's private response to the book as literary experience is negative—if he feels, for example, that its experiential world is hermetically sealed or that its awarenesses are relatively negligible in a brutal universe—he has simply disqualified himself as a companion of Marius and his "miniature Boswell" and has confirmed the book's method. On the other hand, the reader who can willingly join this company adopts for himself a state of being in which metamorphosis is the primary expectation and to which personal inadequacy is a constant threat. Failure—for protagonist, narrator/commentator, and reader alike—is a persistent possibility: a real aspect of the book's methodological open-endedness is the ever-present danger of collapse. The very genre-evasiveness of the book—philosophical romance, historical novel, imaginary portrait, *journal intime*, prose poem, culture epic, critical essay turned inward and personal—disavows even literary-conventional solutions to the problems the book explores.

Between Carlyle's signal to his generation that modern literary relevance requires nothing short of modern man's imaginative self-renewal and Pater's restatement, in *Marius*, of essentially the same theme, there has been an enormous shift in literary strategy. The relativism of the age has thoroughly reconditioned the aesthetic of the age: the participatory structure of Pater's book, prepared for over several decades by the literary transmutations effected by such texts as *In Memoriam*, *Maud*, and *The Ring and the Book*, provides an unparalleled insight into the ways in which modern man, forced afresh to a state of zero spiritual budgeting by the changed conditions of his culture, can work out for himself a dignified denouement. Dignified, worthy of his humanness, but not romantically climactic: like Marius, he may have epiphanic moments as his mythic reassurances occasionally inflate, but as those moments are clustering, they are scattering too. At an eclipsed level, the narrative experience formalized in *Marius the Epicurean* is comparable to the narrative results of that spiritual hunger given a moment of explosive epic reality in Tennyson's *Ulysses*,

1. "Past and Present," *Emerson's Works* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1893), XII, 247-48.

2. *Past and Present*, Book III, Chapter XV.

3. *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. W. H. Gilman and J. E. Parsons (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), VIII, 408.

concerning which the following provides a glancing insight:

I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move. (11. 18-21)

Life as a series or pile of solidified blocks of experience, of frozen stagings however gratifying, has been dissolved into a renewed perceptual reality in which man is eternally voyaging into new spiritual spaces, is experiencing, with a rapidity that outstrips the inductive consciousness, a perpetual bombardment of deaths and rebirths, is constantly transforming the past, both the personal past and the cultural past, into the future.

All failure to recognize this truth of the human condition, a truth of man's physical as well as his cultural environment, smacks of the stereotypical. Even art itself—at its best the quintessence of man's formal awarenesses—necessarily freezes time and threatens to induce a false perceptual reality. Art frees itself from time when it releases in its devotees the capacity to perceive even art *sub specie aeternitatis*, the frozen image being only the most immediately conspicuous dimension of art (*art as artifact*), art's latent capacity to release psychic motion, to trigger inexhaustible possibilities, to make thinking men think (Carlyle) and intelligent men more intelligent (Arnold), being its essential character (*art as an embodiment of the soul's becomings*).

Even Pater's sentence structure in *Marius* foregoes rhetorical neatness in favor of perceptual precision: he allows his sentences to wander from a norm of classical balance in search of the minutely qualified revelation. "The privilege of augury itself, according to tradition, had at one time belonged to his race; and if you can imagine how, once in a way, an impressible boy might have an *inkling*, an inward mystic intimation, of the meaning and consequences of all that, what was implied in it becoming explicit for him, you conceive aright the mind of Marius, in whose house the auspices were still carefully consulted before every undertaking of moment."<sup>4</sup> This sentence is obviously germane to the way history is thematically handled in *Marius*, but it is equally indicative of the apprehensive tone of the book, of how respect for perception weights narrative language. Fairly reflective of the stylistic "feel" of the book, the sentence backs and fills and qualifies until it has made its revelation without any effort to subjugate that revelation to a rhetorical predisposition, a preconceived structural formulation. It is a style so "sincere" that it carefully avoids inter-

posing between the truth with which it deals and the reader's (or the narrator's) consciousness any factitious heightening and distraction.

What is true of the individual consciousness is true also of the historical consciousness. The story of the race and the biography of the individual share a common pattern: "the composite experience of all ages is part of each one of us: to deduct from that experience, to obliterate any part of it . . . is as impossible as to become a little child, or enter again into the womb and be born. But though it is not possible to repress a single phase of that humanity, which, because we live and move and have our being in the life of humanity, makes us what we are, it is possible to isolate such a phase, to throw it into relief, to be divided against ourselves in our zeal for it; as we may hark back to some choice space of our own individual life."<sup>5</sup> History is, therefore, not a "vain antiquarianism," but a discovery of the pattern of the past in the self and a chief object of man's poetic concerns. To be deep in empirical introspection, to be radically in touch with one's own "sensations and ideas," is to be deep in history. The macrocosmic cautions are thoroughly consistent with this perspective: a monistic fixation on any phase of human history of and for itself (a singular time-frame, a special cultural manifestation, an all-consuming thesis) is personally self-destructive in that it divides us against our holistic selves and diminishes us, just as to be frozen (like the protagonist in *Maud*) into some moment in personal time would cause psychic shrinkage.

*Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* is thus a brilliant experiment in personal-historical narrative in which Pater draws the reader deep into *the idea of history* (history's history) through the precariously balanced creation of a narrator/commentator who tries to embody in the form of a tale the radical self-awarenesses of a soul's becomings (or, from the macrocosmic perspective, history watching itself evolve).<sup>6</sup>

A crucial illustration of just how Pater's precariously balanced creation works occurs in Book I, Chapter VII, "A Pagan's End." The subject is the deathbed verse composed by a brilliant young pagan dying of the plague:

In the expression of all this Flavian seemed, while making it his chief aim to retain the opulent, many-syllabled vocabulary of the Latin genius, at some points even to have advanced beyond it, in anticipation of wholly new laws of taste as regards sound, a new range of sound itself. The peculiar resultant note, associating itself with certain other experiences of his, was to Marius like the foretaste of an entirely novel world of poetic beauty to come. Flavian had caught,

4. Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* (London: Macmillan, 1910), Book I, Chapter II, page 16. Future references to the novel are to this edition and are given in the text in parentheses.

5. Walter Pater, *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 223-24.

6. The critical adjustments necessitated by this view of *Marius* are funda-

mental: the "Marius-Pater" rubric, a staple of criticism of the book, converts to "Marius-Everyman"; the comparisons between *Marius* and such historical novels as *Hypatia*, *Callista*, *Pompeii*, and *Fabiola* become essentially irrelevant; the manifest subject of the book ceases to be its central critical concern.

indeed, something of the rhyming cadence, the sonorous organ-music of the medieval Latin, and therewithal something of its unction and mysticity of spirit. There was in his work, along with the last splendour of the classical language, a touch, almost prophetic, of that transformed life it was to have in the rhyming middle age, just about to dawn. The impression thus forced upon Marius connected itself with a feeling, the exact inverse of that, known to every one, which seems to say, *You have been just here, just thus, before!*—a feeling, in his case, not reminiscent but prescient of the future, which passed over him many times, as he came across certain places and people. It was as if he detected there the process of actual change to a wholly undreamed-of and renewed condition of the human body and soul: as if he saw the heavy yet decrepit old Roman architecture about him, rebuilding on an intrinsically better pattern. (Pp. 113-14)

History as perceived organic metamorphosis (time's sensuous story) is at the center of what is going on here, and Pater's imaginative structure brings us to a precise locus of illuminative understanding: we as reader-witnesses are watching a creator-witness (say Pater) watching the protagonist watching Flavian, a death-resurrection figure through whom time is sensuously, perceptibly evolving. Marius' own role is quintessential, of course, but each witness plays both an individual and a generic role, and each is induced to believe that Flavian's role-playing is both very special and very typical: we are all death-resurrection figures, and the more keenly we witness ourselves, the more keenly attuned are we to that poetic note-catching called prophecy. Through the instrumentality of the book, both as the story of Marius and as an imaginative structure, we, in whatever century, see our past futuristically: we witness both the *what* and the *how* of the making of us and hence the *what* and the *how* of history. Flavian is the inevitable product of the past that needs renewing, and by attempting to get in touch with the original genius of his particular instrument of creativity, language, he releases the new phase of that original genius—releases the future. It is a necessarily specialized process (music renewing music, art art, literature literature, language language) since the process is truly organic, but it is also as large as human nature: "Here, as elsewhere, the power of 'fashion,' as it is called, is but one minor form, slight enough, it may be, yet distinctly symptomatic, of that deeper yearning of human nature towards ideal perfection, which is a continuous force in it; and since in this direction too human nature is limited, such fashions must necessarily reproduce themselves" (I, VI, 98).

That Pater's metaphors are broadly symptomatic does not obscure the fact that they are highly specialized: his figures are apex-figures, figures at the cutting-edge of spiritual movement, creating, or observing the creation of, the language, literature, art, music, religion (for them, the "culture") of the future. The clarity of what he is doing depends considerably upon this narrowness. Cultural history as such is only the machinery through which, in a literary artifact,

he enables his merged historical-personal consciousness to surface and process itself. But it is literature, not history, that we must watch most attentively: how the literary imagination perspectives man surviving in time (the spirit negotiating its renewals) is the critic's necessary focus in dealing with *Marius the Epicurean*. It is as literature that the book has an impressive reality: history facilitates mythic apprehension and is thus made usable. Pater might have placed any one of the figures who play a significant part in the book at the center of a myth (Flavian, Marcus Aurelius, Cornelius, Cecilia), but each case would have required a very different tale. He chose Marius, his own imaginary *persona*, for reasons similar to those for which Tennyson chose the *persona* of *In Memoriam*—to make a certain kind of mythic process credible. *Marius*, like Tennyson's *persona*, is a hieratic personality predisposed to a belief that will give him some sense of what lies beyond the world's horizons; he is possessed, further, of a finely tuned imagination capable of extrapolating his experiences and of translating one order of experience into another; and he is blessed with a miraculous happening that, at the level of imaginative rather than dogmatic awareness, fully catalyzes him. If any one of these essential ingredients were missing from Marius or from his life-experience, the book's myth would be immeasurably altered. Thus one of the perceptions the book turns on is that an indispensable element in the pattern of this historical-personal consciousness is spiritual fatigue turning to hope and hope eventually turning to belief: human nature, through the instrumentality of individuals weary of their exhausted heritage, believes itself into the future; and its beliefs are most trustworthy when they emerge from a thoroughly empirical observation of one's self and one's time.

The two characters at the center of Pater's exploration of process, his history of history, are his *persona* *Marius* and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius; and the approximations and divergences of these two characters, the spiritual measurements made possible by their juxtaposition, diversify an admittedly narrow concentration. They relate to each other in doppelgänger fashion, like two halves of an imminent event both personal and historical: "Here, then, under the tame surface of what was meant for a life of business, Marius discovered, welcoming a brother, the spontaneous self-revelation of a soul as delicate as his own,—a soul for which conversation with itself was a necessity of existence. Marius, indeed, had always suspected that the sense of such necessity was a peculiarity of his. But here, certainly, was another, in this respect like himself; and again he seemed to detect the advent of some new or changed spirit into the world, mystic, inward, hardly to be satisfied with that wholly external and objective habit of life, which had been sufficient for the old classic soul" (II, XVIII, 46-47). Marius and Marcus Aurelius share the fatigue of spirit to which an exhausted past has brought their culture, and they are both

bearers of the future. Their spiritual companionship, though limited, is very real: "Before all things examine into thyself: strive to be at home with thyself!—Marius, a sympathetic witness to all this, might almost seem to have had a foresight of monasticism itself in the prophetic future. With this mystic companion he had gone a step onward out of the merely objective pagan existence. Here was already a master in that craft of self-direction, which was about to play so large a part in the forming of human mind, under the sanction of the Christian church" (II, XVIII, 50-51). But what they have in common, their pagan fatigue and their keen and delicate techniques of self-awareness and self-direction, is minor relative to the life-apprehensions with which, through them, the past is inducing the future.

Marcus Aurelius is the angel of asceticism: "Abase yourself! . . . With the ascetic pride that lurks under all Platonism, resultant from its opposition of the seen to the unseen, as falsehood to truth—the imperial Stoic, like his true descendant, the hermit of the middle age, was ready, in no friendly humour, to mock, there in its narrow bed, the corpse which had made so much of itself in life" (I, XII, 200-201). The spiritual children of an ascetic Platonism are about to capture the world; and the "reality of the unseen" is about to assert its dominance anew, the spirit once again to be entombed in abstract expectancy. It is the renaissance of the death-wish and very, very real.<sup>7</sup>

Marius, on the other hand, the visual concretist, the uncompromising empiricist, is the embodiment and messenger of Marcus Aurelius' spiritual counterpart in the coming age. To Aurelius' *Tristitia* he opposes an eagerness "to taste and see and touch" (I, XII, 201); instead of the self-abasement of the future, "Marius felt as if he were face to face, for the first time, with some new knighthood or chivalry, just then coming into the world" (I, X, 170); the renaissance that he experiences and bears forward is that of the blithe, graceful, debonair aspect of the original pagan genius translated through the Christian jubilee into a new metaphor of hope: his vision is "of a natural, a scrupulously natural, love, transforming, by some new gift of insight into the truth of human relationships, and under the urgency of some new motive by him so far unfathomable, all the conditions of life. He saw in all its primitive freshness and amid the lively facts of its actual coming into the world, as a reality of experience, that regenerate type of humanity, which, centuries later, Giotto and his successors, down to the best and purest days of the young Raphael, working under conditions very friendly to the imagination, were to conceive as an artistic ideal" (II, XXII, 109-10). Gradually, as his experience of this wonderful new dispensation of the human spirit deepens, as his

psyche becomes fully attuned to its historical correspondences, Marius becomes a witness rather than a prophet of the future:

The reader may think perhaps, that Marius, who, Epicurean as he was, had his visionary aptitudes, by an inversion of one of Plato's peculiarities with which he was of course familiar, must have descended, by *foresight*, upon a later age than his own, and anticipated Christian poetry and art as they came to be under the influence of Saint Francis of Assisi. But if he dreamed on one of those nights of the beautiful house of Cecilia, its lights and flowers, of Cecilia herself moving among the lilies, with an enhanced grace as happens sometimes in healthy dreams, it was indeed hardly an anticipation. He had lighted, by one of the peculiar intellectual good-fortunes of his life, upon a period when, even more than in the days of austere *ascèsis* which had preceded and were to follow it, the church was true for a moment, truer perhaps than she would ever be again, to that element of profound serenity in the soul of her Founder, which reflected the eternal goodwill of God to man, "in whom," according to the oldest version of the angelic message, "He is well-pleased." (II, XXII, 116-17)

The *déjà vu* inversion through which patterns of historical incipience have been experienced, encapsulated, in the individual are now neutralized in the event: expectation is fulfilled; the future has become for the moment the present; and the *déjà vu*'s of another era are implanted in personal-historical time.

*Marius the Epicurean*, then, is Walter Pater's history of history, his narrative experiment in personal and historical metamorphosis. In evolving his experimental narrative model, he carefully blended the past with the present (*perenniality*) and fact with fiction (*myth*); and he so layered the witnessings of the book's events that it becomes essentially a process of watching and wondering to which nothing (not style, not characterization, not story-line) brings a climactic conclusion. Everything is experientialized: every event, every thought, expectation, "disease of the spirit" is registered on personality, and each of the book's personalities plays a visible role in the historical transformations thus sensuously, tactilely rendered. Indeed, the power of the man and the power of the moment are so totally fused that the issue of cause and effect is thoroughly mooted. At the heart of the book is a firm belief in the organic regeneration of men and their cultures; and that belief is translated into an imaginative structure that enables the reader, during the relatively short time he spends with the book, to participate personally in that regenerative process.

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7. The narrator/commentator, though he sees monasticism, with its austere rubric of self-contemplation, projective in Marcus Aurelius, compares him unfavorably even with medieval asceticism since he

suffers from *Tristitia*, "which even the monastic moralists had held to be of the nature of deadly sin, akin to the sin of *Desidia* or *Inactivity*" (II, XVIII, 51).

# Rights, Reason, and Redemption: Charlotte Brontë's Neo-Platonism

Sara Moore Putzell

AN "ANTI-CHRISTIAN" composition, wrote Elizabeth Rigby in 1848; "unwomanly" and of "questionable morality," wrote a few of her more prudish peers.<sup>1</sup> Many modern readers give credence to their judgment of *Jane Eyre*. They may not call Charlotte Brontë's novel "anti-Christian," but they do say a Byronic Romanticism opposes a puritanical, Calvinist Christianity in her novels.<sup>2</sup> Certainly Brontë's protagonists appreciate the active care of God's providence at the same time as they romantically assert that they "must follow [their] own devices" and that "each human being has his share of rights."<sup>3</sup> They pray to God, but they find earthly happiness that confirms their faith in their own judgments and rights.

This romantic faith is inconsistent with Calvinism. It is not, however, inconsistent with the Arminian bias of Brontë's Methodist aunt and Anglican father, nor is it inconsistent with the Neo-Platonism of the seventeenth-century importers of Arminianism, the Cambridge Platonists. In an attempt to counter the religious divisiveness of the time, the Cambridge Platonists recommended a comprehensive national church based on essential truths evident to the divine light of reason in all men. In the nineteenth century, the Cambridge Platonists' latitudinarianism influenced Coleridge and through him both the Oxford Movement and—with wider effect—the Broad Church Movement, led by F. D. Maurice, whose ministry Charlotte Brontë preferred (*Letters*, 11-15-1851). Read in the context of this liberal, Neo-Platonic Anglicanism, her novels appear neither "anti-Christian" nor inconsistent, but coherent and typical of a major perspective within English Protestantism.

Like the Cambridge Platonists, Brontë rejects parties and sects in favor of a broadly-based Anglicanism. She writes, for example, "I consider Methodism, Dissenterism, Quakerism, and the extremes of high and low Churchism foolish"

(*Letters*, July, 1842). The only "ism" with which she ever seems to have associated herself is what she calls "my latitudinarianism"—a position opposed by her husband but one which she refused to relinquish, writing to Mrs. Gaskell, "I will not be a bigot—My heart will always turn to the good of every sect and class."<sup>4</sup> Brontë's latitudinarianism appears in her novels in her repeated ridicule of religious sectarians and in her description of her last heroine, Lucy Snowe of *Villette* (1853), going "by turns, and indiscriminately" to three Protestant churches, because she "had often secretly wondered at the minute and unimportant character of the differences between these three sects" and had seen "nothing to hinder them from being one day fused into one grand Holy Alliance" (II, 215).

The basis for Brontë's faith in a comprehensive church is her Neo-Platonic faith in human nature. Whereas Calvinists upheld the Augustinian view of fallen man as totally depraved, Neo-Platonists saw him as still retaining a divine spark even in his corrupt state. Thus, they were fond of quoting Athanasius that "God was therefore incarnated and made man, that he might Deifie us."<sup>5</sup> The divine nature that man shares with Christ is his reason, which, for the Neo-Platonists, is both man's true nature and his moral guide. Consistent with this view, Brontë depicts heroines who regularly resist their passions for the sake of obeying reason and reason's voice, conscience. In the Brontë heroine, "Reason sits firm and holds the reins. . . . The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are . . . but judgment shall still have the last word," so that she may say, as Rochester regretfully imagines Jane Eyre's saying, "I shall follow the guiding of that still small voice which interprets the dictates of conscience."<sup>6</sup>

For Charlotte Brontë, as for the Neo-Platonists, an individual's rational spirit emanates from the divine spirit of the

1. Elizabeth Rigby, *Quarterly Review*, 84 (1848), 173-4, quoted in *Critics on Charlotte and Emily Brontë*, ed. Judith O'Neill, *Readings in Literary Criticism*, 2 (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1968), 15. The charge of unwomanliness occurs in "The Lady Novelists of Great Britain," *Gentleman's Magazine*, rpt. *Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art*, 30 (Sept. 1853); that of doubtful morality from the *Christian Remembrancer*, 25 (April, 1848), 396-409, in *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Miriam Allott (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 91.

2. Among those who describe such a clash are Nina Auerbach, "Charlotte Brontë: The Two Countries," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 42 (1973), 328-42; Charles Burkhart, "Another Key Word for Jane Eyre," *NCF*, 16 (1961), 178; Margot M. Peters, *Charlotte Brontë: Style in the Novel* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973); and R. E. Hughes, "Jane Eyre: The Unbaptized Dionysos," *NCF*, 18 (1964), 347-64.

3. *The Professor*, p. 49, and *Shirley*, I, 193-4 of *The Shakespeare Head Brontë*, ed. T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, 19 vols. (Oxford, 1931-1938). With the exception of *Jane Eyre*, all further references to the novels and the letters are in the text to this edition; the letters are given by date; the novels by page and, where applicable, volume.

4. Letter to Mrs. Gaskell, 4-26-1854, in *Brontë Society Transactions*, 12 (1957), 123.

5. Quoted in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 101. Although popular in the nineteenth century, the works of the Cambridge Platonists are difficult to obtain today; for convenience, therefore, all further references to their works will be in the text by page to this ample anthology, hereafter abbreviated as CP.

6. *Jane Eyre*, ed. Jane Jack and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 252. All further references are in the text by page to this edition.

creator and, if not destroyed by a life of sin, will return to him. Making no distinction between resistible and irresistible grace, the Neo-Platonists held that God extends his grace to all men and will no more abandon the spark of himself in man than an earthly father will his offspring. Brontë holds their doctrines of universal salvation to be "the truth" and demonstrates her support by having the saintly Helen Burns proclaim in *Jane Eyre*: "the time will soon come when, I trust . . . debasement and sin will fall from us with this cumbersome frame of flesh, and only the spark of the spirit will remain,—the impalpable principle of life and thought, pure as when it left the Creator to inspire the creature: whence it came it will return" (pp. 66-67).<sup>7</sup> Although Helen says, "no one ever taught" her this creed, it recalls such Neo-Platonic statements as Cudworth's that the "*Divine life begun and kindled in any heart, wheresoever it be, is something of God in flesh*; and, in a sober and qualified sense, *Divinity incarnate*; and all particular Christians . . . so many *Mysticall Christs*. And God forbid, that *Gods own Life and Nature* here in the World, should be forlorn, forsaken, and abandoned of God himself" (*CP*, p. 105).

"[F]orlorn, forsaken, and abandoned" is precisely how mankind feels in Brontë's parable of "La Première Femme Savante" in *Shirley* (1849). In the parable, Humanity—represented as a woman—suffers from the isolation of her intelligence until joined by Genius, an invisible voice come to be her bridegroom, who transforms her world, fights for her purity, and at last crowns her with immortality. While the parable has biographical, Romantic, and even feminist reverberations, it is fundamentally an allegory of the soul's salvation through the love of the divine intelligence of which it is an overflow. Humanity seems to herself "a small, forgotten atom of life, a spark of soul, emitted inadvertent from the great creative source," while Genius's descent to her echoes the coming of the reign of life in Revelation 22, for he announces, "I come: a Comforter!" and Humanity replies, "Lord, come quickly!" Scriptural allusions abound in the description of their union and of Genius's bearing her "triumphant into his own home—Heaven; [where he] restored her, redeemed to Jehovah—her Maker" (II, 187). In addition to indicating that Brontë shares the Neo-Platonist's tendency to deify the rational spirit in man, this parable suggests that she also shares their confidence in man's power to cooperate in his own salvation.

Luther and Calvin had insisted that man cannot work out his salvation, and the Neo-Platonists agreed; however,

they distinguished between man's having a will powerful enough to save himself and a will capable of desiring and cooperating with God. This capability, sometimes spoken of as prevenient or preventing grace, is suggested in Brontë's parable when "something within [Humanity] stirred disquieted, and restlessly asserted a God-given strength, for which it insisted she should find exercise" (II, 184). Desiring spiritual fulfillment yet impotent in isolation, Humanity requires divine aid before she can rejoin her Maker. Not only in this parable but also in the crises of her protagonists' lives, Brontë depicts human reason recognizing and longing to follow God's way, but requiring divine support in order that, as the Thirty-Nine Articles put it, "we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."<sup>8</sup> In *The Professor*, for example, William Crimsworth, the schoolmaster-hero, recognizes his imminent danger of becoming part of a ménage à trois with his employers, and righteously determines to flee, but he is afraid to give up the security of his teaching positions. Conscience admonishes him to go, yet Crimsworth vacillates until he experiences "a strange, inly-felt idea of some Great Being, unseen, but all present" who desires his welfare and waits "to see whether [he] should obey his voice, heard in the whispers of . . . conscience, or lend an ear to the sophisms [by] which . . . the Spirit of evil, sought to lead [him] astray." Providentially sustained by the vision of a loving Deity, Crimsworth finds himself able to follow "the path indicated by divine suggestion" (p. 198). Similarly, *Jane Eyre* requires divine support after the disclosure of Rochester's mad wife, for she cannot bring herself to leave him. While conscience holds "passion by the throat," she calls for aid against her own weakness. Then, an awful voice reminds her, as Crimsworth's vision had reminded him, of the consequences of yielding to an unsanctified passion; the voice admonishes her, "you shall tear yourself away . . . you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye, yourself cut off your right hand," and thus echoes the New Testament warning that "it is better . . . to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (*JE*, p. 379; cf. Mark 9:47, Matt. 5:27-32, 18:9). Urged on by this voice and a supportive dream, Jane is able to follow reason and to leave Rochester.

Insofar as Brontë emphasizes man's power to act rationally and thus morally, she minimizes the concept of original sin. Like the Cambridge Platonists, Brontë excuses man's natural weaknesses, but condemns willful "failing to live up to one's possibilities" and any "falling short of natural perfection."<sup>9</sup>

7. Although *Jane Eyre* ultimately fulfills both flesh and spirit in her marriage, she too regards the flesh as but a transitory home for the spirit. Thus, rather than risk her soul in a "temporary heaven" or "fool's paradise" (*JE*, pp. 408, 459), she refuses to become Rochester's mistress and endures the agony of separation from him until she can become his wife. For Brontë's view of the doctrine of universal salvation, see the *Letters*, 2-14-1850 and the *Brontë Society Transactions*, 12 (1957), 122, which give a letter of 12-27-1853.

8. Quoted in Edward Harold Browne, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, Historical and Doctrinal*, ed. J. Williams (1865; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1874), p. 261.

9. James Deotis Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism in Seventeenth Century England* (The Hague: Martinus Mjhoff, 1968), p. 217.

Platonist Benjamin Whichcote had pointed out that the "Scripture doth never fasten the Title . . . of sinner upon them that mean well, but are in something mistaken; who now and then are under an Error, having Failings, Imperfections, and Shortnesses" (*CP*, p. 45). Brontë likewise makes natural incapacities excuses for errors. Thus, Jane Eyre pardons her childhood oppressor Mrs. Reed, because "it was her nature to wound me cruelly" (p. 35), and Helen Burns forgives an unmerciful teacher, because the woman's natural neatness and punctuality prevent her sympathizing with her slovenly pupil. In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe excuses her lover's irritability because, in addition to being genuinely kind, "he was naturally a little man of unreasonable moods"; she similarly disarms criticism of herself by explaining, "such shades of peculiarity as were engrained in my nature" were "born in and with me, and no more to be parted with than my identity" (II, 123; I, 133). Brontë's willingness to excuse natural limitations does not mean that she abandons the concept of sin, but that, by emphasizing sin as a conscious disobedience of reason and conscience, she stresses the individual's responsibility for his own spiritual state.

Like the Neo-Platonists, she recoils from active, chosen sin as madness. Thus, Rochester's first wife, Bertha, who neglects such mind as she has in the pursuit of carnal pleasure, goes mad; her condition is appropriate to Brontë, who later writes, "sin is itself a species of insanity" (*Letters*, 1-4-1848). Whereas Bertha's degeneration into mad animality recalls Whichcote's aphorism, "Passion uncontrolled by Reason is Madness," the mental torment of the actress Vashti in *Villette* suggests his concept of Hell as, not a place, but a state arising "out of a Man's self" (*CP*, pp. 332, 46). "Fallen, insurgent, banished," like a Romantic Satan, Vashti "remembers the heaven where she rebelled," yet reveals "HELL on her straight, haughty brow" (II, 7-8). While characters like Vashti and Bertha show that Brontë believes man by his own perverse will instates himself in hell, her protagonists show her corollary belief that individuals may find assurance in this life of their eternal salvation.

Brontë's protagonists are notable for finding spiritual security in choosing to realize their rational selves. In *Jane Eyre*, for example, St. John Rivers leaves a woman with whom he can fulfill only his carnal nature in order to fulfill what he calls his essential self, his reason and ambition, through the life and martyrdom of a missionary. His reward? The "well-grounded Hope and comfortable Confidence concerning the Love of God toward [his soul], and its

own Salvation" (*CP*, p. 180) that the Neo-Platonists accord the faithful Christian, for the last words of the novel are St. John's eager response to his master's "Surely I come quickly": "Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!" (pp. 578-9). In contrast to St. John, Rochester abandons his true self for years altogether in a life of conventional debauchery before choosing at last to be the good man Brontë says he fundamentally is. Despite his dissipation, "what is really good in him still remains," says Brontë, so that, when providence teaches him "the severe lessons of experience," he "has sense to learn wisdom from them" (*Letters*, 8-14-1848). Contrite, he confesses to God that he has merited his sufferings and pleads for mercy. His reward? An Edenic marriage with Jane that anticipates the new Eden. That marriage is also, of course, Jane's reward for her earlier refusal to suppress her reason in an adulterous affair with Rochester or her passion in a loveless marriage with St. John. Marrying the regenerate Rochester, who suits her to the "finest fibre" of her nature, brings her whole being "to life and light" and gives her the Christian saint's assurance that she is "blest" (*JE*, pp. 408, 576).

Fiction and not systematic theology, Charlotte Brontë's novels nevertheless do present a coherent, Christian view. It is not the Augustinian view that dominated English theology through the eighteenth century, but the Neo-Platonic view that was to become dominant by the end of the nineteenth. Like the Cambridge Platonists, Brontë rejects the Augustinian idea that man is totally depraved, for she believes man has in his reason a spark of the divine intelligence. That spark is, moreover, man's essential identity which—if he is true to it—will be saved by the God from which it has emanated. Given such an identity, man's responsibility is to do precisely what Jane Eyre does that so aroused Elizabeth Rigby's ire: obey the judgment of one's own reason and be oneself. In fulfilling this responsibility, Brontë's protagonists do not display what David Lodge and others have described as a "passionate, non-ethical drive . . . towards self-fulfillment at whatever cost," a drive merely "held in check" by Christian ethics and worldly prudence.<sup>10</sup> Brontë's protagonists display, instead, a rational desire for a self-fulfillment that is, by definition, guided by *Christian* ethics and *spiritual* prudence.

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10. David Lodge, *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 115.



## Tractarian Aesthetics: Analogy and Reserve in Keble and Newman

G. B. Tennyson

AMONG THE MANY ASPECTS of the Oxford or Tractarian Movement that have captured the attention of subsequent students of the subject the matter of aesthetics has until recently been one of the least thoroughly explored. To be sure, theology, politics, social events, ecclesiastical developments, and even personal experience all played their part in the emergence and course of what the participants thought of as a campaign to redeem the Church of England. Recently, however, there has emerged an awareness that an approach through aesthetics casts a good deal of light on the deepest nature of Tractarianism, not in opposition to any of the previously cited aspects but rather complementary to them, especially to the most important of all—Tractarian theology. I propose today to summarize the findings on Tractarian aesthetics,<sup>1</sup> and then to do what has still hitherto been very little done—to apply a few of the important aspects of Tractarian aesthetics to some of the literary works written in the spirit of that aesthetic position to see what kind of practical critical insights flow from the recently won understanding of the theoretical critical principles. It is, to adopt and modify Matthew Arnold's phrase for his effort in *God and the Bible*, an "attempt literary, and an attempt religious,"<sup>2</sup> for, as we shall see, it is imprudent to approach the Tractarians exclusively from one or the other perspective. They best come alive through an approach from both.

The Tractarian aesthetic insists above all on the religious character of poetry and by extension of all art. Poetry is the result of a welling-up and expression of an intense emotion, which in turn is the desire of the soul to know God. Poetry is thus the outward expression of a powerful inward, even subconscious, religious feeling. This is the fundamental principle of Tractarian aesthetics, perhaps indeed of the Tractarian worldview, and it represents the ultimate subordination of poetry, and art, to theology. For, if art is in origin

religious, it can best be judged, pursued, and evaluated from a theological standpoint. And the Tractarians did just that, which accounts for the religious character of all of their literary works.

In addition to the fundamental Tractarian principle of arts as religious self-expression, we should note also the importance for the Tractarians of what one may call the two essential Tractarian corollaries. These are the Doctrine of Analogy and the Doctrine of Reserve. Briefly stated, the Doctrine of Analogy or Correspondences is the application to art of the text from St. Paul: "The invisible things of [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Romans, i. 20). That is, the visible world is a world full of correspondences with the invisible world; physical things are signs and symbols of spiritual things. The doctrine of Reserve held by the Tractarians was that in communicating religious knowledge (which would, of course, in their view include also poetry and art) the communicator (including of course the poet) should exercise "due religious reserve,"<sup>3</sup> a kind of restraint and even indirection in expression appropriate to the sacredness of the subject being discussed.

Recent commentators on Tractarian aesthetics point out also the importance of the following emphases in Tractarian theory which I can no more than cite in passing. They are: the use of the terms "poetry" and "poetic" in Tractarian discourse as equivalents to "imagination" and "aesthetic"; the tendency of the Tractarians to speak of religion itself as a work of art; and the inclination of the Tractarian aesthetic position to issue in a theologized and sacramentalized view of Nature.<sup>4</sup>

The relation of theology and aesthetics in Tractarianism, then, is one of a mutually stimulating and modifying union of the two disciplines. This may best be grasped by consid-

1. Modern study of Tractarian aesthetics begins in the 1950's with Alba H. Warren, Jr., *English Poetic Theory 1825-1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950); and M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953) (rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1958). Recent studies include Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Lawrence G. Starzyk, *The Imprisoned Splendor: A Study of Early Victorian Critical Theory* (Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977); and G. B. Tennyson, "The Sacramental Imagination" in U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson, eds., *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 370-390.

Among the Tractarians a primary source is Keble's Latin *Lectures on Poetry*, delivered between 1831 and 1841, but not translated into English until 1912. His other essays are collected in his *Occasional*

*Papers and Reviews* (1877). Newman's critical views are found chiefly in his essays, "Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*," and "Literature," and scattered throughout his works. The most important of the *Tracts for the Times* for critical theory are No. 80, "On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge," by Isaac Williams, and No. 89, "On the Mysticism Attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church," by John Keble.

2. *Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), 7:398. Arnold's phrase was "an attempt conservative, and an attempt religious."

3. Keble uses this and similar expressions throughout the *Lectures on Poetry*. The most celebrated formulation of the idea occurs in Isaac Williams' Tract 80, cited above, note 1.

4. See especially Prickett, pp. 105-107; Starzyk, pp. 160-161; and Tennyson, p. 374.

ering Newman's assertion that poetry is for those who do not have the benefit of the Catholic Church. His statement becomes two-edged: that is, poetry is inferior to the Church and to her theology, but only because the Church and her theology are the greater poem.<sup>5</sup>

## II

Now, having arrived at this understanding of Tractarian aesthetics, we should, I believe, raise what has hitherto been a quite secondary or wholly ignored consideration. It is: what, if anything, were the actual literary consequences of the Tractarian aesthetic position? That is, are there notable literary works that illustrate Tractarian aesthetics in action? Can we better grasp them as a result of our understanding of Tractarian aesthetics? To each of these questions I would answer, Yes, and in the remaining time I shall endeavor to justify those affirmative answers.

First of all, it is important to note that all of our sources on Tractarian aesthetics come from men who were, not only theologians and Tractarians, but literary artists as well. The two most prominent of these are of course Keble and Newman. Writing on the death of Keble, J. C. Shairp claimed that the two "permanent monuments of genius" left by the Oxford Movement were Keble's *The Christian Year* and Newman's parochial sermons.<sup>6</sup> Taking these two as the pre-eminent Tractarian works, let us apply Tractarian critical precepts to them.

First, *The Christian Year*. If a canvass were taken here as to whether that volume had poetic merit, I think the most common responses would be No, Undecided, and No Opinion—especially No Opinion. But that it exemplifies Tractarian aesthetics can hardly be disputed. Virtually all students of the subject have turned at once to Keble's poem for Septuagesima Sunday to illustrate the Doctrine of Analogy in practice. That is the poem that begins, "There is a Book, who runs may read. . . ." That "Book," I need hardly tell you, is the Book of Nature. Since the remainder of the poem illustrates the doctrine of Analogy more successfully than it does anything else, I will not dwell on it further here. Rather more subtly and, I think, more poetically a similar Tractarian vision of a sacramentalized Romantic nature is captured in the poem for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

In the poem for Advent IV, Keble unites several favorite Tractarian ideas about poetry in a way that seems to me to exhibit considerably greater poetic vigor than in the more doctrinaire poem for Septuagesima. We have here above all the sense of the surcharged spirit, the overburdened soul, seeking release for the tensions within. We have too the ac-

tion of a nature filled with correspondences. We have, further, the sense of restraint or reserve in expressing both the emotion and the recognition of the correspondences. For it is all rendered as an inward struggle, not as a simple matter of applying the theological textbook to nature. It begins with the Romantic dream world through which the speaker struggles to discern the analogical relationships. But Keble's orthodoxy pulls the poem away from merely echoing Coleridge. In stanza six he asserts that with patience the time will come when eye and ear will see and hear aright. With the "blissful vision" one will "deeper and deeper plunge in light." This is, I believe, an effort to supplant, or complete the Romantic vision with the beatific one.

Keble goes on in the poem to instruct the reader that the soul itself—"if duly purged our mental view"—will approach ever nearer that goal of light, till it will "with that inward Music fraught, / For ever rise, and sing, and shine." The ultimate aim of the Tractarian aesthetic vision is also the ultimate aim of the Tractarian religious vision. The soul of the poet, or of the simple believer, fraught with the inward music of divine love, will one day "for ever rise, and sing and shine."

Virtually all of the poems of *The Christian Year* offer examples of Tractarian aesthetic-theological ideas, especially of the idea of Analogy. Perhaps more of these poems have literary merit than is commonly supposed. The curious should look especially at Keble's poems for the Second Sunday after Easter and the Fourth Sunday after Trinity for successful illustrations of Tractarian aesthetics in action. As understanding of Tractarian aesthetics grows, appreciation of Keble as a poet is likely to grow with it.

When we come to the other of the enduring monuments of the Oxford Movement, Newman's parochial sermons, the issue of merit is not a disputed one, and I will accordingly take it for granted that we all recognize Newman's mastery as a prose writer. One cause for this, I believe, is that Newman's writing has not generally been approached through Tractarian theory. But I think we can profitably do so as a means of understanding one of the most commonly remarked aspects of Newman's prose—its intensity in the face of its apparent objectivity and rationality.

The matter of the emotional appeal of what by most analyses seems unemotional prose is one of the continuing themes or puzzlements in Newman studies. Let me suggest that we consider the peculiar power of Newman's writing in terms of some of the leading ideas of Tractarian aesthetics and especially in terms of the doctrine of Reserve.

We must remember that the Doctrine of Reserve was not

5. Prickett, pp. 172-173; Starzyk, pp. 157-162.

6. John Campbell Shairp, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, 2nd. Am. ed. (Boston, 1887), p. 219. The essay was originally published in the *North British Review* in 1866, the year of Keble's death.

7. John Keble, *The Christian Year, Lyra Innocentium, and Other Poems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914). The texts from Keble are taken from this edition, but for ease in using any of the many editions of *The Christian Year* reference is made only to the title of the poem.

only theological; it was also aesthetic and, as I have argued, it was a corollary to the fundamental principle that artistic creation was the personal outpouring of an overwhelmingly religious impulse. Reserve comes into play as the means whereby such an outpouring is prevented from becoming vulgar and profane and merely emotional. One might say that Reserve was the means of insuring that what would come forth from the artist would be Tractarian rather than merely Romantic or, worse, Evangelical.

When we think of Newman's motto—"Cor ad cor loquitur"—Heart speaking to Heart—we should have no trouble linking that with the Tractarian first principle of the deep emotion lying behind artistic utterance. And when we try to understand how Newman managed to convey such intensity without the verbal pyrotechnics of, say, Thomas Carlyle, we would do well to bring into play the doctrine of Reserve. Hear him, for example, concluding a sermon of 1832 titled, after a common Tractarian conviction, "On Personal Influence, the Means of Propagating the Truth":

Let all those, then, who acknowledge the voice of God speaking within them, and urging them heavenward, wait patiently for the End, exercising themselves, and diligently working, with a view to that day when the books shall be opened, and all the disorder of human affairs reviewed and set right; when "the last shall be first, and the first last"; when "all things that offend and they which do iniquity," shall be gathered out and removed; when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun," and Faith shall see her God; when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever."<sup>8</sup>

The reference to God speaking and urging within calls to mind the Tractarian view of the interior power of the religious-poetic impulse. In keeping with the doctrine of Reserve, however, it is linked to the idea of patience and diligence. And the highly Tractarian stringing together of Biblical passages leads finally to the emergence of the righteous to shine like those visible analogues of the invisible world, the sun and the stars of the heavens. "For ever rise, and sing, and shine," as Keble had it.

Even on the matter of Newman's personal style in preaching we may see the effects of Tractarian aesthetic doctrine. David DeLaura has ably traced the abundant references throughout the Victorian age to Newman's personal preaching style and provided us with a rich picture of the effect of that "unforgotten voice" as it echoed down the decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Anyone who has read his account must be struck by the frequency with which Newman's audi-

tors, among them Matthew Arnold, remember his delivery as having been "soft," "sweet," "mournful," "subduing," yet withal "thrilling," "magnetic," "entrancing," and—the one that struck DeLaura so forcefully—"silvery" like the cool radiance of the Church as Keble described it in the Septuagesima Sunday poem, basking in the glow of the moon, which in turn derives its light from the sun that is also the Son of God. This subtle, sweet, restrained, and silvery eloquence that haunted the memories of Oxonians for the rest of their lives is, I believe, an eloquence wholly consonant with the precepts of Tractarian aesthetics and even dictated by those precepts. It is the eloquence of an irresistible religious emotion tempered by a humbling and self-effacing religious reserve.

We can still hear the pathos that such a combination elicits from Newman well after the time of the University sermons. And perhaps in "The Parting of Friends," in 1843, his great sermon of leavetaking from the Church of England, we can see Reserve almost giving way before the intensity of the emotion, which is surely religious as well as personal, that provoked this particular jewel of Newman literary art:

And, O my brethren, O kind and affectionate hearts, O loving friends, should you know any one whose lot it has been, by writing or by word of mouth, in some degree to help you thus to act; if he has ever told you what you knew about yourself, or what you did not know; has read to you your wants or feelings, and comforted you by the very reading; has made you feel that there was a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see; or encouraged you, or sobered you, or opened a way to the inquiring, or soothed the perplexed; if what he has said or done has ever made you feel well inclined towards him; remember such a one in time to come, though you hear him not, and pray for him, that in all things he may know God's will, and at all times he may be ready to fulfill it.<sup>10</sup>

J. C. Shairp called Newman's sermons "high poems . . . as of an inspired singer, or the outpourings as of a prophet, rapt yet self-possessed."<sup>11</sup> "Rapt yet self-possessed"—the exact combination propounded by Tractarian aesthetics of an overwhelming religious emotion conveyed with due religious reserve. Newman may have subsequently enjoyed the benefits of what he viewed as in itself the greatest of poems, the Catholic Church, but that he was able to see it in such a light was possible only because of the Tractarian aesthetic he took with him when he parted from his friends.

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8. *Newman's University Sermons*, ed. D. M. MacKinnon and J. D. Holmes (London: SPCK, 1970), p. 98.

9. David J. DeLaura, "O Unforgotten Voice: The Memory of Newman in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Uses of Nineteenth-Century Documents: Essays in Honor of C.L. Cline* (Austin: Department of English and Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, 1975), pp. 23-55. Quoted words in this paragraph are from this article,

*passim*. See also DeLaura's "Some Victorian Experiments in Closure," and Benjamin Dunlap's "Newman in the Pulpit: The Power of Simplicity," both in *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 7 (1975), 19-35, 63-75.

10. *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day* (London, 1869), p. 409.

11. Shairp, p. 212. See also DeLaura, "O Unforgotten Voice," pp. 41-42.

# Bruising the Serpent's Head: Typological Symbol in Victorian Poetry

George P. Landow

THE SINGLE ASPECT of Victorian religion with which literary students have chiefly concerned themselves has been its diminution, for with the obvious exception of studies of the Oxford Movement and Hoxie N. Fairchild's valuable work, literary scholarship has chosen to examine themes of honest doubt and consequent loss of belief in the Victorian period. This focus has been particularly unfortunate since the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century saw a great, almost astonishing, revival of biblical typology, which left its firm impress upon Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, and virtually every major Victorian poet.

Typology is a Christian form of scriptural interpretation which purports to discover divinely intended anticipations of Christ and His dispensation of the laws, events, and people of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> As Thomas Hartwell Horne explained in the text which was standard reading for British divinity students, "in the sacred or theological sense of the term, a type may be defined to be a symbol of something future and distant, or an example prepared and evidently designed by God to prefigure that future thing. What is thus prefigured is called the *antitype*."<sup>2</sup> Horne further explains that in scripture one encounters three kinds of types—the legal, historical, and prophetic. Legal types are those contained in the Mosaic law which itself prefigures the New Law of Christ. "On comparing the history and economy of Moses," Horne instructs, "it evidently appears that the ritual law [of animal sacrifice] was typical [or typologically prefigurative] of the Messiah and the Gospel blessings." Historical types, according to this standard definition, are the "characters, actions, and fortunes of some eminent persons recorded in the Old Testament, so ordered by divine providence as to be exact prefigurations of the character, actions, and fortunes of future persons [particularly Christ] who should arise under the Gospel dispensation." Thus, Moses, Samson, David, and Melchizedek are all types and partial anticipations of the Saviour, each bearing a portion of His meaning and purpose.

Finally, prophetic types, such as the passage in Psalms 118 about the cornerstone rejected by the builders becoming the basis of a new edifice, "are those by which divinely inspired prophets prefigured or signified things either present or future, by means of external symbols."

Today I would like to discuss one such prophetic type which Victorian commentators take to be simultaneously both the Bible's first type and its first prophecy. As Newman points out when he quotes Genesis 3:15, "It had been prophesied from the beginning, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. 'I will put enmity,' said almighty God to the serpent at the fall, 'between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head.'"<sup>3</sup> The relevant final clause of this pronouncement, which Newman does not here cite, is the fact that the serpent "shalt bruise his [man's] heel," which was conventionally taken to predict the Crucifixion. After briefly examining sermon commentary from a range of High, Broad, and Low Churchmen to show how widespread and how orthodox are such interpretations, I propose to look at the various ways Victorian poets draw upon them in their poetry.

Henry Melvill's sermon on "The First Prophecy" is a particularly useful point at which to begin our investigation, both because Melvill, known as the "Evangelical Chrysostom," was one of the most famous Victorian preachers, and also because this Dean of St. Paul's and chaplain to Victoria makes clear the rules of typological interpretation. According to him, "whether or no the prophecy were intelligible to Adam and Eve, unto ourselves it is a wonderful passage, spreading itself over the whole of time, and giving outlines of the history of this world from the beginning to the final consummation. It is nothing less than a delineation of an unwearied conflict of which this earth shall be the theatre, and which shall issue, though not without partial disaster to man, in the complete discomfiture of Satan and his associates."<sup>4</sup> Other, non-Evangelical commentators agree

1. The finest study of this mode of scriptural exegesis remains a Victorian one—Patrick Fairbairn's much reprinted *The Typology of Scripture*, which is conveniently available in the 1975 Baker Book House edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan). My *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 329-70 and *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 7-17, 186-87 (this last a bibliography of basic works) provide introductions to Victorian typology, and my "Moses Striking the Rock: Typological Symbolism in Victorian Poetry," in *Literary Uses of Typology from the Late Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 315-44 examines the literary applications of this mode

in the Age of Victoria. Linda H. Peterson's 1977 Brown University doctoral dissertation, "Biblical Typology and the Poetry of Robert Browning," contains an essential history of developments in typological exegesis between the seventeenth and late nineteenth centuries.

2. *A Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible*, 9th ed. (London: Thomas Cadell, 1852), p. 184. The passages from Horne which are quoted subsequently appear on this same page.

3. "The Mystery of Godliness," *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 8 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1891), V, 103.

4. "The First Prophecy," *Sermons*, ed. C. P. M'Ilvaine, 2 vols. (N. Y.: Stanford, 1851), I, 10-11.

that this first prophetic type shows forth an essential battle of good and evil, thus providing a central law of human history. F. W. Robertson, a Broadchurchman, urges that "it is the law which governs the conflict with evil. It can only be crushed by suffering from it. . . . The Son of man who puts His naked foot on the serpent's head, crushes it: the fang goes into His heel."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the type foreshadows the future victorious sacrifice of Christ, Who "came into collision with the world's evil, and [Who] bore the penalty." In addition to shadowing forth an essential principle of human existence, this type also announces coming salvation and the means by which it will be purchased. It announces that Christ is at the center of human history and the meaning of human time. As the Evangelical bishop J. C. Ryle argued, "one golden chain runs through" the entire Bible:

—no salvation excepting by Jesus Christ. The bruising of the serpent's head, foretold in the day of the fall,—the clothing of our first parents with skins,—the sacrifices of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—the passover, and all the particulars of the Jewish law,—the high-priest,—the altar,—the daily offering of the lamb,—the holy of holies entered only by blood,—the scapegoat . . . all preach with one voice, salvation only by Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, the High Anglican John Keble urged upon his listeners that Christ, "the true Seed of the woman, God the Son . . . would, in His own good time, bruise the head of the tempting and corrupting serpent," since he is not only the "true Isaac" and "true Jacob" but as "the true David would cast down the true Goliath, would take from him all his armour wherein he trusted, his coat of mail, his sword, his spear and his shield"<sup>7</sup> In other words, this type, like all others, has the capacity to generate the entire Gospel scheme of salvation, reminding the believer—and the poet—of the entire complex semiotic structure of sacred history.

A sophisticated use of the type—because it does not appear within the context of the retelling of Biblical history—appears in "Our Father's Business," the poem Diana Mulock Craik wrote to explain the typological message of Holman Hunt's *Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1860). Addressing the young Christ in this Pre-Raphaelite painting, Mrs. Craik calls him

Messiah! Elder Brother, Priest and King,  
The Son of God, and yet the woman's seed;  
Enterer within the veil.<sup>8</sup>

In so doing she sets Hunt's image within several temporal contexts. Hunt's picture in fact juxtaposes a different, though clearly analogous, set of types to the young Christ, and creates a visual image of a moment of sacred time when Christ recognizes His nature and mission, a moment when He perceived that He was the neglected Cornerstone, the sacrificed lamb—and more!<sup>9</sup>

An even finer example of using linguistic texts to root a visual image in several times appears in Rossetti's poems about paintings.<sup>10</sup> Both his combination of type with prophecy and his concern with time appear in "The Holy Family," a sonnet he wrote for a painting in the National Gallery, London, once thought to be by Michelangelo.<sup>11</sup> The poem begins with the Virgin telling her son, "Turn not the prophet's page, O Son! He knew/ All that thou hast to suffer," and the poet's note reminds us: "In this picture the Virgin Mother is seen withholding from the Child Saviour the prophetic writings in which his sufferings are foretold." Since the prophetic passages are almost certainly those of Isaiah, Rossetti would seem to be offering his own version of the incident James Collinson, another member of the PRB, had earlier treated in "The Child Jesus," which appeared in *The Germ*. Rossetti's Mary tells the child that His "hour of knowledge" has not yet come, and for the moment only the angels depicted by the painting will know all, at which point the octet closes rather lamely: "For these things/ The angels have desired to look into." Rossetti is having poetic difficulty, since he treats the subject of the painting as an actual event rather than an iconic configuration. By treating Mary and the Child as real dramatic personages with their own psychology, he introduces—and nearly succumbs to—difficulties foreign to the original picture. The sestet, which introduces the notion of typology, largely redeems the poem:

Still before Eden waves the fiery sword,—  
Her Tree of Life unransomed: whose sad Tree  
Of Knowledge yet to growth of Calvary  
Must yield its Tempter,—Hell the earliest dead  
Of Earth resign,—and yet, O son and Lord,  
The Seed o' the woman bruise the serpent's head.

Mary, whom Rossetti here supposes to know the future, turns away from Christ's coming sorrows towards the redemption of mankind. The sestet becomes prophecy as Mary

5. "Caiaphas' View of Vicarious Sacrifice," *Sermons, Preached at Trinity Chapel, Brighton. First Series*, 10th ed. (London: Smith, Elder, 1863), p. 162.

6. "Only One Way," *Knots Untied*, 13th ed. (London: William Hunt, 1891), p. 233.

7. "Deadly Peace of the Unawakened Conscience," *Sermons for the Christian Year* (Oxford and London: James Parker, 1879), III, 195; and "Christ's Birthday," II, 80.

8. "Our Father's Business: Holman Hunt's Picture of 'Christ in the

Temple,'" *Poems* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), p. 210.

9. My *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*, pp. 75-103 examines the painter's characteristically complex applications of typological iconography in this picture.

10. See *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*, pp. 148-54.

11. I have repeated the following paragraph with minor changes from my "'Life touching lips with immortality': Rossetti's Typological Structures," *Studies in Romanticism*, 17 (1978), 247-66.

ranges over all human time from the Fall to the unnamed Crucifixion and Harrowing of Hell. She begins by reminding Christ that the "fiery sword" still waves over Eden, keeping man from Paradise, since the Tree of Life has not yet been ransomed. Following an old tradition, Rossetti makes the Tree of Knowledge (and possibly the Tree of Life) serve as the type of the Cross. Satan, that great tempter, must finally relinquish both the Tree of Life and "the earliest dead." The poems end with a skillful use of typological allusion: Mary, who has spoken of Christ's coming death in only the most oblique terms, again leads up to it with her reference to Genesis 3:15 and again stops short of a clear statement of His fate. Repeating God's words, Mary tells Jesus that "the Seed o' the woman [will] bruise the serpent's head," thus restoring life and paradise to man. What she does not tell Him is that the serpent will, in turn, bruise the heel of man—a prophecy taken to indicate the Crucifixion. By providing only the first half of this stock allusion, Rossetti skillfully reinforces the poignant situation depicted in the painting which inspired the sonnet. In addition to setting forth the meaning of the picture, "The Holy Family" also locates this image within several temporal contexts. Ever since Lessing, the ancient truth that paintings in realistic styles were limited to a single moment in time had led to a concern with dramatically climactic moments. But typological symbolism offers a means of inserting the depicted scene in several different times, as it were, thus enriching the picture's effect.

Returning to Victorian sermons, we can observe other poetic possibilities of this type. Henry Melvill holds that "according to the fair laws of interpretation . . . the prophecy must be fulfilled in more than one individual,"<sup>12</sup> and while the seed of the woman is chiefly Christ Himself, this prophetic type has additional meanings. Taking Eve as a type of the Church, Melvill points out that this divine institution may be considered from "three points of view": "first, as represented by the head, which is Christ; secondly, collectively as a body; thirdly, as resolved into its separate members." In setting forth the many ways in which the individual believer can become an *imitatio Christi* by suffering in the battle against Satan, Victorian preachers could point to church party doctrines they wished to enforce. Thus, the High Churchman Keble, who advocates fasting as an orthodox practice, argues that Adam and Eve "sinned by eating, He [Christ] overcame sin by fasting—They began to yield to the serpent by longing after the forbidden tree, He began to bruise the serpent's head by abstaining from food itself lawful and innocent"<sup>13</sup>. Hence the true believer must continue the bruising by fasting. Charles Clayton, the Cambridge

Evangelical, makes a point characteristic of his party (which urged the major importance of preaching the Gospel) when he claimed that "This word, 'testifying' of 'the blood' of Jesus, is now preached everywhere, fully and constantly; and wherever this is done, believers find Satan bruised beneath their feet".<sup>14</sup>

Such interpretations of this type, which make the believer a post-figuration or 'fulfillment' of Christ, appear frequently in devotional verse, where they have had a long history. But perhaps the most interesting—and most subtle—Victorian uses of this type applied to the individual worshiper appear in the poetry of Hopkins. As we have seen in the sermons of F. W. Robertson, Victorian paraphrases of the bruising passage frequently substitute terms such as "crushing" for the words in the King James Bible. The notion that bruising or crushing can create a higher beauty, which underlies "The Windhover" and "God's Grandeur" would seem to be an instance of the extended use of the type, and for this there is ample poetic precedent. George Herbert's "The Banquet" thus provides an earlier example of Hopkins' organizing conceit in "The Windover" when it argues

But as Pomanders and wood  
Still are good,  
Yet being bruised are better scented:  
God, to show how farre his love  
Could improve,  
Here, as broken, is presented.

An even more distant extension of the notion of "bruising the serpent's head" would seem to underlie the "terrible sonnets," where the relations of violence, pressure, and grace are intertwined.<sup>15</sup>

Another capacity of such imagery, of which Robert Browning makes frequent use, is for characterization, or, more precisely, for locating a character within a moral and theological scheme. In *The Ring and the Book* the villainous Count Guido Francheschini represents himself as an innocent man by dramatizing himself as Christlike. But when he refers to "God's decree, / In which I, bowing bruised head, acquiesce" [V, 1410-1], he reminds us that he is, in fact, more like Satan than Christ. Guido's Satanic nature is recognized by other characters in the poem, including Caponsacchi, who, realizing his adversary's dangerous scheming, had thought to himself "No mother nor brother Viper of the [Francheschini] brood / Shall scuttle off without the instructive bruise" [VI, 677-78]. The authoritative statement of Guido's nature in terms of this image is made, of course, by

12. "The First Prophecy," I, 11. The passage from Melvill which follows appears on p. 13.

13. "On Fasting," III, 146.

14. "Satan Falling from Heaven," *Sermons (Preached in Cambridge)* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1859), p. 197.

15. Jerome Bump, "Hopkins Imagery and Medievalist Poetics," *Victorian Poetry*, 15 (1977), 99-119 provides an excellent discussion of the poet's typological images.

the old Pope, who sees Pompilia acting analogously to Christ when she treads this Satan-figure into hell—and, the reader adds, is herself “bruised.” Browning used the same typological allusions in *The Inn Album*. When the evil nobleman mentions in passing that “Head and feet/Are vulnerable both, and I, foot-sure,/Forgot that ducking down saves brow from bruise,” the reader might not perceive this as an allusion to Genesis 3:15. But when his former mistress describes him more elaborately, we cannot miss the allusion:

... let him slink hence till some subtler Eve  
Than I, anticipate the snake—bruise head  
Ere he bruise heel—or, wrier than the first,  
Some Adam purge earth's garden of its pest  
Before the slaver spoil the Tree of Life!

Two points demand mention here. First, Browning again has characters employ typological allusions to locate for the reader his villain, thus providing a form of authorial commentary even in the midst of forms modeled on the dramatic monologue. Second, his subtle uses of typology appear in the quiet distortions and personal applications each character makes of them.

In brief, typological symbolism offered Victorian poets many possibilities, not all of which we have had opportunity to examine in this brief sketch. But we have observed that a typological image can generate the entire Gospel scheme of salvation, for any particular type can lead the reader into the complex web of events that stretches across history, immediately recreating for him the entire pattern of Christ's sacrifice, its anticipations, and effects. Used in this manner such imagery allows the poet and painter alike to create powerful effects with great economy of means. Any allusion, secular or religious, will function in a somewhat similar manner, and what differentiates typology from other forms of allusion is the way it inevitably leads to the Christian conception of history and time which, in turn, creates a complete imaginative cosmos. A second use or effect of this symbolic mode appears in its connection of two times, the

second of which is said to complete or fulfill the first. Rossetti, Hopkins, and Tennyson all use this as a means of redeeming human time, of perceiving order and causality in human events. Thirdly, Rossetti, like Ruskin, uses this symbolism as a means of enriching individual painterly images, making them appear to exist simultaneously on several temporal planes. In addition to these characteristics, typology provides repeated examples of situations in which the eternal brushes up against or reaches into human time. On each occasion that a divinely instituted type, say, Samson or Melchizedek, pre-enacts a portion of Christ's life and message, a privileged situation occurs, one which exists on a double temporal scale, that of the earthly and that of the eternal. Rossetti continually searches for analogous secular moments in life and art which could give human existence the same kind of meaning and essential coherence that types furnish for sacred history, while Hopkins, more orthodox, can find these epiphanic moments still presented by grace.<sup>16</sup> Yet another aspect of typology appears in its emphasis upon the reality of signifier and signified, for whereas in allegory the literal meaning is essentially cast away as soon as its meaning, the kernel, is perceived, in typology literal and symbolic senses (Moses and Christ) remain of value: both are true. Although we have not had an opportunity to observe this effect of typology in our brief glance at various uses of the image derived from Genesis 3:15, we should note in passing that it is from this emphasis on the literal truth of typology that Holman Hunt and John Ruskin derived their related theories of a symbolic realism.<sup>17</sup> Finally, typological iconography offers the poet means of characterization, metaphors for autobiography, and images of the divine poet.<sup>18</sup> Like the century of Donne, Herbert and Milton, that of Rossetti, Browning, and Hopkins made great and ingenious use of biblical typology, and now it remains for students of Victorian literature to perceive traces of its impress upon their work.<sup>19</sup>

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16. I examine Rossetti's attempts to create a secular equivalent to christological typology in the item cited in n11 above.
17. See *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin*, pp. 443-57.
18. Linda H. Peterson, "Biblical Typology and the Self-Portrait of the Artist in Robert Browning," *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, ed. George P. Landow (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), pp. 235-68 demonstrates the way Browning, Carlyle, and others drew upon scriptural types for metaphors of self-representation.
19. An appropriate end note to this brief examination of Victorian typology is provided by a passage from Ch. 12 of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*

pointed out to me by Ms. Patricia Seeley. When Mrs. Verloc pleads with Ossipon to save her after she has murdered her husband, Conrad makes ironic allusion to Genesis 3:15 and its typological interpretation: "He felt her now clinging round his legs, and his terror reached its culminating point . . . He positively saw snakes now. He saw the woman twined round him like a snake, not to be shaken off. She was not deadly. She was death itself. . . . 'Tom, you can't throw me off now,' she murmured from the floor. 'Not unless you crush my head under your heel.' . . . And Mrs. Verloc waited in silence the good pleasure of her saviour."

# High Tea and Matzo Balls: Religion in the Victorian Jewish Novel

Linda Gertner Zatlin

WHEN WE THINK about Victorian Jews, we immediately think of Disraeli. When we think of Victorian Jews who wrote novels, we think of Disraeli. When we think about Victorian Jews who converted to Christianity, we think of Disraeli. What we know about the Victorian Jewish apostate novelist who rose to be prime minister may indeed be the sum of what we generally know about Victorian Jews. Most of us do *not* think about the way other Victorian Jews regarded apostasy and assimilation. Although we think about Disraeli in admiring terms, it is clear that numerous Victorian Jews were dubious about the morality, the value, and the possibility of a complete change of religions like Disraeli's. Indeed, the novels written by Victorian Jews who did not convert show that a change of religion usually meant disgrace and suffering. Yet many, if not most, Jews wanted to be good Victorians, and they had to decide how many Judaic practices were compatible with that aspiration. I want to examine three of the ways Jewish novelists suggest Jews practice their religion if they are to become good English Victorians.

As a result of political and social restrictions, the nineteenth century was the first opportunity Jews had to address other Jews and Englishmen through fiction. Of the forty-two nineteenth-century novelists I have identified as Jewish, fifteen wrote about Jewish life.<sup>1</sup> Although they address the larger community in the sense of providing alternatives and counter-stereotypes to those found in English anti-Semitic literature, these novelists also wrote for Jews. While silver

fork novels taught the middle class how to behave properly and governess novels taught Englishwomen how to marry well, these novels taught Jews how to be successful Victorians while retaining their essential Jewishness. The quick social and religious adjustments that the majority of immigrant Jews had to make between the closed ghetto and relatively open life in England are reflected in the novels.<sup>2</sup>

Many novels observe the Jew as he becomes acculturated, replacing Judaic ethics with Victorian moral and social values. Although the novelists in general criticize acculturation, few overtly preach Jewish separatism. Instead, they suggest readers balance being successful Jews and being English.<sup>3</sup> The rhetoric and the fact that Jewish novelists wrote more about English life and culture than about their own suggest that most of the novelists were slowly becoming acculturated themselves. The basic issues with which they deal are how to practice one's Judaism, whether to condone or condemn conversion and intermarriage, and how to be prosperous without being a Fagin.<sup>4</sup>

As seventeen of the thirty-one Jewish novels I have identified suggest, the good Victorian Jew scrupulously adheres to all the tenets of Judaism but minimizes the difference between Judaism and other religions. In Grace Aguilar's *The Vale of Cedars* (1850), for example, the narrator never clearly defines Judaism. She never names Jewish holidays but identifies each by a roughly concurrent Christian holiday. Descriptions of rituals and customs are oversimplified and ignore spiritual meaning. She emphasizes the physical com-

1. The number of novelists was small, but a small number of Jews lived in Victorian England. According to B. R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 8, in 1837 there were 30,000 Jews in England, .003 percent of the total population of England and Wales. In 1900 there were a quarter million English Jews, slightly more than .0075 percent of the total population.

In identifying the nineteenth-century Jewish novelists, I was assisted particularly by four bibliographies: Rabbi Edward N. Calisch, *The Jew in English Literature as Author and Subject* (Virginia: Bell, 1909), pp. 209-265; Rebecca Schneider, *Bibliography of Jewish Life in the Fiction of America and England* (Albany: New York State Library School, 1916), pp. 1-32; Montagu Frank Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England* (1939, rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 412-426; Leo J. Henkin, "Problems and Digressions in the Victorian Novel (1860-1900)," *Bulletin of Bibliography*, 10, 5 (1944), 105-107. This identification of nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish novels is the basis for a longer study on the same subject.

2. V. D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England: 1850-1950* (London: Watts, 1954), pp. 36-37, and Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 224, note that Jewish schools in England, from the 1820's forward, educated virtually all Jewish youth. After mid-century cultural confusion was created when English language, history, and literature were introduced into

the Jewish school curriculum. The cultural confusion this must have produced even in native English Jews emerges in Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto* (1898), in which a character comes to prefer the English language to Hebrew, the history of England to the history of the Jews, and Shakespeare to the Bible and thus denies her Judaism for many years.

3. At the same time the novelists teach Jews, they are also teaching Christians to tolerate Jews, not a surprising practice at a time when Jews were struggling to have political, economic, and social restrictions removed.

4. Although the novelists advocate no consistent religious doctrine, they do try to deal with the tension produced in those who attempted to be simultaneously religious Jews and good Victorians. And the picture they painted was palatable enough to sell. Most of the thirty-one novels dealing with Jewish life went through three editions. Grace Aguilar's *The Vale of Cedars* (1850) went through fourteen editions, the last in 1903, and seven translations, the last in 1939.

Figures on editions and translations come from Sampson Low, compiler, *English Catalogue of Books*, I, 8; IV, 6; V, 15; VII, 19; *The British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books* (London: British Museum, 1965), II, 752-754; *National Union Catalogue Pre-1956 Imprints* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1968), V, 349-354; Beth-Zion Abrahams, "Grace Aguilar: A Centenary Tribute," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 16(1952), 147.



ponents of the ceremonies: the booth erected for the festival of the harvest, the interior of a temple, and the marriage canopy under which a couple stands.<sup>5</sup> Each description employs adjectives such as "peculiar" and "mysterious," which romanticize rather than reveal anything about the spiritual significance of Jewish practices and teach Jews to conceal what is distinctive about their faith.

The narrator of *The Vale of Cedars* also suggests that a Jew should not reveal that he or she is Jewish because such a revelation may produce fear and aversion in non-Jews. When a non-Jew in the novel discovers his beloved is Jewish, he "stagger[ed] back, relinquishing the hands he had so fondly clasped, casting on her one look in which love and aversion were strangely and fearfully blended, and then burying his face in his hands, his whole frame shook as with some sudden and irrepressible anguish" (20). He continues to love her but believes himself a victim "to the magic and sorcery by means of which alone her hated race could make themselves beloved" (77; italics mine).<sup>6</sup>

The message for the Victorian Jew was clear: do not highlight the difference between you and other Englishmen. Avoid detailed religious explanation and minimize differences between Jew and non-Jew. One narrator, looking back over the century in 1898, presents the tension this way: a Jew "yearned to approximate as much as possible to John Bull without merging in him; to sink himself and yet not be absorbed." The complexity in having it both ways—in maintaining one's Judaism and becoming a Victorian Englishman—is epitomized in a description of the Jewish heroine of *The Vale of Cedars* whose complexion is "brunette when brought into close contact with the Saxon, blonde when compared with the Spaniard" (17-18).

Rather than try to have it both ways, some upper- and middle-class Jews became acculturated, either by formally converting to Christianity or by becoming cultural Jews who observed only the chief festivals. These cultural Jews were the ones in whose families the issues of conversion and intermarriage arose. The novelists write about wealthy and poor Jews who convert to Christianity as well as about Christians who convert to Judaism.<sup>8</sup> Whichever way conversion is attempted, it fails: three-quarters of the fictional Jews who convert to Christianity return to Judaism; all of

the Christians who convert to Judaism return to Christianity. By repeatedly illustrating the failure of conversion, the novelists seem to be showing the Victorian Jew that changing one's religion has no value, that it does not work.

Bertie Lee Harrison in Amy Levy's *Reuben Sachs, A Sketch* (1888) and Ellen Devereux in Samuel Gordon's *Unto Each Man His Own* (1904) typify the convert to Judaism and show the failure of such an effort. Bertie Lee Harrison, who converts to Judaism for sociological investigation, comes to Judaism with a history of switching religions: "he flirted with the Holy Mother for some years but didn't get caught. Then he joined a sect of mystics and lived for three months on a mountain, somewhere in Asia Minor. Now he has come round to thinking Judaism the one religion."<sup>9</sup> His shortlived ardor is first dampened by the rigors of Judaic practice. Bertie Lee confides to a Jewish friend, for example, that "the twenty-four hours' fast [on the Day of Atonement] had been the severest ordeal he had as yet undergone in the service of religion—his experience in Asia Minor not excepted" (95). Bertie Lee's zeal for Judaism withers quickly. He easily abandons the "faith his search for the true religion had led him, for the time being, to embrace" (110).

In contrast to Bertie Lee, the dilettante convert, is the sincere convert, typified by Ellen Devereux, who wants to become Jewish because she loves Arthur Clauston, a Jew. Although she is concerned that "the racial instincts in us may refuse to merge," Ellen becomes a serious proselyte, only to end several months later on the Jewish Day of Atonement, praying on her knees, cross in hand.<sup>10</sup> Pregnant and unable to face raising her child in the "covenant of Abraham," she leaves Arthur and marries a Protestant vicar in order to save her child's soul (196-213). This novel presents the fullest description of a common view: the convert, no matter how sincere, fails.

If Christians who convert to Judaism revert to Christianity in Jewish fiction, Jews who convert to Christianity never fully free themselves from their heritage. Josef Borlinski in Benjamin Farjeon's *Aaron the Jew* (1894) typifies these characters. Converted by the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, whose persuasive methods include giving him money, Borlinski does not abandon his Judaism entirely, for he is seen in synagogue religiously, "pray[ing], grovel[ling], and

5. Grace Aguilar, *The Vale of Cedars; or, the Martyr* (London: R. Groombridge, 1850). Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

6. Moreover, by ignoring actual beliefs and highlighting similarities, Aguilar indicates her awareness of a putative non-Jewish audience. To this audience, "peculiar," "mysterious," "sorcery," and "hated" were terms used by some non-Jews and confirmed for non-Jews their own image of Judaism. The narrator oversimplifies Judaism and avoids what it embodies, thereby neither offending nor informing the non-Jewish audience. Clearly, the narrator wishes this audience to tolerate Jews in their difference without necessarily understanding them.

7. Israel Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto, A Study of A Peculiar People* (New York: MacMillan, 1898), p. 329.

8. James Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History* (London: Trubner, 1875), pp. 198-201, and Israel Finestein, "The New Community: 1880-1918," *Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History*, ed. V. D. Lipman (Cambridge: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1961), p. 153, verify the conversions from Judaism to Christianity, but the novels of the day are the only documents to suggest that Christians may have converted to Judaism.

9. Amy Levy, *Reuben Sachs, A Sketch* (London: MacMillan, 1888), p. 24. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

10. Samuel Gordon, *Unto Each Man His Own* (London: William Heineman, 1904), p. 65. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

trembl[ing]" each year on the Day of Atonement.<sup>11</sup> Another character summarizes the novel's implicit message: "Once a Jew, always a Jew" (269).

Although they temporize about acculturation for their audiences and themselves, the novelists are uniformly against intermarriage—at least until 1894, when intermarriage becomes no longer an *issue* but a *condition*.<sup>12</sup> Early Victorian Jewish novelists depict little problem with intermarriage. Jews and non-Jews simply do not marry. The young heroine of *The Vale of Cedars* dies somewhat accultured, looking forward to meeting her Christian beloved in heaven where "earth's fearful distinctions can never come between us" (248); but she dies without considering intermarriage. Later novelists teach that each Jew must protect the walls of the community and the faith by marrying within Judaism. Using negative examples the novelists examine what happens both when Jewish women marry non-Jewish men and when Jewish men marry non-Jewish women. Jewish women who marry out of the faith are considered failures who cannot bring "down one of the wily sons of Shem" (*Reuben Sachs*, 235). More important, they are cut off from family and friends.

When Jewish men marry Christian women, they suffer. Judaism and "ugly Jewish features" cause one wife to despise her husband and to reject their daughter because of her "Ghetto face."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in Farjeon's *Pride of Race* (1900) Lady Julia despises her wealthy, educated Jewish husband and berates herself for marrying a Jew, moaning, "How low I have fallen, how low, how low."<sup>14</sup> Intermarriage may have worked for Disraeli, but in Jewish fiction it works primarily for the scoundrels of Judaism and Christianity. Anglo-Jewish novelists thus show that to become a good Victorian one must remain diffident about Judaism while protecting the future of the faith by scorning conversion and intermarriage.

By comparing the financial affairs of nominal and devout Jews, the novelists teach that the successful Victorian Jew must also learn how to make money yet remain a good Jew. Nominal Jews are materialistic, the novelists show, because they fail to follow the Jewish model for living. Because they worship money instead of God, they are dishonest in their professions. As appropriate punishment they ultimately lose their money, fail to find personal happiness, or both. The

novelists' treatment of nominal, materialistic Jews suggests growing discontent with this increasingly prominent section of the Jewish community. Their criticism of individuals whose "God is Gain" (*Hasty Marriage*, 1857, 33) progresses during the century from hostility toward a parasitic Jewish moneylender (*Caleb Stukely*, 1842-43) to an intense generic disgust with accultured, middle-class *nouveaux riches* Jews who make money obsessively. In contrast, the truly good Jew does not live only to make money. Devout Jews succeed in their vocations and their personal lives because they adhere to the ethical tenets Judaism provides.

Accultured though they are themselves, Jewish novelists do not permit materialistic Jews who ignore their religion to succeed for long. One nominal Jew, Solomon Isaacs, "went to synagogue regularly every Sabbath, and mumbled through a form of prayers, the meaning of which he had as much knowledge as the Man in the Moon."<sup>15</sup> Instead of worshipping God, Isaacs worships money, of which he makes a great deal. Seeing his new fortune as the key to English society, Isaacs sheds what he perceives as barriers: his longtime Jewish friends, his Jewish-sounding name, and his son's fiancée—a poor Jewish girl. As punishment Isaacs awakens one morning to find himself "a ruined man and a beggar" (913).<sup>16</sup> Jewish novelists also teach that nominal Jews pursue unethical business methods. Crude Manny Henry buys anything and anyone. Yet he cannot buy his daughter's way out of an unhappy marriage.<sup>17</sup>

Businessmen are not the only Jewish materialists. Reuben Sachs, an ambitious politician, performs "the sacred duty of doing the very best for [him]-self" (126). Because only self-interest and personal ambition motivate him, Sachs dies before he can learn that he won an election. Physicians, too, come under the novelists' scalpel, as in *Dr. Phillips*. The eponymous protagonist worships at the shrine of money no less than other Jewish materialists, but he flaunts his philosophy. He takes a non-Jewish mistress, plays the stock market, kills his wife, and openly rejects Judaism; his intent at the end of the novel is "to unsex women and maim men; to be a living testimony to manual dexterity and moral recklessness."<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to the amoral and eventually unsuccessful

11. Benjamin Farjeon, *Aaron the Jew* (London: Hutchinson, 1894), p. 275. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited in the text. Presumably, Borlinski prays to be forgiven for converting to earn money. In effect, Borlinski plays a Jewish joke on the conversionist society by remaining true to his heredity.

12. The novelists' concern about intermarriage is appropriate, given the fact that intermarriage increasingly occurred in the Jewish community during the last half of the century. In reaction, eighteen of the thirty-one novels about Jewish life examine intermarriage and deliver the verdict that intermarriages are overwhelmingly unsuccessful.

13. Mrs. Andrew Dean, pseud. [Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick], *Lesser's Daughter* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), pp. 41, 18.

14. Benjamin Farjeon, *Pride of Race* (Philadelphia: Jacobs, 1901), p. 101. Only one intermarriage works, in Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick's, *The Grasshoppers* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895), apparently because

both partners interest themselves in making money, exhibit little empathy with others, and invest their energy in obliterating all traces of the husband's Jewish origins.

15. Benjamin Farjeon, *Solomon Isaacs* (Chicago: Donnelly, Loyd, 1877), p. 904. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

16. In Frank Danby, pseud. [Mrs. Julia Frankau], *Pigs in Clover* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1893), another nominal Jew, a greedy venal man, ultimately loses all his friends and relatives as a result of his obsession with making money.

17. Frank Danby, *The Sphinx's Lawyer* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1906).

18. Frank Danby, *Dr. Phillips: A Maida Vale Idyll*, 2nd ed. (London: Vize-telly, 1877), p. 341.

nominal Jews, devout Jews are not materialists. Whether they are stockbrokers or pawn brokers, clothiers or old clothes men, their religion provides an ethical structure for their business methods. Because Aaron Cohen (*Aaron the Jew*) and Moses Mendoza (*Pride of Race*) are devout Jews and ethical men in their business and personal lives, they receive financial and spiritual rewards. Cohen, who donates a substantial part of his fortune to charity anonymously—the highest form of charity for a Jew—becomes a respected man in his community. Mendoza makes a fortune on the stock market, then he educates his son and supports many people anonymously. Although Mendoza loses most of his money, because he is a devout Jew, he easily adapts to an altered style of living, and the novelist even suggests he will make another fortune.

Devout Jews do not necessarily adhere, however, to formal Jewish religious practice. For Mendoza, keeping dietary laws and attending synagogue are unimportant. Retaining Jewish beliefs and using them by living Jewishly—through charity, for example—are important.<sup>19</sup> Sincerity toward Judaism, expressed through the way one lives, is paramount. The good Victorian Jew is Jewish in his heart. The relationship is

circular: the good Victorian Jew is a devout Jew because a devout Jew is more successful.

For these novelists, then, a good Jew is born, not made. Religious affiliation is an inherited instinct which cannot be denied or obliterated. Environment has no effect—adopting a non-Jewish baby is not the issue (*Aaron the Jew*, 285-324). Conversion to or from Judaism will not cause a transfiguration. Inter-marriage will not alter religious identity. One character bluntly states, “[one’s religion] is in the blood” (*Aaron the Jew*, 322), a view developed as we know in *Harrington* (1816) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Thus, by the close of the era, a quasi-scientific view, a matter of things unseen—of birth, of instinct, of inner feeling rather than outward appearance—constitutes the definition of a good Jew. If one’s religion depends heavily on things unseen, one does not have to appear different, to follow all the religious dictates, or to be really different. The novelists redefine the Jewish religion from ritual to romance and thus make it easy to be a good Jew and an acculturated Victorian too.

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## Hardy, Barnes, and the Provincial

Donald Wesling

AS WE TRY to clarify the integral sensibility behind the poetry and the novels of Thomas Hardy, his relation to the marvellous Dorsetshire poet William Barnes will seem especially pertinent. I will argue that Hardy’s recognition of Barnes’ limits as a provincial poet contributed not only to decisions about the handling of dialogue in his major novels, but also to his enlarging imaginative grasp of place-as-theme in the concept of Wessex.

In a conversation recorded late in life, Hardy responded heatedly to a critic’s notion that he was “brought up” to speak the local dialect. “I did not speak it. I knew it, but it was not spoken at home. My mother only used it when speaking to the cottagers, and my father when speaking to his workmen.”<sup>1</sup> Though on his mother’s side of the family Hardy was directly related to laboring people, his father as master mason was in the position of hiring-out labor, and it appears the family refrained from speaking dialect as a mark of class-differential.<sup>2</sup> What distinguishes their position is the discre-

tionary use of *two languages, both English*, one dialect and one standard, one tugging toward the country laborer and the other toward the town shopkeeper. In Hardy’s lifetime and since, most students of the novels have preferred to describe Hardy’s language and class situation by the imprecise label “countryman.” Though perhaps the mistake sold novels, Hardy himself, wishing to suppress his class origins, could never resist a chance to set the record straight. The novels themselves perform this correction by isolating the dialect speakers, modifying their speech by contrast with standard forms, and then, in the Prefaces, arguing that represented dialect is the result of scientific selection.

In the mature Hardy the wish to muffle class origins takes the guise not of avoidance or disdain of dialectal forms, but of philological study. Among other purposes, the Wessex novels were to be the elegiac rehearsal of what he called “the dying, unwritten Wessex English,”<sup>3</sup> in its final moment of poise. Knowing well that literature is imagined orality

19. See also, for example, *Unto Each Man His Own*, pp. 23-24.

1. Quoted in Vere H. Collins, *Talks With Thomas Hardy at Max Gate: 1920-1922* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1928), pp. 73-4.

2. Statements about Hardy’s attitude toward his position in society depend on Robert Gittings’ recent and definitive account of Hardy’s

fierce suppression of his own class background: see *Young Thomas Hardy* (London: Heinemann, 1975), esp. Chapters 1, 2, and 20.

3. See Harold Orel, ed., *Thomas Hardy’s Personal Writings* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1966), p. 170. Further page references to this collection will be abbreviated “Orel” in my text.

and not speech itself, Hardy no doubt saw that to write the unwritten Wessex English was to acknowledge a symptom of its dying. And yet, partly because he had before him vividly the example of William Barnes, dialect became part of his rural-novel project. The career of Barnes was an incentive, and a warning, to the young writer obsessed by the relationship between province and metropolis. Hardy saw the very considerable achievement in Barnes' invention of a true dialect poetry: he understood that the success was one of exuberant philology, a selection of rhythms and graphic representations for local Dorset speech—a conscious appreciative use, for example, of “the luxury of four demonstrative pronouns” rather than two (Orel, p. 76). Despite Barnes' own admission that he “could not help” writing a poetry that set untaught speakers uttering dramatic monologues in the local dialect of a tiny corner of England, Hardy rightly believed Barnes an “academic” poet who “really belonged to the literary school of such poets as Tennyson, Gray, and Collins, rather than to that of the old unpremeditated singers in dialect” (Orel, p. 79). Barnes' was a metropolitan poetry which happened to fasten itself in Dorchester.

Hardy's complaint wasn't that Barnes was not conscious, but that he was not conscious enough of the possibilities in the local material; for the limitation almost solely to local speech and speakers helped Barnes “to elude . . . those dreams and speculations that cannot leave alone the mystery of things” (Orel, p. 81). Writing the older poet's obituary in 1886 Hardy praises “not only a lyric writer of a high order of genius, but probably the most interesting link between present and past forms of rural life that England possessed” (Orel, p. 100-101). Hardy was aware that he was himself another such link, and aware too that “intense localization” and the “veil” or “screen” of dialect restrict the literary possibilities of the rural material: “much is lost to the outsider” (Orel, p. 82). Accordingly his own poems and novels are highly selective in their use of the provincial materials.

Even beyond the use of dialect to defamiliarize standard speech, the invention of Wessex in the novels of the 1870s is

an attempt to subsume and transcend Barnes. Hardy, wanting a larger innovation than Barnes', determined to combine dialectal and standard registers so that each would be the implicit comment on the other. That way dialect would become a graph of class in a novel written about the countryside for a readership in the city. Beyond this, and partly because of the negative lesson learned from Barnes' works, Wessex becomes more than a roofing concept or resurrected place-name for the major fiction. It is the name of a project or cycle, a concept which enables the author to pursue an extended inquiry, a sustained literary reverie of powerful seriousness. Beginning as a geographical premise with the end-maps of *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), Wessex not only populates the places on the map but extends as well to the completion of a historical terrain. It offers an account of the human effects of an acceleration of the rate of historical change. The six major Novels of Character and Environment work out deep personal and historical perplexities, privileged by this systematic convenience which rules that distinctions between local and cosmopolitan, reality and fiction, be overridden; that a single story of change in the countryside be multiple, through novels which repeat place, theme, and character-types; and that words of dialogue be dissociated from the author's.

It will not have escaped notice that in setting himself up as a provincial writer whose dialect passages are intended for metropolitan readers of standard English, Hardy in his fictional project repeats the class-situation of the earliest years of his family life by transposing it to a linguistic situation in the interaction of created characters. That Hardy was a poet before, and during, his quarter-century flourishing as a novelist, enabled him the more adequately to define, then transcend, Barnes' version of the provincial. Barnes, by contrast, lacked Wessex. He did not perceive the dialectical possibilities inherent in the literary use of dialect: he did not directly attempt to correlate speech with class.

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## Father and Mother in *Father and Son*

E. Pearlman

THE RECORD of the struggle of a sensitive child with a domineering parent is set apart from similar Victorian autobiographies by Gosse's certainty that his father was the possessor of a seventeenth-century soul or character. All stories of generational conflict are biased in favor of the abused child, who is often (as in this case) the narrator, but *Father and Son* more than most, for young Willy Gosse must triumph over a particularly old-fashioned and repressive tyrant in order to achieve uniqueness and personal dignity. The

emergence of individualism in this book is handled with a deftness that the finest of novelists must envy. In fact, Gosse deploys so many of the familiar stylistic devices of autobiographical novels that we must take every precaution to avoid thinking of *Father and Son* as a work of autonomous fiction. Gosse can himself mislead us into so limited a frame of reference, for in his introduction he seems to suggest that the most important act of a critical reader of *Father and Son* is to adjudicate the rival claims of tragedy and comedy. “The

comedy was superficial and the tragedy essential"<sup>1</sup> is his mistaken diagnosis. Yet Gosse also moves to set purely literary questions aside when he stakes a claim for the book as a historical document; every part, he says, is "scrupulously true" (5). The primary effort of this brief essay is historical—to set a psychological autobiography in its context in psychological history. Nevertheless, it should not be thought that to see *Father and Son* as a historical document is to deny its very considerable imaginative power. Gosse's achievement in representing the conflict of seventeenth-century and nineteenth-century norms of behavior is a work of great historical and imaginative sympathy.

Sections of the autobiography, it must be conceded, are indistinguishable from fiction. Surely it was Gosse's reading of Dickens' novels that alerted him to the person of Miss Flaw, a dotty old lady who adapted to the extraordinary length and intensity of the meetings of the Plymouth Brethren by going through a "service exactly similar to ours, but much briefer," mouthing a hymn when she felt its time had come, and "sweep[ing] . . . in fairy majesty, out of the chapel, my Father still rounding his periods from the pulpit" (103). From Dickens, Gosse learned not only to cherish oddity, but more importantly to exploit the double perspective characteristic of *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, where the naive astonishment of the child is not compromised by the ironic or moralistic sophistication of the adult narrator. A remarkable event of Gosse's childhood was his surreptitious consumption of a Christmas pudding in a household where the least gesture toward the holiday was forbidden as both pagan and popish. Filled with anguish and remorse, the seven-year-old child burst into his father's study, calling out, "'Oh! Papa, Papa, I have eaten of flesh offered to idols!'"

It took some time, between my sobs, to explain what had happened. Then my father sternly said: "Where is the accursed thing?" I explained that as much as was left of it was still on the kitchen table. He took me by the hand, and ran with me into the midst of the startled servants, seized what remained of the pudding, and with the plate in one hand and me still tight in the other, ran till we reached the dust-heap, when he flung the idolatrous confectionery on to the middle of the ashes, and then raked it deep down into the mass. (84)

Our reaction to the passage is controlled by the phrase, "idolatrous confectionery," in which the earnestness of the adjective is defused by the triviality of the noun. Gosse's phraseology gives us assurance in advance that this harsh regimen will be superseded by a freer state, while the ironic dismissal of a potentially disabling experience guarantees that the abused narrator has already transcended puritanical repression to achieve a more liberated and spacious point of view. If comedy celebrates release from bondage, this

autobiography is intrinsically comic; and its comedy (as well as its humor) arises out of the double perspective.

This rhetorical technique is based on a particular psychological configuration. Double perspective is a function of divided consciousness—the simultaneous awareness of the thing itself and its alternative or negation. This autobiography takes place in the century and the moment of Dorian Grey and Dr. Jekyll, and doubling or splitting has become a characteristic literary mode. In *Father and Son* Gosse depicts the genesis of this particular intrapsychic situation—that is, the divided self—and it is to this most intriguing point that I now wish to turn.

According to Edmund, his father, Philip Henry Gosse, was the possessor of a "state of soul once not uncommon in Protestant Europe" (15)—that of a seventeenth-century Calvinist sectarian. In the *Life* of his father, written in 1890, Gosse had discussed this at some length, concluding that

[my father] had nothing in common with his age. He was a Covenanter come into the world a couple of centuries after his time, to find society grown too soft for his scruples and too ingenious for his severe simplicity. He could never learn to speak the ethical language of the nineteenth century; he was seventeenth century in spirit and manner to the last.<sup>2</sup>

This extraordinary judgment seems to be a correct one, for Philip Henry Gosse, at least as he comes through to us in his own writings, is a man immensely similar to the kind of individual thrown up by various of the separatist movements of the earlier part of the seventeenth century. The most prominent point of comparison is his conviction (not achieved without vigorous self-scrutiny) of the righteousness of his faith. He was able to rest secure and content in the knowledge that the church of Christ of his parish had been solely chosen for salvation, not only from fissiparous Calvinism but from the whole of Christendom, the others doomed to damnation for doctrinal errors. Chosen and halloved, he was a member of a group known among themselves as "the Saints" (a usage either descended from the seventeenth century, or independently re-invented). Along with anxious exclusivity and strenuous self-examination came a devout millenarianism indifferent to the world's repeated failure to put an end to itself. Fierce anti-Catholicism united to a tendentious style of biblical exegesis, more idolatrous than reverential, was also prominent in his system. On the innovative left of religious radicalism in the middle of the seventeenth century, these ideas had fossilized generations before the middle of the nineteenth century, when the events which comprise *Father and Son* act themselves out. Just as P. H. Gosse's *Omphalos*, a curious fundamentalistic attack on Darwin, was the last atavistic gasp of a habit of

1. P. 6 in the convenient Penguin edition (Baltimore, 1970).

2. *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.* (London, 1890), p. 335.

mind earlier in the mainstream of scientific thought, so Philip Henry's general orientation toward the world was similarly embalmed. Young William, confined to a small community in which such ideas went unchallenged, insulated from the merest inkling of progressive thought, almost wholly isolated from any influence but that of his father, was therefore brought up in an environment which can only be regarded, at least in its intellectual substance, as a remnant of an era long superseded.

But there is an important contrast between the ideology to which Gosse was forced to subscribe and the emotional pattern of the child-rearing which shaped his character, and it is out of this tension that the drama as well as the psychological complexity of *Father and Son* arises. It must not be forgotten that vast changes had taken place in attitudes toward children. In the seventeenth century, children were liable to be treated as smaller adults capable of a full day of work or learning, to be shunted from one surrogate family to another, to be physically abused. In the nineteenth century, childhood had achieved separate and dignified status, and while parents could be faulted for "intrusive" child-rearing, the casual brutality of previous eras had withered (at least in the social class to which Gosse belonged). If nothing else, Gosse was prized as a child—treated as a person of great value. Remnants of the earlier pattern did survive; when Gosse bitterly describes how his father would pray over a wound before bandaging it, he criticizes a seventeenth-century priority. But in general Gosse's situation was special in that a seventeenth-century system of ideas confronts a very modern pattern of child care. *Father and Son* shows how an ideology which was designed to encourage dependence and a feeling of worthlessness before the divine power was dissolved by a nurturing pattern of childrearing. When, therefore, Gosse chronicles the emergence of his own personality out of this environment, he condenses into one experience seven or eight generations of the progression in psychological change.

One of the features of an upbringing dominated, as was Gosse's, by a father convinced of his perfect theological accuracy was the requirement that the child ingest an extraordinary deal of unquestionable information about an all-powerful God. Gosse's experience was therefore similar to that of the normative child of the seventeenth century in that he was instructed that God was omnipotent and, even if inscrutable, certainly knowable. In the seventeenth century this concept of the divine was supplemented by a great deal of authoritarian propaganda which identified the father of the family as the surrogate of God and consequently demanded faithful obedience to the divine viceroy. Because it governed the relationship between fathers and sons, this prevailing metaphor stands as the essential doctrinal point of

seventeenth-century psychology. This most common of commonplaces was stated (by Isaac Ambrose) with neither apology nor shuffling:

Children must remember, that whatsoever they do to their Parents, they do it to God; when they please them, they please God; when they disobey them, they disobey God. When their Parents are justly angry with them, God is angry with them; nor can they recover Gods favour (though all the Saints of heaven should entreat for them) till they have submitted themselves to their own Parents. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The nineteenth-century philosophical tradition from Feuerbach to Freud had overturned this formula ("the father represents God") and replaced it with its inverse ("God represents the father"). Psychological reality had altered as much as the system of ideas; chief among the differences between seventeenth-century and modern psychology was the relegation to the margins of an authoritarian personality heavily indentured to the father-as-God equivalence, and its replacement by a personality marked, as is Gosse's, by divided or split consciousness. It is in this context that I wish to call attention to what must be the single most important paragraph in *Father and Son*; most important, that is, to anyone interested in the advent of this characteristic of the Victorian frame of mind.

Young Edmund William began life as Isaac Ambrose's model child, unskeptical of the divinity of his father. Hearing so much "about an Omniscient God" and not perceiving him, he identified him with his father. "I confused [him] in some sense with God; at all events, I believed that my Father knew everything and saw everything" (28). Inevitably, his father failed him, and disillusionment followed.

The theory that my Father was omniscient or infallible was now dead and buried. . . . My father, as a deity, as a natural force of immense prestige, fell in my eyes to a human level. In future, his statements about things in general need not be accepted implicitly. (30)

The antique notion that God and the father are one and the same had been summarily dethroned. It is in the sentences which follow that a most interesting and revealing psychological movement takes shape.

But of all the thoughts which rushed upon my savage and undeveloped little brain at this crisis, the most curious was that I had found a companion and a confidant in myself. There was a secret in this world and it belonged to me and to a somebody who lived in the same body with me. There were two of us and we could talk with one another. It is difficult to define impressions so rudimentary, but it is certain that it was in this dual form that the sense of my individuality now suddenly descended upon me, and it is equally certain that it was a great solace to me to find a sympathizer in my own breast. (30)

3. Isaac Ambrose, *Media*, p. 237 in *Complete Works* (London, 1674).

Gosse's individuality "descended" in "dual form." He discovered a secret sharer of his own consciousness. In so doing he replicated in cataclysmic form what may have occurred over the generations by the accretion of smaller variations. In this brief compass we see the emergence of a significant aspect of nineteenth-century personality out of what is essentially a seventeenth-century intellectual matrix.

But how is it that the dual consciousness that seeds itself in this paragraph was able to grow to fruition? The realization that the father is not divine must have occurred to great numbers of children, though it is obvious that, for many, such an idea was deflected (or repressed) to the area of the unthinkable, an instigator of unconscious tension but certainly not of rational analysis. But why was such an idea not crushed by the power of a domineering father such as Philip Henry Gosse? How was it that Edmund was able to progress from an authoritarian to a modern posture? How could he shrug off in a few years a powerful psychological structure that took centuries to wear away by attrition?

The most obvious reason is probably the most important. The social nexus which had reinforced authoritarian principles in the seventeenth century no longer functioned. Paternal prerogatives and economic sanctions had by and large come to an end, while the state itself had abandoned the injunctive powers that had legally compelled orthodoxy. Moreover, Edmund could not avoid learning that his father's *Omphalos* had been ridiculed; little by little, his attic reading informed him of the great world beyond the Oddicombe cloister. Indeed, the society to which Gosse was attracted when he eventually snipped the umbilicus and made his pilgrimage to London could only have served to alienate him from paternal doctrine. He counted among his acquaintances not only Swinburne the notorious but also Robert Louis Stevenson, whose psychological drift from Edinburgh Calvinism paralleled almost exactly Gosse's own development. But these powerful economic and intellectual factors are the *public* causes of burgeoning psychological independence; of equal or greater interest is Gosse's *private* reality.

A crucial and startling difference between Gosse and a theoretical seventeenth-century child analogously placed (and even between him and other members of the Plymouth Brethren) was that, strange as it may seem, young Edmund was exempted from damnation. All seventeenth-century separatists suffered dreadfully from an inner conviction of unworthiness and from a desperate anxiety about eternal punishment. For them, the power of God was enforced not only positively by exhortation but negatively by the threat of damnation. That such an ideology provoked an unlimited variety of defensive adaptations is well-known. In one familiar theory, the doctrine of the calling becomes a channel through which the fear of eternal punishment can be converted into productive labor—thus providing the psychological impetus for the development of rational capitalism.

I do not know whether it has been suggested that rationalism itself can in some cases be precipitated by a vigorous denial of the horrors of Calvinist theology. Be that as it may, the subject of damnation is important by its non-existence in Edmund Gosse's account of himself. His father, we are told,

had formed the idea, and cultivated it assiduously, that I was an *âme d'élite* . . . one in whom the Holy Ghost had already performed a real and permanent work. . . . Nothing . . . could invalidate my election. (108-109)

Philip Henry Gosse seems to have effected a curious amalgam of Calvinist orthodoxy with the doctrine of the romantic child. And though the young Gosse listed this as one of the burdens of his youth—that as a chosen one he had to conform to a moral standard more exacting than that of his peers—it is hard to imagine that the security and comfort of his position did not help him to cultivate the less dependent side of his nature and therefore allow the new duality of his person to flourish.

A second source of Gosse's strength was a very satisfying relationship with his mother, and this again was a privilege that does not seem at all common among the children of seventeenth-century sectarians. The strongest and most harrowing portion of *Father and Son* concerns the young child's months of sole attendance on his cancer-ridden and doomed mother. The reader is solicited to sympathize with Edmund, when his mother lies

in the greatest misery in a lodging with no professional nurse to wait on her, and with no companion but a little helpless boy of seven years of age. . . . I was now my Mother's sole and ceaseless companion: the silent witness of her suffering, of her patience, of her vain and delusive attempts to obtain alleviation for her anguish. For nearly three months I breathed the atmosphere of pain, saw no other light, heard no other sounds, thought no other thoughts than those which accompany physical suffering and weariness. (47, 44)

Without attempting to deny the terrible pain of the death of Emily Gosse (and the author has rather mitigated than exaggerated its horrors), the effect on the child was not the unalloyed misery these quotations suggest. Scattered comments indicate that the important and secure bond between mother and son was strengthened by her suffering.

That bond had been strong from the first. When Gosse subtitled his book "The Struggle of Two Temperaments," he failed to make it clear that he had an important ally in the struggle. Though Emily Gosse died in 1857, when her son was only seven years old, her influence on him did not cease. While his mother had been alive, the family, or at least that part in her control, had been intensely child-centered. "Left to my Mother's sole care," he noted in the opening chapter of his book, "I became the center of her solicitude" (11). He took the trouble to cite a line from her unpublished diary:

"I [Emily] have made up my mind to give myself up to Baby for the winter" (12). Later, when his mother became ill, a principal regret was that he

no longer slept in her room, no longer sank to sleep under her kiss, no longer saw her mild eyes smile on me with the earliest sunshine. (52)

Despite its title, *Father and Son* is not to be grouped with such documents as Mill's *Autobiography*, where the conflict is of such a resolutely masculine character that the existence of the mother is denied.

In fact, a closer examination of the chapter that describes Emily Gosse's death shows that the author is not content merely to solicit sympathy for the bereaved child. The clause cited above, "I was my mother's sole and ceaseless companion," carries with it the tone not only of regret, but of distinction. Diseased she may be, but Edmund has her all to himself. Apparent woe is set against actual pleasure:

As my Mother's illness progressed, she could neither sleep, save by the use of opiates, nor rest, except in a sloping posture, propped up by many pillows. It was my great joy, and a pleasant diversion, to be allowed to shift, beat up, and rearrange these pillows, a task which I learned to accomplish not too awkwardly. (47)

Self-satisfaction becomes just a trifle too smug. A succeeding paragraph is even more frank, and consequently a trifle offensive. Emily was forced to travel from Islington to Pimlico to consult a specialist:

This involved great fatigue and distress to her, but as far as I was personally concerned it did me a great deal of good. I invariably accompanied her, and when she was tired and weak, I enjoyed the pride of believing that I protected her. (42)

And when "the holiest and purest of women" (53) dies, her last words (according to the son's account, but, interestingly enough, not the father's) are directed toward young Edmund. "Take our lamb and walk with me," she says. "Then my Father comprehended, and pressed me forward; her hand fell softly upon mine, and she seemed content" (53). If it is true that boys compete with their fathers for their mother's attention, then this particular battle has been settled decisively in the son's favor.<sup>4</sup> Is it too speculative to suggest that Gosse's resilience in achieving an independent personality in the face of his father's inquisitorial demands was a heritage bequeathed to him by a mother who managed, even in dying, to communicate a sense of worth and value?

There is abundant material in *Father and Son* to provoke a vigorous psychoanalytic foray, but such cannot be the purpose of an essay only designed to set Gosse's peculiar upbringing in historical context. Born into a fossilized community presided over by an authoritarian, seventeenth-century father, Gosse developed a characteristic Victorian sensibility. The decline of hell and the end of the public sanction of orthodoxy made it easy for him to rebel, but the essential freedom derived from a special nurturing relationship with his mother. The high valuation placed on childhood, and on this particular child, overrode the tyranny of his father and made possible the cultivation of that complex personality which took shape when the idea that the father represents God was suddenly nullified. Just as *Father and Son* has an important place in intellectual history, so it has a place in psychological history; nor is its value as literature diminished.<sup>5</sup>

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## Time in *Nicholas Nickleby*

Patricia Marks

THE SUBPLOTS IN *Nicholas Nickleby* are unmistakably connected in a picaresque manner with Nicholas himself serving as the primary common denominator. Yet while the novel is also integrated by the major themes of isolation and money,

most critics acknowledge the absence of a "great ramifying symbol."<sup>1</sup> Dickens' metaphorical handling of time in this novel has thus been virtually ignored,<sup>2</sup> although time as a function of the natural cycle is the stated milieu for each

4. In P. H. Gosse's, *A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse* (London, 1857), the last word she uttered on earth was "Papa" (78).

5. It is not difficult to detect these psychological patterns in Gosse's juvenile drama, *King Erik*. A young poet offers affection to Erik's wife; the king kills him. In penance, Erik is told to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but is killed by the half-brother of the victim. It is all there; the divided consciousness, symbolized by the poet and his half-brother; the struggle for possession of the mother; and even (in the pilgrimage) the search for true religion in order to legitimize the family structure.

1. Bernard Bergonzi, "Nicholas Nickleby," in *Dickens and the Twentieth Century*, ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 67.

2. A brief treatment of time in *Nicholas Nickleby* appears in Gerald Duane Brown's dissertation, *The Significance of Time in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1971). Brown notes that the "subjective character" of time is stronger than its "objective character" and that Ralph and the Cheerybles personify a "temporal framework."



character. Moreover, each character's attitude toward time (the way that he measures and uses it) is a pronouncement upon his moral health.

At least a dozen different timepieces or chronological accessories are mentioned, quite aside from the sun itself and the dial on St. Paul's Cathedral. Newman Noggs, in keeping with his alcoholic propensities, tells time by the public-house clock; Squeers by the clock in the station; and Tilda by a Dutch kitchen clock, a symbol of domesticity. Madeline makes watch-guards while nursing her dying father. Mantilini, whose foppishness tethers him to materialism, appears with "a very copious watchchain wound round his body." The Cheeryble brothers wear watch chains of gold, a metal indicating their nature. The miser Gride, who wears a steel chain, owns a clock that represents his penurious spirit: "A tall grim clock upon the stairs, with long lean hands and famished face, ticked in cautious whispers; and when it struck the time, in thin and piping sounds like an old man's voice, it rattled, as if it were pinched with hunger."<sup>3</sup> In fact, Gride and his clock are so closely identified that when he summons Peg, his servant, she replies, "Was that you a calling, or only the clock a striking?" Ralph Nickleby, who is in the process of resetting his watch when he is notified of his brother's death, is likewise indistinguishable from a timepiece: "[the heart] of the old worldly man lay rusting in its cell, beating only as a piece of cunning mechanism, and yielding no one throb of hope, or fear, or love, or care, for any living thing" (p. 122). Moreover, Tim Linkinwater's "scrupulous method" is described in terms of time: "Punctual as the counting-house dial, which he maintained to be the best time-keeper in London next after the clock of some old, hidden, unknown church hard by . . . the old clerk performed the minutest actions of the day, and arranged the minutest articles in the little room, in a precise and regular order" (p. 469).

Underlying horological time, or time artificially divided and recorded by manmade timepieces, is natural time, a cyclical progression which is experienced holistically. Clearly, the person attuned to nature escapes from a chafing consciousness of time, for "nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own; and from morning to night, as from the cradle to the grave, is but a succession of changes so gentle and easy, that we can scarcely mark their progress" (p. 122). In the country the air is "clear and fair," and the sun's diurnal movement from youthful brightness to the "serenity of old age" is a proper model for the progress of man's life. Just as clearly, the person who lives in accord with Ralph Nickleby's and Gride's maxim, "time is money," binds himself to a limiting definition in which time, like

money, is measured and used rather than experienced. The city, where "the very breath of its busy people hung over their schemes of gain and profit," is so polluted by this misinterpretation that when "the time was three o'clock in the afternoon to the dull and plodding," it was "the first hour of morning to the gay and spirited." Such an emphatic contrast between the wholesome natural rhythm and the unhealthy extension of daytime for money's sake is the background for the duel between the dissipated Mulberry and the weak-willed Verisopht: "For the flaring yellow light within [the gambling den] was substituted the clear, bright, glorious morning; for a hot, close atmosphere, tainted with the smell of expiring lamps, and reeking with the steams of riot and dissipation, the free, fresh, wholesome air" (p. 664). This disruption of time effectively removes the "gay and spirited" not only from ordinary daily responsibilities but also from the salvation that the natural cycle offers.

For Dickens perfect attunement to the natural cycle promises a full life as well as rebirth through death. The proper human orientation is well exemplified by the Cheeryble Brothers, whose honesty and altruism are offered as antidotes to their commercial involvement. Since the Cheerybles' wealth is their good nature, it is they themselves, and not the naturalistic City Square in which the counting-house stands, who become symbolic of the natural way. Dickens, in fact, deliberately refuses to accept the square as a symbol for nature: let no one suppose, he says, "that the affections of Tim Linkinwater, or the inferior lovers of this particular locality, had been awakened and kept alive by any refreshing associations with leaves, however dingy, or grass, however bare and thin" (p. 468). The only greenery is weeds, and the main source of light is a lamppost, for the sun's rays are directed to "noisier" districts. Indoors, however, a solar metaphor confirming the Cheerybles' connection with the natural time cycle is in force. Everything shines with "some reflection of the kindly spirit of the brothers," whose "reigning influence" sheds a sunny beneficence. Nicholas is at first attracted by Charles' "clear, twinkling, honest, merry, happy eye" and then by the expression "lighting" his face: "There were so many little lights hovering about the corners of his mouth and eyes" that he is a pleasure to behold. Moreover, when Charles and Ned shake hands, "the fact of each [is] lighted up by beaming looks of affection."

Unlike Ralph, who wants to rush time in order to accumulate more money, the Cheerybles joke about turning time back. Their first serio-comic suggestion—"if he began business an hour later in the morning . . . old Tim Linkinwater would grow young again in time" (p. 454)—is followed by a

3. Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 667. Page references for significant quotations appear in the body of the text.

profoundly philosophical pleasantries: "Tim Linkinwater was born a hundred-and-fifty years old, and is gradually coming down to five-and-twenty; for he's younger every birthday than he was the year before" (p. 473). Tim, in growing older, approaches the moment of rebirth. As punctual as the counting-house clock itself, the human calibration of the rhythmical cycle, he reminds the brothers that the daily rhythm is immutable: "It's forty-four year . . . next May, since I first kept the books of Cheeryble, Brothers. I've opened the safe every morning all that time . . . as the clock struck nine, and gone over the house every night at half-past ten" (p. 455). Moreover, Tim finds it a "pleasant thing to think of" on his birthday that with the hiring of Nicholas, "the business will go on, when I'm dead, as well as it did when I was alive." Thus Tim, who can perceive in the maintenance of his accounting books a comforting continuance of time and in Nicholas' penmanship a perpetuation of his own hand, is promised a significant rebirth, and hence an overcoming of time, not only by the Cheerybles, but by cyclical nature itself. Ralph, on the other hand, whose commercial spirit has impregnated his soul, rejects the natural cycle, divorcing his heart so far from human emotion that it becomes only a "cunning mechanism." He denies himself rebirth by ignoring his own death: "among all the plots and calculations of the old man, there [was] not one word or figure denoting thought of death or of the grave" (p. 122). Significantly, he acknowledges the death of his brother by the symbolic action of resetting his watch rather than by re-vamping his priorities. Applying a profit/loss ethic to the situation, he repudiates both family responsibilities and family feeling: "My brother never did anything for me, and I never expected it; the breath is no sooner out of his body than I am to be looked to, as the support of a great hearty woman, and a grown boy and girl. What are they to me! I never saw them" (p. 19). Thus the distinction between natural time and artificial time becomes personified in the warm, sympathetic Cheerybles (the sun) and in the cold, ruthless Ralph (a rusty mechanism).

With two antipathetic forces embodied in this way, Dickens stages the duel for the selfhood of Nicholas, whose personal validity becomes defined in terms of his conception of time. During the first half of the novel, while Nicholas is too immature to take his natural position as head of the family, Ralph imposes his values on the Nicklebys. To save himself both time and money, Ralph separates the family, setting Kate and Nicholas to work as seamstress and tutor; as a result Mrs. Nickleby becomes subject to schizophrenic dreams, Kate to insult, and Nicholas to Squeersian hypocrisy. What Ralph does in effect is to place more value on money than on preserving the family structure with its wealth of emotional support. When Nicholas repudiates his uncle for the Cheerybles, he instinctively declares his fidelity to the natural cycle and to all of the human responses such fidelity

predicates. One of his first acts is to affirm human brotherhood by extending his family. Unlike Ralph, who refuses to be responsible for Smike, Nicholas provides a home: "By night and day, at all times and seasons: always watchful, attentive, and solicitous, and never varying in the discharge of his self-imposed duty to one so friendless and helpless as he whose sands of life were now fast running out" (p. 758).

Once he becomes the object of Nicholas' concern, Smike becomes part of the natural cycle. In Yorkshire, however, time stands still: almost nineteen years old, he is still dressed in childish clothing. Of his early years, he remembers most vividly a room with a trap door at the top of Ralph's house, a room which contains "an old clock, in one corner." Smike, raised in an artificial time cycle, is unnaturally stunted and cannot help himself. Moreover, although hope, like the sun in its diurnal cycle of rebirth, can both refresh and save, it cannot penetrate the psychological miasma created by Smike's prolonged misery and suffering: "To prepare the mind for such a heavy sleep, its growth must be stopped by rigour and cruelty in childhood; there must be years of misery and suffering lightened by no ray of hope; the chords of the heart, which beat a quick response to the voice of gentleness and affection, must have rusted and broken in their secret places" (p. 500). Both Ralph and Smike have "rusted" hearts, yet Smike, unlike his father, responds instinctively to human emotion in a way that is both his death and his salvation, for once he is part of Nicholas' family, time begins flowing. His terminal illness is one which changes the balance between the mortal and the spiritual parts, such that death merges into life: "the spirit grows light and sanguine with its lightning load, and, feeling immortality at hand, deems it but a new term of mortal life" (p. 637). In dying, Smike becomes so perfectly attuned to the natural cycle that he is rewarded with a vision of Eden—a paradise of "beautiful gardens, which he said stretched out before him, and were filled with figures . . . all with light upon their faces" (p. 763).

The ways in which the other deaths in *Nicholas Nickleby* take place dramatize the relationship of the characters to time. Like Smike, Verisopht dies in the country, but is vouchsafed only a momentary glimpse of the beauty and serenity of natural objects. Bray, who dies as he sells his daughter to Gride in order to purchase "freer air" and "brighter skies," is granted a commercial vision, one based on the time/money equation: as Ralph says, "France, and an annuity that would support you there in luxury, would give you a new lease of life, would transfer you to a new existence. The town rang with your expensive pleasures once, and you could blaze on a new scene again, profiting by experience, and living a little at others' cost, instead of letting others live at yours" (p. 621). In Ralph's ethic life is equated with the possession of money, and human flesh may be sold for self-interest. Although he evokes the solar metaphor with the

word "blaze," Ralph tempts Bray with a reinstatement of his artificially time-centered life, not with a new, naturally rhythmical one. Bray, like all men, must die; when Nicholas points out "that both [Ralph's and Gride's] debts are paid in the one great debt of nature" (p. 719), he signals the triumph of the natural cycle.

Once Ralph loses his money, his time literally runs out. He clearly defines the connection between time and money and the conflict between his world view and Nicholas' as he meditates upon his loss:

Ten thousand pounds! And only lying there for a day—for one day! How many anxious years, how many pinching days and sleepless nights, before I scraped together that ten thousand pounds! . . . The time has been when nothing could have moved me like the loss of this great sum. Nothing. For births, deaths, marriages, and all the events which are of interest to most men, have (unless they are connected with gain or loss of money) no interest for me. But now, I swear, I mix up with the loss, his triumph in telling it. If he had brought it about . . . I couldn't hate him more. (pp. 739-40)

Subsequently, he ignores the "monotonous warning" of his watch and like a clock with a broken spring, departs from "his regular and constant habit" although he is usually "so regular and unvarying in all that appertained to the daily pursuit of riches" (p. 764). Denouncing time itself as he prepares to commit suicide, he importunes the church bells to

"ring chimes for the coming in of every year that brings this cursed world nearer to its end" (p. 806). Ralph, whose final wish is to "rot" and "infect the air," is promised no rebirth; his repudiation of the natural time cycle is complete, for in his death he sees only the end of the world, not its constant renewal.

Clearly, then, the moral burden of the plot is borne by the triumph of natural time over horological time. The persistently recurring references to time are found not only in the descriptions of specific watches and clocks which indicate the world views of their owners, but also in a solar metaphor which defines the conflict between the Cheerybles' and Ralph's interpretations of time as one of cosmic significance. To attune oneself to seasonal time is to be part of a natural cycle of birth, death, and rebirth; to create an arbitrary time schedule is to deny one's humanity. For Dickens, nature is benevolent: although the individual must choose between the two ways of interpreting time and is held accountable in eternity for his choice, those who are enfeebled, like Smike, are in the long run subsumed into the natural redemptive cycle. Certainly *Nicholas Nickleby*, while not one of Dickens' great works, exhibits a structure more symbolically integrated than hitherto recognized.

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## In Which a Poet is Frightened by a Lion: The Philosophical Context of Mill's Poetic Theory

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JOHN STUART MILL'S ESSAYS on poetry have received considerable critical attention in their own right. But the critics have not succeeded, I think, in satisfactorily explaining the often strange turns the essays take: the separation of poetry from eloquence that isolates poetry in a radical way from its audience; the discussion of the poet's description of the lion, a discussion that seems to confuse description and expression in its attempt to clarify the problem of what poetry communicates; and, more generally, Mill's insistence on explicating in a relentlessly analytical tone a seemingly Romantic philosophy. The reason for this failure is, I suggest, that the essays have never been placed in their proper context. They are not simply an intriguing dalliance, on Mill's part, with poetry. They are rather a rigorously theoretical effort—but not an effort centrally concerned with defining poetry. Poetry is

Mill's tool for constructing a theory of associational psychology that has a place for a willed and constructive self-consciousness leading to a form of intuitional knowledge. This may seem a paradoxical statement to make about essays whose ostensible concern is directly with poetry, but seen in the proper perspective, the essay's central concern with epistemology will become clear.

To the extent that Mill's critics give the essays any context, it is, in an overly straightforward way, that of his mental crisis. According to this reading, the mental crisis as recounted in the *Autobiography* showed Mill the need for emotional cultivation, and the poetic theory was a detailed explication of the place that that cultivation had in a utilitarian philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since these critics tend to accept Mill's statement in the *Autobiography* that the only real

1. This argument is followed in various ways by Walter J. Ong, "J.S. Mill's Pariah Poet," *PQ* 29 (1950), 333-344, F. Parvin Sharpless, *The Literary Criticism of John Stuart Mill* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967), John M. Robson, "J.S. Mill's Theory of Poetry," *Mill: A Collec-*

*tion of Critical Essays*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), pp. 251-279, and Wendell O. Harris, "The Warp of Mill's Fabric of Thought," *VNL* 37 (Spring, 1970), 1-7.

turning point in his thought was during his mental crisis, they assume that the essays on poetic theory represent, with minor contradictions, Mill's final position on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, a more specific context in which Mill's poetic theory can be placed, one which also is related to his intellectual turmoil in the late 1820's. A central aspect of Mill's difficulties during the mental crisis was the problem of free will:

. . . during the later returns of my dejection, the doctrine of what is called Philosophical Necessity weighed on my existence like an incubus. I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our own power.<sup>3</sup>

The agencies beyond control were, of course, James Mill and the education he gave his son. As long as Mill continued to believe in the psychological theories of associationism (and he certainly never abandoned the theory completely), he would be confronted with the corollary doctrine of Philosophical Necessity. And, according to that doctrine, he might be dissatisfied with his education, but he could never free himself from it. Immediately after stating the problem, however, Mill explains the solution at which he arrived:

I perceived that the word Necessity, as a name for the doctrine of Cause and Effect applied to human action, carried with it a misleading association; and that this association was the operative force in the depressing and paralysing influence which I experienced. I saw that though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances; and that what is really inspiring and ennobling in the doctrine of freewill, is the conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character.<sup>4</sup>

This statement only drives the problem one step further back, however. Mill has abandoned the concept of free will as autonomous action upon the external world in favor of the more limited, but in his situation more relevant, concept of autonomous action affecting oneself. It is a fact of experience that we can act, to a certain extent, to shape ourselves according to our desires. But if the desires themselves are associationally caused and therefore a product of necessity, then we are back to where we started. Since free will now exists in the realm of self-consciousness, though, in our actions upon ourselves, if Mill can formulate a definition of self-consciousness that separates it from associational cause

and effect, and endows it with an intuitional perception of truth, then he will have succeeded in decisively breaking the chain of cause and effect and in placing free will within that opening. Moreover, if his formulation leaves the bulk of associational psychology undamaged, he will have preserved the utilitarian claims for the possibility of mankind's improvement, a claim which he states in his *Autobiography* would be untenable in the face of a completely intuitional psychology.<sup>5</sup>

This formulation is the burden of "What is Poetry?" and "The Two Kinds of Poetry" (both written in 1833). Since Mill had found a solution to his own problems in 1828 by reading Wordsworth, it is hardly surprising that he turned to aesthetic theory as the starting-point of a newly reconstructed philosophy. But the two essays are not simply an idiosyncratic restatement of Romantic theory. Rather, they are an attempt to give that theory a basis in utilitarian philosophy. The attempt, I will further argue, failed. And Mill recognized the failure and relinquished the theory as a shambles by the middle of the 1830's. The essays remain interesting, however, as one of the few serious theoretical efforts, until Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*, to find a value for poetry that is dependent neither on its reflection of external truth, nor simply on its expression of emotion. Even the fact of the failure is worthy of attention, particularly the attention of those critics who bemoan Mill's refusal to exchange associationism for an acceptance of intuitional apprehension.

The implicit starting-point for Mill's theory is the distinctive quality of poetic discourse. The fact that men produce something so unique as poetry implies about those men a psychological characteristic so obviously inexplicable by the normal experiential theories of associationism that Mill feels himself entitled to assert with almost no argument that "it seems undeniable in point of fact, and consistent with the principles of a sound metaphysics, that there are poetic *natures*."<sup>6</sup> To explain those natures, to distinguish poets from men in general, he posits in "The Two Kinds of Poetry" a distinctive psychology, which he differentiates from the standard associational process and defines as follows: normal associations are "chiefly of the successive, not the synchronous kind." For the born poet, however, the case is different:

Where, therefore, nature has given strong feelings, and education has not created factitious tendencies stronger than the natural ones, the prevailing associations will be those which connect objects and ideas with emotions, and with each other through the intervention of

2. In addition to the critics cited above, Edward Alexander, in *Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), finds Mill's views essentially consistent, although he does note shifts in sympathy.

3. *Autobiography*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), p. 101.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

6. "The Two Kinds of Poetry," *Mill's Essays on Literature and Society*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (New York: Collier Books, 1965), p. 118, hereafter cited as *TKP* with page references in the text.

emotions. Thoughts and images will be linked together, according to the similarity of the feelings which cling to them. A thought will introduce a thought by first introducing a feeling which is allied with it. (TKP, pp. 120-121)

Actually, what matters here is not really the direction of the association, whether successive or synchronous. Mill admits that unpoetic synchronous associations exist too; he would have to, since the basic activity of bonding feelings of pain and pleasure with external objects, when that activity ceases to be causal and becomes synchronous, is, in associational theories, the determining factor in individuation. But there are no external objects in the poetic form of association. A thought is associated with an emotion. A different thought is associated with the same or a similar emotion. The poetic mind is thus enabled to move from thought to thought with no reference to anything outside itself.

It follows easily enough that "great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life. What they know has come by observations of themselves."<sup>7</sup> Mill makes this statement quite casually, almost in passing. Yet it is a mark of what his newly introduced form of association has achieved for him. In his father's standard formulation of associational theory, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, which Mill had read carefully as it was being written, from 1822 to 1829, self-consciousness does not exist. "To be conscious" is merely another way of saying that one has a feeling.<sup>8</sup> To say one is conscious of a feeling is by this theory redundant. And since James Mill defines the self as a series of feelings, the term self-consciousness is a solecism. What does it mean to feel a series of feelings? Mill was to attempt to formulate a definition of self-consciousness within associational theory in the footnotes that he wrote for his father's work in 1868. Here, however, there is no need for any extended definition. Since poetic association is an internal affair, to be aware of it, by definition, to be self-conscious, as to be aware of a sensation was for James Mill to be conscious of a sensation. Mill has, in effect, created through his aesthetics a way in which one can perceive a truth solely from internal observation, and therefore a way of acting solely from internal motivation, a place for free will within association.

Here, however, we enter the troublesome area of the theory. Mill is not simply delineating a model of intuitive

perception or knowledge, but using poetry to provide a basis for that model. But to the extent that poetry results solely from intuition, solely from self-consciousness, it is nothing at all except a poet feeling. There is no provision for communication, no external audience. To avoid such an obviously unreal situation, Mill states at the outset that "the object of poetry is confessedly to act upon emotion" (WP, pp. 103-104). We have, then, an audience which is being moved, presumably by the poet's emotions. To give poetry an external object, however, would seem to vitiate the claim that it derives from a pure moment of self-consciousness. One need not have any special intuitive knowledge in order to act upon the emotions of others. Emotions can be understood and therefore manipulated through standard associational means. Such a manipulation was, after all, what Mill's education had been all about. The distinctive quality of poetic discourse, then, could not properly act as a basis for asserting a separate form of association. Bentham's theory that poetry is simply ornamental misrepresentation, the creation of pleasurable fictions, would adequately account for its distinctively unanalytical style of discourse.

To meet this problem, Mill, not all that innocently, asserts that "common apprehension and philosophic criticism alike recognize a distinction" between poetry and eloquence (WP, p. 108). And he defines the distinction by the relative awareness in each discourse of an audience:

Eloquence supposes an audience; the peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude, and bodying itself forth in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself forth to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavoring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action. (WP, p. 109)

Eloquence intends to move its audience. Mill, however, makes an implicit distinction between poetry and the poet. Poetry presupposes an audience, but the poet remains ignorant of that audience. Accordingly, despite the existence of the audience, poetry begins and ends in self-consciousness and must therefore be explained by a distinctive process of association.<sup>9</sup>

Mill seems to have solved one problem here at the expense

7. "What is Poetry?" *Mill's Essays on Literature and Society*, p. 106, henceforth cited as WP with page references in the text.

8. James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, edited with additional notes by John Stuart Mill (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1878), I, 224.

9. Ong's contention that the reason for the sequestration of the poet is that his constitutional difference makes him an "anomaly" and "a misfit" (p. 342) is surely wrong. The separation protects the poet, not society, and is not directed at the poet's personality at all but at the nature of his poetry. To the extent that Mill's poet is a pariah—and he is clearly not intended to be—it is the result rather than the cause

of the distinction between eloquence and poetry. Sharpless has read the distinction as a defense against Bentham's charge that poetry's misrepresentation, to the extent that it is not a harmless fiction, is, in its effect on an audience, potentially dangerous (pp. 77-79). According to this theory, since he will not concede that poetry is harmless fiction, Mill argues rather that its effect on an audience is unintentional and, therefore, innocent. This is a plausible reading, and does not necessarily contradict my argument. The only problem with it is that Mill nowhere makes any reference to Bentham's or any other similar criticism of poetry.

of revitalizing another. In order to maintain its purity, he has again made poetry an entirely internal affair. This situation is rectified in the famous analogy immediately following: "all poetry is of the nature of soliloquy." It is now clear why the poet in the above passage took the trouble to embody his feeling in symbols. The feeling is, in fact, spoken or written, not simply expressed. There is, though, a minor evasion in the comparison. A soliloquy, after all, is a dramatic convention. We do not ask why a character in a play soliloquizes. We know he does so because it is a convenient way of letting us know what he is thinking, not because people are given to making speeches to themselves. Why a poet might want to express his feelings to himself in a disciplined and formal language is another question. Since poetry exists for Mill in that philosophically shadowy area of intuitive knowledge and free will, he might answer that the question is not answerable, but, since intuition and free will are, by definition, not contingent qualities, neither is it a proper question. If such an answer would not be satisfactory, it would nevertheless be conclusive.

The real problem, however, is that the concept of soliloquy smuggles back into the picture the aspect of communication. It is true that the poet no longer intends to act upon an audience. If the audience chooses to eavesdrop on his soliloquy, that is their affair. But communicate he must. If the audience eavesdrops and hears gibberish, then there is no poetry. To see how this aspect of poetry affects the theory, we must watch a poet encounter a lion:

If a poet is to describe a lion, he will not set about describing him as a naturalist would, nor even as a traveler would, who was intent upon stating the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He will describe him by *imagery*, that is, by suggesting the most striking likenesses and contrasts which might occur to a mind contemplating the lion, in the state of awe, wonder, or terror, which the spectacle naturally excites, or is, on the occasion, supposed to excite. (WP, pp. 107-108)

The need for this encounter is created by Mill's admission that "it is established by common consent that there is a poetry called *descriptive*" (WP, p. 107). If poetry can, like narrative or scientific discourse, engage in description, then how is it distinctively different? Are not its departures from accurate description simply examples of misrepresentation? Mill answers this question by adjusting the process of poetic communication. Even though the lion is being described, it is the poet's state of mind, his emotion, that is being communicated. Poetic communication, therefore, remains distinctly different from other kinds of discourse.

The real difficulty here is the one M. H. Abrams raises: "Mill's reader properly wonders why, if the poet's underlying aim is to describe his own feelings, he should choose to complicate matters by bringing in a lion."<sup>10</sup> The answer critics give to the question is the one that Abrams in fact gives by moving to another writer whose language is more precise: the difficulty is in the imprecise use of the word "describe." What Mill really wants to say is that the poet expresses his emotion by describing that which would give rise to such an emotion.<sup>11</sup> This distinction defines the activity of the passage more clearly, but it is still not a proper answer to Abrams' question since a scream of fear would be the best form of emotional expression. And, given the exigencies of an audience, a description of the fear itself would still, all things considered, be clearer and more direct communication than a description of a lion. Simply describing the fear, however, is not really possible given Mill's associational psychology. Emotions are bound to things, either external sensations or thoughts about or ideas of sensation. To describe an emotion in isolation is thus not to describe it in all its specificity. But choosing simply to scream would, of course, only return us to the problem of intelligible communication.

The lion is only the most physical reminder in the two essays of the final barrier to the poet's freedom. Poetry must describe as well as express. Even if it describes only the thoughts that are held together by emotion, and does not deal with any external object, those thoughts, to the extent that one can verbalize them, are intelligible reactions to the external world rather than pristinely internal emotions. The poet suddenly has, therefore, the responsibility of discrimination:

It is true, [the poet] possesses this advantage over others who use the "instrument of words," that of the truths which he utters, a large proportion are derived from personal consciousness, and a smaller from philosophic investigation. But the power itself of discriminating between what really is consciousness, and what is only a process of inference completed in a single instant; and the capacity of distinguishing whether that of which the mind is conscious, be an eternal truth or but a dream—are among the last results of the most matured and perfect intellect. Not to mention that the poet, no more than any other person who writes, confines himself altogether to intuitive truths, nor has any means of communicating even these, but by words, every one of which derives all its power of conveying a meaning, from a whole host of acquired notions, and facts learned by study and experience. (TKP, p. 118)

This passage is meant to be merely a series of judicious quali-

10. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1958), p. 322.

11. This position is restated, essentially, by both Sharpless, p. 76, and Alan Ryan, *J.S. Mill* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 51. Alexander suggests that "even when he came closest to complete subjec-

tivism, Mill continued to believe that poetic feelings must be anchored in actuality" (p. 180), but this is a curious argument since, in context, the passage is explicitly defending the distortion of actuality in order to express the subjective state.

fications. It is immediately followed by a paragraph beginning "nevertheless." These qualifications, however, present Mill with options that are equally disastrous to his theory. On the one hand, he may allow the poet to stay as close to his emotions and as far away from thoughts, words, intellect, as possible. In this case, however, the poet turns, if not into a pariah, at least into an individual apart, speaking, if not in gibberish, at least in tongues. In any case, he would be rarely, if ever, understood.

In fact, Mill seriously entertained precisely this formulation. The type of poetry that Shelley is used to represent seems indeed to suffer from unintelligibility. Shelley

seldom follows up an idea; it starts into life, summons from the fairy-land of his inexhaustible fancy some three or four bold images, then vanishes, and straight he is off on the wings of some casual association into quite another sphere. He had not yet acquired the consecutiveness of thought necessary for a long poem; his more ambitious compositions too often resemble the scattered fragments of a mirror; colors brilliant as life, single images without end, but no picture. (TKP, pp. 123-124)

This may seem to be more an account of the dangers a Shelley may be exposed to than a description of the definitive traits of such poetry. In a letter written to Carlyle, however, in July, 1833, between the publication of "What is Poetry?" and that of "The Two Kinds of Poetry," Mill is more explicit:

I conceive that most of the highest truths, are, to persons endowed by nature in certain ways which I think I could state, intuitive; that is, they need neither explanation nor proof, but if not known before, are assented to as soon as stated. Now it appears to me that the poet or artist is conversant chiefly with *such* truths and that his office in respect to such truth is to declare *them*, and to make them *impressive*. This, however, supposes that the reader, hearer, or spectator is a person of the kind to whom these truths *are* intuitive. Such will of course receive them at once, and will lay them to heart in proportion to the impressiveness with which the artist delivers and embodies them. But the other, and more numerous kind of people will consider them as nothing but dreaming or madness: and the more so, certainly, the more powerful the artist *as* artist. . . .<sup>12</sup>

This is, I suppose, an enhancement of the poet's intelligibility. Instead of speaking in tongues, the poet is uttering higher truths impressively. And there is an audience who understands him. That audience, however, is limited to those who, like him, have received, or would easily receive, the truths in the first place. For the rest, he is either a dreamer or a madman. This assertion is not likely to be satisfactory to any poet. Nor is it ultimately a solution. Mill proposes the role of a Logician in Ordinary, therefore, which he feels him-

self quite suited for, in order to translate the higher truths into terms understood by the multitude. Such a position is not even successful on its own terms, though, since it does not transmit a knowledge of the higher truths—that understanding remains intuitive—but merely an acceptance of those truths as probable and consistent with external reality.

Although "The Two Kinds of Poetry" are the poetry of Shelley and Wordsworth, Mill's other alternative is not really exemplified by Wordsworth. Wordsworth is something of an anomaly in the essay, a successfully unpoetic poet whose philosophy is faulty, whose emotions are both weak and secondary to the faulty thought, and yet who "has exercised, and continues to exercise, a powerful, and mostly a highly beneficial influence over the formation and growth of not a few of the most cultivated and vigorous of the youthful minds of our time, over whose heads poetry of the opposite [Shelleyan] description would have flown" (TKP, p. 122). Rather, Mill's other option appears at the end of the essay, embodied by Milton and Coleridge, in whom "Poetic nature has been united with logical and scientific culture." Mill states of this combination:

Whether the superiority will naturally be on the side of the logician-poet or of the mere poet—whether the writings of the one ought, as a whole, to be truer, and their influence more beneficent than those of the other—is too obvious in principle to need statement: it would be absurd to doubt whether two endowments are better than one; whether truth is more certainly arrived at by two processes, verifying and correcting each other, than by one alone. (TKP, p. 129)

This statement looks very much like Mill's common strategy of finding truth by yoking opposite methods or viewpoints together. In the context of this essay, however, it is an extraordinary concession. The whole thrust of "What Is Poetry?" is that poetry is not relevant to or answerable to logic. By admitting that logic may arrive at the same truth as poetry and that, therefore, the two processes combined are preferable, Mill has salvaged poetry from being incomprehensible, but he has re-opened it to the demand for accuracy of thought.

It is doubtful whether Mill was aware of how much he had given up in the last pages of the essay. The tone is rather that of hopefulness at the complete form of knowledge a binding of poetry and philosophy would yield, than that of an acknowledgement that poetry has been drained of the privileged status that had been given it. Mill never makes such an acknowledgement explicitly, but two years later, in his essay on Tennyson, it is implicit in his final warning to the poet:

To render his poetic endowment the means of giving impressiveness

12. *The Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill 1812-1848*, ed. Francis Mineka (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 163. Critics who assert

that Mill never entertained the concept of intuitive perception or knowledge should look at this passage with some attention.

to important truths, he must, by continual study and meditation, strengthen his intellect for the discrimination of such truths; he must see that his theory of life and the world be no chimera of the brain, but the well-grounded result of solid and mature thinking; —he must cultivate, and with no half devotion, philosophy as well as poetry.<sup>13</sup>

Behind this exhortation are the ruins of the edifice Mill had built with poetry to enclose a space for intuitive truth within an associative world. He never lost his belief in a separate form of poetic association. He restates it in *A System of Logic*. But it is reduced there to “an interesting theory,” which he had early examined to see how far it went “towards explaining the peculiarities of the poetic temperament.”<sup>14</sup> It no longer has a claim on any kind of special insight into higher truths. Poetry is now merely in the service of truth, giving it emotional power. A knowledge of philosophy, merely an advantage at the end of “The Two Kinds of Poetry,” has, accordingly, become a responsibility here.

Further, the line between poetry and eloquence has been all but erased. Since poetry now makes extra-poetic truths emotionally moving, and since the poet now must look outside himself, go beyond self-consciousness, in order to find truths with which to endow his emotional fervor, poetry can no longer remain simply soliloquy. The poet finds these truths out for himself by reason. And Mill is quite clear here that the poet (or Tennyson in particular) “should guard himself against an error, to which the philosophical speculations of poets are peculiarly liable—that of embracing as truth, not the conclusions which are recommended by the strongest evidence, but those which have the most poetical appearance.”<sup>15</sup> It is unlikely then that he is endowing reasons that he already finds sufficient with emotional effect solely for his own benefit. Poetry like eloquence now “supposes an audience” (*WP*, p. 109), implicitly if not explicitly.

It is hard to tell precisely when Mill relinquished his early theory of intuitional knowledge and the concomitant placement of free will. It seems simply to have dropped out of his writings after those two early essays on poetry. The only other essay in which there is even a possible reference to such a form of knowledge is his “Remarks on Bentham’s Philosophy,” also written in 1833. Mill there criticizes Bentham in part for not giving due recognition to the moral importance of such feelings as conscience and benevolence. He continues:

the power of any one to realize in himself the state of mind, without which his own enjoyment of life can be but poor and scanty, and on which all our hopes of happiness or moral perfection to the species must rest, depends entirely on his having faith in the actual existence

of such feelings and dispositions in others, and in their possibility for himself.<sup>16</sup>

Mill never ceased thinking that Bentham gave insufficient weight to moral sentiments. But here the test of the existence of those feelings or that “state of mind” is no test at all but “faith.”

By 1835, the important words with regard to these feelings have become “cultivation” and “culture.” These words were a mark of division in “The Two Kinds of Poetry”:

Culture, that culture by which Wordsworth has reared from his own inward nature the richest harvest ever brought forth by a soil of so little depth, is precisely what was wanting to Shelley. (*TKP*, p. 123)

In “Tennyson’s Poems,” however, if the poet “must cultivate . . . philosophy as well as poetry,” it follows by implication that poetry must now be cultivatable. The new division Mill makes is suggested by a remark in an incidental footnote to his review of Carlyle’s *French Revolution*. Mill states that “Mr. Carlyle’s book is less fitted for those who know nothing about the subject, than for those who already know a little.”<sup>17</sup> This seems a curious remark since Mill claims that Carlyle lets us see historical events in their full and vivid concrete detail, with no rhetorical falsification. The distinction Mill is making, however, is that between acknowledging something’s existence and understanding its full significance. The first act is obviously prior, but the second is equally necessary.

But understanding can be achieved through cultivation, the education of taste, the training of perception. Poetic cultivation is only one among many methods. In fact, it is the burden of Mill’s complaints about education, from the 1836 essay “Civilization,” through “On Liberty” in 1859, to the 1867 “Inaugural Address to the University of St. Andrews,” that the existing system of teaching crammed students with facts, rather than teaching them how to think so that they could learn to understand truths. Mill thus finds a new place for poetry in his thinking, but he gives it a reduced role. It no longer offers both the knowledge of certain truths and a place in which action can be self-willed. As soon as the lion appeared in his essay, and the poet had to deal with it as well as the terror it invoked, the self-creating, self-perpetuating qualities of emotion that Mill wanted to define were lost. Perhaps that is the reason he never returned to aesthetic theory in his later writings. It had lost its special value for him.

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13. “Tennyson’s Poems,” *Mill’s Essays on Literature and Society*, p. 146.

14. *A System of Logic* (London: John W. Parker, 1843), I, 578.

15. “Tennyson’s Poems,” p. 146.

16. “Remarks on Bentham’s Philosophy,” *Essays on Ethics, Religion and*

*Society*, Vol. X of *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 15.

17. “Carlyle’s ‘French Revolution,’” *Mill’s Essays on Literature and Society*, p. 193.



## Books Received

- Allen, Peter. *The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years*. New York and London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979. 266 pp. \$29.50. Supercedes Frances Brookfield's *The Cambridge Apostles* (1906). Allen locates all material available to Mrs. Brookfield and a good deal more. He concentrates on the early years of Maurice, Hallam and Tennyson, but brings the Apostles up to 1900.
- Blount, Paul G. *George Sand and the Victorian World*. Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1979. 190 pp. \$13.50. A thin treatment of Sand in Victorian England which depends heavily on English reviews, has chapters on the responses of Arnold, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. Blount does little more than collect and categorize critical comments.
- Hanham, H. J. *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone*. Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979. 468 pp. \$27.50. A reprint of the 1959 edition with an introduction to this second printing.
- Hardy, Thomas. *Thomas Hardy's Chosen Poems*, ed. Francine Shapiro Puk. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978. 354 pp. \$16.50. A reprinting of *Chosen Poems of Thomas Hardy* prepared by Hardy four months before he died and published in 1929. To the 161 chosen poems, Puk has added two appendices: in the first are included 14 "additional critical favorites"; in the second "the complete sequence of poems of 1912-13."
- Marsh, Peter ed. *The Conscience of the Victorian State*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1979. 257 pp. \$16.00 cloth, \$6.75 paper. "This book analyzes the ways in which a variety of Victorians combined the promptings of conscience with the pursuit of power and their fashionings of policies for the state to follow. . . . [It] focuses on the moral concerns of the politically influential, on the particular values and virtues and interests which the governing minority sought to foster, on their principles of conduct, and their performance." There are chapters on the conscience of various constituencies: Whigs, Utilitarians, Gladstone, Nonconformists, Imperialists, and Conservatives.
- McMurtry, Jo. *Victorian Life and Victorian Fiction: A Companion for the American Reader*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1979. 315 pp. \$17.50. A useful book for the student on the Victorian novel who is confused by titles and social rank, church hierarchies, politics, army practices, courtship and marriage rites, servant roles and the like. Victorian custom is first explained and then illustrated from Victorian fiction. Index and useful annotated bibliography.
- Paradis, James G. *T. H. Huxley: Man's Place in Nature*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1979. 226 pp. \$13.50. Paradis attempts to show that Huxley's "philosophical outlook underwent a gradual transition from youthful Romanticism, influenced by writers like Carlyle and Goethe, toward increasing determinism at mid-career, to his final and startling *fin-de-siècle* declaration, almost on his deathbed, that man's hope lay in his revolt against nature.
- Steig, Michael. *Dickens and Phiz*. Bloomington and London: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978. 340 pp., 126 illus. \$12.50. Steig's purpose is to show Hablot K. Browne as the collaborator and interpreter of Dickens, not merely an illustrator. "Even if not a single Victorian reader recognized the complexities of the texts; [the illustrations] are at once an expression of Dickens's intentions and Browne's interpretations, at once a visual accompaniment to the text and a commentary upon it." Illustrations include many not easily accessible.
- Stevens, Robert L. *Charles Darwin*. Boston: Twayne, 1978. 150 pp. Intended for a general audience, includes two chapters of biography, three chapters on review of the major writings, a lengthy chapter of analysis of Darwin's thought, based largely on Darwin's notebooks and other writings, and a brief summary chapter. Focus is on Darwin's "ideas" and his contributions to the history of ideas.
- Worth, George J. *Dickensian Melodrama: A Reading of the Novels*. Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1978. 147 pp. \$6.00. An urbanely written analysis of Dickens's developing success with melodrama in various forms: melodrama of situation, melodramatic speech, melodramatic scenes, melodramatic narrative, melodrama of mystery, mock melodrama.

# Victorian Group News

The birthplace of George Gissing, the Victorian novelist (1857-1903), a Georgian house at 2-4 Thompson's Yard in Wakefield, Yorkshire, has recently been listed as a historic site, and is now the property of the Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, which plans to renovate it and maintain it as a Gissing Centre for displays and research relating to Gissing and the literary history of Wakefield. A Gissing Trust has been formed to raise funds for this project; among its patrons are Sir John Betjeman, David Storey, Gillian Tindall, Angus Wilson, and the Presidents of the Wakefield Civic and Historical Societies. Readers interested in Gissing, or in the literature and culture of the Victorian period in England are urged to contribute. Donations should be made payable to the Gissing Trust Appeal Fund, and should be sent to either of the following addresses: the Hon. Appeal Treasurer, Mr. Clifford Brook, 1 Standbridge Lane, Sandal, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 7DZ, England; or Jacob Korg, Department of English, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195.

A George Eliot Centennial Conference will be held April 10-12, 1980 at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. Deadline for submission of papers is December 15, 1979. For further information, contact: Dr. Rosemary T. VanArsdel or the English Department, University of Puget Sound, 98461.

There will be a special session on "The Brontës: New Directions in Research and Criticism" at the December meeting of the MLA in San Francisco. Discussants will include Maurianne Adams, Barbara Gates, Helen Moglen, Margot Peters, and Elaine Showalter.

The fifteenth annual Conference on Editorial Problems will be held at the University of Toronto on Friday and Saturday, November 2nd and 3rd, 1979. The theme of this year's conference is the "Editing of Illustrated Books" and papers will be presented on topics ranging from emblem books to the editing of microfiche editions of the great illustrated books of the past and the art of fine printing. The speakers will include John Horden, G. E. Bentley, Jr., Charlene Garry, George Knox, and Thomas Lange. A number of special exhibitions of illustrated books will be mounted by local institutions. Registration forms and further information are available from Professor Desmond Neill, Librarian, Massey College, University of Toronto, Toronto M5S 1A5, Canada.

The Thomas Hardy Society of America is soliciting membership. For information write to the society at New York University, 19 University Place, English Department, New York, N.Y. 10003.

## MIDWEST VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

### Call for Papers and Other Proposals 1980 Meeting

The Midwest Victorian Studies Association is soliciting proposals for formal papers and discussion groups for its annual spring meeting, to be held on the campus of Indiana University in Bloomington, March 28 and 29, 1980. The theme of the conference will be Victorian popular culture; papers and other proposals should be of interest to a broadly interdisciplinary audience. Papers and proposals should be sent no later than December 1, 1979, to Lawrence Poston, Department of English, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, Box 4348, Chicago, Illinois 60680, for distribution to the Program Committee. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should be included if return of a manuscript is desired.