

The Victorian Newsletter

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Cover: Portrait of Anthony Trollope by S. Lawrence

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Early Verse By "Unfortunate W. Thackeray"

Juliet McMaster

On Monday, April 2, 1832, when he was twenty and a law student in London, Thackeray recorded in his diary, "Wrote some verses for Charlotte Shakespear, wh. are not quite finished." The entry continues prosaically with a little list of his current expenses, including laundry at seven shillings. But he begins the next day's entry, "Despatched my verses to Charlotte."¹ I believe these early verses have survived (though not, probably, through any devoted piety on the part of the lady). A manuscript containing appropriate verses, with Thackeray's signature included, was bought in an English bookshop about two decades ago by Professor L. P. V. Johnson, from whom I recently acquired it. The handwriting is certainly Thackeray's: it is his sloping hand, and appears to date from early in his career. This early effusion of Thackeray's muse has been printed once in an alumni journal,² but Thackerayans will be glad to have it made more accessible. It is written on both sides of a single sheet of 7" x 9" paper:

I have found out a gift for my fair!
And I trust that she'll not be offended!
If I say that it's neat if not rare
And useful tho' not very splendid.

I have found a gift - & be sure
That nobly it's praise I'd rehearse, if I'd
The genius of Byron or Moore
But my feelings an't used to be versified.

I'm no poet (you doubtless can guess it).
But the heart which to you I surrender
Would, but for the woes which oppress it
Say something excessively tender.

I would speak of the boisterous Ocean
In strains of most eloquent music
But oh! what a cruel emotion
I feel, when I'm thinking of y[ou sick]!

I would speak of a land where you'll find
Of desperate lovers there are lots
Alas! you leave lovers behind
But you leave them a very few Charlottes!

If home hath a charm in your eyes
If constant affections a jewel t'ye
Oh go not! be kind & be wise
And repent of this horrible cruelty!

But why speak? - while my heart's torn to pieces
While with agonized vows I am filling her
She's ordering hats and pelisses
Not thinking of me but the Milliner!

While I mourn for my love that's departed.
You'll speedily find out a fresh one.
And then you'll forget - fickle hearted!
This last dying speech & Confession!

With the fire of your eyes you will murder.
The Captain, the mates & the purser.
And as you go further and further.
Why I shall grow worse & worse!

Yes - soon will be seen round my [bier]
My mourning relations in black array
And this is the last you will hear
Of unfortunate
W. Thackeray

The circumstances in the poem conveniently match those in the diary. The poem is addressed to a Charlotte who is about to depart on a sea voyage to a land where she'll find "Of desperate lovers there are lots" - surely recognizable as France. And on the day after despatching his verses, Thackeray records in his diary, a friend "tempted me very much by proposing a visit to Paris, but it won't do - I shd. fall in love with Charlotte before I got back" (*Letters*, I, 187). The mock-heroic tone in the poem, burlesquing the melancholic lover who contemplates his own demise when his heartless mistress deserts him, matches well with the down-to-earth caution of the young man who knows he is not yet quite in love, but sees his danger and takes precautions accordingly. In fact the writing of the verses might itself have been useful therapy, through which Thackeray learned the wisdom voiced later in *Pendennis*: "When a gentleman is cudgeling his brain to find any rhyme for sorrow, besides borrow and tomorrow, his woes are nearer at an end than he thinks for."³ So much the more so, perhaps, if he is finding less hackneyed rhymes for words like "Charlotte" and "Thackeray."

Charlotte Shakespear was Thackeray's cousin, the daughter of his paternal aunt, Emily Shakespear, née Thackeray. Apparently Thackeray gathered some personal experience of that standard theme of the nineteenth-century novel of "cousins in love, &c."⁴ He was

1. *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon N. Ray, 4 vols. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1945), I, 186. I have made free use of Professor Ray's excellent notes and genealogies.
2. L. P. V. Johnson, "Some Notes on an Unpublished Thackeray Manuscript," *New Trail* (University of Alberta alumni journal), 19:2 (Fall, 1961), p. 9. Professor Johnson effectively demonstrates in his

headnote that the handwriting is from the 1830's. But his candidate for the original "Charlotte" is a different cousin, Charlotte Ritchie (1820?-1878). However, I find his case unconvincing.

3. *Pendennis*, chapter 15. *The Oxford Thackeray*, ed. George Saintsbury (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1908), XII, 167.
4. *Mansfield Park*, chapter 1. *The Novels of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1934), p. 6.

afterwards to incorporate it in the loves of Clive and Ethel Newcome and Henry and Beatrix Esmond (the latter, admittedly, are not first cousins), who are paired cousins like those in *Mansfield Park*, *Wuthering Heights*, and many another novel. This real-life cousin did indeed prove "fickle hearted," and fulfilled her old love's prophecy that she would "speedily find out a fresh one": in the next year she married James Crawford of the Bengal Civil Service, and her old love had the chance to peruse a letter from her that was "full of her James" (*Letters*, I, 263). She proceeded to have eight children.

We may owe Charlotte Shakespear thanks for more than inspiring the youthful Thackeray to discover his ingenuity in verse. He seems to have recognized in her a type that was to become familiar in his fiction as in his life. Some years later, when he was twenty-nine, and married himself, he went to visit her, as he tells his mother:

I went to Dorking from Leatherhead & saw my pretty Charlotte Crawford. There is nothing about her but simplicity: & I like this milk-&-water in women - perhaps too much, undervaluing your ladyship's heads, and caring only for the heart part of the business. (*Letters*, I, 460)

There speaks the creator of a string of milk-and-water women, including Amelia Sedley, Rosey Newcome (who ought to be painted "in milk," says the artist who marries her); Theo Lambert and Charlotte Baynes (another Charlotte). However, there speaks also a man perfectly

I have found out a gift for my fair
 And I trust that shall not be off
 If I say that it's neat if not rare
 And useful tho' not very showy -
 I have found out a gift - & be sure
 That nobly it'll please I'd rehearse, if I
 The genius of Byron or Moore
 But my feelings ain't used to be verified
 It's no fact (you doubtless can guess it)
 But the heart which to you I surrender
 Would, but for the awe which oppresses it
 Say something excessively tender
 I would speak of the boisterous Ocean
 In strains of most eloquent music
 But oh! what a cruel emotion
 I feel, when I'm thinking of
 I would speak of a land where you'll find
 Of our private loves there are lots
 Alas! you have lovers behind
 But you have them a very few Charles

able to judge the short-comings of such milk-and-water creatures, and to create ladies who have specialized in the head part of the business, like Becky Sharp, Beatrix Esmond, and Ethel Newcome.

This visit to Charlotte Crawford, the love of his youth, may have produced an association on which he humorously elaborated in *The Newcomes*. Dorking in Surrey, where he visited her, was famous for its breed of good laying chickens. ("The characteristics of the pure Dorking are, that it is white-feathered, short-legged, and an excellent layer," is the description quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* from the *Penny Cyclopaedia* of 1840, the very year of Thackeray's visit to Dorking.) Now Clara Pulleyn of *The Newcomes*, who undoubtedly belongs in the milk-and-water class of women, is the daughter of Lord and Lady Dorking, and in creating the family Thackeray reeled off a gleeful series of chicken jokes: the heir to the Dorking title is Viscount Rooster, the family estate is Chanticleere, and the Pulleyn girls include Hennie, Biddy, and Adelaide.⁵

Thackeray's youthful jeu d'esprit is a delightful addition to the canon. While predating nearly all his published verse, it shows already his propensity to the mock heroic, his readiness in comic self-deflation, and his talent for ingenious rhyming. Fortunately, it was to be far from the last we would hear of unfortunate W. Thackeray.

If home hath a shadow in your eyes
 If constant affections a jewel lay
 Oh you not! be kind & be wise
 And repent of this "horrible cradly!"
 But why speak? - while my heart's torn to pain
 While with agonized sobs I am filling her
 And exclaiming "oh! be kind & be wise"
 Not thinking of me but the "cradly!"
 While I mourn my love that's departed,
 Could I speedily find out a fresh one,
 And then you'd forget - fickle hearted!
 This last dying speech & confession:
 With the fire of your eyes you will soothe
 The Captain, the mate, & the purser
 And as you go further & further,
 Why I shall grow wiser & wiser!
 Go - soon with the dawn you'll find me
 My mourning relations in black array
 And this is the last you will hear
 Of unfortunate
 W. Thackeray.

University of Alberta

5. *The Newcomes*, chapter 25. *The Oxford Thackeray*, XIV, 314.
 6. *The Newcomes*, chapter 18, pp. 359, 366, 369.

"A Habitable Doll's House": *Beginning in Bleak House*

Thorell Tsomondo

— Behold the child among his new-born blisses . . .

Wordsworth

— the romantic side of familiar things

Bleak House

Soon after Richard Carstone is introduced to Bleak House, John Jarndyce counsels him: "The world is before you; . . . Trust in nothing but Providence and your own efforts" (137).¹ Mr. Jarndyce's advice recalls the "beginning" that the close of *Paradise Lost* advances; a beginning that is initiated and modified by an end, and that sets forth a fresh design, the new criteria for continuing. In the course of *Bleak House* Mr. Jarndyce will again admonish his ward: "How I hoped you would begin, and how go on . . . Make a clear beginning altogether. . . . begin afresh! Byegones shall be byegones, and a new page turned for you to write your lives in" (258-9). In *Great Expectations* Pip entertains an analogous Miltonic sentiment when at the end of the first stage of his Expectations and on the eve of his new life in London he exults, ". . . the mists had all solemnly risen now and the world lay spread before me."² Both novels direct attention to the problem of *beginning* and both have first-person narrator protagonists who contemplate beginnings, "genealogical" and "intentional."³ In *Bleak House*, however, not only does the concept of "beginning" provide the motive, direct or indirect, for action, it is central to the narrative structure of the work. The novel itself has difficulty beginning: it starts twice, and throughout maintains a dual perspective that, ultimately, resists closure. Of course, beginning-as-motive is inherent in narrative, which, by its own definition, is a series of re-creative verbal gestures. Edward Said suggests that concern with "beginnings" influences the kind of thought, writing and meaning that an author produces and the continuities that are thereby implied.⁴ Dickens' explicit use of the concept of "beginning" throughout *Bleak House* must therefore prove an aid to understanding this complex narrative.

The principal characters in the work fall loosely into two groups: those who wait for ends or emphasize them and those who reflect upon and initiate beginnings. George Rouncewell endorses his reunion with his mother with the wish to "make a late beginning" (569); the shock of disillusionment causes Sir Leicester to experience "trouble in beginning"; he can only "utter inarticulate sounds" (551). After her illness, Esther resolves to "begin afresh"

(332), and on her return from Chesney Wold, sets out to "make a general new beginning altogether" (407). Each of these characters articulates a consciousness of the need to begin at a time of crisis; each understands that he cannot or must not continue in his present course. On the other hand, there are those who either defer beginning, or cannot begin. Miss Flite, Gridley, Richard Carstone cannot begin because they anticipate an end that they believe is imminent. "Everything has an end" (524). Richard tells Alan Woodcourt, and as justification for the fatal concentration of his youthful energy upon this one, "fixed idea," Richard suggests that a general sense of incompleteness retards his power to act. He illustrates: "If you live in an unfinished house, you couldn't settle down in it, if you were condemned to leave everything you undertook, unfinished, you would find it hard to apply yourself to anything . . ." (245).

Richard believes that in order to "begin" there must be a "settling down" or clarification of matters, a conclusive resolution of issues. But the incentive to begin derives not from satisfactory conclusions gratuitously obtained, but from need. Beginnings, like ends, are invented.⁴ They spring from an awareness that things as they stand are not producing desired results and that some alternative must be found. Moreover, contrary to Richard's expectations, his case will never be settled. Mr. Jarndyce says of the suit:

. . . through years and years, and lives and lives, everything goes on, constantly beginning over and over again, and nothing ever ends. And we can't get out of the suit on any terms, for we are made parties to it, and *must be* parties to it, whether we like it or not. But it won't do to think of it! When my great uncle, poor Tom Jarndyce, began to think of it, it was the beginning of the end! (73).

Another kind of beginning is suggested here: one that is repetitious, regressive and deterministic. Richard's fate results from and exemplifies this. In the chapter ironically titled "Beginning The World," Richard is jolted into an awareness of the paralytic effect of his prepossession: at the final dissolution of Jarndyce and Jarndyce Woodcourt discovers him in the court frozen "like a stone figure" — a cogent dramatization of the effects of an externally determined or passive end. Back at Symonds Inn Esther finds Richard "cheerful and looking forward." He now clings tenaciously to the idea of "beginning," moving

1. All references to *Bleak House* are from the Riverside edition, ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956). Page numbers appear in parentheses.

2. In *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), Edward Said explores "beginning" as both a human goal and a literary objective. Said discusses *Great Expectations* as exemplary of "beginning intention," the novelistic mode of defining initiation. In this study I examine the repeated statements

about "beginning" by characters in *Bleak House*, and how the conceptualization of the idea of beginning orders the narrative. Said's study proves invaluable here.

3. Said, p. 5.

4. Frank Kermode suggests that *ends* are invented by us in our effort to deal with the problem of being in the middle. *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967).

urgently from consciousness of need: "I have to begin the world," to expression of intent: "I will begin the world," to a clear articulation of purpose: "You will forgive me . . . Ada, before I begin the world." But Richard is dying. He has just left Chancery where he has participated in his ruin by a "fatal inheritance," has seen Jarndyce and Jarndyce (his life) "melt away." From the outset, Richard has looked to Chancery for the settlement that would allow him to start. His error was in not realizing that Chancery itself is nothing but an endless "end" the innateness of which is both veiled and perpetuated by the false starts that it continuously generates at great cost to suit and suitor. By its very nature therefore, Chancery is incapable of initiating creative beginnings. Its barrenness, marked by the stultifying mud and fog in which it sits, points to an end that is immanent and incapable of regeneration. According to J. Hillis Miller, the fog and mud of *Bleak House* indicate a general disintegration into the "primal slime," which, unlike "the primeval stuff out of which all fully developed forms evolve," promises nothing "fresh" or "new."⁵

Bleak House argues two types of "beginnings." The sort of beginning that has been discussed so far is recapitulative and may more precisely be termed "origin." Origin is linked to inheritance, material and immaterial. Its phylogenetic dictates transcend individual preference. Thus the individual may be bound to historical circumstances that are largely a primitive restatement. As already shown, in *Bleak House* the regenerative process has been inverted and compressed into a protracted end. Whereas Chancery's ostensible purpose is to free the suitor by disentangling the confused links of a legacy that inhibits him, it intensifies the problem. Chancery absorbs the suitor; it consumes his inheritance; and by the void it creates, binds him to itself. Miss Flite summarizes the relationship between Chancery and suitor thus: "there's a dreadful attraction in the place . . . [t]here's a cruel attraction in the place . . . you can't leave it. And you must expect." The uses of Chancery, Miss Flite further observes, "Draw people on . . . Draw peace out of them. Sense out of them. Good looks out of them. Good qualities out of them" (378), devitalize them. Chancery is father or creator of the most irredeemable orphans of *Bleak House*.

Yet, it should be feasible for an orphan to "make a new beginning." Freed from the constraints of paternity, the orphan can create his own identity, as Ishmael or Moll Flanders does. In *Bleak House*, however, to be orphaned is to be securely bound to a non-heritage that is the less emancipating because the less differentiable from heritage. The sociological significance of Dickens' treatment of "origin" and its implications in *Bleak House* need not

be repeated here.⁶ Suffice it to say that the characters in *Bleak House* are issued into a society in which the vital functions have ceased, in which life personifies death.⁷

As an alternative to "origin" Dickens proposes a "beginning" that is both motive and inventive — and here the author "purposely dwelt on the romantic side of familiar things." The fragmented and tyrannical society that Dickens sketches is just such a one as the romantic poets strive to transcend. The romantics advocate the autonomy of the individual, his potential for self-realization against great odds. They believe that the individual has the option to choose between passive recurrence and the self-divined power to act, to "begin." Said asserts that once "beginning" is identified with the individual, it can no longer be termed "origin," which is the "purely circumstantial existence of conditions"; it is an "intentional act,"⁸ and as such, is the "first step" towards "production of meaning."⁹ Said has much more to say that is pertinent to Dickens' treatment of "beginnings" in *Bleak House*. He suggests that "beginning" is largely linguistic: It utilizes language and is about the use of language; that the "beginning" usually "implicates" the end; that almost invariably, "for the writer, the historian, or the philosopher the beginning will emerge reflectively and perhaps unhappily, already engaging him in an awareness of its difficulty." In addition, Said suggests that a beginning is identifiable by certain characteristic features:

... the desire, the will and the freedom to reverse oneself, to accept thereby the risks of rupture and discontinuity: for whether one looks to see where and when he began, or whether he looks in order to begin now, he cannot continue as he is. It is, however, very difficult to begin [Said continues] with a wholly new start. Too many old habits, loyalties and pressures inhibit the substitution of a novel enterprise for an established one. When the Old Testament God chooses to begin the world again he does it with Noah; things have been going very badly and since it is his prerogative, God wishes a new beginning. Yet it is interesting that God himself does not begin completely from nothing. Noah and the ark comprise a piece of the old world initiating the new.¹⁰

Said's definition of beginning calls to mind Esther Summerson's program for being.¹¹ The terms of her survival — "It was not for me to muse over byegones, but to act with a cheerful spirit" (62) (emphasis added) — denote intention and, besides, demonstrate that Esther has anticipated and, indeed, already taken up Mr. Jarndyce's challenge to "begin." She begins with a complex apperception. She knows that she is beginning, that she is doing so in *medias res*, and that it is difficult: "I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of

5. Miller, "Bleak House," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Bleak House*, ed. Jacob Korg (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 78.

6. An analogy may be drawn between *origin* or the "family curse" as it is defined by Jarndyce and Jarndyce, and the hopeless blight of English nineteenth-century society as Dickens depicts it. For some discussion of the topicality of the social-historical issues raised in *Bleak House* see *Charles Dickens: Bleak House: A Casebook*, ed. A. E. Dyson (London: Macmillan, 1969).

7. For an examination of the burgeoning metaphor, "death" and its thematic significance in *Bleak House*, see Garrett Stewart, "The New Mortality of Bleak House," *ELH* 45 (1978), 443-484.

8. Said, p. 32.

9. Said, p. 5.

10. Said, p. 34-36.

11. Stewart recognizes in Esther Summerson an exemplification of Said's view of "beginning" as a novelistic mode of characterization, p. 475.

these pages" (11) (emphasis added). She is also aware of the functional aspect of her *linguistic* enterprise: "It seems curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of my life!" (20). In addition Esther is aware that she is not only offspring but creator, though only partly, of her world, and that *other* is an important element in her activity; she comments:

I don't know how it is. I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible . . . but it is all of no use. I hope any one who may read what I write, will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I can only suppose it must be because I have really something to do with them and can't be kept out (85).

Esther's compulsion to *write*, even if, she says, she must "rub it out again," underscores the extent to which her identity, her *beginning* is bound up in language.

Her role as narrator defines the limits of her existence. She opens tentatively, apologizing to her audience for not being "clever." Her consciousness of her relationship to her audience summons the recollection of her earlier role as narrator and her erstwhile audience, her doll. She reminisces: "I can remember, when I was a very little girl indeed, I used to say to my doll . . . 'Now Dolly, I am not clever, . . . and you must be patient . . .'" The doll, she says, "used to sit propped in a great arm-chair" staring, "not so much" at her "as at nothing," while she told it all her "secrets" (11). Esther addresses her audience as she used to do her doll, and as she repeated the story of her "birthday" to the doll she now recounts it for her audience. This could be interpreted in two ways: as regression or as a necessary re-creative gesture. But she tells us further that she was brought up as in "fairy stories" by a "godmother" (11); and it is here in the child's fairy-tale world of fictional inhabitants that Esther finds repeatedly the inspiration to "begin." Throughout the work she overcomes obstacles by reviving the bond between herself and the doll, that "old childish prayer in its old childish words," to be "industrious, contented, and true-hearted and to do good to some one and win some love" (376, 375) to herself. Esther recalls the past then not to be defined by it but in order to overcome it. In this sense her "beginning" is not passive recurrence but a purposeful, goal-directed act.

Nevertheless, Esther's narrative ends with unsettling echoes of its inception. The new Bleak House is "a rustic cottage of *doll's rooms*" (648) (emphasis added). Though her childhood world has expanded to include a whole community, there is still a sense of cramped discomfort about its "pretty rooms," "little verandah doors" and "tiny colonades." Still, it has been constructed on *her* "better plan," furnished and decorated according to *her* "little tastes and fancies," *her* "little methods and inventions," peopled by *her* favorites. And though the new

Bleak House bears the scars of the affliction of the old, Esther and her entourage, like Noah and his ark, have survived extinction. However, the "tiny" design, the beatific mise-en-scene of Esther's doll's rooms in the monstrous world of the Jos, the Flites, the Krooks and the Pardiggles, distresses many critics — it extends and intensifies the jarring note struck by Esther's self-effacing posture counterposed against the extravagance of her I's and her constant flourish of the *keys* to Bleak House. This dissonance raises questions about authority and blindness, reality and myth-making, and has led many readers to choose between the two narrative points of view, almost invariably preferring that of the third person narrator. According to Ellen Serlen, Esther, in her fairy-tale sense of fulfillment, offers the reader nothing but an "escape" from reality, from the "familiar things" of the omniscient narrator's world, *our world*" (emphasis added).¹² Did Dickens weave the double thread just to have his readers choose unequivocally between the strands?

Early in the novel Jarndyce proposes a "habitable doll's house with . . . a few tin people" in it as the safeguard against Skimpole's pernicious "inexperience", and as a palliative for his "childish" omissions. Conversely, the third person narrator suggests that Judy Smallweed's premature "pattern of sordid age" is a result of her never having inhabited the world of the child: the Smallweed children "never owned a doll, never heard of Cinderella" (220). Skimpole personifies the distortion of child-like ingenuousness — we learn later that he had been the "victim of a combination on the part of mankind against an amiable child" (629) — the embodiment of the "innocuous" exploiter that Esther could become. On the other hand, the Smallweed family symbolizes the perversion that may develop outside the precincts of the child. Esther and her "doll's house" occupy a place between the two, as is evident in the utility of its extension, the fairy-tale abode. On her arrival at Chesney Wold to recuperate from her illness she finds Boythorn's home touched up with "endearing remembrance" of her "little tastes and likings." Accordingly, the house takes on qualities of enchantment; to her it seems built magically by a "good fairy," for her, a "princess," a "favoured godchild" (381). Esther's perception has transformed the *given* into states of relatively boundless prospects. The poet Coleridge finds similar munificence in the fairy tale:

For from my early reading of fairy-tales and genii etc., etc., my mind had become habituated to the Vast, and I never regarded my senses, in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight.¹³

Esther, her doll, and her fairy-godmother belong to the child's world of improvisation where experience is still fluid enough to resist the corruption and stagnation that surround it. In the same vein Coleridge again observes:

12. Serlen, *ELH* 43 (1976), 565.

13. Coleridge, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1895), 1, 16.

The first lesson that innocent Childhood affords me, is — that it is an instinct of my Nature to pass out of myself, and to exist in the form of others.

The second is — not to suffer any one form to pass into me and to become a usurping Self in the disguise of what the German Pathologists call a *fixed Idea*.¹⁴

As illustrated by Richard, the adult world of representation, of Chancery, the Tulkingshorns and Wholess, does become the "fixed idea" or "usurping self" that destroys. On the other hand, Esther defines her own identity utilizing the romantic technique of assertion of self through denial of self. Her success is manifest in the power she accrues through her Wordsworthian egotistical rendering of the external world. The critics who chide Esther for her "unrealistic" approach overlook the significance of her authorial performance. Esther's reaction to the problems of her society is no more dysfunctional than Wordsworth's response to the decrepit Cumberland beggar; nor is it aesthetically less "real" than Don Quixote's imaging of Dulcinea. In the latter cases, the audience is always mindful of another reality, which, however, is magnified rather than abrogated by its counterpart. Dickens' world, the artist's, must embrace not a single, but a twofold reality.

It is in the narrative dispensation that Esther's "insufficiency" lies. In *Great Expectations* Dickens presents the voice of little Pip whose "infant tongue" contracts Phillip Pirrip to Pip and draws "childish conclusions" from the shapes of letters, simultaneously with that of Pip the narrator whose maturer, analytic consciousness demands (of Joe and Biddy) the "words" in full so that he (Pip) may "carry the sound of them away" with him. In *Bleak House* these two elements of a single narrative utterance are separated. In one sense, Esther's narrative remains within the confines of the vacant stare of her doll — this explains, to some extent, reader resistance to Esther, a resistance to performing as one of her "pets." For although Esther speaks of the past, she narrates without the retrospective distance that provides the internal or textual critical reference that is the reader's passage to a "sympathetic" co-performance. The silences in Esther's story, occasioned by the blank stare of the doll, her audience, are filled by the impinging voice of the third person narrator. He provides the canvas on which Esther must construct, sets the stage on which she must act or "begin." He therefore imposes an external critical gauge. The third person narrative circumscribes Esther's narrative in the same way that Chancery environs Bleak House. The concern of

each narrator — one for the individual, the other for the universal — parallels his respective narrative status. The reader is always tempted, then, to weigh Esther's words against those of the third person narrator. This tends to make her culpable in that her portrayal of her sense of self and its purlieus sometimes reads like an account by Wemmick of his fairy-tale castle and its "Aged" innocence, without Wemmick's acknowledgement of the conjunction of its threatening counterpart, Newgate and Juggers.

But this is a limited reading of Esther's role in the work. Far from negating the "reality" of the society, Esther's "lack" emphasizes it by demonstrating the limitations of her options, which, finally, question, in the universal sense, the efficacy of the individual's necessarily "little" labors. Esther's predicament is that she is called upon to act in an environment that qualifies action; to write, in Quixotic fashion, her narrative within another, externally determined narrative in which she is still only embryonic — for the most part she appears in the third person narrative as a name on a handkerchief that Bucket discovers hidden in a drawer; as a vague resemblance to a portrait that Guppy sees; as signs that must be translated to bridge the gap between the external world and hers. From the start Esther is excluded from the other narrative except as a barely distinguishable part of a chaotic mass. She must call herself into being. This difficulty begins with the *beginning*, with her aunt's denial of her birth, with childhood, a lonely room, a doll, a fairy godmother and the story that all together fabricate. Esther's narrative is the child's plastic re-creation of a cosmos that refuses her access; a realm that the *other* distantly anatomizes.

This is not to say, however, that Esther's vision is less valid than that of the third person narrator. Anton Ehrenzweig contends that the child's seemingly unrealistic or "syncretistic" portrayal of the object may in fact be superior in its perception to the adult's duller, analytic portraiture. The child does not seek a "detail to detail" correspondence between perception and reality. He grasps the "total" object, and therefore has the advantage of being able to accommodate change.¹⁵ If the child's depiction seems unrealistic then, it must be because of its particularity rather than from incorrectness.

Esther particularizes Bleak House and thereby introduces a change of perspective. This change explains her actualization. Her existence cannot be accounted for on the basis of heredity — she "died" at birth; her own mother thought that she "had never . . . breathed . . . had never been endowed with life" (389). Through this, her

14. Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit: A New Presentation of Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 68. Dickens' own fascination with the child and childhood and the autobiographical source of this fascination are well-known. According to Walter Crotch: "To Dickens came the vision of the child. It came to him early in life and it endured till death," *The Pageant of Dickens* (New York: Haskell House, 1972), p. 1.
15. Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967), pp. 6-17. Ehrenzweig's point recalls Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" in which the poet distinguishes between the child's way of apprehension and the adults' "developed"

sense of reality. According to Wordsworth, "a dreamlike vividness and splendour . . . invest objects of sight in childhood." The "visionary gleam" fades when, as maturity advances, the cares of everyday life take on greater significance, and

. . . thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.

Wordsworth's distinction between child-vision and adult-vision provides an apt gloss to the contrast that Dickens makes between Esther's perception of the world and the perspective of the third person narrator.

uniquely defined place in the work's structure, Esther poses, against the paligenetic tedium of "origin" in *Bleak House*, the animating difference, "beginning." Not surprisingly the third person narrative concludes with a yielding to the end:

Thus Chesney Wold. With so much of itself abandoned to darkness and vacancy; with so little change under the summer shining or the wintry lowering; so sombre and motionless always — no flag flying now by day, no rows of lights sparkling by night; with no family to come and go, no visitors to be the souls of pale cold shapes of rooms, no stir of life about it; — passion and pride, even to the stranger's eye, have died away from the place in Lincolnshire, and yielded it to dull repose (662).

In her conclusion, Esther sets forth a new conception of the old order, based on the purposeful reconstruction of a defective framework. The re-created Bleak House, she demonstrates, produces the new healthy offspring

necessary for continuity. Notwithstanding, the problematic "even supposing" with which she closes introduces a question mark that qualifies conclusiveness, even on her part.

Esther does not, indeed, cannot, offer a comprehensive solution to the ills of her society, ills so expansive that they dwarf individual effort, hers, Jarndyce's, Woodcourt's. She ventures a "beginning," a youthful, and continuous one that counterpoints the eternal decline of the world that the third person narrator delineates. The tension created by these polarities imparts a vibrantly discursive quality to the novel. The narratives bring together two "realities," a beginning and an end; each is meaningful only in the context of the other. Could it be that Dickens himself saw his own *Bleak House* as but a "beginning," a "doll's room" in his improvised, "habitable doll's house" — the narrative reconstruction of a reality that threatens to cripple all save the architect of his "unreal" creations?

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Nietzsche, Bagehot and The Morality of Custom

David S. Thatcher

According to Norman St John-Stevan, Walter Bagehot "combined a mind of extraordinary keenness and subtlety with a nature dominated by deep and passionate feeling," a writer whose entire work carries the stamp of "intellectual detachment." Although he may have been "the greatest Victorian," he was by no means the most representative figure of the age: "While he lucidly appreciated the viewpoints and prejudices of the contemporary middle and upper classes, as well as those of the intellectuals, he was identified with neither, and thus became the most perceptive critic of the age in which he lived."¹ Bagehot was, in addition, "the perfect expositor" whose merit it was to describe "what is actually happening, rather than what ought to be happening according to prevalent theory," and the freshness and originality of his thought is reflected in the "vivid and striking phrases" of an appealing prose style.² If this be accepted as an accurate portrayal of Bagehot as thinker and writer, it is less surprising to discover that he attracted the attention of his greater and more influential German contemporary, Friedrich Nietzsche.

It is known that Nietzsche read the German translation of one of Bagehot's most important works, *Physics and Politics, or Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of 'Natural Selection' and 'Inheritance' to Political Society*, shortly after it was published in 1874.³ Two quotations from this book were incorporated in Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer as Educator*, finished in the late summer that same year,⁴ and there is one allusion to Bagehot in a *Nachlass* note.⁵ No further references to Bagehot are to be found in Nietzsche's work, published or unpublished, although *Human, All-Too-Human* (1878) and *The Dawn* (1880) contain evident borrowings from *Physics and Politics*.

A chance meeting at the summer resort of Rosenlauhaid is of some significance, for it was there, in August 1877, that Nietzsche befriended G. Croom Robertson, professor of philosophy at University College, London, and editor of the quarterly review, *Mind*. Undeterred by an insecure grasp of the English language, Nietzsche described this journal to a friend as the best English journal of philosophy, and was aware that Darwin, Edward Tylor,

1. *Walter Bagehot: A Study of His Life and Thought Together with a Selection from His Political Writings* (Bloomington: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1959), p. 21.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

3. Serialized in the *Fortnightly Review* beginning November 1, 1867, *Physics and Politics* was published in London by Henry S. King in 1872; all subsequent page references are to this edition. Frequent republication and translation testify to the book's widespread popularity within and without the world of academe. William M. McGovern calls Bagehot's title "misleading," inasmuch as "its main theme is the relation, not between physics and politics, but between biology and politics." *From Luther to Hitler* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1941), p. 463. McGovern also discusses Nietzsche in his book, but draws no parallel between Nietzsche and Bagehot. *Physics and Politics* was translated into

German under the title *Der Ursprung der Nationen. Betrachtungen über den Einfluß der natürlichen Zuchtwahl und der Vererbung auf die Bildung politischer Gemeinwesen* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1874). The preface of the translator, I. Rosenthal, is dated February 7, 1874. Rosenthal is, by and large, faithful to the English text but he acknowledges deleting some of the more repetitious passages.

4. *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), V, 120 and 193-194; unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Nietzsche's works are from this edition.

5. The note reads: "Das Misstrauen der strengen Forscher gegen jedes deduktive System, vid. Bagehot." *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), IV 4, 318. The note is dated summer-fall, 1873, but probably belongs to a later period.

Henry Maine and Herbert Spencer were among its distinguished contributors.⁶ Nietzsche also records that Robertson spoke to him about Darwin and Bagehot. The meeting with Robertson may have been one reason for Nietzsche's curiosity about English writers at this time. In the spring of 1878 we find him asking his publisher, Ernst Schmeitzner, for Brockhaus's second-hand catalogue of translations of English books; at the end of the following year he specifically asks to be informed of everything of Bagehot's that is available in German translation.⁷ *Physics and Politics* had obviously made an impression on him.

The credit for being the first to point out Nietzsche's indebtedness to *Physics and Politics* belongs, in all probability, to an early champion of Nietzsche in England, Thomas Common. In 1896 Common noted that the book was "very carefully studied by Nietzsche, who quotes [from] it with approval"; on the controversial question of social evolution, Bagehot was "probably the writer who has approximated most closely to Nietzsche's ideas."⁸ Twenty years later acting perhaps on Common's hint, George Sampson offered a more detailed comparison:

Walter Bagehot lived and died in utter ignorance that any such person as Friedrich Nietzsche was in existence; yet you may take paragraph after paragraph of *Physics and Politics* . . . and set them parallel to the aphorisms of *Human, All-Too-Human*. Aphorism ninety-six, for example, called "Custom and Morality," is pure Bagehot, and might have come from the Englishman's work. When Bagehot describes the evolution of superior or ruling castes, we seem to catch glimpses of Nietzsche's conquering "blond beasts" rising to dominion over the lesser races of primitive times. Even his acceptance of slavery as a necessary "provisional institution" in human progress, and as an actual benefit to certain types of population, has a strangely Nietzschean complexion.⁹

Since 1915, when Sampson wrote this passage, *Physics and Politics* seems to have slipped from view as an influence on Nietzsche's thought. Symptomatic is the omission of Bagehot from David Henkle's *Nietzsche and the Victorians* (Kent State diss., 1971), the only full-scale study of the subject to date.¹⁰ A re-appraisal of Bagehot's influence is surely long overdue.

The striking parallels between Bagehot and Nietzsche can briefly be illustrated by juxtaposing four statements

from *Physics and Politics* with analogous passages in Nietzsche's writings:

BAGEHOT	NIETZSCHE
1. In historic times there has been little progress; in pre-historic times there must have been much. (p. 42).	Everything <i>essential</i> in human development happened in pre-historic times, long before those four thousand years which we know something of; man may not have changed much during this time.
2. The child resolutely accepts every idea which passes through its brain as true. (p. 94).	The first <i>causa</i> which occurred to the mind [of primitive man] to explain anything that required explanation was sufficient and stood for truth.
3. Every sort of philosophy has been systematized . . . A large book of deductive philosophy is much to be suspected . . . Superfluous energy . . . has worked into big systems what should be left as little suggestions. (pp. 190, 191).	I mistrust all systematizers, and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity.
4. There is only a certain <i>quantum</i> of power in each of our race; if it goes in one way it is spent, and cannot go in another. (p. 199).	No one can spend more than he has . . . If one spends oneself on power, grand politics, economic affairs, world commerce, parliamentary institutions, military interests — if one expends in <i>this</i> direction the quantum of reason, seriousness, will, self-overcoming that one is, then there will be a shortage in the other direction. 11

Other parallels could easily be adduced on such diverse topics as war, slavery, "master-morality," "the herd," democracy, parliamentary institutions and the phenomenon of modern restlessness. Rather than deal with each of these in a necessarily random and diffuse manner, I think it would be more instructive to dwell on an idea which permeates *Physics and Politics*, the idea to which Bagehot, following the practice of Sir Henry Maine in *Ancient Law* (1861), gives the name of "customary

6. *Nietzsche Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), II 5, 265-266, 268, 270.
 7. *Ibid.*, 307, 318, 474. In his reply Schmeitzner mentions translations of *Lombard Street* and *Physics and Politics* (*ibid.*, III 2, 11). It is at this time that Nietzsche commends the English for producing scientific manuals written "by their foremost men of learning, full, complete, and inspiring natures, and not, as among us, by mediocre investigators." *Miscellaneous Maxims and Opinions* [= *MMO*], aph. 184. By the time of *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) Nietzsche is showing signs of the anglophobia usually attributed to him (see apts. 252 and 253).
 8. "Friedrich Nietzsche," *To-morrow*, I (March 1896), 161.
 9. "Nietzsche," *Bookman*, XLVII (March 1915), 174-175. Rudolph Binion mentions Bagehot briefly in *Franz Lou: Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), and Jörg Salquarda has identified a quotation in *Schopenhauer as Educa-*

tor as being from *Physics and Politics* — see his article "Der unmögliche Shelley," *Nietzsche-Studien*, VIII (1979), 396-397. Apart from these isolated cases, and perhaps a few others which have eluded me, Bagehot appears to be a "forgotten man" in Nietzsche scholarship.
 10. Henkle also contrives to ignore Bain, Galton, Landor, Lecky, Lubbock, Maudsley, Proctor, Spencer and Tylor, all of whom had varying degrees of impact on Nietzsche's work. I have dealt elsewhere with Nietzsche's response to Lubbock's *Origin of Civilization*, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1875). In an introduction defending the study of anthropology, Lubbock praises *Physics and Politics* as a work which confirms his own "general conclusions" (p. in.).
 11. The quotations from Nietzsche are, respectively: *Human, All-Too-Human* [= *HAH*], aph. 2; *HAH*, aph. 13; *The Twilight of the Idols* [= *T*], translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 25; *T*, p. 62.

law." Nietzsche's term is "die Sittlichkeit der Sitte," the morality of mores or of customs.¹²

Bagehot and Nietzsche are united in the belief that, in primitive times, the domain of morality was more extensive than it is now: they regard it, in fact, as having been all-embracing. Usage, writes Bagehot, was then "social, political, religious" all in one (p. 157), and for Nietzsche morality included "education and hygienics, marriage, medicine, agriculture, war, speech and silence, the relationship between man and man, and between man and the gods" — everything, he declares, was "originally custom." Morality can be equated with custom: "Morality is nothing else (and, above all, nothing more) than obedience to customs, of whatsoever nature they be," for customs are "simply the traditional way of acting and valuing" (*D*, aph. 9). Customs represent "the experiences of men of earlier times in regard to what they considered as useful and harmful" (*D*, aph. 19). In Nietzsche's view, the fundamental distinction between moral and immoral, between good and evil, has nothing to do with "altruism" and "egoism," but derives from obedience to tradition, so that "to be moral, correct, and virtuous is to be obedient to an old-established law and custom" and "whether we submit with difficulty or willingly is immaterial, enough that we do so" (*HAA*, aph. 96).

In keeping with the Darwinian approach already manifest in the subtitle of his book, Bagehot asserts that morality was of inestimable value in the "struggle for existence," and that entrenched customs aided certain tribes to survive: "The slightest symptom of legal development, the least indication of a military bond, is then enough to turn the scale. The compact tribes win, and the compact tribes are the tamest. Civilisation begins, because the beginning of civilisation is a military advantage" (p. 52). Paradoxically, "the most obedient, the tamest tribes are, at the first stage in the real struggle of life, the strongest and the conquerors."¹³ Bagehot gives the name "polity" to a given system of social organizations, justifying it on the grounds of "natural selection":

I need not pause to prove that any form of polity is more efficient than none; that an aggregate of families owning even a slipperly allegiance to a single head, would be sure to have the better of a set of families acknowledging no obedience to anyone, but scattering loose about the world and fighting where they stood. (p. 24).

What is needed in such a polity is "a comprehensive rule

binding men together, making them do much the same things, telling them what to expect of each other — fashioning them alike, and keeping them so"; what this rule is does not matter very much, the cardinal point being that "any rule is better than none" (p. 25). For his part Nietzsche states flatly that morality was primarily "a means of preserving the community and saving it from destruction."¹⁴ A race of people is best preserved "when the greater number hold one common spirit in consequence of the similarity of their accustomed and indisputable principles" and of "their common faith" (*HAA*, aph. 224), and primitive morality "required that a man should observe her prescriptions without thinking of *himself* as an individual" (*D*, aph. 9). The permanent interest of the community outweighs the temporary interest of the individual, and "even if the individual suffers by an arrangement that suits the mass, even if he is depressed and ruined by it, morality must be maintained and the victim brought to the sacrifice."¹⁵ Valuations and orders of rank are "expressions of the needs of a community and herd," and because it trains the individual to be a function of the herd and to ascribe value to himself only as a function, morality can be regarded as "herd instinct in the individual."¹⁶ The morality of custom makes men "to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable" (*GM*, p. 59, Second Essay, section 2). The customs of the herd, the pressure to submit to "a law of agreement" (*GS*, aph. 76), create social conformity and uniformity and hence strength and cohesion. For this reason, says Nietzsche, in words which echo Bagehot's, the great principle which stands at the beginning of all civilization is the principle that "any custom is better than none" (*D*, aph. 16). Tradition is a form of "higher authority, which is obeyed, not because it commands what is useful to us, but merely because it commands" (*D*, aph. 9).

Commands, as both Bagehot and Nietzsche recognize, were often irrational, even superfluous. Bagehot describes them as "often of most childish origin, beginning in a casual superstition or local accident" (p. 213), and he provides some amusing examples in support. Nietzsche provides examples of his own (*D*, aphs. 16 & 24) and, fully aware of what he calls "the severity, tyranny, stupidity, and idiocy" of many primitive customs, places them in a perspective quite different from that of Christian or Kantian ethics:

12. This term is first used in *The Dawn* [= *D*], aph. 9, but is implied, on Nietzsche's own admission, in the earlier *HAA*, aphs. 96 & 99, and *MMO*, aph. 89. For Nietzsche's admission, see section four of his preface to *The Genealogy of Morals* [= *GM*], trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 18. Other explicit references to "die Sittlichkeit der Sitte" will be cited in the course of this paper, but it might be found convenient to have them listed here: *D*, aphs. 14, 16, 18, 33; *The Gay Science* [= *GS*], trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), aphs. 43, 143, 149, 296; *GM*, p. 59 (Second Essay, section 2), p. 114 (Third Essay, section 9); *The Will to Power* [= *WP*], trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), aphs. 265, 283.

13. p. 51. "By 'tamest' Bagehot obviously means not the weakest or the meekest, but those most willing to submit to the discipline ordained by the group." McGovern, p. 467.

14. *The Wanderer and His Shadow* [= *WS*], aph. 44. Cf. *WP*, aphs. 284, 285, 315.

15. *MMO*, aph. 89. Bagehot makes a similar point: "The fixed custom which public opinion alone tolerates is imposed on all minds, whether it suits them or not" (p. 54).

16. *GS*, aph. 116. See also aph. 117, "Herd Remorse." Bagehot also uses the word "herd" (very common in Nietzsche's vocabulary): "A savage tribe resembles a herd of gregarious beasts; where the leader goes they go too; they copy blindly his habits, and thus soon become that which he already is" (pp. 100-101).

How the tradition has arisen is immaterial, at all events without regard to good and evil or any immanent categorical imperative, but above all for the purpose of preserving a community, a generation, an association, a people; every superstitious custom that has arisen on account of some falsely explained accident, creates a tradition, which it is moral to follow.¹⁷

Being immoral is not being "evil," but being "in opposition to tradition, however sensible or stupid it may be" (HAH, aph. 96). Whenever we consider primitive peoples, ancient or modern, we find them "most strongly influenced by law and by tradition" (HAH, aph. 111).

Both writers also realize that commands were harsh, strict and tyrannical. Bagehot argues that social cohesion was produced "by one of the strongest yokes . . . and the most terrible tyrannies ever known among men — the authority of 'customary law'"; the rule under which men were compelled to live was "no pleasant power — no 'rose-water' authority, as Carlyle would have called it — but a stern, incessant, implacable rule" (p. 213). Religions were mainly responsible for imposing "the yoke of custom" on mankind, and for putting upon "a fixed law a sanction so fearful that no one could dream of not conforming to it" (pp. 56-57). Bagehot employs the term "yoke" some eight or nine times to convey the oppressive burden of "customary discipline" (p. 57), and Nietzsche follows suit by pointing to the irresistible urge felt by "superior men" to "throw off the yoke ['Joch'] of some morality or other" (D, aph. 14). He also speaks of "the dreadful barbarism of custom" (WP, aph. 871), and describes morality as always having been "a bed of Procrustes" (T, p. 96).

For Bagehot the crucial problem is to gain the obedience of men, though "what you do with that obedience is less critical"; to gain obedience the principal requirement is "the identity — not the union, but the sameness — of what we now call Church and State," a single government "regulating the whole of human life" (p. 26). Such a government will create "a cake of custom" in which "all the actions of life are to be submitted to a single rule for a single object" (p. 27), a "thick crust of custom" (p. 65), a "usage of imperishable import" which must be kept unchanged (p. 157). As a result of this "binding polity" or "fixity," there was no room for contract or choice:

In modern days, in civilised days, men's choice determines nearly all they do. But in early times that choice determined scarcely anything. The guiding rule was the law of *status*. Everybody was born to a place in the community: in that place he had to stay: in that place he found certain duties which he had to fulfil, and which were all he needed to think of. The net of custom caught men in distinct spots, and kept each where he stood. (p. 29).

17. HAH, aph. 96. J. W. Burrow, without referring to Nietzsche, describes this insight as "the central core of the emerging sociology of the nineteenth century." He notes that many primitive customs and institutions do not appear to have been devised rationally to answer "a readily comprehensible purpose," nor do their proponents explain them in this way: "Yet they cannot be dismissed as simply random and accidental phenomena, or striking examples of human folly and absurdity, to be eradicated as soon as possible by demonstrations of their absurdity, because although

All human action was regulated by "a sacred ritual," itself part of "an ancient usage conceived as emanating from a superhuman authority, and not to be transgressed without risk of punishment by more than mortal power" (p. 103). Bagehot is reluctant to call this usage "law," because he thinks it antedates the word "law" in human speech; but the usage has the force if not the character of official, legal sanctions. In Greece such usage "presented itself to men's minds as something venerable and unchangeable, as old as the city; it had been delivered by the founder himself, when he laid the walls of the city, and kindled its sacred fire" (p. 159). Nietzsche advances similar arguments to explain the grounds on which "customary law" was upheld: first, the law is claimed to be of divine origin, and therefore whole, perfect and exempt from human error, and, secondly, it is claimed that since "the law has already existed from time immemorial, it is impious, a crime against the ancestors, to call it in question." In short, the authority of such law is established by the thesis, "God gave it, the ancestors lived it."¹⁸

Nietzsche's thinking is consistent with Bagehot's in two other aspects of "customary law": the attitude of collective guilt for any violation, and the obstacles in the way of change. As regards the former, their thinking runs on virtually identical lines as the following juxtaposition will show:

BAGEHOT

Very commonly all the tribe would expect a punishment from the gods if any one of them refrained from what was old, or began what was new. In modern times and in cultivated countries we regard each person as responsible only for his own actions, and do not believe, or think of believing, that the misconduct of others can bring guilt on them. Guilt to us is an individual taint consequent on choice and cleaving to the chooser. But in early ages the act of one member of the tribe is conceived to make all the tribe impious, to offend its peculiar god, to expose all the tribe to penalties from heaven . . . The early tribe or nation is a religious partnership, on which a rash member by a sudden impiety may bring utter ruin. (p. 102).

NIETZSCHE

Wherever a community exists, and consequently also a morality of custom, the feeling prevails that any punishment for the violation of a custom is inflicted, above all, on the community: this punishment is a supernatural punishment, the manifestations and limits of which are so difficult to understand, and are investigated with such superstitious fear. The community can compel any one member of it to make good, either to an individual or to the community itself, all ill consequences which may have followed upon such a member's action. It can also call down a sort of vengeance upon the head of the individual by endeavouring to show that, as a result of his action, a storm of divine anger has burst over the community. — but, above all, it regards the guilt of the individual more particularly as its own guilt, and bears the punishment of the isolated individual as its own punishment. (D, aph. 9).

they do not contribute to the ostensible purposes which are claimed for them — appeasing the gods, say, or giving comfort to departed ancestors — they do seem to contribute very strikingly to another, recondit purpose, namely, the maintenance of social order." *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), p. 104.

18. *The Antichrist* [= A], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 177, aph. 57.

There are other passages in *Physics and Politics* (e.g., pp. 140-142) which find their reflection in Nietzsche's writings.¹⁹

In view of the general liability for any infraction of "customary law," changing that law was extremely difficult and hazardous. "In early society," writes Bagehot, "originality in life was forbidden and repressed by the fixed rule of life" (p. 159). In a society subordinated to the "cake of custom" free thought was prohibited; such a prohibition is not to be regarded as an evil, "or rather, though an evil, it is the necessary basis for the greatest good," since it makes "the mould of civilisation" and hardens "the soft fibre of early man" (p. 27). Furthermore, "permitted deviation from the transmitted ordinances becomes simple folly It is allowing one individual, for a moment's pleasure or a stupid whim, to bring terrible and irretrievable calamity upon all" (pp. 102-103). In these circumstances toleration of deviations is unthinkable, even wicked. Intolerance, on the other hand, leads inevitably to stagnation and stultification:

Either men had no law at all, and lived in confused tribes, hardly hanging together, or they had to obtain a fixed law by processes of incredible difficulty. Those who surmounted that difficulty soon destroyed all those that lay in their way who did not. And then they themselves were caught in their own yoke. The customary discipline, which could only be imposed on any early men by terrible sanctions, continued with those sanctions, and killed out of the whole society the propensities to variation which are the principle of progress. (p. 57).

The peculiarity of "arrested civilisation" is to stamp out variations before they have time to develop (p. 54). Other factors hamper and inhibit change, not the least of which is the human tendency to avoid it whenever possible: "Men are too fond of their own life, too credulous of the completeness of their own ideas, too angry at the pain of new thoughts, to be able to bear easily with a changing existence" (p. 57). Exasperation obtrudes through Bagehot's characteristic mask of self-control: "One of the greatest pains to human nature is the pain of a new idea" (p. 163).

In that "enormous lapse of time," writes Nietzsche, when the "morality of custom" held the field, every kind of change was looked upon "as immoral and pregnant with ruin" (*D*, aph. 18). Indeed, the values and virtues associated with that morality brought "all change, all re-learning, all self-transformation into *ill repute*" (*GS*, aph. 296). He agrees with Bagehot that fixity is the enemy of experimentation, custom the enemy of choice:

At a certain point in the evolution of a people its most enlightened, that is to say most reflective and far-sighted, class declares the experience in accordance with which the people is to live — that is, *can live* — to be fixed and settled. Their objective is to bring home the richest and completest harvest from the ages of experimentation and *bad* experience. What, consequently, is to be prevented above all is the continuation of experimenting, the perpetuation *in infinitum* of the fluid condition of values, tests, choices, criticizing of values. (*A*, pp. 176-177, aph. 57).

Exploiting a Bagehot image, he notes that "the periods when the taming of the human animal ('civilisation') was desired and enforced were times of intolerance against the boldest and most spiritual natures" (*WP*, aph. 121). The age, the sanctity and the unquestioned authority of the custom hinder "our acquiring new experiences and amending morals"; morality, in fact, "is opposed to the formation of new and better morals: it stupefies."²⁰ Monotheism he regards as one form of the "morality of custom" which, in its rigidity, threatened mankind "with the premature stagnation that, as far as we can see, most other species have long reached" (*GS*, aph. 143). Like Bagehot, Nietzsche recognizes and scorns mankind's antagonism to change: "public opinion" he reduces to "private laziness" (*HAA*, aph. 482).

Despite obstacles to change, Bagehot declares, societies have to negotiate the slow and difficult transition from the first stage of civilization, "where permanence is most wanted," to the second stage, "where variability is most wanted" (p. 61). Such a transition is accompanied with feelings of dread, as primitive communities are always alarmed "when the sudden impact of new thoughts and new examples breaks down the compact despotism of the single consecrated code," and when individual men, opposing the collective ethos, strike out on new paths "without distinct guidance by hereditary morality and hereditary religion" (p. 39). A further question poses itself:

If fixity is an invariable ingredient in early civilisations, how then did any civilisation become unfixed? No doubt most civilisations stuck where they first were: no doubt we see now why stagnation is the rule of the world, and why progress is the very rare exception. (p. 158).

Bagehot's answer, which would surely have appealed to Nietzsche's loving admiration for classical Greece and Renaissance Italy, is that "the chain of custom" was first broken in the small republics of Greece and Italy which inaugurated "government by discussion" in which subjects of debate were "in some degree abstract" or consisted of "matters of principle" (p. 158). Discussion implies an admission that questions are "in no degree settled by established rule," and also that "there is no divinely appointed man whom . . . the community is bound to obey" (p. 161). If a nation can gain "the benefit of custom without the evil," and if it can have "order and choice together," then impediments to "the springs of progress" are removed (p. 162). Tolerance replaces bigotry, "the ruling principle of customary societies." Other forces, such as trade, operate "to bring men of different customs and different beliefs into close contiguity," thereby helping "to change the customs and the beliefs of them all" (pp. 176-177).

Nietzsche, too, describes the transition as a difficult one. "Under the dominating influence of the morality of custom," he writes, "originality of every kind came to acquire a bad conscience," and "every individual action, every individual mode of thinking, cause[d] dread."

19. E.g., *HAA*, aph. 96; *WS*, aph. 57; *D*, aph. 24.

20. *D*, aph. 19. Cf. *HAA*, aph. 224.

those who dared to take new paths incurred "the utmost disapproval of all the representatives of the morality of custom," and, having severed their connection with the community, were hated and feared as "evil ones":

The free man is immoral, because it is his will to depend upon himself and not upon tradition: in all the primitive states of humanity "evil" is equivalent to "individual," "free," "arbitrary," "unaccustomed," "unforeseen," "incalculable" It is impossible to determine how much the more select, rare, and original minds must have suffered in the course of time by being considered evil and dangerous, yea, because they even looked upon themselves as such.²¹

Gradually, however, the foundation of subordination, "the belief in unconditional authority, in ultimate truth" (HAH, aph. 441), has been eroded. The reason for this, for Bagehot, was "the sudden acquisition of much physical knowledge" (p. 1); for Nietzsche it is rather the comparative approach to learning which has been instrumental. We live, he says, in an age of comparison in which "various views of the world, customs and cultures can be compared and experienced simultaneously" (HAH, aph. 23). The consequences for morality he sees as more radical than Bagehot suspected:

In comparison with the mode of life which prevailed among men for thousands of years, we men of the present day are living in a very immoral age: the power of custom has been weakened to a remarkable degree, and the sense of morality is so refined and elevated that we might almost describe it as volatilised. . . . Where there is no tradition there is no morality; and the less life is governed by tradition, the narrower the circle of morality. (D, aph. 9).

Bagehot's remarks about "discussion" in the political sphere closely resemble those made by Nietzsche about "free-spiritism" in the philosophical one. Bagehot praises "liberty," Nietzsche praises "liberation," the emancipation of thought as well as of speech and action: "The ability to contradict, the attainment of a good conscience

when one feels hostile to what is accustomed, traditional, and hallowed. . . . constitutes what is really great, new, and amazing in our culture; this is the step of steps of the liberated spirit" (GS, aph. 297).

What emerges from the foregoing exposition, even in its radically condensed form, is that the parallel between Bagehot and Nietzsche is certainly — at least as far as the notion of the morality of custom is concerned — as close as Common and Sampson had suspected. Of course, the interrelationship of custom and morality had been noticed hundreds of years before Bagehot's time — the Greeks had even incorporated the idea into their language, viz. the terms *ethos* and *nomos*, and the Romans, borrowing their philosophical terminology from the Greeks, had created the term *moralis* as a direct translation from Aristotle. After the Middle High German period, the German *sittlich* and *Sittlichkeit* appear, probably formed on the model of *moralis* and *moralitas*.²² As a classicist and philologist Nietzsche must have been aware of these philosophical and linguistic conventions. Neither as theoretical concept nor as punning expression is Nietzsche's phrase "die Sittlichkeit der Sitte" as novel as both he and many of his commentators have claimed.²³ For its part, *Physics and Politics* was "clearly inspired by Darwin, Spencer, Tylor and Wallace, and especially by Sir Henry Maine, whose *Ancient Law* had been published in 1861, but its thought parallels rather than reproduces their conclusions."²⁴ Though not original, Bagehot's book appears to have been a major, if not exclusive, influence on Nietzsche's ideas of customary morality both in their content and in their expression.

Nietzsche's reaction to *Physics and Politics* is, finally, characteristic of his secretive attitude to many of his sources. Not once, in all his references to the morality of custom, does Nietzsche see fit to allude to Bagehot's book. In coining the phrase "die Sittlichkeit der Sitte" he appears to be claiming ownership of the theory which the phrase represents, an ownership which is patently unjustified.²⁵ Indeed, the very mainstream of Nietzsche's

21. D, aph 9. Cf. GS, aph. 4.

22. Wilhelm Wundt, *Ethics: An Investigation of the Facts and Laws of the Moral Life*, translated from the second German edition (1892) by Julia Gulliver and Edward Bradford Titchener (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1897), pp. 23-26. Wundt deals with the "morality of custom" at some length, pp. 127-164, without alluding to Bagehot or Nietzsche. See also William Graham Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (Boston: Ginn, 1906), *passim*, John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt, 1908), chap. IV, and John L. Myres, *The Political Ideas of the Greeks* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1927), lectures IV-VI. Myres does not refer to Bagehot, but entitles one section of his book "Physics and Nomos in Physics and Politics."

23. For example, though he mentions writers like Wundt, Sumner and Dewey, who came after Nietzsche, W. M. Salter does not mention Bagehot or any other figure who may have helped Nietzsche formulate his ideas on customary morality. *Nietzsche the Thinker* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1917), pp. 120-124, 213-225.

24. Norman St John-Stevan, p. 38. Bagehot's indebtedness to Maine, whose work Nietzsche appears not to have known, can be suggested by an enumeration of some of the ideas in *Ancient Law* reflected, implicitly or explicitly, in *Physics and Politics*. 1. Human history is guided by ascertainable laws of development. 2. Social structure is originally patriarchal and hierarchical. 3. Early society

begins with the group, not the individual. 4. Customs in primitive society are those "on the whole best suited to promote its physical and moral well-being." 5. Early law is a matter of custom and habit, not a conscious and deliberate creation of lawgivers and legislators. 6. Customs solidify into a code, of which the rulers are the custodians, not the creators. 7. Customs are maintained and enforced by means of supernatural sanctions. 8. Since crime is "a corporate act," guilt and retribution are collective, not individual. 9. The rigidity of custom "has prevented or arrested the progress of far the greater part of mankind." 10. "The stationary condition of the human race is the rule, the progress the exception." 11. The concept of progress as "necessarily from worse to better" is a modern idea. 12. The rule of the common man represents a danger to modern civilization.

25. Another striking example of this is the phrase "ressentiment," often seen as Nietzsche's invention, but in fact derived from Eugen Dühring's *Der Wert des Lebens* (1865). Nietzsche's true originality will only be fully confirmed when scholars follow the exemplary lead of Charles Andler, Alwin Mittasch, Anni Anders and others and seek to familiarize themselves with some part of the vast range of Nietzsche's reading — despite his frequent disavowals and complaints about the weakness of his eyes, Nietzsche always remained an inveterate bookworm. His library has still not been divested of all its secrets.

thought is fed by many tributaries, some large, some small, and these tributaries do not always receive the attention they deserve. Nietzsche's mode of writing — provocative, passionate, polemical, memorable — enabled him to formulate, epitomize and bring into focus ideas in such a way that they are inevitably associated with his name and considered outside the context of the relevant intellectual background. This has led, and can lead, to serious distortions of intellectual history. As far as Victorian authors are concerned, we should seek ways of

contending with Nietzsche's habitual secrecy, and refuse to take his scornful dismissals at face value. It would be a regrettable disservice to a number of Nietzsche's English contemporaries, Bagehot, Lubbock and Lecky among them, to continue to ignore or minimize the debt he owed them, a debt none the less real and demonstrable for being unsuspected or concealed.

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Voices in a Dream: The Language of Skepticism in Tennyson's "The Hesperides"

Aidan Day

In his perceptive and influential essay "Tennyson's Garden of Art: A Study of 'The Hesperides,'" G. Robert Stange has spoken of the work (published in *Poems*, 1832, but not reprinted in the poet's lifetime) as an "allegory of personal and inward experience," and more specifically, "a symbolic statement of the situation of the artist" (pp. 101, 100). He has also observed that the poem's epigraph from *Comus* — "Hesperus, and his daughters three / That sing about the golden tree" (ll. 981-82)² — reminds us that

this nineteenth-century vision is to be compared with Milton's description . . . of the paradisaical home of the Attendant Spirit. Milton's Garden of the Hesperides . . . has been best described . . . as a symbol of life itself . . . In Tennyson's version the religious implications of *Comus* are lacking. The chief resemblance of his poem to Milton's is in the parallel conception of the gardens as a . . . source of creativity — in Milton's case of the higher life, and in Tennyson's of the life of art. (p. 101)

While I shall take the view that Stange is correct in his observation that the epigraph from *Comus* has an important bearing on "The Hesperides," my initial purpose in this study will be to show that there is no reason to accept his assertion that the larger, ethical, metaphysical and religious implications of the Hesperidian Gardens in Milton are entirely lacking in Tennyson. While, however, I shall try to demonstrate that there are larger significations to Tennyson's Hesperidian Garden than Stange allows, I do not of course intend to suggest that Tennyson adopts a religious position directly comparable to Milton's. In the first section of this essay I shall argue that we may, in fact, discern in "The Hesperides" a profound skepticism concerning the existence of a providential order in the universe and that the poem may be seen as a significant expression of an early nineteenth-century world-view in which established patterns of thought and traditional

systems of religious belief were being radically called in question.

My further purpose will be to suggest that "The Hesperides" may illuminatingly be read against the background of that internalization of authority which was the characteristic response of Tennyson's Romantic predecessors to the failure of received systems of structuring and ordering experience. To the extent that there are, as Stange has observed, elements in "The Hesperides" that indicate that Tennyson is concerned in the poem to explore "the roots of being from which the poet's visions arise" (p. 107), it seems to me that the work may usefully be considered in the light of Romantic theories of mind and reality, whereby any statement concerning the interior life of the individual imagination usually implies at once, if not a "religious," at least some kind of metaphysical concern. But here, again, I do not propose to argue that Tennyson exhibits in this poem an unqualified dependence on Romantic values. The peculiar historical position of Tennyson as a writer following the work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats may be indicated through reference to a letter written in 1830 by Richard Chevenix Trench, one of Tennyson's contemporaries in the Cambridge Society known as the Apostles, to another member of that Society, William Bodham Donne:

Do we not place the glory of our century in the understanding of past ages, because our individual energy is extinct, and we are ourselves nothing? After one or two revolutions in thought and opinion, all our boasted poetry, all, or nearly all, of Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth and Byron, will become unintelligible. When except in our times, did men seek to build up their poetry on their own individual experiences, instead of some objective foundations common to all men.³

In this passage we notice, first of all, the almost Augustan

1. First published in *PMLA*, 67 (1952), 732-43. All my references are to the text of the essay as reprinted in *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*, ed. John Killham (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 99-112; hereafter cited as *Killham*.

2. The editions of Milton's poetry used in this study are *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, (London: Longman,

1971), hereafter cited as *Carey*; and *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), hereafter cited as *Fowler*.

3. *Richard Chevenix Trench, Archbishop: Letters and Memorials*, ed. [Maria Trench], 2 Vols. (London: Kegan Paul, 1888), 1, 73.

aspiration in the last phrase. Secondly, while the Romantic assertion of the scope and authority of the individual imagination can be recognized as a considerable achievement in an age when "continental areas of common values were breaking up,"⁴ the fruitfulness of that assertion as a guide to living is already open to doubt. In the second section of this essay I shall attempt to show that while "The Hesperides" bears witness to the vital influence of Romantic habits of thought and feeling on Tennyson's poetic concerns, it also enacts a significant movement away from certain fundamental Romantic positions. I shall seek to show that the poem may, indeed, be understood to constitute a criticism of that essential optimism concerning the relation between the finite world and the infinite which lies at the center of Romantic conceptions of the imagination. Such a reading of the poem is of particular importance since it enables us to reverse the judgment — and it is a judgment often applied indiscriminately to a wide variety of Tennyson's earlier works — that in "The Hesperides" we find merely an expression of private aesthetic reverie, divorced from any large conceptual or moral considerations.

In the "Song," which forms the main body of "The Hesperides," we learn that the root of the Hesperidian "fruittree" is "charmèd" (l. 17) and that its blossom "Evermore . . . is born anew" (l. 31).⁵ The activity suggested here is one in which laws of natural process and temporal succession are suspended. In this image of renewal, which involves a conflation of the several stages of the seasonal cycle, decay and death seem to have no reality as states distinguishable from the phenomenon of birth. An unnatural and ahistorical perspective is thus established in which the Garden is seen as existing in the perpetual luxury of springtime. This is clearly an equivalent of the condition of life to be found in the Hesperidian Gardens of Milton's Attendant Spirit, those "happy climes" situated "in the broad fields of the sky" (ll. 976, 978), where

The Graces, and the rosy-bosomed Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring,
That there eternal summer dwells . . . (985-87)

The idea of the Hesperidian Garden as a realm exempt from the logic of life in time is realized throughout "The Hesperides" in Tennyson's use of present and present continuous tenses to describe all forms of activity in the Garden. It is also rendered through his exploitation of the theme of an inclusive and unbroken ritual circularity: the Sisters never cease their singing and they watch "Every way" both "night and day" (ll. 40, 41). Father Hesper must "twinkle not" his "stedfast sight" (l. 45) and must forever "Number, tell them over and number / How many

the mystic fruittree holds" (ll. 49-50). This unremitting attentiveness appears either to dictate or to be dictated by the quiescence, even torpor, of other life in the Garden which strikes one as the necessary condition of the song. Thus the Sisters sing:

Standing about the charmèd root.
Round about all is mute,
As the snowfield on the mountain-peaks,
As the sandfield at the mountain-foot,
Crocodiles in briny creeks
Sleep and stir not: all is mute. (17-22)

The vigilance and the stupefaction which together characterize the Garden are not, paradoxically, contradictory or mutually exclusive states. We notice, for example, that the redcombed dragon's "ancient heart is drunk with overwatchings night and day" (l. 54). Similarly, the Sisters mysteriously insist that "Hesper, the dragon, and sisters three, / Daughters three" (ll. 107-108) are a single reality composed of five elements: "Five links, a golden chain, are we" (l. 106). But in the presentation throughout the poem of the interdependence between Father Hesper, the redcombed dragon with his ancient heart, and the Hesperidian maidens, connotations of extreme age, of experience and tired time, on the one hand, are fused with connotations of youth, innocence and vigor, on the other. The poem offers no clues as to how these contradictions may be reconciled: the Sisters' incantation seems expressly designed to maintain a level of being which escapes formulation in rational terms. The fruit-tree is "mystic," there is a "bliss of secret smiles" (l. 78), and "Honour comes with mystery; / Hoarded wisdom brings delight" (ll. 47-48).

Notwithstanding their role as the voice of the Garden, the Sisters' own wisdom is, to apply Carlyle's use of the phrase, "ever a secret to itself"⁶ and appears not to partake of the discursive and critical examinations of ordinary, historical self-consciousness. In referring to the redcombed dragon they define a condition of consciousness that is unreflective with regard to its own motivation and is without autonomous, individuated will:

If he waken, we waken,
Rapidly levelling eager eyes,
If he sleep, we sleep,
Dropping the eyelid over the eyes. (59-62)

The "treasure / Of the wisdom of the west" (ll. 26-27) that is defined by this condition is equated in the "Song" with the truth of the whole, the truth of "All things" (l. 79). This truth, like the dragon which helps and must be helped to preserve it, is "older than the world" (l. 58) and is identified with qualities of eternity as the Sisters declare that if their chant comes to an end: "We shall lose eternal pleasure. / Worth eternal want of rest" (ll. 24-25).

4. Arthur J. Carr, "Tennyson as a Modern Poet," in *Kilham*, p. 43. Carr's essay was originally published in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 19 (1950), 361-82.
5. *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Long-

man, 1969), is the edition I have used for this essay.
6. From "Characteristics," in *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Centenary Edition, 30 Vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), XXVIII, 10.

The "ancient secret" (l. 72) which the Sisters are so concerned to preserve acquires a more specific connotation if we consider the possible analogues to Tennyson's Hesperidian fruit-tree which, with its "golden apple" (l. 14) and sap of "Liquid gold" (l. 37), is the embodiment of the wisdom of the Garden. The tree is associated, as we have seen, with a perpetual renewal of life. It is worth noting that an important aspect of classical versions of the myth of the Garden of the Hesperides is the idea that the Hesperidian tree is the tree which confers immortality.⁷ We should also remember that in *Paradise Lost* Milton recalls classical descriptions of the golden Hesperidian fruit as he reports that the "tree of life" (IV, 218) in Eden stood "High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit / Of vegetable gold" (IV, 219-20).⁸ The "golden tree" of the Attendant Spirit's Hesperidian Gardens in *Comus*, to which we are referred in Tennyson's epigraph, is itself connected with the idea of eternal life through its identification with a realm of spiritual purification. In the Attendant Spirit's "gardens fair / Of Hesperus" (ll. 980-81) we learn that the

young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sully sits the Assyrian queen . . . (998-1001)

In the somewhat baroque cosmology of Milton's *Masque*, classical and Christian elements are, of course, compounded in a highly individual poetic conception of the spiritual order and hierarchy of the universe. I shall return briefly to the question of the relationship between classical and Christian ideas in the poem — a relationship which turns on the association between the classical idea of Virtue and the Christian doctrine of Grace — at a later stage in this essay. For the moment, we should simply observe that Milton's picture of Adonis healing in the Hesperidian Gardens represents a higher mode of regeneration than that principle of merely natural regeneration represented in Spenser's portrayal of the Garden of Adonis in *The Faerie Queene* (III, vi). As John Carey has noted in elucidating the Platonic dimension of the cosmology of *Comus*, whereas Spenser's Garden of Adonis is on earth, Milton's Venus and Adonis lie in a transitional state "in the Elysian fields of the moon" where they await the "separation of soul and mind, when mind will finally return to its source, the sun," a sun which is "to be distinguished from that of mere earthly fruitfulness."⁹ At the

very opening of *Comus* the Attendant Spirit makes explicit the spiritual orientation of his realm of repose. His abode, he declares, is where "those immortal shapes / Of bright aerial spirits live ensphered" above the "dim spot" of earth (ll. 2-3, 5) where men

Strive to keep up a frail, and feverish being
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives
After this mortal change, to her true servants
Amongst the enthron'd gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opens the palace of eternity . . . (8-14)

Bearing both these kinds of mythical and literary antecedents and Tennyson's own presentation of the special attributes of the Garden in mind, it seems not unreasonable to perceive in Tennyson's Hesperidian realm a metaphor for a higher principle of life, for an ultimate reality where rational antinomies and logical opposites are reconciled, and where the pains of earthly existence are not felt.

It should be emphasized that Tennyson's presentation of the Hesperidian Garden does not reflect the fine distinctions employed by Renaissance writers in their representation of paradisaical gardens. There is, for example, no question of our being invited to view his Garden of the Hesperides as a false paradise, in the manner of Spenser in his representation of the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene* (II, xii); or as a symbol of purely natural regeneration, as in Spenser's portrayal of the Garden of Adonis. Tennyson's reference to *Comus*, where the Hesperidian Gardens are associated with a spiritual principle of life does, however, establish a broad context of meaning for the Garden in "The Hesperides." Tennyson allows by this reference the highest possible signification for his Garden as an image of the absolute. But the elaborate Platonic-Christian cosmology within which Milton places the Hesperidian Gardens in *Comus* is not carried over into Tennyson's work. In "The Hesperides" Tennyson resolves the several possible levels of traditional classical-Christian cosmology to two basic terms: the supramundane reality of the Garden in the West stands in simple opposition, as we shall shortly see, to the quotidian world represented by the East. This simplification does not betray a want of sophistication on Tennyson's part but may be seen as symptomatic of that failure of confidence in traditional religious and philosophical systems which,

the Hesperidian Sisters were a kind of triplicated Eve and the dragon "an antithetical type of the satanic serpent in Eden" (Paden, p. 155). But the argument that there are strict correspondences between the various motifs in "The Hesperides" and all the elements in Faber's interpretation of the myth of the Hesperidian Garden carries the implication that Tennyson's poem is confused: "Among so many competing symbols, it would not be strange if Tennyson became slightly unintelligible" (Paden, p. 155). There is, in fact, no external evidence to show that Tennyson had read any of Faber's works before he composed "The Hesperides" (see my article "G. S. Faber and Tennyson: A Note on the Question of Influence," in *Notes and Queries*, 27, No. 6, [1980], 520-22).

9. Carey, p. 227.

7. Cf. H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology, Including Its Extension to Rome* (London: Methuen, 1928), p. 216.

8. Fowler, p. 205, suggests that Milton's image recalls particularly Ovid's description of the Hesperidian fruit in *Metamorphoses*, IV, 637 ff. In *Tennyson in Egypt: A Study of the Imagery in His Earlier Work* (Lawrence, Kansas: Univ. of Kansas Publications, 1942), W. D. Paden suggested that in his conception of "The Hesperides" Tennyson owed much to notions advanced by the early nineteenth-century mythologist G. S. Faber in his treatise *The Origin of Pagan Idolatry* (London: Rivington, 1816). The analogues and connotations of the Hesperidian tree in Faber are the exact opposite of those I have pointed to, with reference to Milton. For Faber, the tree was, for example, a type of the *faial* tree in Eden,

as I have said, lies at the center of Tennyson's work.

In contrast to the intact and unitary condition represented by the West, the East of the "Song" is a state characterized by deviation and discontinuity. The Sisters compare, for example, the rich integrity of their western "seawind" with the more disturbed "landwind" belonging to the East:

Every flower and every fruit the redolent breath
Of this warm seawind ripeneth,
Arching the billow in his sleep;
But the landwind wandereth,
Broken by the highland-steep . . . (83-87)

We may understand more concerning the nature of the dissociation intrinsic to the East if we recall the observation of the Sisters that if the golden apple be taken by "one from the East" (l. 42) the "world will be overwise" (l. 64); so wise, indeed, that the "old wound of the world" will "be healed" (l. 69). There are obvious connotations of the Fall in this reference to the "old wound of the world." Furthermore, as Gerhard Joseph has pointed out, not only has the "archetypal 'deep wound'" of Adonis — alluded to in the same passage of *Comus* from which Tennyson took his epigraph — traditionally been seen by Christian mythologists as a type of the wound felt by creation at the Fall; but also, given such a Miltonic key as the epigraph, it is difficult to avoid an association "between the 'old wound' of 'The Hesperides' and the 'wound' that earth feels when Eve first tastes of the apple in *Paradise Lost* (IX. 780-84)."¹⁰ Certainly, a basic identification in "The Hesperides" of the West with an otherworldly state of unity and harmony, and of the East with the fallen, imperfect and incomplete "world" (l. 104) of human experience, is to be found in the opposition that the Sisters make between the stable eternity of their Garden and the realm of historical and natural shift and process:

Father, twinkle not thy steadfast sight:
Kingdoms lapse, and climates change, and races die;
Honour comes with mystery . . . (45-47)

The problematic aspect of the relation between finite and infinite worlds in "The Hesperides," between the world of time and change on the one hand and the sphere of the Garden on the other, is that the Sisters are committed to maintaining an absolute separation between the two. Tennyson's line about one from the East who *threatens* (from the point of view of the Sisters) to take the golden apple is clearly to be linked with classical stories concerning the slaying of the guardian-serpent of the Hesperidian tree and the theft of the fruit by Hercules. The unwillingness of Tennyson's Sisters to let the apple be taken is entirely consistent with this story. But the situation involving the defense of the Garden is complicated by

the further possibilities of meaning introduced through Tennyson's allusion to the Biblical theme of the Fall. Donna Fricke has noted a straightforward parallel, in the instinct of the Sisters to protect the apple, to both the Greek myth of Hercules and the "Hebrew-Christian Eden myth" where man was prevented from eating the fruit of the tree of life "after he defied God and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."¹¹ However, the lines of Tennyson's Miltonic epigraph, in referring us to *Comus*, do not refer us simply to this early part of the "Hebrew-Christian Eden myth." In Christian thought, although man may be supposed to have forfeited at the Fall the right to physical immortality, the tree of life is made available to him again, in the sense that the possibility of spiritual regeneration is made available to him, through the endeavour and sacrifice of Christ. This larger idea of the tree of life supports Milton's presentation of the Hesperidian Gardens in *Comus*. As J. B. Leishman has written, "Milton's world, unlike Plato's, is a Christian world, a redeemed world."¹² Within the cosmology of *Comus* the Hesperidian Gardens are above earth but are associated with a plane of spiritual purification lower than that represented by Cupid and Psyche, who are "far above in spangled sheen" (l. 1002). However, there is a higher spiritual reality than all the "sphery chime" (l. 1020) and, despite all the Platonic elements in *Comus*, in the Attendant Spirit's concluding words the idea of Divine Grace is confirmed as an essential feature of Milton's thought in the poem. Here the Spirit reassures us that if human Virtue alone is insufficient to climb higher than the celestial spheres, there nevertheless remains a higher dispensation at the service of man:

Morals that would follow me,
Love Virtue, she alone is free,
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime:
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her. (1017-22)

For the purposes of this essay, perhaps the most useful gloss on this passage is that in *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, edited in six volumes by Henry John Todd (London, 1801). Tennyson's own copy of this edition is still extant.¹³ In his annotations in volume five (pp. 410-11) Todd prefixes his own note on a manuscript variant of the poem with a quotation from "the Rev. Mr. Egerton," who observes that in the last six lines of *Comus* Milton contemplates

"... that stupendous Mystery, whereby He, the lofty theme of *Paradise Regained*, stooping from above all height, 'bowed the Heavens, and came down' on Earth, to atone as Man for the Sins of Men, to strengthen feeble Virtue by the influence of his

10. *Tennysonian Love: The Strange Diagonal* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1969), p. 132.
11. "Tennyson's 'The Hesperides': East of Eden and Variations on the Theme," in *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, 1, No. 4 (1970), 100.
12. *Milton's Minor Poems* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), p. 222.

13. In the Tennyson Research Centre at Lincoln, England; Item No. 1601 in *Tennyson in Lincoln: A Catalogue of the Collections in the Research Centre*, comp. Nancie Campbell, 2 Vols. (Lincoln: Tennyson Society, 1971-73).

Grace. . . ." [Todd then continues:] The last line had been written thus by Milton: "Heaven itself would bow to her." He altered *bow* to *stoop*, because the latter word expresses greater condescension. So, in his *Ode on the Passion*, he applies, to the Son of God when he took our nature upon him, the phrase "stooping his regal head."¹⁴

The distinguishing feature of *Comus* is that the ultimate power presiding over the Attendant Spirit's ethereal Hesperidian Gardens is sympathetic to the "sin-worn mould" (l. 17) of earthly existence. This feature of Milton's presentation of the Hesperidian Gardens is flatly contradicted in Tennyson's work. We note that the powers of Tennyson's Garden are bent, not merely on denying access to the tree of life in the sense that the "Hebrew-Christian" God originally denied man access to the tree of life in Eden, but on refusing all possibility for the redemption of what is already described as the "old" wound of the world.

There are important conclusions to be drawn from Tennyson's presentation of "one from the East" who *promises* (from the point of view of the world) to heal the old wound of Earth. The image of a potential redeemer in Tennyson's line goes beyond the possibilities of meaning inherited directly from classical accounts of the eleventh labor of Hercules. Tennyson is apparently drawing on a traditional Christian interpretation of the figure of Hercules as a type of Christ (Milton himself makes such a comparison in *Paradise Regained*, IV, 563-71). While, however, there is an obvious suggestion of a Redeemer figure in Tennyson's line, it is not there as part of a larger Christian idea governing the meaning of the poem as a whole. The Garden, with its fruit-tree, dragon, Father Hesper, and the Hesperidian maidens, serves as a compound image of an absolute which does not sanction and which is intractably alien to the purpose of the one from the East.

Although the East, understood as the "fallen" world of everyday experience, must logically be derived from the West, viewed as the eternal principle of "All things," there is in "The Hesperides" no presentation of the fall as the historical event of Christian doctrine, enacted under the view of a God whose providential purpose has been revealed to man. Key elements of Christian doctrine are suggested in this work, only to have their meaning and validity cancelled by the larger metaphysical frame of reference established through Tennyson's characterization of the Hesperidian Garden. If there is a Christian motif involved in the idea of one who is to come from the East, it is a motif which, by the metaphorical terms of the poem as a whole, can never be completed. The picture of the absolute stability of the Garden and the image of a potential Redeemer are held in tension, the attributes of the one perpetually denying the possibilities of the other. "The Hesperides" presents us with a radical split between the interests of man and the operation of an essentially blind, impersonal absolute. There is no uniquely

personal Deity in the Garden responsible to the world of activity and strife. In the detached and clinical manner in which the Sisters note the existence of a realm of flux and instability we can detect a kind of constitutional inability to sympathize with the painful problems of that world. However the world of history may be related in them, in their ritual activity they are bound to an automatic principle of guarding their secret and maintaining the mystery. They are bound absolutely by the laws of their own Being which they cannot alter because, as we have seen, they are without independent, individuated will. "The Hesperides" would seem to constitute an early formulation of that vision of an indifferent and impersonal force governing the universe which Tennyson was to define in the light of contemporary geological and biological science in *In Memoriam*.

It is impossible that we should think of Tennyson endorsing the Sisters' refusal to let the old wound of the world be healed, or to allow the "ancient secret," the key to joy, to be revealed. The Sisters observe that "The world is wasted with fire and sword, / But the apple of gold hangs over the sea" (ll. 104-105). The import of these lines is that, while the world may be suffering, all is nevertheless well from the point of view of the Sisters as long as the apple of gold hangs secure and unaccountable over the sea. The Sisters may not be able to help themselves in their inveterate and callous disregard of the world, but the picture surely registers Tennyson's feelings of moral revulsion at the kind of absolute they represent.

To conclude this first part of my discussion, it is worth remembering briefly that such feelings were to find expression again in the strident protest that Tennyson's mariners make against the prevailing order of things in the conclusion to "The Lotos-Eaters" published in *Poems*, 1842:

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind,
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and
fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,
and praying hands. (153-61)

The conception of an alien heaven contained in these lines bears a distinctively Victorian aspect. The concern and the frustration explored through the mariner's experience in "The Lotos-Eaters" is, of course, that of a mind deeply disturbed by the prospect of having to define the meaning of life and the nature and limits of moral obligation in the absence of traditional structures of thought and belief about man and the world. In "The Lotos-Eaters" Tennyson records the atmosphere of a time when, as J. A.

14. The variant to which Todd refers, in line 1022 of *Comus*, occurs in the author's manuscript at Trinity College, Cambridge (MS R.3.4.).

Froude spoke of the eighteen-forties, "the intellectual lightships had broken from their moorings . . . the lights all drifting, the compasses all awry,"¹⁵ a time, as Tennyson's mariners put it, of "confusion worse than death" (l. 128) to "hearts worn out by many wars / And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars" (ll. 131-32).

It is sometimes thought that in his presentation of the mariners' response to deprivation Tennyson reveals his own unqualified desire to escape the intellectual and social responsibilities of his age. But it should always be remembered that in their description of the Lotos-land as *hollow* and in their own condemnation of the unfeeling and inhuman gods whom they seek to emulate the mariners themselves provide a measure by which they may be judged and found wanting. There is space here neither to examine the numerous parallels nor to distinguish certain important differences between the enchanted western island of the lotos-eaters and Tennyson's Garden of the West in "The Hesperides." But both are contrasted in broadly comparable terms with the "wasted" world of ordinary human experience. And, if in "The Hesperides" man has no access to the joy of the Garden, we should not fail to recognize in "The Lotos-Eaters" the ironic contradiction inherent in the mariners' comparison of life in Lotos-land to the life of the epicurean gods. For while, at one level of the poem, we see the mariners as literally successful in landing on their western isle beyond the sea of history, at another level, through the mariners' own identification of that island with the humanly unattainable condition of the gods, we find that Lotos-land connotes an order of being from which man is in reality forever excluded.

The essential unavailability to man of the condition of bliss imaged in the isle and in the "golden houses" of the gods is, in fact, apparent throughout the poem in the manner that the mariners, whatever their stated desire for escape, never actually move beyond desire and never cease to care. Much has been made of the fact that Tennyson does not depict his mariners brought home, as in Homer, to responsibility and duty. But behind the presentation in the *Odyssey* of Ulysses's action of bringing his men home lay Homer's certitude as to the meaning of duty. For Tennyson to return his mariners to Ithaca would be to belie the theme of dispossession which runs through the poem. Tennyson may not know precisely what direction his nineteenth-century mariners should take, but he does not allow any easy solution through a simple reversion to the terms of the original story. And if Tennyson goes no further in "The Lotos-Eaters" than to identify what the hero of *Maud* was to call the "sad astrology" of his age (l. XVIII. iv. 634), he does at least indicate that simple disengagement is impossible; his mariners are constitutionally unable to forget the "sharp distress" (l. 58) of mankind or to become one with the epicurean gods.

15. *Thomas Carlyle: A History of his Life in London*, 2 Vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), I, 311.

16. For a full discussion of the place and importance of Romantic

II

In "The Hesperides" the discontinuity between the secret joy of the Garden and the troubled world of human experience carries considerable implications for the poem viewed as a statement about the grounds of poetic vision. As a prelude to a consideration of these implications, it will be useful to glance at a further work of Tennyson's which bears a complex of imagery associated with a paradise in the West comparable to that in "The Hesperides."

In Tennyson's 1829 Cambridge Prize Poem, "Timbuctoo," it is the Spirit of Fable, a personification of man's expressive and creative capacities, which makes possible the speaker's vision of the City of Timbuctoo. As the Spirit of Fable declares towards the end of the poem:

There is no mightier Spirit than I to sway
The heart of man; and teach him to attain
By shadowing forth the Unattainable:
.....
I am the Spirit,
The permeating life which courseth through
All the intricate and labyrinthine veins
Of the great vine of *Fable*, which, outspread,
With growth of shadowing leaf and clusters rare,
Reacheth to every corner under Heaven,
Deep-rooted in the living soil of truth . . . (191-93, 215-21)

In Tennyson's conception of this organic tutelary Spirit we see a reflection of that emphasis on self-derived authority — that claim that absolute values originate within and are projected from the mind itself — which is to be found in Romantic assertions concerning the constitutive power of the mythopoetic or poetic imagination.¹⁶ What is most interesting for this essay, however, is the fact that the interior, imaginative grounds of spiritual perception have already been defined in the poem in terms of the traditional myths of Atlantis and the Blessed Isles of the West. "Timbuctoo" opens with a reference to "Divinest Atalantis" (l. 22) as a place which once had its "being in the heart of Man / As air is the life of flame" (ll. 19-20) but which, for the speaker of the poem, is an unavailable dream of "ancient Time" (l. 61). The same is true of the legendary Blessed Isles of the West:

Where are ye
Thrones of the Western wave, fair Islands green?
.....
Where are the infinite ways, which, Seraph-trod,
Wound through your great Elysian solitudes,
Whose lowest deeps were, as with visible love,
Filled with Divine effulgence, circumfused . . . (40-41, 46-49)

Through invoking such myths as testaments to the capacity of the human mind to apprehend and to generate metaphors for the infinite and the ideal, Tennyson

ideology in "Timbuctoo" see my "The Spirit of Fable: Arthur Hallam and Romantic Values in Tennyson's 'Timbuctoo'" (forthcoming, *Tennyson Research Bulletin*).

establishes in his work a mode of inward metaphorical structures which to a significant extent fulfills Northrop Frye's observation that

the metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry tends to move inside and downward instead of outside and upward; hence the creative world is deep within, and so is heaven or the place of the presence of God. . . . In Blake this world at the deep centre is Jerusalem. . . . Jerusalem is also . . . Atlantis, the sunken island kingdom which we can rediscover by draining the "Sea of Time and Space" off the top of the mind. . . . The Atlantis theme is in many other Romantic myths. . . .¹⁷

Tennyson's "Timbuctoo" comprises an argument that while traditional myths may have lost credence, in the speaker's vision of the City of Timbuctoo there may be discerned surviving evidence of that same apprehending sense manifest in ancient fable. The poem does not rest, however, with a celebration of the shaping and organizing power of the imagination. As the Spirit of Fable finally calls attention to his "fair City" (l. 245) he also foresees the "river" which winds through its streets "not enduring / To carry through the world those waves, which bore / The reflex" of the City "in their depths" (ll. 225, 233-35). Forsaken by the Spirit of Fable at the very end of the poem, the speaker is enveloped by a darkness which seems to confirm the envisaged breakdown of imaginative correspondence between the "world" and the "Unattainable."

The importance of "Timbuctoo" is twofold: in the first place, the identification in the poem of the Isles of the West with the sphere of the imagination directs us to the Romantic possibilities of meaning in Tennyson's symbolic geography of West and East in "The Hesperides." Secondly, the anticipation in "Timbuctoo" of a failure in the sustaining and cohering power of the imagination prepares us for the dubiety with which the principle of imaginative life is regarded in "The Hesperides." The "Thrones of the Western wave, fair islands green" in "Timbuctoo," with their "cedarn glooms" (l. 42), "blossoming abysses" (l. 43), and "flowering Capes" (l. 44), may be compared with the initial description of the West in "The Hesperides." In the blank-verse prologue to the poem we are told that Zidonian Hanno, voyaging off the West coast of Africa, did not hear the warbling of the nightingale "Blown seaward from the shore" (l. 8) but heard voices, "like the voices in a dream, / Continuous" (ll. 12-13), coming

from a slope
That ran bloombright into the Atlantic blue,
Beneath a highland leaning down a weight
Of cliffs, and zoned below with cedarshade . . . (8-11)

The arena of the imagination explicitly enunciated for the Western Isles and their "infinite ways" in "Timbuctoo" is imaginatively realized by Tennyson in respect of the

17. "The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism," in *The Stubborn Structure: Essays in Criticism and Society* (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 211-212. Frye's essay first

Garden of the Hesperides through placing that Garden within what Robert Stange has called the "framework of vision poetry" (p. 100). We do not, of course, fail to recognize the interior orientation of this 'vision.' Issuing from a region for which there are effectively no literal spatial equivalents the voices of the Garden are heard as "in a dream" — essentially enclosed within the space of Hanno's own consciousness. The textures of language and imagery in the "Song" are themselves accommodated to the inwardness defined by the opening framework of the poem. Thus, for example, we find a subliminal intensity in the description of the western seawind "Arching the billow in his sleep" (l. 85).

In "Timbuctoo," as we have seen, the "Thrones of the Western wave" are associated with an image of the organic life on the "vine of Fable" which provides a refuge for man (at least until the closing lines of the poem) amid its "complicated glooms, / And cool impleachèd twilights" (ll. 223-24). There is a correlation between these motifs and the imagery of western sea, of darkness, and of vegetative generation in "The Hesperides." Certainly, the central figure of "The Hesperides," by which, as Stange has put it, "the burgeoning of the fruit depends on the charmed music of the Hesperides and they, in turn, draw their vitality and find the source of their song in the root and the tree" (p. 103), is characteristic of Romantic coalescent metaphors of mind which emphasize the primacy of unconscious genius and organic growth in the creative life of the artist. The qualities of timelessness and trance which distinguish the Garden also invite comparison with the Romantic interest in these states as conditions associated with the functioning of the creative imagination. These are the states associated, for example, with Shelley's visionary island of the mind in *Epipsychidion*, that island where

all the place is peopled with sweet airs:
.....
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within the soul . . . (445, 453-55)

The word, "wisdom," mentioned in "The Hesperides," has in Tennyson a special connotation. As Stange remarks: "In 'The Poet,' and indeed in all Tennyson's early descriptions of the vatic nature, the qualities of the poetic charism are termed 'wisdom'" (p. 102). The word is, of course, sanctioned in Romantic usage. "[A]ncient Wisdom" is used in Wordsworth's *Excursion* (IV, 957) to describe the intuitive insights of the mythopoetic imagination and to identify that mode of feeling intellect which is to be distinguished from mere rational understanding:

... wisdom, not to be approached
By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
With her minute and speculative pains,
Opinion, ever changing! (IV, 1129-32)

appeared in *Romanticism Reconsidered*, ed. N. Frye (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 1-25.

An emphasis on an unapproachable wisdom appears in Tennyson's Cambridge poem "The Poet's Mind." Tennyson's use in "The Hesperides" of the image of the enchanted garden, fertile, remote, its integrity protected by the eternal singing of the Sisters, may be compared with the final image of "The Poet's Mind," where the poetic spirit is likened to a garden which must be preserved from questionable rational processes of thought:

Dark-browed sophist, come not near;
All the place is holy ground;

In the heart of the garden the merry bird chants.
It would fall to the ground if you came in.
In the middle leaps a fountain

And it sings a song of undying love . . . (8-9, 22-24, 33)

G. H. Ford has observed¹⁸ that an important influence on "The Poet's Mind" is the end of Keats's *Lamia*: "Do not all charms fly / At the mere touch of cold philosophy? / . . . the stately music no more breathes; / . . . Lamia breathed death-breath; the sophist's eye, / Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly" (II, 229-30, 263, 299-300). The Keatsian influence here serves to remind us of Tennyson's general indebtedness — discernible in such poems as "A Dream of Fair Women" and "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" — to the entire world of Keatsian gardens. This is the world of sleep, poetry, and dream-vision epitomized in the music-haunted bower of Adonis in *Endymion*, where the "feathered lyrist" (II, 432) who watches over the sleeping Adonis welcomes Endymion as he descends far "past the scanty bar / To mortal steps" (II, 124-25):

Though from upper day
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer!
For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor
Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense —
here is manna picked from Syrian trees,
In starlight, by the three Hesperides. (II, 433-38, 452-53)

In *Endymion* Keats is, of course, to be found in his most idealistic mood. It is in the *Odes*, above all, that we find him expressing a sense of conflict, a sense that there may be no easy and untroubled meeting between the world of sleep, dream, and poetry on the one hand, and the 'real' world of fever and fret on the other. The tensions of the *Odes* look forward to and define some of the fundamental preoccupations of Victorian poetry. The early Tennyson has often been understood to refuse these tensions and to commit himself either implicitly or explicitly to aesthetic withdrawal from the world. In Robert Stange's view of "The Hesperides" as a poem concerned with the source of the life of art, the desire of the Hesper-

dian maidens to preserve inviolate their Garden in the West is seen as a statement on Tennyson's part that the integrity of the life of the imagination must be maintained over and against the demands of the world of social and moral responsibility that is symbolized in the poem by the forces of the East. Stange thus isolates the basic impulse of the work as regressive and says of the poem that "its assertion of a desire to retreat from purposive moral activity suggests the doctrine of the Beautiful that Arthur Hallam formulated in his influential review of Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*" (p. 111).

If, however, "The Hesperides" is seen to embrace issues concerning the nature of reality itself, the nature of Tennyson's allegiance to the respective interests of West and East has to be reinterpreted. Far from sympathizing with the powers of the Garden, and far from expressing a desire to retreat from purposive moral activity, Tennyson may be seen in this poem to be recording anger and moral outrage at the conditions under which mankind is forced to live. As a poem about the imagination "The Hesperides" reveals a more complex attitude than that which Tennyson expressed in "The Poet" or in "The Poet's Mind." There is in "The Hesperides" neither an argument for retreat into private aesthetic reverie nor a portentous claim for the comprehensiveness of the poet's insight. The poem constitutes a deeper examination into the problems foreshadowed in the conclusion of "Timbuctoo." For we find that the criticism of the eternal principle in "The Hesperides" involves at center a questioning of the status and limitations of the life of the imagination.

The Romantic concern with areas of experience lying beyond or deeper than the ordinary realm of consciousness was not, we remember, developed at the expense of rationality. The special claim for the principle of imagination was that it synthesized conscious and unconscious dimensions of the mind. A higher organ of perception, it was thought to subsume and contain rather than merely to oppose the rational faculty. Imaginative experience was for the Romantics a valid means of insight into the human situation, something that brought coherence and meaning to the wide span of daily consciousness and life. Keats was to sum up Romantic attitudes when, in *The Fall of Hyperion*, he pointed out that the only way of distinguishing the true merit of poetic dreams from those of fanatics or savages is that there is a level at which poetic reverie is rationally accessible:

. . . Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable charm
And dumb enchantment. (I, 8-11)

By contrast with the Romantic stress on the possibilities for some form of rational transcription by the poet of supra-normal experience, the emphasis in Tennyson's poem is that that area of experience lying beyond the rational which is imaged in the life of the Hesperidian

18. *Keats and the Victorians* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1944), p. 34.

Garden is entirely unusable in earthly terms. The "wisdom" whispering in a corner (l. 28), which the Sisters insist must not be opened up to the scrutiny of the world, is presented under a different light from that celebrated in "The Poet." There the poet "saw through life and death" (l. 5), the "marvel of the everlasting will, / An open scroll, / Before him lay" (ll. 7-9), and with such "WISDOM" (l. 46) he "shook the world" (l. 56). Here the infinite mysteries are translated into legible characters and the poet's wisdom is justified as a meaningful transcendental vision which engages and can enlighten the world. But while Tennyson's garden of the Hesperides is not strictly one of dumb enchantment, there are essentially no intelligible sounds in Hanno's dream voices (we hear only ritual utterances – the gnomic impenetrability of the truth of the absolute is suggested through the indecipherable code of the number symbolism in which the Sisters deal: "Five and three / . . . make an awful mystery," (ll. 28-29). As the Sisters maintain their secret of "All things" Hanno is provided with no language by which to relate the truths of the Garden to his conscious life or to interpret the mystery to the world. Likewise, the Sisters' song of hate ("Hesper hateth Phosphor, evening hateth morn," l. 82) is to be contrasted with that "song of undying love" which is heard in the interior garden in "The Poet's Mind." If the energies of Tennyson's Hesperidian Garden have something to tell us about the everlasting will as it is manifest in the human mind and personality, it is that it is an enemy to those self-consciously formulated values by which man strives to mould a sensitive and a moral universe. Identification with the root and spring of imaginative life is not

presented in "The Hesperides" as something which, while involving a modification of ordinary consciousness and will, nevertheless constitutes an expansion and fulfillment of identity. For we see only an obliteration and negation of recognizable human meaning in the mindless, amoral drive of the Sisters' incantation. Draining the sea of time and space off the top of the mind is not in this poem a necessarily energizing process. Hanno cannot return to the world as Endymion from the Bower of Adonis, regenerated with manna plucked by the three Hesperides, and enlightened by a loving interpreter who gives him proper knowledge of the immortal things around him.

To conclude, it is worth remarking that while, as a piece of mythmaking, "The Hesperides" may be seen to justify Robintra Biswas's observation that Tennyson is "so obviously an heir of the later Romantics, so clearly important in his anticipation of the Symbolists,"¹⁹ the poem may at the same time be seen to demonstrate Tennyson's capacity to explore a complex intellectual, moral and social theme through the medium of what Arthur Hallam referred to as a poetry of "sensation."²⁰ Most important of all, however, and the point has a bearing on Tennyson's entire canon, is the fact that while Romantic metaphorical and symbolic modes characteristically emphasize a vision of continuity and unity, in Tennyson's subversive use of myth in "The Hesperides," his examination of a sense of discontinuity, we see him using the language of romanticism against itself.

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Tennyson's Narrative of Desire: *The Lover's Tale*

Herbert F. Tucker, Jr.

And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
Howling in outer darkness.

— Tennyson, "To ———, With the
Following Poem" (1832)

1

Perhaps the most ambitious of the *Poems* Tennyson prepared for the press in 1832 was the one he withdrew, over Arthur Hallam's indignant protest, just a month before publication. Manuscript evidence indicates that he had begun the long blank-verse narrative he called *The Lover's Tale* as early as 1827, well before his important

revision of the very early "Armageddon" (1824-28) into "Timbuctoo" (1829). Of the entire collection of 1832, then, *The Lover's Tale* was the poem on which Tennyson had worked longest; it was without question the poem that would stay with him longest. Having distributed a few printed copies to friends in 1832 yet omitted the poem from the volume of that year, he returned to correct it in 1835, drew for decades upon its situation and imagery, announced yet again retracted it in 1868, and then did the same thing a year later. Finally, once a pirated edition had forced his hand, he published the poem in 1879 together with the incongruous conclusion *The Golden Supper*, which he had issued separately ten years before.¹

19. Arthur Hugh Clough: *Towards a Reconsideration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 202.

20. "On some of the characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyric Poems of Alfred Tennyson," in *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter (London and New York: Modern Language Association, 1943), pp. 182-198.

1. Details of publication are given at length in W. D. Paden, "Tennyson's *The Lover's Tale*," R. H. Shepherd, and T. J. Wise, *Studies in Bibliography*, 18 (1965), 111-45, which supersedes T. J. Wise, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (1908; rpt. London: Dawson's, 1967), pp. 25-76. Most readers will find sufficient background in *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1969), pp. 299-300. All citations — of the 1879 text of *The Lover's Tale*, earlier variant readings, and other Tennyson poems — are to this edition.

This extraordinary history of vacillation might justify a sufficiently perverse and quantitative biographer in claiming that *The Lover's Tale* was the central poem of Tennyson's life. I mean to advance no such biographical claim, but to suggest a more modest critical version of it: Tennyson kept returning to this poem as he did because it took up thematically — and with an analytic rigor we usually hesitate to attribute to him — imaginative problems of emotional relationship that lay at the heart of virtually all his subsequent work, and that he had first made his own in the pivotal volume of 1832. As a narrative that turns upon the seemingly insuperable difficulty posed by a lover's confession of his love, *The Lover's Tale* is a sustained investigation of the relationship between a central self and other selves, the same relationship that consistently emerges as the theme of the best, and best known, of Tennyson's remarkable 1832 *Poems*. The very fact of its prolonged suppression may be significant in this connection: Tennyson's inability either to abandon the poem for good or to manage its narrative to his satisfaction — which we may find mirrored in his narrator Julian's fixated reluctance to bring himself to "the event" (I.292, III.59) — suggests an imaginative inhibition that is manifested in other ways in several of the poems Tennyson did decide to publish in 1832, and that is never altogether overcome in any of them. For these reasons, quite apart from the frequent splendor of its imagery and versification, *The Lover's Tale* deserves a more visible place in Tennyson's canon than it has hitherto occupied.

By way of a preface to the following interpretation, it may be helpful briefly to situate the poem in the context of Tennyson's development in the late 1820s and early 1830s, and to suggest some of the ways in which it bears on the concerns of contemporaneous poems that have become far better known. By 1830 the poet's reading of romantic poetry had taught him how the visionary exoticism of such early works as "Armageddon" and "Timbuctoo" might be domesticated to the native scene and thus made more available for public consumption. He had also learned the romantic art of making the familiar — whether the natural or the traditional — strange and new; and from the cultural canon, "the great vine of *Fable*" ("Timbuctoo," 218), he had bred a handful of haunting myths of romantic self-sufficiency that recast his juvenile concerns in more accessibly objective forms. Still, the 1830 *Poems*, *Chiefly Lyrical* were indeed chiefly lyrical, in so far as their romantic lyricism remained the preserve of the self in proud or ruinous isolation. In this regard they lagged behind their creator. Since "Timbuctoo" Tennyson had known that the poetical character becomes itself in relationship, not in isolation, and with considerable allusive finesse he had incorporated his relations with earlier poets into the fabric of such 1830 lyrics as "Mariana."

2. The only full-scale essay I have found is Clarice Short, "Tennyson and 'The Lover's Tale,'" *PMLA*, 82 (1967), 78-84. Short capably reviews the slender scholarship and criticism that have been devoted to the poem, establishes the enormous imaginative divide between the original three parts and *The Golden Supper*, and disposes of the idea that Boccaccio was the important pre-

"Recollections of the Arabian Nights," "Ode to Memory," and "The Poet's Mind." But this knowledge had not yet been raised to thematic prominence: "Mariana" and "Recollections" would both be quite different poems if the odes of Keats were not behind them, but there is no figure that stands to the unattached, other-less consciousnesses of Mariana and the boyish Bagdat quester as Keats stands to Tennyson. In 1830 Tennyson had come out of himself to accept and issue inter-poetic challenges, but he had left the figures he imagined behind him in the bower.

With the *Poems* he published in December of 1832, Tennyson's characters begin to catch up with him. The confrontation of a central self with others — however this confrontation is sought or evaded, inhibited or achieved — becomes in this volume a theme as striking as the proliferation of subgenres and poetic forms Tennyson devised for setting his theme forth. Almost all the important poems are narratives or songs in narrative frames that challenge the stasis or undifferentiated flux that prevails in his chiefly lyrical earlier writing. There imaginative energy is invested in maintenance projects, and the whole point of a poem, reductively put, is that nothing may influence the consciousness at its core. In the work of 1832, however, Tennyson imagines minds that undergo the impact of other minds, experience a self-division that is the prelude to identity, and attempt transactions with others, which range from the painfully oblique ("The Lady of Shalott," "A Dream of Fair Women") to the daemocratically aggressive ("Fatima," "Oenone"). Generically, then Tennyson's narratives and narrative preambles of 1832 mean that in these poems something actually happens, albeit in occluded or stunted ways; further, the curve of the action these new narratives exhibit, or inhibit, may be instructively plotted on the thematic axes of personal relationship and psychological change.

Now of the entire collection Tennyson prepared in 1832 the longest poem, and the poem most obviously narrative in character, is *The Lover's Tale*, yet despite its length this is the narrative poem in which the least takes place. Presumably its eventlessness is what has stymied readers and has kept it virtually unanalyzed in the considerable body of Tennyson criticism.² But *The Lover's Tale*, I shall argue, is a story in which nothing significantly changes because stasis is its subject: we might indeed call it a narrative about the paralysis of the narrative faculty. In describing it thus, however, we should take care to save it from the boring reductions of the critical parlor game of self-referentiality — as we may do, I think, by bearing in mind that for Tennyson in the early 1830s the narrative faculty disclosed dimensions of public ambition, and of the plain human need for loving relationship, which are antithetical to the tricks of hermetic self-entrapment. And about those

cursor Tennyson later claimed when he described *The Lover's Tale* as "founded on an exquisite tale in Boccaccio." Though Short helpfully affiliates the theme of the poem with romantic antecedents in Shelley, she undertakes little close reading and has little to say on the significance of Tennyson's narrative technique in elaborating his theme.

tricks the poems of 1827 and especially 1830 show that Tennyson knew at least as much as we do, however modern psychology and hermeneutics have altered the vocabulary with which they are diagnosed. The failure of narrative development in *The Lover's Tale* is the most massive of the failures of relationship that inform the 1832 *Poems* it was to accompany, because it confronts the most intractable of obstacles to relationship and change: the tendency of romantic desire to displace its object and become an end in itself.

In this sense *The Lover's Tale* constitutes an early dead end in Tennyson's career, an initial culmination of his complex and personally charged response to the hopes and dilemmas of romanticism. There is much in the poem to remind us that he first conceived it around the time of his removal from Somersby to Cambridge, where he also received his first, and in certain ways indelible, impressions of the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats. (Byron he had weathered back at the Somersby rectory, and Byron's comparative unimportance as an influence on the poetry after 1827 probably stems from Tennyson's rejection of an author he had more than the usual reasons for associating with the melancholies of adolescence.) The conjunction of biography and literary history is quite rich here; without privileging either the man's life or the poet's career, we may speculate that in the late 1820s Tennyson's social circumstances and friendships, on one hand, and on the other the poetry he was reading and writing (often at the urging of his new Cambridge associates), to an exceptional degree reinforced and even interpreted each other. As a young man exchanging a notoriously oppressive family circle for the broader horizon of university life — which presented itself, moreover, as a threshold to the new and expansive world of early Victorian society — Tennyson seems to have found in the romantic dialectics of alienation and recovery a set of imaginative terms with which to survey his own position.³ At the same time, as a young poet encountering the poets of the older generation with a very direct sense of their personal relevance, he seems to have read his romantics at Cambridge quite idiosyncratically. And the way in which he then and there appropriated them for his own purposes — as we paradoxically say, the way he took their influence — arguably imparted its bias to Tennyson's romantic allusiveness for decades to come.

The romanticism of *The Lover's Tale*, with its congested narrative of emotional disability, offers a grim but clear case in point. The tale a disappointed lover tells his friends about his incapacity to tell his love when he thinks it might have done some good, the poem is manifestly concerned with the transition from solitude to communion, from silence to communication, that had occupied Tennyson during his university years, and that was to remain his most characteristic and successful mode of apprehending the cultural situation of the poet writing under a romantic dispensation. But while the university

prize poem "Timbuctoo" had effected this transition with considerable ease in the terms of mythic faith and of literary history, the erotic terms of *The Lover's Tale* evidently posed more daunting obstacles. The original preface states that "the lover is supposed to be himself a poet." But despite a long tradition linking poetry and love, the tradition within which Tennyson wrote when he endowed "The Poet" of 1830 with "The love of love" (4), *The Lover's Tale* appears to have grown out of a suspicion that the poet's needs and the lover's may be incompatible. "Timbuctoo" had asserted the commanding presence of the poet in an abyss, and had celebrated his creative, representative power to evince and elicit belief in a world where meaning is fictive to begin with. But in the context of love, sheer romantic assertion has a way of turning sour. What is the status of lovers' truth in such a fictive world? What keeps imaginative command, when it is a lover who does the imagining, from issuing in a shadowy idealization of the beloved that divides and conquers beloved and lover alike?

Of all versions of the romantic question, these were the ones that came to mean most to the great Victorian poets. Tennyson never attained Browning's radical confidence in equating the ground of romantic belief with those of true lovers' romance, or the pure austerity of Arnold's rejection of romantic love as a joy whose grounds were not verifiably true. The Victorian love poet most like him was Rossetti, although Tennyson refrained from the intensity of Rossetti's vibration between erotic rapture and doubt. Nevertheless, among Victorians it is Tennyson's distinction to have written, in *The Lover's Tale*, the first love poem that asks how imagination is connected to desire, and how this connection may bear upon one person's loving recognition of another. He honors these questions by pursuing the melancholy conclusion that a certain kind of imagination — a kind deeply affiliated with the successes of his earlier poetry — demands for its life the sacrifice of love. That Tennyson found this conclusion both honest and unacceptable explains why he could neither consider the poem complete nor extend it on its own terms. In its discordant jolliness part IV, *The Golden Supper*, is what the poet called it in his 1879 preface, a "sequel" and hardly a conclusion; for despite his reluctance to acknowledge the fact, his original three-part fragment had already wound down to its own brand of desperate closure.

In the preface of 1879 Tennyson explained his retraction of *The Lover's Tale* almost fifty years before: "feeling the imperfection of the poem, I withdrew it from the press." One's sense that he is referring here to the formal imperfection of its fragmentary shape is reinforced by his original preface ("I am aware how deficient the Poem is in point of Art"), and again by the letter he wrote to Edward Moxon on 20 November 1832, which explains that "it is too full of faults" and that "it would spoil the completeness of the book."⁴ One can also imagine, though, that

3. On the possible biographical relevance of the poem see Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), p. 23; Short, p. 80.

4. Quoted in Ricks's edition, pp. 299-300. For the letter see Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), I, 90.

Tennyson's retraction stemmed from motives similar to Matthew Arnold's in withdrawing *Empedocles on Etna* from his own *Poems* two decades later. Tennyson's disenchanted anatomy of narrative and erotic failure in a work in which, as in Arnold's, there is little enough to "inspire and rejoice the reader," "in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous."⁵ In short, Tennyson's poem like Arnold's confronted a problem the youthful poet found insoluble, and therefore it suffered in his estimation from an "imperfection" that was more than formal. But an anatomy of failure may be a poetic success even if it prescribes no cure, and in fact both poems were reissued with their author's mature blessings. As we have long since followed Robert Browning's example and welcomed *Empedocles* into the Arnoldian canon, we might extend a similar courtesy to *The Lover's Tale*, about whose suppression Hallam wrote at once to its author, "You must be point-blank mad."⁶ Hallam, we know, was a skilled close reader of Tennyson's early verse, and the urgency of his protest suggests that this early poem may be worth the pains of a detailed analysis. Such analysis, in any event, can do more than testimonials or considerations of biographical context to secure a better reception for a neglected work. The remainder of this essay undertakes to show in some detail how much psychological sophistication and technical "point of Art" stand behind the monotonous descriptions of which *The Lover's Tale* is so largely composed. I hope to validate particularly what I have thus far been asserting in general terms: Tennyson's bulky, balking narrative deserves higher rank among those early works in which he first posited a central analogy between the crises of literary art and of human identity — an analogy that would later let him speak conspicuously for a troubled age, in a work like *In Memoriam* (1850), without ceasing to speak for himself as a romantic craftsman.

2

The plot of *The Lover's Tale* is easily told. Julian and Camilla are cousins who have been reared as foster siblings, almost as twins. One spring day in their late adolescence they take a walk through the mountain woods by the seacoast where they live, and as Julian exults in his unspoken love for her, Camilla confesses that she has fallen in love with his friend Lionel. Julian swoons away, and upon awakening to find both Lionel and Camilla with him he resolves to bear his disappointment in silence. Here the first long part of the poem ends; the next two parts rehearse with briefer intensity the consequences of this self-suppression, as Julian (now *Furioso*) wanders

alone through the woods and into a series of three extraordinary visions. While this plot may be easily told, Julian finds it rough going indeed — as does the reader, whose interest in the story line is persistently frustrated by Julian's digressions into self-analysis and, most particularly, his obsessive dwelling on scenic descriptions, all of which conspire to extend the bare plot over the course of a thousand lines and more.

It makes a certain sense to impute these problems to Tennyson's inexperience with narrative, but before taking that step towards critical dismissal of the poem it also makes sense to ask how Julian's hesitations and obsessions may be serving Tennyson's artistic purpose. We should begin by observing that both Julian's analysis of his own soul and his portrayal of landscape are conducted, to a striking degree, through figurative imagery.⁷ Julian's narrative inhibitions and the proliferation of his imagery are related phenomena, and their relationship in the telling may bear some analogy to two features repeatedly emphasized in the tale: Julian's failure to speak to Camilla about his love, and the worship he pays to the cherished image of love itself. He remains silent in Camilla's presence on the subject of his love, not just after she disappoints his hopes but beforehand as well: the self-suppression, after the fact, of "I did name no wish" (l.567, 572), "I spake not" (l.696), is pointedly forecast when in the very fullness of his hopeful love, as Julian reports it, "I did not speak" (l.455). Ignorance may be bliss, but for Julian it seems that a lover's highest bliss involves speechlessness, the treasuring up of an enshrined emotional wealth that utterance would spend and profane:

I did not speak: I could not speak my love.
Love lieth deep: Love dwells not in lip-depths.
Love wraps his wings on either side the heart,
Constraining it with kisses soft and warm,
Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts
So that they pass not to the shrine of sound.
(l.455-60)

Love so "wraps" and "constrains" the heart's thoughts that no language can "grasp the infinite of Love" (l.474). This conjunction of speechlessness with imagery of enclosure suggests that Julian's difficulties in telling his love (whether as lover or as narrator) have much to do with the imagery of encirclement and hoarding that governs *The Lover's Tale*. He is saved from present despair by what is "gleaned and garnered up / Into the granaries of memory" (l.124-25), like a camel that traverses a wasteland and "in him keeps / A draught of that sweet fountain that he loves" (l.136-37). On the "day which did enwomb that happy hour" (l.475) of his unspoken bliss, the significantly less tongue-tied Camilla spoke his name and thus transformed it to "A centred, glory-circled memory, / And a peculiar treasure, brooking not / Exchange or currency" (l.436-

5. "Preface" to *Poems* (1853), in *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 204.
6. Arnold reprinted *Empedocles* in 1867, he wrote, "at the request of a man of genius, whom it had the honor and the good fortune

to interest, — Mr. Robert Browning" (*Poetry and Criticism*, ed. Culler, p. 544). Hallam's response is quoted in Sir Charles Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 129.
7. Short, p. 83, notes "the plethora of figures of speech and the interpolation of sentimental self-analysis which slow the narrative."

38). During his period of insane disappointment Julian's imagination was ruled, as he clearly sees, by "forms which ever stood / Within the magic cirque of memory, / Invisible but deathless" (ll. 156-58). Note that these are second-degree images, images for the image of Julian's love, and that their very variety implies that his "infinite of Love" remains "deathless" and inexhaustible precisely in that it remains inaccessible to language. "Had I died then, I had not seemed to die; / For bliss stood round me like the light of heaven" (l. 484-85); compassed round by bliss, the lover's identity can know no death. Even as he launches his tale, Julian opens the vista of memory by shading his face, physically shutting himself in upon an imaginative center, "For when the outer lights are darkened thus, / The memory's vision hath a keener edge" (l. 34-35). Julian's physical posture foreshadows his most arresting habit as a narrator, the substitution of figurative representations for literal presence; and this habit in turn repeats in the narrative present the fixation of erotic imagination that repeatedly held his tongue at the time of which he tells.

Love's alchemist, Julian turns everything he touches into precious imagery. Tennyson is subtle but explicit about this process of transmutation in the very first lines of the poem:

Here far away, seen from the topmost cliff,
Filling with purple gloom the vacancies
Between the tufted hills, the sloping seas
Hung in mid-heaven, and half-way down rare sails,
White as white clouds, floated from sky to sky.
Oh! pleasant breast of waters, quiet bay,
Like to a quiet mind in the loud world,
Where the chafed breakers of the outer sea
Sank powerless, as anger falls aside
And withers on the breast of peaceful love;
Thou didst receive the growth of pines that fledged
The hills that watched thee, as Love watcheth Love,
In thine own essence, and delight thyself
To make it wholly thine on sunny days.
(l. 1-14)

A. Dwight Culler has called attention to the way the repeated similes likening natural to emotional conditions declare in advance the poem's focus on the psychology of its speaker.⁸ Furthermore, in the process of assimilating nature to consciousness the passage offers an emblem of that process in the reflective "breast of waters." The smooth bay is humanized not only with Julian's apostrophe in line 6 but more thoroughly with his attributing to it a purpose that stands for his own unacknowledged purpose in appropriating natural objects and converting them to images, here and throughout the poem.

8. *The Poetry of Tennyson* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), p. 36: "the speaker in the poem sees the natural world as the physiognomy of a mind, as the emblem of spiritual states."
9. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), 206. These lines, which are virtually unchanged in the *Prelude* of 1805 or of 1850 (V.384-88), first appeared in *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800. See Wordsworth's "Preface" to the edition of 1815; also the twentieth chapter of

"Delight thyself / To make it wholly thine on sunny days": Julian addresses the waters here, but he might as well be addressing himself. Only after several readings can we be certain that "it" refers to "the growth of pines" from line 11; it is a fine bonus, if not the intentional point, of Tennyson's roundabout syntax to make us feel that "it" includes whatever the waters reflect (the sky? the hills? all heaven and earth?) — and, as we unwind this highly involuted image for the reflective imagination, to make us feel that the image in effect appropriates everything that comes within Julian's self-regarding ken.

The self-consciousness of the passage most likely expresses Tennyson's poetic self-awareness in drawing on a celebrated excerpt from *The Prelude*, "There Was a Boy," which Wordsworth had published separately in 1800 and republished with commentary as his first "Poem of the Imagination" in 1815. Coleridge had also singled it out for laudatory notice in his *Biographia Literaria* ten years before Tennyson started work on *The Lover's Tale*:

the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.⁹

In Wordsworth, as in Tennyson, the mind appropriates the scene by transforming it to "imagery," and also finds a reflexive image for its appropriation in the scene itself. But where Wordsworth does all he can to keep imagination gentle in its sway, even to render the process unconscious ("unawares"), Tennyson is startlingly explicit about the purposive and knowing self-delight of such imaginative possession. Wordsworth's lake receives the "rocks," "woods," and "heaven" to its bosom as a mother might a child. When in Tennyson the breast of waters received the comparable "sky," "pines," and "hills," it seems by contrast to be taking them into receivership: "To make it wholly thine." In the preface to the same volume that first included "There Was a Boy," Wordsworth had written that poetry "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity"; Tennyson's introverted poet-lover begins with something more like emotion tranquilized in recollection, in the acquisitiveness of a mnemonic imagination that makes a collector's gallery of the natural world. For all the serenity of movement in both passages, it is Tennyson's passage that ruthlessly lays bare the romantic tyranny of self over nature — a tyranny that is already implicit in Wordsworth, but that (Tennyson appearing here to agree with Keats) Wordsworth's egotistically sublime sleights of rhetoric had masked.¹⁰

Tennyson meant, in any event, for his reader to see such

Biographia Literaria.

10. Wordsworth, "Preface" to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 460. See Keats's letter of 27 October 1818 to Richard Woodhouse on "the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime," in *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Frederick Page (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), p. 172.

sleights in Julian's rhetoric, and to see them as self-deceptions. Though Julian can hardly be said to acknowledge as much, the fourteen-line proem to *The Lover's Tale* is in effect an unrhymed love sonnet to his own imagination. "As Love watcheth Love": Julian presumably intends this simile for the sea's reflection of the overlooking hills to represent the mutual absorption of two lovers in each other's sight. But the drift of the surrounding images, and of the entire poem, suggests that the simile is appallingly literal: what love watches is love, in a relationship not of mutuality but of self-absorbed reflexivity. A similar irony inheres in Julian's conviction that he is nothing if not a true lover. The deflected thrust of his narrative establishes that this poem is less the lover's tale than the lover's tale; and like one of Chaucer's pilgrims, or for that matter one of the suitors from Tennyson's own precocious play *The Devil and the Lady* (1824?), Julian is known exclusively through his profession of love. If we ask what he loves in his capacity as lover, however, the sobering answer is again that he loves "love," which becomes another name for the principle of his identity:

This is my sum of knowledge — that my love
Grew with myself — say rather, was my growth,
My inward sap, the hold I have on earth,
My outward circling air wherewith I breathe,
Which yet upholds my life, and evermore
Is to me daily life and daily death:
For how should I have lived and not have loved?
(l. 159-65)

This remarkable imagery for love merits special attention in a poem concerned with the relation of love to imagination. One cluster of images places love outside Julian, and supports his consistent understanding of himself as a man in the grip of love: "outward circling air. . . / Which yet upholds my life." According to another set of images, though, it is Julian who grips and contains: "My inward sap, the hold I have on earth." Apparently Julian and love are simultaneously inside and outside each other, in a process for which the most nearly adequate image in the passage is that of respiration: "air wherewith I breathe." The easy commerce of inner and outer, together with a strong current of physical and kinesthetic imagery, make this passage reminiscent of "Armageddon" — "All sense of Time / And Being and Place was swallowed up and lost / Within a victory of boundless thought" ("Armageddon" II.43-45) — but to think of that poem is to suspect a primary narcissism that should have no place in a true lover's tale. Sometime after 1832 Tennyson gave a somewhat less prominent place to overt narcissism by striking a passage in which Julian, gazing on Camilla's eyes, "did pause / To worship mine own image, laved in light." This revision was in keeping with a poetic strategy of indirect-

tion that consistently keeps Julian from understanding himself too well. But even the indirect evidence is devastating: what seems conspicuously absent from the passage on love last quoted, as from the comparable passage on the inexpressibility of love, with its "kisses soft and warm," is any mention of the beloved. Julian's identity as a lover entails such an interpenetration of the self with love that it precludes the intrusion of any beloved, any Camilla, any living, breathing, other self at all. Otherness is crowded out even at the level of poetic form, as the partial rhymes of "growth," "earth," "breathe," and "death," and of "love," "loved," and (more distantly but still in the family) "evermore," provide an exceptionally unventilated kind of blank verse.

Dowered like Tennyson's "Poet" with "the love of love," Julian is in thrall to a romantic desire that acknowledges no object, but "as Love watcheth Love," possesses only the images it is possessed by.¹¹

Alway the inaudible invisible thought,
Artificer and subject, lord and slave,
Shaped by the audible and visible,
Moulded the audible and visible.

(II. 101-04)

This passage, unlike those quoted thus far, comes from part II, and Julian offers it as an explanation of the phantasmagoria he has undergone during the life of solitary distraction into which Camilla's confession has plunged him. I introduce it here in order to underscore its likeness to the passage we have just been considering, and to suggest the extent to which the almost incantatory homogeneity of the narrative is due to the care with which Tennyson has shaped its local details. Although at this stage of disillusionment the relation between Julian and his "thought," the "one master-passion" (II.59) of his disappointed love, seems more like a mutual stranglehold than like an innocent embrace between the self and its sustaining love, in fact the reversible patterning of inner and outer, master and slave, remains the same. The stylistic resemblance between the hopeful lover's early Eden and the rejected lover's later hell lets us realize why Julian's purgatorial confession in the present should exhibit its cloying but significant uniformity. Dream and waking, hallucination and perception, past and present, all fall under the regime of "the inaudible invisible thought," an objectless and therefore insatiable desire.¹² The uniform texture of the poem corresponds to its uniform temporality, which in turn explains why Julian never comes to the promised rendition of "the event": it is as vain to expect any event to have a decisive effect on the love of love as it is to expect such love to make room for any actual Camilla.

11. Short observes in Julian "an intense desire for an unattainable perfection personified in the beloved" (p. 81) and — suggesting the descent of Tennyson's speaker from Shelley's in "Julian and Maddalo" — "for a permanent union with the kindred spirit, the Epipsychidion of Shelley" (p. 82).

12. The studied blurring of perceptual categories in part II makes it difficult to agree with the interpretation of these lines offered by Sir Charles Tennyson in "The Dream in Tennyson's Poetry," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 40 (1964), 230: "the sense perceptions of the waking brain create thoughts in the dreaming brain which then express themselves in new dream images."

Yet is my life nor in the present time,
 Nor in the present place. To me alone,
 Pushed from his chair of regal heritage,
 The Present is the vassal of the Past:
 So that, in that I *have* lived, do I love,
 And cannot die, and am, in having been ~
 A portion of the pleasant yesterday,
 Thrust forward on today and out of place.
 (l.112-19)

The disjuncting of the twin coefficients of event, time and place, through the usurpation of fixated desire, could hardly be put with greater clarity. The analytic rigor of this passage may in fact seem out of character for Julian, but it can return us to the imaginative thrift with which the flavor of the whole poem is established in its impossible opening phrase – "Here far away" – which stations his tale quite accurately in a mental neverland that is always and nowhere.

The insubstantiality of the present makes itself felt even at Julian's happiest moments. The temporal and textural uniformity of *The Lover's Tale* makes it a dubious enterprise to establish any one moment as "happiest," but my choice would be the following lines:

Through the rocks we wound:
 The great pine shook with lonely sounds of joy
 That came on the sea-wind. As mountain streams
 Our bloods ran free: the sunshine seemed to brood
 More warmly on the heart than on the brow,
 We often paused, and, looking back, we saw
 The clefts and openings in the mountains filled
 With the blue valley and the glistening brooks.
 And all the low dark groves, a land of love!
 A land of promise, a land of memory.
 A land of promise flowing with the milk
 And honey of delicious memories!
 (l.317-28)

Joy, freedom, warmth, fulfillment, and in the last lines paratactic repetition and the biblical allusion to a promised land – all make powerful demands of presence and responsiveness. Yet even stronger are the demands of this erotic imagination for absence and representation; even at the height of happiness Julian is most in love with a promise, a memory, whatever can remind him of something else. Earlier he has spoken of the infantile fulfillment he and Camilla shared once upon a time, before the "term of eighteen years," or longish period of latency, that his narrative has serenely skipped at line 281. As he now looks back upon a time when he and Camilla were "looking back," it would be consoling to think, with Freud, that Julian is gleaned hints of a possible return to such infant joys. But the passage denies us this consolation at its threshold by emphasizing the "lonely" sounds of joy that shake the pine. This tree, like the single "Tree, of many, one," in Wordsworth's great ode based on recollections of early childhood, speaks "of something that is gone" and that imagination may represent ("Ode," 51-53). Moreover, Julian has after his fashion already denied the consolation to himself in the earlier passage on infancy,

which reconstructs a primal bliss from hearsay but withholds the sponsorship of Julian's own memory:

if this be true –
 And that way my wish leads me evermore
 Still to believe it – 'tis so sweet a thought,
 Why in the utter stillness of the soul
 Doth questioned memory answer not?
 (l.267-71)

If we have followed the inexorable dialectic of the love of love, we understand that Julian's memory remains silent not *although* but *because* his wish leads him "evermore / Still to believe it." Julian remains where desire evermore desires to be. "Here far away," in the stronghold of an imagination that insists that the sound of deepest joy be its own, and therefore perennially "lonely." This may be why the text too "looks back" at this point to the initial description of cliffs, pines, and seas "Filling with purple gloom the vacancies / Between the tufted hills." If the two scenes are the same, the reason may be that Julian has withdrawn himself from each, in order to replenish it with an imaginative fertility that he prefers to presence.

3

Tennyson thus brings considerable psychological acumen into collaboration with a matching sophistication in the handling of narrative to make *The Lover's Tale* an intentionally static study in erotic failure. The poem is so nearly plotless because a desire as private as Julian's can show no significant advance where it has no goal to advance towards. There is a sense, though, in which Tennyson's plot does suggest a movement towards the recognition, on Julian's part, of his own dilemma. During the long first part of the poem, where Julian implicitly laments the irony of circumstances in frustrating his desires, the larger irony is that circumstances have left desire where it truly wishes to be: alone. Parts II and III, however, in removing Julian from external controls, let his imagination tell its own tale through a series of waking visions. Each vision gratifies a wish whose fulfillment then precipitates a nightmare of rejection that ends in paralyzed solitude.

As the first vision begins, Camilla is already dead, and we may suppose that her death figures the death of Julian's hopes that his love will be required. He joins her funeral procession, marching beside Lionel, who in contrast to Julian's silence is "loud in weeping and in praise" (ll.86). Stirred to "strong sympathy" (ll.87) with his ever-voluble rival, Julian does what he has pointedly left undone throughout part I:

I flung myself upon him
 In tears and cries: I told him all my love,
 How I had loved her from the first; whereat
 He shrank and howled, and from his brow drew back
 His hand to push me from him.
 (ll.88-92)

Julian falls, conscious but immobilized, at Lionel's feet, and is left alone: "I could not rise / Albeit I strove to follow" (II.96-97). The dream is quite horrible, but like all Julian's dreams — indeed, like all his perceptions — it serves deep purposes of which he is not fully aware. The telling of his love offers Julian a powerful catharsis of feeling; more important, Lionel's rejection of him and his tale may be seen as a sour-grapes consolation confirming what Julian has suspected all along, that to tell his love would have done no good anyhow. This preliminary vision, then, is a complex wish-fulfillment that supports Julian's sense of himself as a passive and innocent cast-away, who has been ousted from bliss by the hands of his rivals, Lionel and death.

The incompatibility between Julian's desires for self-assertion and self-suppression, between his wishes to speak and not to have spoken, leaves behind this vision a residual energy that fuels its altogether starker successor (II.137-205). This second vision also involves death and rejection, but now Julian the outcast sees himself more truly as the caster-out, no longer the mourner of Camilla's death but now its agent. He dreams that he and Camilla are sitting alone in an unspecified place; given the (by this point familiar) rhetoric of his silent rapture with her voice and face, the most likely setting for this scene would be somewhere among the landscapes of part I. But here, in contrast to the first vision, Julian's analytic understanding supervenes in the dawning realization that his dream is a fiction, the product of wishes that inhabit "The magic cirque of memory"; and with this access of self-consciousness there comes a quickening of the vision into vivid specificity: "It was a room / Within the summer-house of which I spake / Hung round with paintings of the sea" (II.163-65). With this setting the vision has shifted to Julian's home ground, an artificial enclosure, a cottage of art that is literally encompassed with images. Upon one of its paintings in particular, a stormy seascape, Julian and Camilla have collaborated as artists; as they gaze on this picture together — the closest thing to an image of creative mutuality in the entire poem — it suddenly comes to life and threatens to engulf them in the "gyres" of its "whirlwind."

Aloud she shrieked:
My heart was cloven with pain: I wound my arms
About her: we whirled giddily: the wind
Sung: but I clasped her without fear: her weight
Shrank in my grasp, and over my dim eyes,
And parted lips which drank her breath, down-hung
The jaws of Death: I, groaning, from me flung
Her empty phantom: all the sway and whirl
Of the storm dropt to windless calm, and I
Down weltered through the dark ever and ever.
(II.196-205)

13. W. D. Paden, *Tennyson in Egypt* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Publications, 1942), p. 91, suggests a different reading: Julian kills off Camilla as a way of punishing himself and thus appeasing his "intolerable sense of guilt," which is provoked by his having transgressed a Tennysonian taboo in daring to imagine a maturely happy

sexual relationship. Although Paden's remains our best account of the bearing of Tennyson's psychic inhibitions upon his early art, I would contend that by 1832 the poet was working his way towards a fuller understanding of such matters than Paden allows.

For the one time in the poem Julian imagines himself embracing not love, but his beloved, only to discover that she is what imagination has made her all along, an "empty phantom" who is no sooner clasped than she shrinks into insubstantiality. It is his touch that shrivels her: this notion begets the succeeding image of his drinking her breath, a figure of vampirism that grotesquely represents the way this lover has consistently defended desire against death by sacrificing the living present. This violent passage is no mere Gothic exercise but a precise correction of Julian's fantasies of rejection. In part I, he has said that upon awakening from his swoon to find Lionel with Camilla, "I was led mute / Into her temple like a sacrifice," (I.673-74), but now the roles of deity and victim are dramatically reversed. And whereas in the previous vision the result of Julian's wish-fulfillment was that Lionel "shrank" and rejected him, now it is Julian who rejects Camilla, "groaning," for once, with an audible if inhibited assertion of voice. ("Screaming," in the 1832 version, was less decorous but more faithful to the psychic energy invested in this climactic rejection.) Finally confronting the confessed object of his desire, Julian finds it wanting and discards it, to be alone with the peculiar "calm" of the self-sufficiency that absorbs him, now and always, "ever and ever."¹³ Twice in part I he has alluded to the story of "The Hill of Woe," where according to local legend, from a bridge crossing a chasm a man once "Had thrust his wife and child and dashed himself / Into the dizzy depth below" (I.365-72, 510). Whether dreams fit themselves to facts or vice versa — and the nearby passage on "the inaudible invisible thought" suggests that for Tennyson both options may be valid at the same time — the legend on which Julian has earlier dwelt with apparent irrelevance now can be seen as an apt illustration of his own history.

Can Julian see it thus? If so, the poem might open here towards a diagnosis of his malady and the possibility of change. But for Julian to envision the source of his failure as a lover is not necessarily for him to understand or accept it, and the sharpest twist Tennyson gives to the psychological screw is to have Julian preface this revelation with the series of defensive interpretations offered in lines 122-37. His hovering among a number of alternatives suggests that none of his interpretations has convinced him, but the idea to which he returns, "that which most / Enchains belief," is that "the mind, / With some revenge — even to itself unknown, — / Made strange division of its suffering" with Camilla and that his "dull agony" was "Ideally to her transferred." Julian wonders, in other words, whether his trance was not an attempt to extenuate his pain by wishing some or all of it on Camilla, rejecting her as she has rejected him. He has so consistently held himself to a high ethical ideal of self-denial that this explanation seems a persuasive concession to a more plausible psychic reality; but given the grim facts of

Tennyson's erotic parable, the notion that Julian might share any emotion, pleasurable or painful, turns out to be only an evasive idealization of a different kind. Julian, who has never for an instant dreamed of putting himself in Camilla's place, is not likely to have put her in his this once. If he has ever taken emotional revenge, he has done so in the unrecoverable past for reasons the poem keeps shrouded in silence; long before Camilla's rejection of him for Lionel, Julian has rejected her in order to become the servant of desire itself. The most idealistic force in this part of the poem may well be Julian's unconscious, in its attempt to make him see this homely truth; and it is the finest irony of the poem that even this tragic ideal of self-knowledge goes unachieved. Tennyson's despairing wisdom thus keeps even his sketchy plot of psychological recognition from the eventfulness of consummation.¹⁴ Julian's self-analysis ends in paralysis, which is also the goal of each of his visions. If in his immobile "calm" we recognize the condition of helpless frustration that typifies Tennyson's earliest poems, we should also observe how the tranquilizing power of doom that reigns there from a distance has now taken up residence within the self. Desire, the principle of Julian's identity as "the lover," now provides the grounds of its own frustration; character itself has become fate.

Paralysis is the theme of Julian's "latest vision" (III.59), a milder one that returns to the ritual frame of the first and corrects it with an infusion of the meaning disclosed by the second.¹⁵ Julian and the veiled figure of Lionel again march in Camilla's funeral procession, which the sudden measure of wedding bells quickens into bacchanalian dance. After the laughing palbearers have thrown down Camilla's bier and a gust of wind has blown her shroud away into the sky, Julian says:

I turned: my heart
Shrank in me, like a snowflake in the hand.

14. My argument about this poem thus dovetails with Christopher Ricks's general thesis about Tennyson as an artist of the penultimate, in *Tennyson* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). But with this poem, at least, the penultimate seems awfully ultimate. The implied outcome that Ricks finds characteristic of Tennyson here approaches zero — this despite the poet's manifest belief that *The Lover's Tale* needed a sequel to complete it.

15. Tennyson here revises not just his own prior visions but those of Keats as well. The singleton line that ends part III, in particular, performs a triple allusion, the point of each echo being to isolate Julian more radically than the already isolated Keatsian speakers whose words he recalls. Here follows a sketch of this intertextual moment, to suggest the shape that might be taken by a reading of the poem that paid full attention to its allusiveness — which here, as elsewhere in Tennyson, deserves more scrutiny than it has yet received. First, the last gasp of the 1832 *Lover's Tale* as we have it:

the whirling rout
Led by those two rushed into dance, and fled
Wind-footed to the steeple in the woods,
Till they were swallowed in the leafy bowers.
And I stood sole beside the vacant bier.

There, there, my latest vision — then the event!
(1) As at the close of "Ode to a Nightingale," the sole self stands forlorn, in vacant contrast to a happy presence that has just been, in Keats, "buried deep / In the next valley glades" (ll. 77-78), and

Waiting to see the settled countenance
Of her I loved, adorned with fading flowers.
(III.37-40)

In this most chastened of the three visions, muted details carry special weight. Whether Julian is now turning back from the faraway shroud to the bier or actually averting his eyes from Camilla, the focus of his attention seems curiously inconstant for a lover. And while in the earlier visions Lionel and Camilla each "shrank" from his touch, here the cold and shrinking heart is revealed to be none other than Julian's. Though he might have found ample cause for renewed hope in the events of the preceding lines, evidently he hopes most for a "settled countenance" to match the inner image he has composed and adorned for so long that any contact could but mean change for the worse. To clinch its point, once Camilla has leapt back into splendid life the remorseless logic of his dream draws Julian to a second crucial hesitation:

One hand she reached to those that came behind,
And while I mused nor yet endured to take
So rich a prize, the man who stood with me
Slept gaily forward, throwing down his robes,
And claspt her hand in his.

(III.48-52)

My account of this embittered poem will have failed if it is not yet clear that Julian could never "endure" to take a prize like this, not because the prize is so rich, but because on his scale of value it is so poor. In comparison to "the infinite of Love," the treasure of an imagination that can no more be expended upon an object than it can be told — counted or recounted — even this visionary offer of Camilla's hand must seem a poor thing indeed. Hence the incongruity of Tennyson's 1879 sequel, which attempted to mollify the terrible strength of Julian's rejection of Camilla by letting him deck her out as a rich bridal prize to

in Tennyson, "swallowed in the leafy bowers." Julian, however, lacks the solace of Keatsian demicroyance; he knows his has been a vision, not a waking dream; and in any case for him the distinction between these two imaginative media — and with it, the comparatively cheering Keatsian poise — has long since ceased to signify. (2) If the rather odd diction of Tennyson's last line recalls a poem whose thematic relevance is unmistakable, the "Ode to Psyche" — "O latest born and loveliest vision far" (l. 24) — the effect of the echo is to measure Julian's distance from another powerful Keatsian compensation for frustrated desire, that of sublimation. Keats can content himself by transforming the voyeur's lot into the priest's and creating Psyche's fane; but for Julian, who enjoys imaginative desire always and vicarious desire never, "the steeple in the woods" is there before him as a fait accompli, built by and for others. (3) Julian's "latest vision" more pointedly echoes the knight-at-arms from "La Belle Dame Sans Merci": "The latest dream I ever dreamed / On the cold hillside" (ll. 35-36). Keats's poem largely preempts Tennyson's in featuring a forlorn lover who is, we may suspect, less abandoned than abandoning; still, Julian's seems the more dismal situation, since he lacks even the visionary fellowship, or psychic alibi, of such ghostly predecessors as have appeared in Keat's *Knight*. Having in Lionel a predecessor whom he regards not as misery's companion but as its cause, Julian ends the 1832 poem howling in an outer darkness somewhat farther out than anything Keats had imagined.

be not tossed aside, but generously given away. Even here, nevertheless, it should be said in the old poet's defense that he rebelled a little at the happy ending he had found for *The Golden Supper* in Boccaccio; he sent Julian, "frighted" (IV.380), out of the poem in hasty retreat from the image of domestic joy he had made.¹⁶ *The Lover's*

Tale anatomizes a love that will not be "cabined up in words and syllables" (l.470), for the very reason that it is enshrined as imagery, in the palace of art Tennyson's published *Poems* of 1832 also inhabit but endeavor to transcend — against odds whose steepness this long-suppressed and longer-neglected poem lets us measure.

Northwestern University

Self-Validation in Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* LXII ("Terence, This is Stupid Stuff")

Eddy Dow

The first speaker in this poem begins his criticism of his friend Terence's poetry with these words:

"Terence, this is stupid stuff;
You eat your victuals fast enough;
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,
To see the rate you drink your beer." (ll. 1-4)

Thirty-eight lines later, Terence defends his work in this way:

'Tis true, the stuff I bring for sale
Is not so brisk a brew as ale: (ll. 49-50)
.....
But take it: if the smack is sour,
The better for the embittered hour:
It should do good to heart and head
When your soul is in my soul's stead: (ll. 53-56)

Though "Terence" is among the most discussed of Housman's poems, the flat contradiction between Terence's unnamed friend's "There can't be much amiss" and his own "When your soul is in my soul's stead" has never, as nearly as I can tell, been noticed in print. Much less has it been explained how a drinking companion close enough to Terence to attack his poetry head-on without giving offence could be this blind to the real state of his friend's soul.

It will probably come as no surprise that the burden of this paper is to offer just such an explanation, one that — to my mind, anyway — adds significantly to the interest of this interesting poem.

First, a short paraphrase. Terence, who is of course the Shropshire lad, and his friend — and perhaps others ("We poor lads. . ." l. 9) — are eating and drinking in a pub.

Terence's friend has just read, or had read to him ("This" l. 1), the sixty-one poems that precede "Terence" in *A Shropshire Lad*. (Only one follows it: "I Hoed and Trenched and Weeded," also a defense by Terence of his own poetry, though on different grounds from those of "Terence.")

Terence's friend's response is the bluff and good-humored expostulation that opens the poem. Terence's verse, he says, "gives a chap the belly-ache" (l. 6). And he hints in the first passage quoted in this paper that since Terence obviously feels fine, his gloomy poetry is insincere. Terence's friend then concludes:

"Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme
Your friends to death before their time
Moping melancholy mad:
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad." (ll. 11-14)

Terence's defense of his poetry (and, by implication, similar poetry by others) takes up the poem's remaining sixty-two lines.

He begins by saying, in witty, alliterative, allusive language, that drink is better suited than *any* poetry to produce the effect his friend seeks. But "The mischief is that 'twill not last" (l. 28). This gray fact Terence documents humorously from his own experience, and then he comes to the crux of his (and the poem's) argument.

Terence admits that his poetry is mostly concerned — as his friend has charged and as the reader knows who comes upon LXII in its place in *A Shropshire Lad* rather than in an anthology — with decay, loss, inconstancy, melancholy, and death, often, curiously, death imposed as punishment by the state. But he insists that that is precisely its value, precisely the source of its power to "train" (l. 48) its reader to carry on when he or she en-

16. In the fourth tale of the tenth day of the *Decameron*, Julian's counterpart lives on in Bologna happily ever after with the couple he has nobly reunited: "Messer Gentil always remained a friend of Niccoluccio and his relatives and the lady's relatives" (*The Decameron of Boccaccio*, tr. Richard Aldington [New York: Dell, 1930], p. 581). Paden, *Tennyson in Egypt*, p. 160, speculates that Tennyson's first attempt to complete the tale ended where Boccaccio's had begun, with the disappointed lover's descent into the lady's tomb.

counters these things, not in art, but in reality – in other words, “When your soul is in my soul’s stead” (l. 56). The immediate context of this last line is Terence’s recommendation of his poetry as suited to “The dark and cloudy day” and “The embittered hour,” which makes it clear that his soul has already arrived there. If corroboration is wanted, W. J. Swanson has provided it by pointing out – in *The Explicator*, 39 (1971), item 67 – that the line comes almost verbatim from *Job XVI, 4* (King James Version).

By what means does what Swanson nicely calls the “prophylactic quality” of Terence’s poetry do its work? According to the parable of King Mithridates which ends the poem, it works by a process akin to inoculation: Terence’s poetry gives its readers manageable doses of the poisons of “The many-venomed earth” (l. 64), thus developing in them the resistance needed to survive to a ripe age, as the King did, the otherwise destructive amounts that sooner or later are sure to come.

B. J. Leggett has argued persuasively in *The Poetic Art of A. E. Housman: Theory and Practice* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 113-41, that this parable comes closer to describing the action of tragic and pessimistic poetry than it may seem to, but I am not here concerned with the truth of Terence’s theory in that sense.

Rather, my point – as my reader may have anticipated by now – is that Terence’s friend’s certainty that “there can’t be much amiss” at the very moment that Terence has reached “the embittered hour” is in fact a curious and very pleasing kind of validation of Terence’s doctrine – validation, that is, within the fiction of the poem. In the midst of his unspecified trouble, Terence (who of course has had greater exposure to his own poetry than has anyone else) has remained so sociable, so witty, so clearly in emotional and intellectual command of himself (even under criticism), and so able to enjoy the pleasures of food and drink that his friends hadn’t even suspected that everything was wrong.

One final matter. The reading that I have been urging enables us also to see that Terence’s friend’s great confidence in his perceptiveness – “There can’t be much amiss, ‘tis clear” (my emphasis) – is a satirical thrust by Housman and thus related to the poem’s larger didactic purpose. Like many another who sees in literature merely an escape from the realities of our lives, Terence’s friend is not only wrong-headed, but delightfully, smugly, certain in his wrong-headedness.

Rutgers University

Coming in

The Victorian Newsletter

Franklin E. Court, “The Image of St. Theresa in *Middlemarch* and Positive Ethics”

Ellen Jordan, “The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894”

Shoshana Knapp, “‘Joy came in the morning’: A Note on a Serious Joke in George Eliot’s *Diary*”

Robert K. Martin, “Parody and Homage: The Presence of Pater in *Dorian Gray*”

Hans Ostrom, “The Disappearance of Tragedy in Meredith’s *Modern Love*”

Martha Westwater, “The Victorian Nightmare of Evolution: Charles Darwin and Walter Bagehot”

Books Received

- Bebbington, D. B. *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982. Pp. x + 193. \$22.50. The focus is on the political interests and activities of nonconformists during the period between the Second Reform Act of 1864 and the Franchise Act of 1918, when their influence was significant on questions of Irish Home Rule, public education, imperialism, the strength of the Liberal Party and the support of the infant Labour Party.
- Borowitz, Albert. *A Gallery of Sinister Perspectives: Ten Crimes and a Scandal*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1982. Pp. xii + 163. \$14.95, \$5.75 paper. Includes chapters on *The Ring and the Book*; "Gilbert and Sullivan on Corporation Law: *Utopia, Limited* and the Panama Canal Frauds"; the controversy over Edmund Yates' expulsion from the Garrick Club; and some literary views of capital punishment.
- Browning, Robert. *The Ring and the Book*. Ed. Rich. D. Altick. New Haven & London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981. Pp. 707. \$30.00; \$7.95 paper. Pub. in England in 1971. A very brief intro. and 78 pp. of notes. A more readable text than the Norton edition.
- Burne-Jones, Edward. *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations: 1895-1898 Preserved by his Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke*. Ed. Mary Lago. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1981. Pp. xii + 211. \$19.00. A selection (about 1/3) from a holograph by Lady Burne-Jones of the Rooke text, (which has not survived).
- Crump, R. W. *Charlotte and Emily Brontë, 1846-1915: A Reference Guide*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982. Pp. xviii + 194. \$27.50. An annotated bibliography of writings about both sisters, which includes "reminisces, memorials, sketches, essays, articles, book-length studies, chapters of books, reviews of the Brontës' works, introductions from editions of their works, and reviews of works about the Brontës that include additional comments concerning them" (p. vii), some 900 entries in all.
- Haight, Gordon S. and Rosemary T. VanArsdale, eds. *George Eliot: A Centenary Tribute*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1982. Pp. x + 174. \$27.50. Thirteen essays on Eliot's bastards, her language, her poetics of humanist piety; Eliot and her biographers, and the Russians, and Meredith, and antique gems; how her people think; essays on *Middlemarch* (3), on *Felix Holt*, on *Mill on the Floss*.
- Pinion, F. B., ed. *A George Eliot Miscellany: A Supplement to her Novels*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1982. Pp. xii + 183. \$28.50. A true miscellany, this one includes "key passages from her pre-novel essays and reviews, two stories in prose, writings relative to some of her major publications, four poems, and some evaluations of her contemporary English world." (p. vii) Selections were in part determined by their unavailability.
- Robertson, Priscilla. *An Experience of Women: Pattern and Change in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1982. Pp. xii + 673. \$35.00. The first half of the book is about patterns in four European cultures - England, France, Italy, and Germany - and the second half is about breakers of those patterns. The method used by Ms. Robertson was to investigate all kinds of material and to give us the benefit of her sensitive and penetrating judgment. There is an appendix by Steve Hochstadt, "Demography and Feminism," and a 46 pp. bibliography. An important book.
- Smith, Dennis. *Conflict and Compromise: Class Formation in English Society 1830-1914, A Comparative Study of Birmingham and Sheffield*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. Pp. xiv + 338. \$39.95. Investigates "the processes of class formation . . . in a number of institutional spheres" - "local government, municipal politics, formal education and industrial relations . . . commercial life, the professions, enforcement of the law, religion, leisure, charity, self-help, patterns of residence, property ownership and the family." (p. x).
- Smith, Warren Sylvester. *Bishop of Everywhere: Bernard Shaw and the Life Force*. University Park and London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1982. Pp. 191. \$16.95. A well-written account of the development of Shaw's "personal cosmology - one might even say his theology" (p. 22), Shaw's synthesis of the idea of the Life Force which made "the doctrine of creative evolution and the search for social and economic justice . . . unified." (p. 35).
- Walder, Dennis. *Dickens and Religion*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981. Pp. xvi + 232. \$22.50. Walder does not seek to place Dickens in any particular religious camp, but to identify "the area of contemporary belief with which he associated himself" (p. 5) a liberal even romantic protestantism, which was anticlerical and more concerned with the morality of religion than its ritual or supernatural aspects. Novels to which Walder devotes chapters are: *Pickwick*, *Twist*, *Old Curiosity Shop*, *Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, *Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, and *Our Mutual Friend*.
- Wijesinha, Rajiva. *The Androgynous Trollope: Attitudes to Women amongst Early Victorian Novelists*. Washington, D.C.: Univ. Press of America, 1982. Pp. vi + 355. \$22.75, \$12.75 paper. Argues that well into the Victorian period it was largely true that women were "not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex"; however, "the works of Trollope provide a very distinct exception to the rule" (p. 1).

Victorian Group News

A. THE LOS ANGELES MEETING

28 December 1982, 10:15-11:30 AM, Renaissance, Biltmore
Presiding: John D. Rosenberg, Columbia Univ.

I. Business

II. Papers and Discussion

1. "Rossetti's 'The Burden of Nineveh,'" Carl Woodring, Columbia Univ.
2. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti: The Moment of the Picture," R.K.R. Thornton, Univ. of Newcastle, England
3. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pull of Science," Hartley S. Spatt, Maritime College, State Univ. of New York
4. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Caught between Two Centuries," Miriam Fuchs, Elizabeth Seton College

B. THE VICTORIAN LUNCHEON

The Annual Victorian Division Luncheon will be held in the Colonnade, Biltmore. Cash bar at 11:45; lunch at 12:30 p.m. For information, write to James R. Kincaid, English Department, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

C. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The research Society for Victorian Periodicals will hold its first *International* annual meeting July 1-3, 1983, at the Victorian Studies Centre, The University of Leicester, LE1 74H, England. Inquiries should be sent to Dr. Joanne Shattock, Conference Chairman, at the Centre or to R. T. Van Arsdel, Department of English, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA 98416.

The Northwest Victorian Studies Association Ninth Annual Conference -- "Losers, Weepers: Failure and Loss in the Victorian World" -- will be held at Boston College, April 22-24, 1983.

The Midwest Victorian Studies Association will hold its annual meeting in Chicago 29-30 April, 1983 on "Victorian Health and Victorian Disease." Address inquiries to Frederick Kirchhoff, English Dept., Indiana Univ.-Purdue Univ. at Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, IN 46805.

The Southeastern Nineteenth Century Studies Association, a fascinating interdisciplinary group, will hold its annual Conference on the theme "Children and Childhood in the Nineteenth Century" April 15-16, 1982, in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Address inquiries to Linda Zatlun, English Department, Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA 30314.

University of Hartford Studies in Literature, Fall, 1982, is a special issue of interdisciplinary essays on Victorian literature. Included are Nancy Aycock Metz, "Mayhew's Book of Lists"; Linda Seidel Costic, "Elizabeth Gaskell and the Question of Liberal Education"; Benjamin Brody, "Brainwashing and *Oliver Twist*"; and Natalie Schroeder, "The Oedipal Triangle in Pater's 'Hippolytus Veiled.'" Individual issues may be ordered from Leonard Manheim, Editor, *University of Hartford Studies in Literature*, English Department, University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT 06117.

Back issues of *VNL*, at a cost of \$4.00 per copy, are available in limited quantities for the following numbers: 38, 41, 45, 47, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61.