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Cover: 1983 is the centenary of Edward Fitzgerald's death; the cover is Edmund J. Sullivan's illustration for stanza LX of the *Rubaiyat*.

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“Joy came in the evening”: A Note on a Serious Joke in George Eliot’s Diary

Shoshana Knapp

George Eliot, in her later years, was often worshipped as a sibyl, a speaker of inspired yet enigmatic wisdom. She relished the role. Although she occasionally felt weary of the demands of the pedestal, she seemed to enjoy the chance to be, at once, earnest, ardent, clever, and obscure. Even in her diary, she toys with meaningful mystification, playing hide-and-seek with self-revelation and expressing her deepest feelings in the guise of a succinct joke. By explicating a joke of this sort, by uncovering the hidden George Eliot, we will understand better the George Eliot we have always been able to know. The private allusion is widely relevant and profoundly true.

On October 8, 1879, ten months after the death of George Henry Lewes (her companion of twenty-four years), seven months after she breached the solitude of her mourning by agreeing to see John Walter Cross (a personable banker, twenty years her junior and a friend of long standing), seven weeks after she and Johnny Cross had an interview, probably a proposal, recorded in her diary as “Decisive conversation,” George Eliot made the following entry in her diary: “Joy came in the evening.” A week later, she wrote Cross a letter beginning “Best loved and loving one” A year and a half later, just a few months before her death, they were married.¹

Although “Joy came in the evening” appears to refer to Johnny Cross, the exact bearing of the reference is at first puzzling. Gordon Haight, a pre-eminent George Eliot scholar, asks: “Is Joy a unique abbreviation for Johnny or a term of endearment?” No, and again no. “Joy came in the evening,” I believe, is George Eliot’s revision of a Biblical phrase in the King James translation of Psalms 30:6, which reads: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Her knowledge and habitual use of the Bible, her characteristic views about joy and mornings, her personal history and emotional context — all support this interpretation of her statement.

She was, we know, thoroughly familiar with the Bible in the King James translation and, later, in Hebrew and Greek. Biblical allusions fill her novels and letters. Most of these references, it has been noted, are secular in spirit; a Biblical quotation for her is not an admission of Christian faith, any more than a classical allusion is a declaration of allegiance to the gods of Greece and Rome.² The Bible gave her a private language and a wealth of resources for punning, hyperbole, and irony. Referring to Psalms 37:35, for example, she writes in a letter: “Between the bad weather, bad health, and solitude, I have been so far un-

like the wicked, that I have not flourished like the green-bay tree.”³ Ebenezer, the site of a victory over the Philistines (Samuel II, 7:12), was her code word for triumph: “Put the last stroke to Romola. Ebenezer!”⁴ She knew the Bible so well that its cadences, phrases, and events readily became part of her vocabulary. She knew the Psalms especially well; her letters contain twice as many references to Psalms as to any other single book of the Bible. The verses of Psalm 30 were undoubtedly very familiar to her.

Verse 6, in particular, seems to have been on her mind for many years. Over and over, she said or implied that joy rarely comes in the morning — at any rate, not immediately after a night of weeping. And if joy happens to come in the morning, the emotion is marred by the joylessness that is sure to follow, by the inevitable human experience of living away from morning’s joy. A joyless morning is especially bitter, George Eliot feels, because it partakes of both the dreary day that lies ahead, which is clearly seen in the morning light, and of the despairing night that has gone before, which is clearly felt in the morning fatigue.

Whatever the weather, morning in George Eliot’s novels can be a time of gloom. In the morning of “golden sunlight,” Caterina “moved through all the joy and beauty like a poor wounded leveret . . .” (“Mr. Gilfil’s Love-Story,” Ch. 7); after weeks of hints and hopes, she has finally become certain that her beloved is planning to marry someone else. In “the fresh youth of the summer morning, with its Edenlike peace and loveliness,” Adam Bede finds his father drowned in a brook (Ch. 4). In the chapter entitled “Walking” (*The Mill on the Floss*, Bk. VI, Ch. 14), Maggie begins a “day of resistance” by resolving to leave the lover with whom she has just eloped, against her judgment and partially against her will. On a “delicious Sunday morning,” the musician Klesmer informs Gwendolen that she lacks the talent, training, and temperament to be an artist. (*Daniel Deronda*, Ch. 23). These joyless mornings, a recurrent phenomenon in the novels, involve the painful apprehension of an unwelcome truth: long-evaded, and escapable no longer.

In the light of morning, people are able to see, and, because they see, they suffer. Just as vision is sharper in the morning, so the pain, too, is more acute. There is more to see, and there will be more time to suffer. In *Felix Holt*, Ch. 26, George Eliot writes:

The rays of the morning sun which fell athwart the books, the

1. All facts cited here about George Eliot’s final years, and all quotations from 1879 Diary, are drawn from Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 515-51.

2. Joseph Wiesenfarth, *George Eliot’s Mythmaking* (Heidelberg:

Winter, 1977), pp. 27-30.

3. Gordon S. Haight, ed., *The George Eliot Letters* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955), IV, 415.

4. Journal, 9 March 1863, quoted in Haight, *Biography*, p. 365.

sense of the beginning day, had deepened the solemnity more than night would have done. All knowledge which alters our lives penetrates us more when it comes in the early morning: the day that has to be travelled with something new and perhaps for ever sad in its light, is an image of the light that spreads beyond. But at night the time of rest is near.

Often, on a joyless morning of this sort, we find ourselves in what Barbara Hardy has called the "disenchanted day-lit room," a room and a type of light that she associates with an entire network of images.⁵ The earliest appearance of this scene, says Hardy, is in a letter George Eliot wrote in 1848: "Alas for the fate of poor mortals which condemns them to wake up some fine morning and find all the poetry . . . utterly gone — the hard angular world of chairs and tables and looking-glasses staring at them in all its naked prose." The key features of the scene, according to Hardy, are the "clear light on the objects in a room" (the objects are distinct, the room is depressing) and the "suggestion of a prosaic present stretching into an unchanging prosaic future."⁶ Reality is inescapable, all the more so in the morning when rest is not near, when the pressure of daily labor precludes the luxury of grief, when one must carry on while carrying a burden. Even the joyous mornings — some, surely, are not without joy — are darkened by the changes hidden in the future. Although Maggie and Tom, as children, enjoyed "one of their happy mornings," without thought of change, life "did change for Tom and Maggie" (*The Mill on the Floss*, Bk. I, Ch. 5). Although, for Rex and Gwendolen, "the freshness of the morning mingled with the freshness of their youth," the narrator's wish that they could be forever happy together is in vain (*Daniel Deronda*, Ch. 7). Even in the sunlight of a glorious morning, those who cannot or will not look steadily at their real futures are in danger of finding themselves trapped in the disenchanted day-lit room. Joy is elusive in the morning.

It is especially elusive after a night of weeping. Looking at several miserable mornings in the novels, we can see George Eliot formulating a specific denial of the Biblical verse: If weeping endures for a night, joy will not follow immediately in the morning. Uncontrolled tears make grief harder to bear because they incapacitate the sufferer for the thought and action in which alone lies salvation. On the morning after Caterina learns that the man she loves has shown contempt for her, she is "stupefied by the suffering of the previous night, with that dull mental aching which follows an acute anguish . . ." ("Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story," Ch. 13). On the morning after Hetty learns that Arthur has deserted her, she feels "that dry-eyed morning misery, which is worse than the first shock because it has the future in it as well as the present," and she feels it in

the "half-benumbed mental condition which was the effect of the last night's violent crying . . ." (*Adam Bede*, Ch. 31). After Gwendolen rejects his proposal, Rex becomes sick and faint, lying apathetic on his bed, allowing his grief to make him weak and unfit for his "resurrection into a new world . . . the old interests being left behind" (*Daniel Deronda*, Ch. 8). Morning joy, apparently, does not proceed directly from midnight tears. If nothing intervenes between solitary grief and a new life, if the sufferer takes no steps to rejoin the human community with its exchange of ideas and division of labor, then these sufferers, if surprised by joy, will be totally unprepared to embrace it.

The obvious relevant example is Dorothea's dark night of the soul, after she thinks she has learned that Ladislav is in love with Rosamond. After a night of tears, "she was no longer wrestling with her grief, but could sit down with it as a lasting companion and make it a sharer in her thoughts" (*Middlemarch*, Ch. 80). Although she feels as yet nothing like joy, she resolves to master her grief, to compel it to serve the purpose of action.⁷ "She said to her own irremediable grief, that it should make her more helpful, instead of driving her back from effort." Looking out on "the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance," she dons new clothes and sets out, as she had on her visit the day before, "to see and save Rosamond." When her interview with Rosamond reveals to her that Ladislav loves no one but herself, she is still not entirely ready to feel joy. Even someone who has taken the right steps in the morning continues to feel the effects of the tears that have come before. "The revulsion of feeling in Dorothea was too strong to be called joy. It was a tumult in which the terrible strain of the night and morning made a resistant pain: — she could only perceive that this would be joy when she had recovered her power of feeling it" (Ch. 81). If weeping endures for a night, joy comes not in the morning, but long after.

When, then? If joy is rare in the morning, when is it most frequent and welcome? In the late afternoon or early evening. George Eliot felt that this was true, metaphorically, of her own life. A New Year's entry in her journal reads: "Few women, I fear have had such reasons as I have to think the long sad years of growth were worth living for the sake of middle age . . ." ⁸ It is true for her characters as well. After Adam Bede loses Hetty, his first love, he experiences the "noon of that morning" (Ch. 51) in his love of Dinah, who accepts his proposal as the "afternoon shadows lengthened" and the "light grew softer" (Ch. 54). For Adam and Dinah, joy came in the evening.

5. Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form* (1959; rpt. with corrections London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 189-95.

6. Hardy's examples include the following: "Janet's Repentance" (Ch. 16), *Adam Bede* (Chs. 31, 38), "The Lifted Veil," *The Mill on the Floss* (Bk. IV, Ch. 3), *Felix Holt* (Ch. 44), *Middlemarch* (Chs. 28, 42), *Daniel Deronda* (Chs. 23, 26). Similar scenes that could be cited appear in "Amos Barton" (Ch. 9), *Adam Bede* (Ch. 37), *The Mill on the Floss* (Bk. III, Ch. 5; Bk. IV, Ch. 2; Bk. VII, Ch. 2), *Romola*

(Ch. 37), *Middlemarch* (Chs. 47, 54), and *Daniel Deronda* (Chs. 8, 30).

7. From earlier experience, she knows that uncontrolled tears make her weak. After Casaubon asks her to promise to complete his work after his death, she cries all night and, in the morning, is helpless "as a child which has sobbed and sought too long" (Ch. 48).

8. Journal, 31 December 1857, quoted in Haight, *Biography*, p. 247.

In *Daniel Deronda*, the theme of evening joy receives an extended development. Daniel's favorite hour is sunset, when he can "indulge himself in that solemn passivity which easily comes with the lengthening shadows and mellowing light, when thinking and desiring melt together imperceptibly and what in other hours may have seemed argument takes the quality of passionate vision" (Ch. 17). In this light he can still see clearly enough, and act quickly enough, to save Mirah from committing suicide; if he had not been lying near the bank in solitary contemplation, he would have missed her. As Daniel rows toward the bridge at sunset, much later, he is seen, over the parapet, by another man who has also loved sunset all his life. "It has sunk into me and dwelt with me — fading, slowly fading: it was my own decline: it paused — it waited, till at last it brought my new life — my new self — who will live when this breath is all breathed out" (Ch. 40). Mordecai, the speaker here, has been waiting for a young man to give political reality to his visions of a Jewish homeland; sunset, a time of ending and beginning, is the symbol of this fulfillment. Mordecai's reunion with his long-lost sister Mirah is another event that combines ending with beginning: "the reunion of brother and sister was in reality the first stage of a supreme parting — like that farewell kiss which resembles greeting, that last glance of love which becomes the sharpest pang of sorrow" (Ch. 43). Mordecai is to die of consumption not long after this sunset reunion. With or without explicit reference to sunset, George Eliot is suggesting that joy in the evening looks to the future solemnly, and with a hopeful spirit of resolution — the just reward and proper sequel of one's triumph over the bitterness and sorrow that day has brought.

And this, I believe, is an accurate description of George Eliot's feeling on October 8, 1879. When George Henry Lewes died, on November 30, 1878, she was too upset to attend the funeral, or even to leave her room for a week. She began the period of recovery by revising and completing his last book, *Problems of Life and Mind*; she did not

leave the house or write a letter until she had worked through the manuscript twice. In the following months, she began to see friends again (and Johnny Cross was the first), to read the proofs of her own *Theophrastus Such*, to attend to legal matters (with the help of Johnny Cross), and to study, with Johnny, the *Divine Comedy*. Her diary contains sporadic references to grief, to illness of heart, mind and body; joy did not come easily.

But on October 8, one week before she wrote to her "dear tender one" that he knew "things . . . such as belong to the manly heart — secrets of lovingness and rectitude," she must have come to terms with their "Decisive conversation" of August 21. Although she was not yet ready to agree to marry him — he had to wait nearly a year and a half for that, and to ask her three times — she seemed prepared to accept and return his sympathetic affection. After weeping endured for many nights and days, after George Eliot found new life in completing her companion's work and her own, after she allowed herself to lean on her family, friends, and suitor, joy finally came in the evening.

Although it is not likely that she foresaw her own death a few months after the wedding, she must have known that rest was near. Her mother and sister, after all, had died in their forties, and her own health had been precarious for many years. Now, surely, was the time for the glow of sunset. Did she think of "Sunset and Sunrise," the final section of *Middlemarch*, in which Dorothea takes as her second husband Will Ladislaw, whose characterization may have been inspired by Johnny Cross himself?⁹ In any event, she knew, on October 8, that joy comes in the evening, not in the morning, not in youth, not in the first sharpness of grief. As we review her writings, we see that she had in fact known it for many years. And in this diary note, revising Psalms 30:6, the sibyl has left us a leaf worth catching. Joy comes not at once, but at last.

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9. Richard Ellmann, "Dorothea's Husbands," *TLS*, 16 Feb. 1973, pp. 165-68, and 30 March 1973, pp. 352-53; rpt. in *Golden Codgers: Biographical Speculations* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 17-38.

Swinburne In Hellas: "A Nympholept"¹

George M. Ridenour

Or does happiness come in none of these ways, but either by a sort of elevation of mind inspired by some divine power, in the case of persons possessed on a nymph [*numpholeptoî*] or god . . .

Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*
(1214, 23-25), Loeb trans.

"A Nympholept" (pub. 1894) is easily the most "read" of Swinburne's late poems, and some of the readings have been much to the point.² It does seem, though, that readings that seem essentially right are limited by not considering the possibility that the work might profitably be read in a specific literary context, against a background that alone makes it fully intelligible. By doing this, one may come to an understanding of the poem that does justice both to its considerable intellectual rigor and to the sensory experience that both precipitates it and supports it throughout. Swinburne's life-long preoccupation with Greek letters may be found to supply this.

It is valuable to consider the poem, especially, with reference to the two dialogues of Plato in which Pan, central to "A Nympholept," figures significantly: the *Cratylus* and the *Phaedrus*. The former, I shall assume, provides the intellectual frame for the poem and the latter a rationale for its method. Much of the particularity of the poem, on the other hand, may be understood in terms of works by Sophocles and Euripides.

The *Cratylus*, with its strange exercises in forced etymology, stands at the very beginning of Pan's long career as an allegorical figure, and much of what later appeared reflects it to some extent. At the end of his dogged account of the etymological significance of the names of the gods, with which even he is growing impatient, Socrates is induced to discuss one last god, Hermes, the father of Pan. Hermes' name is explained in the same way as those of the other gods, as referring to his particular role in the divine economy:

I should imagine that the name Hermes has to do with speech, and signifies that he is the interpreter (ἑρμηνεύς), or messenger, or thief, or liar, or bargainer: all that sort of thing has a great deal to do with language.³

This leads to consideration of Pan, the "double-formed" son of Hermes, the rationale being that "speech signifies all things (παν) , and is always turning them round and round, and has two forms, true and false."

Is not the truth that is in him the smooth or sacred form that

dwells above among the Gods, whereas falsehood swells among men below, and is rough like the goat of tragedy; for tales and falsehoods have generally to do with the tragic or goatish life, and tragedy is the place of them?

Then surely Pan, who is the declarer of all things (παν) and the perpetual mover (ἀειπαλλων) of all things, is rightly called ἀιπολος (goat-herd), he being the two-formed son of Hermes, smooth in his upper part, and rough and goat-like in his lower regions. And, as the son of Hermes, he is speech or the brother of speech, and that brother should be like brother is no marvel.⁴

This is not wholly clear, but a few things stand out. Hermes is essentially (not merely professionally, as it were) connected with speech, and is therefore the messenger of the gods, bearing communication among the gods and between the gods and mortals. This communicating, mediating function finds correspondence in the double nature of his son, divine in the upper part and goat-like in the lower, both of these qualities comprised within his identification as "speech or the brother of speech." (I am suppressing Plato's concern with the distinction between heavenly truth and terrestrial falsity, which is not to the purpose.) The emphasis here is less on Pan's "Orphic" identification as the totality of all things than on the proposition that Pan is speech, and a speech that says everything that can be said.

Support for the proposal that this is relevant to "A Nympholept" comes from an unexpected source. In the second stanza we hear that "The word of the wind and the leaves that the light winds fan" is

As the word that quickened at first into flame, and ran,
Creative and subtle and fierce with invasive power,
Through darkness and cloud, from the breath of
the one God, Pan.

The creative Word, that is, that in the most "Platonic" of the gospels is identified with God, and is the force through which all things come into being, is in fact the great God Pan, whose death had been erroneously reported.

This identification is reinforced by the echo of the nineteenth psalm in Swinburne's nineteenth stanza, where, addressing Pan, all things

Proclaim but and prove but thee, as the shifted sands
Speak forth and show but the strength of the sea's
wild will
That sifts and grinds them as grain in the storm-

1. This was read, in somewhat different form, at a symposium held by the Victorian Committee of the City University of New York in April, 1978.

2. Two readings especially stand out. Jerome J. McGann, *Swinburne: an Experiment in Criticism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 185-99. David G. Riede, *Swinburne: a Study of Roman-*

tic Mythmaking (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1978), pp. 193-201.

3. Plato will be quoted from the version by Swinburne's teacher and friend Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, two vols. (New York: Randon House, 1937 [rev. ed. of 1892]), I, 197.

4. Jowett, I, 198. My emphasis.

wind's mill.
 In thee is the doom that falls and the doom that
 stands:
 The tempests utter thy word, and the stars fulfill.

Speech, then, is creative in the first instance, and this primordial word continues to echo throughout its creation. The poem, of course, echoes it as well. (It is Pan and not Apollo, at least for the purposes of this poem, that is god of poets.) In stanza 8,

the silence trembles with passion of sound sup-
 pressed,
 And the twilight quivers and yearns to the sun-
 ward, wrung
 With love as with pain; and the wide wood's mo-
 tionless breast
 Is thrilled with a dumb desire that would fain find
 tongue

The poem would be the fulfilment of this yearning for an adequate speech, adequate in effect to the comprehensiveness of the nature of Pan as described in the *Cratylus*, where it is identical with the signifying act of speech.

The relation between Pan and the act of speech is presented dramatically in the *Phaedrus*, which associates Pan and the Nymphs with the landscape in a way that anticipates "A Nympholept." While the immediate occasion for associating "Summer and noon" with a sense of menace (from Pan) is the first idyll of Theocritus, the poem also recalls a day in Athens when "the hour [was] almost noon, and there [was] the midday sun standing still, as people say, in the meridian."⁵ On that day Socrates and Phaedrus withdrew to the banks of the Ilissus, to "a spot sacred to Achelous and the Nymphs,"⁶ where Socrates would speak — "dithyrambically," as he put it — of, among other things, the madness of oracular utterance and "of those who are possessed by the Muses" and utter inspired poetry. Socrates had earlier playfully protested to Phaedrus: "Do you not perceive that I am already overtaken by the Nymphs to whom you have mischievously exposed me?"⁷ He will later claim that he had been inspired by "the Nymphs of Achelous and Pan the son of Hermes,"⁸ and he concluded his first discourse by remarking of his own unusual degree of inspiration:

Listen to me, then, in silence; for surely the place is holy; so that you must not wonder, if, as I proceed, I appear to be in a divine fury, for already I am getting into dithyrambics.⁹

What Jowett translates as "in a divine fury" is in the Greek *numpholeptos*.

The difference in tone between an urbane philosophic

dialogue and the grave exuberance of Swinburne's sacred eclogue is enormous. But the dialogue not only associates inspired utterance with a landscape inhabited by Pan and the Nymphs, but also provides high precedent for the expression of philosophic argument not only artistically, but dithyrambically, in language of enraptured utterance — the manner, of course, of "A Nympholept."

Closer to Swinburne in tone and manner is a related passage from an eighteenth-century Platonist. Shaftesbury, who cites one of the passages I have quoted in *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, where he discusses the origin of the belief in a Pan who brings terror, sends Theocles and Philocles, in *The Moralists*, into "the sacred groves of the Hamadryads, which were formerly said to render oracles," and where the "pleasing wildness" of nature evokes the following from an enthusiastic Theocles:

The faint and gloomy light looks horrid as the shade itself; and the profound stillness of these places imposes silence upon men Here space astonishes: silence itself seems pregnant, whilst an unknown force works on the mind, and dubious objects move the wakeful sense. Mysterious voices are either heard or fancied, and various forms of deity seem to present themselves and appear more manifest in these sacred silvan scenes, such as of old gave rise to temples, and favoured the religion of the ancient world.¹⁰

The setting, gloom, pregnant silence, the action of an unknown force on the mind, the manifestation of deity, make this almost a prose "original" of "A Nympholept." All that is missing is the light, and that is available elsewhere, as will be seen.

But the precise line of influence is less important than the example given both by Plato and by his English follower for the practice of ecstatic ratiocination, since "A Nympholept," in its dithyrambic way, develops a clear process of thought, sometimes argued with considerable density. A second point concerns the relation of this thought and its expression to the specific natural surroundings and the poet's response to them. (From this point of view, "A Nympholept" is close to Shaftesbury and to eighteenth-century theory of the origin of myth, theory of the sort later found notably in Keats, for whom myth is the verbal correlative of nature, and in Swinburne's own time most notably in Ruskin.)

Like the passage from Shaftesbury, the poem begins with the expression of a sensory condition, a particular state of organic perception. It not only develops out of such a state (like much of Wordsworth), but never loses its attachment to its sensory ground. The meditation is never separate from the sensory response out of which it grows.

5. Jowett, I, 246.
 6. Jowett, I, 236.
 7. Jowett, I, 246.
 8. Jowett, I, 267.
 9. Jowett, I, 243.
 10. Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics* . . . , ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), p. 123.

11. Cf. the following from Jowett's Introduction to Plato:
 . . . however deeply Plato may sometimes go into particulars, his ultimate design is only to exhibit with all possible clearness and directness the Idea shining through the phenomenon; to point out its reflection in the infinite; to fill with its light not merely the intellect, but the whole man.
 B. Jowett, *The Works of Plato* . . . , four vols. in one (New York: Dial Press, n.d.), lii.

And it is largely the absorbed intensity, the brooding rapture of the poem's music, that convinces us of this. What the poet is sharing with us is not merely a brain, though that is very active, but a whole body.¹¹ This is not meant as a tribute to the unity of the poet's sensibility in the poem. It is simply the clearest single thing about "A Nympholept," and if this is not taken into account the poem will not really make sense. If nothing else, we miss the relation between the manner of the poem and its grounding in the experience of the goat-god Pan.

But while Pan is the deity most obviously present in the poem, the God whose arrows of sunlight are so important in the sensory world of the first stanza is clearly far-shooting Apollo, sometimes said to be the father of Pan, and it may be the reference to the possibility of a "wroth" deity in stanza two that first turns the poet's thought toward Pan, who was known to be tetchy at noonday. In any case, Pan is elicited explicitly when the sensations shift from the predominantly visual to the predominantly auditory, creating the possibility of conceiving a breath that speaks a creative word, in the lines quoted earlier.

When such references to the power of the word and to attempts to achieve utterance are prominent in the work of a highly self-conscious poet, it is reasonable to presume that attention is being called to the nature of the poet's own speech. When this occurs in "A Nympholept," the effect is to make the poem seem inspired in a particular way — as oracular, prophetic, expressing both the first and third forms of divine madness as defined in the *Phaedrus*. It is an oracle spoken in the power of Pan and the Nymphs.

In the standard Victorian reference work on classical mythology, we read that Pan was "believed to be possessed of prophetic powers, and to have even instructed Apollo in this art."¹² While on the references to prophetic nymphs, we may notice one from Plutarch's *Life of Aristides* (XI.4):

... and the cave of the Sphragitic nymphs was on one of the peaks of Cithaeron, facing the summer sunsets, and in it there was also an oracle in former days, as they say, and many of the natives were possessed of the oracular power, and these were called *nympholepti*, or "nymph-possessed." (Loeb translation)

But it is a prophecy more in the Hebrew manner than the Greek, leading to theophany. The poem, in fact, contains two divine epiphanies, in identical terms but to very different effect, and its energy comes to be directed toward the maintenance of the rapture of divine communion, toward somehow sustaining it — an enterprise already suggested when the poet echoed Shelley's questioning of Intellectual Beauty in the last line of the first stanza: "Ah, why should an hour that is heaven for an hour pass hence?"

If, though, we think of the poem-as-oracle as being more Hebraic than Greek, the expression of the divine epiphanies is rather clearly Hellenic. E. R. Dodds, in his edition of *The Bacchae* of Euripides, makes useful observations in this connection. He points out that, with the Greeks, "a supernatural light may accompany the epiphany of any god,"¹³ adding that this seems to have been especially associated with the cult of Dionysus. Again: "Stillness is the traditional response of nature to a divine epiphany."¹⁴ These comments are made in connection with the epiphany of Dionysus toward the end of the play, when he appears to command his maenads to destroy Pentheus. This is reported in lines that Dodds gives as follows:

And as the voice [of the god] spoke these words, a light of awful fire was set betwixt heaven and earth. The high air went still, and the woody glade held its leaves in stillness, and you could not have heard the cry of any beast.¹⁵

Dodds remarks of these last lines that they "describe wonderfully the hush of nature at the moment when the pent-up forces of the supernatural break through."¹⁶ In Swinburne's poem we find such expressions as "the silence trembles with passion of sound suppressed" (st. 8, l. 1), or "the whole wood feels thee, the whole air fears thee" (st. 14, l. 1).

In "A Nympholept," the poet has been responding to the silence and light from the beginning, but at two points silence and light, while never being other than natural sensations, are apprehended in such a way that they may be taken as signs of the presence of a supernatural — or divine — being. This might seem perfectly natural to a reader who could draw on passages such as the one just cited from *The Bacchae*, a play whose "power and fineness" Swinburne acknowledged,¹⁷ in spite of his professed dislike of Euripides.

Earlier in the play, furthermore, Dionysus had characterized himself as both terrible and kindly, in the manner of Swinburne's Pan, and the play gives powerful expression to the role of Dionysus as — in Dodds's words — the "Master of Life,"¹⁸ a vegetation god whose mother Semele was surmised by ancient scholars to be Mother Earth.

It is in the thirteenth stanza of "A Nympholept" that, as the poet liturgically puts it, he "receives" the God: "The naked noon is upon me: the fierce dumb spell" of what Dodds, with reference to Dionysus, calls "psychic invasion":¹⁹

Is it love, is it dread, that enkindles the trembling noon,
That yearns, reluctant in rapture that fear has fed,
As man for woman, as woman for man/ Full soon

12. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, three vols., ed. William Smith (London, 1867), III, 106.
13. E. R. Dodds, ed., *Euripides: Bacchae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 213.
14. Same.
15. Same.

16. Same.
17. Cecil Y. Lang, ed., *The Swinburne Letters*, six vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), IV, 277n.
18. Dodds, xx.
19. Dodds, p. 172.

Shall the ear that hears not a leaf quake hear his tread,
The sense that knows not the sound of the deep day's tune
Receive the God, be it love that he brings or dread.
(st. 12)

The naked noon is upon me: the fierce dumb spell,
The fearful charm of the strong sun's imminent might,
Unmerciful, steadfast, deeper than seas that swell,
Pervades, invades, appals me with loveless light.
(st. 13, ll. 1-4)

The next thirteen stanzas constitute, in a kind of hymn, an act of faith in the manifest god in whom fear is changed to delight. After an explicit echo of the eighth psalm (sts. 22-23), the poet affirms that his dignity, and that of humanity as a whole, lies in the fact that one's "soul [has] strength to conceive and perceive . . . Pan." Though he cannot claim to know "what" the being is, he professes that if we remain, as he puts it, "steadfast" in the faith, "Perchance we may find thee and know thee at last for God." Zophar the Naamathite had assured Job (Job 11:15) that if he cultivated a proper humility he would indeed "be stedfast [sic], and [should] not fear." And the seventy-eighth psalm is very clear as to what happens to those who are *not* "steadfast" in their relations with divinity. This is the human steadfastness which meets the "steadfast" nature of the god encountered in stanza thirteen (l. 3), and which is the basis of his hope for sustained communion with the god.

The rest of the poem is an unbroken train of thought, moving firmly and densely. It presents, to begin with, two problems that a satisfactory deity must be able to resolve: it must offer means of coming to terms with both the terrible aspects of our experience and with mutability ("Sleep, change, and death," st. 27, l. 4). "A Nympholept," in consequence, can be thought of as an attempt to conjure the god who is both its object and its source to shape it in the form of theodicy.

Fidelity to Pan was an attempt to deal with both issues, but in stanzas twenty-seven and twenty-eight the relation to the one God Pan dissolves almost instantly in a sense that in Pan the quality of terror is too great to be assimilated. A gentler deity is needed, and — perhaps partly as a result of changes in light inside the grove — such a being appears: the nymph of the title of the poem, who has the same qualities as Pan, but in feminine form. She is, in effect, Pan — now in a gentler mode. (The Christian analogue is unmistakable.) And once again we have the light and silence of divine epiphany:

Above and behind [the nymph] the noon and the woodland lie
Terrible, radiant with mystery, superb and subdued,
Triumphant in silence . . . (st. 30, ll. 1-3)
yea, but the shadow itself is bright
That the light clothes round with love that is one
with fear. (st. 29, ll. 6-7)

For all the similarities in detail and in actual language to the manifestation of Dionysus described earlier, we are at

the site of a very different epiphany from that of the blood-thirsty god of the maenad-haunted vale of Cithaeron. Swinburne is recalling — by way of his own "Athens: an Ode" (pub. 1882) — Sophocles' description of the epiphany that called Oedipus to his death at Colonus, in the Grove of the Furies. This, while it inspires awe, is beyond question beneficent.

In "Athens: an Ode" Swinburne had conflated the account of the exquisite beauty of the grove, as developed in Sophocles' Colonus Ode, with the messenger's account of the translation of Oedipus. We hear (Ant. 3) of a grove "Where a godhead known and unknown makes men pale." In this place,

the fearful gods look gentler than our fear,
And the grove thronged through with birds of holiest feather
Grows nor pale nor dumb with sense of dark things near.

Plato had asserted that Pan was speech, and a speech that said everything by virtue of his own inclusive nature. By a natural theological extension, all being may be said to echo his word, and the poet's word gives expression to the yearnings of a nature otherwise inarticulate. The yearning is clearly for that fulfilment in the divine that only the poet's voice can confer. But for all the inspired, rhapsodic quality of Swinburne's verse, his poem is highly argumentative. It moves from point to point like a monologic version of a Platonic dialogue. It is almost as if Swinburne were validating his claim to be a poet philosopher as postulated in the *Phaedrus*.

Phaedrus concludes with a celebrated invocation to Pan, in which Socrates prays:

Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give
me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward
man be at one.²⁰

Such wholeness of being, as I have insisted, is fundamental to our very experience of "A Nympholept." The heady sensuality of the language leads us along an intricate path of argumentation which is inseparable from the poet's continued sensuous contact with his surroundings and from an acute consciousness of his own responses. This process comes to a head in the final seven stanzas, and the course of the experience-argument must be followed closely.

While stanza 33 continues his rapturous celebration of his "constant" nymph (st. 29, l. 6) in the preceding stanzas, it ends with the ominous question: "And yet may I dream that I dream not indeed of this?" The reply comes at once that the vision may well be only a temporary organic response, and that mortality cannot by its nature have contact with the divine:

An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of birth,
Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that beat
And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,
May not hear surely the fall of immortal feet . . .
(st. 34, ll. 1-4)

20. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, (n. 3), p. 282.

But this awareness of the limitations of one's own organic life does not lead, in an ascetic (or "Platonic") way, to rejection of it for an hypothetical divine, but instead turns the attention to what life in the flesh does offer: "And [in effect "But"] here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth."

This non-visionary, de-mythologized approach to the natural world receives a stanza and a half of celebration corresponding to that earlier elicited by the vision of the nymph. But he has no more that claimed confidently that "No more I crave of earth or her kindred skies" (st. 36, l. 4) than he turns on himself with "No more?", and the transience here deplored is not in himself but in that nature in which he was investing so heavily: its value depends on meteorological conditions. So in a startling reversal he returns to the visionary nymph, understood now in a way that satisfies the demands.

Having been let down, that is, by both visionary and non-visionary approaches, he returns to a modified form of the visionary hypothesis, shifting the emphasis from the apprehension of an objective natural world to a stress on the human, organic capacities that make "apprehension" of any kind possible. The one element common to all of these experiences, both of "supernatural" epiphany and of the de-mythologized joys of earth, would be our sense of our own continuing organic life, in both sensory and mental forms.

The conclusion is that some form of myth is necessary, but that it must be of a special kind. The spirit to be contemplated has no name. Even more than Keats's Pan in *Endymion*, she is "An Unknown - but no more!" (l. 302). As in the case of Keats's Pan, to be more (a personal deity) would be to be less; limited by definite identity, rendered abstract by transcendence, and attached to a sect. She is, in other words, a fiction, an organizing principle in which human thoughts and feelings can be focused and take shape, which inexhaustibly offers the possibilities of form without compelling any one to be adopted.

This echoes Plato's saying that Pan *is* (not represents) speech. Taken strictly, when one speaks, Pan is. It is like that aspect of Athena who *is*, one may feel, the thinking of Odysseus, or Aphrodite when one thinks of her as *being* the passion of Paris and Helen. It is much as Psyche *is* the mental activity of John Keats, and at least potentially of the rest of us as well.²¹

So he returns to the nymph with a solemn *Te igitur*: "Thee, therefore, thee would I come to, cleave to," because of the sense that is given of a permanence

throughout all natural changes, making it possible to give natural mutability its full aesthetic value. He would now be steadfast ("cleave") to what he conceives as an

Unknown sweet spirit, whose vesture is soft in spring,
In summer splendid, in autumn pale as the wood
That shudders and wanes and shrinks as a shamed thing
should,
In winter bright as the mail of a war-worn king
Who stands where foes fled far from the face of him
stood. (st. 37, ll. 3-9)

In this vision, all seasons shall be sweet to us.

Recalling (but amending) the apostolic assurance that "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18), the poet asks (st. 38, ll. 1-2):

My spirit or thine is it, breath of thy life or of mine,
Which fills my sense with a rapture that casts out fear?

The question is, of course, rhetorical, since the experience is one of ennobling interchange. The experience indeed is possible only by virtue of the fact that both the vision and the poet are "earth-born":

Earth-born, or mine eye were withered that sees, mine ear
That hears were stricken to death by the sense divine,
Earth-born I know thee: but heaven is about me here.
(st. 38, ll. 5-7)

And with fear cast out by rapture, Pan returns in his own person, "transformed" when "all" is experienced under the aspect of the Nymph (st. 38, ll. 3-4).

Earth and heaven are united here as in the person of Plato's Pan, and all is made articulate in the speech which is Pan also. So one may conclude with the quiet but assured assertion: "And nought is all, as am I, but a dream of thee."

While this sounds almost Hindu in its formulation, it is specifically not "a dream of thine" (as in the creative dream of Vishnu), but "of thee." It is only in dreaming of the nymph, understood in the way described, that anything is. The line has been less tormented in print than the final lines of the "Grecian Urn" only because fewer people have read the poem and discussed it for publication. But in terms of the understanding of the poem that has been developed here, it would refer to the status of the nymph as a kind of "supreme fiction." It is the form of our experience of the world. The Pan of the *Cratylus* who is both all and speech is now manifest in "A Nympholept."²²

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21. Cf. the following description of Pater's use of myth by Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), p. 100:

For Pater the myths expressed something . . . akin to existential images of perennial needs and aspirations of human beings. Their lack of historical basis made them all the more directly relevant. Although the gods of Greece may have vanished, the human imagination that had given them birth and sustained their life remained. Furthermore, the myths themselves remained as witnesses of the capacity of the imagination to address the spiritual needs of finite human beings and to foster the con-

ditions of an ideal art appropriate to such beings. Turner could almost be paraphrasing Keats's "Ode to Psyche." Cf. Jowett on the theory of language in the *Cratylus*:

Language is an aspect of man, of nature, and of nations, *the transfiguration of the world in thought* the meeting-point of the physical and the mental sciences, and also the mirror in which they are reflected, an effect and partly a cause of our common humanity, present at every moment to the individual, and yet having a sort of eternal or universal existence.

B. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, four vols. (New York: Scribner, 1871), I, 617 (my emphasis).

The Victorian Nightmare of Evolution: Charles Darwin and Walter Bagehot

Martha Westwater

Slow though the process of selection may be, . . . I can see no limit to the amount of change, to the beauty and complexity of the coadaptations between all organic beings, . . . which may have been effected in the long course of time through nature's power of selection, that is by the survival of the fittest. (*Origin of Species*)

Both Walter Bagehot and Charles Darwin were fascinated by the process of change, and both were among the first Victorians to question the idea of progress. Both emphasized the necessity of time in any development, and both agreed (Bagehot, perhaps more arrogantly than Darwin) that the Englishman of the mid-Victorian period was the fittest to survive.

Carefully optimistic, the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin held out the hope that a future, better world with better men was possible. Most liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century (Mill, Spencer, and Meredith, for example) embraced Darwin's new scientific era, rejoiced over science's rescue of the spirit from religion, and submitted calmly to the eternal process moving onwards. An oft-neglected thinker who looked on the darker side of evolutionary thought was Walter Bagehot.

For Bagehot, author of *The English Constitution* (1867) and *Physics and Politics* (1871), the theory of evolution bolstered a growing conservatism which represented an innate urge to insist both on the continuity of time and of the slow change which govern the disparate elements of life. More than any of his contemporaries, Bagehot stressed the time necessary for spirit to evolve from blood and brain. Evolution imbued Bagehot with an indomitable respect for gradualism and convinced him that natural growth is always slow. Darwin's theory acted as a brake to Bagehot's liberalism, which began to waver only with the passage of the Second Reform Bill (1867), by which, he thought, the reign of mobocracy had begun. In his opinion the leadership of the few was a safer way of insuring liberty than allowing inexperienced hordes to practice leadership. Progress was capricious. Brilliant advancements could be followed by false moves leading mankind into dark corners; the slightest advancement was liable to be destroyed by some mysterious atavism — some strange recurrence to a primitive past.¹

This nightmare of reversion into barbarism haunted Bagehot and colored his two major works, *Physics and Politics* and *The English Constitution*. Evolutionary theory threw into even greater relief the unhappy truth

that men were not equal: "The most strange fact, though the most certain in nature, is the unequal development of the human race" (*TEC* 207). He distrusted swift or violent action fearing that wildness and violence would lead to extinction. Only the tamed in nature and society are preserved (*P&P* 47). And the lower classes must be tamed by their betters — the "select few" (*TEC* 378). No one realized better than Bagehot the awe evoked by Queen Victoria. Disastrous would it be when there was no reverence paid to one's betters. Negativism was the abyss into which Bagehot plummeted in his evil dreams of a democratic future. No jeremiads did he address to his age but Bagehot, the "bald-headed man at the back of the omnibus," was terrified by the tempest in the distance, by the nightmare of impending chaos.

Charles Darwin's thought pervades all Walter Bagehot's writings on evolution. Darwin's study was so painstaking, so thorough, and was strengthened by such a vast amount of research that it transformed a mere speculation into a new science. And that new science, according to Bagehot, would have repercussions on the entire spectrum of human knowledge:

These are the sort of doctrines with which, under the name of 'natural selection' in physical science, we have become familiar; and as every great scientific conception tends to advance its boundaries and to be of use in solving problems not thought of when it was started, so here, what was put forward for mere animal history may, with a change of form, but an identical essence, be applied to human history. (*P & P* 42)

Thus, the theory of evolution had illuminated in Bagehot's mind the prominence of the past in prognosticating the future and the need for gradualism in effecting change. His interpretation of civilization's progress was not only biological but also psychological, emphasizing man's fondness for the familiar and his distrust of the different — restraining forces which reduced the risk of frenzied haste in mankind's inexorable drive forward.

The transferring of Malthus's idea to biology had been a stroke of genius on Darwin's part, and Darwin gave full credit to Malthus:

. . . as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the physical conditions of life. It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms . . .²

1. Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* from *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, ed. by Norman St. John-Stevan, 8 vols. (London: The Economist Press, 1974), p. 141. All subsequent references to Bagehot's works in the paper are from this edition and will be cited: *Physics and Politics*, Vol. VII, as *P & P*, and *The English Consti-*

tution, Vol. V, as *TEC*, both followed by page number.
2. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, Intro. Sir Julian Huxley (New York and Toronto: The New American Library [A Mentor book], 1958), p. 75. All further references to this work appear in the text and are cited as *O of S* followed by page number.

But of comparable brilliance was Bagehot's bringing back into the social sciences the concept which Darwin seized upon in Malthus. In *Physics and Politics*, or "thoughts on the application of the principles of 'Natural Selection' and 'Inheritance' to 'political society,'" the first three words are clearly an alliterative metonymy, "physics" standing for the physical sciences as a whole and "politics" for the social sciences.³ And Darwin did not fail to note the significance of Bagehot's "remarkable series of articles on 'Physics and Politics' in the 'Fortnightly Review,' Nov. 1867; April 1, 1868; July 1, 1869." The three papers are cited with evident approval in *The Descent of Man*.⁴

In *Physics and Politics* Bagehot shows how he trusts the ultimate sanity of human nature and shares the progressive belief that man will make "nicer music from finer cords" (P & P 21.) Nevertheless, he insists initially on the restraining forces of morality, stability, and antiquity to forge "the 'connective tissue' of civilisation" (P & P 21). Man is not born either virtuous or vicious, rather, with a capacity for both; but to the extent that each generation "hoards" its moral "energy" and develops its ethical standards, the greater will be the result of their "silent toil" in the next generation (P & P 22). Through slow development man himself has become an antiquity from which future generations will study and learn. Following Darwin, Bagehot believed science would unearth secrets of man's past development and his continuous adaptation, albeit a Victorian's view into the past was, at best, murky. Darwin had noted:

We see nothing of these slow changes in progress, until the hand of time has marked the lapse of ages, and then, so imperfect is our view into long-past geological ages, that we see only that the forms of life are now different from what they formerly were. (O of S 90-91).

Growth never rushed. Explosive changes in society were as dangerous as violent changes in biology. Evolution vastly extended the time frame of history. Bagehot could have had no idea of future cellular research, but intuitively he felt the more abrupt the change any mutation produced, the greater the chance that it would bring harm to an organism. Society must alter, but slow change was the essence of its alteration.

Even more penetratingly, the *Origin of Species* impressed on him Darwin's belief in the conservative role of natural selection. Every species of animal and plant contains some individuals which, by heredity, are better fitted than their fellows to survive. Natural selection protects the "good" variants from being lost by eliminating the individuals which carry the "bad" or disadvantageous counterpart before they can mate:

... natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and

insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life. (O of S 90)

Thus, natural selection has a predominant, conservative role. Darwin's notation of the preserving as well as the creating factor in the development of new species profoundly impressed Bagehot and can be caught in his qualified concepts of "verifiable progress" (P & P 135), "conservative innovation" (P & P 64) and "animated moderation" (P & P 142).

In *Physics and Politics* Bagehot outlined the three stages in social evolution: the preliminary or race-making age, the age of custom or the nation-making age, and the final, golden age of discussion. The process of natural selection obliterated those weak nations which have not been able to achieve a cohesive unity through law, "rigid, definite, concise law" (P & P 28). Once unity and stability are achieved, however, only those people will progress who do not obstruct knowledge and free discussion. According to Bagehot the greatest difficulty lay in progressing from the nation-making stage to the age of discussion. Clearly, for him, men must be led into the golden age of discussion cautiously — and by the fittest leaders. The "fittest" governing body contains the most "mixed" minds, i.e., independent, original minds. Progress can be achieved only "in those happy cases where the force of legality has gone far enough to bind the nation together, but not far enough to kill out all varieties and destroy nature's perpetual tendency to change." (P & P 54).

Throughout *Physics and Politics* Bagehot stresses ordered progress, the necessity of time in normal development and the role of the past as mankind's preceptor. Furthermore, he believes that evolution has a stabilizing effect in nature and in society; in nature by equalizing, for example, the number and efficiency of carnivores that prey on herbivores which, in turn, crop the grass. As a result, any fluctuation in the abundance of any of these organisms is compensated by changes in the other, and an equilibrium is reached. Bagehot holds no illusions about the natural process. Nature is not always benign to man nor man immune to its terrors; rather nature, to Bagehot as to Darwin, is always an "indifferent" benefactor:

We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings are destroyed by birds of prey; we do not always bear in mind, that though food may be now superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year. (O of S 74)

As a result of conflict, between creatures in nature and beings in society, there comes improvement or progress in the Bagehotian view. Nature, to Darwin, and society, to

3. See Thomas Cowles' seminal article, "Malthus, Darwin and Bagehot: A Study in the Transference of a Concept," *Isis*, XXVI, (March 1937), 345-346.

4. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1896), p. 130. Darwin also refers to Bagehot on p. 117.

Bagehot, provide challenges to which the species responds by adaptive modifications. If the response is made, the adaptive faculty is strengthened; if not, it declines and atrophies. Man's adaptation to an indifferent nature can therefore be his source of stability.

In this way the species is in constant conflict with the environment. Just as some birds have lost the power to fly because the islands they inhabited were "tenanted by no beast of prey" (*O of S* 133), and there was no need to struggle, so man might lose his powers if there were no conflict. Life, as Bagehot saw it, always had an ugly side; so did man. The world was not always bright and beautiful, but it was the only one man had. In all tests for survival, there was a potential good — even in such horrors as slavery and war.

But slavery and war bring on their own punishments. The "momentary gain is bought at a ruinous after-cost" (*P & P* 59). War and slavery generate mere surface virtues which are not the highest. Values such as "valour, veracity, the spirit of obedience, the habit of discipline" are what Bagehot terms "preliminary virtues" (*P & P* 60). The point which Bagehot makes, however, is that so long as war and slavery are the *main* occupations of nations, the inhabitants are not allowed the advantage of semi-free discussion which is "necessary to break the thick crust of custom . . ." (*P & P* 55). Thus the age of conflict had its consolations for Bagehot as it had for Darwin in the sense "that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply" (*O of S* 86).

Bagehot's analysis of war and slavery as provisional institutions in the development of societies unmasks his belief in the principle of natural inequality. Slavery and war are modes by which one class (or state) acquires superiority over another. Natural inequality necessitates classes because of man's persecuting and imitating tendencies: "New forces will impinge upon us . . . and we must alter to meet them. But the persecuting habit and the imitative combine to insure that the new thing shall be in the old fashion . . ." (*P & P* 77).

In *Physics and Politics* Bagehot argued that an imitable elite was indispensable for unity and progress, but he was less than optimistic about the numbers of the elite: "Though a few gifted people may advance much, the mass of each generation can improve but very little on the generation which preceded it" (*P & P* 141). He had already shown his contempt for the masses in his first installment of *The English Constitution* (May 15, 1865). In this work, which headlined the beginning of *The Fortnightly Review*, he had unequivocally asserted that: "The principle of popular government is that the supreme power, the determining efficacy in matters political, resides in the people — not necessarily or commonly in the whole people, in the numerical majority, but in a chosen people, a picked and selected people" (*TEC* 222). Class equality was not only nonsense to Bagehot; it was nightmarish nonsense causing him to exclaim: "I am exceedingly afraid of the ignorant multitude of the new

constituencies . . ." (*TEC* 177).

The existence of natural inequality might be offensive to man's concept of justice, but evolution made the unlovely truth an indisputable fact. Mill, Ruskin, Spencer — even Arnold — had more optimistic ideas about the time element necessary in the evolution of an articulate, individualistic voter from a deferential, uncritical laborer. Bagehot had a more pessimistic view:

There used to be a notion — not so much widely asserted as deeply implanted . . . that in a little while, perhaps ten years or so, all human beings might, without extraordinary appliances, be brought to the same level. But now, when we see by the painful history of mankind at what point we began, . . . when we realise the tedium of history and the painfulness of results — our perceptions are sharpened as to the relative steps of our long and gradual progress. (*TEC* 207)

In Bagehot's view the working class was still "narrow-minded, unintelligent and incurious" (*TEC* 208) woefully ill-prepared to assume the responsibilities of self-government. This being the fact, they must be persuaded to continue paying deference to their betters. Bagehot raised the pivotal question: would the new voters "defer . . . to wealth and rank, and to the higher qualities of which these are the rough symbols and the common accompaniments?" (*TEC* 170). Wealth and class were to Bagehot the sacraments of the polity — outward signs of an inward, invisible grace. What Bagehot wanted was the rule of an elite maintained by popular deference. For this reason the dignified parts of government (Monarchy and the House of Lords) were necessary to impress the masses and capture political power, while the efficient part (House of Commons) was necessary to use power to rule the masses.

At all costs, the aristocracy, with its attendant rank, must be retained. Rank creates tradition and the pageantry of pomp. The brilliance of Bagehot's analysis in *The English Constitution* lies in his making his contemporaries realize that the "dignified" parts of the constitution were as vital as the "efficient" parts. It is the "dignified" parts which "excite" the most easy reverence (*TEC* 209). The pageantry of royalty was just as useful in politics as the brilliance of flowers in nature. Darwin had already elucidated the utility of beauty:

. . . we may conclude that the structure of every living creature either now is or was formerly, of some direct or indirect use to its possessor . . . [The beauty of the holly berry] serves merely as a guide to birds and beasts, in order that the fruit may be devoured and the matured seeds disseminated. (*O of S* 185-6).

"That which is mystic in its claims . . . occult in its mode of actions . . . brilliant to the eye . . . that which . . . is seen vividly for a moment, and then is seen no more . . . this, howsoever its form may change, or however we may define it or describe it, is the sort of thing — the only sort — which yet comes home to the mass of men" (*TEC* 209). Mystery animates tradition, and human nature is most easily impressed by that which is handed down.

Because men "are governed by the weakness of their imaginations" (*TEC* 226), Bagehot sees a magnetic power

in the awe generated by the "ancient show" of imposing personages. What he stresses as an important function of the monarchy is its catering to the needs of the "vacant many." Theatrical elements are the embodiments of the greatest human ideas and as such they "excite the most easy reverence" (TEC 209). There are "whole classes," he writes, "unable to feel the least attachment to impersonal laws" (TEC 229), but they can understand the power to rule which the monarchy represents:

A family on the throne is an interesting idea also. It brings down the pride of sovereignty to the level of petty life. No feeling could seem more childish than the enthusiasm of the English at the marriage of the Prince of Wales. [Remember the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, 1981.] . . . The women – one half of the human race at least – care fifty times more for a marriage than a ministry. . . . Just so a royal family sweetens politics Accordingly, so long as the human heart is strong and the human reason weak, royalty will be strong because it appeals to diffused feeling, and Republics weak because they appeal to the understanding. (TEC 229).

This passage might be taken as proof of Bagehot's aristocratic snobbishness and his contempt for the intellectual and political incapacity of the populace, but at the same time, does it not bring down "the pride of sovereignty to the level of petty life?" Does he not elsewhere speak of the "retired widow" and her "unemployed son"? Bagehot minimizes the intellectual differences and bridges the social barriers between the "family on the throne" and the family in the street by appealing to those natural feelings, the "facts which speak to men's bosoms." It is the pleasing illusion of the "nice and pretty events" which makes obedience easy and power mild. The illusion is necessary to mollify the truth that in government, as in nature, "one species incessantly takes advantage of and profits by, the structures of others" (O of S 186).

Bagehot understood the tyranny of greed in a growing democracy. Self-interest is the law of survival in nature, and will be so in government unless constantly restrained. He attempted to convince his readers in his section on the House of Lords that the nobility ("the symbol of mind" TEC 262) preserves the lower classes from the idolatry of wealth: "The common peasantry will listen to his [poor squire's] nonsense more submissively than to the new [rich] man's sense" (TEC 262). Despite democracy's levelling process in which "the aristocracy live in fear of the middle classes – of the grocer and the merchant" (TEC 276), ugly differences between the classes remained. But what Bagehot subtly suggested was that society, like nature, required its hosts and parasites. Some parasites destroy their hosts, and others, as modern science has demonstrated, manufacture some of the vitamins needed by the host.⁵ Nature and society both require cooperation and tolerance. In England the lower cater to the upper

class but the upper – notably the House of Lords – curbs the worship of riches, "the obvious and natural idol of the Anglo Saxon" (TEC 263). The House of Commons, on the other hand, informs the nation of the grievances of the lower classes.

Commons, therefore, needs a variety of minds with a variety of ideas. Evolution alleged that "the modified descendants of any one species will succeed so much the better if they become more diversified in structure and are thus enabled to encroach on places occupied by other beings" (O of S 114). Each class in society has its own concepts and its own needs. It is the informing function of Commons to bring before the nation these ideas and grievances. Commons needs, then, a variety of minds – "of minds which attend to the means, and of minds which attend to the end" (TEC 331).

Darwin's theories made Bagehot realize that a new age had dawned. Its existence was a fact. He paid meet tribute to the new scientific era, but it is a frightened tribute. Bagehot had the hideous nightmare that man, caught in such a violent tidal wave as the new democracy, would perish. "The mass of uneducated men could not now in England be told 'go to, choose your rulers'; they would go wild; their imaginations would fancy unreal dangers, and the attempt at election would issue in some forcible usurpation" (TEC 369). For Bagehot, then, it was legitimate to use the monarchy as a means of staving off the element of irrationality in man which he felt would destroy civilization in the onrush of total democracy. Precipitous haste would be disastrous to any genuine progress because haste usually leads to violence. Men "are so eager for action only because they have inherited from the earlier simpler and more violent ages, an excessive predisposition to action"⁶

Because Bagehot was consistently aware of the ambiguities in himself, he realized that societies share with individuals the difficulty of defining the duality of their existence. There were too many risks that passion would overthrow reason in giving political power to the majority of the lower classes in the Reform Bill of 1867. Darwin's insistence on slow change in the evolutionary process made Bagehot apprehensive that the uneducated masses of lower-class voters would be flattered too quickly into power: "Vox populi will be vox diaboli if it is worked in this manner" (TEC 174). He was excessively fearful of unqualified democracy. With Burke Bagehot believed in an elite and concurred with him that "some decent pre-eminence, some preference (not exclusive appropriation) given to birth, is neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic."⁷ The gifted were few; the masses were incapable of rapid improvement. Even if human nature could become "better tamed, more calm, more capable of civilization . . . than the one before it . . . such inherited improvements are always slow and dubious" (P & P 141).

5. L. C. Dunn and Theodosius Dobzhansky, *Heredity, Race and Society* (New York: The New American Library, 1963), pp. 68-69.

6. Mrs. Russell Barrington, ed., *The Works and Life of Walter Bagehot*, 10 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915),

"Memoir," I, 23.

7. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on Revolution in France*, vol. 2 of *Select Works*, ed. by E. J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878), 61.

Again and again Bagehot cried out against precipitous haste which caused so much evil – evil that could have been spared mankind, if those who thought they were doing good “had not inherited from their barbarous forefathers a wild passion for instant action” (*P & P* 124). The

natural selection of the favored few and the painfully slow progress of human development caused Walter Bagehot’s nightmares of evolution.

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Supposed Confessions, Uttered Thoughts: The First-Person Singular in Tennyson’s Poetry

Timothy Peltason

The suppression of the first person singular in most of Tennyson’s early poems might be read as yet another confirmation of the human separateness that is the overt theme of so many of these poems. Standing offstage, the poet is another isolated and enclosed figure, addressing the world only indirectly, through character, setting, poetic device, and not in a language of direct expression. It is only after the death of Arthur Hallam that Tennyson emerges to speak for himself in his poems and to speak directly about how difficult direct speech is. But for the more experienced writer the distance between speech and experience is one form only of the obstinate distance between reach and grasp that defines the insufficiency of mortal life. The poem may begin in a complaint against language, but it must end elsewhere if its own language is to avail. Comparing two first-person poems by Tennyson, one written before the death of Hallam and one after, we can register an important shift in the relation of the speaking self to its own language and in the poet’s sense of what his language might accomplish.

“Break, break, break,” written just after Arthur Hallam’s death, is at once a highly wrought and a frankly expressive poem. But simple self-expression is not enough for the poet who had discovered a greater problem than his own self-conscious isolation, who has discovered indeed that this isolation was a luxurious fiction. Under the pressure of adult experience, the language of “Break, break, break” places its author in the world in a new way for Tennyson and records the rising up of a particular thought out of an imaginatively realized human drama.

Quite another sort of drama – a melodrama, really – is offered by the poem “Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind Not In Unity With Itself,” which appeared in Tennyson’s first adult volume, the *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* of 1830. Garrulously and explicitly concerned with the condition of the Romantic self in the world, “Supposed Confessions” does provide a useful and fascinating map to the psychological doctrine of Tennyson’s early poetry and of its period, and it repays attention. But the borrowed poetic diction of “Supposed Confessions,” warped only slightly by Tennyson’s own distinctive sensibility, is an evidence of his failure to examine and transform his subject, to make more than a

peculiar and yet an exemplary case out of the sensitive mind whose dilemma the poem intimately records. A cautionary exception to Tennyson’s rule of reticence in his early poems, “Supposed Confessions” reveals the psychological and aesthetic dangers of an automatic expressiveness that enjoys too easily its freedom from the mediation of fable or fiction.

After its first publication, “Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind Not in Unity With Itself,” was withdrawn by Tennyson from his subsequent volumes and re-published only in 1884 with the last five words of its title dropped. In spite of the several crude disclaimers of the poem’s title, the relationship between Tennyson and his speaker was clearly both intimate and confused, and one imagines that Tennyson was reluctant to sponsor the frank religious scepticism of the poem or to own up to its psychological instability. Even at the poem’s first appearance, he made the formal distinction of the title between the second-rate mind and his own, whatever thoughts the two minds might have had in common. The self that speaks the poem is denied authority at the outset.

This challenge to authority matters less, however, than the challenge to integrity, the self-division announced in the poem’s title and manifested throughout. This self-expressive poem expresses a self in evident and terrible disrepair. The poem begins in a moment of apparent crisis:

O God! my God! have mercy now.
I faint, I fall.

But the crisis is never resolved, because no resolution is imaginable. The speaker, in an epistemological panic, can see no end to his suffering. Oppressed by his guilt, he must nevertheless confess a continuing need to know and, at the same time, its inevitable frustration:

-That even now,
In this extremest misery
Of ignorance, I should require
A sign! and if a bolt of fire
Would rive the slumbrous summer noon
While I do pray to Thee alone,
Think my belief would stronger grow!

This passage illuminates also the poem's characteristic mode of irony, not by any means a controlled sarcasm, but an inability to control and stabilize meaning. So deeply and perfectly divided is this mind that it cannot make its language mean any one thing. The speaker's shame at requiring a sign does not for moment suspend the urgency of his request. Nor are we convinced by his knowing scepticism in the lines that follow. Mocking his own belief that such a sign would restore faith, the speaker does not cease believing or cease craving whatever certitude could be gained from some supernatural display.

Both a fervent prayer and a prolonged whistle in the dark, the poem sincerely believes in and sincerely doubts the existence of the God it addresses. Thus each naming of that God reveals the characteristic double think of this speaker's "double nature" (175). Protestations of faith or of doubt immediately call forth their opposites, and at the poem's close the speaker is still caught in the maddened alternation of doubt and faith:

Ay me! I fear
All may not doubt, but everywhere
Some must clasp Idols. Yet, my God,
Whom call I Idol!

(177-80)

After a proud and lengthy account of his method of doubt, the speaker comes up against its logical conclusion and immediately reverses field. Yet once again the rhetorical gesture carries a double significance. "Whom call I Idol?" simultaneously apologizes for scepticism and dares to imply the further question, "Just who is there?"

The speaker has been led to this impasse by the momentum of his own language, and from the opening ejaculation to the despairing curse of the last line – "O damned vacillating state!" – he is less the agent than the driven object of his own agitated impulses. Hurried along by the frantic need to know and doomed by the impossibility of certain knowledge, the speaker cannot bring himself to rest. He began this career of doubt as an exercise in intellectual freedom, but now that he finds "The joy I had in my free will/All cold, and dead," (16-17), he finds also that free will itself is denied him. He has willed himself into this spiritual chaos, but cannot will himself out of it because there is something, some given fact of character that underlies and cripples the conscious will.

A spiritual and a linguistic problem coincide in the poem, and the speaker who cannot control his own frenzy of doubt fails also to impose upon his confessions the saving coherence of plot, of crisis followed even by an imagined or hoped-for resolution. The narrative changes course not in response to any guiding will or in pursuit of any goal, but erratically, often seeming, as in the case of "Idol" above, to be taken by surprise by its own words, shocked into some new train of thought. The unstable ironies, which reveal the self-divisions of the title, are not suspended, but rather institutionalized by the advance of the narrative, so that "O damned vacillating state" is only

a final complaint and not any final wisdom. The poem has not provided the speaker any of the potential therapies of self-expression; it has not reduced tension by releasing it or healed self-division by creating a unified self-portrait.

Yet it is something that the disarray of the speaker's language so perfectly reflects the disarray of his mind. The language of the poem succeeds admirably in putting before us the untidy and multiform operations of consciousness. The "sad incompetence of human speech" is not a subject matter here, and the speaker nowhere complains that words are inadequate or that they betray or fragment the experience they are called upon to represent. Indeed, the speaker and his language are one, but this achievement is overshadowed by the dilemma of their shared exile. The achieved continuity of self and language cannot be announced and celebrated until we ask what sort of existence as a self the speaker truly has. For his passage into language is, in fact, dangerously complete, and it is as if nothing remains on the other side of the barrier, or passageway, between language and experience.

Another look at the title reminds us that these are the confessions not of a whole being, but of a mind, and this disembodiment becomes the fundamental version of disunity. After the fainting and falling of line two and the early description of a "slumbrous summer noon" (11), the speaker never again alludes to his physical presence in a physical world. "Speaker" is the only name we can give him, because speech is his only action and his only mode of being. Language is less a cause than a symptom of existential difficulty, not a bodily property that obscures or obstructs the spirit, but a fact of self-consciousness and of the knowing separation of the self from the world.

Lamenting his own failures of faith, the speaker laments his isolation, his exclusion from a community:

Men pass me by:
Christians with happy countenances-
And children all seem full of Thee!
(19-21)

How sweet to have a common faith!
To hold a common scorn of death!
(33-34)

The faith that sustains and supports is a communal endeavor. Having asked earlier, "And what is left to me but Thou,/And faith in Thee," the speaker now reveals just how unstable that position was, for the individual who is alone with God and his faith will be alone as well with his doubt, undefended by the strength of numbers. Of course, the speaker's isolation may be merely the result and not the cause of his waning faith. Another passage, however, in which the speaker looks enviously at another community, suggests that the very process of becoming an individual is deeply implicated in this spiritual crisis.

Thrice happy state again to be
The trustful infant on the knee!
Who lets his rosy fingers play

About his mother's neck, and knows
 Nothing beyond his mother's eyes.
 They comfort him by night and day:
 They light his little life away;
 He hath no thought of coming woes;
 He hath no care of life or death.

(40-48)

Here is a second community from which the speaker feels himself excluded and a second form of self-division. Divided from himself in the present by the conflicting energies of doubt and faith, he is divided as well from a past self whose spirit was whole. This Wordsworthian retrospect discovers time as a field of loss and this discovery is itself a measure of the speaker's distance from the infant who had "no thought of coming woes." Between the thrice happy days of infancy and the suffering of the present, the speaker has become a conscious individual.

But if the discovery of isolation is precisely the discovery of identity, then it ought hardly to be the occasion of unmixed regret, and we can take a second, more critical look at the poem's strange image of infant beatitude. To say that the infant "knows nothing" violates context, but also captures the scorn that is mingled with envy throughout the passage. Any limits to knowledge will be suspicious in the account of a speaker whose "extremest misery" is a "misery of ignorance." The infant, protected from knowledge, is vulnerable to irony. The mother's eyes will not light his life "always," a word that does less to complete the picture of bliss than to expose a profound inability to imagine a state other than the present. Having no care of death may demonstrate an admirable Christian composure, but having no care of life verges on insensibility. The infant is hardly a self at all, and the speaker writes of him in the third person because it is impossible to sustain a sense of identity with a being that does not know itself as anything but an extension of the mother. If the speaker is all mind, this thrice happy infant is all animal body, no more conscious than the ox and the lamb whose mindless careers are evoked in a macabre and lyrical digression later in the poem.

But the infant does assume a peculiar and inhuman stature in the speaker's further description:

Scarce outward signs of joy arise,
 Because the Spirit of happiness
 And perfect rest so inward is:
 And loveth so his innocent heart,
 Her temple and her place of birth,
 Where she would ever wish to dwell,
 Life of the fountain there, beneath
 Its salient springs, and far apart,
 Hating to wander out on earth,
 Or breathe into the hollow air,
 Whose chillness would make visible
 Her subtil, warm, and golden breath,
 Which mixing with the infant's blood,
 Fulfils him with beatitude.

(49-62)

This is reminiscent of the language and imagery of "The Poet's Mind," another 1830 poem that describes an exotic landscape of inwardness, separated from the profane world. But crucial elements are omitted from this landscape and in the world of the unpublished infant poet there is no movement at all towards the world, no rising bird-song and no subterranean connection between the garden's fountain and the distant mountains. Perfect joy is perfect stillness, and the need of the self to go beyond itself, to emerge in any outward sign, would be the sign already of having fallen. The autonomous spirit of happiness will not breathe itself into the world, but mingles with the infant's blood. The happy self does not speak, the speaking self is not happy, and the compulsive speaker of the poem announces his dilemma with every word.

The language of this divided mind is the living form of its doubt, and the poem thus both describes and constitutes the wanderings of a spirit that has lost its way. Having emerged from ignorance into knowledge, from community to individuality, from silence into speech, this mind now finds itself coexistent with its speech, adrift in the atmosphere, a prayer directed at a God who may or may not be there. The original project called for doubt as the path to an improved faith, for an intellectual progress that would eventually replace the security of ignorance with the security of knowledge. This project has stalled, however, because once doubt was accepted as the principle of identity, identity itself became the subject of doubt. Purposeful movement has been abandoned, and the self has become a thing "void/Dark, formless, utterly destroyed" (121-22). These lines, like the passage from Coleridge's "Dejection" that they echo, document a loss of vital power, when what was deeply desired, now to quote Wordsworth, was "Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power" (*The Prelude*, 1850, V, 425). The joy of free will, of individual identity, is no longer a driving force, and this poem, like its near contemporary, Browning's *Pauline*, describes the directionless and failed career of Romantic self-consciousness.

Consciousness of self in "Supposed Confessions" is defined by consciousness of time, by the unappeasable hunger for knowledge, and by the needy and uncontrollable passage into speech. And like all of these symptoms, self-consciousness is itself both a part of the problem and an inevitable part of any solution. "There is one remedy," says Geoffrey Hartman in his essay on "Romanticism and Anti-Self-Consciousness," "of great importance which is almost co-terminous with art itself in the Romantic period . . . It seeks to draw the antidote to self-consciousness from consciousness itself. A way is to be found not to escape from or limit knowledge, but to convert it into an energy finer than intellectual."¹ But "Supposed Confessions" discovers no principle and no process of conversion, and this failure is both strategic and real, a key to the poem's doctrine and to its artistic limitations.

Standing outside his speaker only in the title, Tennyson

1. *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 299-300.

cannot transcend the imaginative limitations of the speaker's compulsive and defeatist self-abasement.

O God! my God! have mercy now.
I faint, I fall. Men say that Thou
Didst die for me, for such as *me*.
(1-3)

That emphatic "*me*" confesses shame at the mere fact of selfhood, yet the whole poem remains a gesture, however hopeless, in the direction of a re-integrated self. Giving over to the clearly limited narrator the immense linguistic power that is elsewhere the agent and evidence of Tennyson's control of his material, "Supposed Confessions" sets the limit to its own success. Although the poem remains entirely coherent and comprehensible as the expression of a sensitive and divided mind, it does too little to distinguish Tennyson from some generic product called "youthful Romanticism." It simply does not *sound* like Tennyson, as other less nakedly expressive poems of its volume do, poems in which the dilemma of isolate and morbid selfhood is displaced onto a fabulous or fictional protagonist and in which the language of the poet addresses this dilemma and does not just record it. In "Mariana" or "The Kraken" or "The Dying Swan," psychological interest and complication are concealed and suggested in a highly original language of sensuous particularity. The doctrine of "Supposed Confessions," though fascinating in occasional details and useful to the study of other poems by Tennyson, is unremarkable in its large outline. And the language of "Supposed Confessions" is the language of a nervous, tender, and extravagant self-regard. There is interest and value in a poem that transcribes so nearly and directly the running thoughts of its speaker, but the price of this directness is the admission that Tennyson comes no closer than his speaker to imagining an acceptable end to the quest of Romantic identity.

After the death of Arthur Hallam, a sense of the brokenness of experience no longer needs to be placed as the obsession of a second-rate mind, and the problems of living in time acquire a real and untheoretical force. At the same time, regression becomes a far greater temptation, as the past is associated not with mythical ignorance and innocence but with the presence of that Other who made experience whole. We may say simply that grief at Hallam's death overwhelmed all else and imperiously demanded expression. Yet even the earliest and most straightforward of these complaints are far more than "wild and wandering cries" (*In Memoriam*, Prologue). "Break, break, break," published in 1842, but probably written within three or four months of Hallam's death, appears often as the type of Tennyson's "simple eloquence,"² the pure expression of pure regret:

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!

2. Cleanth Brooks, "The Motivation of Tennyson's Weeper," *The Well Wrought Urn* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947), p. 175.

And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Eloquent simplicity there is here, but the speaker's powerful emotion has also been processed, incorporated into a larger structure of experience of which the poem itself is part. This is not just an immediate expression of grief, but a considered account of the human experience of grief and of the varieties of expression that may form a human response. Though the sense is immediately, almost magically, apprehensible, the verse is accomplishing a great deal.

The direct and compelling statement of the first stanza establishes the connection between grief and the need for self-expression. But the attempt to specify this connection comes up against several obscurities. What is the relation of the first statement in this stanza to the second? The "And" of line three leaves it unclear whether the sea's breaking waves are a model of the articulateness to which the speaker aspires or an image of his own disability. And just how disabled is he? The complaint of lines three and four seems desperately sincere, yet this very sincerity invites us to read ironically, to notice that the poet is, in fact, bringing forth the truths that inhabit his deepest being. Is he not receiving his wish even as he utters it?

I think not, because of the specific force that "utter" receives in comparison with the shouting and singing of the next stanza. The "O well" formula that introduces the two youthful figures is at once despairingly envious and dismissive. The poet envies them the luxury of heedlessness, but dismisses shouting and singing as sufficient only to their lesser needs. He can shout and sing, too, as his poem reveals, but he requires the shaped utterance of the tongue and not just the easy, animal expressiveness of heedless youth. Nor does he envy the sea its noisy repetitions, for as the poem's first lines show he can reproduce the effect handsomely. In fact, Tennyson was nowhere near the sea when he composed the poem, but in a Lincolnshire Lane on a spring morning.³ The poem does not contrast natural with human expression, but all the variety of sound effects of which Tennyson himself was master with the adequate speech that he now craves.

3. *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), II, 133.

The poem next follows the stately ships to their haven that is just out of view and leaves the reader wondering again what sort of work the connective "And" is doing. Are the ships, following from the youths of stanza two, merely another reminder of the world that goes on as before? Their directed movement suggests as much, but also introduces new matter to the poem, the reminder that life, too, is a journey that must come to its end. They serve thus as a model of natural truths both feared and desired, but the awful truth of mortality imposes itself on us without our control or direction, while the consoling truth that life goes on requires the will as its accomplice. The "would" of line three gave evidence of the speaker's will, but also of its frustration, and the serene progress of the ships mocks his own compulsion to repetition. He cannot emulate their progress, but must long for a return of things past. The poem itself reflects this desire in its rhymes and rhythms and in the last stanza's repetition of the hypnotic first line.

To discover more precisely what it is that the poem wants, one can range together its three overt laments: for the power of utterance, for the absent hand and voice, and for the day that is dead. The first and last of these are established in parallel position by the repetition of the emphatic "Break, break, break," and the other shares with them the same cadence of longing. Taken together, they form a suggestive catalogue of desire. The first, the desire for utterance, requires most attention and seems most out of place, for the other two rely on the play of presence and absence that is constitutive of elegy. The hand that cannot be grasped and the voice that cannot be heard will be important images of loss for *In Memoriam*. Here they are part of the poet's most conventional expression of loss. The "tender grace of a day that is dead" is a stranger figure, merging the loss of the individual with the loss of the past. Where the earlier figure went from whole to part, from the lost one to his hand and voice, this goes from whole to greater whole, anticipating the generalized "passion of the past" that informs "Tears, Idle Tears," with its vision of "the days that are no more." Both figures suggest the obvious remedy for loss, the return of the thing lost.

But these terms will not account for the structure of "And I would that my tongue could utter/The thoughts that arise in me." If these lines describe a desire for presence, it is for presence of a special kind, the self-presence of the poet that would be accomplished by bringing deep and unarticulated facts of experience to the surface and finally to the intelligibility of speech. The painful absence here resides in the gap between imagination and utterance, imaged as that final distance across the tongue which the poet's thoughts cannot travel. Dissociation of sensibility is not the problem, as the oddity of "thoughts" in this context reveals. Thoughts that "arise" to the tongue come from an unexpected place and attest to the union of heart and head in the full human experience of inwardness. The worrisome separation, enforced by the form of these lines and shadowed forth by the sense, is that

between "I" and "me."

The failure to speak the self fully is a failure to establish it fully as a presence. In his earlier poems, Tennyson often equated self-expression with self-expenditure, and such poets within poems as "The Lady of Shalott" and "The Dying Swan" and "The Kraken" all died in literalizing the metaphor through which Keats's nightingale "pour[ed] forth [its] soul in song." In "Supposed Confessions," too, speech sent the soul into the hostile air where it readily lost its way. But the poet of "Break, break, break" knows a greater pain than inarticulateness and does not imagine as the sufficient miracle of speech the easy flowing of the self into the world. He seeks still a kind of self-completion or self-healing, but these are something more than the phantom of full self-expression. Language must be turned to account, must turn to account the rising thoughts and the insistently, but obscurely, meaningful sights and sounds of the speaker's experience.

A distance remains, however, between the self and its speech, and self-expression is at least one problem among others. "I would that my tongue could utter" places the will as primary and the self as its agent, but it cedes utterance to the tongue, one remove from the willing subject. The terrible division between the speaker and his beloved friend has created correspondent divisions within the self, between present and past, thought and utterance. The "Break, break, break," of the title refers not only to the crashings of the sea, but to the brokenness of all things in the speaker's world, which has been so decisively disrupted that identity itself must be reformulated. The poem abounds in fragments of selves — thoughts, tongues, hands, voices — that must somehow be re-united, and the poem itself is the effort to do this. Bridging all the gaps within the self and within lines three and four would yield finally the core statement and the desired achievement, "I utter me." Utterance here does not seek to empty the self, but to restore and fulfill it.

The only whole figures in the poem are those too young to know death and thus too innocent and ignorant to need a speech beyond shouting or singing. Mere sound alone, shouting or singing or his friend's dear voice, is the adequate language of a happy phase of human existence that the poet has now left behind. To speak himself back into personal wholeness, he must pass beyond the heaving emotions of the poem's title and the bluntly observed facts of the world around him and even beyond the suddenly honest and straightforward longing of "O for the touch of a vanished hand." To seek an adequate speech is not to seek merely the return of something lost, and this is not an elegy for the poet's own lost powers. Lines three and four do not suggest that the poet needs to recover the power of utterance, that it was a power he once possessed. Rather, the poem seems to suggest, more audaciously, an equation between the miracle of adequate speech and the greater miracle of a return of the past.

What joins these two achievement besides their apparent impossibility? Another passage from Tennyson's poetry, from a poem written before Hallam's

death, helps to establish the terms of the relationship. At the conclusion of "A Dream of Fair Women," the speaker has awakened from his dream vision and compares his futile attempts to return to it with all attempts to recover the past. As in "Break, break, break," this longing for the past is identified with the language that attempts to express it:

No memory labours longer from the deep
Gold-mines of thought to lift the hidden ore
That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep
To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what dull pain
Compassed, how eagerly I sought to strike
Into that wondrous track of dreams again!
But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,
Desiring what is mingled with past years,
In yearnings that can never be express'd
By signs or groans or tears;

Because all words, though culled with choicest art
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

"Signs" is striking, because so close visually to the expected "sighs," which is indeed the reading in some texts. Christopher Ricks gives "signs," however, and the choice seems justified by the logically linked mention of words in the next line. Inexpressible yearnings here are explicitly yearnings for the return of the past. And as the image of excavation makes clear, the place deep within from which utterance would arise is also the storehouse of the past. Achieved utterance would provide a release of painful emotion – its failure in the last stanza causes the system to overheat – but it would also be a successful contact between depth and surface within the self, a bringing up of the past into the present. Just as both speech and memory arise from an absence or sensed need in experience, a perfected speech or perfected act of memory would fill the absence, close the gap, make experience whole again. Yet this is doubly impossible, because experience cannot be repeated – "No two dreams are like" – and because words are inadequate to the yearnings deep within.

We have returned now to "the sad incompetence of human speech," but this fragment at least offers some hint about the nature of the incompetence. Words fail because they cannot "give the bitter of the sweet." What then is bitter or sweet in the soul's yearning for the past? Memory is sweet, I think, but the absence that memory necessarily implies is bitter. The language that successfully evokes the past provides only a false presence and cannot be adequate to the pastness of the past, to the

central, painful fact that it is gone. At its end, "A Dream of Fair Women" turns to this linguistic problem. The past cannot be repeated, the poem tells us, and, what is more, the human experience of this truth cannot be comprehended in language.

The situation of "Break, break, break" is different, of course, because the speaker's pain is not theoretical. The poem gains its momentum by reversing the order of concerns of "A Dream of Fair Women." The problem of adequate speech comes first, and the poem moves from there towards the dark truth that is explicitly formulated only in the poem's last two lines. What my reading thus far suppressed is the fact that these lines do not record another futile desire, though the desire for the past can surely be inferred from them, but instead an achieved tragic knowledge. They say without equivocation that the past is irrecoverable and, in so doing, they say something that the poem could not earlier bring itself to say. The correlation between achieved utterance and the recovery of the past is suggested by the poem itself and sets the terms of its exposition, but in these closing lines it is ultimately rejected. Adequate utterance comes only, in fact, from surrendering the desire to repeat the past and naming it in its inalterable absence. In this way, too, the poem breaks from its pattern of repetitions and moves forward in the crucial difference of the last stanza from the first.

Tennyson's earliest poems rely on the saving distance between what a poem says and what it does, between what a poem means and what it accomplishes in the world and for its reader. In "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind," that distance is closed and no more than the willfulness of the title separates the poet from a speaker for whom saying and doing are the same. The poem thus gives form to a particular and an historically significant existential dilemma, the dilemma of Romantic self-consciousness. But this form can be no more than what John Ashbery, in his late Romantic lyric "Soonest Mended," has wittily called "fence-sitting/Raised to the level of an esthetic ideal."

Without pretending that the dilemma of Romantic self-consciousness can be easily summarized or finally, unimaginably solved, we can say that "Break, break, break" succeeds at what most of Tennyson's earlier poems do not attempt: at registering clearly and in the order of a recorded experience how the expressive needs of the self and its separation from the world are connected to its mortality and to the passing of time. These connections are also evident, even explicit, in "Supposed Confessions." But "Break, break, break" is the more artistically controlled of the two poems, and I have tried to show in this essay what that primary and intuitive aesthetic judgment might comprehend, to show how Tennyson's control of his own language is not just a technical skill but a form of new understanding.

Avoiding the High Prophetic Strain: De Quincey's Mail-Coach and *Felix Holt*

Susan R. Cohen

The celebrated Introduction to *Felix Holt* conveys us to a past when "the glory had not yet departed from the old coach roads."¹ The old stage-coach itself is both an object of Eliot's nostalgic reflections and the vehicle of her narrative; literal and figurative uses of the stage-coach converge as the memory of a journey blends with the backward journey of memory. The stage-coach provides Eliot with material for "a modern Odyssey" (76). It also allows her to meditate on the very possibility of creating a modern Odyssey, on problems of narrative structure, and a model much closer to hand than Homer may well have informed her meditations. Eliot had a distinguished precedent in the imaginative use of the horse-drawn coach: Thomas de Quincey's "The English Mail-Coach." De Quincey's essay was first published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1849; and though there is no concrete evidence that Eliot read the article in its journal form, it is more than likely – considering the prestige and popularity of *Blackwood's* and her own later connections with it – that she would have done so. Moreover, the *Westminster Review*, while under her editorship, published an article by Henry Bright on "Thomas de Quincey and His Works."² The article specifically cites "The English Mail-Coach" and thus reinforces the likelihood that she knew the essay. Eliot's possible borrowings from De Quincey are, however, considerably less interesting than what she did not borrow, and the oppositions between the two works are illuminating whether or not Eliot took a deliberate stand against De Quincey.

The contrasting contexts of the two essays are not insignificant: Eliot's essay is an introduction to a lengthy, realistic novel; De Quincey's "little paper" is an independent narrative, actually detached from the *Suspensio de Profundis* of which it was originally to have been part.³ Though the essay is subordinated to no larger whole, however, its three sections arrange themselves in a hierarchy of privilege and subordination. The first section, a nostalgic reveling in "The Glory of Motion," serves primarily to introduce "The Vision of Sudden Death," and this vision itself becomes merely the germ of the "Dream-fugue Founded on the Preceding Theme of Sudden Death." Building toward the apocalyptic dream-fugue, the essay witnesses a "duel between life and death" (DQ 329), a confrontation between glorious motion and absolute stasis. Appropriately, the first section of the essay, though its rather whimsical tone is set by its high-spirited memories of De Quincey's Oxford days,

emphasizes the sublimity of the mail-coaches, their "terror and terrific beauty" (DQ 272). De Quincey exults in a "velocity at that time unprecedented" and in "grand effects for the eye between lamp-light and the darkness upon solitary roads." The coaches reassure him of "the conscious presence of a central intellect" overruling "all obstacles into one steady co-operation to a national result." Most important, though, is "the awful political mission" which the coaches fulfilled: "The mail-coach it was that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo" (DQ 271-2).

The romantic sublimity of De Quincey's coach finds no equivalent in George Eliot's. The Napoleonic war has been replaced by the controversy surrounding the first Reform Bill, an international "conflict of unparalleled grandeur" (DQ 329) by petty internal politicking. The sense of a central intellect and a national heart has been lost, and England, once galvanized by international crisis into a conscious organic wholeness, has now disintegrated into competing classes and regions. Eliot's stage-coach, no longer an organ or emblem of a pre-existing national unity, must itself create the unity. The consciousness of the coach passenger imaginatively unifies all he sees in his progress through the Midlands, but the people he sees have no comparable experience of unity: "Mail or stage coach for him belonged to that mysterious distant system of things called 'Gover'nment,' which, whatever it might be, was no business of his, any more than the most outlying nebula or the coal-sacks of the southern hemisphere . . ." (76). There are no "apocalyptic vials" to open. Change can only be effected slowly, through time.

It is in their senses of time that the two essays are in most direct conflict. Eliot's daylight traveler, "seated on the box from the dawn to the gloaming" (75), enjoys no sublime effects of darkness and lamplight. Nor does he revel in speed, preferring instead "the slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other . . ." (75-6). De Quincey himself, in fact, disparages the greater speed of the railways: "The modern modes of travelling cannot compare with the old mail-coach system in grandeur and power. They boast of more velocity – not, however, as a consciousness, but as a fact of our lifeless knowledge" (DQ 283). De Quincey objects to the railroads' inhuman mechanization – to a speed, inaccessible to the imagination, which deprives the traveler of the sen-

1. George Eliot, *Felix Holt, the Radical*, ed. Peter Coveney (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 75. Parenthetical page numbers within the text will refer to this edition.
2. *Westminster Review*, N. S. 5 [1854], 519-37.

3. Thomas de Quincey, "The English Mail-Coach" in *Tales and Prose Phantasies*, Vol. XIII of *The Collected Writings of Thomas de Quincey*, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), p. 328. Further references to this work, identified as DQ, will be given in the text.

sation of sublimity. Eliot, in this introductory chapter, objects not only to mechanical speed but also to imaginative speed, to the sublime, apocalyptic and prophetic imagination De Quincey celebrates.

Eliot's genial coachman has been embittered by "the recent initiation of railways": "at that word the coachman looked before him with the blank gaze of one who had driven his coach to the outer-most edge of the universe, and saw his leaders plunging into the abyss. Still he would soon relapse from the high prophetic strain to the familiar one of narrative" (81). Eliot demonstrates considerable wit in this hyperbolic depiction of the coachman confronting the abyss. Clearly, the violence of the coachman's response is most immediately evoked by the prospect of his own obsolescence, and the impersonal narrator comically exaggerates his horror. But the coachman, who "could tell the names of sites and persons . . . as well as the shade of Virgil in a more memorable journey" (81), is himself a surrogate narrator, a creator as well as a creature of language; and the prophetic strain, peculiarly enough, is mute. The railroad cuts off his speech, leaving him with only a blank gaze. It drives him to the outermost edge of a linguistic universe and plunges him into an abyss of silence.

Narrative has, of course, survived the railroads, and Eliot reinforces her transportation metaphor with a glance at futuristic modes of travel. Speculating that "[p]osterity may be shot, like a bullet through a tube, by atmospheric pressure from Winchester to Newcastle," Eliot assures the reader that "the slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other is the better thing to have in the memory" (75). It is a better thing to have in the memory simply because it makes memory possible. Pneumatic journeys are rejected not on any practical grounds but because they provide no space — that is, no time — for the imagination. Collapsing the end into the beginning, "the tube-journey can never lend much to picture and narrative; it is as barren as an exclamatory O!" (75). The "exclamatory O," the mute prophetic strain, is seen as a constant threat in *Felix Holt*. Eliot deliberately retreats from the sublimity of De Quincey (and the romance elements of *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*) and relapses to the familiarity of realistic narrative. De Quincey's tendency is to collapse time, to foreshadow in language the eclipse of language, and this precipitancy removes him from the sphere of action: "This accursed gift I have as regards thought, that in the first step towards the possibility of a misfortune I see its total evolution; in the radix of the series I see too certainly and too instantly its entire expansion; in the first syllable of the dreadful

sentence I read already the last . . . I saw not discursively or by effort, or by succession but by one flash of horrid simultaneous intuition" (*DQ* 311-12). Eliot, though determined that her novel should be unified, its ending vaguely visible in its beginning, is equally determined to see discursively and by succession.

The linguistic and narrative problems of *Felix Holt* are analogous to its political issues, and all are involved in avoiding De Quincey's excessive speed, his apocalyptic short-circuiting. Thousands of words intervene to keep the first syllable from collapsing into the last and reducing language to the mute blankness of the exclamatory O. Absurd complications of plot keep the radix of the series from expanding too explosively to its end. Eliot's titular Radical does not pass revolution or even active reform, for revolutionary politics, millennial in impulse, threaten human life as the prophetic strain threatens the human voice. In one of the novel's several choric political discussions, a brewer dismisses the Radicals with good-natured cynicism: "'Everything's wrong,' says he. That's a big text. But does he want to make everything right? Not he. He'd lose his text" (303). *Felix Holt* is an experiment in not losing one's text, whether the text be a political platform or a novel. Felix saves his text of personal and social moral reformation by removing it from the field of public politics, by withdrawing it from publication. Harold Transome has a double text to save. His political program is interpolated into the text — more interesting to him and to us — of his own personality, and his challenge is to preserve both: "The years had nourished an inclination to as much opposition as would enable him to assert his own independence and power without throwing himself into that tabooed condition which robs the power of its triumph" (196-97). Eliot, too, must save her text. Her account of Reverend Lyon's method of composing a lengthy sermon from a short, simple quotation might be seen as a coyly apologetic confession of her own method in the excessively complicated *Felix Holt*: "'And all the people said, Amen' — a mere mustard-seed of a text, which had split at first only into two divisions, 'What was said,' and 'Who said it'; but these were growing into a many-branched discourse . . ." (132). The self-sufficient Biblical text has no need for human commentary; Lyon must break it up in order to make room for his own speech. Eliot does not so much apologize for her many-branched discourse as insist that its complexities are justified as a defense against the mute blankness of De Quincey's prophetic strain.

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Bleak House: Dickens, Esther, and the Androgynous Mind

Carol A. Senf

And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Because the use of two distinct narrators makes *Bleak House*¹ unique among novels of its period, practically every critic of the novel has tried to come to terms with Dickens's method of narration, most arguing that the dual narrators split the novel into two separate halves.² Given the critical interest in the two narrators, it is somewhat surprising to discover that none of the critical approaches has discussed the reasons for this separation, reasons which stem directly from the Victorian culture which was always Dickens's chief subject. This article discusses why Dickens chose two completely different narrators; it argues that *Bleak House* is Dickens's contribution to the nineteenth-century debate about the separate roles for men and women; and it explains that the novel's two-part structure reveals the negative effects that this rigid separation had on individual men and women and ultimately on the entire society.

Like *Bleak House*, Victorian culture was split into two halves, which were described at the time as "Separate Spheres." Public life, which was male-oriented and governed by the intellect, included such areas as politics, business, and industry. Private life, on the other hand, which was female-dominated and centered in the home, was governed by the spirit.³ The following passage from Mrs. Craik's *Olive* (published two years before *Bleak House*) clearly illustrates this division:

Nature, which gave to man the dominion of the intellect, gave to her that of the heart and affections . . . there scarcely ever lived the woman who would not rather sit meekly by her own hearth, with her husband at her side, and her children at her knee, than be crowned Corinne of the Capitol.⁴

It is wise to remember that the notion of "Separate Spheres" was an ideal which never worked as absolutely in practice as it did in theory and which is thus a tidier literary convention than a historical fact. As Martha Vicinus explains, a number of women could not "afford to pursue the course laid out for them either economically, socially or psychologically."⁵ Moreover, a number of men (including Dickens's fictional portrait of Wemmick in *Great Expectations*) had lives which centered in their homes instead of in the larger world of politics, business, or industry.

1. All references to *Bleak House* are included in the text and are to the following edition: *Bleak House*, ed. George Ford and Sylvere Monod (New York: Norton, 1977).

2. See, for example, Ellen Serlen, who describes the two halves as "two totally separate entities rather than two halves of a whole fictional world." "The Two Worlds of *Bleak House*," *ELH*, 43 (1976), 551-66; Jacob Korg: "the split in Dickens' narrative method creates a corresponding fissure in the vision presented by the novel." "Introduction," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Bleak House: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 15; Masao Miyoshi, who indicates that the two narrators result from "Dickens' Manichean inclination to see the world in terms of irreconcilables. . . . with its omniscient voice intoning the ever-expanding chaos of the world and Esther Summerson providing the conventional cause-and-effect moral view in her retrospective account." *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1969), p. 268; Joseph I. Fradin: "The debate between the two voices carries, without the genuine possibility of resolution, beyond the conclusion, and the limitations of the story they tell." "Will and Society in *Bleak House*," *PMLA*, 71 (1966), 109; G. Armour Craig: the "two narratives are as separate as their grammar. . . . The voice that would articulate both is far on the other side of silence." "The Unpoetic Compromise," *Twentieth Century Interpretations*, p. 62; Thorell Tsomondo: the "concern of each narrator — one for the individual, the other for the universal" tempts the reader "to weigh Esther's words against those of the third person narrator." "'A Habitable Doll's House': Beginning in *Bleak House*," *The Victorian Newsletter*, 62 (1982), 6.

3. There are a number of excellent studies of the cultural conditions which produced the ideal of "Separate Spheres." Ruth H. Block links the "Separate Spheres" to sweeping social and economic changes:

Just as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the realignment of sex roles and symbolism was associated with the sweeping social transformations brought on by the Reformation and commercial capitalism, so, too, major changes during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries corresponded to developments in culture and economy — above all, romantic, evangelical Protestantism and industrialism. While men generally dominated the highly fluid and competitive economic and political spheres, women increasingly gained ascendancy in the sacred, moral and emotional spheres of life: religious benevolence, sentimental fiction, and the family.

"Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change," *Signs*, 4 (1978), 245-46.

Alexander Welsh, on the other hand, connects the idea of separate spheres to the biblical distinction between the earthly city and the City of God:

The problem was in many ways unanswerable; the future of individual life, as of the city, was obscure. Confronted with this problem, however, the nineteenth century developed a homely remedy of its own — so snug, so cherished, so endlessly invoked, that we are apt to discount its importance and its considerable success. The practical extension of this remedy was the conviction that clean and tidy homes were the most promising answer to urban poverty and desolation. The sentimental side was the celebration, as the antithesis of the city, of the fireside at home.

The City of Dickens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 142.

4. *Olive* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), pp. 166-67; cited by Jean E. Kennard, *Victims of Convention* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978), p. 17.

5. Martha Vicinus, "Introduction," *Suffer and Be Still* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), p. x.

Acutely aware of the difference between the ideal and the reality, Dickens nonetheless chooses to adapt the notion of "Separate Spheres" as a narrative strategy in *Bleak House*. Why? On a superficial level, at least, his decision to use two narrators appears to be a nearly perfect incarnation of "Separate Spheres." He characterizes Esther as the ideal Victorian woman, her narrative revealing that she is governed by her heart, not her head; and even the nicknames which the other characters affectionately call her reveal her domesticity and her orientation to the home. The essentially characterless third-person narrator, on the other hand, is portrayed as a masculine voice. His cool and analytical narrative, which reveals that he is usually ruled by the head, focuses on issues outside the home such as Chancery, politics, and social relationships. The method of narration, in fact, appears to separate male and female, head and heart, objectivity and subjectivity.

While Dickens's method of narration is modeled on the contemporary ideal of "Separate Spheres," his attitude to the ideal is more sophisticated than that of people like Craik. For example, he reveals that the two narrators are not as separate as they appear to be. In fact, he structures *Bleak House* so that the reader can synthesize the two narrators as he or she reads the novel. Unlike other novels which use multiple narrators (such as *The Sound and the Fury* or *Ulysses*), *Bleak House*, which alternates between the third-person narrator's masculine point of view and Esther's intensely feminine one, encourages this synthesis. The dualities blend as the reader combines masculine and feminine, objectivity and subjectivity, emotional response and intellectual analysis. Therefore, the mere act of reading *Bleak House* places the responsive reader in the position which Virginia Woolf describes as androgynous, a place where heart and head, masculine and feminine are fused.⁶

Moreover, Dickens facilitates this synthesis, not only by making the two narrators more distinct at the beginnings of their narrative sections and less so as the sections progress, but also by having them share a number of characteristics — an interest in the same general subjects, a knowledge of the same characters, and a common moral philosophy. As Jacob Korg argues, the two narrators have similar "general opinions" because "both sympathise with the poor and helpless, oppose burdensome traditions, and favor personal benevolence over abstract humanitarianism as a means of solving social problems."⁷

The two narrators may share a common moral stance, but their differences — patterned according to typical Victorian sexual models — enable the reader to perceive the limitations inherent in such rigid models. Looking carefully at each narrator and at his/her characteristic tone,

subject matter, and relationship to the world will help to reveal these limitations.

Although Chapter I is the most frequently discussed of the third-person narrator's chapters, the following passage is also typical of his analytical view of the world:

Wintry morning, looking with dull eyes and sallow face upon the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, finds its inhabitants unwilling to get out of bed. Many of them are not early risers at the brightest of times, being birds of night who roost when the sun is high, and are wide awake and keen for prey when the stars shine out. Behind dingy blind and curtain, in upper story and garret, skulking more or less under false names, false hair, false titles, false jewellery, and false histories, a colony of brigands lie in their first sleep. (p. 324)

Because the third-person narrator begins this passage by personifying the morning with "dull eyes" and "sallow face," he evokes the impression of a diseased environment. Here, as elsewhere in the novel, he usually sees only the grim side of life, such as the fog in London or the rain at Chesney Wold. Furthermore, because this analyst of the human condition is more interested in systems such as the law, government, and philosophy than he is with individuals, he tends to see people as representatives of a class or profession rather than as discrete human beings. A kind of literary sociologist, he lumps people together: The inhabitants of Leicester Square are birds of prey; the poor are driven oxen or semi-domesticated dogs; and other people in the novel are frequently characterized by the use of animal imagery. His is thus a dehumanized view of people which tends to focus on the macabre, the diseased, and the destructive; and even when he is sympathetic, he tends to see the general rather than the individual. His initial reaction to Jo is characteristic:

Jo, and the other lower animals, get on in the unintelligible mess as they can. It is marketday. The blinded oxen, over-goaded, over-driven, never guided, run into wrong places and are beaten out; and plunge, red-eyed and foaming, at stone walls; and often sorely hurt the innocent, and often sorely hurt themselves. Very like Jo and his order; very, very like! (p. 199)

While Esther nurses a sick boy, the third-person narrator sees Jo only as a type of dumb suffering; and being incapable of separating the suffering individual from the mass of suffering humanity, he can suggest no way of alleviating the situation.

In addition, the third-person narrator is not individualized himself. He is, instead, as described by W. J. Harvey, "a vast, collective, choric voice brilliantly mimicking the varied life it describes, yet able to generalize and comment without lapsing into the idiom of one man, of Dickens

6. Elaine Showalter explains that the world which led to Woolf's celebration of androgyny was very similar to the world of Victorian England:

But whatever the abstract merits of androgyny, the world that Virginia Woolf inhabited was the last place in which a woman could fully express both femaleness and maleness, nurturance and aggression. . . . Androgyny was the myth that helped her

evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition. Woolf inherited a female tradition a century old. . . .

A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 263-64.

7. Korg, p. 15.

himself."⁸ Thus, the third-person narrator becomes a kind of spokesman for middle-class England. In addition, not being confined within one person, he can also provide a panoramic view of English society because he has the freedom of movement which is denied to Esther. He can be, as J. Hillis Miller demonstrates, "everywhere in London and its environs, able to move instantaneously from the Essex marshes to the Kentish heights, and anywhere between."⁹ He speaks always in the present tense; and Joan D. Winslow describes the effect of Dickens's use of the present tense, arguing that it "makes the narrator seem detached and uninvolved, a mere passive spectator watching the world unroll before him."¹⁰ More important, however, the repeated use of the present tense makes it appear that there is no future and therefore no possibility of the world's being other than what it is. Detached, aloof, and tied to the present moment as a kind of expert witness to the enormity of the problem, the third-person narrator is paralyzed because he cannot see that individuals are capable of changing. Thus, the last paragraph in his narrative is as grim and forbidding as the first:

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 . . . 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. (p. 767)

The very language of the paragraph suggests a kind of grim stasis, a death. In fact, the third-person narrator is so preoccupied with death and decay that he cannot even suggest a solution to the misery he depicts other than by analogy to Krook's death by spontaneous combustion. Salvation for the third-person narrator, therefore, is an act of absolute annihilation.

The third-person narrator, while not characterized as a single individual, seems to be modeled on the Victorian

ideal of masculinity. Intellectual and analytical rather than emotional (episodes such as Jo's death,¹¹ which cause him to react emotionally, are Dickens's way of indicating that the spheres aren't truly separate), he has the freedom of movement which was usually denied to Victorian women. Esther, on the other hand, is intensely feminine even though her peculiar situation, which prevents her from being a *typical* Victorian woman, also serves to intensify certain aspects of the feminine ideal.¹² Given her spartan childhood and her illegitimacy, Esther should be both an outsider and an emotional cripple.¹³ However, because Dickens wants to emphasize her femininity and show that young women were taught to be governed by their hearts, Esther is neither. Unlike the third-person narrator, who remains a spectator and who sees only the death and decay of the present moment, Esther is very much a participant in the actions she describes. Moreover, she is committed both to the forces of life and to a future which is better than the present.

Even the names that she is given point both to her willingness to work for the future and to her femininity. Thus, she is Dame Durden, Old Woman, Little Old Woman, Mrs. Shipton, and Mother Hubbard — all names which imply domesticity rather than eroticism — as well as the keeper of the keys to Bleak House. There is, of course, more than one negative side to these names. As Michael Ragussis indicates, these names point to her lack of individual identity: symbolic names "no matter how appropriately they point to characteristics in Esther, seem finally to make more apparent that her true name is unknown."¹⁴ Valerie Kennedy points to the fact that Esther's multiple names tend to obscure her identity completely:

Esther has no existence. Indeed Esther's identity, her very self, has a tendency to be totally absorbed by her role as Jarndyce's housekeeper, a state of affairs indicated by the fact that her own name is replaced by a variety of others. . . .¹⁵

8. W. J. Harvey, "Character and Narration," in *Charles Dickens: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Stephen Wall (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 502.
9. J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (1958; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1973), p. 160. A more recent article by Richard D. Altick also points to the panoramic view of the third-person narrator:
In its fluid course the camera records the scene and activities in no fewer than eight locales: Chesney Wold, the Dedlock town house, Jo's crossing (three times), Tom-all-Alone's, the doorstep of the Gospel Society, Tulkinghorn's chambers, Cook's Court, and the graveyard.
"*Bleak House: The Reach of Chapter One*," *Dickens Studies Annual*, 8 (1980), p. 74.
10. Joan D. Winslow, "Esther Summerson: The Betrayal of the Imagination," *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 6 (1976), 3.
11. Comparing Jo to a broken down cart does tend to increase his emotional distance from his subject, however.
12. For an excellent study of this subject, see Valerie Kennedy, "*Bleak House: More Trouble With Esther*," *Journal of Women's Studies in Literature*, 1 (1979), 330-47.
13. The following studies focus on Esther's psychology: William Axton, "The Trouble With Esther," *Modern Language Quar-*

terly, 26 (1965), 545-57; Alex Zwerdling, "Esther Summerson Rehabilitated," *PMLA*, 88 (1973), 429-39; and Judith Wilt, "Confusion and Consciousness in Dickens's Esther," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32 (1977), 285-309.

Although many of the recent studies focus on Esther's neurosis, Dickens's contemporaries were inclined to see her favorably. For example, W. L. Williams makes the following comment during the discussion period after a lecture on Dickens's women:

Mr. Rideal had mentioned his favourites amongst the heroines of Dickens, and he (the speaker) would not dispute the high place given to them; he had his own likings, and they lay with Agnes in 'David Copperfield' and Esther in 'Bleak House.'
Charles F. Rideal, *Charles Dickens' Heroines and Women-Folk* (1896; rpt. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1974), p. 62.

In addition, Ford and Monod explain that Georgina Hogarth, supposedly the original for Esther, remarked late in her life that "although she strongly disliked to be identified with the character Agnes in *David Copperfield*, she did not object to being likened to Esther in *Bleak House*" (p. 895).

14. Michael Ragussis, "The Ghostly Signs of *Bleak House*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 34 (1979), 258.
15. Kennedy, pp. 336-37.

Certainly both Kennedy and Ragussis are correct to point to the significance of Esther's multiple names. However, because both are interested in her unique character, neither indicates how these names relate to her femaleness. Esther's lack of identity is compounded by her illegitimacy, but her apparent lack of identity is not far from the Victorian ideal. The Victorian woman was not expected to have too strong a sense of self, and she was expected to care for a home which she did not truly own. In fact, even had Esther been legitimate, she would have borne her father's name rather than her own; and she does bear her husband's name at the conclusion. Furthermore, she admits that people know her as "the doctor's wife," a title which in one important way resembles all those nicknames. It too emphasizes her function instead of her identity. In this sense, women's names always deny their independent existence. Dickens, therefore, manipulates Esther's nicknames to highlight a common fact.

In addition, Esther's emotional responses to others (or her repeated attempts to repress emotional responses when her own life is concerned) help her fit the Victorian stereotype of femininity. She underlines the head/heart split by drawing the reader's attention to her lack of analytical skills, and she confesses that she is not clever except when her feelings are involved. While many critics take Esther's admission to mean that she is stupid or incapable of seeing the world, Dickens reveals that she is quite perceptive as far as individuals are concerned. For example, she penetrates Harold Skimpole's mask; and she is equally capable of penetrating Mr. Boythorn's gruff exterior the first time she meets him:

To hear Mr. Boythorn presently expressing the most implacable and passionate sentiments, with this fragile mite of a creature quietly perched on his forehead, was to have a good illustration of his character, I thought. (p. 107)

Esther is absolutely correct in her assessment, but she undermines the accuracy of her analysis by adding, "I thought." As Zwerdling states, however, the difference in the two narrators lies "not in their perceptiveness but in their self-confidence *about* their perceptiveness. The savage sarcasm of the other narrator of *Bleak House* is simply a psychological impossibility for Esther."¹⁶ Why is that self-confidence impossible for Esther? Kennedy argues that Esther's hesitancy reveals Dickens's understanding of women's role:

Yet her struggles for survival — her self-denigration, her obsession with being "busy," and her renunciation of Woodcourt — show the strains imposed not only by illegitimacy, but also by conventional notions of how young women should be-

have. She may not create a new stereotype, but she shows with extreme clarity what is wrong with the old one.¹⁷

On the other hand, her narrative proves that, despite her habitual unwillingness to trust her judgment, her feelings are frequently as accurate as the third-person narrator's sociological analysis.

The following passage is definitely written in the language of the heart and reveals an additional way in which Esther's narrative differs from the third-person narrator's panoramic and analytical view:

I thought it very touching to see these two women, coarse and shabby and beaten, so united; to see what they could be to one another; to see how they felt for one another; how the heart of each to each was softened by the hard trials of their lives. I think the best side of such people is almost hidden from us. What the poor are to the poor is little known, excepting to themselves and God. (p. 101)

More optimistic than the third-person narrator, Esther is blind to certain aspects of human life even before her illness. While the third-person narrator sees only the dirt and squalor which the poor inhabit and thinks of them as a slightly higher form of dumb animal, Esther sympathizes with the human suffering she witnesses. While he merely describes the misery around him and provides no solution for it, Esther admits that she has difficulty keeping herself out of the narrative and attempts at all times to alleviate the pain she encounters. She covers the dead child with her handkerchief and tries to soothe the grief-stricken mother; she nurses Jo in his illness; and she performs such homely tasks as washing Peepy and teaching Caddy how to bring order to her disorderly life. In all these cases, she sees only the individual's unhappiness instead of the universal misery which the third-person narrator describes;¹⁸ and in each case she does what she can to eliminate the unhappiness she sees.

From beginning to end, Esther's narrative also revolves around a much smaller group of people. Because Dickens models her character on the Victorian ideal of womanhood, she is oriented to her various homes — her godmother's, the school where she learns to be a governess, John Jarndyce's Bleak House, the second Bleak House where she and Woodcourt set up housekeeping, and the *Bleak House* that she narrates — and to the people in the immediate environment. Hers is thus a restricted point of view which, as Leonard W. Deen explains, is "primarily about parents and children and their impoverished relationships."¹⁹ Deen is correct in his assessment, for Esther certainly does describe the bad families in the novel — the Jellybys, the Pardiggles and the Turveydrops, for example — and she even observes that the Lord Chancellor

16. Zwerdling, p. 432.

17. Kennedy, p. 345.

18. Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times*, one of Dickens's most feminine characters, is also concerned for the individual as her discussion with Louisa Gradgrind reveals:

I thought I couldn't know whether it was a prosperous nation or not, and whether I was in a thriving state or not, unless I knew who had got the money, and whether any of it was mine

... And my remark was — for I couldn't think of a better one — that I thought it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million. *Hard Times*, ed. George Ford and Sylvere Monod (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 44.

19. Leonard W. Deen, "Style and Unity in *Bleak House*," *Twentieth Century Interpretations*, p. 46.

“appeared so poor a substitute for the love and pride of parents” (p. 31). Thus Esther rarely sees past the small family unit to the society beyond. However, because her point of view is restricted to the family and to individuals within the family, she also sees warmth and potential for growth: Caddy’s love for her lame husband and her deaf-mute child,²⁰ her Guardian’s kindness, and the love which Ada and Richard have for one another. To see Esther clearly, the reader has only to compare the conclusion of her narrative to the conclusion offered by the third-person narrator:

But I know that my dearest little pets are very pretty, and that my darling is very beautiful, and that my husband is very handsome, and that my guardian has the brightest and most benevolent face that ever was seen; and that they can very well do without much beauty in me – even supposing – (p. 770)

It is a blissful (and somewhat simplistic) view of the world, which sees only the beauty in the people she loves and which is therefore totally oblivious to the continuing misery in the surrounding society.

Despite the simplicity of Esther’s conclusion, a number of critics argue that it resolves the problems in the novel. For example, John Kucich sees the conclusion as a type of progress:

. . . through Esther the novel builds a kind of attitudinal potency by developing a sexual transition that was hopelessly blocked in the beginning. Rather than merely repeating Lady Dedlock’s frigidity, Esther has broken with it – warmly, generously – and has made her life what her first chapter title called it: “A Progress.”²¹

Angus Wilson argues that “the contemporary idea of domestic happiness as the resolution of, or perhaps more fairly one should say, the counterpoise to social evil, was a strongly held personal conviction.”²² Wilson’s view is an oversimplification of the world created by Dickens, however. Many of his novels do conclude with a happy domestic scene and with a woman who is responsible for ordering it (for example, Little Dorrit, Agnes in *David Copperfield*, Bella in *Our Mutual Friend*, and Esther). However, Dickens also indicates that this happiness is merely a personal solution for the privileged few rather than a “counterpoise to social evil.” No other Dickens novel shows this duality more clearly than *Bleak House*, with its two narrators and their separate stories. The notion of domestic happiness applies only to Esther and to

the small group of people who are intimately connected to her. The social evil and grim despair described by the third-person narrator remain untouched by this domestic serenity.

There are, of course, other problems in Esther’s narrative; and these too are connected to her femininity. Winslow characterizes her chief weakness as “the failure to penetrate imaginatively beyond the surfaces of things.”²³ Miller, on the other hand, who praises Esther as an embodiment of the spiritual principle at work in the novel, argues that her limitations result from Dickens’s failure to associate consciousness with goodness:

To Dickens the fear of a broad, imaginative, daring moral life seems to have presented itself as a sense that the will would find great difficulty in operating at all, or in operating other than destructively, once it was liberated into self-consciousness. Therefore the unself-conscious instinctive goodness of Esther seemed to him the only possibility.²⁴

Of course, Dickens was well aware that instinctive behavior, morality, and lack of intellectual daring are all characteristics the Victorians expected of women. Dickens’s emphasis of these traits, as well as his emphasis of the limitations inherent in these traits, is part of his criticism of *Separate Spheres*.

A number of critics have seen Esther as simply wrong. Korg, for example, implies that Dickens is aware of Esther’s limitations and that he deliberately manipulates the differences in the two narrators to focus on her shortcomings:

The limitations of Esther’s mind appear when she naively describes Chesney Wold as picturesque and serene, in contrast to the objective narrator’s depiction of the place in Lincolnshire “as dreary and depressing.”²⁵

Korg’s analysis presupposes that the reader will believe only the third-person narrator while he ignores Esther’s view as trivial and overly simplistic; and he is certainly not alone in his judgment. Given Esther’s hesitancy about drawing conclusions, it is easy to understand why so many critics have believed so firmly in the third-person narrator – a voice so authoritative and self-assured that it seems to be the novel’s voice of truth.²⁶ However, if Dickens had meant the reader to accept this voice without reservation, there would be no need for Esther. In fact, her narrative occupies slightly more than half the novel; and it should be

20. Allon H. White comments on the significance of this child:

A deaf and dumb child, forever outside of language and ordinary communication . . . is an extreme type of that familiar Dickens symbol of the child-innocent. But above this, the relation of the child to its mother and to language gives this handicapped girl . . . a tiny, distant, but significant position in the greater concerns of *Bleak House*. She is simply the last and perhaps the most extreme of a number of innocents in the novel who become excluded from the ‘normal’ world of communication only to become passive, helpless victims.

“Language and Location in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*,” *Critical Quarterly*, 20 (1978), 86.

21. John Kucich, “Action in the Dickens Ending: *Bleak House* and

Great Expectations,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33 (1978), 102. Tsomondo concurs, arguing that “Esther ventures a ‘beginning,’ a youthful, and continuous one that counterpoints the eternal decline of the world that the third person narrator delineates” (p. 7).

22. Included in *Charles Dickens: A Critical Anthology*, pp. 434-35.

23. Winslow, p. 10.

24. Miller, p. 222.

25. Korg, p. 16.

26. Tsomondo makes a similar point when she explains that the difference in narrators “has led many readers to choose between the two narrative points of view, almost invariably preferring that of the third person narrator” (p. 5).

obvious that Dickens manipulates the two narratives to show that each is incomplete by itself. Only in the synthesis of the two can the whole story of *Bleak House* be seen. The reader who recognizes the limitations of both the third-person narrator's generalizations and Esther's naive optimism will come to realize, for example, that Chesney Wold is simply a place, with only so much moral significance as the people who live there. It is not only the place where Sir Leicester explains to Volumnia that bribery is necessary in government or only Esther's pastoral refuge, but a place where both responses are possible. The reader can cite numerous other examples which point to the limitations of both narrators: their differing views of Chancery, of Lady Dedlock, or of any of the other characters and institutions represented in the novel. However, because the reader cannot choose to read only half the novel, he cannot choose to accept or ignore either narrator. He must synthesize their two views of the world if he wishes to read *Bleak House* as a whole. As a result, Dickens indicates that both the third-person narrator's clear sightedness and Esther's charity and willingness to act on a small scale are important. Masculine and feminine, objectivity and subjectivity, head and heart are thus shown to be necessary for a complete understanding.

Dickens's use of two narrators who are clearly patterned according to Victorian sexual role models reveals that each "sphere" is incomplete in itself. Thus, *Bleak House* is a direct comment on the nineteenth-century debate about suitable roles for women. This question plagued the Victorians because of the increased interest in equal rights for women. An intensely topical novelist, Dickens frequently incorporates social issues into his fictional world, but *Bleak House* is, according to Ellen Moers, "the single 'woman question' novel in the Dickens canon";²⁷ and it is also somewhat surprising that Dickens, who usually champions the "underdog," seems to have so little sympathy for the proponents of nineteenth-century feminism. In fact, he appears to condemn the feminists in *Bleak House*, directly by concluding the novel with Mrs. Jellyby's decision to abandon Borrioboola-Gha to canvass for the rights of women and indirectly by suggesting, in the case of both Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, that women's decision to leave their traditional roles as wives and mothers led to chaos and confusion. His posi-

tion caused him to be criticized by John Stuart Mill, who, in a March 1854 letter to his wife, describes *Bleak House* as the worst of Dickens's novels and "the only one of them I altogether dislike" because it has the "vulgar impudence in this thing to ridicule rights of women."²⁸ Mill does not mention Esther in this letter, but twentieth-century feminists have been extremely critical of that seemingly perfect embodiment of traditional femininity.²⁹

Mill and twentieth-century feminists criticize Dickens for his attitudes to women because they assume that his portraits of women like Esther and Agnes are arguments for women's maintaining their traditional roles and that Esther's criticism of Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle is Dickens's own.³⁰ Of course, Dickens's close friendship and working relationships with women like Elizabeth Gaskell and Angela Burdett Coutts should be proof that he did not expect real women to be the angels he frequently portrayed in fiction. In fact, as this paper has demonstrated, the very structure of *Bleak House* is an implicit criticism of the Victorian notion of "Separate Spheres" and the extreme separation which this ideal demanded of men and women. Dickens illustrates this problem by showing that each narrator is incomplete, Esther being all emotion, the third-person narrator all reasoned analysis. Moreover, *Bleak House* demonstrates that, without the ability to see and analyze the larger social problem, Esther's kind of goodness will always be restricted to the small domestic environment, where it will have little impact on the larger social world. The third-person narrator, on the other hand, lacks Esther's feelings for individuals and therefore becomes so overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems he observes that he cannot understand that all social solutions must begin somewhere. Dickens shows that, given the extreme separation between these opposing views of the world, there is no possibility of their getting together to work out a solution.

Thus, the novel concludes with two distinct endings: Esther's feminine version, which centers on the small domestic world she knows, concludes with marriage, fertility, and possibility; and the third-person narrator's, which focuses on the social world, concludes with Sir Leicester's unhappiness and the ultimate reality of death. Given these two distinct endings, most critics have despaired at reconciliation and have regarded *Bleak House* as

27. Ellen Moers, "Bleak House: the Agitating Women," *The Dickensian*, 69 (1973), 13-24.

28. The Mill letter is cited in *Charles Dickens: A Critical Anthology*, p. 95.

29. Francoise Basch, for example, is highly critical of Dickens's treatment of women in his novels:

Other heroines have a marvellous aptitude for their fairy-tale domestic mission. Even in the filthy jungle at the Jellybys' Esther can create a home. . . . To know how to transform the most sordid interior into a home is, according to Dickens, the great female gift.

Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel, trans. Anthony Rudolf (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 56. Kate Millet levels an even more devastating criticism when she explains that "nearly all the serious women in Dickens' fiction, with the exception of Nancy and a handful of her criminal sisters,

are insipid goodies carved from the same soap as Ruskin's Queens." *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon, 1969), p. 90.

30. Ford and Monod cite a letter to Henry Christopherson, where Dickens explains his criticism of Mrs. Jellyby:

Indeed I have very grave doubts whether a great commercial country, holding communication with all parts of the world, can better Christianise the benighted portions of it than by the bestowal of its wealth and energy on the making of good Christians at home, and on the utter removal of neglected and untaught childhood from its streets, before it wanders elsewhere. (p. 887)

They also mention Dickens's response to the reputed original for Mrs. Jellyby - Mrs. Caroline Chisholm. He supported her work to organize the Family Colonization Loan Society but was appalled by her housekeeping. In a letter - March 4, 1850 - he comments: "I dream of Mrs. Chisholm, and her housekeeping. The dirty faces of her children are my continual companions" (p. 893).

somehow flawed. However, the solution has been right in front of them — in the text itself. The act of reading the novel is the act which unites these two halves and which, therefore, can synthesize the “Separate Spheres” of the novel. Esther and the third-person narrator never meet in the pages of the novel, but the reader can synthesize their voices in his or her mind. This synthesis suggests the kind of androgynous (a word which Dickens would *not* have used) view which Virginia Woolf praises seventy-five

years later. Aware of the fragmentation which resulted from such rigid sexual roles, Dickens constructs a novel which demonstrates the problems inherent in his culture’s ideal of “Separate Spheres” and which illustrates the need for completeness: subjectivity and objectivity, heart and head, masculine and feminine. Over a century later, we still wrestle with these problems.³¹

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To Be Brought Up “By Hand”

Susan Schoenbauer Thurin

Few are the writers on *Great Expectations* who can resist quoting Dickens’ description of Pip as being “brought up by hand,” for it presents Pip’s condition with humor and pathos.¹ Pip is an orphan who endures an upbringing at the hands of his violent sister, Mrs. Joe, that is as lacking in loving nurture as it is filled with corporal punishment. Lawrence Jay Dessner ably sums up the implications of the phrase:

It ironically implies that especially loving care had been expended on his behalf; it implies, without irony, that a good deal of physical punishment went with it. But beneath the joke . . .

is the pain of infantile deprivation.²

Pip’s “infantile deprivation” has been connected in a general way with his later development, with his sense of guilt, his role as a figure in a moral fable, and his search for identity.³ However, the literal meaning of being “brought up by hand,” detailed in both the didactic literature and the fiction of the period, should not be ignored, for it reveals Dickens’ ability to deal deftly with a serious social problem while at the same time artistically render a complex characterization and family situation.

31. For example, Jeanne Marecek argues that “highly-differentiated sex-role orientations are less suited to current conditions than are androgynous orientations, especially for women.” “Social Change, Positive Mental Health, and Psychological Androgyny,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 3 (1979), 241. Other writers are not as certain that androgyny would be a positive change, but the discussion is still open-ended. In fact, an entire issue of *Women’s Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1974) is devoted to the discussion of androgyny; and there is hardly a work of feminist criticism or scholarship that does not focus on the subject, at least briefly.

1. The Oxford Illustrated Dickens (1953; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 6. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically.
2. “*Great Expectations*: ‘the ghost of a man’s own father,’” *PMLA*, 91 (1976), 440.
3. Frank Donovan, *Dickens and Youth* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1968), pp. 186-196; on the association with guilt, see Julian Moynahan, “The Hero’s Guilt: The Case of *Great Expectations*,” *EIC*, X (1960), 60-79; Dessner, 436-449; focusing on the moral and allegorical perspectives are K. J. Fielding, *Charles Dickens* (London: Longmans, Green, 1958), p. 175 ff; Mary A. Dehaven, “Pip and the Fortunate Fall,” *DSN*, 6 (1975), 42-46; Jane Vogel, *Allegory in Dickens* (University, Ala.: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1977), pp. 26, 86, 149, n. 319; an existential interpretation is that of J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1969), Ch. 8. A reading of *Great Expectations* which combines some of these interpretations with a symbolic and mythic emphasis is Harry Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 279-339. Hand imagery and its implications are discussed on pp. 333-337. The relationship between hand and heart imagery is discussed by Jack B. Moore, “Hearts and Hands in *Great Expectations*,” *Dickensian*, LXI (1965), 52-56.

To bring up a child by hand means to dry-nurse it; that is, to feed it with artificial foods as opposed to suckling it.⁴ This system of infant feeding apparently developed in the eighteenth century as an alternative to the wet nurse system which in turn was being discredited in favor of maternal breast feeding. The didactic literature from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth century insistently calls for maternal nursing as desirable for the health and welfare of the infant. An early conduct book, *The Ladies Calling*, though loath to condemn wet nursing altogether, vigorously urges maternal nursing for "the many advantages the Child may receive by taking its Nourishment whence it derives its Substance." At the turn of the eighteenth century, Thomas Gisborne advises maternal nursing on the basis of moral obligation: "The first of the parental duties which nature points out to the mother is to be herself the nurse of her own offspring." Also addressing the subject, Mary Wollstonecraft relates the emotional ties between mother and child with nursing it: "What sympathy does a mother exercise who sends her babe to a nurse, and only takes it from a nurse to send it to a school?"⁵

A strong basis for these moral and psychological arguments in favor of maternal breast feeding was the evil of the wet nurse who was accused of often being cruel to and neglectful of the infant she fed, though health conditions in the city made it arguable whether providing an infant with a nurse in the country might balance the ill care it risked. A belief that the moral characteristics of the nurse could be transmitted to the infant through her milk, for example that a red-haired nurse might transmit treacherousness and bad temper, also militated against the use of a wet nurse.⁶ In their *Practical Education*, the Edgeworths do not imply that character traits can be ingested, but they emphasize the role of the nurse in a child's character formation:

The temper acquires habits much earlier than is usually apprehended; the first impressions which infants receive, and the

first habits which they learn from their nurses, influence the temper and disposition long after the slight causes which produced them are forgotten.⁷

The eighteenth century revalued the role of the nurse who fed the infant, and as a result, the arguments in favor of a mother nursing her own child succeeded in making the wet-nurse system go out of style as common practice.⁸ However, for some people, the need or desire to find a substitute for mother's milk persisted, and a greater evil than the wet nurse developed. Artificial infant foods such as pap and broths as well as implements for feeding them were introduced in the mid-eighteenth century, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, it was common practice to feed an infant these artificial foods in addition to nursing it.⁹ When these artificial foods were the sole source of nutrition for an infant, it was said to be brought up by hand. Susan Ferrier's *Marriage, A Novel* (1818) and Dickens' *Oliver Twist* clearly indicate what it meant to be brought up in this way. Both novels show that it is *the unwanted child* who receives this fate.

Ferrier's character Lady Juliana produces twin daughters whom the fond mother greets with a "take them away!" and an order for her lap dog to be brought to her instead. When her husband prevails upon her to attempt to nurse the starving infants:

she declared nothing upon earth should ever induce her to perform so odious an office; . . . A wet-nurse was therefore procured; but as she refused to undertake both children . . . it was settled, to the unspeakable delight of the maiden sisters, that the youngest should be entrusted entirely to their management, and brought up by hand.¹⁰

The infant fallen to the zealous care of the three maiden aunts is "stuffed with improper food, and loathsome drugs, and bandied about from one person to another" (119). As a consequence, it quickly becomes "much less than when it was born, and its skin is as yellow as saffron,

4. Charles Parish, "A Boy Brought Up 'By Hand,'" *NCF*, XVII (1962), 286-288; Robert J. Finkel, "Another Boy Brought Up 'By Hand,'" *NCF*, XX (1966), 389-390. On the basis of Dickens' and Marryat's use of the phrase, Parish defines "brought up by hand" as "bottle-fed," and Finkel cites dictionary entries which show that this meaning is still current. "Brought up by hand" is, however, an eighteenth-century formation. The definitions and examples of usage cited by Finkel continue to be listed in dictionaries like *Webster's Third New International Unabridged Dictionary*, 1981 ed. ("with personal care and attention bringing up a child by hand"). It is interesting to note that the *O. E. D.* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971) lists, as an example of usage of the phrase in this sense, a quotation from *Great Expectations*. The earliest such usage listed in the *O. E. D.* is from Steele, *Tatler* No. 89, 1709: "I was bred by Hand."

5. Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling* (Oxford: Theater, 1673), sec. III, pp. 43-46. Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1798), p. 378; Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 152; in America Mrs. L. H. Sigourney echoed this concern which she said was shared by "advanced medical men" - *Letters to Mothers* (New York:

Harper and Brothers, 1839), p. 29. The pervasiveness of the advice on maternal nursing is further evidenced by other conduct-book writers, novelists, and medical sources who are cited by Ernest Caulfield, *The Infant Welfare Movement in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Hoeber, 1931), pp. 24-25; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 20; and Thomas E. Cone, "History of Infant and Child Feeding," in *Infant and Child Feeding*, ed. Jenny T. Bond, et al. (New York: Academic Press, 1981), p. 5.

6. Cone, pp. 5-6; cf. Caulfield, pp. 5-34 and Stone, p. 100.

7. Maria and R. L. Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (London: J. Johnson, 1801), I, 13.

8. Stone, pp. 20 and 430.

9. Cone, pp. 5-6. Pap is a mixture such as flour and water. Sir John E. Gorst lists in *The Children of the Nation* foods improperly fed to infants in the nineteenth century, including periwinkles, red-herring, cheese, beer, and gin. He adds that milk and rice pudding are acceptable baby foods (London: Methuen, 1907), p. 34. Glass feeding bottles come into use in the early nineteenth century.

10. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 118. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically.

and it squints!" (120). Almost at the point of death, the infant Mary is rescued by the kind and well-educated Mrs. Douglas, who secures a wet nurse who will live in the Douglas home to care for the child. Under the intelligent supervision of Mrs. Douglas, the "sucking pots, choleric powders, and other instruments of torture" are banished, and the infant Mary thrives (122).

Oliver Twist's ill-care is more prolonged and worse. The surgeon who attends his birth prescribes "a little gruel" if the infant who is left "a parish child — the orphan of a workhouse" becomes "troublesome."¹¹ "For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. He was brought up by hand." Finally, his "hungry and destitute situation" is reported to the parish authorities, but since no wet nurse can be found, Oliver is sent to that dreadful invention, a baby farm (3-4).¹²

Great Expectations goes beyond detailing the realistic horrors of being brought up by hand and presents instead the absurd Mrs. Joe, who adduces it a merit to have raised Pip in this way and even "established a great reputation with herself and the neighbours" because she had done so (6). The reason for her being able to gain credit for using this child-care method is not one of the more obvious ones — that it is more complicated than breast feeding an infant, that it is an act of generosity to her orphaned brother, or that it is more modern than hiring a wet nurse. Nor is the irony in her claiming Pip's gratitude merely that the wielder of Tickler inspires something quite different from gratitude in the victim. Rather, Mrs. Joe's "great reputation" results from the fact that in spite of her bringing up Pip by hand, he survives.¹³

Due to the unnutritious nature of the artificial foods for infants and the unhygienic feeding conditions, the mortality rate for children fed in this manner during a period from 1762-1771 was sixty-six percent. Hugh Smith, the eighteenth-century collector of these data, writes:

Disease and death are the usual consequences of the present erroneous method of bringing children up by hand. Scarcely one in four of these little innocents live to get over the cutting of their first teeth; and the vitiated blood of those who escape, occasioned by improper nourishment, generally renders them infirm or short lived.¹⁴

Although Smith's work discrediting the hand-feeding of infants appeared seventy-five years before *Great Expectations*, the practice and attendant health risks had not disappeared. Cow's milk had been recognized as an appropriate substitute for breast feeding in the interim, but the conditions under which it was generally available hardly made it adequate. Cows were kept in filth, retailers skimmed and watered milk, and in summer, bacteria spoiled it within twelve hours. The Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, which legislated sanitary conditions for the sale of milk, was not passed until 1878.¹⁵ Finally, early twentieth-century sources sharply criticize infant care during the Victorian period and reiterate Smith's emphasis on the high disease and mortality rate of children who were fed artificial foods rather than breast fed. Interestingly, one of these sources shifts away from moral, psychological, and health concerns to blame science and the mercenary motives of manufacturers for infant disease and mortality:

During the period from 1840-1910, when calories were considered the most important consideration of nutrition, commercial companies did their best to persuade mothers and physicians that certain artificial foods were almost more scientific than breast milk.¹⁶

Pip's ironical criticism of having been brought up by hand coincides with the views of fiction, religious, and medical writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was dangerous. Dickens, of course, does not confine himself to the rudiments of child feeding. Part of his art in *Great Expectations* can be seen in the way that he turns a term normally used for infant care into a metaphorical description of Pip's childhood. Pip confuses the expression that Mrs. Joe used to claim her fame with her method of imposing discipline on him and connects it with his developing sense of himself as a "fellow-sufferer" of Joe, as one tainted with guilt, and as one alienated from his home and society (7). In this way, then, Dickens shows how a bringing up "by hand" leads to an initiation into the often bizarre, cruel, and criminal world of characters like Miss Havisham and Magwitch.

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11. *Oliver Twist*, The Clarendon Dickens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 2. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically.
 12. The miserable neglect possible in these holding places for unwanted children is clearly conveyed in Ch. 2 of *Oliver Twist*. For the historical documentation of these establishments, see Jean D. Heywood, *Children in Care* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 96-97.
 13. Mrs. Joe implies as much in her frequent grim reminders to Pip that she wishes he were in the graveyard along with his brothers.
 14. *Letters to Married Women on Nursing and the Management of Children* (London: Kearsley, 1774); here cited from Cone, p. 8.

15. Caulfield, p. 20; Gorst, pp. 29-31. While the evils of the wet nurse particularly affected the upper classes, who were its chief employers in the eighteenth century, hand feeding seems to have caused an acute problem chiefly among the lower classes in the nineteenth century. In factory towns working mothers were unable to care for their infants, orphans were "farmed," and pure, wholesome artificial foods were less available to them; see Gorst, pp. 20-22.
 16. C. Ulysses Moore, *Nutrition of Mother and Child* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott, 1923), p. 75. Gorst cites statistics from 1905 showing the death risk to be "thirty times as great amongst those who are brought up by hand as have been reared on their natural food" (p. 24).

The Unity of *Kidnapped*

Ralph Stewart

Kidnapped is frequently read as a youth's adventure story, without much claim to historical accuracy or literary merit. The most distinguished exponent of this view is Stevenson himself – at least in the “Dedication” to *Kidnapped*, where he suggests that the novel is merely escapist: “honest Alan, who was a grim old fire-eater in his day, has in this new avatar no more desperate purpose than to steal some young gentleman's attention from his Ovid, carrying him awhile into the Highlands and the last century, and pack him to bed with some engaging images to mingle with his dreams.” Alan sounds as if he will be a stock figure in a stock romance. But Stevenson did later qualify this statement, which seems to refer to his original intentions rather than the finished novel. He agreed with a contemporary reviewer that, although half of *Kidnapped* is only an episodic and improbable adventure story, the Highland part of the novel is worth considering as imaginative literature.¹ The majority of critics concur with this judgment.

Not much has been said, though, about how the novel changes after David is shipwrecked on Mull and reaches the Highlands. What new elements appear at this point, and what relationship do they have to the superficial adventure story which, after all, continues unabated? A consideration of these points throws some light, not only on the Highland part of the novel, but also on the ending. Stevenson said that his inspiration flagged in the last chapters, at the point where his heroes had to emerge from the Highlands, and the epilogue does give the impression that the author has run out of energy: “the present editor inclines for the time to say farewell to David.” The implication seems to be either that the book lacks form – that it is made up of a random succession of adventures that has to be stopped at an arbitrary point – or else that it is incomplete. Most critics accept the latter position: that there is no real conclusion, and that the sequel *Catriona* is required to complete the plot of *Kidnapped*.² But Stevenson's epilogue is not necessarily a better guide to the novel than his dedication, and I shall argue that *Kidnapped* does not merely come to a stop but completes a pattern that resolves both the adventure story and a more serious theme.

The change in *Kidnapped* is not exactly coincidental

with David's arrival on Mull. There is a new note in the adventure story, at least intermittently, from the time Alan Breck appears on the “Covenant.” The novel becomes more historical, more localized in a particular time and place. The first words David and Alan exchange place them politically and culturally, as representatives of commercial Lowlands and pre-feudal Highlands.

“And so you're a Jacobite?” said I, as I set meat before him.

“Ay,” said he beginning to eat. “And you, by your long face, should be a Whig?”

“Betwixt and between,” said I, not to annoy him; for indeed I was as good a Whig as Mr. Campbell could make me.³

David is a rather idealized embodiment of Whig values. That his sturdy probity represents Whig conduct only at its best is suggested by the corrupt nature of the crew of the “Covenant” (the Covenanters were the original Whigs) and notably by Captain Hoseason, but the defects of Lowland mores are not examined further. The novel turns to focus on the old Highland way of life, which David sees functioning, though mutedly, just before the post-Culloden measures extinguished it. *Kidnapped* points up what is admirable about the doomed culture, and it is the introduction of this tragic theme that changes the tone of the book.

The world of the Highlands is shown mainly through four characters, all based on historical figures: Alan Breck, the principal representative of this world, James Stewart of the Glens, Cluny MacPherson, and Robin Macgregor. The action in the Roundhouse of the “Covenant” allows David to give a fairly complete description of Alan's accomplishments.

“I will add the rest of what I have to say about my friend, that he was skilled in all kinds of music, but principally pipe music; was a well considered poet in his own tongue; had read several books both in French and English; was a dead shot; a good angler, and an excellent fencer with the small sword as well as with his own particular weapon. For his faults, they were on his face, and I knew them all.” (pp. 118-19)

They are that he is vain, quick to take offence, and blood-thirsty. The other Highlanders resemble Alan sufficiently

1. Letter to T. Watts-Dunton, September 1886. Included in, Sidney Colvin, ed., *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Methuen, 1902), II, 41-42.

2. See, for example, critics as different as Chesterton, Daiches, and Edwin Eigner. Critics of the last decade have tended to make a sharper distinction between *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*. The latter seems to me a different kind of novel, and much inferior. The fate of James of the Glens, which is well known in Scottish history (and has already been made clear in *Kidnapped*), is a slender thread on which to hang a plot of suspense.

G. K. Chesterton, *Robert Louis Stevenson*, 2nd ed. (1928: Rpt. New

York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), p. 82.

David Daiches, *Robert Louis Stevenson*, (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1947), p. 73.

Edwin W. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 77.

Maurice Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature* (London: Robert Hale, 1977), p. 338.

Jenni Calder, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Life Study* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), p. 188.

3. *Kidnapped* (New York: Scribner, 1910), p. 82.

to reinforce this impression of the culture he represents, yet vary and amplify it. James, who has tried to live in conformity with the Whig government, may appear an exception, but his allegiance to the government is skin deep. He accepts the Highland code by which the slayer of Colin Campbell has taken justifiable revenge and must be protected – though Campbell was a government agent. Cluny shows the more negative side of the Highland character, which is generally not suited to inaction. His caged situation and awareness of defeat have made him peevish and quarrelsome. Robin, although an enemy, seems to resemble Alan in nearly all points. When they meet, shortly before the heroes leave the Highlands, one description serves to cover the reactions of both (p. 264).

The Highland way of life is dying fast, so it is symbolically appropriate that most of its representatives have not long to live. James will shortly be hanged and knows it: "he was clutching at every straw, and all the time, I dare say, saw the faces of his hereditary foes on the bench, and in the jury box, and the gallows in the background" (p. 193). Cluny will survive in Scotland another four or five years but soon after, David tells us, die in France (p. 232). Robin will be dead in three years. Anyone who reads *Kidnapped* simply as an adventure story, without much awareness of the historical context, is likely to feel that Stevenson goes out of his way to emphasize these points, and might wonder why nothing is said about the ultimate fate of the co-hero, Alan Breck. A conventional adventure story would end on an optimistic note but the road ahead of Alan looks misty and precarious, especially if one takes into account the fate of his compatriot, Robin Macgregor, who is wanted by the government for lesser crimes. The historical Alan Breck actually survived at least till the French Revolution⁴ but, paradoxically, Stevenson's historical theme prevents him from revealing this. It would be incongruous for the principal representative of a doomed culture to be shown as surviving and flourishing to old age.

The relationship of the adventure story to the more serious theme is in one sense fairly obvious. David's adventures in the latter part of the book arise from his being caught up in a Highland quarrel, running with Alan Breck, and seeing Highland life at close quarters. But it is the use of point of view that coordinates the two, apparently disparate, lines of the novel. David is not only an outsider, but a natural enemy of the people he observes, identified in sentiment with the authority that will soon crush them. By public and social criteria he should feel pleased at the Highlanders' defeat and, until the end of the novel, he persuades himself that he does so. Yet the defeat entails death for some of those who have helped him, and the destruction of what they value. Moreover, David himself has found much to admire in the Highland way of life.⁵ His feelings are, not surprisingly, often confused, and many of his problems and adventures arise from this state

of mind. Most notably, his mixed loyalties lead to his flight after the death of the Red Fox.

Some of the tensions and ambiguities in David's feelings become apparent in his final comment on Robin Macgregor, as the latter departs after a night's carousing with Alan.

It was the last I saw of him, for I was in the low Countries at the University of Leyden, when he stood his trial, and was hanged at the Grassmarket. And I have told this at so great length, partly because it was the last incident of any note that befell me on the wrong side of the Highland Line, and partly because (as the man came to be hanged) it's in a manner history. (pp. 268-69)

David will presumably study law at Leyden and then become a respectable and prosperous citizen. He is fully aware of the contrast between his fate and Robin's, and his conscious attitude seems to be detached and even smug. He is a loyal subject of King George and not readily sympathetic towards Highland cutthroats; there is no doubt as to which is the "wrong" side of the Highland Line. And yet this passage has an elegiac tone arising from emotions that David is unconsciously repressing. We have already been told, before Robin and Alan meet, that Robin is "sought on all sides" and will fairly soon be hanged; here the point is repeated and insisted on. David, who is half apologizing for describing the previous episode, suggests that Robin has a place in historical records simply because he was tried, condemned, and hanged. But Robin is one of the last survivors of the Old Highlands and his death in the Grassmarket signifies the end of a very old song; this is the deeper sense in which he is part of history. The memory of the pibroch that delights Alan stands as an epitaph to Robin and also to the traditional Highland way of life that David has come to respect.

At the conclusion of the novel, the tension in David's attitudes, between public and private loyalties, is more manifest. The novel is usually taken to be incomplete. Daiches says of the ending: "Alan, the co-hero, had rounded off his adventures; yet for David Balfour, the other and originally the only hero, it was but beginning."⁶ Yet David has come in a complete circle: he set off from his birthplace with justifiable expectations and is now, despite the unlucky events recorded in the novel that placed him temporarily on the wrong side of the law, on his way to wealth and respectability. His adventures north of the Highland Line have fallen into place as an interlude in the steady career of a law-abiding Lowland youth.

What is surprising, especially if one reads *Kidnapped* as merely an adventure story, is David's state of mind at the end. If he were grieving only at being parted from Alan, one would expect his unhappiness to be less intense and different in kind. Why is he so thoroughly miserable? "But as I went on my way to the city, I felt so lost and lonesome,

4. See Scott's footnote on Alan Breck at the end of the Introduction to *Rob Roy*.

5. Mr. Henderland is a useful corroboratory witness to the virtues of

the Highlanders, showing that David's admiration is not only the result of personal regard for Alan (pp. 158-164).

6. Daiches, p. 72.

that I could have found it in my heart to sit down by the dyke, and cry and weep like any baby." And why does he feel "a cold gnawing in my inside like a remorse for something wrong," which seems allied to guilt? He has been solidly, even ostentatiously, upright throughout his travels. David's state of mind at the end of the novel recalls his feelings about Robin Macgregor, but the awareness that his world has destroyed Alan's is closer to the

surface. Alan and his compatriots will never enter Edinburgh unless to be hanged.⁷ As David walks into the capital city towards the British Linen Bank, symbol of the Whiggish, commercial world of the future, he is abandoning Alan and all he represents.

Acadia University

Coming in

The Victorian Newsletter

Kerry Powell, "The Mesmerizing of Dorian Gray"

Atta Britwum, "Dickens's War against the Militancy of the Oppressed"

Carol A. Martin, "George Eliot: Feminist Critic"

Lowell T. Frye, "Chaos and Cosmos: Carlyle's Idea of History"

Henry R. Harrington, "'Muscular Christianity' and Brutality:
The Case of Tom Brown"

Patrick Scott, "Genre and Perspective in the Study of Victorian Women Writers:
The Case of Elizabeth Missing Sewell"

7. Scott records that the historical Alan Breck was living in Paris nearly half a century after the period of the novel. The exile said of the

Paris streets: "Deil ane o' them a' is worth the Hie Street of Edinburgh."

Victorian Group News

A. THE NEW YORK MEETING

28 December 1983, 10:15-11:30 a.m., Murray Hill, Hilton
Presiding: Coral M. Lansbury, Camden College, Rutgers University

I. Business

II. Papers and Discussion

1. "The Novel," George H. Ford, University of Rochester
2. "Poetry and Prose," Jerome H. Buckley, Harvard University
3. "Feminist Perspectives," Elaine Showalter, Douglass College, Rutgers University

B. THE VICTORIAN LUNCHEON

The Annual Victorian Luncheon will be held in the Warwick Hotel, 65 West 54th Street. Cash bar at 11:45, luncheon at 12:30. For reservations, send check for \$22 (payable to Gerhard Joseph) to Gerhard Joseph, English Dept., Lehman College, CUNY, Bronx, N.Y. 10468 by Dec. 17.

C. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Northeast Victorian Studies Association will hold its 1984 conference on April 13-15 at Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y. The conference theme will be "The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870" in memory of Prof. Walter E. Houghton of Wellesley. For further information contact Robert N. Keane, Hofstra University, English Dept., 204 Calkins Hall, Hempstead, N.Y. 11550.

"Patriarchs, Prophets and Demons: Major Victorians and Major Victorian Issues Revisited" will be the topic of the 1984 meeting of the Midwest Victorian Studies Association in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 12-14 April 1984. For information, write Frederick Kirchhoff, Dept. of English and Linguistics, Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, IN 46805.

The Southeastern Nineteenth Century Studies Association will hold its 1984 meeting April 5-7 at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia. The conference topic: "Propriety in the Nineteenth Century." For information, contact N. Lee Orr, Music Dept., Georgia State Univ., Atlanta, GA 30303.

The Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue is underway, under the direction of J. W. Jolliffe, The Bodelian. A Newsletter, which will be available free on request, will describe the project in detail and furnish news of its progress. It will also carry brief articles and notes, and be open for academic queries. All inquiries should be addressed to the Project's Executive Office, 20, Great North Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PS, England.

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