

The Victorian Newsletter

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Cover: On the hundredth anniversary of the death of Charles Reade, our cover is a sketch of him done by John Warren Oakes.

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Nero and the Aesthetics of Torture

Linda Dowling

The emperor Nero, Tacitus tells us, lit his gardens with human torches, captive Christians smeared with wax and set on fire to provide the emperor and his guests simultaneously with light and with amusement. The normal response to so hideous a fact, we might suppose, is the sort of shudder it drew from Dean Merivale in the middle of the nineteenth century: "While the world endures, the iniquities of Nero will retain their pre-eminence in infamy, and it will be equally impossible to recount them at length, or to pass them over in silence."¹ Merivale's is the voice, roughly speaking, of mainstream Victorian historiography, the voice equally of his own work and of a standard narrative like Thomas Arnold's *History of Rome* (1838-42), history written on assumptions that were at an obvious level moral and humane, at a deeper level providential and literary.

By the end of the Victorian period, however, a complex displacement of these assumptions was to issue in a view of history that was to have important consequences for the course of late-Victorian literary development. In Lionel Johnson's essay "On the Character of Nero," for instance, we come upon a Nero whose indulgence in torture is somehow playful and innocent: "the boyish mischievousness of Nero, which moves among its own horrors uncontaminated, was perhaps the trait of his character which made him more loveable than his serious or stupid predecessors. He toyed with horrors like a child unconscious of its cruelty."² As important, Nero is not simply a sort of child but a sort of aesthete as well: "The burning of Rome, that he might witness in spirit by a sympathetic imagination the burning of Troy, the employment of Christians as garden-torches alike point to the leading idea of Nero" (Johnson, p. 137).

The explanation of so dramatic a shift in historical perspective begins, I would like to suggest, in the movement away from the literary and providentialist assumptions of Arnold's *History of Rome* and towards the empirical and anti-teleological assumptions of J. B. Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire* (1889).³ For Bury followed the new scientific historiography of Theodor Mommsen, and Mommsen's historiography had produced two startling conclusions: first of all, that Rome did

not fall because of luxury and licentiousness, the sort of moral collapse of which Nero's human torches stand as a grotesque emblem, and secondly, that Rome, properly speaking, did not fall at all. As Mommsen made clear, the slow impersonal process of historical change which transformed Roman institutions into the institutions of modern Europe left no room for romantic episodes of cultural decline and decadent personal excess. From the perspective of the new empirical historiography, that is to say, the traditional story of Rome's decline looked like nothing so much as a literary invention. Only a mistaken view of history, said Bury, could lead one to "derive the decline of the Empire from the dinners of Apicius and the orgies of Nero As a matter of fact, luxury and immorality do not constitute, and need not be symptoms of, a disease that is fatal to the life of States."⁴ To draw analogies, as so many late Victorians did, between the decadence of Rome and the decline of their own British empire was, Bury added, only to compound the mistake with a further error.

Lionel Johnson found himself in the midst of this continuing historical controversy. For like Swinburne and Wilde before him, Johnson was an Oxford man, and Oxford was the focus of the debate between adherents of the new "paleo-photographic method" of Mommsen, William Stubbs, E. A. Freeman and Bury, and those who preferred the older "chiaroscuro-impressionist method" of Carlyle, Charles Kingsley, Merivale and Arnold.⁵ Swinburne, for example, was crammed by Stubbs in 1860 for his examination in the newly established Final School of History and Law. And in the process Swinburne learned to loathe the new empirical historiography, preferring, as he told his mother, "live biographical chronicles not dead constitutional records."⁶ Even if this preference had not swayed him, Swinburne's anti-German prejudice would likely have prevented him from ever "put[ting] my faith in 'Mommsen' or 'Freeman.'"⁷

Wilde, on the other hand, considered Mommsen's *History of Rome* (along with Suetonius) one of the few genuine "books to read."⁸ Wilde's recommendation was perfectly sincere, for in July 1895 he followed it himself: of the fifteen volumes he was first permitted to receive after his imprisonment in

1. Charles Merivale, *A History of the Romans Under the Empire*, 7 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1858), VI, 160.
 2. [Johnson], "On the Character of Nero," *Macmillan's Monthly Magazine*, 62 (June 1890), 136. Ian Fletcher has established that the essay was written by Johnson, probably while he was still at Oxford, and revised by his friend H. W. Orange, who published it in *Macmillan's* under the pseudonym "Janus." See *The Collected Poems of Lionel Johnson*, ed. Ian Fletcher, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Garland, 1982), pp. 281-82.
 3. This movement is more fully treated in my "Roman Decadence and Victorian Historiography," *Victorian Studies* (forthcoming 1985). For a recent discussion of the influence of Roman decadence upon the Victorian fin de siècle, see R. K. R. Thornton, *The Decadent Dilemma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), pp. 2-6. Patrick Brantlinger surveys nineteenth- and twentieth-century applications of the analogy of Roman decadence in *Bread & Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983).
 4. Bury, "The British and the Roman Empire," *Saturday Review* (June 27,

1896), p. 645.

5. See Frederic Harrison, "The History Schools (An Oxford Dialogue)" [1893] in *The Meaning of History and Other Historical Pieces* (London: Macmillan, 1894), pp. 124-45.
 6. *The Swinburne Letters*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), I, 35.
 7. *Swinburne Letters*, VI, 209. Freeman, Professor of Modern History at Oxford from 1884 to 1892, was so convinced a "Teutomaniac" that he petitioned the Oxford philologist F. Max Müller to intercede on his behalf with the Prussian authorities during the Franco-Prussian War for permission to witness the triumphal entry of the Prussian army into Paris, an event, Freeman noted with real regret, that did not occur above once every thousand years.
 8. Wilde in a February 1886 letter to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* is distinguishing "books to read" from "books not to read," — for Wilde a far more important category. *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p. 185.

Wandsworth Gaol, Mommsen's *History* comprised one-third. Wilde's portrayal of the Roman emperors in Chapter 11 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) suggests that he, like Swinburne, preferred the older historiographic mode of Gibbon and Suetonius for its rich literary effects.⁹ Yet Wilde recognized at the same time that the newer historiographic mode of Mommsen and E. S. Beesly freed the Roman Caesars from the anachronistic and reductive interpretation of moralists like Merivale:

I know that there are many historians, or at least writers on historical subjects, who still think it necessary to apply moral judgments to history, and who distribute their praise or blame with the solemn complacency of a successful schoolmaster. This, however, is a foolish habit. . . . Nobody with the true historical sense ever dreams of blaming Nero, or scolding Tiberius or censuring Caesar Borgia.¹⁰

Wilde recognized that the new historiography had in fact liberated the Roman emperors from the chores of historical causation: "The vices of Tiberius could not destroy that supreme civilization, any more than the virtues of the Antonines could save it. It fell for other, for less interesting reasons."¹¹ Once released from the dreary pantheon of moral (and immoral) exemplars, historical figures like Nero were free to become enduring, ahistorical types of the human imagination, and artists, of course, were free to make use of them. Hence Wilde's later remark to Oxford undergraduates, "Apollo has passed away, but Hyacinth, whom men say he slew, lives on. Nero and Narcissus are always with us."¹² Hence, too, Wilde's own partial impersonation of the aesthete-emperor: the amazing "Neronian coiffure" that, in 1883 at least, made Wilde look so "young," and, much later, the "Neronian hours, rich, profligate, cynical, materialistic" that preceded Wilde's own fall (*OW Letters*, pp. 148, 577).

This, then, is the immediate background of Lionel Johnson's apparently perverse estimate of Nero, for what Johnson saw and what others in the avant-garde of fin de siècle culture were to see as well – is that the new historiography, by denying Nero's part in causing Roman decline, simultaneously exempted Nero from the moral condemnation of traditional historians like Arnold and Merivale. For if Nero's orgies and tortures were now to be seen not as empire-toppling crimes but simply as actions without historical consequences, then Nero could be hailed as a pure aesthete, a "great master of death and lust" (Johnson, p. 139). Thus we arrive at the paradox that the less important Nero's crimes became to scientific historians like Bury, the more important they became to literary artists like Johnson and Wilde, for to just the degree that Nero's tortures seemed to lose their historical purpose they appeared to gain the ludic "purposiveness" of Art.

Johnson could regard Nero as a great master of death and lust, moreover, precisely because the emperor lived free from

all moral prohibitions – "lived with evil in primitive unconsciousness, naked and not ashamed" (Johnson, p. 139). Thus Johnson's Nero emerges, in his primitiveness and vitality, as yet another of the fin de siècle harbingers of twentieth-century modernism, a figure whose indulgence in torture and lust looks forward in unmistakable terms to Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, (1896), himself described as "*une poche à bile, un empereur romain de la décadence*,"¹³ and to the "theater of cruelty" proclaimed by Antonin Artaud.

Like other late-Victorian celebrations of Nero, Johnson's participates at a distance in the French *culte de Néron* begun by Sade, expanded by Flaubert and Gautier and further prosecuted by Jean Lorrain.¹⁴ Yet Johnson's Nero is not without important Victorian precursors, for his portrayal of the emperor as a sort of mischievous boy fond of indulging in grisly practical jokes derives in direct terms from earlier portraits of Nero drawn by Pater, Swinburne and De Quincey. All three agree in viewing Nero not simply as a murderer but as someone for whom murder, in the phrase De Quincy made famous, was one of the fine arts; like Johnson, all three see the comic possibilities in so outrageous a premise. Unlike Johnson, however, the three earlier writers betray a certain nervousness about a premise so morally dubious, and all adopt one or another formal means of distancing themselves from its outrageousness, as De Quincey does in using, for instance, two separate narrative personae in "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts."¹⁵ Only in Johnson's essay do all dramatic or explanatory frames drop away to reveal a Nero whom readers are asked to view with "fellow-feeling" and to see in the emperor's murderous lusts a magnified image of their own childish passions.

De Quincey explores the comic possibilities of crime not only in the celebrated first essay on murder (he wrote a second and less successful essay on murder in 1839) but in an essay on Nero written for a series on the Caesars (both of which Johnson cites in his own essay, pointing out that De Quincey's lesser-known treatment of Nero is really a companion piece to the famous essay). The broad element in De Quincey's comedy has always been, of course, that same unruffled tone of moral anomaly we associate with Swift's *Modest Proposal*:

The subject chosen ought to be in good health: for it is absolutely barbarous to murder a sick person, who is usually quite unable to bear it. On this principle, no Cockney ought to be chosen who is above twenty-five, for after that age he is sure to be dyspeptic. Or at least, if a man will hunt in that warren, he ought to murder a couple at one time . . . ("Murder," p. 213).

The tone is sustained in turn by an exquisite vocabulary of aesthetic appreciation, of connoisseurship – "grouping," "scenical effect," "a warm and sanguinary colouring," etc. – applied to the rank butcheries of the murderer's trade.

De Quincey's premise of connoisseurship in crime was to

9. See R. D. Brown, "Suetonius, Symonds, and Gibbon in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*," *Modern Language Notes*, 71 (1956), 264.

10. Wilde, "Pen, Pencil and Poison: A Study in Green" [1889, 1891] in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 339-40.

11. Wilde, "The Decay of Lying" [1889, 1891] in Ellmann, p. 314.

12. Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young" [1894] in

Ellmann, p. 434.

13. Quoted in Arthur Symonds, "A Symbolist Farce" in *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p. 376.

14. See Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. Angus Davidson, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 190, 362.

15. [De Quincey], "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 21 (Feb. 1827), 199.

lead in an obvious way to a similar theme in such writings as Oscar Wilde's "Pen, Pencil and Poison," R. L. Stevenson's "The Suicide Club," and, more covertly, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. Yet the very same premise – "that a transaction, which, morally considered, was shocking, and without a leg to stand upon," as De Quincey's lecturer put it, "when tried by the principles of Taste, turns out to be a very meritorious performance" ("Murder," p. 201) – was in a less apparent way to sustain Swinburne's portrait of Nero in *Poems and Ballads, First Series* (1866). For in Swinburne's "Dolores" we encounter a Nero who is above all a connoisseur in death and pain:

When, with flame all around him aspirant,
 Stood flushed, as a harp-player stands,
 The implacable beautiful tyrant,
 Rose-crowned, having death in his hands;
 And a sound as the sound of loud water
 Smote far through the flight of the fires,
 And mixed with the lightning of slaughter
 A thunder of lyres.

Yet it is clear at the same time that Swinburne has dispensed with De Quincey's crude explanatory frame: Nero is presented in "Dolores" as a "beautiful implacable tyrant" without any obvious moral judgment being passed. To critics who objected, Swinburne was to answer that this showed just how love-crazed the narrator of "Dolores" was,¹⁶ and we can see with less difficulty today that the narrator's obsessed and savage perspective does indeed form an explanatory frame, albeit an implicit one, for the portrayal of Nero as artist:

On sands by the storm never shaken,
 Nor wet from the washing of tides;
 Nor by foam of the waves overtaken
 Nor winds that the thunder bestrides;
 But red from the print of thy paces,
 Made smooth for the world and its lords,
 Ringed round with a flame of fair faces,
 Made splendid with swords.

The sands of the gladiatorial arena, in short, are the sands of a shore from which nature (storm, tide, waves, wind) has been banished precisely so that Nero may fill Rome with another sort of storm created by his own artistic genius, the "lightning" of slaughter and the "thunder" of lyres.

Swinburne thus summons up the traditional image of Nero as self-deluded musician and poet in order to suggest that the emperor's genuine accomplishment was his discovery of a new artistic medium, human flesh. This is the antinomianism, the *renversement* that we expect to find in Decadent literature. Yet

to take the mad emperor at his own word is inescapably to return to De Quincey's more obviously comic premise, and this is what lends Swinburne's portrait its overtones of ludic derangement. Thus, for instance, Swinburne is able to compress all the broader effects of De Quincey's humor into a single sardonic pun: "When thy gardens were lit with live torches." That is, Swinburne takes the miserable, crucified, wax-besmeared *but still living* Christians of Tacitus' account and sublimates them away into the twinkling lights of a Roman pleasure garden.¹⁷ As the compression of his pun is meant to suggest, Swinburne believed Nero's gift in torture was for a stunning economy of means. For Nero's live torches punished, warned, illuminated and, if Tacitus is to be believed, amused all at the same time.¹⁸

Throughout Johnson's essay on Nero, as when he speaks of "the employment of Christians as garden-torches" (Johnson, p. 137), we are aware of Swinburne's influence. Yet we are more immediately aware of the influence of Pater, and here a complication arises: throughout his portrayal of ancient Rome in *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), Pater is attempting to suppress or deny the influence of Swinburne on his own writing, and along with that influence all implications of a diseased or unhealthy aestheticism. The emperor of Rome in the time of Pater's *Marius* is Aurelius, and the deranged tyrant of Swinburne's poem appears only as a presence offstage, revealing by oblique and ironic contrast everything the enlightened Aurelius is not. Yet we are always aware in *Marius* that Nero's criminality haunts Aurelius's enlightened and philosophic Rome: the one is the enabling condition of the other.

So it is that the traces of Nero's rule in *Marius* constantly impinge upon and subvert its idealizing portrait of Aurelius. In the amphitheater, for instance, there is "a trellis-work of silver – gilt and amber, precious gift of Nero."¹⁹ The full import of the detail dawns only when we realize that this is the very screen behind which Nero had negligently viewed his bloody games, reluctant to preside openly, says Suetonius, yet unwilling to miss the sport. "The philosophic emperor," says Pater of Aurelius, "having no great taste for sport, and asserting here a personal scruple, had greatly changed all that," the "that" referring to human slaughter (*Marius*, I, 239-40). Yet as *Marius* comes to realize, the philosophic emperor, though occupying himself behind a "screen" of official paperwork, is no less than Nero fully present at the gladiatorial arena and indifferent to the slaughter he sees there.

Throughout *Marius*, that is to say, Pater ostensibly sets out to describe Aurelius' epoch as if it were an enlightened window between the blank Neronian terror that preceded it and the savagery that followed: "The time has been and was to come again" when the Roman arena witnessed human slaughter

16. Swinburne, "Notes on Poems and Reviews," *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, ed. Edmund Gosse and T. J. Wise, 20 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1926), XVI, 360. Swinburne adopted the traditional moralized view of Nero in a later group of poems, "The Emperor's Progress: A Study in Three Stages (On the Busts of Nero in the Uffizi)," (*Studies in Song*, 1880).

17. Tacitus says that when daylight failed the Christians were burned in the way of a light [or torch] at night: *ubi defecisset dies in usum nocturni luminis urerentur* (*Annalium*, XV, 44). Merivale translates the Tacitus as "set on fire to serve as torches by night" (Merivale, VI, 168).

18. It was precisely because the Marquis de Sade lacked Nero's sense of artistic compression that Swinburne (in a letter to R. M. Milnes) disallowed his claim to be a great artist: "Shew me the point, the pleasure in all this, as a man of genius ought to *in a few touches*," as Swinburne mockingly adjured Sade, concluding his harangue, "You, a Roman of the later empire? Nero knows nothing of you." *Swinburne Letters*, I, 55, 57. My emphasis.

19. Pater, *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1913), I, 235.

(*Marius*, I, 238). Yet a confusion of details always ensures that the absent Nero presides in the Aurelian amphitheater, for Pater makes the descriptions of Nero's human tortures (the tortures Aurelius no longer allows in the amphitheater) far more vivid than the animal slaughter that Aurelius permits and Marius actually sees. In the same way, the highly ambiguous "absence" of Nero in Aurelius' amphitheater makes it difficult to remember whether it is human or "merely" animal creatures who produce the "certain great red patches" (*Marius*, I, 235) that soak into the clean sand before Aurelius. The coy indirection of the phrase "great red patches" arises, we should normally want to say, not from the Paterian narrator, but from the aesthetic consciousness of Marius' friend Flavian, for the earlier part of the passage has dwelled upon Flavian's imagined delight in both the bright and the opalescent colors of the crowded amphitheater, and clearly in the radical aesthete's *monde visible* blood will be registered, first of all, as simple redness. Yet this cannot serve to explain Pater's other indirections in an identical vein – as when the narrator himself lists among the tortures abolished by Aurelius "Nero's living bonfires" (*Marius*, I, 239).

One explanation of the phrase, obviously enough, is that the narrator of *Marius* is at this moment silently appropriating both Swinburne's pun and the skewed perspective on torture that follows from it, but this in turn cannot serve to explain the change from Swinburne's "torches" to Pater's "bonfires." It is not enough to say that Pater here is once again suppressing Swinburne's influence on him. The answer, I think, and one that goes far to explain both the peculiar register of Paterian irony and the ideal of writing he sets forth in his essay "Style," is that he is punning with a serious purpose, attempting to restore to a word "all its latent figurative expression" (*Marius*, I, 96). Pater, that is to say, writes "living bonfires" to gain a further, etymological pun on the word's original meaning of "bonfires," fires made out of bones.²⁰ Here in an isolated moment we have, in short, the whimsically perverse humor, at times even verging on a delicate sadism, that runs throughout Pater's *oeuvre*, as when, for instance, the narrator of *Marius* describes Roman public torture as "so to speak, the novel-reading of that age" –

a current help provided for sluggish imaginations, in regard, for instance, to grisly accidents, such as might happen to one's self; but with every facility for comfortable inspection. Scaevola might watch his own hand, consuming, crackling, in the fire, in the person of a culprit, willing to redeem his life by an act so delightful to the eyes, the very ears, of a curious public. If the part of Marsyas was called for, there was a criminal condemned to lose his skin. It might be almost edifying to study minutely the expression of his face, while the assistants corded and pegged him to the bench,

cunningly; the servant of the law waiting by, who, after one short cut with his knife, would slip the man's leg from his skin, as neatly as if it were a stocking . . . (*Marius*, I, 239).

Though Pater's silken ironies here refine upon the broader humor of Swinburne and De Quincey, they are clearly being sustained by an identical comic premise of torture as a fine art. Somewhat less obvious perhaps is the explanatory frame Pater is using to control the premise, which is to invoke a species of aesthetic conscience. Unlike the crowds in Nero's amphitheater, Marius fails to find the ingenious contrivances of torture "edifying" or "delightful," because he has become a "humble follower of the bodily eye" (*Marius*, I, 241). That is to say, Marius has refined his aesthetic sensibility to such a degree that it can now serve him as a moral guide to experience. Marius would see no wit or art in a "crackling"²¹ hand or a "stocking" of human skin because a purely aesthetic sense would tell him, "This, and this, is what you may not look upon!" (*Marius*, I, 243).

In Johnson's essay on Nero, however, all such explanatory frames have fallen away. Instead Johnson summons up a vision of Nero unmediated by anachronistic ideas of Victorian conscience, a Nero who "lived out his life of flesh and blood, without the knowledge of good as a possible thing having entered his mind" (Johnson, p. 139), and implicit in this is an appeal to the new scientific historiography and its guiding principle of objectivity. For Nero can be reclaimed as a mischievous boy only by a world prepared to drop its moral and aesthetic preconceptions and to attempt to see the past, in Ranke's famous phrase, "as it actually was" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*). Yet no less implicit in Johnson's essay is a contrary desire to reassert Nero's claims as an intense individual personality – to reassert, that is, the very power of individuality which Mommsen's impersonal historiography of the later Empire had so decisively set aside. So it is that Johnson's portrayal of Nero can simultaneously look back with a perverse nostalgia to the moralizing historiography of Arnold and Merivale, and to its reassuring belief in the historical significance of individual human actions.

In the conflicting impulses or self-divided nature of Johnson's essay, then, we may recognize a central element of literary Decadence: its anxiety to preserve treasured bits of the past while at the same time exposing the larger inheritance of past culture to attack and destruction. The Decadent humanist, to borrow Renato Poggioli's witty formulation, "yearns for the salvation of culture but the yearning itself is hardly more than a wishful thought. Thus that salvation reduces itself to salvage alone."²² Johnson's essay is anxiously divided between the desire for a liberating new historical objectivity and an al-

out, this change is curious because Pater retained it in the 3rd edition when he otherwise took great care to clarify the narrator's ironic attitude toward torture and gladiatorial combat. That Pater's irony was misunderstood is suggested by George Moore's remark in *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888) apropos of *Marius*, "I too love the great pagan world, its bloodshed, its slaves, its injustice, its loathing of all that is feeble," though Moore's remark is not without its own ironic edge.

22. Poggioli, "Qualis Artifex Pater! or Barbarism and Decadence," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 13 (1959), 145.

20. Pater's etymological recuperation of "bonfires" recalls a Neronian if probably apocryphal story told of him as Tutor of Brasenose: although nominally charged with maintaining discipline in the college, Pater did not object when the students ignited bonfires in the Brasenose quadrangle because, he said, "they lighted up the spire of St. Mary's so beautifully." See A. C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 184.

21. The word "crackling" was inserted in the second edition of *Marius* (Nov. 1885). See Edmund Chandler, *Pater on Style: An Examination of the Essay on "Style" and the Textual History of "Marius the Epicurean"* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1958), p. 77. As Chandler points

legiance to such older values as belief in the transforming power of Art and artistic personality. This is the context within which Johnson's Nero must be seen as an apocalyptic figure. For the moment that Merivale's villainous emperor passes over into Johnson's mischievous boy is, as Arthur Symons realized after seeing Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, an epochal moment for civilization: "the artificial, when it has gone the full circle, comes back to the primitive; des Esseintes relapses into the Red Indian" (Symons, p. 310). The Nero of the fin de siècle avant-garde, with his playful tortures and what Johnson's colleague Herbert Horne called "his huge barbaric lust of art,"²³ thus begins to merge with the primitive enemies of civilization. Nero lives, that is to say, in the seam between high civilization and homicidal barbarism, the erotic seam Roland Barthes saw to lie between the idea of civilization and the idea of its destruction.²⁴

De Quincey had long ago made the witty argument that

Rome did not fall from external attack but from such barbarians within the city as the emperor Nero.²⁵ But if Nero is the imperial barbarian who betrays Rome from within it, then Decadent writers themselves, recovering Nero in the name of Art, also represent a betrayal of civilization from within. For the tradition of humane learning that Swinburne, Pater and Johnson represent has, in their recuperation of Nero as the playful artist of torture, the great master of death and lust, been turned against humane ends. Or at least so most Victorians would have said. With our relativist tolerance and our more appreciative estimate of the modernist aesthetic we may wish to say merely that these three writers joined in creatively reinterpreting Nero's dying words, construing *qualis artifex pereo* as "What an artist lives in me!"

Köln, West Germany

Genre and Perspective in the Study of Victorian Women Writers: The Case of Elizabeth Missing Sewell*

Patrick Scott

In a recent review, Martha Vicinus suggested that we need to turn our attention from the well-known nineteenth-century pro-feminist writers towards their less well-known anti-feminist sisters.¹ There are, however, some real difficulties in such refocusing because of the very success of recent feminist criticism in changing the way we try to read nineteenth-century texts. The study of Victorian women writers, like the broader field of Victorian studies, has been through two distinct stages since the palmy, expansionist days of the sixties. In the first phase, in the first energy from throwing off New Critical restraint and going beyond the traditional lists of great authors, both feminists and Victorianists generally read very widely, and almost indiscriminately, tracking the previously suspect thematic and ideological concerns through a host of major and minor authors, fascinated alike by the foreshadowings and contrasts these offered when reread in the light of modern preoccupations. Of course, it was those greater writers who seemed most ideologically sympathetic who attracted the most attention; just as newly-politicized Victorianists were more attentive to Carlyle than to Pater, so newly-feminized Victorianists were more attentive to George Eliot or Charlotte Brontë than to Mrs. Gaskell, and the teaching canon increasingly reflected these sympathies. Nonetheless, at the research level a very broad context of ideologically *unsympathetic* writing was being

reexamined, and dissertations and articles bristled with an almost Browningsque splutter of vivid and particular detail, empirical riches glistening compellingly even where the interpretative setting was crude, slight or moralistic.

The second phase has been in part a reaction against the methodological and theoretical innocence of the first. It seems to me undeniable that both historians and literary critics are now less literal-minded about Victorian text than they used to be; it really *was* a great leap forward from the old-fashioned plot-summary-with-political-comments to such a recent book as Gilbert and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic*, with its fundamentally psychostructural emphasis and its verbal self-consciousness. But there have been losses as well as gains. The New-New Criticism demands a psychological total immersion in the texts it examines, and in practice it works best where the critic can posit (or invent through strong reinterpretation) deep ideological sympathy in every work studied. These conditions simply don't obtain for the study of most Victorian minor or anti-feminist women writers, and while this second phase in feminist criticism has undoubtedly multiplied the meaningfulness of Victorian women's writing, it has also, not coincidentally, narrowed the canon within which that meaningfulness is to be sought. I don't, of course, think that this development is peculiar to the criticism of Victorian women

23. Horne, ["Editor's Preface"], *Nero and Other Plays*, ed Herbert P. Horne (London: Vizetelly, 1888), p. 7.

24. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 7.

25. See [De Quincey], "Philosophy of Roman History," *Blackwoods's Edinburgh Magazine*, 46 (Nov. 1839), 644-53.

* This essay was first published in slightly different form in *Postscript: Publication of the Philological Association of the Carolinas*, 1 (1983), 15-26.

1. Martha Vicinus, in *Victorian Studies*, 24 (Spring 1981), 370.

authors, for the shift from a fundamentally historical to a more textual-structural approach has affected for better or worse nearly all ideologically selfconscious study of Victorian literature.

So, while it is certainly time, as Vicinus suggests, to start raiding out again beyond the favored canon and reexamining some of those Victorian women who have lately been left on the library shelf, the newer critical methodologies seem somehow inappropriate to the task. We're too sophisticated now to pay much heed to the comments the literalist, first-phase critics made about the major authors, but often we allow to stand unreconsidered their negative judgments on minor figures or their cursory dismissal of apparent anti-feminists; we seem to have kept the canon they selected even though we would now look down on the methodological innocence with which they selected it. In first-phase criticism, minor writers were often judged by their explicit comments on women's issues, and because novels are inconveniently indirect, these explicit comments often had to be taken from non-literary contexts or biographical sources. By contrast, the much more sympathetic treatment which second-phase critics have accorded the major Victorian women writers has focused on the implicit, structural patterns of single great imaginative texts. This leaves us now in a critical impasse; it is now, I think, too late to imagine that we can ever again approach the minor and anti-feminist Victorians by politely repressing our expectations about their ideological position, in some kind of artificial historical neutrality. We can best begin to look at them again by introducing another variable into the critical equation.

The variable that I am here concerned with is this: alongside the gendrifcation of modern critical interest, we can place also another undoubted historical fact, the gendrifcation of Victorian published opinion.² The mid-Victorian period was the great age of cheap printing, and the incredible variety of print media created a great variety of contexts for opinion. Without any conscious hypocrisy, the balance of a writer's opinion on some ideologically-charged matter came out very differently if she were writing a religious tract for free distribution to the poor, or an historical tale for children, or a contribution to an on-going debate in a serious review, or an adult novel, or a letter to an old friend. A Victorian educator, for instance, is far more likely to sound off intransigently on the indispensability of religious schooling in an article for a diocesan magazine than in the religiously-neutral *School Board Gazette*, where a more moderate stance would probably be more effective; the odds are that for a minor figure, the historical critic will have taken his 3 x 5 note from the more colorful source, and will have quoted the extremism rather than the balanced opinion. The nuances of genre-influence get forgotten. However principled we may

be, contexts affect the way we say things, and contexts frequently determine, because they usually suggest, the things we will choose to say. If we are to renew or expand our understanding of Victorian thought, on almost any issue, we must first come to terms with this fundamental fact of the Victorian publishing scene, the gendrifcation of printed opinion.

One Victorian woman writer who well illustrates this idea is Elizabeth Missing Sewell, a varied, a complex, and an interesting minor writer, whose reputation has long suffered from premature categorization. I suppose she is best known, if that phrase doesn't sound too ironic, as a religious novelist, a fictional propagandist for Tractarian beliefs, a lesser Charlotte Mary Yonge, a female Francis Paget or William Gresley.³ Certainly, that was the connection in which I first started collecting her works as an undergraduate in the mid-sixties. As the *Churchman's Family Magazine* noted in 1866, she "always takes care that the exemplary heroine shall be a sound Churchwoman, and shall at proper intervals throw out hints of the comfort and support which she derives from the Church services."⁴ Her early novels all appeared anonymously, "by a Lady," under the editorship of her elder brother William Sewell, a pugnaciously-Tractarian Oxford don, and her commitment to fiction-writing was certainly made psychologically easier by her belief in its didactic function. Even though, as the Victorian progressive quarterly, the *Prospective Review*, noted approvingly, her novels' "Anglican dress hangs quite loosely upon them,"⁵ there's no doubt that this labelling, as a Tractarian or Puseyite novelist, has limited the way in which her books have been read, both in her time and in ours.

Secondly, her reputation has suffered from her categorization as children's author. Her early works such as *Stories on the Lord's Prayer* (1840, in periodical form), *Amy Herbert* (1844), and *Laneton Parsonage, a tale . . . on the practical use of a portion of the Church Catechism* (1846-48, in three parts) — these were all designedly for children; they made their sales as gifts and prizes, and favorable reviewers throughout her life often introduced her works with some such kiss-of-death praise as "a peculiarly safe and trustworthy guide for young minds."⁶ As reviewers condescendingly noted, "stories for children present the readiest mode for modest talent to feel its way and make experiment of its powers."⁷ But Miss Sewell's children's novels are really just that, experiments of her powers, apprenticeships to writing, and in the eighteen-fifties, beginning with her very important autobiographical novel, *The Experience of Life* (1853), she focused her fiction almost exclusively on the adult dilemmas of the unmarried Victorian woman. *The Experience of Life* was, significantly, her first novel to be published under her own name, and its appearance in her thirty-eighth year signals a deliberate change of creative emphasis, yet liter-

2. "Gendrifcation" is from Geoffrey Hartman, "Shakespeare Gendrifed," *New York Times Book Review*, March 22, 1981, p. 11. For the gendrifcation of Victorian publishing, I am drawing on my "Victorian Religious Periodicals: 'Fragments that Remain,'" *Materials, Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History: Studies in Church History*, XI, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), 325-339.

3. See, e.g., Joseph E. Baker, *The Novel and the Oxford Movement* (orig. 1933; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), pp. 116-126; Margaret Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace: A Survey of the Religious Novel in the Victorian Age* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 41-47; Robert

Lee Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), pp. 140-147. A similar Victorian judgment is "Sewell's Religious Novels," *North American Review*, 65 (1847), 348-366.

4. "Mr. and Miss Sewell," from *Churchman's Family Magazine*, in *Living Age*, 88 (1866), 453.

5. "Puseyite Novels," *Prospective Review*, 6 (1850), 518.

6. "Ivors, and other tales," *Christian Remembrancer*, 33 (1857), 291.

7. P. 306.

ary historians of all preoccupations tend still to pigeonhole her as a children's author, "juvenile alike in morality and experience."⁸

Thirdly, Miss Sewell has in most recent commentary been prematurely categorized as to her views on what Victorians called, perhaps misleadingly, the "question of sex" – that is, women's proper sphere and proper education. It is not my intention in this paper casuistically to deny that she regularly wrote on these issues with self-consciously conservative dogmatism, but simply to acknowledge that and then put her back on the shelf is to cheat, historically speaking. Modern commentators on her novels generally stress her advocacy of submissiveness for women.⁹ An example would be the teaching of an early book like *Amy Herbert* that "we can all learn to submit to whatever is the will of God."¹⁰ One might contrast with the liberating fantasies of the Brontëan imagination Miss Sewell's comments on day-dreams in her *Laneton Parsonage*: "you must make strict rules against day dreams . . . if we indulge ourselves in fancying how it would be if we were to obtain our wishes; then the wishes become stronger, and . . . at last we act."¹¹ There are more directly hair-raising comments, too, in her book *Principles of Education drawn from Nature and Revelation and applied to Female Education in the Upper Classes* (1865); she advocated an essentially moral and domestic (and, incidentally literary) education, rather than a strenuously academic one. She opposed the new "reign of pedantry" that required public academic examinations for girls as for boys, because women, she asserted, didn't need that academic competitiveness for after-life: they are "formed . . . by God" simply "to be man's comfort, . . . the adornment of his daily existence."¹² She loved to cite to her pupils the advice of the Church Catechism that we should "do our duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us," and she commented acidly on more progressive contemporaries that "it almost seems to me as I watch the spirit of the age, that the chief object of some of its energetic women teachers is to do their duty in that state of life to which God did *not* call them."¹³ One of her last books, the *Notebook of an Elderly Lady* (1881), includes a

dialogue arguing against extending the suffrage to women.¹⁴

Yet this categorization as an anti-feminist does not square with the unavoidable tenor of Miss Sewell's own life. Her father had died in 1842, when she was twenty-seven, and because of a recent series of financial failures, he left his widow and four unmarried daughters with only the house and a much-diminished income. The sons, Elizabeth's brothers, though all were gifted enough to rate inclusion, like her, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, were financially feckless, and from 1844, with the success of *Amy Herbert*, Miss Sewell was the chief breadwinner for the female part of the family. She was, she wrote later, "under a great pressure of pecuniary anxiety and personal responsibility," and she claimed it "crushed any feeling except that of momentary pleasure connected with the success of my books."¹⁵ From the mid-eighteen-forties, she and her sister ran a small private girls' school in their home, and in 1866 she founded and for the next forty years controlled a church school for middle-class girls, St. Boniface's, in Ventnor, a girls' equivalent of the contemporary movements for boys' middle-class schooling led by J. L. Brereton and Nathaniel Woodard;¹⁶ in an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1870, she confessed she had in her mind "a network of St. Boniface schools gradually spreading over the country," just as Brereton had founded a nationwide county schools movement and Woodard the national network of the Woodard Corporation.¹⁷ In that school, she in fact introduced the new academic examinations she argued against in her more theoretical writings. Perhaps more revealingly, in the early eighteen-fifties, she made herself financially independent of the rest of her family, buying a house in her own name and establishing independent savings for her old age; this financial move seems to be connected with the change in creative focus to novels of adult life. In short, though she never ceased to live with her family, and though she never moved away from the island on which she had been brought up, Miss Sewell probably earned for herself more real independence, and took a more independent role in public affairs, than did any of the Brontë sisters.

How does one resolve these apparent contradictions between

8. Baker, as in n. 3, p. 116; J. S. Bratton, in *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 168, while stressing Sewell's continuing didacticism, makes clear that in the fifties she "moved into the realm of the novel."
9. See, e.g., Vineta Colby, *Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 180-182; Maison, as in n. 3, pp. 45-46. For a recent revisionist view, see Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 144-147.
10. [E. M. Sewell], *Amy Herbert*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1844), II, 61.
11. [E. M. Sewell], *Laneton Pasonage . . . Second Part*, 3rd edition (London: Longman, 1848), p. 221.
12. E. M. Sewell, "The Reign of Pedantry in Girls's Schools," *Nineteenth Century*, 23 (1888), 216-238; p. 221.
13. *Autobiography of Elizabeth M. Sewell*, ed. Eleanor L. Sewell (London: Longmans Green, 1908), p. 203. Something of the complexity of summarizing Miss Sewell's position can be seen by noting that she used the same Catechism phrasing as the weapon of an oppressive and domineering aunt over a perfectly dutiful niece in *The Experience of Life* (London: Longman, 1853), p. 238.
14. A different interpretation of this dialogue, as politically ambivalent, is proposed in Sarah C. Frerichs, "Elizabeth Missing Sewell: Concealment and Revelation in a Victorian Everywoman," in *Approaches to Victorian*

Autobiography, ed. George P. Landow (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 175-199; p. 197, where it is even claimed that Miss Sewell "unwittingly wins the reader's sympathies to the feminist side."

15. *Autobiography*, p. 80. Bratton (p. 164) states that the father left an annual income of £500 p.a. (more than adequate – the Carlyles never spent more than £300 p.a. throughout their life, yet kept servants and a pony in London, while an average curate's salary was £70-100 p.a.); this statement seems to be based on a misreading of the *Autobiography*, p. 71, where £500 is the family's estimated income from all sources, including the rental from the house, the brothers' unreliable contributions, and Elizabeth's authorial and educational earnings. The *DNB* entry (supplement 1901-1910, pp. 293-295, based on "private information") says that the father died "deep in debt," and that the children had not only to support themselves but also to pay off the creditors.
16. Cf. Brian Heeny, *Mission to the Middle Classes: the Woodard Schools, 1848-1891* (London: S.P.C.K., 1969), and J. R. de S. Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe: the Development of the Public Schools in the 19th Century* (London: Millington, 1977), ch. 2.
17. E. M. Sewell, "An Experiment in Middle-Class Education," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 25 (1870), 229-237; p. 247. For background on girls' schooling in the sixties, see Nonita Glenday and Mary Price, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: A Century of Head Mistresses, 1874-1974* (London: Pitman, 1974), esp. ch. 1.

the anti-feminist ideology of submissiveness that I have cited earlier, and Miss Sewell's admittedly dutiful and responsible but very far from submissive life? First of all, I think, one must recognize for minor figures like Miss Sewell what is increasingly understood for such major figures as Charlotte Brontë or George Eliot, that we can rarely expect to make any neat or consistent summary of a Victorian writer's views on the "question of sex." Victorians had, for better or worse, the same protean multiplicity of imaginings about sexual roles that still affect us in the late twentieth century. Victorian self-contradictions may be different from the contradictions we find in ourselves, but the experience of self-contradictoriness is surely one we recognize as historically probable. Sarah Frerichs, in an interesting recent study of Elizabeth Sewell's *Autobiography* and published *Journals*, has traced out just how ambivalent and self-contradictory her ideas about the role of women could be, and Frerichs argues, in fact, for a kind of repressed profeminist Sewell, revealed chiefly through anecdote and imagery and irony and subjunctive imaginings.¹⁸ But this, it seems to me, is to melodramatize a rather unmelodramatic woman, and arbitrarily to assert that one aspect of her character was the "real" person, when all aspects were "real." We simply can't expect whole Victorian minds, whole life-times and whole *oeuvres*, to display such unity and coherence.

But, secondly, there is another general point to be considered as we view these contradictions, my introductory idea about genrification. It is very significant that, to make the profeminist case, Frerichs deals chiefly with adult-audience, personal-voice writing, the *Autobiography* and *Journals*, while the conventional anti-feminist label has largely been established with reference to the avowedly juvenile-audience, didactic works. In some sense, the genre within which Miss Sewell was writing probably dictated the openness or dogmatism with which she discussed this issue. Her *Principles of Education* must be understood, not as a timeless piece of argumentation, but with reference to its original genre and context, as a defense of smaller, domestically-oriented church schools, like her own, against the pressures of larger schools and a more secular curriculum. Her hair-curling remarks about the proper role of women were first published in James Knowles's late Victorian monthly, the *Nineteenth Century*, a periodical that had been expressly designed for the liberal clerisy's game of almost-artificially abstract and extreme debate; even in that forum, one should note, Miss Sewell prefaced her *credo* with the warning that woman "is not called to be man's slave – very far from it," and accompanied her remarks with the explicit recognition that she was a woman "belonging to the past," and that her opinions "must run counter to the opinions" of most woman educators.¹⁹ Conversely, one might note that the more visionary and positive ideas about girls' schooling, from the *Macmillan's* article, were being published in a magazine that was editorially-liberal in both politics and religion, and which normally took a lighter, less abstract tone than the intellectual reviews; for *Macmillan's*, Miss Sewell cast her ideas into the confessional form of a letter from one lady to another, about the hopes,

needs and practical experiences involved in establishing a middle-class church school. To some degree, the confessional genre encouraged her visionary ambitiousness, and encouraged her to sidestep the abstract issues.

Broadly speaking, one finds in Miss Sewell's writings a generically-ordered division between, on the one hand, the more consistent and better articulated, but ideologically more limited, positions taken in her children's books and in public non-fiction prose, and, on the other hand, the much more exploratory, sympathetic and ironically multiperspectival complex of attitudes taken in her autobiographical writings and her adult fiction. And one might be tempted to leave the question at this point. It is always comforting for the literary professional to find that art is better than non-art, and one might justify the position by identifying my broad division of her writings as being between the socially-determined non-art genres, which are relatively conservative, and the individually-determined or artistic genres, which are relatively liberal or progressive. Imaginative literature, on that argument, retains its romantic, prophetic role, helping the individual artist to transcend the conventions of her time and place. There's an element of truth in the position, provided that one recognizes that the realist novel is always likely to educe from its author a more centrist ideological position than abstract non-fictional prose, which may seem extremist to left as well as right, and provided one recognizes also that poetry and the romance are likely to educe from the writer more individualist and extremist perspectives than is the realist, and therefore socially-dependent, mainstream novel. But even after such qualifications, I should still want to argue that the question of the genrification of opinion is more complex than that: literary genres, especially the mid-Victorian novel, are highly formulaic, and their structural and stylistic formulae, whether psychological Gothic or domestic realism, are in their implicit value systems probably more determining than such non-imaginative, less-formulaic genres as the periodical article, initiated and developed in the early nineteenth century for the conscious deployment of explicit moral, sociopolitical and aesthetic judgments.

Two examples from Miss Sewell's writings will serve to bring out this final paradox about genrification and attitude. Among Miss Sewell's minor works, still unexamined by modern critics, is a school textbook of dictation-exercises, and there, of all places, one would expect to find safe, moralistic and antifeminist statements, or at least safe Church-of-England religious opinions. The exercises are a series of short essays and letters between female friends, each designed to include as many examples as possible of a single group of spelling difficulties. But the game of making up prose on such arbitrary principles, even for schoolroom use, seems, far from determining total propriety, actually to have released a vein of playfulness, and even aggressiveness, in Miss Sewell's imagination. For instance, one letter is headed "Rome, April, 1865" (for this school text has its dutiful students escaping to a continental grand tour), and it begins:

18. Frerichs, as in n. 14 above. Frerich's Brown dissertation abstract (*DAI*, 35, 1975, p. 7303-A) takes a more moderate line, but asserts "she nevertheless prepared the ground for militant advocates of women's

rights."

19. Sewell, as in n. 12, pp. 220-221 and p. 216.

My dear friend – What an *inflammable* and *incomprehensible* jumble was your last letter! If my new friend was *immoral*, *irreclaimable*, and *irreverent*, you could not use stronger *invectives*. Your anger is *incommensurable* with the cause; indeed, it is *inexpressibly infantile*.²⁰

None of Miss Sewell's fictional heroines would ever have allowed herself such uninhibitedly headlong emotion. Other letters describe dining with a young man off champagne and chops in a cheap cafe in Paris; report collecting particulars about cere-cloths and cerements and Egyptian funeral ceremonies, in hopes of contributing to the *Cornhill Magazine*, "though I should much prefer being a *Times* correspondent;" and reflect with quite unTractarian charity on the disturbing noise from the customary singing at the constant services of a contiguous dissenting conventicle, that "it is a consolatory thought that the congregation are contented."²¹ This extraordinary genre, the school textbook, even allows Miss Sewell to take an uncompromising stand on sexual identity, in a pen-sketch of the writer's giggling friend Constance Carey:

Constance is devoted to *croquet*, and I am *convinced* that, in a quiet way, she would be a *coquette*; but it is no use to *coquet* with me for I am devoted to *celibacy*, and *coquetry* has no effect on me. It may not be *criminal*, but it makes me *cynical* and *contentious*, and increases my inclination to *cavil* and behave like a *captious curmudgeon*.²²

A very stable, and socially-safe, publication form, the schoolbook, has allowed, then, the expression of liberatingly anti-social attitudes.

Conversely, the theoretically less-determining genre of the adult novel may, in fact, have been more constraining than the writer realized. It has not, I think, been previously noted that *The Experience of Life* was, at least in part, conceived as a response to and repudiation of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, a sort of *Northanger Abbey* to mid-Victorian female Gothic. The outraged conservative-religious response to the Brontë novel, as exemplified by Lady Eastlake's review in the *Quarterly*, is well-known, and Miss Sewell appears to have shared in that response, even while recognizing the imaginative power of the book and the autobiographical genre. In her journal for June 9th, 1857, after reading "Mrs. Gaskell's Life of Miss Brontë," she noted, "Years ago, when *Jane Eyre* came out I read it. People said it was coarse, and I felt it was, but I felt also that . . . the moral of the story was intended to be good; but that it failed in detail." (She goes on to praise "Miss" Brontë for showing "a man's energy and power of will and passionate impulse," and to find her wanting only "in the religious element.")²³ Miss Sewell's *The Experience of Life* can be seen as a Tractarian-celibate-domestic rewriting of Charlotte Brontë's Evangelical-passionate-Gothic. Like *Jane Eyre*, it is the autobiographical account of an unmarried Victorian woman in uncertain financial circumstances, but it subverts the Brontëan value-system by widening the focus both in tone and social setting. *Jane Eyre*, once we are through the opening childhood

and school chapters, covers only a few years of the heroine's life, from leaving Lowood School to marriage; the heroine has no female mentor on whom to model her behavior, in spite of her poverty she never seems to suffer any realistically-detailed small-scale practical or financial worries, and she is curiously insulated throughout from any social network – her relatives are interfering encumbrances, duly to be dispatched to death, the convent or missionary work in India, and her work as a governess keeps her geographically isolated from sustained contact with anyone but her employer, her pupil, and the odd servant. Romance sustains the novel not merely as nightmare but also as a kind of secular salvation. Miss Sewell's heroine, Sarah Mortimer, by contrast, tells her story for a real life-time, from the age of sixteen to, at least prospectively, her mid-seventies; she is surrounded by older female relatives who can serve her as a pattern or warning; her life is made up of constant practical financial fears and problems, at least until she reaches a spinster-aunt independence; and, above all, her psychic independence must be won while living with and accepting increasing responsibility for her widowed mother and her younger siblings. Many of the details of Miss Sewell's novel, like Charlotte Brontë's, are autobiographical, but with this fundamental distinction: Miss Sewell refuses the imaginative conveniences of making herself an orphan, of conjuring up a Rochester, or of ending the experience of life, as the Brontë novel does, while still in her early twenties. Miss Sewell attempts to negate the Brontë magic, too, by reappropriating to positive use some of the key names which in *Jane Eyre* signify Victorian religious oppressiveness; thus, Lowood, the cruel clergy daughters' school, becomes the name of a well-run country estate where dissenters are tolerated, and Rivers, Jane's religiously chauvinist missionary cousin, changes sex and attitude to become the still-religious but charitable and sympathetic Lady Emily Rivers. Perhaps most strikingly, Miss Sewell attempts in her opening paragraph to repudiate the tyranny of conventional plot-structure:

I am not going to write a tale [she begins] . . . [Novels are not] a real representation of human existence. For one person whose life has been marked by some very striking event, there are hundreds who pass to their graves with nothing to distinguish the different periods of their probation, but the changes which steal upon them so naturally as scarcely to occasion a momentary surprise. They hope and enjoy, they are disappointed and sad . . . They are born unthought-of beyond their own immediate circle, and die lamented only by a few; and we pass over their names in the obituary of the day with the same strange indifference with which we hear the aggregate amount of deaths in a battle.²⁴

It is a very brave, and striking, passage, nearly twenty years before George Eliot penned the famous last paragraph of *Middlemarch*, about those who "live faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs." But just as, for all its narrative omniscience and multiplot complexities and philosophical detachment, *Middlemarch* in its later volumes approximates more and more to the conventional novel, with its disputed inheri-

20. E. M. Sewell and L. B. Urbino, *Dictation Exercises*, Seventh Edition (New York: Henry Holt, 1874), pp. 143-144.

21. Pp. 98-99.

22. P. 99.

23. *Autobiography*, pp. 159-160.

24. *Experience of Life*, p. 1.

tances, haunted villain with a past, fair-haired lover, and final consummation in marriage, so Miss Sewell wrote a novel in spite of herself, in spite of her declared anti-generic aims. In the end, the demands of genre simply overrode the complexity that had been her real experience of life, and the inherent values of the autobiographical novel form – its subjectivist preoccupation with one's own psychological development and well-being – won out over the religious objectivism and concern for responsibility to others that were Miss Sewell's explicit creed. Virtually every commentator describes *The Experience of Life* as Miss Sewell's "best book," her "most successful novel,"²⁵ and so on, but what this choric unanimity really means may only be that this is the work that most closely approximates the subjectivist ideological value-system we have come to call literary. Take a passage like this, from a scene in *The Experience of Life* where Sarah is at a dinner-party at her financier brother-in-law's:

Time went on, and the dinner went on also; fish and soup, and *entremets*, and the *pièce de résistance* only equalled in massiveness by the figure of Mr. Blair behind it; and there was much talking of bank stock, and consols, and lucky speculations, with a few observations on politics as connected with mercantile safety . . . It did appear to me a dream; those mingled voices, – those words of deepest interest, – those eager faces round the long table; with the glittering silver, and glass, and the dazzling lights. Were they dreaming, or was I? Were we beings of one world, or of two? Had the things I saw about me any value, or were they mere phantoms, tinsel, delusions? . . . I thought till my senses grew dizzy.²⁶

There are brilliant technical details in that passage (the foreignness of the menu language, an underrelated pronoun so

that people seem like things, the suppressed pun on Sarah's meaning for "interest" and that of her dinner-partners), but clearly Miss Sewell meant it to be a didactic passage condemning the worldliness of commercial involvement. In the light of gendrifed criticism, we can hardly avoid noticing that the two worlds at the dinner-table are not so much this world and the next world, as a male world of business and a female world of value and imagination. But one might also suggest that it is the autobiographical genre, the basic individualist point-of-view, that has subverted Miss Sewell's moral intention, and the resulting passage comes to share in the very Brontë-ish values she was attempting through her novel to repudiate. Literary genres may, in short, exercise more of a tyranny over the moral imagination than the non-literary genres we often, rather too snobbishly, assume must be more compromised by considerations of propriety or audience.

I hope I have said enough to show that Miss Sewell is interesting, and an interesting writer, and one whose writings raise important general issues about the interpretation of Victorian ideology-in-literature. The twentieth-century British poet Keith Douglas wrote sarcastically of those who would "Simplify me when I am dead;" Miss Sewell has surely suffered such simplification. But my central argument is not really about Miss Sewell herself, or even about Victorian women writers, but rather about the importance of publishing genres for any study of Victorian ideology. In some sense, the different Victorian publishing forms created or predicated different attitudes and perspectives in their writers; the genres wrote the authors, as much as the authors the genres, and we still know too little about the generic influences in Victorian opinion.

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Rossetti's *intellegenza nova*: Perception, Poetry and Vision in *Dante at Verona*

Thomas L. Cooksey

According to his brother William Michael, Dante Gabriel Rossetti began work on *Dante at Verona* soon after finishing the initial version of "The Blessed Damozel."¹ Although it went through substantial expansion and revision before it was finally published, it shares a number of similarities with "The Blessed Damozel" and might be seen as a companion piece, treating the living lover's side of the separation. However, as the title piece of his first book of poetry (1870), *Dante at Verona* carries a heavier responsibility to Rossetti's "poetic vision." It also represents Rossetti's most explicit use of Dante

aside from his translations of the *Vita Nuova*. In places it seems little more than a pastiche of episodes and anecdotes culled from Boccaccio's *Vita di Dante* and other historical sources, a practice that has led one critic to compare it in obscurity with Browning's *Sordello*.² In fact, Rossetti takes liberties with sources in order to enlist Dante in his own poetic project. As the "The Blessed Damozel," he is concerned with the theme of exile, focusing on the separation of Dante and his beloved. But in *Dante at Verona* he expands the theme to include political exile as well – Dante's separation from his city. This, however,

25. *Maison*, p. 46; Bratton, p. 167.

26. *Experience of Life*, pp. 261-262.

1. William Michael Rossetti, ed. *Family-Letters*, I (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1885), 107. See also Oswald Doughty, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Victorian Romantic* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1949), pp. 54-55 and 576n. All references to Rossetti's poems and translations are from *The Collected*

Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. William M. Rossetti, (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1901).

2. Lionel Stevenson, *The Pre-Raphaelite Poets* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 58. See also B. J. Morse, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Dante Alighieri," *Englische Studien*, 68 (1933), 244; Florence Saunders Boos, *The Poetry of Dante G. Rossetti: A Critical Reading and Source Study* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 138.

transforms the subject to the alienation of the poet in his world, a defiant rejection of a world that is not capable of appreciating the artist.³

Yet if his Lady's home above
Was Heaven, on earth she filled his soul;
And if his City held control
To cast the body forth to rove,
The soul could sour from earth's vain throng,
And Heaven and Hell fulfill the song.

The nature of the poet's alienation is positive for it is what marks him as a poet. The very endeavor to transcend the bounds of separation leads to the creative perception of the poet.

The form of the poem underlines a fundamental conflict between the aspiration of the poet and the pull of the world, a tension between the epic and the dramatic. The first stanza echoes the traditional apparatus of the classical epic:

Of Florence and of Beatrice
Servant and singer from of old,
O'er Dante's heart in youth had toll'd
The knell that gave his Lady peace;
And now in manhood flew the dart
Wherewith his city pierced his heart.

Allusions to Virgil and Homer resonate throughout. Yet closer examinations reveal that these do not quite harmonize with the epic originals. If one untangles Rossetti's syntax, it is the knell that is the subject of the verb "had toll'd." A Vergilian narrator, singing of "arms and a man" fades into the background. The sentence indicates that the events of the poem take place long after Beatrice has died and Dante has left his city. It also departs from the epic convention that it suggests: Rossetti contrives to take Homer or Virgil one step further by removing the subjective "I" of the narrator. The center of the poem shifts from the narrator to the action; rather than singing of Dante's woes, he dramatizes them. Yet, at the same time, Rossetti's presence is felt throughout the work like a prompter underlining the points of high emotion and channeling the readers's response by his ironic commentary on the action.

Eat and wash hand, Can Grande: — scarce
We know their deeds now; hands which fed
Our Dante with that bitter bread;

The tension that Rossetti creates between subject and object, between the epic and the dramatic, may be explained in part as an echo of the formal tension that underlines the *Divine Comedy* itself. Dante is both the subject of his story and its recorder; he is dramatizing his own subjective development. Similarly, *Dante at Verona* revolves around a tension between an epic subjectivity centering on the voice of the narrator and a dramatic objectivity surrounding the perception of the action. The narrator stands over the events of the narrative like fate, directing them to their inevitable conclusions, and like fate,

underlining their irony. In being true to the purity of his vision, Rossetti's Dante is fated to be scorned and misunderstood; yet in being true, in not compromising his labor, he is destined to triumph over his opponents, even within the disappointments of his own life. Readers, from their privileged perspective, know that the historical Dante managed to transcend his time, and that those who had scorned him are now either long forgotten or themselves the object of scorn. In Dante's steadfastness, in his triumph of vision over action, Rossetti makes the poet the hero of his "epic": the creative act of Homer is greater than the deeds of Achilles; those of Dante are greater than those of Can Grande.

But despite the aspirations, the epic quality is held in tension by an encompassing form that moves in the opposite direction. The language of the poem is balladic; while the six line stanzas do not fall into a traditional ballad stanza, the rhyming of the second with the third lines and fifth with the sixth in tetrameter couplets suggests the jauntiness and lightness of the ballad. This contrasts sharply with the elevation of the subject. Indeed, the formal tension between the epic quality of the narrative and the balladic style underlines the fundamental tension of Dante's torment. He is suspended between earth and heaven, between the mundane demands of everyday life and his spiritual aspirations as a poet. The world becomes his purgatory, testing his character and purifying his vision; like that of the blessed damozel, it is marked by an absolute sense of physical separation from the beloved. In Dante's case this is twofold, involving both Beatrice and Florence.

The most telling imagery of Dante's separation is found toward the middle of the poem. In a scene that parallels the damozel's weeping at the barrier of heaven, Dante sequesters himself in his room at Can Grande's palace. Pressing his forehead against the window pane, he weeps:

Then, weeping, I think certainly
Thou hast beheld, past sight of eye, —
Within another room of thine
Where now thy body may not be
But where in thought thou still remain'st —
A window often wept against. . . .

The glass of the window: first it suggests the orientation of the poet; he has turned his back on the world, preferring to look outward. The drops of rain against the pane or the rays of light suggest the inspiration of Beatrice. Yet even though penetrated by light ("Her breath was on thy face and hair"), the glass still marks a tangible separation, an impassible barrier whose partial penetration makes its ultimate impenetrability all the more agonizing. Dante may sense the spiritual presence of Beatrice, but finally there is an unbridgeable gulf, the "dark glass" (viz. *The House of Life*) that prevents a final apprehension.⁴ But the image is more complex: not only is Dante separated from Beatrice by the glass of the window, but he is separated from the world in the enclosure of his room. Rossetti is careful to emphasize the isolation of this room from the rest of the palace

3. Ronnie Howard argues that the poet accepts estrangement as the necessary cost of spiritual purity: "Thus the poem is the record of a soul and a celebration of not selling out, in spite of the cost of integrity." *The Dark Glass* (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1972), p. 27. c.f. the Victorian myth

of Keats, George H. Ford, *Keats and the Victorians* (1944; rpt. London: Archer Books, 1962), pp. 269-70; Boos, p. 122.

4. Howard takes Beatrice as a symbol of Dante's "most intense yearnings." (p. 26)

household:

... having reached his room apart
Beyond vast lengths of palace-floor
He drew the arras round his door.

Like the window the room takes on a double meaning. It signifies both the oppressive world and the inwardness that becomes Dante's refuge. In turning toward Beatrice, both in his palace chamber and "within another room," Dante consciously turns his back on the business and comforts of the world; in effect, he can have neither one nor the other.

The iconography of this scene is consistent with that found in Rossetti's drawings of Dante on the anniversary of Beatrice's death.⁵ These show Dante in front of a window in a closed room, unwilling to be comforted by his friends and family. The image of the beloved absorbs, but also isolates him. His nature as a poet automatically alienates him from others. Thus, in a larger sense, the enclosure within the room represents a self enclosure, a turn inward. Unlike the damozel whose separation is underlined by a fundamental sense of uncertainty, Dante's represents a conscious defense against an empty world. Finding its rewards problematic, whether they be the glories of war, the banalities of court or the machinations of politics, Dante takes refuge within his vision of Beatrice and his duty to it. His final triumph in the poem is to abandon the court of Can Grande and the city of Verona, a movement from an alienating interior to a free exterior.

The real journey of the poet, however, is not physical. Rather, it is a mental journey, the result of the poet's own creative activity. Those around him, lacking his perception, are oblivious to Dante's experience:

All this, being there, we had not seen,
Seen only was the shadow wrought
On the strong features bound in
thought. . . .

Rossetti plays down the overtly mystical in favor of a more natural supernaturalism. Dante's vision is less the action of divine intervention, a bridging of the realms by Beatrice, than the result of his own creative projection. Poetry here is an active process involving a transformative perception rather than the passive reception of transcendent knowledge. In a section borrowed from the *Vita Nuova* (XLIII in Rossetti's translation), Rossetti has Dante describe the nature of his enterprise:

"It is my trust, as the years fall,
To write more worthily of her
Who now, being made God's minister,
Looks on His visage and knows all."

To this he adds in the next stanza,

... "In such trust
To labour, and believe I must
Accomplish this which my soul took
I charge, if God, my Lord and hers,
Leave my life with me a few years."

It is clear that Dante's prayer is not that of a lover seeking a physical or spiritual reunion, but that of a poet obsessed with the creation of a "moment's monument," to capture the experience of his love in a poetic form. This enterprise is a trust, a test of his own abilities, a "labour" to make himself more worthy of the task at hand. The reconciliation he seeks is between the vision and the work, and it is this that he achieves with the creation itself:

The trust which he had born in youth
Was all at length accomplished. He
At length has written worthily -

The paraphrased passage that Rossetti interpolates in *Dante at Verona* comments on the concluding sonnet of the *Vita Nuova* ("Oltre la spera . . .") in which Dante tells of having a final vision which convinces him to stop writing until he is more worthy. The sonnet moves from a state of interiority outward, from the inner realm to "Beyond the sphere which spreads to widest space . . ." The spiritual movement parallels Dante's physical movement out of Verona in Rossetti's poem. But more significantly, the nature of this movement involves for Rossetti a transformation of perception. He translates Dante's "intellegenza nova" as "new perception":

Beyond the sphere which spreads to widest space
Now soars the sigh that my heart sends above:
A new perception born of grieving Love
Guideth it upward the untrodden ways.

The choice of "perception" focuses attention on the *how* of the poetic vision rather than the *what*. Rossetti's equation of perception with mystical intelligence suggests a strong Blakean influence; the seat of vision resides in the creative imagination of the poet, and the development of the poetic faculty entails a purification of the imagination. That Rossetti should have Blake in mind is not surprising. He was among the circle of early Blake enthusiasts, even buying one of Blake's notebooks and helping in the completion of Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*. As another poet-artist, Blake contributed to the personal character of Rossetti's vision of the poet. Rossetti seems also to have known Blake's Dante illustrations, though by that time they had little influence on his conception of Dante.⁶

Rossetti takes up perception and vision again in his translation of the sonnet's closing sestet. Referring to the "intellegenza nova," Dante's Italian reads,

Although Blake's Dante illustrations were known to a select circle of enthusiasts, including Rossetti, who helped Gilchrist's widow complete the *Life*, they had little clear influence on the Victorians until they were "rediscovered" by William Butler Yeats in his 1897 essay, "William Blake and his Illustrations of the *Divine Comedy*," rpt. in *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), pp. 116-145. For a general discussion see Deborah Dorfman, *Blake in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 54, 63 and 199n.

5. Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882): A Catalogue Raisonné*, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), plates 27, 28 and 51.
6. Florence Sanders Boos sees more of Blake in Rossetti's Dante (Boos, pp. 266-69). For a general discussion of Blake's Dante see in particular Albert Roe, *Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957) and Milton Klonsky, *Blake's Dante: The Complete Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (New York: Harmony Books, 1980).

Vedela tal, che quando 'l mi ridice,
 Io no lo intendo, si parla sottile
 Al cor dolente che lo far parlare.
So io che parla di quella gentile,
 Però che spesso ricorda Beatrice,
 Si ch'io lo'ttendo ben, donne mi care.

In contrast, Rossetti's version reads,

It sees her such, that it tells me this
 Which it hath seen, I understand it not,
 It hath a speech so subtle and so fine.
And yet I know its voice within my thought
 Often remembereth me of Beatrice:
 So that I understand it, ladies mine.

The voice speaking within Dante's thought was Rossetti's invention. Dante's line more accurately runs, "I know that it [*intelligenza nova*] speaks of that courteous [lady]."⁷ In translating the line in this way, Rossetti enlists Dante into his own ranks, interpreting him as a Blakean visionary. He focuses attention on the thought of the poet rather than on a voice emanating from outside the poet. In this manner the voice takes on a plausible, naturalistic aspect, grounding vision within the power and imagination of the poet. It is, as we have already seen, a movement from the interior to the exterior through the mediation of a "new perception."

In both his translation of the *Vita Nuova* and his recreation of the Florentine in *Dante at Verona*, Rossetti enlists Dante as a spokesman for the nineteenth-century consciousness. Instead of existing as an integral part of a divine hierarchy, the poet lives in an uncertain and problematic world. The discrepancy between interior and exterior life shatters the epic sense of wholeness. Faced with this dismal prospect, the consciousness retreats inward upon itself for refuge and sustenance, certain only of its own integrity. In this state of being epic wholeness becomes a process of moving outward, of reintegrating the world through its own perception and imagination. Rossetti's Dante follows this pattern: "*Dante at Verona*" is a problematic epic, torn between the demands of a world and the aspirations of the spirit. In it, Rossetti slowly reveals Dante's reintegration through the purification of his perception.

Drawn by the memory of Beatrice, his imagination reaches outward, embracing not the physical world, but a world of his own poetic creation:

. . . From his shoes
 It may be that he shook the dust,
 As every righteous dealer must
 Once and again ere life can close:
 And unaccomplished destiny
 Struck cold his forehead, it may be.

All of this represents an existence foreign to the historical Dante Alighieri. While his own world offered little more than the bitterness of exile, he was confident of a meaning beyond his own cognition, and of his place in a transcendent cosmos. Rossetti's re-interpretation is akin to what Baudelaire had in mind when he called for a criticism that is partial, passionate, and political. The political dimension of Rossetti's Dante is readily apparent. Rather than produce the historical figure, Rossetti uses Dante as the archetype of the poet, but here the archetypal figure is that of the Romantic poet whose vision stands in opposition to the world that alienates him. Like the Victorian myths of the maligned Keats or the incendiary Blake, Rossetti's Dante stands as a monument to the emptiness of society that is incapable of understanding him. Similarly the Baudelairean passion is found in the nature of the poet. The poet who emanates from Rossetti's portrait is sustained by his own vision. He is little concerned with the values imposed from the outside. Rossetti's Dante is not a coldly rational scholastic philosopher, but an artist capturing the "Soul's eternity" in a "moment's monument." Most important of all, however, Rossetti's Dante is partial. He reinterprets Dante in terms of his own "autopsychology" – not in a narrowly biographical sense, but in the sense of an idealization of his own self. Dante becomes the spokesman for Rossetti's own poetic vision, for his alienation and aspiration in a problematic world. He becomes the symbol of Rossetti struggling to reconcile his vision with his imaginative capability, his own labor to be "worthy." Rossetti's interest in his namesake is not casual; it represents his entire poetic commitment. The heavens that Leigh Hunt took to be Dantesque are Rossettian after all.

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7. c.f. Mark Musa's translation of the passage:

I cannot understand its subtle tale
 Spoken to the sad heart that makes it speak
 I know it talks of that most gracious one,
 . . .

Vita Nuova (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1962), p. 85.

A. E. Housman's Two Strategies: *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems*

Robert K. Martin

This essay addresses itself to what I have called Housman's two "strategies" – two ways of responding to the situation of the homosexual through the means of his art. I identify one of these strategies with each of his volumes of poetry. The first, which I call the "strategy of survival," is the strategy of *A Shropshire Lad*; the second, which I call the "strategy of revolt," is the strategy of *Last Poems*. Although much Housman criticism treats his work as a single body, frequently even lumping all the poems into the modes of *A Shropshire Lad*, the two volumes represent very different strategies and forms of presentation of self.

I

Asked about his use of place, A. E. Housman replied drily, "My Shropshire, like the Cambridge of Lycidas, is not exactly a real place."¹ The remark is suggestive in several ways. It serves to remind us of *A Shropshire Lad*'s status as fiction, its qualities of invention and imagination as ways of transforming experience into art. If the "Shropshire" of the poem is not really Shropshire, neither is the speaker of most of the poems, Terence Hearsay, Housman himself. At the same time Housman's comment seems to invite us to read *A Shropshire Lad* at least partly in the light of Milton's monody. To do so is to understand much of the structure of Housman's work, the transformation of the "uncouth swain" into the "lad" of the later poem, but also to see how *Lycidas*, with its Christian reassurance, becomes an ironic model for Housman's Stoic or antitheist elegy.²

In the popular imagination the poems of *A Shropshire Lad* are often seen as pastoral lyrics singing the praises of innocent rural life and the loves of lads and lasses. In fact, however, the book is a series of dramatic monologues depicting a fallen pastoral. The world they portray is as cruel as Frost's rural New England – Frost is in fact one of Housman's most important spiritual and poetic descendants. The speaker gives us a panoramic view of Shropshire as a world dominated by guilt and death. And yet, paradoxically, the poems triumph over the world they record: the lads die, but the love they inspire gives rise to the poems which preserve that love in a way that life is incapable of. *A Shropshire Lad* is a book which begins in death and concludes in an eternal life of shared art and love.

A Shropshire Lad was indeed a deeply personal work, the poetic consequence of Housman's love for Moses Jackson and his recognition of the impossibility of fulfilling that love in

life. Housman found an adequate means of rendering his love only through the effective exclusion of the personal self from the poems. Housman's invention of a rural uncouth persona was not merely an indication of his indebtedness to a poetic tradition; it was the means by which he could make his suffering into the material of art and hence surmount it. The Shropshire lad is Housman's objective correlative for his own sense of loss.

This process, which I have termed Housman's "strategy of survival," is most clearly indicated in the penultimate poem of the collection, the only one in which the speaker is specifically identified as Terence. Terence replies to accusations that his poetry (which we have just read, of course) is "stupid stuff" by explaining that his poems are not merely "a tune to dance to." If poetry is an escape from thought, then its place can well be taken by ale. But, following the liquor analogy, his brew is "sour," for it has been distilled "in a weary land," "Out of a stem that scored the hand."³ In his first explanation of his poetry, the speaker appears to justify it in terms of reality: if his poetry is grim, it is because life is grim as well (it has, in his words, "much less good than ill").

The fourth stanza of the poem introduces a new argument, through the story of Mithridates, who uses small doses of poison to develop an immunity to it. The pain of the poems is also mithridatic; it is designed to introduce a controlled amount of pain in order that the reader may be inured against an even larger dose. By this analogy, Housman reveals his own strategy of control and distance. The king survives because he has trained his body to respond to poison; the knowledge of poison has made him strong. So, we are to understand, it is with these poems: they are also ways of learning to survive, not through escape from pain but through the ability to take the pain in small doses. As therapy for the reader, they build an immunity that may enable him to overcome adversity; as therapy for the author, they are an index of the ability of pain to heal itself, by a kind of burning-out process.

It should be remembered that the speaker in this poem is Terence – but Terence in his guise as poet, even if still the unsophisticated poet of Ludlow. The poem is thus Terence's poetics, or Housman's poetics as spoken through Terence. For Terence is integral precisely to the strategy that Housman describes in this poem. It was through the creation of a less sophisticated, cruder self that Housman could give voice to his pain while still retaining an element of control. The shepherd's lament became Housman's way of channeling, and hence mastering, his own mourning.⁴ Those who met Housman were

1. B. J. Leggett, *Housman's Land of Lost Content: A Critical Study of A Shropshire Lad* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1970), p. 92, quoting from Cyril Clemens, "Some Unpublished Housman Letters," *Poet Lore* 53 (1947), 262.

2. Housman's "A Winter Funeral" is the best example of this.

3. This line seems to have had an influence on Hardy: see l. 5 of "The Darkling Thrush," written in 1900.

4. The importance of the persona is discussed by B. J. Leggett, *The Poetic Art of A. E. Housman: Theory and Practice* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska

Press, 1978), p. 49. But he carefully avoids any connections to Housman's life: whatever the "private compulsions," he argues, the "poet's own emotional life, however fascinating, is at present beyond the range of criticism" (p. 53). This attitude is typical of Housman criticism: F. W. Bateson writes, for instance, "a critic's first concern is with the poems as poems and not with the neuroses of his poet" ("The Poetry of Emphasis," in Christopher Ricks, ed., *A. E. Housman: A Collection of Critical Essays* [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968], p. 131.) No one seems to consider the possibility that the "private" life will be given shape in the art.

often surprised to find such an unsympathetic, cold person, not at all like the warm-hearted voice of the poems. What they seem not to have understood is the extraordinary inner tension that led to the creation of two different public identities, the cruelly correct classics scholar, and the lively, vulgar lad. Housman seems to have had no way of bringing them together.

The Mithridates poem bears great weight, but it is not the last poem in the collection. For a final work, following his poetic justification, Housman wrote a kind of envoi, for which he returned to his characteristic ballad (or hymn) meter. "I hoed and trenched and weeded" no longer justifies the poetic method, but accepts simultaneously its unfashionable quality and its ultimate survival. As the opening line makes clear, the speaker is still very much a rural figure, but his personality is no longer at issue. Here it is the horticultural metaphor itself which is central. For the poems are flowers which go unsold at the fair, since their "hue" is "not the wear."⁵

Since they are flowers, they also contain the means of their own continuation. The poet sows their seeds so that they may flower again another year. By this capacity for regeneration, they are able to survive the poet himself. In miniature form (four quatrains of common meter), the poet thus presents an account of his own life and art. The speaker makes an offering of his love and labor, but it goes "unheeded." He then "sows" the seeds of his first offering, which is to say, he creates the poems that are the product, or seed, of the love once proffered and refused. That seed will yield new flowers and come to adorn "other luckless lads." It is important to note here that in this poem, more than any other of this collection, Housman is open about the homosexual meanings of his heritage: the flowers that he sows are to be worn by other lads. In that way his own love, so hopeless and so painful, becomes a source of hope and comfort. For the love, once transformed into art, is able to transcend time and prejudice until it finds its rightful place.

The analogy of the sower and the seed echoes, especially in lines 9 and 10, "Some seed the birds devour, / And some the season mars," the Gospel of St. Matthew, 13, where Jesus explains his own method of speaking in parables. The allusion thus functions two ways: it signals Housman's transformation of his source and his use of his poems as an analogue to the Word; it also signals to us Housman's own parabolic method. The poem is not realistic; instead it translates the poet's work into the language of the country and then by revealing its source back into its origins as a parable about the survival of language. Like the Whitman of the "Calamus" poems, which seem remarkably close to this poem, the speaker concludes by withdrawing, leaving only his work, seen as flower seed or leaf of grass, behind. Nature subsumes the artist and preserves his creation until a time when it may find response. Housman's work is therefore a parable, not only in the obvious sense that the flowers here are a metaphor, but in the sense that it is cast as a message in a secret tongue. The male love which gave rise to the poems would survive in them until it could flower

again.

The idea that art preserves by transforming love from the transitory realm of the real into the eternal world of the imagination was not unique to Housman, of course, although it is one of his most persistent themes. There is perhaps no more important source for this concept as expressed in Housman's poetry than in Shakespeare's sonnets, such as sonnet 18, with its lines,

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

Housman's most famous single poem, "To an Athlete Dying Young," is one of a number of his poems which touch on this theme. It must be remembered that the poem is based on Pindar's Olympian Odes and that, like them, it celebrates the beauty and grace of the athlete at the moment of his perfection. It is therefore inaccurate to think of Housman's elegaic poems in terms of the world-weariness and *amour de l'impossible* of the poets of the '90s: for their mourning is always countered by an assurance of a compensating life, never certainly in the Christian terms of *Lycidas* but often in the aesthetic terms of Shakespeare.

"To an Athlete Dying Young" is structured around the figure of the laurel, which, as Housman knew, was used for the wreath of the victorious athlete and for the poet. Although the laurel in the poem refers explicitly only to the athlete's crown, the poem's full meaning depends upon an understanding of its unstated other reference. For the poem itself is the laurel wreath bestowed on the young man, and it is the wreath which guarantees a life beyond death. In the third stanza, the speaker praises the youth:

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

In the natural world, indicated by the "fields where glory does not stay," nothing is permanent, all life leads to death. The laurel grows "early" because the beauty of the youth achieves its peak, according to the Greek ideal of beauty, in late adolescence. But that beauty dies equally quickly, and indeed "withers quicker than the rose," the emblem of feminine beauty as well as of short flowering.

The final stanza returns to the figure of the laurel, now transformed from an emblem of early death into one of permanent life:

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,

5. The choice of the color metaphor is interesting, especially in connection with Housman's poem, unpublished during his lifetime, on the Wilde trial, "Oh who is that young sinner with the handcuffs on his wrists?" in which it is the "colour of his hair" that leads to the sentence of hard labor.

It may be linked to the persistent association of certain colors with homosexuality, such as yellow, green, or lavender. The Wilde poem is discussed by Joseph Cady, "Housman and the Struggle for a Homosexual Voice," unpublished paper delivered at MLA, 1976.

And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

The irony of this transformation, that this garland which is "briefer than a girl's" should be still "unwithered," is the poet's assertion of the permanence of art (and memory). For although the athlete is presumably dead, he is always imagined in the poem's terms as alive (indeed the title sees him only "dying," not dead): the imperatives of stanza 6 "set" and "hold" suggest his continued activity, while it is the others who are now "the strengthless dead." He remains alive because he wears a laurel that will not wither, a garland of words, in fact the very poem we are now reading and in that act gazing once more on that "early-laurelled head." Thus the poem's last line, "The garland briefer than a girl's," accomplishes an ironic triumph, since its very brevity is what enables it to survive; so too the line suggests the love for a young man, although destined for an early death, prevails over death in a way that the rose garland of heterosexual love cannot. Like most pederastic poems of this period, Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young" suggests that it is the purity of boy-love which preserves it from time and mortality.⁶

Although "To an Athlete" does not explicitly identify the garland of the last line as a trope for the poem, there can be no doubt that this was Housman's intention, for he used the same figure in a closely related poem, *A Shropshire Lad* 44, "Shot? so quick, so clean an ending?" There can be few readers who are not moved by this expression of self-hatred. Did Housman really prefer death before "dishonour"? The poem poses many problems, not the least of which is its tone. It seems certain that the young cadet (about whose suicide Housman had read) aroused a sentiment similar to that which the athlete produced. Reading of this young man and his death, Housman chose to preserve him from the anonymity of time by transforming him from pathetic victim to hero. Thus much of what the poem accomplishes is subversive: a suicide is praised as if he were a military hero (he is "brave," "wise," and "right"), and his death becomes the means of new life. For it is the poet's act of love, his response to the unknown cadet, that creates the laurel of the last stanza:

And here, man, here's the wreath I've made:
'Tis not a gift that's worth the taking,
But wear it and it will not fade.

By incorporating the cadet into his poems, Housman preserves his memory, and makes his act a permanent presence, but as an act of heroism and not an act of cowardice. Seen from the perspective of Housman's time (the cadet's suicide and Housman's probable composition of the poem took place less than three months after the conviction of Oscar Wilde), the poem is an attempt to redefine bravery by making a gesture of love. Although Housman in 1895 was perhaps incapable of imagining a homosexual life, he was capable of recognizing his own obligation to preserve the memory of those who died for their sexuality, in the hope that his wreath might last "unwithered"

6. I have discussed Housman's relationship to Santayana briefly in *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1979), pp. 110-114. For the Uranian poets in England see Timothy d'Arch

to another age where it might give hope to other "luckless lads." The composition of such a poem seems to be another element in the "strategy of survival": by dramatizing the death of the cadet, Housman freed himself from death. His mission was clear: it was left to him to write the works that could preserve the memory of those who could not speak (as Whitman put it in "Song of Myself," "I act as the tongue of you, / Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosened").

II

If the fundamental strategy of *A Shropshire Lad* is the attempt to overcome pain by controlling it, Housman's second (and final) collection of poems, *Last Poems*, proposes a very different strategy. These are poems of rebellion, poems that clearly affirm life over death. For whatever reason, Housman appears no longer to have found necessary the strategies that made *A Shropshire Lad* possible. Most of the poems appear still to be written in the voice of Terence (although there are striking exceptions such as the "Epithalamium," which Housman wrote for Moses Jackson's wedding), but the dominant elegiac tone is gone. Indeed the first poem sets the tone for the volume by insisting on a refusal of death. Housman was in his 60's when the book was published, and so one might have anticipated poems which looked toward the end. Instead the book is dominated by its *carpe diem* theme; the presence of death makes life all the more valuable. In the initial poem, "The West," the speaker acknowledges the appeal of death, troped variously as the West, the sea, and "our native land." If there is still no reason to deny that all life will terminate in death, yet there is no reason to succumb to its beguilements. The reason for the change is clear in the poem: the presence of the comrade who "stride for stride, / Paces silent at my side." The word "lad" is used twice in the poem, both times in association with the desire for death, while the living figure is referred to four times as "comrade." The use of these terms in this way appears to signal a shift from the pederastic mode to the Whitmanic mode. There is a strong sense of a newfound equality that matches the determination to accept life, to "Plant your heel on earth and stand." Since death will mean an end to love, the call of the poems is to life:

When you and I are spilt on air
Long we shall be strangers there;
Friends of flesh and bone are best:
Comrade, look not on the West.

Although *Last Poems* still makes use of the mithridatic theory, as in these lines from the second poem of the collection, "So here are things to think on / That ought to make me brave," the consolation of the poems is no longer sought exclusively in art, and the sufferers begin to respond to their suffering. This poem, for instance, begins, "As I gird on for fighting," and the military metaphor runs throughout the volume. The third poem imagines a direct act of revolt: confronted with Hecate, the "Queen of air and darkness," the speaker replies

Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

to her threat, "I shall die tomorrow; / But you will die to-day." *Last Poems* indicates Housman's determination to kill the demons of darkness. While recognizing the inevitability of human suffering and death, they are nonetheless poems of assertion in which life is valued for itself.

One of the best known poems from this collection, "The chestnut casts his flambeaux," is indicative of the change in attitude. The poem's sense of loss through time is carefully controlled by the ironic voice. His complaints may be those of a slightly drunk Terence, but the anger is now present along with the self-pity, particularly in the curse against "Whatever brute and blackguard made the world." It is a cry like that in *Atalanta in Calydon*, against a malevolent god. Shorn of hope for an afterlife, man in these poems has only the possibility of assuming human responsibilities, those which require him to do his work as best he can. The Stoic philosophy of the poem is slightly undercut by the final phrase, "and drink your ale," but it remains nonetheless essential to Housman's attempt to delineate a world without god. He seeks no consolations, but indeed uses the confrontation with evil and absence as the occasion for spiritual growth. Man is, as poem 12 puts it, "a stranger and afraid / In a world [he] never made."

Although Housman's rejection of Christianity appears to have occurred fairly early in his life (it became final around 1880-1881) and although it is in any case not unlike that of Swinburne in its angry phase or Arnold in its milder moments, in this particular poem Housman seems to draw a connection between his "criminality" and his atheism. It is important to recall the crimes and criminals of *A Shropshire Lad*, and to suggest that they may be, more than realistic portrayal, the metaphor for Housman's own situation as a sexual criminal, an awareness heightened for him, of course, by the Wilde trial. In the earlier volume the representation of his own sexuality as crime remained at the level of metaphor; it requires a knowledge of biography to guess that Maurice's murderer in *A Shropshire Lad* 8 may represent to some extent Housman's own outlawed status as a homosexual. In *Last Poems*, however, the feelings of anger are much closer to the surface. "Let them mind their own affairs," the speaker declares, or "look the other way."

But no, they will not; they must still
Wrest their neighbour to their will,
And make me dance as they desire
With jail and gallows and hell-fire.

The poem effectively dramatizes the mingling of religious and civil sanctions, all in the name of a superficial conformity on a matter that is none of "their" affair. By choosing the metaphor of the dance, Housman emphasizes the triviality of the difference and the sense of disproportion between the "crime" and the punishment. At the same time, the metaphor of the "stranger" and the "foreign laws" suggests the depth of Housman's alienation and his recognition that he would always live in a world that he could never be fully a part of.

The most significant manifestation of the "revolutionary" Housman is "Hell Gate," in which he turns again to the model of Milton; but the Milton called upon here is not the pastoral elegist of *Lycidas* but the epic poet of *Paradise Lost* — and that

poem is reimagined in a Romantic way. The speaker reaches Hell, only to find that the sentry guarding the gate is an old soldier friend named Ned. Greeting his old friend, the sentry is now transformed into a "flaming mutineer" who kills the master of Hell, and the act of cosmic rebellion leaves the two friends alone, about to begin "the backward way." The expulsion from the Garden becomes the escape from Hell, the revolt against God becomes the revolt against Satan, and the original couple, Adam and Eve, are radically recast as a "pair of friends." The poem is astonishing in its vision of human rebellion against an unjust world. That injustice is no longer some vague notion of Fate, but is, in this collection of poems, specifically seen as the attempt by God and man to impose "foreign laws" to make men "dance as they desire." The poem's role as a trope of homosexual revolt is seen not only in the final emblem of the two friends, but also in the repeated references to the "plain," recalling the Cities of the Plain, and the reference to the moment when the two rebels "looked back," recalling Lot's wife. "There was," however, the poem concludes, "no pursuit." It has been argued the poem is the only one to achieve a "return to the pastoral world" and deals with "the redemption of the fallen world by the innocent world of the past."⁷ Although the friends go back, it is back from death to life, not from experience to innocence. There is no suggestion that the pastoral can be restored. The sentry may be an old friend from Shropshire, as it were, but he is a far different figure from the lads of the earlier book. "Hell Gate" is the poem in which Housman imagines that love may conquer death, that man need not accept the fear of damnation, and that evil is vanquished by a transformation of the lad into "the soldier at my side." It is Housman's vision of a triumphant humanity, joined by what Whitman would have called "manly love."

After such a vision, it is hard to imagine that Housman would have returned to the modes of the earlier poems, and indeed he does not. The volume's last poem is called "Fancy's Knell," and it confirms the recognition that death must lead us to life, even more than to art. Unlike the poems of the earlier volume, there is no assurance here that art will survive:

Away we both must hie,
To air the ditty,
And to earth I.

The death of both the individual and the art that he creates leads Housman to a celebration of life, "learn the dances / And praise the tune to-day." Terence refused the call for a dance tune in the penultimate poem of *A Shropshire Lad*; the speaker's concluding image of himself as the flautist in *Last Poems* suggests the distance that has been travelled. Evil is no longer administered as antidote to even greater evil; instead it is confronted and vanquished. In that sense only is the pastoral recaptured at the end of *Last Poems*. The pipes of Pan call forth a new, invigorated, and sensual music that arises from experience while still retaining the vigor of innocence. No longer seeking strategies of survival through distance from the self, Housman left as his *Last Poems* a new strategy of anger, rebellion, and the joy that might come if only Hell were vanquished.

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7. Leggett, *Poetic Art*, p. 81.

The Lady as Criminal: Contradiction and Resolution in Trollope's *Orley Farm*

Laura Hapke

Voicing a common sentiment when he praised Anthony Trollope for verisimilitude, a contemporary reviewer of *Orley Farm* (1862) remarked: "His gentlemen and ladies are exactly like real gentlemen and ladies, except, perhaps, that they are a trifle more entertaining."¹ As a painstaking chronicler of the marriages arranged by and for his well-bred characters, Trollope is skillful in portraying conventional young women and the wives they later become, their lives demonstrating, in Margaret Hewitt's phrase, "the pattern of life his women readers should copy."² Only his anti-heroines question the code of female moral superiority and domestic submissiveness which regulates the conduct of their more decorous, though less memorable, literary sisters. But how "real" in fact is Trollope's depiction of women, their obedience to and disobedience of the code in which he and so many of his readers believed?

Lady Mason, the central character of his well-received and commercially successful *Orley Farm*, commits the most daring crime, short of murder, which a Victorian woman could attempt: the forgery of a will in order to subvert primogeniture. As criminal as the amoral Lizzie Eustace, as lovable as the unstable Lady Glencora Palliser, as mercenary in marriage as the cunning Julia Clavering, Lady Mason is an unjustly neglected Trollopian anti-heroine, and this critical neglect is especially curious in light of the fact that Trollope himself felt *Orley Farm* secured his reputation as a man of letters.³ By analyzing the terms in which Trollope defines, defends, and ultimately exonerates this lady criminal, we can learn much about the power of the Victorian ideology of ideal womanhood and its limiting effect on Trollope's celebrated "ability to reproduce experience as exactly as possible."⁴

Belief in woman's higher moral sense ("Women have fewer worldly interests and are by nature and education less selfish," wrote one period moralist) was, with the inconsistency typical of Victorian theories of femininity, accompanied by approving references to her dependence and defenselessness.⁵ Weaker physically than man, and by nature sexually innocent (as suggested in Coventry Patmore's line, "marr'd less than man by mortal fall"), woman was to find definition in marriage and

maternity. As we shall observe, Trollope uses the very qualities which defined proper feminine behavior to characterize Lady Mason. That is, Lady Mason is in all ways but one an ideal Victorian lady.

She is certainly one of literature's most sympathetic women criminals. Quiet, dutiful, willing to sacrifice herself for her parents, she is married off to the elderly Sir Joseph Mason, submitting without complaint as he "took [her] to his bosom as his portion of the assets of [her parents'] estate." (I,10) Although there is not the same disastrous lack of marital communication between Sir Joseph and his wife as in the misalliances of *He Knew He Was Right*, or *Can You Forgive Her?*, for Lady Mason the marriage is one in which she bears much and receives little. Yoked to an old man whom "she burthened . . . with no requests for gay society, and took his home as she found it," (I,11) she is snubbed by her husband's first family and spoken of contemptuously. Enduring the snobbery, she is an exemplary wife during Sir Joseph's lifetime, and, Trollope adds significantly, "for herself in the way of wealth and money . . . never asked anything." (I,12) Since, throughout the novel, Trollope's defense will be that she "only filched for her babe," (II,311) such praise of Lady Mason's lack of greed is presented to a great extent without irony. Her motive for the crime is only the tenderest maternal care that her son not be left destitute.

When Trollope has to discuss the actual commission of the forgery, an act which keeps Lady Mason up well into the night and which requires steadiness of purpose and skill in duplication, he minimizes her responsibility completely, resorting to what Booth has termed "stock devil imagery," fiends clutching at her bosom, devils clouding her vision. Booth has argued for the parallel between Lady Mason and Faust, the devils suggesting the evil of her deed and the inevitable retribution.⁶ Yet given the other images of her it is far more likely that these references externalize her guilt, shifting the blame, as far as it is possible to do so, onto outside agents. Thus the devils, which in morality play tradition had symbolized internal states, here may very well be working in an opposite way. Certainly

1. Quoted in *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Donald Smalley (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 144.

2. Margaret Hewitt, "Anthony Trollope: Historian and Sociologist," *British Journal of Sociology*, 14 (1963), 226. See also David Aitken, "Trollope on the 'Genus Girl,'" *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 28 (March 1974), 417-434.

3. Anthony Trollope, *Autobiography* (1883) (1923; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953), p. 144; Anthony Trollope, *Orley Farm* (1862; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1981). Subsequent quotations are to this edition and are indicated in the text.

4. David Cecil, *Victorian Novelists* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 228. Other modern explicators of Trollope's realism are Michael Sadleir, *Trollope: A Commentary* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961); Robert Martin Adams, "Orley Farm and Real Fiction," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 8 (1953), 27-41. On the subtler uses of Trollopian

realism, see David Skilton, *Trollope and His Contemporaries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972) and Robin Gilmour, "A Lesser Thackeray? Trollope and the Victorian New Woman," *Anthony Trollope*, ed. Tony Bareham (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1981).

5. Sarah Lewis, *Woman's Mission* (1839), *Strong-Minded Women*, ed. Janet Murray (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 24. See also Mrs. John Sanford, *Woman, in Her Social and Domestic Character* (Boston: Otis, Broaders & Co., 1842); Mrs. Ellis, *The Women of England* (London: Peter Jackson, 1846); Françoise Basch, *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974); Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982).

6. Bradford Booth, "Trollope's *Orley Farm*: Artistry Manqué," *Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Austin Wright (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 366.

what Trollope sees as Lady Mason's one rash act comes neither from conviction nor from premeditation. Furthermore, in her confession to her sympathetic neighbor Mrs. Orme she says, "I had heard nothing but falsehood from my youth upwards," (II, 158) implying again a taking over of her senses, a betwitching. And immediately after the crime is committed she returns to her true self.

Trollope further establishes sympathy for her in that he delays informing the reader of her guilt. An uproar follows the death of Sir Joseph, who has left not to his elder son by his first wife, but to his infant son Lucius, the bulk of his estate. This is a decision hotly and unsuccessfully contested by her stepson, George Mason. Lady Mason escapes the fate of the forger, however, and for twenty years is considered innocent. Then new evidence is unearthed, and George Mason again contests the will. As the reader is immersed in details of preparations for the retrial, Trollope reluctantly admits that Lady Mason has been guilty all along. By this time, however, he has firmly fixed in the reader's mind the image of Lady Mason as lone, unprotected, and persecuted, rather than as an impostor living for twenty years off ill-gotten gains. She has, for example, never remarried, though "accused a dozen times," Trollope adds protectively. Although she has respect, she possesses but few friends in the community, and lives in terror of her son Lucius, an unsympathetic prig with ruinous plans for the estate. Her difficulties are further heightened by her unrelenting enemies, whom Trollope also portrays unsympathetically: George Mason, the choleric rightful heir, and the aptly-named lawyer, Dockwrath, a marital sadist.

In her frightened but dignified speech to her lawyer, Mr. Furnival, she strikes the note of fearful nobility proper for a respectable woman in an unjust situation:

"Another lawsuit would kill me. I think . . . you cannot understand what I suffered [the first time]. I nerved myself to bear it, telling myself that it was the first duty I owed to the babe that was lying on my bosom. . . . I endured the eyes of all men on me, the eyes of men who thought I had been guilty of so terrible a crime, for the sake of that child who was so weak . . ." (I, 11).

Here Trollope ennobles Lady Mason by playing on the familiar Victorian themes of a world inimical to pure womanhood and the unselfishness and bravery produced by the maternal instinct.

Images of her as altruistic heroine and victim of unjust suspicion thus reinforce each other in the novel. Here she is preparing herself for the coming courtroom ordeal: "There was still within her a great power of self-maintenance," (II, 117) and, "loving mother that she was, she did not wish to see her son downhearted" (II, 118). One critic in the British *National Review* the year *Orley Farm* was published was outraged by such characterizations: "[Her] every act had been studied for a hypocritical purpose. . . . [Her] whole life . . . one long lie." Yet the majority forgave her, calling her a "noble charac-

ter, stained by a great crime [committed only] from maternal passion," "lovable as a woman," "pitiable, lovable." Even George Eliot, a severe critic of female moral weakness, found the novel "wholesome-minded."⁷

Indeed, by purifying her motive, externalizing her guilt, loading her with every unjust persecution, holding off the truth, and orchestrating her conduct under fire according to the most hallowed conventions of innocent nobility, Trollope, himself her advocate, has done everything literarily possible to persuade his jury of readers to the lady's acquittal.

There is nothing in Trollope's descriptions to suggest either cold calculation or amoral manipulateness on Lady Mason's part. When she visits her lawyer, pleading for his help, and is confronted by his jealous wife, she later is sorry she has caused trouble, and "her tears were not false" (I, 96). Though she realizes that the powerful baronet Sir Peregrine Orme is in love with her, "she ha[s] no thought, no suspicion of evil," in visiting him (I, 272). Trollope even ties her decision to present to the courtroom "a front on which guilt should not seem to have laid its hideous, defacing hand" (II, 179) to her lack of calculation. Her dissembling, indeed, takes on the quality of a moral act.

Despite these ingenious defenses, the novel in effect poses the same questions about criminality in a respectable woman that Lady Mason's lawyer asks the court:

[is] so fair a life . . . compatible with the idea of guilt so foul? . . . That she, at the age of twenty, . . . she who had so well performed the duties of her young life, that she should have forged a will, — have . . . deceived all those lawyers. . . . [How could] she who had so well performed the duties of her young life have forged?" (II, 255)

Both Trollope and the lawyer he creates play on that incompatibility, yet, like Mr. Furnival, Trollope knows Lady Mason is guilty and must show (again to quote the lawyer) "her conduct in every other aspect of her life had been beyond praise" (II, 255).

Trollope's sympathetic portrayal of Lady Mason is in keeping with what has variously been termed his "tolerance of frailty," his reservation of judgment, and his compassion for the outsider.⁸ But some modern critics have found her too conventional to be as daring as she is. Having once presented an outsider who challenges the values of the community, rather than dwell on the pressures, dissatisfactions, and anarchic impulses which Mary Hartman discovered in her study of Victorian murderesses, Trollope not only suggests that Lady Mason acted uncharacteristically in her forgery, but also that she suffers a lifetime of regret.⁹ Logically either what she did is a crime, and therefore she is a criminal; or what she did is not a crime, only subversion of an unjust law, and therefore she is a revolutionary. But Trollope, having gone to such lengths to convince us she is not a criminal, goes even further to assure us

7. Quoted in Smalley, pp. 172, 149, 152; Eliot's comment appears in Booth, p. 360; a similar remark is quoted in Amy Cruse, *The Victorians and Their Reading* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 281, in praise of Trollope's "pure women."

8. Sadleir, p. 132; Ruth apRoberts, "Emily and Nora and Dorothy and Priscilla and Jemima and Carry," *The Victorian Experience: The Novelists*, ed. Richard A. Levine (Athens, OH: Ohio Univ. Press, 1976),

p. 118; George Levine, "Can You Forgive Him? Trollope's 'Can You Forgive Her?' and the Myth of Realism," *Victorian Studies*, 18 (September 1974), 7, 20.

9. Mary S. Hartman, *Victorian Murderesses* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). See also Richard Altick, *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 12.

she is not a revolutionary either. She changes nothing in the system and meekly offers all in reparation. Certainly it is in a repentant spirit that she confesses to Sir Peregrine, who could have been a great ally during her legal troubles, and to her son Lucius, who promptly renounces both her and the property.

Yet, although Trollope does not allow her to escape unscathed, her sufferings and confessions in no way jeopardize the court decision. Her punishment, while deserved, is but the rejection of the men dearest to her, a fate meted out to Trollope's blameless heroines as well. It is still the punishment of the lady; it enables her to keep up that mask of moral and social respectability without which a woman had no identity in the Victorian world.

In her study of Victorian women criminals, most of whom were acquitted or freed before their full sentences were served, Mary Hartman concludes: "it was well to be female and respectable" if one contemplated serious crime in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Certainly the facade of sexual ignorance and the duping of her unwitting husband which characterized Adelaide Bartlett's successful plot to hypnotize her husband and induce him to drink deadly chloroform, and the careful leading of a double life which fooled the fiancé to whom Madelaine Smith gave arsenic, were the products of months of plotting. Indeed, each of the thirteen women Hartman discusses created the self she wished the world to see, a self very much at variance with the ruthless and conflicted woman who committed murder to be rid of restriction.

Hartman sees the women's crimes as extreme reactions to ordinary problems of achieving autonomy from husbands and fathers. Had Trollope so desired, his portrayal of Lady Mason could well have illustrated the success of the female bourgeois criminal in her desire to expand her authority and power. A tradesman's daughter who ascends socially only to have her plans for herself and her child thwarted when she least expects it, Lady Mason revenges herself on her aristocratic husband and escapes legal punishment.

Nor is she alone in her aspirations; the novel contains numerous other characters anxious to ascend socially without regard to ethics: the dubious and aptly-named salesman Kantwise; the ambitious Mr. Furnival; the repellent Moulder, who sees every human action from the viewpoint of profit; the hungry Dockwrath, obsessed with the reward prosecuting Lady Mason will produce. Yet Trollope neither admits the pressure of her tradesman family's greed nor ties Lady Mason to these unattractive self-seekers. Scrupulous about mercenary motives in portraits of other characters, he vehemently denies what the facts indicate about Lady Mason: that she is a social climber, not a hereditary aristocrat. He will not allow her to be a criminal or a revolutionary, and he will not allow her to be a mere grasping *parvenue* either.

Nevertheless, Lady Mason is an anti-heroine, and in choosing to heroinize his protagonist, Trollope was in the fashion of the

novels of the 1860's. That element was a staple of the sensation school, whose king, Wilkie Collins, and queen, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, were read by everyone from Queen Victoria and Gladstone to the humblest subscriber of Mudie's Circulating Library. As a "businessman novelist," Trollope was well aware of this new literary market. Although he did not approve of the use of "excitements, secrets, surprise, and suspense" to generate "sensation," he did borrow enough sensation material to have *Orley Farm* included in reviews of work by Collins and Braddon.¹¹ One incensed critic charged that the popularity of Miss Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* was

indicative of a certain morbid condition in the public mind, for which Mr. Wilkie Collins, and, in some degree, Mr. Trollope, is responsible. *Lady Audley's Secret* is not nearly so clever . . . [as Collins'] *No Name*, and it possesses none of the artistic qualities which redeem *Orley Farm*, and take away all danger from our sympathy with the guilty Lady Mason.¹²

We cannot be certain what redeeming "artistic qualities" this critic had in mind, but the train of his argument suggests that depiction of a character who is both female and deliberately criminal is grotesque, and so violates proper sensibility that she could hardly be made "artistic." In contrast, Trollope's portrait of a lady unable to do harm is faithful to (a certain accepted idea of) nature, artistic in that it is "true," and innocuous in that it neither gives women bad role models nor men cause for fear. Crime does not pay here on any level, and Lady Mason's extreme maternal solicitude, touching as it is, produces a spoiled tyrant of a son as well as temporary legal disarray. We are back with Victorian contradictions about the adorable ineptitude of women.

What made Lady Mason so much more acceptable to even that disapproving reader can be seen more clearly if one looks at the villainesses of the two novels named with Trollope's novels published the year of *Orley Farm*. Collins' *No Name* features the amoral Magdalen Vanstone, Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* the sinister Lucy Audley, both of them wives greedy for title and property.¹³ Magdalen is willing to disguise her identity and marry her own cousin to revenge herself on him; Lucy Audley pushes her first husband down a well to continue living as the wife of an aristocrat. Unremittingly bold and devious, given to savage tantrums, weeping fits, and hysterical threats uttered to hired accomplices and the heavens, these women resemble Lady Mason only in their willingness to commit impostures in marriage.

Lady Mason's typical reaction to a reversal in her plans for the Orley Farm estate is to worry, attempt to raise her spirits, and think sorrowfully that "tranquility, repose, and that retirement of life which had been so valuable to her" (I,117) might all be lost. Magdalen Vanstone and Lucy Audley, in contrast, meet adversity by summoning up tigerish energy. Magdalen

10. Hartman, p. 1.

11. Booth, p. 358; Sally Mitchell, *Chastity, Class and Women's Reading 1835-1880* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1981), p. 73. On the popularity of Collins and Braddon respectively, see Kenneth Robinson, *Wilkie Collins: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1952); Robert Lee Wolff, *Sensational Victorian: The Life and Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon* (New York: Garland Publishing Company,

1979).

12. *North British Review*, 38 (February 1863), 187.

13. Wilkie Collins, *No Name* (1873; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1972); Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1887; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1974). Subsequent quotations are to these editions and are indicated in the text.

started up, wild and flushed . . . with an angry resolution in her manner . . . a raised voice, and a glow like fever in her cheeks. (105)

Lucy reacts in a similar fashion:

The red blood dashed up into my lady's face with as sudden . . . a blaze as the flickering flame of a fire. (203)

Images of heat, fire, and vengeful purpose succeed to images of clever revenge. Thus Magdalen in her plot against her cousin:

"[He is] an enemy," she answered quickly. . . . "I want to know about his habits; about who the people are whom he associates with; about what he does with his money. . . ." (192)

And later:

She scoffed at the bare idea of any . . . difficulty [in her plot] . . . She mimicked [her enemy's voice] . . . with a bitter enjoyment of turning him into ridicule. (311,312)

Lucy, too, moves from rage to connivance:

"He will do it [unmask me], unless I get him into a lunatic-asylum first; or unless [she thought] some strange calamity befalls him, and silences him for ever." (205)

She then greets the success of her stratagem, burning down the house in which her enemy sleeps, with exquisite composure:

"It's a fire – a fire, my lady!"
"Yes, child, I see. At Brentwood, most likely. Let me go, Phoebe. It's nothing to us." (214)

By virtue of such cold decisiveness, Lucy Audley almost succeeds in leading a double life – demure lady of the manor by day, murderess plotting further vengeance by night.

The only resemblance ingenuous Lady Mason bears to these Victorian Lucrezia Borgias is that Collins and Braddon, bowing to the marketplace, say their heroines suffer and, at least in Magdalen's case, repent. Such trials, however, do not mar what Auerbach terms the "structural potency" of these anti-heroines.¹⁴ Society can conquer Lucy Audley only by locking her up (though again, as a lady, it is in a private asylum rather than a public jail). And the powerful conservative critic Mrs. Oliphant worried that Magdalen's near-fatal illness did nothing to chasten her:

from all the pollutions [which she has produced and undergone] . . . she emerges, at the cheap cost of a fever, triumphant – it seems quite right to the author . . . she should . . . have a good husband and a happy home.¹⁵

Both Collins and Braddon create Victorian "counterworlds" in which their deceitful characters delight in artifice and fraud.¹⁶ Unlike Trollope, the sensation school dramatizes the view that some women, finding too restrictive and financially limiting the rules governing proper behavior, completely break away, while retaining the pose of propriety. By committing himself to a virtuous and submissive anti-heroine, Trollope denies that ladylike behavior can be assumed. Collins and Braddon recognize that a woman who acts criminally in some sense chooses to do so. Trollope, imprisoned in an ideology of inherent female gentility, is either unable or unwilling to imagine aggressive motives for a woman's behavior. Rather than admit either egotistical or revolutionary explanations for Lady Mason's crime, he seems to argue as does Furnival that a woman with otherwise admirable qualities cannot be immoral – in effect denying the very lady criminal he has created.

Why then, was she created? The sensation school, by romantically empowering their characters, created anarchic figures who threatened both society and the concept of woman's proper place. Trollope's sweet-faced, repentant lady forger, whose nature contains neither anger nor rebelliousness, was a response. Though a forger, she posed no threat to the established order. One could treat her like the lady she really was. Robert Martin Adams views this exoneration of Lady Mason as a "romantic resolution" of a novel in which "people [are] not punished, ideas have no consequences [and] . . . moral judgments are without significance."¹⁷ Yet there is a deeper and more serious message in this quasi-comic resolution: sentenced or freed, no woman is powerful enough to cause social havoc. Legal justice need not be invoked. The natural order of things – with help from men (in this case the moralistic Lucius Mason, who gives up his claim to the estate) – can be trusted to re-establish itself. If a woman errs, a man can bring it right. In any event, crime in a woman is a brief irrationality caused by the pressure of extraordinary circumstances, not by anything in her character more dangerous than simple frailty.

In his portrait of Lady Mason, then, Trollope neither explores the dangerously aberrant, as Collins and Braddon did, nor does he "reproduce experience as exactly as possible," as he has been elsewhere rightly praised for doing.¹⁸ Rather he unfolds a canny and extremely successful defense of a conventional contemporary stereotype. Trollope's guileless and guiltless heroine resolved the problem of the rebellious female, but only at great cost to his celebrated verisimilitude.

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14. Nina Auerbach, "The Rise of the Fallen Woman," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 35 (June 1980), 48.
15. Quoted in *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Norman Page (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 143.
16. U. C. Knoepfelmacher, "The Counterworld of Victorian Fiction," *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction*, ed. Jerome H. Buckley (Cambridge, Mass.:

Harvard Univ. Press, 1975); Elaine Showalter, "Desperate Remedies: Sensation Novels of the 1860's" *The Victorian Newsletter*, No. 49 (Spring 1976), 1-5; Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860's* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), p. 154.

17. Adams, p. 41.

18. See Note 4.

"Childe Roland" and Two Other Poems by Browning

Myra Armistead

"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" has an extraordinary emotional effect upon the reader. Descriptions such as the following contribute to one's sense of foreboding: "As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair / In leprosy" (ll. 73-74), "One stiff, blind horse, his every bone a-stare, / Stood stupefied" (ll. 76-77), "mere earth / Desperate and done with" (ll. 146-47).¹ Among the most startling lines are these: "I never saw a brute I hated so" (l. 83) and "It may have been a water-rat I speared, / But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek" (ll. 125-26).

In the view of Maud Bodkin, a consideration of psychological concepts is essential to understanding the appeal of poetry.² She accepts C. G. Jung's theory that a poem stirs the emotions because of the reader's response to archetypes in the work. Perhaps it is the archetypal patterns in "Childe Roland" that account for the fascination it seems to have had for its many commentators.

Several writers have discovered parallels between the poem and an extensive list of possible sources, including fairy tales and chivalric romances, Wordsworth's "Peter Bell," the *Inferno*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Faerie Queene*, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and the *Bible*. Apparently, Browning acknowledged only three sources: a line from *King Lear* which became the title of the poem; the recollection of a solitary tower among some hills in the Italian countryside; and a figure in one of his tapestries, which inspired the horse.³

As for the circumstances of composition, Lilian Whiting presents the following account attributed to Browning himself by an unidentified "caller:"

T'was like this; one year in Florence I had been rather lazy; I resolved that I would write something every day. Well, the first day I wrote about some roses, suggested by a magnificent basket that some one had sent my wife. The next day 'Childe Roland' came upon me as a kind of dream. I had to write it, then and there, and I finished it the same day, I believe. But it was simply that I had to do it. I did not know then what I meant beyond that, and I'm sure I don't know now. But I am very fond of it.⁴

An enigmatic poem produced because its author felt impelled to write it makes a fruitful subject for psychological study. Indeed, several critics have applied psychological and mythical theories in analyzing "Childe Roland."

R. E. Hughes uses a Freudian approach to argue that retribution for carnality is the theme of the poem.⁵ The desolate nature of images such as the horse, which would ordinarily be associated with potency, suggests that the whole land has been punished with sterility. Obsession with carnality, according to Hughes, is the reason for the curse.

In a brief note, Maud Bodkin suggests that the poem concerns a "challenge to the horror of death."⁶ She also finds elements of the initiation rite in the work.

More recent works by Harold Bloom have explored Browning's psyche in an attempt to illuminate "Childe Roland." Bloom states that the "representation of power" is the element that is "deepest and most abiding in this poem."⁷

One omission from the considerable body of Browning scholarship is an effort to establish a direct linkage between some of the symbols of "Childe Roland" and the texts of Jungian psychology. Before attempting to fill the gap, I shall summarize a thoughtful analysis by Charles Woodard.⁸ In his opinion, Browning's explanation of how he composed "Childe Roland" is at least as credible as Coleridge's account of the dream origin of "Kubla Khan," which has been the subject of much psychoanalytical criticism. Thus, "Childe Roland" should be approached as a product of the unconscious and not as a consciously-created allegory. In regard to moral or allegorical interpretations which characterize "Childe Roland" as a statement of perseverance and courage, Woodard states that moralizing does not seem to be included among the activities of the unconscious. Furthermore, Browning's use of the horse and other images should not be treated as mere reproduction of remembered objects or recalled feelings. Instead, they are symbols which can be related through a logical scheme.

Woodard cites two studies of "Childe Roland" which employ the Freudian idea that dream images have a personal origin and significance. J. M. Cohen asserts that the images of "Childe Roland" represent brutal, inhuman elements of Browning's character.⁹ Betty Miller advances the idea that the poem reveals the author's sense of guilt over the failure to fully discharge his burden of delivering a message to mankind.¹⁰ In Woodard's view, the bleak landscape of "Childe Roland" could represent artistic despair as easily as guilt. Between 1846 and 1855, the poet had published only one volume of poetry, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, and was experiencing financial difficulty.

1. Robert Browning, *Poetical Works, Complete from 1833 to 1868, and the Shorter Poems Thereafter* (1905; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968).

2. Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination* (1934; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 36.

3. William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook*, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 229. A subsequent reference to this work will be cited in the text.

4. Lilian Whiting, *The Brownings: Their Life and Art* (1911; rpt. New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1972), p. 261.

5. "Browning's *Childe Roland* and the Broken Taboo," *Literature and Psychology*, 9 (1959), 18-19.

6. In *Literature and Psychology*, 10 (1960), 37.

7. *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), p. 199. Other pertinent essays by Bloom include "Browning's *Childe Roland*: All Things Deformed and Broken," *Prose*, 1 (1970), 29-44, and "How to Read a Poem: Browning's *Childe Roland*," *Georgia Review*, 28 (1974), 404-18.

8. Charles R. Woodard, "The Road to the Dark Tower: An Interpretation of Browning's 'Childe Roland,'" in *Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1961), pp. 94-99.

9. "The Young Robert Browning," *Cornhill Magazine*, 163 (1948), 245-47, as cited in Woodard, p. 95.

10. *Robert Browning, a Portrait* (London: J. Murray, 1952), p. 168. A subsequent reference to this work will be cited in the text.

Though Browning's feelings of creative inadequacy might explain the desolation conveyed by his images, it does not, according to Woodard, account for Childe Roland's quest. Turning to the work of another writer, Woodard reviews Jessie Weston's theory that Grail romances are remnants of primitive rebirth rituals connected with fertility myths. The rebirth archetype, as characterized by Weston, involves a wasteland, blighted because of a weakened king, and the quest of a hero.¹¹ Thus, Childe Roland's quest and the ruined land that he crosses may be seen as elements of the rebirth archetype. Woodard asks whether the old cripple who gives directions to the Dark Tower may not be the fallen king whose impotence is responsible for the horrors of the plain.

Woodard also refers to Northrop Frye's writings on dragon-slaying legends such as the stories of St. George and Perseus. Frye implies that dragon stories may be later versions of myths in which a king is killed in order to restore the land.¹² Woodard acknowledges that there is no dragon in "Childe Roland," although the Dark Tower could be a reasonable substitute, and that the object of the quest is vague.

Perhaps it is possible to extend Woodard's commentary by speculating further on the nature of Childe Roland's quest. First, it will be necessary to assume, as Woodard does, that the Dark Tower has a function similar to that of the dragon in legends. However, instead of accepting Frye's explanation of the dragon as a king substitute, I will examine the writings of Jung and two of his disciples who have explored the psychological significance of legendary dragons. In *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Jung lists the dragon as one of the symbols for the negative side of the mother archetype.¹³

Joseph L. Henderson, a prominent American Jungian, states that a patient with an unwholesome attachment to the mother image must find a way to free his psychic energy so that he can form mature social relationships. According to Henderson, "the hero-dragon battle was the symbolic expression of this process of 'growing up.'"¹⁴

In her book entitled *Psychic Energy*, which has a foreword by Jung, M. Esther Harding discusses dragon legends as typified by the story of St. George.¹⁵ The princess of the tale, who is held captive by the dragon and must be rescued by the hero, symbolizes the anima, or the undeveloped feminine component of the man's personality. According to Harding, an imprisoned princess represents the anima in a state as yet undifferentiated from the dragon of self-indulgence. The hero must collect his energies and overcome the monster or else sink into the depths of blind instinct. In a successful assault, some of the dragon's energy is redeemed for the use of the individual.

Before delving further into archetypes identified by Jungian psychology, it would be appropriate to examine "Women and Roses" and "Love Among the Ruins," which are occasionally

discussed in relation to "Childe Roland." William Clyde DeVane asserts that the three works were written in January 1852, in the following order: "Women and Roses," on the 1st; "Childe Roland," on the 2nd; and "Love Among the Ruins," on the 3rd (p. 229).

In a 1957 article, David Erdman relies heavily on this order of composition.¹⁶ He suggests that "Women and Roses," supposedly first in the series, expresses Browning's frustrated desire to escape from history by embracing passion. The poet tries to choose women from either the past, the present, or the future but finds it impossible to disentangle one age from another because the roses symbolizing the women keep moving in circles. In the second work, the poet, as Childe Roland, ventures to confront the folly and violence of life represented by the tower. As a result, he adopts a brighter outlook which enables him, on the third day, to dismiss the negative aspects of history. At last, the women and roses of the first poem apparently have ceased their constant whirling, for he can now write about a particular woman, possibly representing the future, with whom he finds love among the ruins of the past. Erdman's idea is that Browning deplored the viciousness of industrial competitiveness. In terms of past, present, and future, "Childe Roland," as the central poem of the three, may stand for the present and thus reflect the industrial evils of Browning's day.

It is significant that Erdman acknowledges the relatedness of the three works and that he is conscious of the unifying function of the image of woman as it appears in "Women and Roses" and "Love Among the Ruins." To carry his study further, one might ask: is the image of woman, so significant in two of the poems, equally important in the third? To attempt an answer, it would be helpful to look more closely at psychoanalytical writings about the anima, the freeing of which may be the object of Childe Roland's quest.

Jung describes this archetype in the following terms: "The anima is not the soul in the dogmatic sense . . . but a natural archetype that satisfactorily sums up all the statements of the unconscious. . . . Man cannot make it; on the contrary, it is always the *a priori* element in his moods, reactions, impulses, and whatever else is spontaneous in psychic life; it is a life behind consciousness that cannot be completely integrated with it, but from which, on the contrary, consciousness arises" (p. 27). As Harding observes, when the anima is "assimilated by an individual in the course of his psychological development, an increase in the range and intensity of his consciousness is achieved, for a certain portion of the unconscious has been redeemed" (p. 313).

An examination of biographical material may explain Browning's impulsion to write a poem such as "Childe Roland." According to his own statement, he "had to write it." William Irvine and Park Honan identify opposing masculine and

11. Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (1920; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 23.

12. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 137.

13. C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Vol. 9, Pt. 1 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), 82. Subsequent references to this work will be cited in the text.

14. "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. Carl

G. Jung (1968; rpt. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), pp. 117-18.

15. *Psychic Energy: Its Source and Its Transformation*. 2nd ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), pp. 273-92. Subsequent references to this work will be cited in the text.

16. "Browning's Industrial Nightmare," *Philological Quarterly*, 36 (1957), 426-27.

feminine images that were significant in Browning's life.¹⁷ Shelley was his masculine ideal; his mother and his wife were the revered feminine images. Noting Browning's habit of deferring to both women, Irvine and Honan suggest that he felt a sense of guilt and obligation because of forsaking his mother for his wife and because of endangering Elizabeth's delicate health by marrying her and making her pregnant. A sense of duty to Elizabeth may have accounted for his becoming increasingly more conservative and respectable and less political, to the detriment of his conscience.

The Brownings were in Paris during the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon on December 2, 1851, about one month before "Childe Roland" was supposedly written. Unlike Elizabeth, who exalted in the show of power against the republican resistance, Robert was appalled by the tyranny. Betty Miller suggests that, as Elizabeth gradually discovered she was the stronger of the two, she assumed the manner of a mildly domineering older sister (pp. 164-68). Indeed, Robert once told her that he was accustomed by choice to be led by another in the small matters of life. In complacently belittling Robert's intense hatred of Louis Napoleon, Elizabeth seems to have usurped his independence in major matters as well, for he made no public protest of the coup de'état.

It is possible that Browning's psychic energy had been so drained by a lifelong dependence first on his mother and later on his wife that he had fallen far short of fulfilling his human and artistic potential. The creation of "Childe Roland" may represent a healthy rebellious impulse, an awareness of the need to achieve independence and a greater degree of consciousness, which a liberated anima would represent.

In addition to the anima, another psychic phenomenon identified by Jung is that of the spirit archetype (pp. 214-16). In dreams and fairy tales, the archetype of the spirit may appear in the form of an old man, an animal, or a hobgoblin whenever there is a situation requiring wise counsel, understanding, and determination beyond the resources of the dreamer or the hero. In Browning's poem, a possible manifestation of the spirit archetype is the old cripple who offers help by pointing Childe Roland in the direction of his goal. Moreover, the black bird, "Apollyon's bosom-friend" (l. 160), brushes past as a sort of signal that the destination is near. Even the miserable horse seems to have the function of reminding Roland of his quest at a point when he had been absorbed in simply observing the landscape.

Jung states that all archetypes have positive and negative sides (p. 226). As an example of the negative aspect of the spirit archetype, he mentions a fairy tale in which the wise old man of the story has only one eye. Jung suggests that the partial blindness may signify that part of the old man's enlightenment has been lost to the dark daemonic world. In "Childe Roland," the cripple, the blind horse, and the bird, which seem either despicable or diabolical, are perhaps helpful spirit archetypes in their negative phase. The fact that they are negative, and

consequently lost in some degree to the daemonic world, contributes to the menacing atmosphere of the poem.

At one point, Childe Roland recalls other knights who failed in the same search that he has undertaken. Later, after finding the tower, he becomes aware that these knights have gathered to watch him from the hillsides. If the quest for the tower is a psychological process, the unsuccessful predecessors could represent the searcher in earlier stages of psychic development.

The reader does not know for certain whether Childe Roland is successful in his quest. However, the following statement of Harding's may be applicable to the poem: "It is the unawareness of danger that constitutes the greatest threat to one who is assailed by an uprush of primitive libido from the unconscious. If he could see that threat of temptation clearly enough to call it by its true name, half the battle would be won; for such an honest naming of the peril acts like a clarion call summoning all the forces of consciousness to the contest" (p. 274). In blowing the slug-horn, Childe Roland may be showing his consciousness of the threat posed by the tower. For a possible answer to whether he survives the encounter, one might look more closely at "Love Among the Ruins."

Nancy Rich discusses Browning's technique of producing companion poems, such as "Andrea del Sarto" and "Fra Lippo Lippi," "Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister" and "Incident in a French Camp," and "Cleon" and "Karshish." She observes that the two parts of a companion pair generally represent contrasting positions. The complementary relationship of the two works often extends the meaning or sharpens the focus of the individual poems.

Obviously, "Childe Roland" and "Love Among the Ruins" could easily be classified as companion poems. In "Childe Roland," there is "Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound" (l. 53). The setting for "Love Among the Ruins" is also a plain that "Does not even boast a tree" (l. 13). Childe Roland describes a "round squat turret" (l. 182). In "Love Among the Ruins," there is a "single little turret" (l. 37) from which a tower sprang in ancient times. Many writers have observed these and other similarities.

It is interesting to note that the landscape of "Love Among the Ruins," unlike that of "Childe Roland," is carpeted by an abundance of grass. Moreover, the turret on the grassy plain, in contrast to the menacing structure encountered by Childe Roland, is adorned with flower blossoms. One might conjecture that the ruined landscape of "Childe Roland" has undergone an amazing transformation to become the verdant panorama of "Love Among the Ruins."

If Childe Roland represents a troubled seeker who succeeds in releasing his psychic energy, an ameliorization of his condition would be inevitable. Perhaps the companion poem "Love Among the Ruins," with its image of the yellow-haired girl who awaits the speaker, expresses this ameliorization.

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17. *The Book, the Ring, and the Poet: A Biography of Robert Browning* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), p. 292.

18. Nancy B. Rich, "New Perspective on the Companion Poems of Robert Browning," *Victorian Newsletter*, No. 36 (1969), 5-9.

Lombroso's Criminal Man and Stoker's *Dracula*

Ernest Fontana

Studies of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) have not given sufficient emphasis to the precise Lombrosian pseudoscientific conception of the criminal personality that underlies not only the conception of Dracula himself, but also of Renfield, and even Dracula's female victims, Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker.¹ Lombroso and his German disciple, Max Nordau, are specifically cited by the precocious Mina, after Dr. Van Helsing's Lombrosian disquisition on Dracula as a born criminal "predestinate to crime." Lucy replies that "The Count is a criminal and of a criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him and *quâ* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind."²

Cesare Lombroso's *Uomo Delinquente* (1876) was available to Stoker in a two volume French translation *L'homme criminel* (1895). An English reduction and translation of *Uomo Delinquente* by Lombroso's daughter, Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, was not available until 1911. An English translation of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* was published in 1895.³ Nordau's book, which is dedicated to Lombroso as "Dear and Honoured Master," extends Lombroso's ideas to the realm of culture, demonstrating that degenerates are not always criminals, anarchists, and lunatics, but "often authors and artists."⁴

For Lombroso the criminal was a reversion to past races of mankind; "The criminal is an atavistic being, a relic of a vanished race."⁵ Dracula, who has survived for almost half a millenium as an "Undead," presents himself to Jonathan Harker as a relic of the Szekelys, the descendents of the Huns, "whose warlike fury had swept the earth like a living flame" (30). Stoker's Dracula (unlike the historical Wallachian Vlad, the Impaler)⁶ claims to be a survivor of a conquering race that was once the scourge of Europe. "What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila whose blood is in these veins" (30)? Dracula is a survivor from an earlier warlike period when his race's bloodthirsty behavior on the battlefield was functional and even necessary; "The warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told" (31). In the late nineteenth century, his practice of vampirism and his journey to England are attempts to enact the conquests of his ancestors and of himself in the more evolved and "pacific"

modern world. In Stoker's plot, Dracula's "criminality" is not presented as a reversion back to an earlier, atavistic state, but as a sublime and fabulous survival from an earlier historical period of humanity. Dracula's practice of vampirism is a defiance of the evolutionary cycle. By resisting his personal death, and by infecting others into the condition of the "nosferatu," Dracula threatens to conquer not merely the civilized world, as his ancestor Attila, but the entire race of evolved and evolving humanity. His final triumph, according to Dr. Van Helsing, quoting his friend Dr. Arminius of Buda-Pesth, would be to father "a new order of beings, whose road must lead through Death, not Life" (320).⁷

Dracula is a powerful image of cultural and social otherness, as Burton Hatlen has shown,⁸ because his character is conceived in terms of the Lombrosian criminal as "an atavistic being, a relic of a vanished race." Secondly, since "He may not enter anywhere, at the first unless there be some one of the household who bid him to come" (253), Dracula selects as his victims those persons among the more evolved races who are, unknown to themselves, kindred to him; that is, who contain the innate biological and psychological potential of savage reversion. Dracula is a threat to societies of predominately morally and socially evolved humanity, because there survives within these societies, even in England, a minority of potentially "diseased" individuals who are driven, subconsciously, to a reversion back to the atavistic, pre-civilized world from which Dracula survives, and who, subconsciously, "bid him to come," and who become, for Dracula, "flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, kin of my kin" (304). Such are, as I shall show, Renfield, Lucy and Mina.

In *Uomo Delinquente*, Lombroso presents with amazing confidence the physical and psychological traits of the born criminal or atavistic being. He also asserts that "the born criminal is an epileptic;" and that "the anatomical and psychological characteristics of the criminal and the epileptic are identical" (72). Leonard Woolf has shown that some of Dracula's physical characteristics are derived from Lombroso's concept of criminal man, but he has not extended the Lombrosian conception to Dracula's motivation, nor to the other characters in the book.⁹ Dracula's "aquiline nose," "massive" eyebrows, and "pointed"

1. Charles Blinderman, in "Vampirella, Darwin, and Count Dracula," *Massachusetts Review* 21 (1980), 411-28, argues that Dracula is a degenerate, but he links, without internal evidence, Stoker's notion of degeneracy to E. Ray Lankester's *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1889). My argument attempts to show that Lombroso's well-known theories were the primary "scientific" schemes in which Stoker worked. The immediate literary sources of *Dracula* have been cited by many: e.g., LeFanu's *Camilla* and Emily Gerard's *Land Beyond the Forest*. See Raymond T. McNally's and Radu Florescu's *In Search of Dracula* (New York: Graphic Society, 1972), pp. 171-181.

2. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), pp. 360-1. Hereafter cited in the text.

3. Stoker began *Dracula* in August of 1895; see Daniel Farson, *The Man Who Wrote Dracula* (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), p. 175.

4. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1895), p. vii. Donald Pizer shows the influence of Lombroso on Frank Norris

in his portrayal of McTeague. *The Novels of Frank Norris* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 57-63.

5. Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, *Criminal Man* (Montclair, N.J.: Paterson Smith, 1972), p. 135. This is a reprint of the 1911 edition, published by G.P. Putnam's Sons. Hereafter cited in the text.

6. The Historical Dracula was a Wallachian, not a Szekely. For clarification, see Grigore Nandris, "The Historical Dracula: The Theme of His Legend in the Western and in the Eastern Literatures of Europe," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 3 (1966), 367-96.

7. Carrol L. Fry notes "the contagious nature of vampirism." Vampires like fictional rakes "pass on their conditions . . . to their victims." *Victorian Newsletter*, No. 42 (1972), 21.

8. Burton Hatlen, "The Return of the Repressed/Oppressed in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Minnesota Review* 15 (1980), 80-97.

9. Leonard Woolf, *The Annotated Dracula by Bram Stoker* (New York: Charles N. Potter, 1975), p. 300.

ears (18) correspond to characteristics identified by Lombroso: "the nose is often aquiline like the beak of a bird of prey" (15); "the eyebrows are generally bushy in murderers and violators of women" (236) and "tend to meet across the nose" (18); and there is "a protuberance on the upper part of the posterior margin" of the ear, "a relic of the pointed ear characteristic of apes" (14-15).

There are other characteristics, not noted by Woolf, that Dracula shares with Lombroso's criminal type. His "peculiarly sharp white teeth" that protrude over his lips (18) correspond to Lombroso's observation that a criminal often has "supernumerary teeth, amounting to a double row" (235) and often "strongly developed" canines (17). Dracula's "rank breath" (19) may be related to the "premature caries" (17) (although "premature" is hardly an appropriate word for Dracula) that Lombroso notes is common to the criminal type. Except for a white mustache Dracula's face is "clean-shaven" (16); Lombroso observes "that the beard is scanty in born criminals and altogether absent in epileptics" (233), and he quotes an Italian proverb: "There is nothing worse under Heaven than a scanty beard and colourless face" (50). Although Dracula is clean-shaven, there are ape-like hairs in the center of his palms and his fingers are "broad and squat" (20).¹⁰ Lombroso notes that those who commit crimes against persons have "short, clumsy fingers" and that the principal lines of their palms "are reduced to one or two of horizontal or transverse direction as in apes" (20).

Dracula's extraordinary agility, his bat-like ability to crawl down a sheer castle wall that overlooks a dreadful abyss "face down with his cloak spreading out around like wings" relates to the extraordinary agility Lombroso notes in criminals, even those of advanced age. Vilella, a celebrated thief whom Lombroso examined, was able to spring "like a goat up the steep rocks of his native Calabria," "and when quite an old man, escaped from his captors by leaping from a high rampart at Pavia" (27). Lombroso also notes that criminals have great mobility in their toes and, often, great strength in their large toe, giving them a "prehensile foot" which is used in grasping (20-21). This may be the source of Stoker's vivid image of Dracula crawling downward like a bat.

Dracula's obsession with drinking from the throats of his victims and leaving there a mark can be related to the Lombrosian criminal's obsession with tattooing his women on their faces. "Of atavistic origin, also, is the practice, common to members of the *camorra*, of branding their sweethearts on the face, not from motives of revenge, but as a sign of proprietorship, like the chiefs of savage tribes, who mark their wives and other belongings" (48). Indeed, Mina, after drinking blood from Dracula's breast, after becoming through this rite both his symbolic child and wife, is tattooed or seared when Van Helsing places the Sacred Wafer on her forehead. This "tattoo" is not removed until Dracula's death in the Borgo Pass when his "proprietorship" over her ceases.

The characterization of Renfield, an inmate in Dr. Seward's asylum, is also derived from Lombroso. His excitability, his susceptibility to paroxysms, and, more specifically, his con-

sumption of live animals all are symptoms of what Lombroso identifies as the epileptic-criminal type. "The criminal is only a diseased person, an epileptic, in whom the cerebral malady, begun in some cases during prenatal existence or later, in consequences of some infection or cerebral poisoning, produces, together with certain signs of physical degeneration in the skull, face, teeth and brain, a return to the early brutal egotism natural to primitive races" (72-73).

Whereas atavistic man has survived for over four centuries in Dracula through vampirism, Renfield is a reversion or throw-back to the atavistic type. Neither his education, nor his acquired sentiments, which he manifests when he attempts to warn Dr. Seward of the approaching menace to Mina, are strong enough to overcome his innate criminality, which is, in Lombrosian terms, an incurable disease. In fact for Lombroso the disease is epilepsy. According to Lombroso, the epileptic in his seizures manifests "paroxysms of rage or ferocious and brutal impulse (devouring animals alive), which if consciously committed, would be considered criminal" (58-59). Dr. Seward identifies Renfield as "a zoöphagus (life-eating) maniac" (75), and his description of Renfield's consumption of animals is an imaginative elaboration of Lombroso. "He disgusted me much while with him, for when a horrid blowfly, bloated with some carrion food, buzzed into the room, he caught it, held it exultantly for a few moments between his finger and thumb, and, before I knew what he was going to do, put it in his mouth and ate it" (73). As Leslie Fiedler has observed, Renfield seems "the prototype of the side-show Geek,"¹¹ but unlike the Geek he is not made by other men exploiting his need, but born to his condition. The contrast between Renfield's zoöphagus and raging paroxysms on the one hand and, on the other hand, his scientific and philosophical sophistication, which he shows in Chapter 18, is, for Lombroso, also characteristic of the epileptic-criminal. "In epileptics, this divergence is sometimes manifested in one and the same person in the space of twenty-four hours. An individual at one time afflicted with loss of willpower and amnesia, and incapable of formulating the simplest notion, will shortly afterwards give expression to original ideas and reason logically" (61).

If Renfield is obviously a Lombrosian criminal type, who comes under Dracula's power because of their biological and psychological kinship, Lucy Westenra is less obviously so. What links her to the epileptic-criminal is her sonnambulism, which, according to Lombroso, is a frequent characteristic of epileptics.¹² Lucy is assaulted by Dracula, for the first time, after having sleepwalked to the churchyard at Whitby the day after Dracula's arrival on the *Demeter*. As the *Demeter* approaches Whitby, Lucy, as observed by Mina, becomes restless and her sleepwalking increases. Since it is Lucy's sonnambulistic nature that links her to Dracula as a criminal reversion, she is drawn to him as he approaches and, subconsciously, she seeks him out, bidding him to come to her the night after his disembarkation. In the moonlit graveyard of St. Mary's Church at Whitby, Stoker brings together the ancient atavistic survivor and the vulnerable Lucy, an epileptic atavistic reversion. Mina writes:

10. Woolf links Dracula's hairy palms to "the standard nineteenth-century image of the masturbator," p. 22.

11. Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 343.

12. Lombroso-Ferrero, p. 63.

... there on our favourite seat, the silver light of the moon struck a half-reclining figure, snowy white. The coming of the cloud was too quick for me to see much, for shadow shut down on light almost immediately; but it seemed to me as though something dark stood behind the seat where the white figure shone, and bent over it. What it was, whether man or beast, I could not tell (96).

Lucy's latent criminal nature "bids" Dracula to come to her, despite her acquired morality and her betrothal to Arthur. Dracula's power over her derives from their biological and psychological kinship. Later, when she describes to Mina the intense eroticism of her first nocturnal encounter with Dracula, she presents the experience as if it were a dream: "... and something very sweet and very bitter all around me at once; and then I seemed sinking into deep green water, and there was a singing in my ears, as I have heard there is to drowning men; and then everything seemed passing away from me; my soul seemed to go out from my body and float about the air" (104). The vertigo that informs Lucy's dream is, according to Lombroso, a frequent experience of epileptics during their seizures,¹³ which, Lombroso asserts, resemble the reproductive act, both being characterized by "the tonic tension of the muscles, loss of consciousness, and mydriasis [dilation of the pupil]" (63). After this experience, which evokes both orgasm and epileptic seizure, Lucy's will is helpless; she is drawn to Dracula, despite her conscious, acquired, civilized resolutions. Neither Van Helsing's transfusions nor her own "best" sentiments can arrest the inevitable progress of her disease towards the Medusa-like horror Dr. Seward beholds in the graveyard in London. For Stoker, the condition of being a vampire is a metaphor for the posthumous survival and full realization of Lombroso's concept of innate criminal epilepsy.

Lucy's epilepsy is incurable, Mina's disease is not. After being assaulted by Dracula, Mina manifests the symptoms of "hysteria," which, as Thomas Szasz has shown, is an invention or fiction of early modern psychiatry.¹⁴ For Lombroso, "Hysteria is a disease allied to epilepsy of which it appears to be a milder form. One characteristic of the hysteric is her susceptibility to suggestion" (95). Through his hypnotism of Mina, Dr. Van Helsing uses Mina's hysteria as a way of tracking

Dracula, with whom she is in telepathic contact, on his return journey to Transylvania. Like Renfield and Lucy, Mina is linked on an innate, subconscious level to Dracula. She too is a diseased reversion. But because her disease is milder than that of the others, it can be a source of insight in the final pursuit of Dracula.

Stoker departs finally from Lombroso in his portrayal of Mina. Here, the science of Van Helsing and the love of Harker are strong enough to reverse the innate, degenerative tendencies of her nature. In fact, these atavistic traits that Mina carries and that, symbolically, enter her body when she is forced to drink blood from Dracula's bosom, in a parody of the mother-child relation, serve to resolve the conflict between the evolved and atavistic that is the organizing principle of the text. The world of Victorian modernity, enervated like Wells's Eloi, in the *Time Machine* (1896), by virtue of its moral and social evolution, is vivified, as Mark Hennelly has argued, through a "transfusion . . . from the blood knowledge of Dracula."¹⁵ The hysterical Lucy by feeding upon the blood of him who feeds upon the blood of others is empowered to bear the man-child whose birth is celebrated in the coda of the book.¹⁶ Caught between the poles of civilization and Lombrosian criminal atavism, Mina is shocked into becoming a vessel of evolution rather than a victim of reversion. She comes to bear the child "in whose veins run not only the Victorian blood of his parents but also the vitality of the Count whose blood Mina had drunk."¹⁷

Although the underlying schema of Stoker's *Dracula* is Lombrosian, the book finally goes beyond the pseudo-science of Lombroso. Atavistic man for Lombroso is diseased, an incurable epileptic among the healthy who must protect themselves through rational forms of incarceration from the contamination of the alien menace. But Stoker's *Dracula* shows that the infected carrier of the infection of degeneration contains within his blood mysterious sources of renewal and regeneration. Although Dracula's body "crumbled into dust and passed from our sight" (398) in the Borgo Pass, traces of Draculian atavistic blood survive commingled in the blood of future life.

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13. Lombroso-Ferrero, p. 58.

14. On this point see Szasz's *The Myth of Mental Illness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

15. Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., "Dracula: The Gnostic Quest and Victorian Wasteland," *English Literature in Transition*, 20 (1977), p. 13.

16. The conflict between moral evolution and degeneration also informs

Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, whose coda ends not with the birth of a child but, in #CXXI, with the imagined conception of the child who will be "a closer link/betwixt us and the crowning race." The conclusion of *Dracula* appears to be a structural and thematic echoing of the conclusion of Tennyson's poem.

17. Hennelly, p. 23.

Recollections of Tennyson by Sir George Prothero in the Tennyson Research Centre

Richard Collins

The following pages of recollections were written by Sir George Walter Prothero (1848-1922) in July 1894, while he was between appointments as university lecturer at King's College, Cambridge, and as the first chair of modern history at Edinburgh University. They concern meetings with Tennyson in August 1880, December 1885 and various uncertain dates. Prothero's notes shed some light not only on the public Tennyson who rubbed elbows with queens and prime ministers, but the private Tennyson who shakes his fist at reviewers and roughnecks alike. But these notes are equally interesting for revealing the tone and substance of conversations between a respected historian and the preeminent poet of Victorian England. For not only do we hear of conversations on literary matters but of political and social matters as well: the historian shares his favorite lines of Greek poetry with the poet, who tells afterdinner anecdotes about obscure exchanges between historical figures.

George Prothero was born 14 October 1848 in Wiltshire, eldest son of the Reverend George Prothero, who was for a time the rector of Whippingham, Isle of Wight. After rising to the head of the school at Eton, he went on scholarship to King's College, Cambridge. After graduation and a short stint as assistant-master at Eton, Prothero studied the German historians at Bonn University, which study later resulted in his translating the first volume of Ranke's *Weltgeschichte* in 1883. The following year he became university lecturer in history at King's. Other publications include his *Life and Times of Simon de Montfort* (1877) and *Select Statutes and other Documents Illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I*, published in 1894, the year in which he composed the present notes. Later in 1894 Prothero moved to Edinburgh to take his new post as Chair of Modern History at Edinburgh University, a position with which he was entirely satisfied for the five years he held it.

However, in 1899 he was offered the editorship of the *Quarterly Review*, recently resigned by his brother Rowland Edmund. His position as editor did not prevent him from vigorously pursuing academic and public activities. He was president of the Royal Historical Society (1901-1905); co-editor of the *Cambridge Modern History* (1901-1912); general editor of the Cambridge Historical Series; fellow of the British Academy (1903); Rede lecturer at Cambridge (1903); Lowell lecturer at Boston University (1910); Schouler lecturer at Johns Hopkins University (1910); and Chichele lecturer at Oxford (1915). As Historical Advisor to the Foreign Office in 1919 he supplied British delegates to the Versailles Conference with necessary historical, geographical and economic information about Germany before the War. He was created K.B.E. in 1920. While still editor of the *Quarterly Review*, he died in 1922.

The *Dictionary of National Biography* (1922-1930) states that while editor of the *Quarterly Review*, Prothero

had a definite place in the social and intellectual life of the London of his time. He entertained generously, and those who were privileged to be his guests at 24 Bedford Square were sensible of the quiet charm of their host not less than of the vivacious charm of their hostess. In touch with representative men in political and diplomatic as well as in historical and literary circles, Prothero had good company at his command; and the talk at his table was enriched by his own balanced and sympathetic contributions (*DNB*, 1922-1930, 699).

Tennyson, however, does not mention Prothero in any of his published memoirs, nor does Lady Tennyson in her *Letters*, which often consist of guest-lists of both favored and occasional visitors. The information in Prothero's recollections of Tennyson indicates that although the two men were on good terms and kept in contact (however inconstantly) with each other for over two decades, their relationship could not have been based on deeper than intellectual concerns.

Still, their meetings – which seem to have taken place primarily on Tennyson's turf and not at 24 Bedford Square – display a range of topics and a candidness which suggest a high level of mutual respect and trust. Tennyson could often be rather one-sided in his friendships, and his failure to mention Prothero may show that he was doing more talking than listening in his meetings with Prothero, who, to all indications, was a benevolent and sympathetic observer. Likewise, Prothero's own reserved tone may reflect more of the recording historian in him than of the recollecting friend. (For another, quite different, example of Prothero's recollections, see his *Memoir* [London: Paul, Trench, 1888] concerning his friend Henry Bradshaw.)

Tennyson's tone as it emerges in these pages accords with what we know of him at this latter stage of his life. The year 1880 marks the decline of his health and the growing frequency of the "voices" he has intermittently heard throughout his life. It also marks the growing awareness of his critics that he was not, in the words of John Churton Collins, an "original" so much as an "assimilative" genius. In January, seven months before the first conversation that Prothero records, Collins had published "A New Study of Tennyson" in the *Cornhill*, pinpointing Tennyson's "wondrous assimilative skill." In his copy at the Tennyson Research Centre Tennyson wrote: "I will answer for it that no modern poet can write a single line but among the innumerable authors of this world you will find somewhere a striking parallelism. It is the unimaginative man who thinks everything borrowed." Prothero reports that Tennyson goes on to talk much of the Latin poets, evidently despite (or in spite of) his reaction to what he took to be Collins's charge of plagiarism. But when we consider that Collins is ranking Tennyson with Virgil and praising "his tact, his taste, his learning," it is hard to see what Tennyson is so sensitive about. Indeed, in his *Illustrations of Tennyson* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1891) Collins is careful to point out that he has no

fear of his "illustrations being mistaken for an insinuation of plagiarism against a poet of whom we are all of us so justly proud."

The 1885 entry is distinguished by the almost entirely condemnatory nature of Tennyson's literary and political remarks. What praise he gives is either reserved for his own poetry ("His own line 'The mellow ousel [sic] fluting in the elm' a good example: he 'would be content to live by that line alone.'") or else is dubiously generous. For example, he calls *Aurora Leigh* a "great creation," then revokes the positive element of this criticism by judging it to be "not a poem." In the same manner, he implies that Rossetti's sonnets are "perfect" only to conclude that such perfection disqualifies them as "hateful." Even his praise of Charles Tennyson Turner's sonnets is based upon their imperfection. The condemnatory tone of his remarks, however, may indicate Prothero's interest more than Tennyson's critical tenor at this time. (For Tennyson's more generous critical comments recorded in circumstances similar to Prothero's jottings see *William Allingham's Diary*, ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford [London: Macmillan, 1907] and *The Diary of Alfred Domett, 1872-1885*, ed. E. A. Horsman [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953]). On the other hand, it may very well be that Tennyson's tone reflects the personal bitterness of having lost his son Lionel earlier in the year, renewing his anxieties about mortality, which had begun with the death of Hallam. Was Prothero reacting to the personal presence of Tennyson's mood when he recalled the dark verses of Moschus on the finality of human death? In any case, Prothero gives us an intriguing glimpse into the private side of the Ancient Sage.

It is interesting to note that each of the three entries concludes with an imputation. The portrait sketch which Prothero's

economically vivid lines leave us with is that of an artist whose greatness needs no defense vigorously shaking his fist at one harmless antagonist or another. Finally, I think, we might see Tennyson shaking a self-conscious fist at himself. For as he says at the end of the second entry, "If I had been the eighth sage, my gnomé w^d have been 'Everyone imputes himself.'"

Text

Aldworth.¹ Aug. 1 & 2, 1880

Tennyson talked much after dinner about morality & a future life – also of the stupidity of critics, who did not understand the dramatic in his poetry – "They attribute to *me* the opinions of the hero in *Maud* – can't they see that it is *he*, & not *me*, who is speaking?"² – He was vexed with the critics for charging him with plagiarism, too. "Even Leslie Stephen, who might know better, said I had taken things in *In Memoriam* from Omar Khayam. Why, I don't know a word of Arabic, & O.K. wasn't translated when I wrote *In Memoriam*. Why should not two poets think independently of the same thing?"³

Walked for two hours with Tennyson on the hill. He talked much of the Latin poets, modern morality, the force of public opinion in these days, Darwinism, the evil of agnosticism, etc.⁴

*Freshwater*⁵ Dec. 26, 27, 1885.

Tennyson talked of many things – Browning's Poems: The "Ring and the Book" – "not a work of art."⁶ *Aurora Leigh* also a great creation but "not a poem"⁷ – Glenaveril an inferior Don Juan. Walt Whitman no real poet.⁸ He said also, "A sonnet is the easiest thing in the world to write – and the hardest."

1. Aldworth, Haslemere. Tennyson's estate southeast of London, his second house, purchased in 1867.
2. Goldwyn Smith, for example, in "The War Passages in *Maud*," *Saturday Review* (3 November 1855), took Tennyson to task for presenting war as the cure for the vices of a nation and a broken heart: "To rely on external sensations instead of internal efforts for a moral cure, is natural to that character which, whether dramatically or otherwise, is presented to us throughout Mr. Tennyson's poems" (*Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John D. Jump [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967], p. 188). For a whole range of reactions, see E. F. Shannon, "The Critical Reception of *Maud*," *PMLA* 68 (1953), 397-417.
3. Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) was the editor of the *Cornhill* in January 1880 when John Churton Collins published "A New Study of Tennyson" in that magazine. This connection may be the basis of Tennyson's gripe about Stephen. It was not true, however, that Tennyson did not know "a word of Arabic" at the time of his meeting with Prothero, unless he had forgotten what he had learned with Fitzgerald and on his own many years before. But the fact that he overstates the limitations of his knowledge can be attributed to his defensiveness in questions of his own originality. When Edward Fitzgerald visited Tennyson at Freshwater to attend Lionel Tennyson's christening in 1854, he did translate some Persian for Tennyson who, as Robert Martin has pointed out, "had been trying to learn the language but had to give it up because the characters so bothered his eyes that Emily had hidden his textbooks" (*Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980], p. 379). It is unlikely that Tennyson failed to learn a "word" of the language. Nonetheless, the substance of Tennyson's defense is undamaged, since he had begun sections of *In Memoriam* in 1833 and had published a first edition in 1850, clearly several years before his attempts at Persian. Fitzgerald himself did not learn Persian until the 1850s and did not publish his first Persian translation, the *Salámán and Absál* of Jámi, until 1856.

The Rubáiyat itself did not appear until 1859.

4. It is curious that Tennyson should be speaking of "the evil of agnosticism" at this time. In 1865 Tennyson accepted the (second) invitation to become a Fellow of the Royal Society, another member of which was Thomas Huxley, who coined the term *agnosticism*. Huxley, a great admirer of Tennyson, once said: "We scientific men claim him as having quite the mind of a man of science." In 1869 Tennyson joined the Metaphysical Society, of which Huxley was also a member. In 1879 he resigned, having, according to Robert Martin, "learned to respect the integrity of the agnostics without in any way changing his own convictions about the irrationality of pure materialism" (Martin, 484). It is perhaps worth noting that Leslie Stephen published "An Agnostic's Apology" in *The Fortnightly Review* (June 1876) in which he revealed his private convictions and popularized Huxley's term of 1870.
5. The house called Farringford, near the village of Freshwater on the western side of the Isle of Wight, was the Tennyson home for over a century, beginning in 1846.
6. *The Ring and the Book* (1869) appeared at about the same time as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Browning offered the subject of his long narrative poem to Trollope as suitable for a novel and then to Tennyson as suitable for a narrative poem before undertaking it himself. Tennyson felt the subject matter was esoteric and morbid and had no chance with the general public, although he gave it guarded praise when it appeared.
7. Tennyson called *Aurora Leigh* (1856) "very good lymph of poetry" when he received his review copy – one of the better examples of his ability to lavish dubious praise.
8. Tennyson and Whitman exchanged books for a time and corresponded, but Tennyson's praise is always indirect, congratulating Whitman for his celebration of a noble Constitution but never for his poetry as such. Hallam Tennyson quotes his father as saying "Walt neglects form altogether, but there is a fine spirit breathing through his writings. Some

Rossetti's sonnets very fine, but "a perfect sonnet (so-called) a hateful thing" – "I hate the perfect sonnet with a perfect hatred."⁹ C. Tennyson Turner's sonnets some of the best in the language, because not perfect.¹⁰ Rogers said of sonnets "I won't dance in fetters."¹¹ Amiel a very fine book: much true criticism in it.¹²

Walked with Tennyson in the morning, and again in the aft-ⁿ in the garden. He hates modern French realism, Zola etc. "Art is selection." He talked much of the force of melody in poetry, the sound of words: the beauty of rhythm most important. Browning a great sinner in this respect. His own line "The mellow ouzel fluting in the elm" a good example: he "would be content to live by that line alone. And yet (he went on) some people are fools enough to pronounce it *owsel*. Why, it spoils the whole line."¹³ English is much finer than Italian for variety of sound: so Milton finer than Dante – full vowels and declined endings make D. monotonous. He quoted Homer, Dante, Milton to illustrate the contrast. I quoted the lines of Bion (or Moschus, is it?) αἶαι τὰ μάλ' ἀκαί τε ...

of them are quite unreadable from nakedness of expression" (*Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols. [London: Macmillan, 1897], II, 424). A more reliable tribute may be the fact that Tennyson would often read to Emily from Whitman's works. (See James O. Hoge, *The Letters of Emily Tennyson* [University Park & London: Penn State Press, 1974], p. 117).

9. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *House of Life* appeared in various expanded and amended versions between 1869 and 1881. The prefatory verses, "A Sonnet is a moment's monument," which clarified Rossetti's practice in the 1881 edition, can be taken as the exemplary target of Tennyson's criticism.
10. Charles Tennyson Turner (1808-1879) published a volume of verse, *Poems by Two Brothers*, in 1827, when he and his younger brother Alfred entered Cambridge. He published lyrics and sonnets off and on until 1873, a collection of sonnets being posthumously published in 1880.
11. Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), poet and friend of Byron and Thomas Moore, was an early admirer of Tennyson's work. In 1850, after Rogers refused the laureateship which had been Wordsworth's, it was offered to and accepted by Tennyson.
12. Mrs. Humphrey Ward's popular translation of Henri-Frédéric Amiel's *Journal Intime* was published in 1885.
13. "The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm" ("in the elm and aloft" in MS) is the correct line as published in "The Gardener's Daughter," line 93 (*English Idyls*, 1842). The poem was written 1833-34. It is interesting that Tennyson should choose this line "to live by," since it seems an amalgam of Thomson's "The mellow bullfinch answers from the grove" (*Spring*, 605) and James Hurdis's "And ouzel fluting with melodious pipe" (*The Favourite Village*, IV). See *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1969), p. 513n; also George G. Loane, *Echoes in Tennyson* (London: Stockwell, 1928), p. 6.
14. The lines are from Moschus's "Lament for Bion," III, 99-104, which is done in imitation of Bion's "Lament for Adonis." I quote the lines in full from the Loeb edition: "Ay me! when the mallows and the fresh green parsley and the springing crumpled anise perish in the garden, they live yet again and grow another year; but we men that are so tall and strong and wise, soon as ever we be dead, unhearing there in a hole of the earth sleep we both sound and long a sleep that is without end or waking" (*The Greek Bucolic Poets*, with translations by J. M. Edmonds [London: Heinemann, 1912], pp. 452-53).
15. Arthur Henry Hallam (1811-1833), critic and friend of Tennyson, whose death was one of the major events in Tennyson's life, inspiring *In Memoriam* as well as much of his other poetry indirectly. It was generally agreed that Hallam was potentially one of the subtlest critical minds of his generation. In 1831 Hallam published the influential essay, "On Some Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson," in the *Englishman's Magazine* (reprinted in *The Writ-*

εἶδομεν εὖ μάλα μᾶκρον, ἀτέρμονα, νήδυμον ὕπνον¹⁴ as some of the finest lines I knew. "Yes, (he said) I pointed out those lines to Arthur Hallam more than fifty years ago."¹⁵ He is annoyed by the criticisms in the papers – the Standard saying he had shown marked improvement – "That for an old fellow of 76!" Furnival[I] had bothered him to be president of the Browning Society; he had refused twice.¹⁶ In his last book, the "Ancient Sage" is Lao-tse,¹⁷ contemporary to Confucius – the lines ". . . the name "that can be named, Is not the Eternal & unchanging one," [sic] are the germ of the poem: they were pointed out to him by Jowett.¹⁸ No one in particular is meant by the Dead Prophet. He is in despair about the present state of things, especially in Ireland: "never were so many lies told in the world as now." "Gladstone is personally my friend, but politically, I hate him like the devil."¹⁹

In the evening after dinner, he told several excellent stories. He thought Jack Towers' answer to Will. IV (when Lord High Adm-¹) the best response he knew, though that of Wilkes to Sandwich,²⁰ and of a certain courtier to Louis XV ran it very

ings of Arthur Henry Hallam, ed. T. H. Vail Motter [New York: MLA; London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1943]).

16. Frederick James Furnivall (1825-1910) had established the Browning Society in 1881, publishing a pamphlet on this endeavor entitled *How the Browning Society came into being* (London: Trübner, 1884). Furnivall did much to popularize Browning's poetry and arranged for the production of several of Browning's plays in the '80s and '90s. Failing to convince Tennyson to assume the presidency of the society, Furnivall himself finally took it over from 1887-1892. In 1873 Tennyson testified in Furnivall's behalf for his unsuccessful candidacy for the post of secretary of the Royal Academy. At the Working Men's College Furnivall taught English poetry from Chaucer to Tennyson. As an honorary secretary of the Philological Society, he preceded James A. H. Murray as editor of what was to become the Oxford *New English Dictionary (OED)*. He was one of the champions of reviving interest in Arthurian romances, editing Lonelich's *Seynt Graal*, 2 vols. (London: Roxburghe Club, 1861) and the *Morte d'Arthur* (London: Macmillan, 1865). In 1864 he founded the Early English Text Society, with Tennyson as a subscriber. At the suggestion of Henry Bradshaw, the subject of Prothero's friendly memoir, Furnivall started the Chaucer Society. In 1873 he established the Shakespeare Society, with Browning as its president.
17. Lao-tse, an older contemporary of Confucius, lived in the sixth century B.C. The lines pointed out to Tennyson by Benjamin Jowett (see note 18) are those which begin the classic work of Taoism, the *Lao-Tzu or Tao Te Ching*: "The way that can be spoken of / Is not the constant way; / The name that can be named / Is not the constant name" (*Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching*, trans. D. C. Lau [New York: Penguin, 1963], p. 57).
18. Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), the great translator of Plato, was master of Balliol College and regius professor of Greek at Oxford. He had a considerable influence not only on his own students but on a whole generation of writers, including Swinburne, Walter Pater and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Prothero's brother, Rowland Edmund Prothero, wrote a *Life of Dean Stanley*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1894) in which Jowett figures prominently as friend and colleague.
19. William Gladstone (1809-1898), British statesman and Prime Minister, was instrumental in getting Tennyson his peerage, but no doubt was not entirely surprised to find Tennyson less than a thankful ally in Parliament, since their political differences were marked. Tennyson refused to take a party seat in the House of Lords, pointing out their differences whenever he could. In 1885 Queen Victoria asked Tennyson to encourage Gladstone to retire, a request which the Prime Minister did not take seriously.
20. John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich (d. 1792) jibed that his fellow libertine John Wilkes (c. 1727-1797) would "die of pox or on the gallows." To which Wilkes replied: "That depends, my lord, on whether I embrace your mistress or your principles."

close.²¹ "If I had been the eighth (?) sage, my gnomé w^d have been 'Everyone imputes himself.' "

Other recollections – time uncertain.

Met Tennyson & Hallam at Neuchatel in autumn of 1874 (?)²² – they had been at Macugnaga etc. He said he had been somewhat disappointed by the mountain-scenery: Macugnaga was the only place he had seen which at all came up to his idea of mountain-grandeur.

Once heard him read "Maud" through, at Farringford. He read it one Sunday morning: the Stanfords were there too.²³ He read to the poem beginning "Oh that 'twere possible, After long grief of pain etc" – then his voice failed him, & he almost broke down: he shut the book & said "I can't read any more." He told me afterwards that that poem was the germ of "Maud." He had written it long before, & left it lying in a drawer. One day Sir J. Simeon found it, or he showed it to him – & Sir J. S. said "Why there is a whole long poem in this – Why don't you finish it?" "And so (he said) I spun Maud round it."²⁴

I remember hearing him read "The Revenge" in London once, to several people.²⁵ As he read he got hold of Pinkie Ritchie's hand, & becoming absorbed in his reading he squeezed it so hard that she gave a little cry, on which he stopped.²⁶ "Did I hurt you?" She – "Oh never mind. Please go on." He: "I didn't know I was pinching you. Must hold on to something, but a table-leg will do as well."²⁷

Once he told me that he was walking near his park-gate at Freshwater, & a couple of rough fellows began to chaff him about his hat or something. He strode up to the gate & clenched his fist, a very large one. "Do you see *that*?" and they sheered off at once.

G. W. Prothero
22 July '94

Louisiana State University

21. After killing two stags one day, Louis XV said to his huntsman Jean-Marie de Lasmartre: "Lasmartre, are the horses tired?" "Yes, Sire, they've just about had it." "And the hounds?" "Indeed!" "All right, Lasmartre. I'll be hunting again the day after tomorrow." A pause. "Did you hear me, Lasmartre? The day after tomorrow." "Yes, Sire, I heard you the first time." Then Lasmartre said aside, loud enough for the King to hear: "It's always the same: he asks if the animals are tired, never the men."

22. The date is possibly late summer of 1873, but even more likely to be 1872. Tennyson was not in Switzerland in 1874.

23. Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), a friend of Hallam Tennyson, composed the music for Tennyson's play *Becket*, which opened (disastrously) 18 April 1876. See his *Studies and Memories* (London: Constable, 1908) and *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London: Arnold, 1914).

24. Sir John Simeon (1815-1870), neighbor and frequent guest at Tennyson's Isle of Wight home, was first introduced to Tennyson in London by Thomas Carlyle, who described the poet as "sitting on a dung-heap among innumerable dead dogs" (see Martin, p. 242). It has been said that Simeon, who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1851, relied heavily upon Tennyson's advice and influence while a Liberal MP for the Isle of Wight (1842-1851 and 1865 to his death in 1870). Upon Simeon's death, Tennyson wrote of him to Lady Simeon: "He was the only man on earth, I verily believe, to whom I could, and have more than once opened my whole heart and he also has given me, in many a conversation at Farringford in my little attic, his utter confidence. I knew none like him for tenderness and generosity" (Charles Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* [London: Macmillan, 1949], p. 389). "In the Garden at Swainston,"

which Tennyson wrote while waiting for the funeral procession to leave Simeon's home, depicts Simeon as "the Prince of Courtesy."

25. "The Revenge: A Ballad of the Fleet" was published in the *Nineteenth Century* (March 1878) and then in *Poems* (1880). Tennyson began work on the poem early in 1877 after he had re-read Edward Arber's 1871 reprint of *The Revenge* (1591). Arber characterized *The Revenge's* battle as "the Balaclava charge of that Spanish War," which would have appealed to the poet of "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

26. Emily Ritchie, otherwise known as Pinkie, one of Richmond Ritchie's sisters.

27. It was not unusual for Tennyson to express himself spontaneously in this way during a reading, giving physical expression to his verses as though he were as much sculptor as poet. Charles Tennyson, for example, describes a reading of *Maud* during which Tennyson "seized and kept quite unconsciously twisting in his powerful hands a large brocaded cushion which was lying at his side" (*Alfred Tennyson*, 289, 386). Rossetti's drawing of Tennyson reading *Maud* (dated 27 September 1855) shows the poet absorbed in the small book which he holds in one large, block-like hand, while his other hand – open, square and expressive – as large as the shoe which it eclipses, dominates the composition (reproduced in Martin, Plate XIII). It is, therefore, not inappropriate that Prothero's last images of Tennyson are almost synecdochal images of his hands – either unconsciously mauling Pinkie Ritchie's fingers in a London drawing-room, or consciously threatening a pair of roughnecks at his park-gate in the country.

Books Received

- Anderson, Vincent P. *Robert Browning as a Religious Poet: An Annotated Bibliography of the Criticism*. Troy, N.Y.: The Whitson Publishing Co., 1983. Pp. [viii] + 325. \$25.00. There is a 62 pp. introduction to a bibliography of works from 1833 to 1980, also an annotated bibliography of dissertations.
- Anthony, P.D. *John Ruskin's Labour: A Study of Ruskin's Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. viii + 220. \$37.50. Anthony demonstrates how Ruskin's social criticism is "inextricably related to his work on art and architecture" (p. 8) and that there is therefore "only one Ruskin," that the "essential unity of Ruskin's work in art criticism, architecture and social philosophy [is] that all relationships must be governed by truth." (p. 22). A pleasure to read.
- Brooks, Chris. *Signs for the Times: Symbolic Realism in the Mid-Victorian World*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984. Pp. [xv] + 202. \$29.95. Symbolic realism is "a concern to give to the interpretive structures by means of which we understand reality a phenomenal existence within the fabric of that reality: in other words, to give to the semantic connotations of the real a tangibility like that of physical reality itself. In practice this results in a conflation of the immediate nature of direct experience with the mediate nature of our experience of symbolism, in which the sign mediates between ourselves and the reality it signifies" (p. 3). Chapters devoted to Carlyle (1), Dickens (5), Ruskin (1), Arnold (1), Pre-Raphaelites (2), as well as three chapters on architecture – Pugin & Butterfield.
- Eden Phillpotts (1862-1960): *Selected Letters*. Ed. James Y. Dayananda. Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1984. Pp. xii + 319. \$24.50 cloth, \$14.75 paper. 293 letters chosen from more than 6,000 extant. The letters were chosen "that bear directly on his methods of composing fiction, drama, poetry, and non-fiction and on his views on literature in general . . . [and that] give . . . the flavor of the man. . ." (p. 22). Includes a biographical sketch and chronology as well as a bibliography of some 225 books written by Phillpotts.
- Giordano, Frank R., Jr. *I'd Have My Life Unbe: Thomas Hardy's Self-Destructive Characters*. University, AL: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1984. Pp. xix + 211. \$18.75. A convincingly argued discussion of the suicidal natures of Jude, Tess, Boldwood, Giles Winterborne, Henchard, Eustacia, which makes a case for the positive in suicide as opposed to the negative associated with traditional Christianity.
- Graver, Suzanne. *George Eliot and Community: A Study in Social Theory and Fictional Form*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984. Pp. [xii] + 340. \$29.50. Graver's "major interest is the relationship between the concreteness [Eliot's] fictional communities attain and a tradition of social thought in which community becomes an abstraction, a qualitative ideal rather than a perceived reality – but an ideal that addresses an actual world, immediately present, dominated by individualist values and struggling to recover communal ones" (p. 9). "The chapters are organized in pairs: in each case, the first of the two is devoted to the theoretical social issues, the second to George Eliot's fiction" (p. 27). A lucid, interesting analysis.
- Hunt, Leigh. *Captain Sword and Captain Pen*. Intro. Rhodes Dunlap. Iowa City: Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries, 1984. Pp. [117]. \$10.00. A facsimile of the 1835 first edition of the six-part poem and postscript, with a new 31 pp. introduction.
- Kipling: *Interviews and Recollections*. Ed. Harold Orel. 2 vols. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1983. Vol. I, pp. xvi + 170, \$26.50; Vol. II, pp. x + [283], \$26.50. Some 90 entries by "more than eighty men and women" (I, x) about a man whom Orel calls "one of the most original, talented and remarkable writers in the history of English literature. . ." (I, x).
- Myers, William. *The Teaching of George Eliot*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1984. Pp. 264. \$27.50. Myers attempts "the explication, critical analysis and, if possible, the defence of [Eliot's] conscious intentions as an aesthetic teacher" (p. 12), and divides his book into three parts – Convictions, Confusions, Affirmations – with an introduction and conclusion.
- Ruskin: *The Critical Heritage*. Ed. J. L. Bradley. London, Boston, Melbourne, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984. Pp. [xiv] + 436. \$29.95. Standard Critical Heritage series volume with 49 entries from 1843 to 1900, with a 29 pp. introduction, a chronological table, and an 11 pp. index.
- Suvin, Darko. *Victorian Science Fiction in the UK: The Discourses of Knowledge and of Power*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983. Pp. [xviii] + 461. \$50.00. Includes an annotated primary bibliography of S-F books 1848-1900, biographical sketches of Victorian S-F writers, social classification of S-F writers, an essay on the limits of the genre, an interpretive essay, "The Social Discourse of Victorian Science Fiction" (163 pp. including a secondary bibliography) and an 32 pp. Index. A sprawling but useful book.
- Visions of the Modern City: Essays in History, Art and Literature*. Ed. Wm. Sharpe and Leonard Wallock. Proc. of the Heyman Center for the Humanities. New York: Columbia Univ., [1983]. Pp. 245. \$2.50. Essays of primary interest to Victorian specialists would be Sharpe and Wallock intro., Eric. E. Lampard's "The Nature of Urbanization," Philip Collins's "Dickens and the City" and Deborah Epstein Nord's "The Social Explorer as Anthropologist: Victorian Travelers among the Urban Poor."
- Westwater, Martha. *The Wilson Sisters: A Biographical Study of Upper Middle-Class Victorian Life*. Athens, OH; London: Ohio Univ. Press, 1984. Pp. [xii] + 250. \$29.95. A short section on the six sisters as daughters of James Wilson, a long section on them as wives of Walter Bagehot, Russell Barrington, Orby Shipley, Wm. Rathbone Greg, Matthew Horan, Wm. Halsey; and a conclusion. A study in part of the confusion over the "proper sphere" for Victorian upper middle-class women.

Victorian Group News

A. THE VICTORIAN LUNCHEON

The Annual Victorian Luncheon will be held on December 28, 1984: Cash Bar at 11:45 at the Sheraton Washington Hotel; Luncheon 12:45 at Mrs. Simpson's Restaurant. For reservations, send check for \$22 by December 15 payable to Deirdre David (Univ. of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742). Early reservations recommended as seating limited to 60.

B. ANNOUNCEMENTS

VICTORIANS AT HOME will be the topic of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Midwest Victorian Studies Assoc. in Chicago, April 26-27, 1985. The Assoc. welcomes proposals treating aspects of Victorian homelife, such as family structures, feminine roles, domestic architecture and design, leisure activities. Eight- to ten-page papers or two-page abstracts no later than Nov. 15, 1984, to Kristine Ottesen Garrigan, English Dept., DePaul Univ., 2323 North Seminary Ave., Chicago, IL 60614.

The topic for the English X section of M.L.A. (Victorian) for the 1985 M.L.A. meeting will be Poet-Novelist or Novelist-Poet. Paper deadline will be March of 1985. For further information, contact George H. Ford, English Department, Univ. of Rochester, River Campus Station, Rochester, N.Y. 14627.

VICTORIAN LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Essays Presented to Richard D. Altick

Ed. James R. Kincaid and Albert J. Kuhn, Columbus, OH: Ohio Univ. Press, 1984. Pp. viii + 374. \$25.00.

Essays by Philip Collins, Alexander Welsh, Robert Colby, Donald Gray, U. C. Knoepfelmacher, John Clubbe, George Ford, Jerome Beaty, David DeLaura, Jerome Buckley, John Fenstermaker, James Kincaid, Arthur Adrian, George Worth, Andrew Wright, Wendell Harris.

In addition to his many other achievements, Richard Altick was the first editor of *The Victorian Newsletter*, 1952-1954.

Back issues of *VNL*, at a cost of \$4.00 per copy, are available in limited quantities for the following numbers: 38, 41, 45, 47, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65.