

# The Victorian Newsletter

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## "Ut Pictura Poesis": The Nineteenth-Century Perspective

Lawrence Starzyk

*As I watched and wondered a yearning seized me to  
counterscribe the painting; I searched out an exegete of  
the icon and I carefully crafted four books.*

Longus

Recent critical efforts to redefine the relationship between word and image in light of nineteenth-century aesthetic developments have reinforced the long-standing paragonal aspect of literary ekphrasis.<sup>1</sup> The artifact resulting from the contest between the sister arts of poetry and painting attests to both a representational friction—the "*difficulté vaincue*" occurring when particular artistic media are required to function beyond their inherent limitations (Hagstrum xxi, 53)—and an engendered hostility—the antagonism between word, defined as male, and image, identified as female.<sup>2</sup> The long history of ekphrasis from Simonides's time to the present recounts the obstetric attempts of the verbal to deliver message from the muted visual. Acknowledging the understandable reluctance of the chauvinistic word to empower the subservient visual, recent criticism persists in analyzing ekphrasis disjunctively as a contest eventually dominated by one or the other of these sisterly antagonists.<sup>3</sup>

Such critical assessment derives primarily from the continued dominance of mimesis in discussions of ekphrasis in general and of individual manifestations of ekphrasis in particular. Superiority in the contest is accorded to whichever medium produces the closest resemblance to, correspondence with, or trace of the object depicted. But the shift in critical orientation resulting from Romanticism's emphasis on efficient as opposed to formal causality required the redefinition of all aspects of the world view grounded in the new assumption (Krieger 15). My intention here is not to re-examine the general aesthetic consequences of "the mirror turn[ed] lamp," but to discuss how the Romantics' emphasis on expressivism in their poetic theory influenced the redefinition in the nineteenth century of the long-standing assumptions informing the relationship of the sister arts of poetry and painting. I intend to argue that Romanticism's reorientation of aesthetic theory and the Victorians' subsequent incorporations of the resultant poetic principles reflect a revised understanding of *ut pictura poesis* that defines the relationship between word and image as countersigns of each other. The verbal and visual, in other words, come to be regarded not only as rivals but as duplicates.

The following pages attempt to examine the relationship between the sister arts of poetry and painting dialectically as the unresolved interplay in the nineteenth century between

the contending forces of word and image. I am not suggesting that recent disjunctive or gendered analyses of nineteenth-century English ekphrastic literature, such as Heffernan's, fail to illuminate aspects of the tension between the visual and the verbal, but that a dialectical reading of representative nineteenth-century texts is more consistent with the prevailing critical assumptions of the Romantic aesthetic.

### I

The notion of exegesis suggested by the epigraph from *Daphnis and Chloe* (second century, A.D.) involves an observer of a painting verbally "leading out" of the visual text a reading or interpretation. The nature of that exegesis—a counterscribing—indicates, however, that the artifact produced in the verbal rendition can be either a duplicate or a rival of the image. Resemblance and subversion are both inherent possibilities of counterscription. What Mitchell calls the "relationship of subversion" (*Iconology* 43) results from the artifact simultaneously looking like what it represents while denying what it allegedly depicts. So many of René Magritte's paintings—his *La Trahison des Images*, for example—visually dramatize the ambivalence or equivocation central to representation of any kind. "Everything tends to make us think," Magritte contends in a premise central to his art, "that there is very little connection between an object and what represents it" (qtd. in Whitfield 158). It seems natural for human beings in general, and for poets especially, to begin the exegesis of icons assuming that the verbal rendition is a duplicate of the image, that a painted pipe is a faithful copy of that object, that a particular painting is my last duchess. Lack of equivalency, however, gradually and invariably manifests itself, as it does in so many of Magritte's paintings, until what initially appeared to be companionable forms discloses a troubling hostility.

Jean Hagstrum's pioneering study of *ut pictura poesis* persuasively argues that no matter how heated the battle for supremacy between poetry and painting from Simonides' time through the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the relationship remained essentially amicable because both art forms attempted, with varying degrees of success, to articulate the underlying immutable forms of which the verbal and the visual were imperfect representations. If contention existed between verbal and visual representations of the same object or event, in other words, the contest betrayed only a superficial antagonism masking an essential unity. The relationship between the verbal representation of a visual representation throughout much of the Western tradition, in

<sup>1</sup>For a recent, detailed account of the history of literary ekphrasis, see Krieger, pp. 1-28. The definition of ekphrasis I use here emphasizes the verbal representation of visual representations.

<sup>2</sup>Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other," underscores the gendered antagonism of word and image in literary ekphrasis. Other contemporary critics who similarly emphasize the gendered hostility between the verbal and the visual include Beth Newman and James Heffernan.

<sup>3</sup>The feminist critical bias informing recent ekphrastic studies and stressing the gendered antagonism between word and image perpetuates the long-standing notion of one of the paragonal elements attaining superiority over its inferior antagonist. The value of such a bias is evident in Berger's study of the nude in European painting. "The spectator in front of the picture," according to Berger, "is assumed to be a man." The painted women are regarded as "offering up their femininity as the surveyed" (54-5).

short, was merely political, and hegemony was accorded one or the other of the sister arts based on whether Leonardo, for instance, argued the incomparable vividness of painting or Dante, for example, praised the greater latitude of poetry. Both sisters represented what was essentially a shadowy reflection of the ineffable (Hagstrum 66-70).

Mimetic theory thus saved the appearances of things by directing attention to the immutable; in doing so, mimesis preserved the amicableness of the relationship between poetry and painting even while permitting the paragonal struggle between the two. The proposition of fundamental likeness grounded in the immutable mitigated the possible hostility of the sisterly contestants and attenuated whatever fear arose from the recognition that *C'est ne pas une pipe*. Duplication, whatever its flaws, only superficially attested to a lack of equivalency between the verbal or visual representation and its referent while essentially affirming the unity of both and of the media employed to render the object. So much of the aesthetic theory informing the classical notion of *ut pictura poesis* similarly argued for the unity of all artistic media based on some underlying immutable idea even when, on the surface, the struggle for bragging rights seemed to be of paramount concern in the relationship between the sister arts.

When M. H. Abrams in his classic study of the Romantic shift from mimesis to expressivism considers the implications of this aesthetic reorientation for the theory of *ut pictura poesis*, he argues that the analogy between poetry and painting gives way to the analogy between poetry and music.<sup>4</sup> Even in the Romantic era, though, the question of which of the sister arts vied for or achieved supremacy remained inconsequential since the classical notion of unity among the various art forms prevailed. Roy Park has persuasively argued the limitations of Abrams' reinterpretation of the classical analogy in light of the Romantic poetic. Park contends that the analogy between poetry and painting remained as pervasive and aesthetically significant throughout the nineteenth century as it had for over two thousand years prior to the Romantic revolution. The issue is not which two art forms are fitting analogues of each other (although this critical debate continued in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), but rather how the relationship between poetry and painting, hitherto considered sisterly, was transformed into an inconclusive antagonism in

which neither politics nor gender, but ongoing psychological tension, characterized contest and outcome.

Romanticism's interiorization, what Park calls the "involution" of subjective and objective,<sup>5</sup> undermined the notion that a representation, whether verbal or visual, could be the duplicate or likeness of something on the other side of object, representation, and representer. If equivalency did in fact exist, it presumed that artifact was the likeness or expression of artist, not of some immutable or transcendent idea. Park's contention is not that the analogy of poetry and painting was no longer pervasive in Romantic aesthetics, but that it required readjustment in light of the revolution in poetic thinking advanced by Schlegel, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Carlyle, and Ruskin. And the essence of that thinking was grounded in the notion, as expressed in the mid-nineteenth century by James Ferrier, that "every objective, when construed to the intellect, is found to have a subjective clinging to it, and forming one with it" (3: 275).<sup>6</sup>

Ferrier's exploration of "The Crisis of Modern Speculation" suggests a more pessimistic view of the relationship between subject and object than the sanguine perspective of most Romantic poets who in appropriating the objective to themselves communed, as Wordsworth observed, "with something not apart from, but inherent in, my immaterial nature" (4: 463). Acknowledging both the deleterious implications for science of this position and the idolatrous possibilities for art of such self-divinization, Ferrier recognized as well the inevitability in the nineteenth century of understanding that perception "always is, and must be, the object with the addition of oneself—object plus subject—thing, or thought, *mecum*" (1: 97). Mimesis becomes unfeasible in a context that emphasizes the dialectical involution of the subjective and objective.<sup>7</sup> If the early Romantic poets seemed to revel in the gladness attending the self-deification Romanticism appeared to foster, they and their Victorian successors nevertheless learned that, in Wordsworth's words, "thereof come in the end despondency and madness" ("Resolution and Independence," 1: 49).

Ferrier's observation accurately reflects a significant philosophical concern of Victorian artists struggling to readjust their aesthetics to the implications of Romanticism's interiorization. If the immutable that grounds artistic representations in the mimetic theory vanishes, what alternative

remains to save the appearances of things? Is the self-communing self of the artist sufficient? Or must the consequence of such solipsism inevitably be the displacement, according to Ruskin, of the "stability, definiteness, and luminousness" characteristic of classical and medieval art by "what it is impossible to arrest, and difficult to comprehend" (5: 318-9).

## II

It is precisely this instability and indefiniteness that characterize such nineteenth-century painting as Turner's seascapes. These qualities are symptomatic of the crisis Ferrier examines and are indicative of the aesthetic implications of the modern expressivist poetic in general and of *ut pictura poesis* specifically. The *Fighting "Temeraire,"* for example, visually dramatizes what Ferrier, Ruskin, and Carlyle verbally attempt to define. In an era in which Jupiter is dethroned and the "coronation of the whirlwind" commences, perspective requires the witnessing of objects, the regard of the appearances of things, through the "effects of mists" and endless reflections of reflections (5: 317). The inconclusiveness of Turner's visual pyrring in a gyre suggests that neither beginning nor end exists to ground representations, that the visually seductive vortexes of his seascapes invite chaos and destruction. Whatever likenesses emerge in representations of any kind ultimately function to betray themselves and thus underscore for poet and observer alike the discontinuity of things. This radical shift from a grounded to an ungrounded universe is poignantly expressed by Ruskin who, in *The Queen of Air*, writes of the pervasiveness of that "living hieroglyph" that speaks "with an inner language" (19: 361), but who, in "The Tears of Psammenitus," painfully observes that "its echoes have forgot / The fiery steps that shook the shore" (2: 187-8).

This disquieting recognition of the absence of ground or immutable idea to save the appearance of things encouraged Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge to predicate "the one Life within us and abroad" ("The Eolian Harp" 1: 26) as the ground of nature. If this philosophical principle temporarily addressed the threat of instability and indefiniteness by existentially predicating the artistic soul as the source of stability and the determinate, the principle also had an important consequence for the Romantics' redefinition of *ut pictura poesis*. The prophetic role of the poet for someone like Shelley derives as much from the artist's awareness of this informing "Life" as it does from his verbal ability to articulate how reality is shaped by the word. Art is the expression in the finite of the Infinite witnessed in the artist's

mind. Poetry, as Browning remarks of the subjective artist, is the expression of the Divine to be found in the poet's "own soul as the reflex of that absolute Mind" ("An Essay on Shelley"). Art is first and foremost expression.

Wordsworth's preoccupation with language in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is motivated less by his concern with simplicity of diction than it is by the idea that the word constructs reality, that in the creation of literature as well as of society "language and the human mind act and react on each other" (1: 120). "Words are the signs," Hazlitt remarks in "Sir Walter Scott, Racine, and Shakespeare," "which point out and define the objects of the highest import to the human mind" (12: 336). Implicit in Hazlitt and Wordsworth's ideas of language is the notion of the word's superiority not only to painting but to music as well. Their comments, however, are not intended to continue the paragonal relationship between the sister arts—whether of poetry and painting or poetry and music—but to argue the superiority of the word, as opposed to other artistic modes of expression, in transcribing what Wordsworth called "The picture of the mind" ("Tintern Abbey" 1: 61).<sup>8</sup> If music seemed, according to Abrams, to enjoy the affiliation with poetry once guaranteed almost exclusively to painting, it was because the function of art was to express feeling, not to render transcriptions of external reality. The almost militant late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century attitude toward painting understood as primarily the picturesque derived from the fact that art's objective was the spiritual essence of things—"the one Life"—not life's materiality. And it was words, not colors, shapes, or sounds, that most adequately conveyed this essence.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, painting's relationship with poetry in the Romantic aesthetic remained unassailable despite the seeming pejorative regard critics in the period had for this "materialistic" art form. Wordsworth's preoccupation with attempting to "paint / What then I was" ("Tintern Abbey" 11: 75-6), Turner's fascination with appending poems of his own or others' composition to his canvases, the Royal Academy's insistence in 1798 that exhibitors attach epigraphs to their submissions, underscore the continuing significance of *ut pictura poesis* and of the importance of the verbal in representations of the visual.<sup>10</sup>

The ambivalence critics expressed regarding the relationship between poetry and painting in the nineteenth century, however, indicates the far more significant concern theorists continued to have with the notion of exegesis or the use of one art form as the countersign of another. This concern is nowhere more powerfully expressed than in Wordsworth's analysis of the origins of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." The emotion,

verbal.

<sup>10</sup>For a discussion of Turner's use of poetry to provide a narrative component to the visual, see Nicholson, 54, 79-80. See also Lindsay, 49-71, for a discussion of how poetry shaped Turner's aesthetic theory and practice. The Royal Academy Council in 1798 encouraged artists to append to their submissions brief literary or descriptive statements elaborative of their work. Two intentions seemed to have informed the Council's directive: (1) to help resolve for viewers possible ambiguities of the visual, and (2) to provide an explicative tool other than the painting's elements to assist viewers in comprehending the artist's intentions.

and the visual in the nineteenth century, but also how the two sisters function to redefine reality in a faithless world.

<sup>5</sup>Park's redefinition of *ut pictura poesis* (1969) remains the most important, if unfortunately neglected, examination of the relationship between the verbal and the visual in Romantic aesthetics. The essay clearly demonstrates how "involution" (161) derives from the Romantic shift away from formal to efficient causality and what the consequences are for Romanticism's subsequent redefinition of the relationship between poetry and painting.

<sup>6</sup>For a discussion of Ferrier's influence on Victorian poetics, see Shaw, 48-53.

<sup>7</sup>The unfeasibility of mimesis understood as re-making of some enduring form is evident in critical comments throughout the Victorian period. Browning has Sordello ask, "why needs Sordello square his course / By any known example?" (2: 378-9). E. S. Dallas in 1866 boasts that "The theory of imitation is now utterly exploded" (1: 84). The assumption that any artifact is "the mirror of eternal truths" constitutes for G. H. Lewes, writing in an 1842 *Westminster Review* essay, "one of the pompous imbecilities into which ignorance has led the critic" (33).

<sup>8</sup>Addison and Burke are chiefly responsible in the eighteenth century for arguing the supremacy of the word and for demonstrating how language becomes privileged as classical mimesis gives way to an expressivist aesthetic. For a detailed discussion of the influence of Addison and Burke on this shift in critical orientation, see Krieger, 97-103.

<sup>9</sup>The "disadvantaged place for literature [the word]," according to Krieger, "is dictated by mimetic theory" (15), the implication being that the shift in the late eighteenth century to expressive theory disadvantaged the pictorial or the image. Krieger's chronology in *Ekphrasis* of the shifting relationship between word and image offers a persuasive argument that shifts in epistemologies necessitate changes in the primacy of either the visual or the

<sup>4</sup>Abrams concedes that "the use of painting to illuminate the essential character of poetry. . . so widespread in the eighteenth century, almost disappears in the major criticism of the romantic period; the comparisons between poetry and painting that survive are casual, or, as in the instance of the mirror, show the canvas reversed in order to image the inner substance of the poet. In place of painting, music becomes the art frequently pointed to as having a profound affinity with poetry" (50). Krieger explains the interest in music as a fitting analogue of poetry when he cites Burke's influence in shifting "literary theory into the realm of temporality at the expense of visual form" (25). One of the unfortunate consequences of Abrams' assertion is what Wendy Steiner calls a "hiatus" in the scholarly examination of the relationship between word and image (57). Even when critics like John Barrell, Matthew Brennan, and Kathleen Nicholson examine various aspects of the interplay between the verbal and the visual in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century art theory and practice, serious attention is not paid to the integral and pervasive connection between word and image. Martin Meisel's *Realizations* (1983) provides the most significant challenge to the "hiatus" inspired by Abrams' contention by arguing not only the pervasiveness of the relationship between the verbal

Wordsworth explains, "is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind" (1: 148). The passage emphasizes the primacy of feeling in the Romantic poetic as opposed to the action central to classical mimesis. More importantly, however, Wordsworth's definition of poetry underscores the notion of kindredness or equivalence that spectators or readers and artists or poets presume exists between artifact and its represented. Like Coleridge's universe predicated on the coalescence resulting from the pervasiveness of the "one Life," Wordsworth's world is predicated on the unifying "spirit or motion" that rolls through all things including the mind of man and that thus allies the disparate elements of the universe into unity and kindredness. Art is a duplicate, not a rival; the poem is the expressed kindred of the kindred emotion resulting from the feeling contemplated in tranquillity. And the word, because it articulates this kindredness, attains privileged status.<sup>11</sup>

Byron's understanding of the poetic process seems to sanction Wordsworth's implicit notion of art as a verbal deliverance from the artist's being of some otherwise inarticulate idea. Poem is verbal incarnation, the deliverance from silence of the soul's muted message. And it is, ironically, this idea of verbal deliverance that comes to threaten the word's unassailability and the long-standing unity of the arts.

'Tis to create, and in creating live  
A being more intense, that we endow  
With form our fancy, gaining as we give  
The life we image, even as I do now.  
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,  
Soul of my thought! With whom I traverse earth,  
Invisible but gazing, as I glow  
Mix'd with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,  
And feeling still with thee my crush'd feelings'  
dearth.

*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 3: 6. 46-54

The expressive nature of Romantic poetry, which makes artifact the reflex of the poet's living soul, comes, in Byron's description, to acknowledge poem as projected, but not separated, from the soul that gives it birth. Artistic generation is an informing of the artifact with the poet's spirit. The poetic self in the process of artistic generation becomes "nothing," having exhausted itself in providing form to fancy and life to a gazing image. Implicit in Byron's account is acknowledgment that artifact is potentially less a duplicate than a rival antagonist threatening the very being responsible for its independent existence. Also implicit, however, is the notion

that the separate identities of parent and offspring depend upon the continued interrelationship suggested by the almost paranoid gazing and being gazed at of the parties involved in artistic generation. Identity is predicated on being seen, and neither offspring nor parent can any longer exist independent of the other's regard.

The obstetric metaphor informing Byron's account of the origin of art finds correlative expression in the Romantic idea of the poetic self seeking habitation in a seemingly unrelated other. The Wordsworthian alliance between self and not-self necessitates the conviction that nature's multitudinousness provides what Coleridge calls "companionable form[s]" ("Frost at Midnight" l. 19) that "Echo or mirror" the self "seeking of itself" (l. 22). Artistic involution depends upon the subjective appropriating for its purposes what is assumed to be companionable objective forms. Poetic "delusion," according to Wordsworth, results as the artist permits himself to "confound and identify his own feelings" with the objective multitudinousness (794). This delusional condition, however, this confusion of self and not-self, predicated on the essential adaptation of man and nature, constitutes "the soul of truth" ("Elegiac Stanzas" l. 31). Even Keats, in assessing Wordsworth's egotistical sublimity, advocates the poet's "filling some other Body," with the result that the self is "annihilated," that "I am perhaps not speaking from myself, but from some character in whose soul I now live" (*Letters* 1: 387).

Keats' description of the poetic annihilation of self parallels Byron's notion that the artist's soul surrenders its identity to its creation. The poetic anima no longer goes "home to itself" but resides in the body it fills (*Letters* 1: 387). The voice heard in the poem's word is, ironically, the expression of the muted image created in the poetic act. Inanimate reality when artistically appropriated remains mute until the artist relinquishes the essence of his being; the ultimate surrender of the poetic self to its offspring requires, according to Arnold, that poets "lend their life a voice" ("Resignation" l. 269).<sup>12</sup> The attendant annihilation of self by the companionable or kindred creation becomes the very essence of the poetic process. Antagonistic as these forces—the poetic spirit and its offspring—eventually come to be regarded, they are nevertheless, as DeQuincey observes in "Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism," essential "correlates" that "explain themselves and define themselves at the same time; for the one is the rebound of the other" (9: 328). Such reciprocity establishes a relationship between word and image, creator and created, gazer and gazed at, that defines art dialectically not disjunctively. At its most intense, art results in what Carlyle likens to a Hall of Mirrors condition in which the introspective self seeking embodiment in an other finds in the reflecting and re-reflecting surfaces of its mirror-lined quarters endless images of self superimposed

of nature's beauty depends upon the poet's giving expression or voice to that quality. Invariably, the inarticulate "other" undercuts the poet's assumed verbal supremacy by pointing out the inadequacy of "his voice at its best" (l. 99) to express anything.

upon reflecting and reflected images of self.<sup>13</sup>

The poetic prodigality resulting from such an understanding of the artistic enterprise is rivaled only by nature's prodigality. When Ruskin in *Modern Painters III* remarks that the world Wordsworth created "would not be able to get on well without Wordsworth" (5: 343), he underscores the inevitability in the Romantic aesthetic of the world's plenitude being dependent upon the solipsistic divine. The mutual rebounding DeQuincey regards as the essence of the self's relationship with the world's multitudinous others attests to the life of things being dependent upon what Coleridge calls "the eddying of her living soul" ("Dejection: An Ode" l. 136). Artifact in these terms is not so much a duplicate or copy of its creator as a guarantor of the poetic anima's plenitude: it respeaks in its muted gaze the word first spoken by the poet, even if, in the end, it threatens, verbally, the very source of its being and gives rise to pathetic fallacy as the distinguishing feature of modern poetry.<sup>14</sup>

### III

The most important ekphrastic poem of Romanticism, Wordsworth's "Elegiac Stanzas," registers the pessimistic turn of events inherent in the early Romantic view of reality. The poem becomes paradigmatic of counterscription—of how the visual echoes and then ultimately rivals or threatens the verbal. Peele Castle, the structure, as an architectural statement, as a form reflected on a glassy sea, as a putative picture in the poet's mind acknowledges the perdurance of image: "Whene'er I looked, thy image still was there; / It trembled, but it never passed away" (ll. 7-8). Whatever distortion of the immutable image is perceptible in artistic renditions becomes inconsequential if the resultant artifacts rhyme with each other and with their underlying informing Idea. Initially, Romanticism's seeming reliance upon music rather than painting as the key analogical term in discussing poetry stems from the idea of harmony central to rhyming. The importance of the aeolian harp as metaphor of the poetic act reinforces this reliance for the Romantic poets as does Beethoven's musical liberation of the word in the 1824 final movement of the Ninth Symphony, and Matthew Arnold's call to his Victorian brothers in art that only music can release the "soul" of the message of "bounded words."<sup>15</sup> But that seeming reliance on music as the key analogical term of the sister arts diverts attention from the central conflict between word and image.

<sup>13</sup>In an essay on "The Nibelungen Lied," Carlyle likens the poet's task to furnishing "primeval truth" with new forms, until what results is "a Hall of Mirrors, where in pale light each mirror reflects, convexly or concavely, not only some real Object, but the Shadows of this in other mirrors; which again do the like for it: till in such reflection and re-reflection the whole immensity is filled with dimmer and dimmer shapes; and no firm scene lies round us, but a dislocated, distorted chaos, fading away on all hands, in the distance, into utter night" (27: 220).

<sup>14</sup>In "Old Pictures in Florence," Browning defines the classical poet as the re-utterer of "The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken" (l. 85). In an era of faithlessness, the guarantor of that "Truth" is no longer God, but man, and the consequence, as Ruskin points out, is pathetic fallacy as "eminently

When Wordsworth, in the face of his brother's death, attempted to memorialize his drowned brother John, he struggled through two unsuccessful poetic testimonials—"Elegiac Verses in Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth, Commander of the E. I. Company's Ship the Earl of Abergavenny, in which He Perished by Calamitous Shipwreck, February 6, 1805" and "To the Daisy"—before finding adequate expression in what was suggested by Beaumont's painting *Peele Castle in a Storm*. Wordsworth's poem is critically important in the history of ekphrasis in the West because it is the first work following Romanticism's reorientation of aesthetic thinking that shows how and why the visual and verbal function as countersigns—duplicates and rivals—of each other. The poem is significant also because it redefines the centrality of painting to word in *ut pictura poesis* by dramatizing a fundamental absence of rhyme or kindredness as the underlying condition of the world's multitudinousness.

"Elegiac Stanzas" is a verbal gallery in which Wordsworth mounts and juxtaposes four paintings. The first three pictures—the castle itself, the trembling image of the castle in a reflecting pond, and the painting the poet would have drawn had his been the painter's hand—all square; all three rhyme with, reflect, the immutable image informing these three imperfect renditions. The "delusional" condition resulting from the Romantic poet's inhabiting the world's multitudinousness, whether his identity in the process be annihilated or reconfirmed, paradoxically attests to the "truth" evident in every part of these imperfect materializations of Idea. The sense that these materializations rhyme and harmonize yields a tranquillity that Wordsworth believed could not be "betrayed" (l. 32), a "fond illusion" incapable of being undermined (l. 29). But the introduction of Beaumont's painting, its superimposition upon the other three materializations of the immutable, constitutes an act of betrayal that is at the very core of Romanticism's redefinition of the relationship between word and image. For not only does Beaumont's visualization of Peele Castle not rhyme with the three other images lining the walls of Wordsworth's poetic gallery, it repudiates and subverts the very companionableness or harmony of these three pictures, including the putative painting Wordsworth imagines himself to have drawn. The visual's unexpected recalcitrance attests to the absence of rhyme and to the absence of sight. The narrator's perspective in creating and superimposing on the architectural and reflected images his own imagined painting is that of a "blind" man (l. 56). "Not for a moment could I now

characteristic of the modern mind" (5: 221).

<sup>15</sup>For a detailed discussion of the relationship between music and poetry in the Romantic period, see Winn, 259-70. In the "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon," Arnold comments that while poetry can momentarily capture the depths of "penitential moan" (l. 91) in the *Miserere, Domini!*, only the musical rendering—"Transplant[ing] them to another tongue" (l. 98)—of "bounded words" (l. 96) can make them "new" (l. 96), "Infinite" (l. 97), and "young" (l. 97). "Without constraint" (l. 99), Beethoven's *Miserere*, Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*, Mendelssohn's *Ein Sommernachtstraum* can "Pour all the soul of their message" (l. 100), "Eternal, passion-fraught, and free" (l. 105), into the soul of man.

<sup>11</sup>For a full discussion of the role of the emotions in privileging the word, see Krieger 93-112.

<sup>12</sup>Arnold's poetic personae frequently attempt to envoice the mute world they inhabit. In "Tristram and Iseult," for example, the bard gives voice to a tapestry. In "The Youth of Nature," the speaker wonders if the revelation



behold / A smiling sea, and be what I have been" (ll. 37-8). The attainment of sight, however, discloses more than the discontinuity of things in a world hitherto regarded as correspondent; it discloses the self's discontinuity from the habitations euphorically entered into by the poet. The appropriation of and filling objective correlatives end in betrayal.

When Fox read the first Victorian's attempt at inhabiting in splendid isolation a world ultimately of the poet's own devising, he brilliantly captured the fatality resulting from the word's redefined relationship with the visual. Commenting on what he called the "consciousness of contrast" characterizing Tennyson's early poetry, Fox observes that the poet

does not merely assume their external shapes, and exhibit his own mind masquerading. He takes their senses, feelings, nerves, and brain, along with their names and local habitations; still it is himself in them, modified but not absorbed by their peculiar constitution and mode of being . . . for a moment the identification is complete, and then a consciousness of contrast springs up between the reports of external objects brought to the mind by the sense and those which it has been accustomed to receive.

(85)

This consciousness, Fox argues, is what gives Tennyson's art its unique "poetic colouring." But it also produces the psychological terror and spiritual stagnation informing the anima at the conclusion of its habitation of the Palace of Art. The terror results from the soul's recognition that its artistic representations of "every mood / And change of my still soul" (ll. 59-60) peopling the palace constitute mediated images not of the divine, but of the self divinized. In this lordly condition, isolated from all and left to commune only with its self, the anima gazes upon its idols only to discover that these mute images provide "no murmur of reply" (l. 286). The represented or masquerading selves inhabiting "others" become idols, not only in the sense that they literally are something *instead* of God, but that while "they have mouths, they speak not" (Psalm 115).

What is instructive about Tennyson's poem for an understanding of nineteenth-century British ekphrastic experiments is the recognition that idolatry must be rejected, the image or icons destroyed, and that the ultimate instrument of the iconoclast in destroying images is the very word that the poetic parent feels compelled to lend to its artistic offspring. Poetry becomes the refuge and instrument of iconoclasts; in privileging word over image, the poet attenuates the fear inspired by images. Interest in ekphrasis thus becomes the inevitable outgrowth of the solipsistic divine inherent in Romanticism. Yet Tennyson's poetic anima, instead of destroying the phantasms of art haunting its final year in the palace of art, prays that the structure not be torn down since the anima "may return with others there" (l. 295).

This involvement of a community other than the self in witnessing icons of self is a distinguishing feature of Romantic and Victorian ekphrastic literature. And the motives for such involvement are many. First, the narcissistic engagement of the self with representations of its own being simultaneously compel the inhabitant to destroy his

masquerades while preserving them for the gaze of independent judgment. The reader, the listener, the audience can absolve the idolater's "crime" (l. 272), her "sin" (l. 287) or refute as misinterpretation such criminal or delusional readings of the mute icon. Second, the terror mitigated by the involvement of others may nevertheless recur should the silent image in the course of the poet's verbally privileged representation of the visual suddenly find voice, as it metaphorically does in the stammering of Browning's otherwise articulate Duke and as it morally develops in the muted voice of conscience to which the narrator of Rossetti's "Jenny" seems to respond. And the prospect of that new terror requires the presence of others as a source of mitigation. Third, psychological reassurance is provided by the listener, reader, or audience for the poet who comes to acknowledge, not that his various masquerades constitute likenesses of his self, but that the self so represented is other than the being who took up residence in various local habitations. Wordsworth's complaint to his sister Dorothy that "I cannot paint / What then I was," his plea that she "remember" him ("Tintern Abbey" ll. 75-6, 145) echoes throughout nineteenth-century literary illustrations of *ut pictura poesis* and specifically in dramatic monologues on the subject like Tennyson's "The Gardener's Daughter," Browning's "Pauline" and Arnold's "Resignation": the search for visual analogues of self, whether icons or the memory of a beloved sister, inevitably testifies both to the inadequacy of an other to represent the self seeking memorialization and to the essential discontinuity or lack of rhyme existing between representations and the inhabiting self. "So wide appears / The vacancy between me and those days / Which have such self-presence in my mind," Wordsworth remarks on the discontinuity between represented and representer, "That sometimes when I think of them I seem / Two consciousness—conscious of myself / And of some other being" (*The Prelude* 2: 28-33).

Wordsworth regards such psychic division as potentially salvific in the sense that memorialization provides the poet with his own self-generated and self-supporting witnesses. "Each man is a memory to himself" (*The Prelude* 3: 189). To be is to be seen. And the word's representation understood as likeness constitutes self-sufficiency to anyone believing that the soul can sustain itself in existence by what it fabricates from a companionable world. Even in Wordsworth, however, such salvific possibilities dissolve into debilitating doubt. The dual consciousnesses represented by the self as inhabitant and the self as masquerade reduce the self in isolation to a solitary soul "haunted by itself" (*The Prelude* 6: 180). The artistic embodiments or images hung along the hall of memory "mock me under a strange reverse" (*The Prelude* 10: 465). Browning's Cleon and Arnold's Empedocles are Victorian manifestations of such mockery and self-haunting.

No Romantic poet recognized more clearly the ambivalence of images created from the plenitude of the solipsistic divine than Shelley. The "mysterious tongue" of mute representations "teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild" ("Mount Blanc" ll. 76-7). Were it only because of the inadequacy of finite forms to represent the artist's infinite passions, Shelley's distress in seeking for "a prototype of his

conception" (Preface to "Alastor") could be relieved. Wordsworthian and Coleridgean coalescence remain possible for Shelley, who finds in nature's plenitude hospitable habitations: all, he believes, "Have each their type in me" ("Alastor" l. 509). Shelley's ideal poet trusts in this conviction. But in the moment that the poet trusts the privileged word to give voice to his otherwise silent representations and thus articulate the equivalency between self and its habitations, discontinuity emerges. The narcissistic artist projects his self into the mirroring surface of the world only to discover "its own treacherous likeness there" ("Alastor" l. 444). The ultimate curse of the wordsmith seeking in the world's multitudinousness for prototypes of his self is not that images or idols or other local habitations cease to suffice for his requisition, but that these alleged likenesses become actively inimical to the alienated self. What Shelley called the "shadowy lure" of the seemingly companionable physical universe suddenly becomes "the deaf ear . . . the blind earth and heaven / That echoes not my thoughts" ("Alastor" ll. 294, 289-90).

The implications for a poet's exegesis of a particular icon are also terrifying. Forced to recollect or conjure up the recalcitrant mute representation he imaginatively inhabited, the poet dramatically relieves for his reader the destructive realities of a seemingly inarticulate, impotent image that ineluctably shapes and controls his every verbal rendition. Browning's Pictor, for example, initially entertains, not the danger, but the euphoria of the seemingly endless secondings of self permitted the artist. The exhilaration, however, "Of going—I, in each new picture—forth" (l. 26) quickly subsides when the Pictor likens the self's pictorial divinizations to "the revels . . . / Of some strange house of idols at its rites!" (ll. 42-3). In the most striking irony confronting practitioners of Romantic poetry, the artist in rendering a legible sign—a word—loses his voice, is rendered inarticulate or mute by the very image he attempts to envoice. The volubility of the poet attests in the end, in other words, to the subversion of the privileged status of his words by the inarticulate other.<sup>16</sup>

Ironically, the threatening lure of the visual becomes critical to the very notion of Romantic poetry.<sup>17</sup> Arguing against pictorialism understood as the mere delineation of form, Coleridge observes that "the grandest efforts of poetry are where the imagination is called forth, not to produce a distinct form, but a strong working of the mind" (*Shakespearean Criticism* 2: 138). Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Ruskin, Park notes (158), similarly contend that the highest pleasure produced by the word's relationship with visual delineations arises, not from the mind's passive perception of things, but from its excited reflection on its own activity.

Two critical elements of Romantic ekphrasis are implied by these and other similar comments from Wordsworth and Shelley: first, observation of the distinctive visual representation and its verbal countersign; second, meditation on the

mind's own workings as it contemplates the mutual gaze inspired by the juxtaposition of word and image. These two elements—observation and meditation—apply equally to the artist and his audience and explain, in part, the inevitable evolution of the dramatic monologue from the Romantic meditative lyric. The visual becomes aesthetically significant in Romantic ekphrasis, not because it inspires a verbal rendition of itself, but because it occasions the dialogue of the mind with itself. When Wordsworth searches the gallery of his mind for pictures of what he once was and no longer is, when he entertains the resuscitation of those images ("The picture of the mind revives again," ["Tintern Abbey" l. 61]), he is interested as much in finding analogues of stages of his being as in reflecting on the mind's predilection for remembering and memorializing. In the process so alluring because of its potential disclosure of the grounds of being, the reflecting artist and the meditating reader, however, come upon the twin consciousnesses symbolic of fundamental discontinuity. The allure of the observed or gazed upon other betrays, as it does in the Medusan figures of Western art, the horror of some "treacherous likeness," what DeQuincey in "Suspiria de Profundis" called the "irrelate" (13: 347). The observing and meditative self is thus compelled to acknowledge, in Arnold's words, the fact that the self in this process is, like Empedocles' mind, "astray forever" (Act 2, l. 39). As Swinburne was forced to conclude, the ekphrastic endeavor constitutes "the struggle of the image to keep afloat in the mighty sea of words" (*Letters* 6: 139). The threat in all countersignations is mutual, the word threatening the image, the visual steadfastly refusing to capitulate. As he chronicles his inspection of the old masters at Florence, the realization dawns for Swinburne that all visuals as they are cast in words simultaneously "unveil" and "reserve" "all their suggestions and all their suppressions" (15: 158).

The process of observation-meditation disclosed in the exegeses of icons—Browning's "My Last Duchess," Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The Portrait," for example—reveals three specific consequences of the ekphrastic encounter: (1) The likeness, image, or idol observed and meditated on is not simply treacherous; it stands out, exists, not as a *part* of the gazing self, but *apart* from it. (2) The observing self thus furnishes its own prey. The meditative mind becomes, in Arnold's words, a "devouring flame of thought" consumed by its own creations ("Empedocles on Etna," Act 2, l. 130). (3) The self comes to exist as the result of this process in an indeterminate condition characterized by the self-conscious disassociation of what is and what would be. Like Browning's reluctant Pictor, the meditative figures in Romantic and Victorian ekphrastic encounters are simultaneously enamoured of and terrified by the image they gaze upon. In an apt definition of what she calls "the irony of modern life," Patricia Ball summarizes the ambivalent consequence of the ekphrastic gaze, namely the realization "that self-consciousness equals self-alienation" (187). The solipsistic

<sup>16</sup>Shelley's "On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci" explores how the gazer becomes the victim of the image, how the latter "turns the gazer's spirit into stone" (l. 10). For a discussion of Tennyson's "increased virulence" and sense of fatality in depicting women, see Joseph 124.

<sup>17</sup>See Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other" (696-8) for a discussion of how the seemingly irreconcilable responses—"ekphrastic hope" and "ekphrastic fear"—are both integral to the relationship between word and image.

divine, encouraged to predicate his self in the world's appropriated multitudinousness and emboldened by the privileged status of the word to resort to pathetic fallacy as his literary *modus operandi*, discovers that the local habitations he gives voice to are not simply "other" than the self, but hostile, discontinuous semblances, what the bard of Arnold's "Tristram and Iseult" acknowledges as "repeated effigies]" (3: 95).

Perhaps the most dramatic nineteenth-century representation of the consequences of ekphrasis' observation-meditation is Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." "After a life spent training for the sight" (l. 180), the young knight comes upon the object of his quest, not to see, but to be seen. "There they stood," he writes of the faces of his predecessors in the quest, "ranged along the hillsides met / To view the last of me, a living frame / For one more picture!" (ll. 199-201). The irony of a questor suddenly becoming the object of sight, "a living frame," underscores the counterscriptive character of ekphrasis in the Romantic aesthetic. The defiant assertion Roland makes at poem's end returns the reader endlessly to the poem's opening line—the title—"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." The eternal recurrence insured by the repetition explains why on subsequent readings, the first line of the text can no longer read, "My first thought was" (emphasis mine). The eternal recurrence, more importantly, however, suggests the inconclusiveness of the ekphrastic experiments engaged in by poets from Wordsworth to Swinburne: the attempt to render articulate mute images necessarily requires word itself to be silenced by image.

The variations on the numerous nineteenth-century ekphrastic encounters disclose the richness and complexity of the Romantic redefinition of *ut pictura poesis*. The informing principle of these exegeses of icons, however, remains the irresolvable dialectical tension between the discontinuous selves arising from the poet's determination to give voice to the lives he has imaged, to the local habitations he has appropriated. That tension underscores, literally, how word and image are countersigns of each other, how the likeness or duplication initially disclosed by the verbal and visual representations is only apparent, and how, symbolically, the ekphrastic encounter testifies to the indeterminate and what Matthew Arnold writing to Clough called the general "unpoetical" character of the modern world (*Letters* 99).

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Flowers on the Dunghill in *The Nether World*<sup>1</sup>

Constance Harsh

George Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889) is one of the gloomiest of nineteenth-century English novels. Its uncompromising depiction of the lives of the London poor reveals squalor and depravity in unflinching detail. Yet it is not alone the conditions of living for the working class that account for the grim atmosphere of this book. As many readers have recognized, the extraordinary quality of *The Nether World* is the absence of any hope for change. As David Grylls has observed, "In contrast with Gissing's earliest novels, no substantial initiatives for social reform are anywhere visible here" (51). Or, in the words of Stephen Gill, "What is so striking about *The Nether World* is how little is presented as a counter-force to [the novel's] economic pressure" (xv). Gissing himself, when first planning this novel in 1887, wrote to Thomas Hardy that he did not plan to hold out much hope for social amelioration, but only a little "evening sunlight to close. For there may occasionally be a triumph of individual strength; a different thing from hope for the masses of men" (139). *The Nether World* indeed leaves us with a world in which class boundaries seem unalterable and in which Clerkenwell will remain for its inhabitants, as the title implies, a kind of eternal Hell.

The undeniable power of this book should not obscure the equivocal nature of its social commitment. Certainly it is possible to see the very starkness of *The Nether World* as a powerful indictment of a corrupt social system. Gissing himself seems to have had a social purpose in mind as he began the novel in 1888. On March 1 of that year, eighteen days before he wrote its opening pages, he viewed the corpse of his alcoholic first wife in the comfortless room to which her troubles had relegated her. Shocked by her appearance and surroundings, he wrote an impassioned resolution in his diary: "Henceforth I never cease to bear testimony against the accursed social order that brings about things of this kind" (*Diary* 23). Yet testifying to abuse does not necessarily entail recognizing the weapons that might end abuse. Gissing's outrage can ignore legitimate grounds for optimism: for instance, as both Gill and Adrian Poole note, the futility of John Hewett's class resentments belies the very real possibility of change that late-Victorian trades-unionism offered (Gill xvi-xvii; Poole 96-97). Tellingly, Gissing followed his passionate vow to bear witness with a more self-

interested assessment of the artistic fuel that her example would provide: "I feel that she will help me more in her death than she balked me during her life" (23). A later diary entry in July 1888, as he was completing the last three chapters, brings to light a similar tension. He wrote of his interest in identifying the best means of social amelioration: "In these [I] wish to emphasize that the idealistic social reformer is of far less use than the humble discharger of human duty" (*Diary* 36). Yet to read the end of the novel is to find hope minimized and the beauty of selflessness maximized. The last paragraph establishes the nature of Sidney and Jane's future lives. "Unmarked, unencouraged save by their love of uprightness and mercy, they stood by the side of those more hapless, brought some comfort to hearts less courageous than their own. Where they abode it was not all dark. Sorrow certainly awaited them, perchance defeat in even the humble aims that they had set themselves; but at least their lives would remain a protest . . ." (392). The final product of *The Nether World* is a peculiar sort of aesthetic effect. Gissing uses characteristic ideas and narrative tools in an uncharacteristic fashion to foreclose meaningful hope so that the "sunlight to close" can shine its wintry light over the narrative. The end result of Gissing's methods here is to create a form of ash-can aestheticism, in which social stasis guarantees the beautiful effects created by the heroes' nobility. Examining the novel's treatment of systematic thought and the consolations of pessimism reveals how Gissing's form of aestheticism comes into being.

In most of his novels, Gissing shows a consistent interest in ideation, the process by which people form and hold ideas. In novels such as *The Unclassed*, *Thyrza*, *The Odd Women*, and *In the Year of Jubilee*, he devotes considerable attention to the ways in which the human propensity for systematic thinking leads both to admirable ideals and lamentable delusions. Sometimes a character will explicitly articulate a theory, as when Walter Egremont describes to Gilbert Grail his doomed plan to reform society by educating the better sort of workingman (*Thyrza* 92). Or, particularly in the later novels, free indirect discourse will represent characters' minds in flux, as they are drawing false provisional conclusions or making imperfect judgments. For instance, in *The Odd Women* Gissing traces even the not par-

<sup>1</sup>An earlier version of this essay was delivered at the Modern Language Association Convention in December 2000.

ticularly intellectual Monica Madden's progress through a series of ideological positions. As I have argued elsewhere, Gissing's focus on the thinking mind can complicate the reader's understanding of the text's ideological allegiances. But even when an interest in ideation does not significantly complicate our reading of the text, it has another effect. The characters' thought processes, however flawed, bring into being some kind of ideal that can constitute a counterforce to the determining power of oppressive conditions. Even if this ideal is never realized, its articulation gives it a powerful textual reality.

In contrast, *The Nether World's* examples of systematic thought are largely fragmentary or decayed, and its one sustained idea, Michael Snowdon's plan of philanthropy, is largely misbegotten. Its weak source of hope, altruistic but atomistic compassion, undermines the significance of systematic thought. The rubble of systematic thought lies scattered around the scenes of *The Nether World*. The most evocative physical token of past ideas is St. John's Arch, the surviving fragment of the Hospitallers' priory. It has multiple associations that neither connect with one another nor have any sustained narrative significance: medieval Christianity, Clerkenwell's rural past, the men of letters of the eighteenth century, and Sidney's father's dreams of a better life for his son (51-52). Only a few streets away, Clerkenwell Green, the geographical heart of the novel, is the setting for the incoherent rantings of would-be working-class philosophers. At the beginning of Chapter XXI, "Death the Reconciler," Gissing's narrator turns from Sidney and the Snowdons' country idyll to what he sarcastically calls "that modern Agora" (181). With more than a touch of Gissing's usual contempt for the masses, the narrator describes the frightful mishmash of topics that the speakers cover: "From the doctrine of the Trinity to the question of cabbage versus beef; from Neo-Malthusianism to the grievance of compulsory vaccination; not a subject which modernism has thrown out to the multitude but here received its sufficient mauling" (181). The sympathetic John Hewett, who has a long history of participating in this public forum, provides an apt embodiment of how life in the nether world affects ideas. While his earlier speeches, if awkward, were sufficiently honest and sane to draw Sidney into friendship with him, by this point in the novel John has been so worn down by poverty and personal sorrow that his talk is mere raving: "he had no command of his voice and no coherence of style; after the first few words he seemed to be overcome by rage that was little short of frenzy. Inarticulate screams and yells interrupted the torrent of his invective . . ." (182). Clerkenwell destroys the capacity for rational discourse, reducing expression to animalistic howls.

Even more decayed than these ideas is Christianity, which makes sporadic appearances in the text in fragmentary form. At its best, Christianity provides a secular ethic that can inspire Jane, whom Snowdon seeks to enlighten with such carefully chosen Bible stories "as had a purely human significance" (151) like the parable of the good Samaritan (99). More typically, Christianity exists in bits and pieces—the Sunday morning carillon of St. James Clerkenwell, blown to bits by the wind and drowned out by other bells (120); the unregarded fragments of Bible and prayer book declaimed by

Mad Jack. At its worst, it appears in the sham piety that is just one of the earliest means by which Clara Hewett can claw her way to a false eminence. (We learn that Clara as a child "perceived that a regard for religion gave her a certain distinction at home, and elsewhere placed her apart from 'common girls'" [80].) Certainly Christianity does not provide an example of a cohesive intellectual system.

The notion that ideation, far from being a vehicle for liberation, can be a vehicle for morally questionable social power, even when it does not exist in a coherent intellectual form, also emerges in the description of the games that Bob Hewett's party enjoys at the Crystal Palace.

Did you choose to "shy" sticks in the contest for coconuts, behold your object was a wooden model of the treacherous Afghan or the base African. If you took up the mallet to smite upon a spring and make proof of how far you could send a ball flying upwards, your blow descended upon the head of some other recent foeman. . . . What a joy to observe the tendency of all these diversions! How characteristic of a high-spirited people that nowhere could be found any amusement appealing to the mere mind, or calculated to effeminate by encouraging a love of beauty. (107)

Here jingoistic imperialism makes its way into the lives of the intellectually degraded inhabitants of Clerkenwell. It is a type of ideology, but it makes no "appeal to the mere mind"—it contributes to the debasement of the working class, as do the ideas debated on the Green and even sometimes the ideals of Christianity. It has no more intellectual dignity than Mrs. Tubbs's absurd naming of the garish bar where Clara works the "Imperial Restaurant and Luncheon Bar" (30). Like the other fragmentary testimonials to the operations of the human mind, these signs of imperialism offer no hope, but only cautionary tales.

The most important example of a consistently pursued idea is Michael Snowdon's plan to raise up his granddaughter Jane as a philanthropist who retains her working-class identity. When Snowdon finally reveals his long-held plan midway through the novel, initial signs indicate that it is good—as the title of Chapter XX indicates, it seems to be "A Vision of Noble Things." Sidney Kirkwood is swept away by his introduction to this vision, which he is expected to help realize as Jane's prospective husband. Yet even in Chapter XX there are indications that Snowdon's plan is, as Grylls puts it, "an intoxicant delusion" (53) that does not even appeal to Sidney's mere mind. It has "the same effect . . . as a wine that exalts and enraptures":

Had this story been related to him of some unknown person, Sidney would have admired, but as one admires the nobly impracticable; subject to the electric influence of a man who was great enough to conceive and direct his life by such a project, . . . he could accept with a throbbing heart the superb challenge addressed to him. (179)

Emotionally affected by Michael's charisma, Sidney signs on to a program that he knows intellectually to be impossible. In the context of this passage, the semi-rational babble of

Clerkenwell Green that opens the next chapter may no longer seem like the complete contrast that the narrator has made it out to be.

And even without these hints there is considerable room for skepticism about Michael's scheme. By this point Jane has already assumed, on a small scale, a compassionate role that benefits others and adequately satisfies her need to be useful. "Whenever an opportunity had offered for struggling successfully with some form of evil—were it poor Pennyloaf's dangerous despair, or the very human difficulties between Bessie and her husband—Jane lived at her highest reach of spiritual joy" (136). In a sense Michael's intervention is wholly unnecessary and hubristic, bringing peace neither to Jane nor himself. Since he has conceived his plan, his countenance has undergone troubling changes: "He looked strangely careworn; his forehead was set in lines of anxiety; his mouth expressed a nervousness of which formerly there had been no trace" (133). But, more powerfully than these subtly discordant passages, Gissing's consistent focus on the overwhelming problems of lower-class life has already established how intractable they are. Most vividly, Chapter XII ("Io Saturnalia!") has exposed the hopeless abasement of the poor and their inability to profit from the slightest freedom given them. Here Gissing has depicted a world where degradation and violence enter even into a young woman's celebration of her wedding day. This is not a social system that even the wealthiest individual can possibly hope to transform.

The novel represents the ultimate failure of Snowdon's project in a curiously ambiguous way. On the one hand, this failure has seemed inevitable and perhaps even desirable. When Sidney has a chance to think the plan over, he imagines confronting the old man with his candid assessment of it: "You have formed a wild scheme, the project of a fanatic. Its realisation would be a miracle . . . You are playing with people's lives, as fanatics always do. . . . Jane is a simple girl, of infinite goodness; what possesses you that you want to make her an impossible sort of social saint?" (236). Snowdon's insistence upon pursuing an ideal at the expense of the human reality of his granddaughter is clearly monstrous. Once Sidney backs out of participation in the plan, Michael convinces himself that celibacy is a more appropriate condition for a woman with Jane's destiny.

He did not feel that Sidney's change of mind gravely affected the plan itself. Age had cooled his blood; enthusiasm had made personal interests of comparatively small account to him; he recognised his granddaughter's feeling, but could not appreciate its intensity, its supreme significance. . . . With household and family cares, could Jane devote herself to the great work after the manner of his ideal? . . . Was it not decidedly, infinitely better that Jane should be unmarried?

Michael had taken the last step in that process of dehumanisation which threatens idealists of his type.

(255)

This passage is striking in two respects. Most obviously, it contains an unprecedentedly explicit narrative judgment of Michael's plans. While the novel has provided ample

grounds for questioning Michael up to this point, this passage leaves no room for a reader to endorse his humanitarianism.

Beyond this, the passage provides a rare glimpse into Michael's thought processes. Gissing has carefully limited access to Michael's point of view. From the moment he appears in the first sentence of the first chapter, as an eccentrically dressed old man with a noble mien, he is viewed almost exclusively from without. The advantages of such a narrative approach are clear: it contributes to the air of mystery and untapped potential that surrounds this character. When we first learn of his plan for Jane, it is through the enchanted eyes of Sidney, who responds emotionally to the sudden revelation of Michael's fully formed scheme. Indeed, it is in part the contrast between Michael's prior opacity and his sudden full disclosure that impresses both Sidney and the reader. "Sidney understood now why he had always been conscious of something in the man's mind that was not revealed to him, of a life-controlling purpose but vaguely indicated by the general tenor of Michael's opinions" (177). Like Sidney, the reader has been aware of Michael as a portentous figure, and his self-disburdening achieves something of the quality of a glorious event foretold by prophecy.

So Gissing has withheld access to Michael's consciousness, to powerful effect. But, interestingly, when he does finally provide this access in the passage quoted above, he does not make his typical use of free indirect discourse to open up the possibility of multiple judgments of an individual's motives and characters—as in *The Unclassed*, where the representation of Osmond Waymark's consciousness suggests both the power and the inadequacies of his intellect. Unlike the representations of thought in other Gissing novels, the treatment of Snowdon's thinking does not complicate our attitude to his ideas; instead, it simplifies it by presenting his merely instrumental view of Jane and introducing a narrative judgment that clearly labels it as inadequate. The effect is to clarify the narrative's view of the proper role of ideals: they should always yield precedence to personal interests. By abjuring free indirect discourse's capacity for expressing the multivalency of ideas, Gissing has closed off one possibility for giving Michael's plan a reality independent of the success or failure of its implementation.

If the narrative treatment of Michael Snowdon tends to undercut the potential power of ideas, so does the characterization of Jane. *The Nether World* has stipulated Jane's incapacity for book-learning (135-36) and for the abstract thought that might make her a suitable agent for her grandfather. In her moment of greatest closeness to Sidney, her sensibility is most clearly defined: "Jane's delight was as simple as the language in which she was wont to express herself. . . . She could as little have understood Sidney's mind at this moment as she could have given an analytic account of her own sensations" (166). As Barbara Leah Harman has observed, "She has no instinct for generalization, no capacity to theorize" (187). Since Jane cannot conceivably manage the large-scale role her grandfather imagines, her character underscores the unrealistic nature of the goals Michael has endorsed. But Jane's lack of intellectuality, which ensures her focus on small-scale benevolence, also seems to be one of the conditions of her goodness. By creating a disconnect



between systematic thought and simple goodness, Gissing implies that large-scale thinking is antithetical to localized acts of compassion.

While Gissing's fiction usually places considerable weight on a character's capacity for intellectual reflection, Jane Snowdon seems to be a character out of Dickens. Fredric Jameson has noted Gissing's use of "Dickensian paradigms" in this novel—"in particular, Dickensian sentimentality, the narrative paradigm of the Dickensian heroine" (186). In his 1898 study of Dickens, Gissing would identify, somewhat critically, several characteristic features of that writer's work: his "associat[ion of] kindness of disposition with lack of brains" (101), his creation of individuals who are morally untouched by impoverished surroundings (207), and his belief in "private benevolence" by individuals rather than systematic reform (209). Gissing sees each of these tendencies as products of a past age or of Dickens's personal history. But in *The Nether World* he adopts these same anachronistic strategies without the palpable belief in their power that sustains Dickens's narratives.<sup>2</sup> Again it is clear that Gissing's purpose in this novel has required the alteration of his preferred modes of operation.

If Michael Snowdon's ideas are shown to be unpersuasive and inhumane almost from their initial appearance, they partly survive their apparent demise. At the novel's end, both Sidney and Jane are separately leading lives of compassionate service to others. Remaining within the working class themselves, they are shedding at least a ray of light on the dark world of the poor. And, despite the evidence that Jane had begun a life of service independently of Michael, we are told that their compassionate service is Michael's doing: "Michael Snowdon's wealth had melted away; with it was gone for ever the hope of realising his high projects. All passed into the world of memory, of dream—all save the spirit which had ennobled him, the generous purpose bequeathed to those two hearts which had loved him best" (391). Ironically, that aspect of Michael's plan that was most inhumane—his anticipation of Jane's sacrifice of personal happiness—has been fully realized. Both Jane and Sidney have scrupulously taken up painful lives devoid of personal satisfaction. Jane has rejected the small allowance from her father that would make life comfortable, and she has rejected Charles Scawthorne's proposal. Sidney has married Clara in an excess of self-martyrdom and has taken on responsibility for her entire family. The end of the novel is a festival of self-denial. Gissing has, oddly enough, undermined the potential of systematic thought throughout *The Nether World* but has held on to many of Michael's thoughts, eliminating only those elements

that offered the possibility of social change. To put it unsympathetically, Michael's scheme of social reform has been collapsed into sentimentality—it has become a "spirit" and a feeling rather than an idea. Michael's concern for others survives, but only insofar as it has been drained of larger political significance.

The novel's pessimism and its emphasis on the importance of nurturing pity and fellow-feeling offer a clear connection between *The Nether World* and Gissing's essay "The Hope of Pessimism" (written in 1882, but unpublished in his lifetime). This piece, a critique of Positivism, represents Gissing's closest approach to the philosophy of Schopenhauer. It also provides a useful framework for understanding the novel. In outlining the inadequacies of the Religion of Humanity, Gissing identifies a ground for pessimism that accords well with the reality of *The Nether World*. "Lay to our souls what flattering unction we may, we shall not escape from the eternal truth that the world is synonymous with evil" (88). His preferred method of combating the egotism that accompanies optimism entails counteracting the will to live, perhaps even embracing an asceticism that seems to anticipate the lives of Jane and Sidney ("Hope" 91). Eventually, he argues, humanity will reach its inevitable end by dying off peacefully. There will be no more of that reproduction that, according to *The Nether World*, "increase[s] the sum total of the world's misery" (57; see also 130, 165). For the moment all people can do is recognize their common plight: "In the pity of it we must find our salvation. The compassion which each man first feels for himself, let him extend to his fellow-sufferers" ("Hope" 94). In such sympathy lies the only possible response to the condition of humanity, just as it seems the only response available to the inhabitants of *The Nether World*.<sup>3</sup>

Yet *The Nether World* represents a significant departure from the ideas Gissing had articulated a few years before. The treatment of the subject itself entails a significant change: the novel's anthropological focus ensures that for the reader hopelessness emerges out of a specific set of material circumstances rather than out of an intellectual recognition of the timelessly evil essence of the universe. Moreover, in "The Hope of Pessimism," both the metaphysical instinct and art offer some means of combating the horrors of everyday life, but in *The Nether World* both these operations of the human mind have been so defined that they lose any of their transformative force. According to Gissing in "The Hope of Pessimism," the artist is the only being with grounds for optimism, since in the selfless, will-less realm of art "good does prevail over evil" (95). In such early works as *The Unclassed* and *Thyrza*, the central figures have at least some

artistic ability or affinity: Waymark, Maud Enderby, and Thyrza herself come readily to mind. For at least a time in these novels art offers some possibility of relief from the conditions of poverty in working-class English life. Yet *The Nether World* contains only the most rudimentary traces of the artistic impulse. Bob Hewett has something of the abilities and temperament of the artist, yet he finds no expression for his talents other than counterfeiting. Clara Hewett has genuine ability as an actress, but the vitriol attack that ends her stage career reduces her to acting at Sidney Kirkwood to entice him into marriage. Sidney himself, a singularly pallid version of the Gissing intellectual, has some of the qualities of an artist. His choice of engravings of Constable and Gainsborough for his walls (60) accords with what Jameson calls the "contemplative passivity and lugubrious melancholy . . . [that] seem to mark him off from the rest and to endow him with a peculiar self-consciousness" (195). Sidney's own ambitions as a landscape artist periodically emerge in times of happiness, only to be repeatedly crushed by fate. In each of these three examples the hint of artistry in his characters serves Gissing only as a means of underlining the pathos of their situation. Art itself does not have a real existence in the lives of these characters.

The other mental faculty from Gissing's essay presents a more complicated case. According to "The Hope of Pessimism," the metaphysical instinct is "that standing revolt of the intellect against its circumscribed conditions, which has given birth to every form of supernatural religion, and has been hitherto the prime motive of philosophical enquiry" (81). While Positivism suggested that humans have outgrown this instinct, Gissing sees it as of continuing value: it can give the understanding of the pointlessness of human existence that will create fellow-feeling. In this essay, the metaphysical instinct is a primarily philosophical impulse—a questing after "the ultimate problems of existence" (84) that alone can lead to the altruistic compassion born of clear-eyed pessimism. Yet the language of revolt in Gissing's definition allies this instinct with an innate quality that marks many of his characters. In novel after novel, Gissing depicts individuals who are unable to accept stagnation, limitation, or social injustice. Often these characters are intensely sympathetic precisely because they possess this spirit. In *The Odd Women*, for instance, Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot exemplify a modern spirit of rebellion that ultimately offers the possibility for improving relations between the sexes. In *The Nether World*, many characters partake of "the spirit of revolt" (58): Scawthorne, John Hewett, Clara, and Sidney. In Sidney and Scawthorne, revolt is an attitude that the characters outgrow; in John Hewett, revolt is soul-consumingly destructive. While there is some narrative sympathy for these men, none of them provides a positive view of revolt's possibilities.

It is Clara who exhibits the best and most complex example of rebelliousness in the novel. On one level she represents a strikingly vital response to the limitations of lower-class life. Clara is an interesting foil to Jane—more intelligent and more beautiful, but almost incapable of sympathy. Possessing "the forces of a man's brain" (26), she has formed a bitter but wholly accurate analysis of her situation:

She felt in her inmost heart the tyranny of a world which takes revenge for errors that are inevitable, which misleads a helpless child and then condemns it for being found astray. She could judge herself, yes, better than Sidney Kirkwood could judge her. . . . But she could not renounce the claims that Nature had planted in her . . . . The better she understood how difficult was every way of advancement, the more fiercely resolute was she to conquer satisfactions which seemed beyond the sphere of her destiny. (81-82)

Gissing takes some pains to give Clara her due. Sidney, exercising considerable self-control, provides the most sympathetic read of her character that he can make: "Suppose she'd been the daughter of a rich man; then everything we now call a fault in her would either have been of no account or actually a virtue" (102). At the beginning of Chapter IX, there is a passage of free indirect discourse in which Clara justifies her unwillingness to send her father money as she had promised. Her conclusion, starkly inconsistent with traditional femininity, is that "It would be unjust to herself to share her scanty earnings with those at home" (79). Here the narrator, anticipating the reader's revulsion, immediately intrudes with a rather awkward excuse for Clara: "Yes; but you must try to understand this girl of the people, with her unfortunate endowment of brains and defect of tenderness." Yet the narrative places her beyond the pale by conflating the metaphysical instinct with egotism, the attitude that Gissing finds antithetical to "human morality" ("Hope" 91). Once Scawthorne opens up the possibility of a theatrical life to her, she determines to succeed regardless of the cost. Her principle of action is a vigorous one: "Self-assertion; to be no longer an unregarded atom in the mass of those who are born only to labour for others; to find play for the strength and the passion which, by no choice of her own, distinguished her from the tame slave" (86). There is obviously room to understand her feelings as heroic. But in context hers is not a positive impulse, for we have just been told that "the character of her suffering . . . became less womanly, it defied weakness and grew to a fever of fierce, unscrupulous rebellion" (86). Similarly, narrative commentary identifies her aspirations to escape as proof of her contamination by the nether world.

"Be my origin what it may, I have the intelligence and the desires of one born to freedom. Nothing in me, nothing, is akin to that gross world from which I have escaped!" So she thought—with every drop of her heart's blood crying its source from that red fountain of revolt whereon never yet did the upper daylight gleam! Brain and pulses such as hers belong not to the mild breed of mortals fostered in sunshine. (277)

Unlike other Gissing novels, *The Nether World* closes off all possibility of seeing revolt as a productive form of response to oppression. It is, to take the title of Chapter IX, merely "Pathological."

Perhaps the most curious aspect of Clara's story is the way her social mobility abruptly ends. For she does nearly escape the nether world; certainly she escapes the narrative

<sup>2</sup>Jameson offers an account of Gissing's view of philanthropy that, while not accounting for the differently valued varieties of philanthropy in *The Nether World*, usefully describes Gissing's deeply divided attitude to his own solution. "What is interesting about Gissing is that he is locked into this program at the same time that he sees through it and arraigns it violently, oscillating between an implacable denunciation of the reformist-philanthropists and an equally single-minded indictment of the 'poor' who cannot thus be rescued or elevated" (192). It is this sort of ambivalence that undercuts Gissing's Dickensian propensities.

<sup>3</sup>William J. Scheick has offered an interesting analysis of how Thomas

Hardy (in *Jude the Obscure*) and Joseph Conrad (in *Heart of Darkness*) express Schopenhauerian compassion. For these writers compassion arises out of a spirit of simultaneous engagement and detachment. And, in the case of Hardy in particular, compassion is achieved by readers of the novel but not by any character within the novel. In contrast, Gissing establishes the reality of compassion by the example of his two heroes Jane and Sidney, and their compassion has been created by immersion in a social reality rather than by severe philosophical detachment. In these respects, despite his affinity for Schopenhauer, Gissing seems to be charting his own philosophical terrain.

for a time, not appearing in person from Chapter XI until Chapter XXIII. And she is on the verge of breaking out of secondary acting roles when we meet her again. Her approach to success has been based on her willingness to do anything to get ahead. In a speech to her former friend Grace Danvers, whom she is about to supplant on the stage, she articulates a Social Darwinian ethos: "there's no such thing as friendship or generosity or feeling for women who have to make their way in the world. . . . You wouldn't give up a chance for me; I'm sure I should never expect you to. We have to fight, to fight for everything, and the weak get beaten. That's what life has taught me" (207). In such other novels as *New Grub Street*, characters who understand the reality of the struggle for existence, like Jasper Yates, experience a morally compromised material success. But Clara is about to see the end of all her dreams: Grace will end Clara's career by throwing vitriol in her face. Astonishingly, Clara's failure is attributable to her unwillingness to show Jane Snowdon's sort of compassion; we are told that "A little generosity, and Clara might have helped to soothe the pains of one so much weaker than herself" (203). Presumably a soothed Grace would be a non-violent Grace. Nowhere else in the novel does sympathy seem like a solidly prudential strategy. But here compassion provides a handy way of closing off the possibility of social mobility. In *The Nether World* there is not even a natural Darwinian process that characters can ride to escape poverty.

So, *The Nether World* presents a reality from which Gissing has carefully excised the customary consolations offered by the operations of the human mind. One result of this procedure is, obviously, to heighten the gloom of the novel by ensuring the inevitability of social stasis. Yet there is also an aesthetic result, one that arises from the elimination of all forms of value other than the small sympathetic gestures of the two heroes. The epigraph to the novel quotes Ernest Renan: "La peinture d'un fumier peut être justifiée pourvu qu'il y pousse une belle fleur; sans cela, le fumier n'est que repoussant" (xxx). ("A painting of a dung-heap might be justified if a beautiful flower grew out of it; otherwise the dung-heap is merely repulsive" [393].) This quotation suggests that the novel may most properly be viewed as an object of aesthetic contemplation, presenting a scene of beauty for our delectation. And indeed this view is consistent with some of the language that describes Jane. Earlier I cited Michael Snowdon's callous disregard of Jane's need for love to illustrate the inadequacy of his plan of reform. But a particular phrase is interesting for my purposes here as well: "he recognised his granddaughter's feeling, but could not appreciate its intensity, its supreme significance" (255). As I suggested before, one meaning of this is that human feelings are more important than ideals. There is also a hint here, however, that the extraordinary intensity of Jane's feeling gives it a special claim to reverence: in other words, it is not only that the feeling is supremely important to Jane, but that the flowering of such a feeling constitutes an event of supreme importance. A later example may be less ambiguous. After Michael dies, having destroyed his will, Joseph Snowdon announces to Jane that her expected inheritance will all go to him. When she shows no interest in the money, being anxious only about whether her grandfather

had lost his good opinion of her, even Joseph is moved. "Snowdon was astonished at the explanation of his own good luck, and yet more at Jane's display of feeling. . . . For some moments he could only gaze at her in wonder. Never yet had he heard, never again would he hear, the utterance of an emotion so profound and so noble" (354). If Joseph is touched, the narrator is positively rhapsodic. Jane's feeling is all the more impressive because *The Nether World* has insisted on the ugliness of all around it. But she is especially important as a unique access point to a realm of beauty that transcends ordinary reality. She is the goal of the Aesthetic impulse, what Leon Chai has described as the "quest for specific impressions or experiences that are felt to possess an intrinsic significance—above all, the experience of beauty and the experience of form" (xi).

It seems plausible, then, to see Jane, and to a lesser extent Sidney, as the flowers on the dung-heap that make its representation justifiable. From Gissing's Schopenhauerian point of view in "The Hope of Pessimism," here at last may be material productive of that state of "artistic contemplation" in which "self is eliminated" and "the heart rejoices itself before images of pure beauty" (95). If there are no real artists in *The Nether World*, and so no artistic agency, there do seem to be people who are art objects. Yet there may be something disturbing in this aspect of the novel for those who value Gissing as a morally engaged social commentator. The impulse to bear witness, so clearly articulated in March 1888, lies alongside an impulse to accentuate the beauty of Jane's and Sidney's self-sacrificial behavior by draining all hope from the world of the novel. These impulses coexisted in Gissing's own life as well. On February 24, 1889, he was in the midst of taking a vacation in Italy with the proceeds from the sale of *The Nether World*. Having finished correcting the proofs of the second volume two days before, he delighted in the art by Bellini and Cima da Conegliano that he visited that day in the Venice Accademia (*Diary* 139-40). It was that evening that he came across the Renan quotation that he would make his epigraph. It is perhaps understandable that at a moment of personal aesthetic delight Gissing would see the justification of his own work in the speck of beauty that it created. And the epigraph does not eliminate those aspects of the novel that indeed bear witness against social injustice. But it does provide a reminder that the novel presses towards beauty at a very high cost. *The Nether World* is a work that creates striking effects by denying that the human mind might be a means of challenging the ugliness that it represents.

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## Who is Heathcliff? The Shadow Knows

Marilyn Hume

Charlotte Brontë asks in the preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, "Whether it is right or advisable to create things like Heathcliff," and goes on to say that she scarcely thinks it is. She also suggests that the author has little control over this creative process once it has been set in motion, claiming that it has a life of its own (xxxvi). What is it in Heathcliff that so concerns Charlotte Brontë that she feels a need to question the wisdom of his existence? Is it pure evil in some demonic form? Is it wild unbridled passion, part of the nature of the moors? Is he more simply a tyrant, a cruel sadistic despot? Is he a romantic lover, slave to his own passions and victim of circumstance? In Heathcliff Emily Brontë gives us all of these characters and phenomena. He is not one to the exclusion of the others: he is all. In Heathcliff we have a man to stir our feelings, a man to enrage our senses, engage our passions and walk over our graves. He disturbs us so because he reflects our unconscious minds. He plays out our fantasies and our nightmares. Heathcliff is a man formed by the unconscious projections of the characters in the novel—the projection of all they find unacceptable in themselves. He is a man formed, particularly, by the unconscious projections of the narrators and Catherine Earnshaw. Everything rejected by the conscious sensibilities of Lockwood, Nelly Dean and Catherine finds unlimited freedom of expression in Heathcliff, where it surfaces to taunt and confuse its creators. These unconscious projections of unacceptable traits take the form of "The Shadow" as described by Carl G. Jung.

C. G. Jung sees shadow as manifesting in his own dreams and in the dreams of his analysands. Aspects of the shadow are also projected on to others:

The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always

thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly—for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies. . . . The shadow is that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors and so comprise the whole historical aspect of the unconscious. If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of all evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is, his shadow, does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc. (399)

Shadow is encountered either in our dreams or projected onto the world. In *Wuthering Heights*, others project their shadow side on to Heathcliff. In this essay we look specifically at how that occurs with the characters of Lockwood, Nelly Dean and Cathy.

*Wuthering Heights* is written with a framed narrative. The first narrator is Mr. Lockwood and the second is Nelly Dean. These two narrators see Heathcliff differently. Their perception of him is influenced by their own perception of themselves. In the case of Lockwood, he at first sees Heathcliff as similar to himself. This view is expressed by Lockwood in the following excerpt and is from the start a little hard for the reader to accept:

"Thruscross Grange is my own, sir," he interrupted, wincing, "I should not allow anyone to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it—walk in!" The "walk in" was uttered with closed teeth and expressed the sentiment, "Go to the Deuce!" Even the gate over which he leant manifested no



sympathising movement to the words, and I think that circumstances determined me to accept the invitation; I felt interested in a man who seemed more exaggeratedly reserved than myself. (3)

Lockwood wants to see in Heathcliff a man who is reserved, and more so than himself. He wants to see this level of reservation as admirable in Heathcliff and therefore fine in him too:

I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling—to manifestations of mutual kindness. He'll love and hate equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again—No, I'm running on too fast—I bestow my own attributes over liberally on him. (5)

By Lockwood's own admission, he consciously bestows his attributes on Heathcliff. Consciously he sees himself as reserved and finds this acceptable. Consciously he bestows that attribute on Heathcliff. The shadow, however, personifies everything the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself. What is it that Lockwood refuses to acknowledge about himself that he unconsciously projects onto Heathcliff? Emily Brontë soon gives us an example of Lockwood's unconscious self. Lockwood tells of an incident in which he met a young woman to whom he was attracted. He makes it plain to her that he is attracted to her but when she responds he shuns her. She is so overwhelmed with confusion at her supposed mistake that she leaves. He confesses that because of this he has gained the reputation of deliberate heartlessness, a reputation he cannot accept (6). He cannot see himself as heartless, yet clearly he is.

Emily Brontë gives us another look at this true aspect of Lockwood's character in the episode when he sees Cathy's ghost:

The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but, the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed,

"Let me in—let me in!"

"Who are you?" I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

"Catherine Linton," it replied, shiveringly. . . . "I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor!"

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child's face looking through the window—Terror made me cruel; and finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro until the blood ran down and soaked the bed clothes. (25)

Lockwood admits that in his dream he is cruel and deliberately heartless but these are aspects of his personality that he does not consciously accept. Lockwood cannot integrate cruelty as part of who he is, so he relegates cruelty to his shadow side. He projects this shadow onto Heathcliff. He is attracted to Heathcliff not for the reasons of his conscious mind but because Heathcliff personifies his forbidden

self. Heathcliff is cruel and deliberately heartless.

Lockwood also has a strange Biblical dream which serves to illuminate his shadow. He dreams he is travelling with Joseph to hear the famous James Branderham preach from the text "Seventy Times Seven" (22). He dreams that Joseph, the preacher or himself has committed the "First of the Seventy First," and is to be publicly exposed and excommunicated. This refers to the story in Matthew known as "The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant." The sin referred to is that of unforgiveness: "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?' 'No, not seven times,' answered Jesus, 'but seventy times seven'" (Matt. 18: 21-22). In the dream Lockwood fights with the whole assembly. He has no weapon to use in self defense. Joseph and the others all have staves. In the language of symbols, the staff used as a weapon has punitive meaning (Tresidder 191). In Jungian psychology it is generally believed that when a person is in conflict with someone else in a dream that other person is a shadow figure representing qualities the dreamer refuses to admit as part of his personality (Robertson 130). Lockwood, not surprisingly, offers us no interpretation of this dream, other than to blame it on bad tea and bad temper. We are given no interpretation from any other source in the text and yet it would seem to have some meaning. Using the Jungian model, one may reasonably propose that Lockwood is repressing his desire to punish others and his inability to forgive them. In the dream he is going to be exposed and punished by the whole assembly and by Joseph, whom he refers to as his most ferocious assailant, and by Branderham. These figures all represent the repressed side of Lockwood in his dream. In his waking life Heathcliff represents this shadow side of Lockwood. Lockwood's repressed punitive side finds free expression in Heathcliff: Heathcliff is punitive, ferocious and unforgiving.

The second narrator, Nelly Dean, has a different part to play in forming Heathcliff. We have no dreams to give us a glimpse of Nelly's unconscious mind. Nelly does, however, fantasize about Heathcliff, particularly about the circumstances of his birth:

"You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows, but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer." (57)

Heathcliff as far as we can learn from the text does not fantasize about his parentage. Nelly fantasizes about Heathcliff's parentage. Nelly, it appears, is not content with her own humble station in life, a station determined by parentage. Nelly is a servant, but she does not like to be treated as one. When she is treated as a servant she objects. When Catherine, for example, treats her as a servant she

refers to Catherine as haughty and says, "she ceased to hold any communications with me except as a mere servant" (87). Nelly finds this form of communication unacceptable. Nelly has no mysterious background to fantasize about for herself. Indeed, such fantasies on her own behalf would be incompatible with Nelly's view of herself as, "a steady, reasonable kind of body" (62). Romantic thoughts and fancies are not part of Nelly's conscious thinking. It would not be acceptable for a country girl to be so fanciful. She must find some other outlet for these desirable but forbidden fantasies. Nelly relegates these desires and fantasies to her unconscious mind where they manifest in the romantic persona of Heathcliff.

Cathy, though not a narrator, is clearly crucial to the development of Heathcliff. Emily Brontë uses Cathy as the one character who understands Heathcliff, the only one who knows his true character. She knows him so well because he is, indeed, part of her. He is her shadow side.

Heathcliff comes into Cathy's life when they are children. They quickly become very close, recognizing in each other a common wildness, lack of convention and love of the moors:

But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at. The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot every thing the minute they were together again, at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge; and many a time I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not daring to speak a syllable for fear of losing the small power I still retained over the unfriendly creatures. (46)

Nelly describes two equally truculent children. Wild and defiant of any convention or guidance, they are described by her as "unfriendly" and as "creatures." As children they are a pair. Then, beginning with her visit to the Lintons, Cathy starts to repress this side of her nature. She consigns it to her unconscious shadow and lives it, as projection, through Heathcliff. From this point on the boundary between Cathy and Heathcliff blurs. When she returns from Thrushcross Grange she is dressed like a lady. She adopts the airs and graces of a lady and consciously cultivates her relationship with Edgar Linton. She decides over a very short period of time that she will marry him. Cathy feels that she is repressing part of herself but is powerless to stop. She cannot accept her own wild nature as an integral part of her personality and conform to the dictates of her society to be a lady. She chooses the latter. She rejects the wild part of herself in the form of Heathcliff. She tells Nelly that it would degrade her to marry Heathcliff now that he is so low. Cathy's inability to be true to her feelings and marry Heathcliff also serves as metaphor for her rejection of "the hatless little savage" (52) she can no longer allow herself to be. Cathy's savage nature is relegated to her unconscious shadow side where it immediately manifests in Heathcliff. Cathy, to confirm this, dramatically declares that she is Heathcliff:

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees—my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being—so, don't talk of our separation again—it is impracticable. (82)

From this moment on, Heathcliff fully embodies Cathy's rejected self.

When Cathy returns from Thrushcross Grange, Heathcliff is at first nowhere to be found. He continues to hide from Cathy and to sulk. Then, still at this point seeing himself as Cathy's partner, he starts to question his role. He hangs around Nelly for awhile and finally summons up the courage to say, "Nelly, make me decent, I'm going to be good" (55). Nelly takes this on as her project. She washes Heathcliff and dresses him up. She encourages him to frame high notions of his birth, suggesting that perhaps he may be a prince from some foreign land. She tells him that all he needs to be handsome as he wishes is to have a good heart. Heathcliff as a young boy wants to be fair and handsome and have a chance at being rich like Edgar Linton. In fact, he wants the same things Cathy wants, and at this point is willing to try to get them by following Cathy's lead and conforming. He is ready to be amiable. An amiable Heathcliff, however, is not acceptable to anyone. The Lintons are perfectly content to be amiable themselves. They don't need and won't accept that from Heathcliff. Hindley is determined to keep Heathcliff down and together they thwart Heathcliff's attempt to "be good." From Heathcliff's first appearance at Wuthering Heights as "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child" (36), he has a disruptive effect on all those around him. Cathy and Hindley are upset because the gifts their father has for them are broken. The household is thrown into confusion by his arrival. They refer to him as "it" and they reject him:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone by the morning. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr Earnshaw's door and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (37)

Heathcliff has spent only one night at Wuthering Heights at this point and already there is confusion and conflict. Not only is there external conflict between the children and Heathcliff, and the children and their father, and Mr. Earnshaw and Nelly, but there is also internal conflict in Nelly. Nelly refers to her actions as cowardly and inhuman. A peaceful domestic scene becomes one of confusion, chaos and conflict. Throughout the novel, Heathcliff causes chaos, confusion and conflict among others. He also causes the same emotions within others. It is fair to say that where Heathcliff is, there is no peace. What is it in Heathcliff that

so disrupts others?

It is an aphorism that whatever most attracts or repels us in another is generated by something in ourselves: something of ourselves we see reflected back to us by the recipient of our attention. It is our unconscious shadow side that so disturbs and attracts us. It is this shadow that we find reflected back to us that so upsets our psyche. The characters in *Wuthering Heights*, especially, but not exclusively, Lockwood, Nelly Dean and Catherine, face their shadow in Heathcliff. In Heathcliff they are brought face to face with everything they refuse to acknowledge in themselves. When they are faced with this embodiment of their shadow, it is no wonder that chaos, confusion and conflict ensue. And when she is faced with this embodiment, it is no wonder that Charlotte Brontë questions the wisdom of the creation of Heathcliff. Heathcliff is, after all, unacceptable.

## Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time": "Finally, there is the systematic judgment . . . the most worthless of all." ("A French Critic on Goethe" CPW 8: 254)<sup>1</sup>

Nilli Diengott

Matthew Arnold, to many cultural and certain post-structuralist critics, is the epitome of DWEM attitudes, and vilifying and attacking his views of culture and criticism have been a particularly evident fashion since the 1980s.<sup>2</sup> My intention is not to engage once again either in vilification or praise but to examine "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" in order to point to a method in Arnold's discussion which has not been analyzed by critics of this essay.

The use of method with reference to Arnold's writing immediately runs into two difficulties. 1. Arnold's own dismissal of systematic judgment:

Finally, there is the systematic judgment, and this judgment is the most worthless of all . . . Its author has not really his eye upon the professed object of his criticism at all, but upon something else which he wants to prove by means of that object. . . . As it is, all he tells us is that he is no genuine critic, but a man with a system, an advocate. (8: 254-255)

2. The criticism of his essays on similar grounds already by his contemporaries (see Dawson and Pfordresher 2, 26-31) and certainly by modern critics (see Buckley, Holloway, Baldick, Levine, Buckler). However, as I hope to show,

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there is a method in his manner of writing which yet leaves it very unsystematic, but not incoherent or unintelligible.

To begin with there is Arnold's definition of the critical effort in "The Function"<sup>3</sup>: "The endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is" (258). After having discussed in the course of the essay the function of criticism close to the end Arnold summarizes his discussion and redefines criticism in the following manner (emphasis in the original): "*a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world*" (283).

Even a cursory glance at the two definitions indicates that they are hardly identical. Things become even more perplexing since in the course of the essay (268, paragraph 5 lines 31-36) we get the following definition of criticism:

But criticism, real criticism is essentially the exercise of this quality [curiosity, i.e., "disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake" (268)]. It obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind; and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever.

If arranged in table form the three definitions seem to

display lack of systematicity and logic (I number the clauses in each definition):

initial definition	para. 15	final definition
1. endeavour	obeys an instinct	a disinterested endeavour
2. all branches of knowledge	_____	_____
3. to see the object as as in itself it really is	to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world the best that is known	to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world
4. _____	irrespectively of practices, politics, and everything of the kind	_____
5. _____	to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best	_____
6. _____	without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever	_____

The difference between the initial and final definitions is evident: disinterested is added in the final definition. The second clause in the initial definition is totally missing from the final one. The final clause in the initial definition mentions "seeing the object" etc., whereas the final definition mentions "propagat[ing] the best" etc.

The intermediate definition in relation to the other two is much longer: clauses 4 to 6 are added and have no counterparts in the other two definitions. Also, the word *endeavour* which appears in the initial and final definitions is replaced with "obey[ing] an instinct." The third clause in the intermediate definition has a partial overlap with the final definition ("the best that is known" etc.).

Clearly, the differences between the three definitions add force to Arnold's detractors, who of course also point to his general tendency to fuzzy writing.<sup>4</sup> What precisely does "seeing an object as in itself it really is" mean? *Which* object? *What* does "it really is" mean? *How* do you see it "as in itself it really is?" These formulations which sound so simple, once looked at more closely, seem to be hermetically glib; they sound well but in the light of logic and systematic thinking leave much to be desired. Arnold seems to commit

a double error in "The Function": inconsistent as well as unintelligible definitions of criticism.

However I suggest that Arnold should not be read as one would read a Northrop Frye or an M. H. Abrams, but rather as a poet who turned to writing criticism and whose poetic background influences his expository writing.<sup>5</sup>

The poetic quality of Arnold's criticism in "The Function" is manifest in the change that occurs in his definition of criticism in paragraph 15. The word "disinterested" in the final definition is a distillation of clauses 4 and 6 in the intermediate definition. Furthermore, Arnold opts finally for endeavour—a conscious effort—over a prompt by instinct in the intermediate definition.

If in the initial definition he is satisfied with *seeing* the object, in the intermediate definition the verb is to *know* and in the final one to *learn* and *propagate*. In other words, there is an increasing activity: seeing is passively understanding; knowing is a greater or deeper, an assimilative or incorporative seeing; learning and propagating are actually taking charge, making an effort both to know, through learning, but also not keeping it to one's self but disseminating this knowledge. This increasing activity merges with the idea of endeavor which appears in both the initial and final definitions.

Clause 2 of the initial definition—"all branches"—apparently has no counterparts in the two later definitions, but actually the formulation "best that is known and thought" is another distillation: all branches of knowledge which he enumerated in the initial definition are now described as the "best that is known and thought," not just all branches but the *best* in those branches (Arnold never specifies how one determines this best). But notice that clause 5 in the intermediate definition is a bit less strict: "to value knowledge and thought as they *approach* this best" (emphasis added); in other words, even things short of perfection but where an endeavor is involved should be valued.

We are now left with the "object as in itself it really is," one of the favorite whipping boy phrases of the anti-Arnoldians. Again, the intermediate definition in clauses 4 and 6 clarifies his terms: "in itself it really is" means "irrespective of practice . . . without intrusion," i.e., without partisanship and political considerations and manipulations.

We need to read Arnold as we would a poem, even when he is supposedly writing an expository essay (often based on a lecture). His method is to state something, repeat it with modifications which keep accumulating in the process of reading and resonate when another statement is made. The reading is not entirely linear: it is rather synoptic, reading back and forth, adjusting meanings through the accumulating resonances until finally we have a definition that, though initially puzzling, fuzzy and elusive, is meaningful without being necessarily logical, accurate, consistently or thoroughly "scientific." Arnold is an impressionist critic in a positive sense of the term, in the sense that there are insights but not a rigorous, theoretical investigation. Nevertheless he is intelligible and even coherent though not

<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank Professor Catherine Runcie for her comments on this essay.

<sup>2</sup>For an egregious and particularly distorting view of Arnold's attitudes see Brantlinger (39-40), but also Hartman (380), Thesing, Dooley (116); for critics who discuss Arnold's detractors see Bell, Collini (115-116, 126);

Dickstein, and Mermin. *Critical Inquiry* 9 (1983) is totally devoted to pro and con views of Arnold. See also Mazzeno's survey of Arnold's position in criticism especially chapters six and seven.

<sup>3</sup>All references are to *CPW* 3: 258-290 and will be incorporated in the text.

<sup>4</sup>Buckley, Holloway, Baldick, Levine and Buckler all point to this aspect of Arnold's writing.

<sup>5</sup>Buckler mentions Arnold's poetic qualities in the *Essays in Criticism* (especially 37, 43, 63) but provides no detailed analysis such as I offer.

systematic. Considering the fact the poststructuralists of all kinds abhor rigid, positivistic, male, binary, logical, phallogocentric writing it is quite ironic that they should disparage Arnold for something he does so skillfully and very much in line with their purported preferences. As Arnold might say, these critics do not see the object as in itself it really is.

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## Monkeys, Microcephalous Idiots, and the Barbarous Races of Mankind: Darwin's Dangerous Victorianism<sup>1</sup>

Leila S. May

Daniel Dennett is a provocateur. In his best-selling book with the wicked title of *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* he gleefully presents Darwin's theory as being like the universal acid in a science fiction story which eats through all vessels that attempt to contain it (63). This acid destroys not only the notion of any teleology in nature (intentions, plans and goals) as well as all remnants of Lamarckism ("acquired characteristics can be inherited") but also the foundations and substance of religion and of traditional moral systems. It replaces them with "sociobiology or evolutionary ethics" (480),<sup>2</sup> evolutionary psychology and, by extension, the com-

puterized model of the brain—which just happens to be one of Dennett's favorite topics. (Dennett refers impishly to "Artificial Intelligence and its evil twin, Darwinism" [400].) What, then, is Darwin's dangerous idea? According to Dennett, it is "the very idea that evolution is, in the end, just an algorithmic process" (266), the notion that "the algorithmic level is the level that best accounts for. . . [the] wonder in the world of nature" (59). An algorithm is an "underlying mindlessness" (51)—a formula for a purely mechanical repetition.

Dennett clearly had a marvelous time writing his book,

Nietzsche, "the second great sociobiologist" (461). He supports the idea of biological reductionism that sociobiology employs (80-82, 102, 395), but he criticizes what he calls "greedy reductionism" (395), which is what leads to some of sociobiology's overblown claims.

in the process annoying not only traditional moralists but also various top-ranked biologists and paleontologists whose names are usually associated with Darwinian theory, notably R. C. Lewontin and Stephen Jay Gould. Gould proved to be unamused by Dennett's barbs,<sup>3</sup> and Darwin himself would surely not have been pleased with Dennett's account of the mischief that Darwin's ideas must produce if properly understood. Darwin's fear of confrontation is well-known, as is the pain he suffered when he contemplated the offense that his ideas provoked. Robert M. Young summarizes what he takes to be the standard version of Darwin's impact on Victorian culture: "*The Origin of Species* came into the theological world like a plough into an ant-hill. Everywhere those rudely awakened from their old comfort and repose swarmed forth angry and confused" (5).<sup>4</sup> In the *Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin purposely refrained from applying evolutionary theory to the case of the human being—except for one ominous sentence at the end of the book: "Much light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history" (647). Darwin delayed twelve years before dropping the other shoe, but the general public—both Darwin's actual readership, and those who knew only by report and rumor of Darwin's ideas—understood what they took to be the shocking implications of the theory of evolution as applied to the human case. By the time Darwin finally published *The Descent of Man*, the way had been to some extent prepared by the publication of *Evidence of Man's Place in Nature* (1863) by Thomas Huxley ("Darwin's bulldog"). Yet, the document that Darwin presented to the world in 1871 represented a significant retreat from some of the views that, when applied to the human case, would have led in Dennett's direction and would have been offensive to "proper" Victorians.

Darwin's retreat involves an emphasis on the role of sexual selection (whose mechanism consists of a kind of choice) over natural selection (the "mindless algorithm" that is Dennett's "universal acid"), an intensified use of Lamarckian ideas to explain features of human motivation, behavior and even anatomy, and an apparent respect for the role of religion in human development. This book, then, furthers the re-entrenchment that was manifested in the changes made in each new edition of *The Origin of Species*, which, by 1871, had already been rewritten so extensively that Robert Young can claim, tongue in cheek, that by the sixth edition of *Origin*, "the book was mistitled and should have read *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection and All Sorts of Other Things*" (119).

It is to *The Descent of Man* that I wish to turn. I will not attempt to interpret it in terms of authorial intention—that is, I will not ask how much of its retreat relates to Darwin's possible fears, diplomatic dissimulations or cowardice—rather, I will ask what dangerous idea, if any,

would have been found by Victorian readers engaged in an objective perusal of *The Descent*. I will argue that, despite the dread with which the publication of *The Descent* may have been anticipated, in fact, far from providing an argument that could undermine the Western moral canon, Darwin ultimately tries to show that virtually every traditional moral possibility open to Victorian philosophy is implied by the theory of evolution. I will further argue that if we are to find a "dangerous idea" in *The Descent of Man*, it will not be in the innovative synthesis of traditional moralities Darwin lays out there, but rather in the political implications of traditional morality as Darwin understands it.

One of the fears of anti-evolutionists was that Darwin's theory would undercut the moral codes that allowed the kind of self-sacrifice required for the advance of civilization: if moral theory had to fall back on instinct we would be returned to a Hobbesian state of nature where self-interest would be murderously promoted. Darwin in fact admits that there are strong components of selfishness in animals higher on the evolutionary scale, as there are in primitive humans, and, indeed, in civilized humans. However, he does not see selfishness as he defines it as deserving moral reprobation; selfishness is "the satisfaction which every animal feels, when it follows its proper instincts, and the dissatisfaction felt when prevented" (105). But despite Darwin's approval of this modified version of selfishness, he steers clear of deriving morality from selfishness, the error Thomas Hobbes had made two hundred years earlier when he asserted that all acts are motivated exclusively by self-interest. ("[O]f the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some good to himself" [105]). Hobbes's view, now known as psychological egoism, turns out to be a form of psychological hedonism, for he defines the benefit that each person seeks for him or herself in terms of pleasure: "*Pleasure . . . or delight*, is the appearance or sense of good, and *molestation or displeasure*, the appearance, or sense of evil" (49-50). Darwin refers to Hobbes's philosophy as a "derivative school of morals" which holds that "the foundation of morality lay in a form of Selfishness" (103). Despite its deep English roots, Hobbes's theory scandalized Victorian sensibilities.

Darwin has seen through the tautological structure of Hobbes's theory—tautological because it attempts to dispose of any counter-evidence to the theory of egoism not with facts but with redefinitions (risking one's life to save others is simply defined as a deriving pleasure from risk, or as seeking pleasure in glory, just as stepping in front of another's body to take a bullet for that person is defined as a perverted quest for pleasure). Darwin makes an astute criticism of this conflation of egoism and hedonism.

[M]an seems often to act impulsively, that is from instinct

<sup>3</sup>Gould responds to Dennett in a two-part article published in *The New York Review of Books*. See "Darwinian Fundamentalism," and "Evolution: The Pleasures of Pluralism."

<sup>4</sup>Young agrees that at many levels of culture, Darwin's theory had just such an impact. However, according to Young, "the intelligentsia [made] a subtle accommodation with the theory and adopt[ed] an attendant natural theology which, while it made God more remote from nature, made his rule grander at the same time that it left him much more a personal duty" (912). In other words, the intellectuals of the Anglican hierarchy found ways of

defusing the explosive danger that horrified those at other levels of the religious hierarchy. The response of the intelligentsia was consistent with Darwin's intentions, Young claims, because "the idea of opposing theology could not have been further from the minds of the main evolutionists. Their aim was to reconcile nature, God, and man" (10). Even though it is not my plan to explore Darwin's intentions in this essay, the evidence I supply supports Young's conclusions as I show that Darwin's words themselves do not demand a rupture with the European moral tradition; rather, they invite continuity with it.

<sup>1</sup>I am grateful to Andrew H. Miller for his suggestions on an earlier draft of this essay.

<sup>2</sup>In *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, Dennett is sympathetic to sociobiology but critical of its excesses. He speaks approvingly of Thomas Hobbes, "the first sociobiologist, two hundred years before Darwin" (453), and of



or long habit, without any consciousness of pleasure, in the same manner as does probably a bee or ant, when it blindly follows its instincts. Under circumstances of extreme peril, as during a fire, when a man endeavors to save a fellow-creature without a moment's hesitation, he can hardly feel pleasure; and still less has he time to reflect on the dissatisfaction which he might subsequently experience if he did not make the attempt. Should he afterward reflect over his own conduct, he would feel that there lies within him an impulsive power widely different from a search after pleasure or happiness; and this seems to be the deeply planted social instinct. (104)

Here we see that, rather than tracing all motivation to the quest for pleasure, Darwin opposes acts motivated by the desire for pleasure to those motivated by instinct. Darwin had already shown how one instinct can override another when, speaking of the strength of the maternal instinct in birds, he observed, "Nevertheless, the migratory instinct is so powerful that late in the autumn swallows, house-martins, and swifts frequently desert their tender young, leaving them to perish miserably in their nests" (93). Thus, not only can instincts override the "pleasure principle" (Freud's term), but one instinct may override the other. Moreover, learned behavior (customs, mores, ethical codes and superstitions) may override both the pleasure principle and instinct. (Darwin writes: "It is even doubtful whether in some tribes incest would be looked upon with greater horror than would the marriage of a man with a woman bearing the same name though not a relation" [99-100]). For Darwin, instinct plays a role in morality, but morality cannot be reduced to instinct, and certainly not to the pursuit of pleasure. Yet, for him, the foundation of morality is instinctual. Morality is derived from the instinct of "sympathy," which he finds in limited amounts in many animals other than humans and their ancestors. ("Species which are not social, such as lions and tigers, no doubt feel sympathy for the suffering of their own young, but not for that of any other animal" [92].) In higher social animals, such as humans and their ancestors, "selfishness, experience, and imitation probably add . . . to the power of sympathy; for we are led by the hope of receiving good in return to perform acts of sympathetic kindness to others; and sympathy is much strengthened by habit" (92). Darwin goes on to say that it can hardly be doubted that sympathy "was originally developed through natural selection as one of the most important elements of the social instincts" (125). Darwin speculates on the sociality of the primitive humans.

As man is a social animal, it is almost certain that he would inherit a tendency to be faithful to his comrades and obedient to the leader of his tribe; for these qualities are common to most social animals. He would consequently possess some capacity for self-command. He would from an inherited tendency be willing to defend, in concert with others, his fellow-men; and would be ready to aid them in any way, which did not too greatly interfere with his own welfare or his own strong desires. (94)

Because of Darwin's belief that sympathy is a native component of the human make-up passed along by natural selection, he is able to acknowledge the significance of the Utilitarianism of his nineteenth-century compatriots Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, summarized in the "Principle of Utility." ("It is the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong" [45]). Darwin is willing to recognize a slightly corrected version of Utilitarianism as compatible with natural selection, and even derivable from it. He speaks of Utilitarianism as upstaging the Hobbesian school of selfishness: "more recently the 'greatest happiness principle' has been brought prominently forward" (104). Now, for Darwin, if we treat the desire for happiness as the motive for all human action, we are in the same bind as were the Hobbesians. There are clearly some acts that are *not* motivated by the desire for happiness—neither individual nor collective—and if we simply declare that any apparently differing motive is "really" just that agent's idea of happiness, then we reduce our principle to an empty tautology. However, Darwin is at least able to agree with the Utilitarians that "as happiness is an essential part of the general good the greatest-happiness principle is a nearly safe standard of right and wrong" (320).

Natural selection, then, has provided us with a modicum of sympathy for the other. This is the material foundation both of sociality and morality; it leads slowly but directly to a modified version of the Benthamite Principle of Utility which Utilitarians claim as their own. More surprisingly, Darwin dramatically informs his readers that it also leads directly to the Categorical Imperative. Two of the ethical codes that have competed for the allegiance of Western moral theorists have been Kantian rationalism, epitomized in the primary versions of the Categorical Imperative ("Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law," and "Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person, or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" [39, 47]), and Benthamite/Millian Utilitarianism epitomized in the Principle of Utility. These two traditions have been regarded as being at odds with one another, the first deriving from reason and logic, the second from feeling and sentiment. Yet, as we shall see, Darwin's version of evolutionary ethics is not only compatible with two of the principal Western ethical traditions—Utilitarianism (a form of hedonism) and Kantianism (a form of rationalism)—but in fact natural selection has brought the human race to embrace both of them.

Darwin begins chapter four of *The Descent* with a quotation from Kant:

Duty! Wondrous thought, that worketh neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they revel; whence thy original? (84)

Darwin says that this "great question" cannot be passed over in silence, and that it must be approached "exclusively from the side of natural history"—an approach, he claims, that no

one has yet taken. In addition to answering Kant's question, such an approach will also have "some independent interest, as an attempt to see how far the study of the lower animals throws light on one of the highest psychical faculties of man" (84). After tracing primitive advancement through the development of social instincts, the heightening of the powers of memory, and the acquisition of language, Darwin says that then "the wishes of the community could be expressed [and] the common opinion how each member ought to act for the public good would naturally become in paramount degree the guide to action" (85). Speaking of "man in a very rude state," Darwin writes that such a man "might then declare—not that any barbarian or uncultivated man could thus think—I am the supreme judge of my own conduct, and in the words of Kant, I will not in my own person violate the dignity of humanity" (94-95).<sup>5</sup> This is an amazing passage, for Darwin well knew that the rationalistic tradition in which Kant labored was on the side of the angels, not on the side of the primate. Darwin clearly saw that the rationality and autonomy, which, according to Kant, alone gave human beings their dignity, was precisely the spiritual and divine-like principle which humans would need to transcend their animality. For this reason it is clear that Darwin's assertion that evolution leads to the Categorical Imperative is not a *carte blanche* endorsement of the whole of the Kantian ethic. Kant's conception of human dignity is premised on the distinction between human and animal psychology (humans have dignity precisely because they are not animals), while Darwin insists on the continuity between animal and human. Contemporary evolutionary ethicists react very harshly to Kant for just these reasons (see Rachels, especially 88-91). Nevertheless, Darwin is able to incorporate the key Kantian idea into his theory of evolution, and to derive the former from the latter.

There is yet another addition to Darwin's evolutionary ethics. He says, "[T]he social instincts—the prime principle of man's moral constitution—with the aid of active intellectual powers and the effects of habit, naturally lead to the golden rule, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise'; and this lies at the foundation of morality" (109-10).<sup>6</sup> Thus, not only does Darwin's version of "evolutionary ethics" lead to Kant and Mill but to the Sermon on the Mount. It seems that the only major Western moral tradition not embraced by Darwin is the Greek ethics of virtue, according to which the so-called issue of morality is really the issue of what constitutes "the good life," and this question is answered not in terms of duty or of "the general good," but in terms of the concept of "virtue," as in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Yet Darwin even gestures toward this moral tradition, stating that "courage" is a universal virtue: "this quality has universally been placed in the highest rank" (102). He goes on to say, "It is not

improbable that after long practice virtuous tendencies may be inherited" (320). In fact, Darwin enters into an optimistic rhapsody on the prognosis for virtue: "Looking to future generations, there is no cause to fear that the social instincts will grow weaker, and we may expect that virtuous habits will grow stronger, becoming perhaps fixed by inheritance. In this case the struggle between our higher and lower impulses will be less severe, and virtue will be triumphant" (108). Darwin proves equally sanguine about "intelligence" when he claims that "some intelligent actions, after being performed during several generations, become converted into instincts and are inherited, as when birds on oceanic islands learn to avoid man" (57).

The ideas set forth by Darwin in these last two passages may in fact be the unexpressed motives (due to embarrassment) for the abandonment by twentieth-century evolutionary ethicists of Darwin's commitment to traditional morality, for Darwin's ideas about intelligence and virtue are clearly Lamarckian in nature. That is to say, they are strongly committed to one of the great biological errors over which "Darwinism"—especially in the form of Darwin's Dangerous Idea—is supposed to have triumphed, the doctrine that acquired characteristics can be inherited. (Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's most famous just-so story accounts for the giraffe's long neck by explaining that each proto-giraffe generation is forced to stretch its neck a bit more to reach the ever-diminishing leaves on the African savanna, and these stretch-marks are inherited by subsequent generations, producing the species of today.) That Darwin was on occasion a crypto-Lamarckian *malgré lui* cannot be denied. He explains not only human virtues in terms of Lamarckian principles—"Habits, moreover, followed during many generations probably tend to be inherited" (114)—but also human physical traits such as the disappearance of the tail:

As we have now evidence that mutilations occasionally produce an inherited effect, it is not very improbable that in short-tailed monkeys the projecting part of the tail, being functionally useless, should after many generations have become rudimentary and distorted, from being continually rubbed and chafed. (49)

In this fashion he also explains the "girth of the neck and the depth of the instep" of sailors (25), the thickness "of the skin on the soles of the feet" (25), and the more sophisticated development of certain organs:

As all animals tend to multiply beyond their means of subsistence, so it must have been with the progenitors of man; and this would inevitably lead to a struggle for existence and to natural selection. The latter process would be greatly aided by the inherited effects of the increased use

<sup>5</sup>The concept of dignity is what grounds the categorical imperative. Kant says: "But suppose that there were something the existence of which in itself had absolute worth, something which, as an end in itself, could be a ground of definite laws. In it and only in it could lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, i.e. of a practical law. . . . The ground of this principle is: rational nature exists as an end in itself" (46-47). This produces "the idea of the *dignity* of a rational being who obeys no law except

that which he himself also gives." (53).  
<sup>6</sup>The "golden rule" is itself a kind of compromise between the Categorical Imperative and the greatest happiness principle. Like the former, it implies that no action can be moral unless it can be universalized (i.e., logically extended to cover everybody, and not just oneself), yet, like the latter, it is based on desire (one's own desire).

of parts, and these two processes would incessantly react on each other. (51)

As was the case with Galileo's dangerous idea, Darwin's was considered dangerous in his own time, and by some in ours, because its apparently anti-religious philosophy would undermine the possibility for moral action and would justify immorality. Yet, as we have seen, by showing (with a little help from his Lamarckian friends) that the doctrine of natural selection encompassed *all* of the most important features of the European-Christian moral tradition, Darwin attempted to alleviate that anxiety. Moreover, despite having admitted in personal correspondence that he found Christianity to be a "damnable doctrine," (qtd. in Desmond and Moore 623) and in spite of being capable of publicly denouncing "foolish religious motives" (102) and "absurd religious beliefs" (105) (but only in Hinduism), and being prepared to admit of *The Descent of Man* "that the conclusions arrived at in this work will be denounced by some as highly irreligious" (321)—despite all this, he goes on to declare that saying that the individual and the species are the "results of blind chance" *would* be irreligious, but that saying they are the result of "the laws of variation and natural selection" (321) would not be. Indeed, he is perfectly prepared to amalgamate religion, Larmarkism, and natural selection:

For the moral qualities are advanced, either directly or indirectly, much more through the effects of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, etc., than through natural selection; though to this latter agency may be safely attributed the social instincts which afforded the basis for the development of the moral sense. (327-28)

In fact, because of these forces the human being can take pride in having risen "to the very summit of the organic scale" (325).

This last reference to a "summit of organic scale" produces another difficulty for neo-Darwinism, because Darwin was supposed to have destroyed the concept of biological progress. Biologist Jonathan Howard observes in his contribution to the Oxford "Past Masters" series that "[p]erfection and progress had no place in Darwin's pragmatic and relativistic scheme," adding that "the crucial idea is the blindness of the evolutionary process, which responds only to contingency" (56, 35). Alexander Alland, Jr., in his *Evolution and Human Behavior*, says that a science like Darwin's is not concerned with "value-loaded concepts such as progress or happiness" (323). Likewise, the late Stephen Jay Gould told us that Darwin did not like to use the word "evolution" because in his time it was associated with the idea of progress. Gould insisted that it was social Darwinism (basically Herbert Spencer's creation) that made the unfortunate equation between "progress and evolution,"

(*Ever Since Darwin* 36, 304). Yet, not only in the passage above, but in many others, it is clear that Charles Darwin—the Victorian scholar as opposed to his purged and scientifically purified image—has a distinct concept of "evolutionary progress," an idea that contradicts contemporary evolutionary theory and therefore one that, in his own day, would not in and of itself be shocking. He writes that "progress has been much more general than retrogression; that man has risen, though by slow and interrupted steps, from a lowly condition to the highest standard as yet attained by him in knowledge, morals and religion" (127). "Progress" for Darwin means the transition from a "primitive" state to a "civilized" one. (For instance, because of the harsh conditions in which they find themselves, the Eskimos, despite all their heroic efforts, have found that "their climate has been too severe for continued progress" [116].) However, even within civilization there are barriers to evolutionary advancement. For example, civilization allows for the accumulation of wealth, which "when very great tends to convert men into useless drones, but their number is never large; and some degree of elimination occurs here, for we daily see rich men, who happen to be fools or profligates, squandering away their wealth" (118). In addition, progress-retarding atavism is possible within civilization. Just as blackness in sheep is a throwback to an earlier period, "[w]ith mankind some of the worst dispositions, which occasionally without any assignable cause make their appearance in families, may perhaps be reversions to a savage state, from which we are not removed by very many generations" (120). Nevertheless, Darwin's optimism about the inevitability of progress is indomitable. In a most astonishing passage, he declares:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes . . . will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the Negro or Australian and the gorilla. (139)

Thus, even though Darwin's gentlemanly amalgamation of the Christian, Kantian, Utilitarian and Aristotelian moral traditions caused him to abhor slavery,<sup>7</sup> it did not in his mind entail any critique of racism and militant imperialism.<sup>8</sup> In the passage just cited, Darwin does not condemn the inevitable "extermination of the savage races," races that are closer to our simian "allies" than they are to civilized peoples. Currently (this passage tells us), hierarchical relations can be diagrammed as follows:

CAUCASIAN IN A  
FUTURE STATE  
OF CIVILIZATION  
(1)

CAUCASIAN IN A  
CURRENT STATE  
OF CIVILIZATION  
(2)

NEGRO OR  
ABORIGINE  
(SAVAGE)  
(3)

BREAK  
(4)

GORILLA  
(5)

BABOON  
(6)

But because of the inexorable extermination of both "savages" and gorillas (#3 & #5), and the elimination of the current state of civilization through normal advances (#2), eventually the gap between civilization and nature will be wider.

CAUCASIAN IN A  
FUTURE STATE  
OF CIVILIZATION  
(1)

BREAK  
(2)

BREAK  
(3)

BREAK  
(4)

BREAK  
(5)

BABOON  
(6)

It seems that if Darwin regrets anything in this passage, it is that in the future the truth of his theory of evolution will be less visible, for the connection between more highly civilized Caucasians (#1) and baboons (#6) will be less patent than that between today's dark "savage races" and gorillas. Any doubt about Darwin's support for peculiarly British colonialism in the name of progress is erased upon encountering the following observation: "The remarkable success of the English as colonists, compared to other European nations, has been ascribed to their daring and persistent energy; a result which is well illustrated by comparing the progress of the Canadians of English and French extraction" (124).<sup>9</sup>

Darwin's defense of colonialism, like, I suspect, most such defenses, presupposes the truth of racism. Throughout *The Descent*, as in so much of the anthropological literature of the day, there are references to "the higher or civilized races" (14) and to "the lower races of man" (33). In mentioning a certain Dr. Duncan, who criticizes Darwin's theory of evolution by pointing out that the theory of natural selection, if true, would tend to favor the prolific but inferior Irish over the more self-controlled but superior Saxons, Darwin corrects Dr. Duncan's *math*, but not his racism ("the intemperate suffer from a high rate of mortality, and the extremely profligate leave few offspring" [121]). Darwin apparently does not approve of interracial marriages, and claims to have demonstrated that such liaisons would lead to atavism: "crossed races of man would be eminently liable to revert to the primordial hairy character of their early ape-like progenitors" (311). While discussing human beings with arrested mental developments, he writes, "these idiots somewhat resemble the lower types of mankind" (27), and he compares "monkeys, . . . microcephalous idiots, and . . . the barbarous races of mankind" (75). Indeed, Darwin's allegiance to his own social class leads him to prefer animals to the "lower races of mankind." In response to those who point out that, on his own theory, Darwin accuses himself of being descended from a simian, Darwin responds that he would as soon be descended from a "heroic little monkey. . . as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions" (328).

Not surprisingly, Darwin's racism is accompanied by an

<sup>7</sup>"It makes one's blood boil" (qtd. in Desmond and Moore 329).

<sup>8</sup>Gillian Beer's estimation is more moderate than mine. She says, "Darwin was alert to some of the colonising impulses in his society and did not seek

merely to naturalise or neutralise them by likening them to events in nature. . . . [He] did take considerable pains—not always successfully—to avoid legitimating current social order by naturalising it" (52-53).

<sup>9</sup>Gillian Beer also sees the issue of racism differently from the way I do. She says that Darwin's monogenist thesis (i.e., all species are derived from one source) "had, and was known to have, political bearings: it aligned Darwin where he had wished to stand, firmly against those who would

separate other races from the 'Caucasian'" (109). It seems to me that the passage we have just inspected does not support Beer's generous evaluation.

almost equal dose of sexism.<sup>10</sup> "Man," he observes, "is more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than woman, and has a more inventive genius." However, always the careful scientist, Darwin adds: "His brain is absolutely larger, but whether or not proportionately to his larger body, has not, I believe, been fully ascertained" (269). Moreover, in a passage now notorious among Darwin's feminist critics, we are told,

[t]he chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands. If two lists were made of the most eminent men and women in poetry, painting, sculpture, music (inclusive both of composition and performance), history, science and philosophy, with half a dozen names under each subject, the two lists would not bear comparison. (275)

"Thus," he concludes from all this, "man has ultimately become superior to woman" (276). Despite the pressures of natural selection weighing against the equality of women, Darwin, speaking optimistically of the "inherited effects" of education, suggests the following possibility:

In order that woman should reach the same standard as man, she ought, when nearly adult, to be trained to energy and perseverance and to have her reason and imagination exercised to the highest point; and then she would probably transmit these qualities chiefly to her adult daughters. (276-77)

But even this moment of Lamarckian optimism fades, as Darwin reminds us that this proposal would be successful only in the unlikely event that the highly-educated cadre of women produce more offspring than their more ignorant sisters. Even then, natural selection might cause men to forge ahead beyond women, as men "generally undergo a severe struggle in order to maintain themselves and their families; and this will tend to keep up or even increase their mental powers, and, as a consequence, the present inequality between the sexes" (277).<sup>11</sup>

Finally, regardless of his attempt to rescue his ideas from the misreadings of Social Darwinists, Darwin gives succor to the new "science" of eugenics (created by his cousin, Francis Galton), and notes that "excepting in the case of man himself, hardly anyone is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed" (117). "Both sexes," he counsels, "ought to refrain from marriage if they are in any marked degree inferior in body or mind; but such hopes are Utopian and will never be even partially realized until the laws of inheritance are thoroughly known" (327).

In conclusion, I believe we can say that any nineteenth-century theory that entailed the truth of Kantian moral rationalism, the Benthamite and Millian doctrine of happiness, the Christian commandment of love, and the Aristotelian theory of virtue did not constitute a threat to the moral fiber of Britain. In Darwinism, as Darwin expressed it himself in *The Descent of Man*, there was no "dangerous idea"—unless of course one was not white, English, Victorian and male.

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leen Richards believes that Hubbard is "correct in asserting the bias at the root of Darwin's characterization of women as innately domestic intellectually inferior men" and in worrying about the political effects of his influence, but she believes it is a mistake to attribute political motives to Darwin (98). To the contrary, she argues, Darwin passively absorbed the bourgeois biases of his time and incorporated them into his work. Referring to the male Darwins and Wedgewoods (Darwin's in-laws), Richards says, "These staunch supporters of negro emancipation would have been confounded by the suggestion that their wives, daughters, sisters, needed emancipating" (83).

<sup>11</sup>Both Cynthia Eagle Russett and Evelleen Richards comment on this passage. Russett observes: "Darwin's vision was both highly individualistic and highly elitist: female minds would improve not by large-scale instruction of the many, but by selective breeding of the few" (88-89). Richards asserts: "The conclusion to be drawn from this was that higher education of women could have no long-term impact on social evolution and was, biologically and socially, a waste of resources" (73).

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## Allusion in Robert Browning's "A Death in the Desert"

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Robert Browning's blank-verse poem "A Death in the Desert," which first appeared in the collection *Dramatis Personae* in May 1864, is an extraordinary and critically problematic poem in which Browning attempts to engage with distinctively modern questions of religious belief and unbelief. Most of the poem is taken up with the speech of St John, the evangelist and last surviving apostle, now dying in extreme old age, in hiding from Roman persecution with a small group of followers. St. John's spiritual last testament, much of it densely argumentative and characterized by an often almost elliptical concentration of expression, represents Browning's attempt to answer what he saw as the potentially destructive arguments of modern unbelief—as of course contemporary readers and reviewers recognized. St. John's speech incorporates numerous interpolated speeches in different imaginary voices: two of these, the speech of the sceptic in lines 370-421 and that of the representative "man" in lines 514-39, are of considerable length, both representing the relentlessly questioning voices of modern religious scepticism. Much remains to be said about the contemporary context of Browning's St. John's arguments.<sup>1</sup>

This article is concerned with a short, difficult passage (ll. 625-9) which occurs in the later part of St. John's speech, at the end of the long verse paragraph (ll. 571-633) in which the apostle argues for man's collective capacity for spiritual progress. Behind the arguments of this paragraph lies the notion of the progressive revelation of spiritual truth, which

was gaining currency in the late 50s and early 60s. Browning would almost certainly know, at least in translation, G. E. Lessing's essay "Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts" (1780), in which revelation is equated with the education of mankind; F. W. Robertson's English translation, *The Education of the Human Race*, appeared in 1858. In his important review-essay, "Revelation; what it is not and what it is," first published in the *National Review* in 1859 and later reprinted as "What is Revelation?," R. H. Hutton proposes a strongly progressive and historical conception of revelation, actually quoting Lessing's phrase "the education of the human race." For Browning's purposes the notion had a certain appropriateness: in St. John's Gospel Christ prophesies that his own revelation of divine things will be continued in the indefinite future through "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost" and the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14: 26, 16: 2). Browning's St. John argues that our conception of truth is necessarily provisional: "God's gift was that man should conceive of truth / And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake, / As midway help till he reach fact indeed" (ll. 605-7).<sup>2</sup> Using the analogy of the sculptor gradually moulding his clay, the apostle observes, "Right in you, right in him, such way be man's! / God only makes the live shape at a jet. / Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship?" (ll. 622-4). Only God can create the living form in a single "spurt" of activity: the "ye" of the last line, as throughout the apostle's speech, is not only the small group of followers whom he is addressing,

<sup>10</sup>The question of Darwin's sexism has occupied the attention of a number of critics. For example, Cynthia Eagle Russett has shown how Darwin's conventional Victorian biases along with his commitment to the animal breeder's model of reproduction work to the disadvantage of women. She concludes that, unlike his contemporary, John Stuart Mill, "Charles Darwin will never be elevated to a niche in the pantheon of feminism." But, she adds, nevertheless, "The Descent of Man did not validate the oppression of women" (102-103). Fiona Erskine argues that when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* he already held the views about women that later appeared in more detail in *The Descent of Man*. "Only Darwin's self-denying ordinance to avoid discussion of man in the *Origin* allowed his views on gender to be obscured"; but the *Descent* "gives voice to Darwin's deeply rooted beliefs. If his *Origin* statements appear neutral, it is only because patriarchy and the subordination of women were for him unchallenged assumptions" (100-101). The biologist Ruth Hubbard provides an exhaustive feminist critique of Darwin, and indicts him for blatant sexism. She implies that this sexism is a political response to the threat of feminism that was developing in mid-century Britain (7-35). Evel-

<sup>1</sup>A still outstanding discussion of the intellectual background of "A Death in the Desert" and other poems is W. O. Raymond "Browning and the Higher Criticism," first published in *PMLA* and reprinted in *The Infinite Moment and Other Essays in Robert Browning* (19-51). In "Browning's St. John: The Casuistry of the Higher Criticism," first published in *Victorian Studies* and reprinted in heavily revised form in *Kubla Khan and "The Fall of*

*Jerusalem: The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature 1770-1880* (191-224), Elinor Shaffer argues not entirely convincingly that far from opposing the higher criticism Browning largely absorbed its essential "casuistry."

<sup>2</sup>In this article quotations from "A Death in the Desert" follow the text of the 1888-9 first impression of the *Poetical Works*.



but believers in general, and particularly, by implication, modern believers.

In the lines that follow St. John takes the argument further:

The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,  
Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness;  
But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,  
Serve still and are replaced as time requires:  
By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!

(ll. 625-9)

The lines are extremely concentrated in expression, based on a double biblical allusion that needs to be recognized. The immediate allusion is to Hebrews 8: 5, "for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." St. Paul is quoting Exodus 25: 40, in which God instructs Moses as to the design of the ritual vessels of the tabernacle: "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount."<sup>3</sup> The "mount" is Mount Sinai, where God speaks to Moses (Exodus 24: 39-40). The verse in Hebrews occurs in a long passage describing the replacement of the "old covenant," represented by the tabernacle, ark and ritual objects that God instructs Moses to build and make, by the new, essentially spiritual "covenant" established through Christ's redeeming self-sacrifice: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (8: 13). Through the allusion to Hebrews, Browning's St. John (with considerable boldness on the poet's part) draws on both the language and spiritual authority of St. Paul's Epistle to express the need for a constant renewal of man's relationship with God. In the strenuous imperative of the last line, "By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!," addressed again to believers in general, the "newest vessels" that replace Moses' "copies" of the divine pattern represent a new spiritual covenant that will necessarily go beyond New Testament revelation. The "type"—a word, of course, that has a theological sense that is certainly relevant—is the ultimate ideal to which man is moving. In "Revelation; what it is not and what it is" Hutton asks, "Does not every man feel. . . that a living tendency urges us to grow, not merely in moral but in physical and intellectual constitution, towards the individual type for which we are made?" (*National Review* 223). These lines might be compared with Lessing's argument in "Die

Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts" that the progressive revelation of truth will culminate in human perfection.

In the four lines that follow, at the end of the verse paragraph, St. John continues to address the generalized "ye," the believers, and particularly the modern believers, whose duty it is to make the "newest vessels," to renew the vital relationship with God:

If ye demur, this judgment on your head,  
Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,  
Indulging every instinct of the soul  
There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

(ll. 630-3)

The apostle is, of course, describing the higher mode of being which will be enjoyed by the perfected humanity of the future: the odd phrase "angels' law" (l. 631) may allude to Acts 7: 53, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." The severe, admonishing tone of the first line, typical of much of St. John's speech, seems strangely out of key with the evocation of perfected human nature, in which man's conflicting impulses will form a joyous, blended unity. The lines form the conclusion to what was obviously intended as a climactic statement, a final affirmation of man's collective spiritual destiny. To many modern readers, as perhaps to many of Browning's contemporaries, the optimism of this paragraph must seem impossibly shallow.

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## Rossetti's Belated and Disturbed Walk Poems

Ernest Fontana

One does not immediately associate Dante Gabriel Rossetti with rural walking tours. Of the major male Victorian poets, he shares with Browning exclusively urban origins and, consequently, a broad range of cosmopolitan interests. Not surprisingly Rossetti's imagination feeds upon the stimuli provided by the London metropolis: museums, galleries, libraries and the relative freedom to develop intimate relationships with women of different social classes.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless in the summer of 1853, the twenty-four year old Rossetti, beset by both boils and a London cholera epidemic, undertook a rural walking tour. To his mother he wrote: "I wish to get into the country immediately, to go somewhere and walk a good deal" (Marsh 103). Although he had initially hoped to visit the Lake District with its Wordsworthian associations, he instead first travelled by train to Newcastle with William Bell Scott and then with Scott by train to Carlisle and Hexam (Marsh 103-104). In July Rossetti escaped "'beastly Newcastle,' travelling by rail to Coventry, and thence on foot to Warwick's magnificent castle and Kenilworth" (Marsh 105). He wrote Woolner that "[he] walked through some part of Warwickshire for a week or so, having great glory" (Marsh 105). Of this walking tour Marsh writes: "[t]his brief and solitary pilgrimage so uncharacteristic of Rossetti's physical self in later years, remained with him as a golden memory, and some kind of indefinite landmark in his life" [Marsh 106]).

For us what is significant is that this 1853 walking tour inspired a series of walk poems in which Rossetti engages directly with Wordsworth as a precursor poet, specifically with Wordsworth the author of walk poems such as *Tintern Abbey*, "Resolution and Independence," "The Solitary Reaper," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," and "Stepping Westward." What Rossetti does in his walk poems is to disturb and decenter this Wordsworthian genre.<sup>2</sup> For example, in Rossetti's walk poems there are no accidental epiphany encounters, no occasions for imaginative transport, no harvest of imperishable memories for the future repair of the imagination and spirit, "life and food / For future years." Rossetti's walk poems present instead situations of confusion, belatedness, missed opportunity and imaginative inhibition.

Ann Wallace cites DeQuincey, who estimated that Wordsworth walked in his lifetime "175 to 180,000 English miles" (127). His walk poems are therefore rooted in an actual social practice. For Wallace the Wordsworthian walk-

ing or walk poem is "an extension of the georgic mode into a previously unrecognized literary mode that [she names] 'peripatetic.'" For her "walking replaces [georgic] cultivation" (68). This neo-georgic form emerges as "walkers [such as Wordsworth] on a public footpath, were by means of walking itself, unenclosing that path, reappropriating it to common use" and thereby partially reversing the land enclosures of the previous century (Wallace 10-11).

Although some of Wallace's argument is highly speculative, her idea that in the walk or peripatetic poem the walker replaces the cultivator of traditional georgic is telling. The meditative and imaginative content of the walk poem thus replaces the harvest of the georgic. In her commentary on "The Solitary Reaper," Levinson makes this analogy explicit: "here, the poet reaps his mind of a harvest grown from the seeds of random, unlooked for association" (139). For Rossetti, however, there is no harvest. In his walk poems sensorial perception does not lead as in Wordsworth to the recovery of a heightened spiritual awareness, but instead to an intensified sense of a rupture between landscape and consciousness and a greater awareness of the unreadable and aleatory nature of the world through which the walker walks.<sup>3</sup>

Three weeks before his death in 1882 Rossetti attempted to finish his story "St. Agnes of Intercession."<sup>4</sup> He contrasts here the experience of the urban walker with that of his rural counterpart, privileging the experience of the urban walker. The city is seen as a familiar text, full of passages or *loci* that carry personal, intimate meanings for the urban walker whose entire life has been spent traversing them. Rural places, visited by an urban walker, perhaps once or twice during a vacation or walking tour, are less familiar and, therefore, less associated with the walker's personal history. The woods and fields have their own "proper spell" and need no "consecration from thought." The objective impersonal otherness of field and wood projects an aura or spell that, it is implied, resist, unlike more familiar urban sites, being read as a text expressive of the walker's own personal history.

Any artist or thoughtful man whatsoever, whose life has passed in a large city, can scarcely fail, in course of time, to have some association connecting each spot continually passed and repassed with the labours of his own mind. In the woods and fields every place has its proper spell and

<sup>1</sup>McGann describes how Rossetti's "famous lodgings near the river at 16 Cheyne Walk," emblemize "the machinery of his mind." McGann stresses how, in this urban dwelling, "[a]mong so many mirrors and reflective forms, persons and objects would continually appear and reappear in different angles and perspectives, multiplying reflections of reflections and avenues of focus" (26).

<sup>2</sup>Gilbert describes the Romantic walking poem as characterized by "a fluid oscillation between external objects and inward ideas"; it registers "the sub-

tle impingements of a world, a setting, upon the apparently autonomous process of thinking. It is in the intricate dialectic between perception and reflection that the walk poem finds its center; as a genre it emphasizes the ineluctable dependency of the general on the particular, the abstract on the circumstantial" (11). Also see Robinson.

<sup>3</sup>My argument parallels that of Riede, whose 1983 study demonstrates Rossetti's "inability to achieve transcendent vision" (278).

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of this story and passage see Fontana "Rossetti's."

<sup>3</sup>In Numbers 8: 4 we are told that Aaron made the candlestick "according unto the pattern which the Lord had shewed Moses."

mystery, and needs no consecration from thought; but wherever in the daily walk through the thronged and jarring city, the soul has read some knowledge from life, or laboured towards some birth within its own silence, there abides the glory of that hour, and the cloud rests there before an unseen tabernacle. (Rossetti, *Works* 425)

A notable illustration of this is Rossetti's "Woodspurge" (written in 1856) in which the walker—"I had walked on at the wind's will"—fails to discover a metaphoric or personal significance in the three-cupped woodspurge flower.

My eyes, wide open, had the run  
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;  
Among those few, out of the sun,  
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be  
Wisdom or even memory:  
One thing then learnt remains to me—  
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

The speaker's inner emotion cannot be projected upon the flower. The rural woodspurge is one of ten weeds; it has three cups. It is perceived through the lens of arithmetic fact that neither expresses the labours of the speaker's own mind nor an immanent spiritual presence. Unlike Wordsworth's field of dancing daffodils, "a jocund company" with whom "[A] poet could not but be gay," the single woodspurge weed and flower evince no correspondence with the speaker's "perfect grief." As Riede observes the poem "embodies in a peculiarly bare form one kind of poetry that may result from a loss of faith in the visionary" (59).

In "The Honeysuckle," written during the 1853 walking tour (Rossetti, *Writings* 488), a similar disjunction between the rural walker and the world of fields and woods is shown.

I plucked a honeysuckle where  
The hedge on high is quick with thorn,  
And climbing for the prize, was torn,  
And fouled my feet in quag-water;  
And by the thorns and by the wind  
The blossom that I took was thinn'd,  
And yet I found it sweet and fair.

Thence to a richer growth I came,  
Where, nursed in mellow intercourse,  
The honeysuckles sprang by scores,  
Not harried like my single stem,  
All virgin lamps of scent and dew.  
So from my hand that first I threw,  
Yet plucked not any more of them.

The walker plucks the honeysuckle blossom on a whim. Although its petals are thinned by the wind and surrounding thorns, the speaker finds the blossom "sweet and fair." Yet on another random impulse he discards it when he comes upon a "richer growth," "All virgin lamps of scent and dew," and refrains from further plucking. The walker's relation to the honeysuckle is studiously casual and whimsical and, if

one wishes to push a metaphorical reading, the poem can be seen to dramatize the waywardness and unpredictability of the male walker's sexual impulse. Yet the poem does not reflect or meditate on this connection; it instead records random sensorial impulses and acts without the walking poem's traditional reflective "harvest."

In both "The Church Porch" sonnets, also written in 1853 shortly after Rossetti and Scott's visit to Hexam Abbey (Marsh 104), the Rossettian walker records the failure of the interior of the unnamed ancient church to evoke a sustained sense of appropriate reverence or spiritual transport. In the second of these sonnets, the speaker imagines himself in the company of a sister; neither she nor the walker, "It is so bidden," can abide for the service or prayer. They instead must again place their feet in the heat and dust of "the evil street," spiritually untouched by the church's interior's silence, "sudden dimness, and deep prayer." These sonnets contrast with Rossetti's "Carillon," written during his 1849 trip to France and Belgium with Holman Hunt. In that earlier poem the climbing of the belfry of the cathedral at Bruges leads the speaker to a momentary experience of intense and vivifying sensorial excitement as he responds to the ringing of the carillon.

I climbed at Bruges all the flight  
The Belfry has of ancient stone.  
For leagues I saw the east wind blown:  
The earth was grey, the sky was white.  
I stood so near upon the height  
That my flesh felt the Carillon. (31-36)

## II

In the 1881 edition of *The House of Life* there are five walking poems, written between 1850 and 1873. All are placed in Part II of the work, entitled "Change and Fate." In order to trace Rossetti's developing execution of the walk poem I shall treat these sonnets in the order of their composition rather than that of their position in the 1881 edition of *The House of Life*.

In #69, "Autumn Idleness," written in 1850, the vividly rendered sunlit autumnal landscape of the octet and the purposeful passage of the sun determined times of day—dawn, noon, and eve—contrast with the walker-speaker's own purposelessness and sense of his own time's waste. The enervated pedestrian derives neither comfort, purpose, nor meaning from his walk.

Here dawn to-day unveiled her magic glass;  
Here noon now gives the thirst and takes the dew;  
Till eve bring rest when other good things pass.  
And here the lost hours the lost hours renew  
While I still lead my shadow o'er the grass,  
Nor know, for longing, that which I should do.

In a poem full of color and sunlight, the speaker is bound to his colorless shadow, to a darkness, and, filled with a vague, undirected longing, he is unable to move forward into a new shadowless time or path.

If the walker of "Autumn Idleness" lacks a knowledge of a new path or future destination, the walker in #70, "The Hill Summit," inspired in 1853 by Rossetti's Warwickshire walking tour (Marsh 105), has "lingered in the vale too long" and now gazes at the setting sun as "a belated worshipper." He now remembers what he should have heeded earlier in his walk.

This feast-day of the sun, his altar there  
In the broad west has blazed for vesper-song;  
And I have loitered in the vale too long  
And gaze now a belated worshipper.  
Yet may I not forget that I was 'ware,  
So journeying, of his face at intervals  
Transfigured where the fringed horizon falls,—  
A fiery bush with coruscating hair.

If the epiphany encounter with the sun as Moses' angelic "fiery bush" was possible earlier in the day, now at evening the walker can only regret that he then failed to respond to this vivifying revelation with full perceptual intensity. The consequence of this failure is that now the walker must "tread downward," "And travel the bewildered tracks till night."<sup>5</sup> Rossetti here defines his relation to the walking poems of Wordsworth, his great Romantic precursor, whose first person walk poems characteristically present the walker as fully responsive to and transformed by his chance pedestrian encounters, e.g., "The Solitary Reaper" and "Resolution and Independence." Here the Rossettian walker is "belated"; his pedestrian encounters and the memories of them do not vivify or inspire. "The Hill Summit" is a walk poem that can be said to dramatize the end of its genre. For an hour the walker beholds a sunset that will neither illuminate nor transform him as he slowly walks into "the last light."

Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed  
And see the gold air and the silver fade  
And the last bird fly into the last light.

In "The Hill Summit" the "feast day" of the sun is observed by the walker with belated reverence; in #67 "The Landmark," written in 1855, the well, a source of vivifying refreshment and a significant landmark on the walker's journey, was initially treated with thoughtless irreverence. Now, as the walker in "The Hill Summit," the walker in "The Landmark" belatedly recognizes his careless error and seeks to retrace his step back to the well hoping both to allay his thirst and discover his missed path. Here the solitary Rossettian walker has, at least, hope that he can correct his error and find the path he had earlier missed.<sup>6</sup>

Was that the landmark? What,—the foolish well  
Whose wave, low down, I did not stoop to drink  
But sat and flung the pebbles from its brink  
In sport to send its imaged skies pell-mell,

(And mine own image, had I noted well!)—  
Was that my point of turning?—I had thought  
The stations of my course should rise unsought,  
As altar-stone or ensigned citadel.  
But lo! the path is missed, I must go back,  
And thirst to drink when next I reach the spring  
Which once I stained, which since may have grown  
black.  
Yet though no light be left nor bird now sing  
As here I turn, I'll thank God, hastening,  
That the same goal is still on the same track.

In #84, "Farewell to the Glen" (1869), the Rossettian walker bids farewell to the "Stream-fed glen," which, unlike himself, "far'st so well and find'st for ever smooth / The brow of Time where man may read no ruth." In contrast to the glen, the walker "now fare[s] forth in bitter fantasy," remembering previous walks beside other streams where he was able to indulge "the bitter bliss of being sad made melancholy." This sonnet, unlike the glen, may be "read" as an expression of hopeless ruth, an emotion that is much more painful than the cited and contrasted melancholy of the traditional poetic *Penseroso*. Here Rossetti also emphasizes the ineptitude of the walker to read into the glen meanings that are vivifying and fresh and which also differ from what he "read" in his previous walks by other streams in other glens. In the sestet of the sonnet, the walker, consequently, bequeaths the glen to future and more able walkers.

And yet, farewell! For better shalt thou fare  
When children bathe sweet faces in thy flow  
And happy lovers blend sweet shadows there  
In hours to come, than when an hour ago  
Thine echoes had but one man's sighs to bear  
And thy trees whispered what he feared to know.

Although not precisely a record of a return to a specific place, like Wordsworth's *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* . . . Rossetti's "Farewell to the Glen" represents a return to a generalized or typical place—"a stream fed glen"—that unlike Wordsworth's revisited "Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798," does not provide for the poet-walker "life and food / For future years." By this placing of Rossetti's sonnet within the category of walk poem, complex intertextualities reveal themselves that, in turn, thicken the sonnet's texture of significance.

Sonnet #81, "Memorial Thresholds" (1873) is, unlike the four previous sonnets from *The House of Life*, an urban walking poem. Here, to quote the previously cited "St. Agnes of Intercession," the walker-speaker revisits an urban place "where his soul read some knowledge, from life, or laboured towards some birth within its own silence" (Rossetti, *Works* 425). In this return to place walking poem, the solitary Rossettian urban pedestrian stands before "a single simple door" that for him is stranger and more evocative of

<sup>5</sup>Rossetti's walker here seeks to retrace his steps unlike the walker in Frost's "The Road Not Taken." For the influence of Rossetti on Frost, see Poirier, 35-37. Both poets are belated practitioners of the Romantic walk poem.

<sup>6</sup>Baum quotes William Rossetti as attributing this imagery to the conclusion of Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (192).

"the passion of surprise" than the geology inspired images of the earth's ancient beginnings and imagined end.

What place so strange,—though unrevealed snow  
With unimaginable fires arise  
At the earth's end,—what passion of surprise  
Like frost-bound fire-girt scenes of long ago?  
Lo! this is none but I this hour; and lo!  
This is the very place which to mine eyes  
Those mortal hours in vain immortalize,  
'Mid hurrying crowds, with what alone I know.

It is this very door that must be replicated in some future life: "By some new Power reduplicate, must be / Even yet my life-porch in eternity, / Even with one presence filled, as once of yore." If this desired requirement, this *must*, this reduplicated single door is a vain fancy, the speaker, his poems, and the city itself (the *Thee* of the sestet) are mere chaff to be blown about by the mocking winds: "Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown floor / Thee and thy years and these my words and me."

Although not completely clear in its resolution, "Memorial Thresholds," leads the walker to the threshold, literally and figuratively, of a revelation that the last two lines of the sonnet cast into doubt. As in the previous four sonnet-walking poems from *The House of Life*, the speaker here fails to achieve or sustain an epiphany restorative encounter. The experience of walking only intensifies the walker's sense of loss, perplexity, isolation, and anguish. Of the last two lines of "Memorial Thresholds" Riede observes that "the clarified expression of despair . . . is all the more powerful following the display of tongue-tied twisted hope" (199).

Uncannily Rossetti anticipates the confusion and belatedness dramatized in his walking poems in his early narrative *Hand and Soul*, first published in *The Germ* in 1850. In this story Rossetti includes two similitudes of walking to figure the protagonist Chiaro's emotional states at two key points in the narration. First, after the failure of Chiaro's attempts to discover and express his soul through the artistic pursuit of fame, orthodox religious spirituality, and morality, Rossetti's narrator registers Chiaro's thoughts.

I am as one who, through the whole night, holding his way diligently, hath smitten the steel unto the flint, to lead some whom he knew darkling; who hath kept his eyes always on the sparks that himself made, lest they should fail; and who, towards dawn, turning to bid them that he had guided God speed, sees the wet grass untrodden except of his own feet. (Rossetti, *Writings* 53)

Here Chiaro imagines himself as a walker who believes he is guiding others through a darkness with sparks of smitten flint—the light of his imagination—only to discover he is alone and without followers. He has lit and led himself to a dark place unvisited by any previous walker.

In the second similitude, Chiaro, on the threshold of speaking to the woman who appears to embody his own soul, feels "like one who scaling a great steepness, hears his own voice echoed in some place much higher than he can see, and the name of which is not known to him" (Rossetti, *Writings* 53). Although this second similitude communicates the walker's confusion and disorientation, as in "Autumn Idleness" and "Hill Summit," it also presents a vivid threshold experience, one in which the boundaries imagined in "Memorial Thresholds" are permeable. Here Chiaro feels as a walker who hears his own echoed voice coming from an unnamed, uncharted place above him and that he is about to enter. In this similitude for the discovery of Chiaro's soul or ideal self, Rossetti devises an ultimate pedestrian experience which, in his walking poems, he subsequently sought but never fully realized.

Most often grounded, unlike those similes of *Hand and Soul*, in the quotidian, rural landscapes of his great predecessor Wordsworth, Rossetti reenacts, in his walk poems, the Wordsworthian pedestrian regimen only to fail to derive from it a Wordsworthian imaginative and consolatory harvest, "life and food / For future years." In a series of remarkably original poems, Rossetti impersonates, disturbs, and decenters what is found to be, for him, a no longer viable poetic inheritance. Thus Rossetti, whose unpublished verse letters to his brother, written during his 1848-49 journey with Holman Hunt to France and Belgium, constitute the first examples of an emerging alternative poetic form, the railroad poem,<sup>7</sup> dramatizes in his walk poems the loss of meditative space, "the ruthless change," Wordsworth himself had foreseen in his 1844 sonnet "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railroad:" "how can this blight endure? / And must he too the ruthless change bemoan / who scorns a false utilitarian lure." Whereas for the early pre-railroad Wordsworthian pedestrian memory of previous walks could "flash upon that inward eye" and generate "the bliss of solitude,"<sup>8</sup> for the belated Rossettian pedestrian past walks are remembered as a confused labyrinth, "the devious coverts of dismay" (*H. L.* #79, "The Monochord"), as devious as the often tangled syntax and diction of Rossetti's own self-consciously belated peripatetic sonnets from *The House of Life*.

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Xavier University—Cincinnati

Coming in

*The Victorian Newsletter*

Nathan Cervo, "The Max Nordeau Pre-Raphaelite Gallery"

Natalie Bell Cole, "'Attached to life again': the 'Queer Beauty' of Convalescence in *Bleak House*"

<sup>7</sup>For a discussion of this genre see Fontana, "Victorian."

<sup>8</sup>These phrases are from Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807).



## Books Received

Broder, Sherri. *Tramps, Unfit Mothers, and Neglected Children: Negotiating the Family in Late Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2002. Pp. 259. \$39.95. "Social policy is embedded in cultural narratives of the family and the poor, even as it contributes to their production. The ways that people imagine what it is to be a mother, a father, a child, help create and are also shaped by social policies and laws about family. Our ideas about the family and its relationship to the state are integrally related to the ways we answer the question: to what extent should the larger society be held accountable and exercise responsibility for all of our children? By exploring the diverse ways that Gilded Age Philadelphians contributed to this ongoing discussion, I hope to enrich our own efforts to do so as well" (10).

Burris, John P. *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions 1851-1893*. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 2001. Pp. xxi + 211. \$39.50. "In this study I have confined myself to the . . . task of exploring how the international expositions may provide important clues about the way in which the concept of 'religion' manifested in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the British-American context. I have forged a connection between British and American international expositions largely because of the cultural continuity between the two countries. In addition, these were the cultural settings in which the first international exposition took place and also where the first interreligious intellectual congress occurred within the exposition tradition. While much contemporary work in the history of religions has come to focus on one geographical setting at a time, in the case of Britain and the United States in the nineteenth century we find an instance of one dominant cultural tradition becoming observable in two quite distinct historical contexts" (xx).

Carroll, Lewis. *The Political Pamphlets and Letters of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and Related Pieces: A Mathematical Approach*. Compiled, with Introductory Essays, Notes, and Annotations by Francine F. Abeles. The Pamphlets of Lewis Carroll Series Vol. 3. New York: Lewis Carroll Society of North America; Dist. by Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 2001. Pp. xx + 260. \$70.00. "Better known for his whimsical and nonsense writings, Dodgson wrote on the entire spectrum of voting theory. He brought his prodigious abilities in mathematics and logic to bear in matters of local governance at Christ Church College in Oxford University, where he was employed all of his professional life, and to issues of national politics. Although Dodgson's contributions brought a fresh perspective to what then was the embryonic school of politics, his work in this area fell into obscurity after his death. The

sophistication and complexity of his theories were not truly appreciated until the second half of the twentieth century" (xvii).

*A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack. Westport, CT & London: Greenwood P, 2002. Pp. xii + 445. \$94.95. Contents: "Preface"; "Victorian Literary Contexts": Ian Duncan, "The Victorian Novel Emerges, 1800-1840"; Graham Law, "Periodicals and Syndication"; Peter L. Shillingburg, "Book Publishing and the Victorian Literary Marketplace"; Lynn Alexander, "Victorian Illustrators and Illustration"; "Victorian Cultural Contexts": Julian Wolfreys, "The Nineteenth-Century Political Novel"; M. Clare Loughlin-Chow, "The Sociological Contexts of Victorian Fiction"; Nancy Cervetti, "Faith, Religion, and the Nineteenth-Century Novel"; Martin Bidney, "Philosophy and the Victorian Literary Aesthetic"; Michael H. Whitworth, "Science and the Scientist in Victorian Fiction"; Elizabeth F. Judge, "Law and the Victorian Novel"; Kathleen McCormack, "Intoxication and the Victorian Novel"; "Victorian Genres": Lucie J. Armit, "Ghosts and Hauntings in the Victorian Novel"; Peter J. Kitson, "The Victorian Gothic"; Lillian Nayder, "Victorian Detective Fiction"; James G. Nelson, "The Victorian Social Problem Novel"; Helen Debenham, "The Victorian Sensation Novel"; Christine Alexander, "Victorian Juvenile"; Todd F. Davis, "Moving Pictures: Film and the Representation of Victorian Fictions"; "Major Authors of the Victorian Era": Marianne Thormählen, "Religion in the Novels of Charlotte and Anne Brontë"; Russell Poole, "Victorian Professionalism and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*"; K. J. Fielding, "Charles Dickens"; Nancy Henry, "George Eliot: Critical Responses to *Daniel Deronda*"; William R. McKelvy, "George Eliot's Reading Revolution and the Mythical School of Criticism"; Edward Neill, "Thomas Hardy"; Juliet McMaster, "The Vanities of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*"; K. M. Newton, "Anthony Trollope and 'Classic Realism'"; Margaret Harris, "George Meredith at the Crossways"; Barbara Quinn Schmidt, "'Not Burying the One Talent': Mrs. Gaskell's Life of Duty"; Sophia Andres, "Wilkie Collins's Challenges to Pre-Raphaelite Gender Constructs"; "Contemporary Critical Approaches to the Victorian Novel": Roslyn Jolly, "Postcolonial Readings"; Eileen Gillooly, "Feminist Criticism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel"; Michael Galchinsky, "Otherness and Identity in the Victorian Novel." Includes a select bibliography and index.

Elliott, Dorice Williams. *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 2002. Pp. x + 270. \$35.00. "Each of the following chapters deals

with a historical moment in which changes in the understanding and practice of philanthropy coincided with and contributed to redefinitions of the appropriate roles women should play and of how relations among different social classes should be conducted. Although the texts, most of them literary works, span a period of more than one hundred years, they all make use of the metaphor drawn from the ideology of separate spheres . . . : they all represent women's charitable dealings with the poor and unfortunate as analogous to their role in the home as mothers and wives. At the same time, however, these writers also employ the vocabulary of the philanthropic institutions that originally arose out of commercial men's need to authorize their power and moral authority by contesting women's exclusive association with sympathy. In different ways and in the face of various historical conditions, then, all these writers use the conjunction of the terms of domestic and philanthropic discourse to project women into a space that can be construed as both private and public" (26-27).

Gates, Barbara T., ed. *In Nature's Name: An Anthology of Women's Writing and Illustrations, 1780-1930*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002. Pp. xxvi + 673. \$27.50; £17.50 (cloth). There are selections from some 69 authors included with 69 illustrations. Text is divided into "Speaking Out," "Sensitivity to Other Creatures," "The Horrors of Sport," "Antivivisection," "Conservation: Birds," "Conservation: The Land and Its Plants," "Memagewries and Animal Stories," "Farming and Gardening," "Plants and Interiors," "For Science," "For Sport," "Romanticism," "Aestheticism," "The Color of Life," "Kinds of Science Popularization," "Women and Darwin," "Who/What Was a Professional," "Seaweeds, Zoophytes, and Women," "Professionals," "Postlude." Includes a chronology, biographical sketches, and list for further reading.

Haggard, H. Rider. *King Solomon's Mines*. Ed. Gerald Monsmon. Peterborough, Ontario; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002. Pp. 306. \$9.95 (US); \$12.95 (CAN); £5.99 (UK) (paper). Monsmon uses the first edition as his copy text and emends only for typographical errors. He includes an introduction, footnotes, Works Cited and Recommended Reading and four Appendices: "Victorian Critical Reaction"—10 commentaries; "Haggard on Africa and Romance"—four of Haggard's own commentaries; "Historical Documents: Natives and Imperialists in South Africa"—Comments from Fred Fynney, John Ruskin, Cecil Rhodes, Olive Schreiner; "Historical Documents: Spoils of Imperialism: Gold, Diamonds, and Ivory"—6 entries.

Jensen, Margaret M. *The Open Book: Creative Misreading in the Works of Selected Modern Writers*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2002. Pp. [xiii] + 235. \$55.00. "Herewith my account of the variety of social, political, aesthetic, and (inter)personal influences that have combined to inform, contaminate, and/or enhance the crea-

tion of certain literary texts. In the following chapters I will illustrate these various forces at play in the works of five writers who lived and composed, literally and figuratively, alongside one another: Sir Leslie Stephen, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, and John Middleton Murry. As I shall demonstrate, each of these figures had strong personal and professional associations with two or more of the others. This 'cross pollination' of influence offered me great range of interpretive opportunities in the early stages of my research. As I soon discovered, however, it also dictated certain organizational difficulties: with so many writers and so many relationships to describe here, the tangle of connections at times becomes confusing. For the sake of clarity, therefore, the study follows these figures through a roughly chronological sequence" (3).

Kaye, Richard A. *The Flirt's Tragedy: Desire without End in Victorian and Edwardian Literature*. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 2002. \$32.00. "In this study of coquettish females and flirty males, of artfully managed attractions and deliberately deferred desires, I consider flirtatious eros as a largely unexcavated, distinct realm of experience in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fiction. Flirtatious desire undermines the still-influential libidinal model of sexuality by its reiterated suggestion that the aim of desire is not necessarily the realization of desire but rather deferral itself. Seductive behavior without seduction, attention without intention, flirtation in the Victorian and the Edwardian novel seems playful, even pointless, yet nonetheless carries powerful emotional associations and unleashes perilous consequences. Containing its own distinct rules and attributes, relying on elusive and multifarious plots, flirtation has its flowering in Victorian fiction for reasons that I shall explore in depth throughout the following chapters" (3-4).

Law, Graham, compiler. *Indexes to Fiction in The Illustrated London News (1842-1901) The Graphic (1869-1901)*. Indexes to Fiction. Victorian Fiction Research Guides 29. Victorian Fiction Research Unit, School of English, Media Studies and Art History, University of Queensland, Australia 4072. Pp. x + 90. \$A15. (See "Group News.") "It is well known that most Victorian novels were published initially in serial form—whether within periodicals or as independent numbers. What seems less clearly understood is that, over the six decades of Victoria's reign, the dominant mode of serialization shifted unmistakably from the monthly to the weekly instalment. The aesthetic implications are significant: the shift from 'fat' monthly to 'thin' weekly parts, in Coolidge's terms, clearly influenced the form of Victorian fiction in the long term, favouring frequent 'incidents', 'climax and curtain' part-endings, and the mechanics of enigma and suspense. Yet the change is best explained as the gradual development of a fully capitalist mode of production in the British fiction industry. In economic terms, therefore, the shift is from expensive, low-circulation

formats produced for middle-class readers by book publishers, towards cheap, high-circulation formats produced for a mass audience by newspaper proprietors. . . . By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the most important outlets for serial fiction were no longer monthly literary magazines but weekly miscellaneous newspapers. This remains true whether we measure by the breadth of the audience reached or by the level of remuneration received by the author, and even, arguably, by the literary value attached to the fiction itself, either then or now. Yet our best current literary charts of this territory, most notably the *Wellesley Index*, tend still to mark the literary monthlies as the broad highways. The present volume in the Victorian Fiction Research Guide series is thus intended as a contribution to the upgrading of the status of the Victorian weekly press from that of mere literary byway. While they were far from being the only journals involved, metropolitan pictorial newspapers like *The Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic* undoubtedly played a key role at more than one stage in the growth of the importance of the weekly serial. In the inevitably brief comments that follow [in the "Introduction"], I will try to sketch in turn the history of the two journals, their characteristics both common and distinct, and the nature of the indexes provided here" (1).

Lawson, Kate and Lynn Shakinovsky, *The Marked Body: Domestic Violence in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Literature*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2002. Pp. viii + 204. \$59.50 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper) "This book is a study of discarded and violated bodies of middle-class women in selected texts of mid-nineteenth-century fiction and poetry. . . . [M]ost of these texts do not urgently explore the violence visited upon these bodies as pressing social, political, or moral problems, and even in those that focus on these questions . . . , the implications of these questions finally tend to be evaded, or set aside. . . . [W]hat makes the violence explored in these texts startling is that the violence does not take place in the space of a largely unrepresented other . . . ; rather, violence takes place in the home, in the privileged sphere of bourgeois women's lives, and at the hands of their husbands and fathers" (1-2).

Meckier, Jerome. *Dickens's Great Expectations: Misnar's Pavilion versus Cinderella*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2002. Pp. xx + 276. \$38.00. "*Dickens's Great Expectations: Misnar's Pavilion versus Cinderella* completes an informal trilogy. The first part of the trilogy, . . . [was] *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction: Dickens, Realism, and Revolution* (1987) . . . [; the second part] *Innocent Abroad: Charles Dickens's American Engagements* (1990). . . . *Dickens's Great Expectations* focuses on what is arguably Dickens's finest novel. It counts the ways the recollection of Misnar's ingenious pavilion in Sir Charles Morell's *The Tales of the Genii*—'the Eastern story' that Pip summarizes in chapter 38's final paragraph . . .

—repeatedly fired Dickens's imagination as he composed *Great Expectations*. To satirize Victorian expectancy and subvert the era's Cinderella complex, Dickens rewrote the cinder girl's story with a warning from Misnar's" ([xviii-xix]).

Richardson, Angelique, ed., intro., notes. *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women, 1890-1914*. London: Penguin, 2002. Pp. lxxxix + [436]. £9.99; \$22.99 (Canada) (paper). Includes Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, George Moore, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Saki, George Gissing, Thomas Hardy, Katherine Mansfield, George Egerton. Chronology, glossary, biographical notes.

*The Victorian Illustrated Book*. Ed. Richard Maxwell. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 2002. Pp. xxx + 440. \$45.00. Contents: Richard Maxwell, "Walter Scott, Historical Fiction, and the Genesis of the Victorian Illustrated Book"; Steven Dillon, "Illustrations of Time: Watches, Dials, and Clocks in Victorian Pictures"; Robert L. Patten, "Serial Illustration and Storytelling in *David Copperfield*"; Simon Joyce, "Maps and Metaphors: Topographical Representation and the Sense of Place in Late-Victorian Fiction"; Herbert F. Tucker, "Literal Illustration in Victorian Print"; Elizabeth K. Helsinger, "William Morris before Kelmscott: Poetry and Design in the 1860s"; Jeffrey Skoblow, "Beyond Reading: Kelmscott and the Modern"; Nicholas Frankel, "Aubrey Beardsley 'Embroiders' the Literary Text"; Charles Harmon, "Alvin Langdon Coburn's Frontpieces to Henry James's New York Edition: Pictures of an Institutional Imaginary"; Katie Trumpener, "City Scenes: Commerce, Utopia, and the Birth of the Picture Book"; Richard Maxwell, "Afterword: The Destruction, Rebirth, and Apotheosis of the Victorian Illustrated Book."

*The Victorian Novel*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman, Blackwell Guides to Criticism. Oxford & Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002. Pp. xviii + 344. \$27.95 (paper). "The 'Victorian novel' in my title is a limited category. As it is used in this book, it refers principally to the acknowledged great names of Victorian fiction—Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope—who have been and continue to be admired and continuously read, to be the subject of academic criticism, the focus of university and school courses, and consistently present in new editions on publishers' lists. It is with the critical history of this remarkable corpus of writing (and cognate, less well-known writers) that I am concerned in this survey of a hundred years of fertile critical investigation. That critical history is immense, and . . . it reveals the changing face of our understanding of the major works of Victorian fiction, our altering areas of interest, and shifting sense of the nineteenth century itself across one hundred years" (2).

## Victorian Group News

### Announcements

*Historical Fictions: Women, History and Authorship*. An International Conference to be held 5-7 August 2003 at Gregynog Hall, University of Wales, UK. This three-day conference seeks to address the nature of the past and history as it is and has been written by women authors. Recent years have witnessed a renaissance in women writers using the past in their fiction. If the past is by definition the origin of the present, what kind of theorized view of history do women authors offer us? Can history, or the use of history in fiction, be theorized? What is it about history and the possibilities of (re-)writing it that so appeals to (contemporary) women writers? Why the use of a particular historical period? What kind of connections are authors trying to create between the period in which they write and the period they write about? Does the past merely offer a framing discourse for these fictions or is there also a deliberate attempt to reclaim the past? Do various genres deal differently with concepts of the past and its relationship to the present / future? This conference seeks to explore these issues and the multiple treatments of the past offered by both historical and contemporary female authors.

Please e-mail a 250-word abstract by Friday 29 November 2002 to: a.b.heilmann@swansea.ac.uk, m.e.llewellyn@ntlworld.com, or rachel.sarsfield@hotmail.com. Or send to one of the organizers: Ann Heilmann, Mark Llewellyn, Rachel Sarsfield, Historical Fiction Conference, Department of English, Keir Hardie Building, University of Wales, Swansea, Singleton Park, Swansea, UK SA2 8PP

### Victorian Fiction Research Guides

*Victorian Fiction Research Guides* are published by the Victorian Fiction Research Unit within the School of English, Media Studies and Art History of the University of Queensland.

The Unit concentrates on minor and lesser-known writers active during the period from about 1860 to about 1910, and on fiction published in journals during the same period. We would be interested to hear from anyone working on relevant author-bibliographies or on indexes to fiction in journals of the period. Any information about the location of manuscripts, rare or unrecorded editions, and other material would be most welcome. Information about gaps or errors in the bibliographies and indexes would also be appreciated.

The subscription for the current (eighth) series of *Victorian Fiction Research Guides* is \$A50 for four guides, single volumes \$A15. Copies of earlier guides are available at the following prices: Series 1-5: \$A25 (single volumes \$A7); Series 6: \$A35 (single volumes \$A10); Series 7: \$A40 (single issues \$A12).

Orders should be sent to Dr. Barbara Garlick and editorial communications to the general editor, Professor P. D. Edwards, both at the School of English, Media Studies, and Art History, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia 4072; fax: 7-3365-2799, email: h.garlick@mailbox.uq.edu.au.

### Notice

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