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Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Ambivalent Pre-Raphaelite Ekphrasis[1]

Sophia Andres

Mrs. Oliphant's vehement denunciation of the sensation novel in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1867 is representative of other reviewers' condemnation of the genre often relegated to the "lower strata of light literature" (258). Yet, like other contemporary reviewers, Mrs. Oliphant was at a loss to explain the spectacular popularity of the sensation novel and, more importantly, the approval it continued to receive by the highly acclaimed *Times* and other major critical journals (260). Though apparently censuring the heavy reliance of sensation novelists on extraordinary incident at the expense of the psychological development of characters or the cultivation of morality, Mrs. Oliphant's derogatory comments simultaneously conceal and disclose anxieties over the destabilization of conventional gender constructs in the sensation novel. After commending the writers of romances for their wholesome representations of conventional gender constructs, for instance, Oliphant denigrates sensation novelists for their flagrant endorsement of transgressions of traditional gender boundaries, especially those of conventional femininity:

> Now it is no knight of romance riding down the forest glades, ready for the defence and succour of all the oppressed, for whom the dreaming maiden waits. She waits now for flesh and muscles, for strong arms that seize her, and warm breath that thrills her through, and a host of other physical attractions, which she indicates to the world with a charming frankness . . . . but were the sketch made from the man's point of view, its openness would at least be less repulsive. The peculiarity of it in England is, that it is oftenest made from the woman's side—that it is women who describe those sensuous raptures—that this intense appreciation of flesh and blood, this eagerness of physical sensation, is represented as the natural sentiment of English girls, and is offered to them not only as the portrait of their own state of mind, but as their amusement and mental food. (259)

Oliphant then equates sensation with women's physical and sensuous enjoyment, a pleasure she, as well as other well-known writers such as W. R. Greg and William Acton, disavowed, maintaining that only men are capable of physical desire and pleasure.

Quite often in her long article on the sensation novel, Oliphant singles out Mary Elizabeth Braddon, "the leader of her school" as the target of her attack (265). It is interesting to note that Braddon's outrage over this vehement denunciation of her work focuses on Oliphant's charge against sensuality: "But I declare that Aurora Floyd is not '*a woman who marries her groom in a fit of sensual passion*,'" she protests to Edward Bulwer-Lytton. And she continues fervently defending herself against the "horror" of sensuality: "Of all horrors sensuality is that from which I shrink with the most utter abhorrence—and to you, Lord Lytton, as a phrenologist, I may venture to say—without fear of provoking ridicule—that all those who have examined my head phrenologically know that this sin is one utterly foreign to my organization, that indeed, the great weakness of my brain is the want of that animal power—which, as I am told, gives force & activity to the higher organs" (Wolff, "Devoted Disciple" 143).[2] Such intense disavowal of physical desire from a relatively liberal and audacious writer flagrantly attests to the impact of the oppressive patriarchal ideology suppressing women's sensuality. Simultaneously Braddon's denial of her own sensuous nature discloses her efforts to sublimate this forbidden pleasure in covert ways acceptable to her audience. It is my belief that Braddon found in Pre-Raphaelite art the means by which she could destabilize conventional gender constructs and offer alternatives suppressed by the hegemonic discourse. Her narrative re-drawings of Pre-Raphaelite paintings at once conceal and reveal contemporary debates on gender, subtly engaging her readers in cultural and social debates, compelling them to question those gender roles which tradition had consecrated as stable and universal.

Such critics as Kate Flint, Elaine Showalter, Lyn Pykett, Ann Cvetcovich and Deborah Wynne have emphasized the crucial role sensation novel played in subverting Victorian gender ideology. In the introduction to her recent work, *Beyond Sensation Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*, Marlene Tromp also contends that even in those novels where Braddon seems to capitulate "to normative Victorian standards of morality in their closing moments, the resistance depicted throughout the novel as a whole provides . . . a subversive variety of revision that allows figures like the infamous Lady Audley to confound and, thus, call into question notions of gendered identity and the domestic order" (xvii). More recently, Nicole Fisk ascertains that women in *Lady Audley's Secret* "are not suppressed at the end of the novel; on the contrary, they are able to cross the boundaries imposed by patriarchal society quite easily and to relocate themselves in a new, genderless society" (24). Such critics, however, overlook the role of the Pre-Raphaelites in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's resistance to conventional representations of women, especially in her two bestsellers, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Aurora Floyd*.

[1]In his discussion of ekphrasis, Hefferman reminds us of its root meaning, "speaking out" or "telling in full." The meaning of *ekphrasis*, he suggests, is bound to its function, for "besides representational friction and the turning of fixed forms into narrative, ekphrasis entails prosopopeia, or the rhetorical technique of envoicing a silent object. Ekphrasis speaks not only *about* works of art but also *to* and *for* them" (1, 6-7). In *The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel: Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries*, I explore the means by which Victorian novelists were involved in delivering Pre-Raphaelite subjects from silence.

[2]For contemporary theories on phrenology, physiognomy, and pathognomy see Julie Codell, "Empiricism, Naturalism, and Science in Millais's Paintings," in *John Everett Millais beyond the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*," ed. Debra N. Mancoff (New Haven and London: Yale UP , 2001), 119-47.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's correspondence with Edward Bulwer-Lytton reveals her anxiety over the quality of her sensation novels and quite often expresses her desire for leisure time that would allow her to produce novels of character rather than of sensational incident. Suprisingly in a letter written on April 13, 1863, soon after the publication and extraordinary success of *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Aurora Floyd*, Braddon does not rejoice over her remarkable achievement: "Believe me I feel very little elated by the superficial success of my pair of Bigamy novels, & the hardest things the critics say of me never strike me as unjust (Wolff, "Devoted Disciple" 12). Her dissatisfaction with her work was not limited to these two exceedingly popular novels but was a recurrent motif in her correspondence with Bulwer-Lytton. In yet another letter in the same year, she expresses the conflict she constantly experiences between her desire to create a highly artistic novel and her need to be financially independent:

> It is so easy to understand what is beautiful & pure in art, but so difficult to attain to it. . . . I have learnt to look at everything in a mercantile sense, & to write solely for the circulating library reader, whose palette [sic] requires strong meat, & is not very particular as to the quality thereof. . . . I want to serve two masters. I want to be artistic & to please *you*. I want to be sensational, & to please Mudie's subscribers. Are these two things possible, or is the stern scriptural dictum not to be gone over, "Thou canst not serve God & Mammon." Can the sensational be elevated by art, & redeemed from all it's [sic] coarseness? (Wolff "Devoted Disciple" 13-14; May 1863).

Like other Victorian novelists, Mary Braddon experienced the pressure of literary critics to transform pictorial into narrative techniques (Andres xviii-xix). General allusions to Pre-Raphaelite art like those in *Lady Audley's Secret* or in *Eleanor's Victory*, as well as specific ones in *Aurora Floyd*, may indeed have served as Braddon's attempts to elevate her fiction, making it appealing to a wider audience; yet her appreciation of Pre-Raphaelite art recorded in her letters as well as in her novels remains ambivalent. In a letter to Bulwer-Lytton on January 17, 1863, for instance, she writes: ". . . do you like that extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite style? I have been wonderfully fascinated by it, but I suppose all that unvarnished realism is the very reverse of poetry" (Wolff "Devoted Disciple" 20). In the summer of 1864, however, she describes her high admiration for Flaubert's style in terms of Pre-Raphaelite art: "The idea of the Doctor's Wife *is* founded on 'Madame Bovary' the style of which book struck me immensely in spite of it's [sic] *hideous* immorality. There seems an extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite power of description—a power to make manifest a scene & an atmosphere in a few lines—almost a few words—that very few writers possess. . . ." (Wolff "Devoted Disciple" 22).

Indeed Braddon's engagement with Pre-Raphaelite art is at times elusive and quite often paradoxical. Her famous visually lush and strikingly arresting Pre-Raphaelite portrait of Lady Audley, for instance, resonates with some of the controversial remarks pervading contemporary reviews of Pre-Raphaelite art. But whereas those reviewers either vehemently denounced Pre-Raphaelite paintings or exuberantly praised them, the narrator here at once endorses and repudiates Pre-Raphaelite art, in the process subtly gaining common ground with both its advocates and detractors and offering transgressive alternatives to traditional gender constructs.

> Yes; the painter must have been a pre-Raphaelite. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold, and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes. No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth that hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait.
>
> It was so like and yet so unlike; it was as if you had burned strange-colored fires before my lady's face, and by their influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before. The perfection of feature, the brilliancy of colouring were there; but I suppose the painter had copied quaint mediaeval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend.
>
> Her crimson dress, exaggerated like all the rest in this strange picture, hung about her in folds that looked like flames, her fair head peeping out of the lurid mass of colour, as if out of a raging furnace. Indeed, the crimson dress, the sunshine on the face, the red gold gleaming in the yellow hair, the ripe scarlet of the pouting lips, the glowing colours of each accessory of the minutely-painted background, all combined to render the first effect of the painting by no means an agreeable one. (70-71)

In the process of describing Lady Audley's portrait, line by line, brushstroke by brushstroke, Braddon paints her own Pre-Raphaelite portrait emphasizing the primary Pre-Raphaelite techniques that made them at once popular and notorious, such as for instance the microscopic details in both the background and the foreground, what Elizabeth Prettejohn calls their "uncompromising egalitarianism" (186), their emphasis on expression rather than beauty and their fascination with *femme fatales*. The attention to the nuances of details, each hair painted with "every glimmer of gold," the unorthodox treatment of light and shadow, their interplay captured in her hair rather than harmoniously distributed throughout the entire portrait, the brilliancy of colouring in the features of her face, the pouting lips (that caused an outrage when Rossetti exhibited *La Bocca Baciata*), her beautiful yet fiendish expression, all salient features of Pre-Raphaelite art, outraged or delighted contemporary reviewers.[3]

[3]Rossetti's pictures of "highly sexualized" women, with pouty lips and loose hair beginning with *Bocca Baciata* in 1859, triggered hostile, critical responses (Barringer 148-149). In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Pamela Brewer maintains, Rossetti found "the perfect model for his painting Lady Lilith and for his companion poem, "Body's Beauty" (8).

By 1861 when *Lady Audley's Secret* first appeared in the magazine *Robin Goodfellow*, Braddon's readers could have imaginatively matched this portrait to an array of Pre-Raphaelite *femme fatales* as, for instance, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Bocca Baciata* (1859) (Fig. 1) or Edward Burne-Jones's *Sidonia von Bork* (1860) (Fig. 2), which they had seen in galleries or in engraved reproductions in such illustrated magazines as the *Athenaeum* or the *London Illustrated News*.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Such *femme fatales*, often seen as transgressive and deviant figures, were invariably associated with sexuality and sensuality, suppressed by mainstream culture. By re-drawing Lady Audley's intertextual portrait, the narrator at once establishes a common ground with the reader, dexterously and successfully grounding the fictional in the real, the sensational in the actual, at the same time transferring transgression and deviance to a realm outside the arena of fiction—the Pre-Raphaelite art. In the process she aligns Pre-Raphaelite techniques with sensation. Thus the delicate details of the face acquire a "lurid" quality, the pouting mouth is "wicked" and the blue eyes become "sinister." Replete with signifiers Lady Audley's Pre-Raphaelite portrait adumbrates future events, as, for instance, the crimson dress, with folds "that looked like flames," that foreshadows her later attempt at setting on fire the hotel where Robert stays when she discovers that he suspects her of being responsible for George Talboys's disappearance.

In the same scene, when Robert avers, his initial enthusiasm having subsided, "'But I don't like the portrait; there's something odd about it,'" Alicia, his cousin and Lady Audley's stepdaughter, brings up yet another salient feature of Pre-Raphaelite art, the depiction of idiosyncratic expression congruent with the subject's psychology: "'I've a strange fancy on that point. I think that sometimes a painter is in a manner inspired, and able to see, through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally a part of it, though not to be perceived by common eyes'" (71). While Alicia implicitly alludes to the Pre-Raphaelites' preference for the depiction of expression over beauty, she simultaneously affirms the readers' awareness of the plot and knowledge of Pre-Raphaelite art (Codell "Expression over Beauty"). In the process readers are invited to collaborate with the writer by contributing their own knowledge to the construction of the narrative. Yet such invitation is not simply an attempt to establish a rapport with her readers on aesthetic grounds but involves them in sociopolitical constructions of gender. Lady Audley's infantile face that proves irresistible to everyone, for example, is representative of the Victorian culture's worship of the child-woman or the Angel in the House, who in Braddon's case turns into a self-aggrandizing "fiend." As the narrator identifies and distances herself from Lady Audley's Pre-Raphaelite portrait, she at once subtly reveals contemporary anxieties over Pre-Raphaelite transgressions of gender constructs attested in hostile contemporary reviews.

Thus the paradoxical perspective governing Lady Audley's Pre-Raphaelite portrait captures some of the inherent contradictions in Victorian gender ideology which at once worships women and imprisons them within the domestic sphere, depriving them of the power it grants them. Extending Lady Audley's power beyond the traditionally domestic constraints, the narrator seems to empower her, yet at the same time weaken her by casting her as a stereotype, a *femme fatale*, "a beautiful fiend." Lady Audley's portrait also captures the paradoxical perspectives embodied in Pre-Raphaelite art from the very beginning of the movement in 1848 till the end, the early 1900s, representative of cultural disparities in definitions of gender identity. Transgressing

aesthetic, social and gender boundaries, the Pre-Raphaelite *avant-garde* gaze revealed hitherto unexplored perspectives as, for instance, unconventional beauty in conventional ugliness, feminine fragility in masculinity, masculine strength in conventional femininity (Prettejohn, 18-19, 64). Through Pre-Raphaelite art then Braddon sought to articulate those feminine qualities which the dominant patriarchal discourse obfuscated. On several occasions in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon makes clear the connection between the transgression of gender boundaries and Pre-Raphaelite art (69,70-71, 294-95). And this subversive effort to extend conventional gender boundaries may explain her paradoxical perspective on the Pre-Raphaelites.

Braddon's engagement with Pre-Raphaelite art becomes even more complex and involved in her next sensational best-seller, *Aurora Floyd*, where instead of the general and wide-ranging allusions to Pre-Raphaelite art prevalent in *Lady Audley's Secret*, she reconfigures specific popular Pre-Raphaelite representations of women and freely criticizes them for entrenching dominant stereotypes. In a letter written to Bulwer-Lytton, while *Aurora Floyd* was still being published serially in *Temple Bar*, Braddon expresses her preference for this novel, regarding it as more audacious than *Lady Audley's Secret*: "I venture to hope that you will like 'Aurora Floyd,' (which I am to finish this month) better than 'Lady Audley,' as it is more boldly written, & less artificial than the latter" (Wolff, "Devoted Disciple" 10; December 1862). The bold treatment of her subject, female identity defined beyond stifling traditional boundaries, extends to her perspective on Pre-Raphaelite art in this novel. Rather than abiding by conventional gender constructs that rigidly separated femininity from masculinity, Braddon here interweaves the two traditionally opposed gender attributes, masculinity and femininity, in her most significant and exuberant characters, Aurora Floyd and John Mellish. In this respect Braddon anticipates later psychologists like Freud and Lacan, who maintained that the human psyche is neither feminine nor masculine but androgynous.

Unlike John Mellish, Aurora's "precious pet," Talbot Bulstrode is representative of conventional masculinity, a captain who fought in the Crimean war, "the eldest son of a wealthy Cornish baronet, whose ancestor had received his title straight from the hands of Scottish King James" (32, 30). Abiding by rigid standards of honor and respect, he alienates those around him, including his parents and the dashing Aurora with whom he falls madly in love, having loved her with "an intensity which has scarcely been manly," but eventually relinquishes when he discovers that she has a secret that might taint his honorable name (104). Instead he chooses, Aurora's cousin, Lucy, "a good little thing," who "would make an admirable wife for a country gentleman" (42). Thus Braddon associates conventional standards of masculinity with the objectification of women and furthermore with their silence and eventual mental instability.

Throughout the novel she demonstrates the absurdity of a culture abiding by restrictive conventional boundaries which stifle identity formation and the expression of subjectivity. When Mellish, for instance, informs Bulstrode that Lucy is in love with him, Bulstrode dreams of Aurora "standing on the brink of a clear pool of water in a woody recess at Felden, and pointing down through its crystal surface to the corpse of Lucy, lying pale and still amidst lilies and clustering aquatic plants, whose long tendrils entwined themselves with the fair golden hair" (96). Braddon's narrative reconfiguration of Millais's popular *Ophelia* (1852) (Fig. 3) here, as on other occasions in the novel, interweaves lifeless feminine stereotypes with male fantasies, simultaneously revealing the violent impulses such fantasies conceal.

Fig. 3

Later on when Bulstrode leaves Aurora after she refuses to disclose her secret, the dismal sound of the door he closes behind triggers the "thought of some frail young creature abandoned by her sister nuns in a living tomb. He thought that he would rather have left Aurora lying rigidly beautiful in her coffin, than as he was leaving her to-day" (105). And when he later reads in the *Times* of her marriage to John Mellish, we are told that he had wished to read about her death instead (130). Bulstrode's wish for the silencing of the unattainable Pre-Raphaelite stunner also extends to Lucy, the conventional self-effacing "fair-haired angel" (63).

When he visits Aurora and John soon after their marriage, as he wanders about the woods of Mellish Park beneath "long arcades of beech and elm," he is struck by the image of Lucy Floyd, "with a pale aureola about her head, her large straw hat in her lap filled with anemones and violets," and proposes to her. But Lucy, "the most undemonstrative of women," makes no reply "until at last, taking her hand to his, he won from her a low-consenting murmur which meant Yes" (160). Even on this joyous occasion, the narrator associates Lucy with Ophelia, in this case redrawing Hughes's *Ophelia* (Fig. 4) that was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1852 with Millais's painting of the same title.

Fig. 4

Representative of the iconography of madness, Hughes's *Ophelia* holding flowers in one of her arms, is (like Lucy) "softened, sexless, and hazy" and silent (Showalter 63). Following this narrative reconfiguration of Hughes's painting, the narrator connects the imposed silence on women with mental illness. Like Lucy, such women, we are told, "sit, like Patience on a monument, smiling at grief; and no one reads the mournful meaning of that sad smile. Concealment, like the worm i' the bud, feeds on their damask cheeks. . . . They are always at a disadvantage" (160). Unlike Aurora, Lucy never defies patriarchal authority and in the process renounces any expression of her subjectivity.

"Barbarous, intoxicating, dangerous, and maddening," Aurora is Lucy's dazzling opposite, defying the boundaries of conventional femininity by her aggressive, unorthodox behavior, her love of horses, her wild riding outdoors, her impetuous and passionate nature. Her effect on others abiding by tradition is evident in Bulstrode's reaction, who soon after he meets her confides in his friends: "if he had such a woman for his sister he would shoot her, unless she reformed and burnt her betting book" (36). Throughout the novel, her untamed nature and unconventional conduct, as well as her overpowering sexuality and sensuality, are often rendered through portraits of Pre- Raphaelite stunners. Dressed in a white gown with a "crown-shaped garland of vivid scarlet berries," "looking straight before her . . . nor at the lights, nor the flowers, nor the dancers but far away into vacancy" at the beginning of the novel, she attracts everyone's attention, including that of the repulsed and fascinated Bulstrode (26,34). Later on at the Christmas party at her home, Aurora appears once again in white "with a garland of artificial holly round her head" (94). When John Mellish discloses Lucy's love for Talbot at the same party, Talbot is tormented by the thought that he might have misled Lucy: "He remembered how, only a short time before, he had wished that this fair-haired girl might fall in love with him, and now all was trouble and confusion. Guinevere was the lady of his heart, and poor Elaine was sadly in the way" (96). Such details point to Braddon's reconfiguration of William Morris's *La Belle Iseult* (1858), in a white dress gazing vacantly in space, self-absorbed and self-contained, her hair adorned with a garland of green branches. In this case though Aurora has gone even further than either Guinevere or Iseult in defying decorum and convention, for she is not merely guilty of adultery but of bigamy as well.

Throughout the novel Braddon subverts restrictive, traditional gender roles and demonstrates, as in the case of Aurora, their absurd and ludicrous aspect. Thus a year after Bulstrode breaks his engagement with her, Aurora returns to her home engaged to John Mellish, "while worthier Marianas moped in the moated granges till grey hairs showed themselves in glistening *bandeaux* . . ." (127). Braddon thus ridicules Millais's popular *Mariana* (1851) (Fig. 5), inspired by Tennyson's eponymous poem, yet another male fantasy of the forsaken woman who renounces self-fulfillment for the consecration of the memory of the man who abandons her.

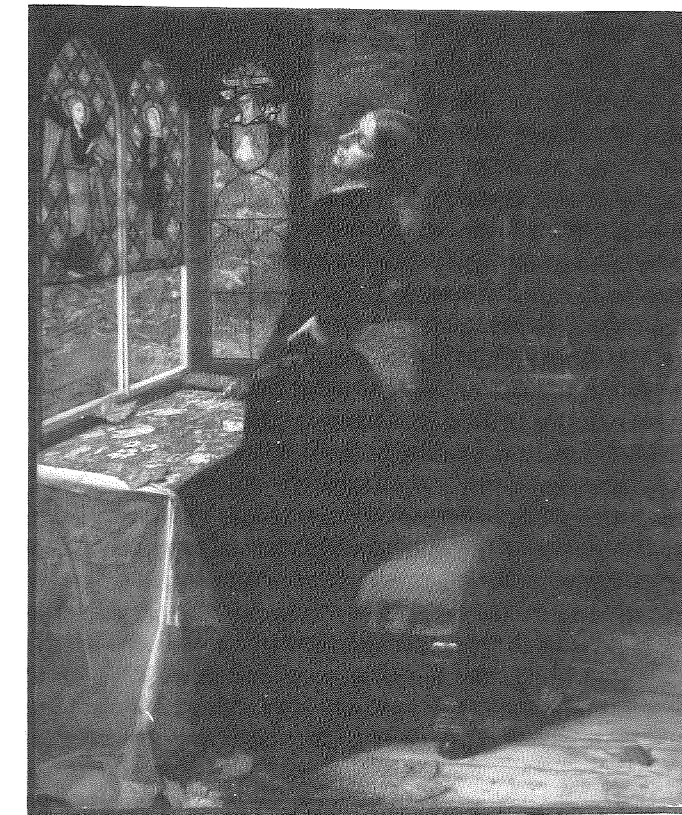

Fig. 5

Later in the novel Braddon further undermines Millais's and Tennyson's victimized Mariana but this time not in connection to a female character but to her most unlikely counterpart, Conyers, Aurora's groom and former husband. In this scene Conyers, like Mariana, is listlessly waiting for his former lover, not to be reunited with her, but to collect 2,000 pounds as a bribe to have him disappear from her life. In a chapter entitled, "'He only said, I am a-weary,'" (the refrain in Tennyson's "Mariana"), Conyers is looking out his window, blind to the beauty of the landscape, like Tennyson's and Millais's *Mariana*. Unlike Mariana though, Conyers is granted his wish and is killed that night. Thus Aurora's illicit marriage becomes legitimate and Aurora is left "happy ever after" at the closing of the novel in spite of her audacious transgression of conventional boundaries.

As in *Lady Audley's Secret*, in *Aurora Floyd* Braddon satirizes absurd concepts of gender identity entrenched in Victorian culture through literature and art. In Pre-Raphaelite art Braddon found an alternative discourse through which she could articulate women's protest against the restrictive social constraints imposed on them by Vic-

torian culture. Simultaneously, in the notoriety of Pre-Raphaelite women, Braddon sought alternatives to stifling and often absurd constructions of femininity, thus at once eluding the critics' outrage and simultaneously grounding her transgressive women in reality rather than enclosing them within the boundaries of fiction.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Bocca Baciata* (1859), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; oil on panel 32.2 x 27.1 cm/ 12 3/4 x 10 3/4 ins.

Fig. 2. Edward Burne-Jones, *Sidonia von Bork* (1860), Tate Gallery, London; watercolor 33.3 x 17.1 cm/ 13 1/8 x 6 3/4 ins.

Fig. 3. John Everett Millais, *Ophelia* (1852); Tate Gallery, London; canvas 76 x 102 cm/ 30 x 40 ins.

Fig.4. Arthur Hughes, *Ophelia* (1852); Manchester City Art Gallery; canvas, arched top 69 x 124 cm/ 27 x 48 3/8 ins.

Fig. 5. John Everett Millais, *Mariana* (1851). Tate Gallery, London; panel 60 x 50 cm/ 23 1/2 x 19 1/2 ins.

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University of Texas of the Permian Basin

Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Anglo-Dutch Emblem Tradition

D.M.R. Bentley

For Donald S. Hair, Scholar, Teacher, Colleague

Thanks to Jerome McGann, and before him, Maryan Wynn Ainsworth, Gail Lynn Goldberg, G. L. Hersey, Catherine Golden, and others, students and scholars of Dante Gabriel Rossetti have become increasingly aware of the

presence and importance in his *oeuvre* of numerous "double works of art"[1] such as *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera* and their accompanying sonnets, "Body's Beauty" and "Soul's Beauty."[2] A recurring point of reference in critical discussions of the complex "textual configurations" (Hill 17) constituted by Rossetti's "double works" is the combination of visual and literary media in the illuminated books of William Blake, but scant attention has been paid to a genre that provided Blake himself with a point of departure: the emblem. This is particularly surprising in view of the fact that in his reviews of Thomas Gordon Hake's *Madeline, with Other Poems* (1871) and *Parables and Tales* (1872) Rossetti not only likens his friend's poetry to the work of Francis Quarles in its "extreme homeliness,"[3] but also reveals his awareness of the tradition to which Quarles's *Emblemes* (1635) and *Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man* (1638) belong by suggesting that one of Hake's poems "produc[e]s much the same impression as the old verse-inscribed Emblems of a whole school of Dutch and English moralists" (*Works* 627, 633).[4] By the early eighteen seventies when he made these observations, Rossetti was less sympathetic to "homeliness" and "moralists" than his tone suggests, but evidently he was quite aware of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Anglo-Dutch genre that may well have helped him, as it did Blake, to appreciate the ways in which visual and literary material might "accompany and 'interpret'" one another (McGann 21).

When Rossetti's "double works" are placed against the backdrop of the Anglo-Dutch emblem tradition, one of the first things to become apparent is their diversity. Whereas Quarles and many other English practitioners of the emblem genre such as George Withers wrote poems to accompany images created largely by Dutch and other European artists, Rossetti's work in a parallel mode—the sonnets for pictures that he wrote near the beginning and end of his artistic career—accounts for only about a third of the works that he produced in one medium in response to works in another. That the majority of Rossetti's poems for pictures by other artists—"For an Annunciation, Early German" ("Filii Filia" [1]) (1847), "The Card-Dealer" (1849), "For Our Lady of the Rocks, by Leonardo da Vinci" (1851 or 1854),[5] and the four sonnets that he wrote for paintings by or attributed to Ingres, Mantegna, and Memling during his visit to France and Belgium in 1849—date from early in his career suggests that such poems may have helped him to recognize the potential of poetic interpretation as a method of clarifying or supplementing the meaning of works of art. There is no evidence that by 1847 Rossetti was familiar with any Anglo-Dutch emblem books,[6] but given the religious tone of the Rossetti household and the various inexpensive editions of Quarles that were published in the eighteen twenties, 'thirties and 'forties it would be surprising if he were not.[7] Certainly, the confidence with which he explicates the Early German *Annunciation* that he saw in 1847 could stem in part from familiarity with, for example, the 1839 edition of Quarles's *Emblems, Divine and Moral*. "[T]here she kneels to pray / Who wafts our prayers to God," he writes of "Mary the Queen," in "For an Annunciation, Early German," "She was Faith's Present, parting what had been / From what began with her. . . . On either side, God's twofold system lay" (*Collected Poetry and Prose* 343). The fact that when Rossetti travelled to northern France and Belgium with William Holman Hunt in 1849 he responded very tentatively and speculatively to paintings of classical subjects (such as *Ruggiero and Angelica* by Ingres) but with explicatory and explanatory confidence to Christian works (such as *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine* by Memling) (see *Collected Poetry and Prose* 183-85 and 344-45) may also be the result of knowledge and experience gained from the Anglo-Dutch emblem tradition.

Much the same confidence that is evident in "For an Annunciation, Early German" and other sonnets for Christian works of the late 'forties is present in the two sonnets that Rossetti wrote in 1848 to "accompany and 'interpret'" the *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1849-50). The first of these is devoted to the life and character of the Virgin herself, but the sestet and part of the octave provide an interpretation of key elements of the painting that mirrors the relationship between poem and picture in an emblem:

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[1]This phrase was first applied to Rossetti by Maryan Wynn Ainsworth in 1976 but has recently been given by Jerome McGann both in the Rossetti Archive and in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must Be Lost* (2000).

[2]For a discussion of the emergence of these four works as a constellation, see D. M. R. Bentley "Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*, *Sibylla Palmifera*, 'Body's Beauty,' and 'Soul's Beauty.'"

[3]It is possible that Rossetti was remembering Charles Lamb's comment that the emblems of George Wither (more of whom in due course) possess "a hearty homeliness of manner, and a plain moral speaking" (323). In his review of Hake's *Madeline, with Other Poems*, Rossetti also sees "extreme homeliness" as a characteristic of John Bunyan (*Works* 627).

[4]The foundational study of English emblem books is, of course, Rosemary Freeman's book of that title, but two other books, both collections of essays, supplement Freeman in valuable ways: Michael Bath's and Daniel Russell's *Deviceful Settings: The English Emblem and Its Contexts* and Bart Westerweel's *Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Field of the Emblem*.

[5] Although William Michael Rossetti assigns this sonnet to 1848, this date is highly unlikely because the version of Leonardo's *Our Lady of the Rocks* in the National Gallery was not available for viewing until 1851 and 1854 and the sonnet is not among the poems inspired by Rossetti's trip to the Louvre (which holds the other version of the painting) in 1849.

[6]He was familiar, however, with the "coloured allegorical designs" of Filippo Pistrucci's *Iconologia* (1821, 1824) as well as several other texts that married the verbal and the pictorial such as the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499) and "a little book of French or Flemish woodcut-illustrations to Bible history" (see William Michael Rossetti, "Memoir" 62).

[7]The British Library Catalogue indicates that at least six editions of Quarles were published during this time period. All quotations in the present essay are from the 1839 edition listed in Works Cited. There were also several editions of Quarles published in the eighteen fifties, 'sixties, and 'seventies, including an edition with illustrations by Charles Bennett and W. Harry Rogers (1861) and an edition that includes Quarles' *School of the Heart* and *Hieroglyphics of the Life of Man* as well as *Emblems, Divine and Moral* (1866). See John Landwehr for a magisterial bibliography of Dutch emblem books and Peter M. Daly and Mary V. Silcox for useful bibliographies of primary and secondary materials. Lothar Hönighausen's *The Symbolist Tradition in English Literature: A Study of Pre-Raphaelitism and Fin de Siècle* contains some valuable observations on the use of emblems by Rossetti and other members of his circle and Gisela Hönnighausen's "Emblematic Tendencies in the Works of Christina Rossetti" is a valuable preliminary examination of the presence and function of emblems in the poetry of Rossetti's sister, an aspect of her work—and, indeed, that of her brother—upon which the studies of Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, especially her recent *Christina Rossetti and Illustration: A Publishing History*, has shed much brightly illuminating light.

These are the symbols. On that cloth of red
I' the centre is the Tripoint: perfect each,
Except the second of its points, to teach
That Christ is not yet born. The books—whose head
Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said—
Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich:
Therefore on them the lily standeth, which

Is Innocence, being interpreted.[8]
The seven-thorn'd briar and the palm seven-leaved
Are her great sorrow and her great reward.
(*Collected Poetry and Prose* 186)

These are some of the most didactic lines that Rossetti wrote, and they bespeak an assured sense not just of the meaning and function of emblems, but also of the relationship between pictures and words, representation and explanation, and pictorial and verbal communication that is strongly reminiscent of Quarles, Withers, and other emblematists.

Although the subject-matter of another early poem, "The Card-Dealer" (1847-48), differs radically from that of the sonnets for *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and the other sonnets hitherto mentioned, it too displays an explanatory confidence that may be indebted to the Anglo-Dutch emblem tradition. If anything, Rossetti's tone in "The Card-Dealer" is even more confident and in keeping with that tradition:

What be her cards, you ask? Even these:—
The heart, that does but crave
More, being fed; the diamond,
Skilled to make base seem brave;
The club, for smiting in the dark;
The spade, to dig a grave.[9]

And do you ask what game she plays?
With *him* 'tis lost or won;
With *him* it is playing still; with *him*
It is not yet begun;
But 'tis a game she plays with all
The game of Twenty-One.
("The Card-Dealer")

In tone and methodology, these and other stanzas in "The Card-Dealer" bear more than a passing resemblance to such passages as the following, from Quarles' analysis of an engraving of a game of bowls (Book 1, Emblem 10):

But where's the palm that fortune's hand allows
To bless the victor's honourable brows?
Come, reader, come; I'll light thine eye the way
To view the prize, the while the gamesters play:
Close by the jack, behold, jill Fortune stands
To wave the game; see in her partial hands
The glorious garland's held in open show,
To cheer the lads, and crown the conqu'ror's brow.
The world's the jack; the gamester's that contend
Are Cupid, Mammon: that judicious fiend,
That gives the ground, is Satan: and the bowls
Are sinful thoughts; the prize a crown for fools.
Who breathes that bowls not? What bold tongue can say,
Without a blush, he hath not bowl'd to-day? (39)

The similarities of diction between these lines and "The Card-Dealer" (which also contains the words "hand," "brows," "prize," "game," "play," and "breath") are strong enough to raise the likelihood of specific indebtedness. Nor is it beyond the bounds of possibility that the third component of many "verse-inscribed Emblems"—the motto that appears between the plate and the poem—lies behind Rossetti's decision to preface "The Card-Dealer" with an epigraph reading "Ambition, Cupidité, / Et délicieuse Volupté, / Sont les soeurs de la Destineé / Après la vingt-premiére année (*Calendrier de la Vie*, 1630)." Indeed, it may not be coincidental that the themes of this invented epigraph, as of the poem itself, are very much those of the Anglo-Dutch emblem tradition: worldly ambition, greed, lust, and human destiny.

None of the poems that Rossetti wrote to "accompany and 'interpret'" his pictures in the 'fifties and later relies on straightforward allegory of the sort practiced in the *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and explained in the second of its accompanying sonnets. Often written several years after the pictures to which they refer, the sonnets for *The Passover of the Holy Family* (1854-56), *Venus Verticordia* (1864-68), and other works are more meditative and suggestive than straightforwardly explanatory and, as a result, display fewer affinities with emblems than the sonnets for pictures of the Pre-Raphaelite period (1848-53). Where emblems can be recognized as a continuing presence in Rossetti's work is in his illustrations of passages by other authors where he uses visual emblems as a means of interpreting literary texts (and, in so doing, reverses the practice of writing a poem to explain a picture). A movement away from allegorical realism is to be discerned here, too, however, as can readily be seen by briefly examining three of Rossetti's illustrations that were made at different points in the 'fifties: *Hesterna Rosa, St. Cecilia,* and *Hamlet and Ophelia*.

Designed in 1850 but not executed until 1853 (see Surtees 57), *Hesterna Rosa* ("Yesterday's Rose") (fig. 1) is a manifestation of the interest in the causes and consequences of female sexual transgression that also produced *Found* (which was begun in 1854), *Arthur's Tomb* (1855), and numerous other works of the 'fifties and later.

[8]This phrase raises echoes of Mark 15.22 and thus cements the sonnet's connection with the tradition of biblical exegesis.

[9]"The Card-Dealer" was inspired by *The Wish* by Theodore von Holst, an engraving of which was apparently the "sole adornment of [Rossetti's] room" in March 1848 (*Correspondence* 1: 58, and see 1: 59 n2 and 1: 66-67), but in its distant background surely lie the playing-cards that he designed in 1840 (see Surtees 4). "The picture . . .represents a beautiful woman, richly dressed, who is sitting at a lamp-lit table, dealing out cards, with a peculiar fixedness of expression" wrote Rossetti in a note to the poem, and in a letter of July 23, 1848 to William Holman Hunt: "I have supposed the lady of the picture (personifying, according to me, intellectual enjoyment) to be playing ['Vingt-et-un'], since twenty-one is the age at which the mind is most liable to be beguiled for a time from its proper purpose" (*Correspondence* 1: 66). Rossetti's early sonnet entitled "Retro Me, Sathana!" (1847), which, among other things, likens "Time" to a "character" and "the world" to his "chariot" may also have been inspired by an emblem, specifically Quarles' Book 1, Emblem 3, which depicts the world as an orb in a chariot being driven by the Devil (40).

Fig. 1

Above a transcription of the passage in Act 5, scene 1 of Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevalde* that it illustrates, *Hesterna Rosa*, depicts two men throwing dice while their companions—two women who are "neither maid nor wife" (Taylor, qtd. in Surtees 57)—display contrary feelings of remorse and ecstasy. Bracketing the couples is an allegorical schema that is reminiscent of Hogarth and Dürer, the former in its sharp juxtaposition of contrary attitudes and consequences and the latter in the large hairy ape scratching itself on the right of the picture space, a representation of sexual indulgence that contrasts with the young girl facing an altar and playing a psaltery on the left. *Hesterna Rosa* does not appear to be indebted even in part to a plate in an emblem book, but it has affinities with countless emblems in its reliance on allegorical interpretation and its insistence on Christian morality. Rossetti's drawing is a visual interpretation of a poem and Quarles' poems are literary interpretations of engravings, but when Rossetti decided to illustrate *Philip van Artevalde* in the way that he did he had much in common with the Quarles who writes in Book 1, Emblem 9 of "brain-sick lovers, that can prize / A wanton smile before eternal joys" and of "beauty, that of late was in her flow'r" and "Is now in ruin" (35, 36).

Although conceived and executed only three years later than *Hesterna Rosa*, *St. Cecilia* (1856-57) is a work of a very different stripe (fig. 2).

Fig. 2

After being asked early in 1855 to contribute to Edward Moxon's illustrated edition of Tennyson's *Poems* (1857), Rossetti declared his intention to choose only passages where he could "allegorize on . . . [his] own hook . . . without killing . . . a distinct idea of the poet's" (*Correspondence* 2: 7). In the case of *St. Cecilia*, an illustration of the passage in "The Palace of Art" in which Tennyson imagines the saint "in a clear-wall'd city on the sea / Near gilded organ-pipes" being "look'd at" by an "angel" while she sleeps (Tennyson 406), the result of this strategy is a design that remains true to the poem in setting (a walled city by the sea) but differs from it in some very important ways: rather than sleeping "Near" her organ, St. Cecilia swoons while playing it, and rather than merely looking at her the "angel" holds her in his arms and kisses her. "Rossetti . . . chose . . . to represent the subject from . . . a special point of view," explains his brother: "He supposes Cecilia, while kept a prisoner for her Christian faith, to be taking the air on the ramparts of the fortress; as she plays on her handorgan, an Angel gives her a kiss, which is the kiss of death. This is what . . . [he] meant" (qtd. in Surtees 83). Two elements at the forefront of the scene were evidently intended to support this interpretation: a helmeted guard holding a pike and biting an apple (presumably to suggest the fallen world) and a barred window from which a bird (a conventional emblem of the soul) has launched itself skyward. To the extent that it eschews moralism in favour of eroticized spirituality, *St. Cecilia* is a step further removed from the Anglo-Dutch emblem tradition than *Hesterna Rosa*.

Yet in one respect *St. Cecilia* is closer to the emblematic tradition than *Hesterna Rosa*. Perhaps (or perhaps not) by chance, it contains a sundial that bears a considerable resemblance to the sundial in Quarles' Book 3, Emblem 13, an engraving of a distraught male figure being embraced by a winged and haloed angel that Quarles interprets as Death (fig. 3).

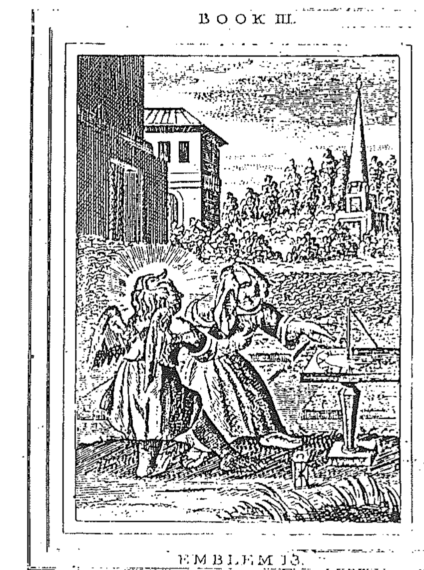


Fig. 3

Taking his cue from the fact that the roman numerals IV, V, and VI[10] are clearly visible on the sundial in his engraving and its shadow suggests that the time is around mid-day, Quarles has the distraught male cry "Read, on this dial, how . . . hour eats up hour; / Alas! The total's from eight to four. . . . My non-ag'd day already points to noon . . ." (17). In *St. Cecilia*, the roman numerals IV, V, and VI are also clearly visible, as, however, is XII, and the position of the shadow directly below the gnomon suggests that Rossetti wanted this to be taken as an indication that the saint's death occurred at noon, a time that he was coming to associate with intense spiritual and emotional experience.[11] If Rossetti did indeed find the sundial in *St. Cecilia* in Quarles, then, like Tennyson's description of "St. Cecily," he used it to "allegorize on . . . [his] own hook."[12]

A more intricate pen and ink drawing than *Hesterna Rosa* or *St. Cecilia, Hamlet and Ophelia* (1858)[13] (fig. 4) illustrates the incident in Act 3, scene 1 of Shakespeare's play where Hamlet, after delivering the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, seizes on Ophelia's desire to return his letters and "gifts" as an opportunity to accuse her of sexual impropriety, to exhort her to enter a nunnery, and to express his abhorrence of women (3.i.56-169).

Fig. 4

In Rossetti's illustration, Ophelia is slumped in a chair in an "oratory" with Hamlet's "remembrances" in one hand and a "devotional book" in her lap while Hamlet is "kneeling in one of the little stalls" of the oratory "talking wildly, . . . pulling to pieces the roses planted in a box" in the corner, and "throw[ing] his arms . . . along the edge of the carved screen" in a posture reminiscent of Christ crucified (Rossetti, qtd. in Surtees 108).[14] In an alcove below Hamlet's left arm, a crucifix reinforces this postural allusion and in the woodwork below his right arm are carvings of "the Tree of Knowledge" and "the man who touched the Ark and died" that "symbol[ize] . . . rash introspection." Inscribed with the single word "Uzzaus," the second of these is a depiction of the Uzzah of 2 Samuel 6.6-7 who was smitten and killed by God for "putting forth his hand" to touch the Ark of the Covenant. Inscribed "Eritus sicut deus [*sic*] scientes bonum et malum" the second depicts two angels with flaming swords on either side of the Tree of Knowledge, around which is twined the human headed serpent that, as John Ruskin had explained in *Modern Painters* 3 (1856), "was the universally-accepted symbol of the evil angel" (207). By giving the serpent a crown and placing its head below its tail, Rossetti may have intended to connect it to Hamlet and to represent Ophelia's statement after hearing his rantings that "a noble mind is here o'erthrown" and "that noble and sovereign reason . . . jangled, out of tune and harsh." Little wonder that in a letter to George Eliot on February 14, 1870, Rossetti conceded that "a simpler treatment" of the "character and situation" depicted in *Hamlet and Ophelia* might "after all . . . have been better" (qtd. in Surtees 108): so recondite are some aspects of the picture's "attempt to embody & symbolize the play" (*Correspondence* 1: 380) that, as argued elsewhere,[15] it approaches the *symboliste* quality of such deliberately mysterious and suggestive works as *Venus Verticordia* and *Astarte Syriaca* (1875-77).

The serpent on the Tree of Knowledge is not the only snake in *Hamlet and Ophelia*. On the arms of each of the seats in the picture is a carving of a ouroborus that is strongly reminiscent of the version of the figure that appears in several of the engravings in Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Modern* (1635) (fig. 5), where it is repeatedly glossed as an "expression . . . / Of *Annuall-Revolutions*; and of things, / Which wheele about in *everlasting-rings*; / There *ending*, where the Round was *done*" (157).

[10]As on most sundials and clock-faces that are marked in Roman numerals, IV is rendered as VI.

[11]See, for example, "World's Worth" (1849), where Father Hilary has his moment of enlightenment at "noon" (*Works* 191) and the final version of"The Blessed Damozel," where the earthly lover thinks that the damozel has descended to him "When . . . bells / Possessed the mid-day air" (*Collected Poetry and Prose* 4).

[12]Sometime between the conception of *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* in 1853 and its execution in 1858-59 (see Surtees 109), Rossetti may have found inspiration for the deer that nibbles the vine below Christ's head in the drawing in Quarles' Book 5, Emblem 4, a meditation on "the hart/heart" that "panteth after the water brooks"/God in Psalm 42.1.

[13]Like *Hesterna Rosa, Hamlet and Ophelia* was also conceived several years before it was executed, in this case in 1854 (see *Correspondence* 1: 263, 369, and 380) some three years after Rossetti commented favourably on Henry Lehrnann's *Hamlet* (the painting "gives proof of thought and intention—the brooding eyes and suspended movement of the hand suggesting indecision of character") and cast aspersions on the same artist's *Ophelia* ("little more . . . than a posture-figure") (*Works* 578).

[14]Not long before the execution of *Hamlet and Ophelia*, Rossetti used a similarly cruciform posture in *Sir Launcelot's Vision of the Sanc Grael* (1857-58) in the hall (now library) of the Oxford Union. There, however, it is Guenevere who adopts the posture by placing her right arm along the branch of an apple tree and holding aloft an apple with her left hand, a gesture that links her with Eve and evokes original sin in relation to the transgression that prevents the sleeping Launcelot from "entering the chapel of the Sancgrael" that is visible behind her (*Correspondence* 2: 225). Although its import is, of course, radically different, the postures and disposition of the figures as well as the tree in *Sir Launcelot's Vision of the Sanc Grael* bear a resemblance to the engraving in Quarles' Book 4, Emblem 14.

[15]See Bentley, "From Allegory to Indeterminacy."

Fig. 5

Now, Rossetti may have encountered the ouroborus in any number of places (including Blake [see Groot]) and there is no external evidence that he knew Wither's work, but if *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Modern* was one of the texts that he had in mind when he likened one of Hake's poems to "the old verse-inscribed Emblems of a whole school of Dutch and English moralists" then perhaps it was the source not only of the figure in the chairs in *Hamlet and Ophelia*, but also of other emblematic adjuncts in his paintings of the late 'fifties onwards, most notably the unbound fascis in *La Pia de' Tolomei* (1868-80). "This *Emblem*," writes Wither of the "*Sheafe of Arrowes*," "fitly doth imply / That Safeguard, which is found in Unity; / And, shewes, that, when *Disunion* is begunne, / It breedeth dangers, where before were none" (177). (La Pia, it may be recalled, was confined by her faithless husband in a fortress in the swamps of the Maremma, "where she pined and died of malaria, or, some say, by poison" [F. G. Stephens, qtd. in Surtees 207]). Perhaps it was Wither's repeated use of the marigold as a heliotrope that "duely, evr'y morning, . . . displayes / Her open breast" (209, and see 159) that recommended it to Rossetti as an appropriate floral adjunct for Fanny Cornforth in *Bocca Baciata* (1859), a painting whose title brings with it from Boccaccio an implicit analogy between male and female lovers and the sun and moon.[16]

With the turn towards paintings of voluptuous women in the Venetian manner signaled by *Bocca Baciata*, traces of the Anglo-Dutch emblem tradition become fewer in Rossetti's poems and paintings. They continue to remain quite visible in some of his illustrative work, however, most notably in the title page that he designed in 1864-65 for his sister Christina's *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems* (1866) (fig. 6) and in the illuminated manuscript of "A Sonnet is a moment's monument . . ." that he drew in April 1880 as a birthday present for his mother.

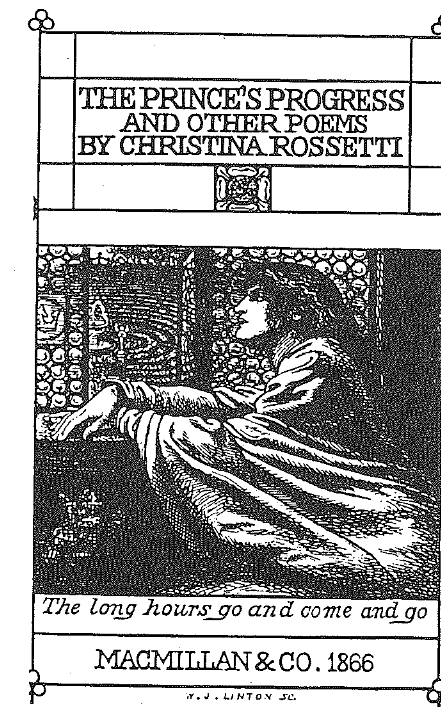
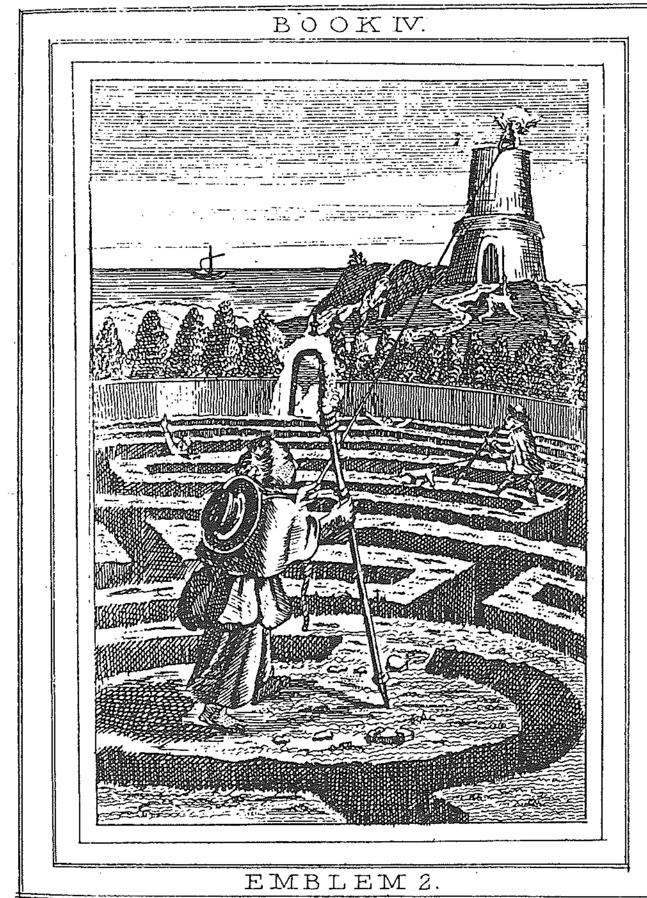


Fig. 6

A juxtaposition of Rossetti's illustration with the engraving in the second emblem in Book in Quarles' *Emblems* (fig. 7) is indicative of a direct debt (see Kooistra 69, and see 79-81) and suggestive of a Quarlesian dimension of "The Prince's Progress," a poem that, like Book 4, Emblem 2, depicts the sinuous route of a traveller who has difficulty negotiating the labyrinth of life as he journeys towards his goal (Divine Love in the emblem, the waiting princess in the poem and engraving).[17]

[16]The title of *Bocca Baciata* is taken from a statement in the *Decameron* that is inscribed on the back of the painting and translates as "The mouth that has been kissed loses not its freshness; still it renews itself as does the moon" (Surtees 114). Sunflowers, which, of course, are heliotropic, also figure in *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee*.

[17]Reading "The Prince's Progress" through the lens of Book 4, Emblem 2 and the emblems that surround it, confirms the Prince's identity as a type of pilgrim (like both figures in the emblem, he has a "staff and . . . hat") whose lack of will and poor interpretive skills cause him to take a desultory journey towards the waiting Princess through, among other things, an "Endless, labyrinthine, grim" waste land (Christina Rossetti, *Complete Poems* 1: 95,99; lines 15 and 152; and see the "world's . . . lab'rinth" and the "gyving lab'rinth" of Quarles Book 4, Emblem 2, 28-29). In this reading, the voices that hasten the Prince on his way near the beginning of the poem correspond to the pilgrim in the engraving who is connected by a cord to the figure in the tower (Divine Love), while the Prince himself corresponds to the pilgrim who is feeling his way along the labyrinth behind his dog and seems more likely to become one of those who have fallen by the wayside ahead of him. "[M]y . . . thoughts [are] opprest / With the . . . winds of my prodigious will," says the speaker of the previous emblem in Book 4: "I [am] driv'n upon these slippery suds, / From real ills to false apparent goods. . . . I know what's good, but yet make choice of ill" (25-26). For her part, the Princess in Rossetti's poem is a figure who, unlike the exemplary "widow" in Book 4, Emblem 10 whose soul desires Christ as a "lover" and whose love is "full of Heav'n, and all divine," seeks love "where [she] should not," for Christ is not to be "found in downy beds of ease" (53). Like Emblems 7 to 15 in Quarles' Book 4, the later stanzas of "The Prince's Progress" contain several allusions to the Song of Solomon that cast the Bridegroom as Christ and the Bride as the human soul (see *Complete Poems* 1: 106-108, particularly lines 408, 464, and 473-74). By allowing himself to be detained by the temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, the Prince fails as both pilgrim and bridegroom. By allowing herself to be fixated on earthly love and to lapse into passivity, the Princess is also culpable, though, as the overall tone of the poem makes clear, less so than the Prince.



Pſalm 119.5.

O that my wand'ring Steps might guided be,
To keep the Road whose Paths direct to Thee!

Fig. 7

The illuminated manuscript of "A Sonnet is a moment's monument . . ." (fig. 8) is distinctly Blakean in character, but in the particular manner of its "integration of text and illustration" (Lothar Hönnighausen 57) it may also owe a debt to Quarles.

Fig. 8

In addition to the text of Rossetti's sonnet, the drawing carries two inscriptions, one identifying it as a birthday gift to his mother ("D. G. Rossetti pro Matre fecit Apr: 27. 1880") and one identifying its angelic figure as the Soul ("Anima"). In a letter of April 27, 1880, Rossetti explains the details of the drawing in a manner that is itself reminiscent of Quarles:

> The Soul is instituting the 'memorial to one dead deathless hour,' a ceremony easily effected by placing a winged hour-glass in a rose-bush, at the same time that she touches the fourteen-stringed harp of the Sonnet, hanging round her neck. On the rose-branches trailing over in the opposite corner is seen hanging the Coin, which is the second symbol used for the Sonnet. Its 'face' bears the Soul, expressed in the butterfly; its 'converse,' the Serpent of Eternity enclosing the Alpha and Omega. (*Letters* 4: 1760)

More telling than the possibility that Rossetti took his "winged hour-glass" from the engraving in Quarles' Book 3, Emblem 15 (or that his "Serpent of Eternity" again derives from Wither) is the resemblance between his design as a whole and the plate that accompanies "The Invocation" to *Emblems, Divine and Moral* (fig. 9): albeit in very different positions and postures, both depict the Soul ("Rouse thee, my soul!" are the opening words of Quarles' "Invocation"), both use a musical instrument and a laurel wreath to represent poetry and poetic achievement, both employ branches as structural devices and to support emblematic devices, and both contain Latin inscriptions.

Dum Cœlum aſpicio Solum deſpicio.

While to high Heav'n our fervent Thoughts arise,
The Soul all Earthly Treasures can despise.

Fig. 9

But in the end, it is as much the differences as the similarities between the engraving and the illuminated manuscript that are striking. In Quarles' emblem, the Soul looks towards God, asks for help in overcoming "human faults," and prays to channel God's "current" into poetry so that "The hearts of men [are filled] with love, their tongues with praise" (10). In contrast, Rossetti's Soul faces downward, gazes intently at an emblem of the swift passage of time, and claims for poetry the power only to give permanency to fleeting moments. Quarles ends his "Invocation" by expressing his greater desire for the "Crown . . . [of] glory" than for the laurels of poetic fame. Rossetti ends "A Sonnet is a moment's monument . . ." by gloomily wondering whether his poetic coin will "serve . . . 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath" to "pay the toll to Death" (*Collected Poetry and Prose* 127). To the "school of English and Dutch moralists" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "verse-inscribed Emblems" were a means of serving God's purposes. To Rossetti, they were a means of placing on view and in words his own concerns and themes, which, as has been seen, coincided less and less with the original spirit and purposes of emblems as he moved further and further away from the allegorical realism of his Pre-Raphaelite period.

Illustrations of Rossetti's *Hesterna Rosa* and *Hamlet and Ophelia*, are taken from H. C. Marillier, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, facing pp. 30, 60, and 64.

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Browning's "Childe Roland": The Visionary Poetic

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> Did the personality of such an one stand like an open watchtower in the midst of the territory it is erected to gaze on, and were the storms and calms, the stars and meteors, its watchman was wont to report of, the habitual variegation of his everyday life, as they glanced across its open door or lay reflected on its four-square parapet?
>
> "An Essay on Shelley"[1]

Browning's description of the objective poet anticipates some of the concerns of the poet's celebrated quest poem written within a month of the publication in December 1852 of his "An Essay on Shelley." The object of Roland's search turns out to be "blind as the fool's heart" (l. 182), not vigilant as the watchtower that is representative of Browning's objective poet. The latter's "openness" permits the empirical facts of the universe to be registered or reflected along the parapet without tinge of the watchman's personality. The former's blindness, on the other hand, threatens destruction to anyone dependent upon this "mocking elf' that "Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf / He strikes on" (ll. 184-6).

Browning's essay on Shelley goes on to describe the poet of opposite genius, the subjective artist, who, unlike his objective counterpart, the watchtower, is likened to a painter. The objective poet is the *poetes* or fashioner who creates from himself an artifact betraying no semblance of its creator. The subjective poet is the *vates*, the seer, whose creations, though "projected from it [his personality]," are nevertheless "not separated" from his person. Such a poet, Browning writes, "does not paint pictures and hang them on the walls, but rather carries them on the retina of his own eyes: we must look deep into his human eyes to see those pictures on them."

Browning's prose essay on Shelley suggests that these two poetic tendencies have throughout history alternated the way thesis inevitably inspires its antithesis. Browning's hope, however, is that this dialectical tension between antithetical poetics will lead in the nineteenth century—and in his own poetry—to a productive and creative tension between the poetic and vatic aesthetic orientations.[2] "Nor is there any reason," he contends, "why these two modes of poetic faculty may not issue hereafter from the same poet in successive perfect works, examples of which, according to what are now considered the exigencies of art, we have hitherto possessed in distinct individuals only."

Harold Bloom has spent considerable critical effort attempting to explain the essential relationship between Browning's only prose piece of criticism and one of the poet's most famous poems.[3] Other critics, while noting the proximity in time of these two works, have attempted to explicate the poem as a metaphor of either the objective or subjective mode of poetic faculty.[4] What I want to examine in the following pages is the possibility that Browning regarded "Childe Roland" as an experiment in which these poetic modes could be, and in fact are, maintained in dialectical tension.[5] Let me cite, at this point in my examination, one anomaly suggestive of such a creative interaction.

Near the conclusion of his quest, in the line immediately before announcing his discovery of the tower, Roland speaks of having spent his life "training for the sight" (l. 180). Having acknowledged his dedication to the quest, the knight suddenly sees what he has sought. The poem, however, concludes not with an expression of triumph at having succeeded where his predecessors failed, at having discovered, that is, what had for so long been sought. The poem ends, rather, with Roland's acknowledgement that he is *seen*. Of his predecessors in the quest, Roland remarks in the concluding stanza, "There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met / To view the last of me, a living frame / For one more picture!" (ll. 199-201). The long quest journey to find the tower ends by focusing on Roland himself being found or seen. The juxtaposition again of tower—of object gazing out upon the landscape—and pictures—the self subjected to an other's gaze—is dramatized at poem's end as it is in the essay on Shelley. Terms—objective and subjective—which in the prose essay can be juxtaposed but not reconciled are, in the poem, I argue, imaginatively synthesized to explain not only the text but also the poetry of the poem.[6]

[1]All references to Browning's work are to the Cambridge Edition.

[2]Dellamora contends that "The dialectical activity [of "Childe Roland"] is restricted to the play between Roland's obsessive relation to landscape and his awareness that this relationship is obsessive" (43). For a detailed discussion of Browning's distinction between objective and subjective poets, see D'Avanzo.

[3]See, for example, Bloom's "Browning's 'Childe Roland': All Things Deformed and Broken" (1971); "How to Read a Poem: Browning's 'Childe Roland'" (1974), *A Map of Misreading* (1975), especially pp. 106-122; *Poetry and Repression* (1976), especially pp. 175-204. Bloom regards "Childe Roland" as a "sequel" to the Shelley essay (*Ringers in the Tower*, p. 164).

[4]Drew, for instance, argues that Browning is primarily an "objective poet."

[5]An early critic, Joseph Milsand (*Revue Contemporaire*, 1856), perceptively noted of Browning's *Men and Women* that the collected poems represented a victorious synthesis of the objective and subjective "so as to be, not in turn, but simultaneously, lyric and dramatic, subjective and objective" (qtd. in DeVane, 211). DeVane simply asserts that "the subjective and objective elements were mixed" (p. 579). Bloom argues that Browning's dramatic monologue, in general, represents "a barely disguised High Romantic lyric, in which antithetical voices contend for an illusory because only momentary mastery" (*A Collection of Critical Essays*, [3]). Collins, on the other hand, understands Browning's poetry, as well as the Shelley essay, as advocating a Christian "synthesis" of antithetical elements (112-124).

[6]Such an interpretation is consistent with critical comments by Bloom (Roland is "the modern-poet-as-hero"; "How to Read a Poem," 418), Dellamora ("Childe Roland" is "a continuing meditation on poetry," 42), and Tucker (the tract Roland follows "is Browning's landscape of poetic origination," 117).

I

One of the intriguing elements of "Childe Roland" is the poem's circularity. Like the snake with its tail in its mouth, the image Coleridge used to describe a great work of art, Browning's poem concludes where it began, with the line/title "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." The repetition becomes significant, not as an aesthetic criterion, but as the resolution of an apparent logical problem. Roland begins his rencounter (the unexpected meeting with the hoary cripple and with himself) with the words, "My first thought was . . . (l. 1). Logically, first demands at least a "second." No such division, however, is verbally signaled in the course of the poem, except, that is, suggestively when Roland regards his seen self as a living frame for one "last" picture.[7] The image called to mind by the concluding lines of the poem is of a slide projector that, in displaying the final slide of a carousel, inevitably comes back upon the first slide shown.[8] Such an image makes it impossible for the viewer—or, in this case, the speaker and reader—to entertain the initial thought as "first."

The net effect of this repetition is the superimposition, renewed with each reading, of the former self upon its present historical representation. The rhetorical self of the childe, the poem's narrative voice, becomes a framing device into which renditions of Roland are sequentially entered. The temporal implications of this progression of semblances is that Roland is continually becoming in the present what he was not in the past.[9] The synergistic development thus initiated coincides with Browning's notion that the artistic product of the subjective poet's creation is simultaneously something projected, but not separate, from the artist's self, that artistic creation becomes synonymous with the very being of the artist who continues to display on the retina of his eye images of what he was and is becoming in any particular moment.

Roland's awareness of himself, and his awareness of others' awareness of him, as the framing device for pictures, like Browning's identification of the subjective poet's act with pictorial mountings, suggests an ekphrastic understanding of selfhood and the poetic process. The result of the creative act is an image, something to be seen. And poetry becomes the verbal deliverance from the mute visual of the message the artist intends.[10] Roland's giving voice—his slug-horn blast—to the "last" of himself framed before his predecessors' gaze, however, is not simply an act of defiance asserting his refusal to be regarded as "last"; it is also a recognition of the threat posed by the gazing predecessors ranged along the hillsides to view his apparent end. Like his most famous ekphrastic poem, "My Last Duchess," "Childe Roland" acknowledges both the terror and the triumph of seeing and being seen. If the objective poet avoids such exposure by factually representing what is, and if the subjective poet opens himself to the full force of his reader's/viewer's threats by equating his self with his creations, the objective/subjective poet can at least attenuate these threats by concealing himself in the poetic personae of his creations.[11]

The important consequence, however, of this intermingling of artistic tendencies is not relative anonymity or exposure but the dialectical tension necessary for the very act of creation itself. The stammering Duke who confesses to the envoy his verbal limitations—"Even had you skill/In speech—which I have not" (ll. 35-6)—becomes as critical to Browning's dramatic monologue as does the verbally confident husband who recounts how and why his last duchess has been silenced. The Duke in seemingly concluding his monologue inadvertently takes his interlocutors back to the beginning of his negotiations ("I repeat,/The Count your master's known munificence/Is ample warrant" [ll. 48-50]); in doing so, he, like Roland, wittingly or unwittingly undermines with a sense of the indeterminate the finality or closure that the poem's end appears to provide.

Browning's hope in the essay on Shelley that in the future poetry may somehow represent both the objective and subjective tendencies is as much an effort to impose the era's dialectical orientation upon the resolution of antithetical elements as it is a means for the poet to ensure the drama or dynamism of his work. "Without contraries," Blake asserts in Plate 3 of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," "is no progression." And for Browning, without antithetical elements in perpetual and inconclusive tension there can be no art.

II

Browning the essayist seems little troubled by the polar opposition of the elements he defines. He never provides insight into how the binary tendencies of objective/subjective are to be reconciled or held in tension or into how the opposition of these elements fuels the artistic process. "Childe Roland," however, demonstrates the nature of this opposition and how these polar opposites—in the form of the conflict between seeing and being seen, for example—function poetically. Before examining the forms this opposition takes and how they operate in the poem, I want briefly to examine earlier Browning poems that reflect a pattern clearly evidenced in "Childe Roland."

[7]Few critics have noted this "logical discrepancy" or satisfactorily explained Browning's resolution of it. Bloom, for example, argues that "'First thought' here is not opposed to second or late thought, which actually never enters the poem, and so 'first thought' itself is an irony or the beginning of one" (*Robert Browning: Modern Critical Views*, 104-105). Erickson contends that the last line's repetition of the poem's title becomes "a demonic parody of the infinite moment" (150). My own position on this critical repetition and seeming discrepancy differs significantly from both critics.

[8]For another perspective on the concluding lines of Browning's poem, see Strickland.

[9]My reading of the concluding lines explicitly refutes Maxwell's contention that the "living frame" "can also be the actual body of [the dead] Roland" (332) and Bloom's assertion that Roland "dies as a living picture, framed by 'all the lost adventurers my peers'" (*Ringers in the Tower*, 165-166). My analysis also rejects the position taken by many critics that Roland dies in pursuit of the Tower, a view represented by such readings as Anne Williams's, who interprets the poem as representing "a preparation for death" (40).

[10]For a discussion of poetic ekphrasis as the obstetric deliverance by word of the message represented by mute image, see Heffernan, (1-8.)

[11]Browning's poem, "One Word More," in which he dedicates his *Men and Women* to Elizabeth Barrett, reflects this poetic tendency toward self-revelation and concealment. Browning confesses that his 50 men and women "name" him, but they also fail to disclose authentically his entire self.

Browning's earliest published work, "Pauline" (1832), and the negative critical reaction it inspired from writers like John Stuart Mill, is instructive in understanding the poet's 1853 experiment to deal aesthetically and poetically with these antithetically opposed poetic types. In "Pauline," criticized as being one of the era's most intensely self-conscious poetic efforts, Browning has his narrator simultaneously seek to reveal and to mask his identity or being. Pauline is asked to drape her loosened hair and her body over the reclining narrator so he can in the security provided by this "screen" (l. 4) both "shut me in" (l. 5) and "unlock the sleepless brood/Of fancies from my soul, their lurking-place" (ll. 6-7). For one aware of his "shame" (l. 62) and his "fallen" (l. 80) condition, the speaker's desire to expose, that is to project himself onto the screen of Pauline's body, appears incongruous. The poem, as the subtitle indicates, is a "Confession"; it attempts to give voice to that which shame suggests should remain mute. But these incongruous motives are the very bases of much of the poetry of Browning's poems, and they indicate the disturbingly anomalous nature of what "Pauline's" narrator attempts. For in unlocking his sleepless fancies and projecting them upon the screen of Pauline, the narrator risks discovering that these projected manifestations of self can just as easily become hostile forces that prey on his being as companionable semblances that affirm his identity. Self-consciousness in this context can produce self-alienation; the confessional self may discover condemnation rather than the intended redemption.

Browning's most famous dramatic monologue features this essentially solipsistic endeavor to appropriate something other than the self for the purposes of objectifying aspects of the self. A paragonal contest occurs between the muted, veiled image of the Duchess and the inspired verbal volubility of a Duke exposed to and exposed by his "last" wife. No matter how painful her "spot of joy" remains and how necessary that it be veiled, the Duke cannot help vicariously rendering articulate a woman from whom words never emerge. Nor can the Duke resist unveiling the spot of joy he commanded to cease, thereby indicting himself anew with each new assertion of the self in the object possessed. No matter the contrivance used to ensure that he has seen the "last" of her, the Duke continues to be viewed by his "last" duchess, and each new regard of her reaffirms the indictment against appropriation of an other.

More telling for our purposes here, however, is the dilemma arising from the contest in the artist between objective and subjective tendencies in a poem like "Pictor Ignotus" (1845). If the unknown painter can be regarded as representing in Browning's work the conflict between the warring tendencies a poet must address, then the Pictor dramatizes, not the dialectical or paragonal relationship of these tendencies, but the requisite disjunctively to choose one and repress or deny the other. Browning's Pictor acknowledges that great art requires of the artist the "seconding my soul" (l. 7), "Of going—I, in each new picture—forth" (l. 26). The Pictor's monologue, however, makes clear that such personal exposure or equation of artifact with self is precisely the price for being known and that, conversely, the anonymity he chooses will forever relegate him to the "same[ness]" (ll. 60,61) artists of a lower order achieve. The Pictor, of course, does not equate the known artist with the subjective poet nor the unknown artist with the objective. But what he does convey is the dilemma confronting all aspiring artists who must choose how to resolve aesthetically the tension between self-disclosure and self-denial. What is unfortunate for the Pictor is how he resolves this tension. Instead of entertaining the possibility of dialectically holding these antithetical tendencies in tension, he chooses instead to consider them disjunctively and accordingly rejects self-disclosure or "seconding" for the self-annihilation synonymous with artistic anonymity.

The narrator of Browning's "Cleon" (1855), a man of multiple talents, similarly acknowledges the fear that artists are threatened—"mock[ed]" (l. 319)—by their own creations and that immunizing the self from such self-inflicted dangers requires the suppression of self in mimetic activities pointing away from and to something other than the self. Objective art becomes a refuge for the poet temperamentally indisposed to mount pictures of his seconded selves on the retina of his eyes. The salvific consequence of the objective mode of art is that it can at least claim truth or conformity between the perceiving mind of the artist and the empirical world he attempts to represent.

In "Old Pictures in Florence" (1855) Browning acknowledges the god-like stature of the artist who in his works reutters "The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken" (l. 85). Mimesis becomes divine because it results in artifacts warranted by the divinity they imitate. Such consolation sufficed, in classical times at least, to mitigate the possible disappointment artists felt in subordinating their selves to a power other than themselves. Browning's narrator in "Old Pictures in Florence" recognizes, however, that the objective mode of art necessarily yields to the subjective when instead of imitators, artists become "now self-acquainters" (l. 147) and in the process necessarily express themselves and not a divinity other than themselves. The problem with romanticism or expressivism's subjective orientation is its requirement to find a basis of truth or conformity in nothing outside the self. Solipsism becomes the inescapable mode of thought following such a "revolution" (l. 157) and pathetic fallacy becomes its prevailing *modus operandi*. The conflicting claims of the objective and subjective artistic operations appear irreconcilable: the one mode of art finds conformity everywhere based on an immutable source other than the self; the other predicates conformity on the mutable grounds of a self terrified at the prospect of public disclosure or sight. The subjective poet could indeed revel in his newfound divinity, the reuttering or seconding of his own being rather than the repetition of something antecedent to his self. The objective poet, however, suffers the inescapable suppression of self required by his reliance on the "Truth of Man" as uttered eternally by the divine.

Browning's Roland seems conflicted by these alternative approaches to existence. But it is less the seeming incompatibility of these diametrically opposed modes of thinking that troubles him than the recognition that nothing in his world squares with anything else. His "first" thought is falsified not only by his discovery of the tower at the end of the path the cripple directs him to take, but also by his own admission that the path taken was indeed the "tract which, all agree,/Hides the Dark Tower" (ll. 14-15). And the "last" picture we have of Roland fails to square with the "first" because the childe is in the closing ongoing now of the poem something other than he was at the outset.

Roland's reaction to such diametrical opposition parallels Browning's own response to the poet's attempt at resolving in *Men and Women* (1855) the binary opposition of subjective-objective tendencies facing romantic artists. Romanticism's seeming repudiation of mimesis in favor of expressivism amounted less to a disjunctive rejection than a dialectical accommodation. In "One Word More," the poem Browning wrote as dedication to his wife of *Men and Women*, the poet asserts that the fifty men and women represented in the collection are "Naming me" (l. 2). The anonymity secured through the fifty screening devices of the collection's personae cannot fully mask the fact that the individual poems are "secondings" of the poet's very being. Browning's wife, like Pauline, can watch the creator of 50 men and women "enter each and all, and use their service,/Speak from each mouth,—the speech a poem" ("One Word More," ll. 141-2) only to have him confess the *je ne sais quoi* of his efforts. "Let me speak this once in my true person," Browning writes to Elizabeth Barrett, as if the images and framed figures of *Men and Women* were now no more than mute idols betraying the creator, himself left mute by his attempts at speaking authentically.

But authenticity is precisely the critical issue confronting the poet/lover who simultaneously strives to name himself while preserving the ongoing becoming essential to life understood dialectically. To be named or regarded as "last" requires a finality inimical to the "Incomplete" (*The Ring and the Book* ll. 1556) Browning strove to represent in his works. And Roland, it strikes me, defiantly rejects the closure he assumes his predecessors seem to represent at poem's end. To be enclosed in a "living frame" constitutes a contradiction as central to the development of selfhood as does the holding in tension of the objective-subjective poetic tendencies to the artistic enterprise. The "last," that is the latest or most recent, framed image both memorializes a dead self and testifies to the self about to be.

Romantic introspection had fostered this duality, producing self-alienation of the kind Wordsworth describes in *The Prelude*:

> So wide appears
> The vacancy between me and those days
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
> That, musing on them, often do I seem
> Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
> And of some other Being. (2: 38-43)

Browning himself registers the significance of this fact when, in "Old Pictures of Florence", he discusses the "revolution" (l. 157) begun when thought and creative activity were "turned . . . inwardly one fine day" (l. 114) and artists were enjoined "'To become now self-acquainters'" (l. 147). Browning's doctrine of artistic imperfection—"The Artificer's hand is not arrested" (l. 125); "What's come to perfection perishes" (l. 130)—requires for its dynamic force the existence of elements in irreconcilable tension. The concern regarding inauthenticity provides that source of dynamism by acknowledging that named self and "true person" are not and never can be synonymous in an evolutionary scheme.

Romanticism's isolationist orientation underscores two important elements involved in the dual consciousness emerging in the poetic act: first, the annihilation or concealment of self; second, the transmigratory impulse associated with such concealment. The first element, annihilation, results from the Keatsian insistence that the poet "has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body." The second element, the transmigratory impulse, is clearly evident in the first as Keats seems to imply a deliberate subsuming of the poet's identity in the object he imaginatively inhabits. Wordsworth similarly suggests that despite the egotistical tendency of the romantic poet such subsumption of identity is required when he writes in the "Preface" that the poet must "let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs [i.e., the persons whose feelings he describes.]"

What Coleridge called the "self-representative" character of romantic poetry necessitated both of these seemingly contradictory tendencies described by Keats and Wordsworth. The concealment of self could be affected by the poet inhabiting what he depicted. The protagonist of Shelley's *Alastor* sets out on his poetic career believing in the Wordsworthian alliance of man and nature: the world's multitudinousness provides fitting habitations for the poet's transmigrations. The narcissistic and solipsistic impulses underlying this belief, however, are undermined once the poet discovers the world's inadequacies in this respect and is forced to conclude that he "seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception" ("Preface to Alastor"). The lack of equivalency between the self and its habitations, the inhospitable character of what originally was conceived as "companionable" forms, leads Shelley's protagonist in his wanderings to "See its own treacherous likeness there" (l. 474).

What Fox, writing of Tennyson's attempts at such transmigratory poetics, called the "consciousness of contrast" between the poetic self inhabiting the world's multitudinousness—a Mariana, for example—and the self emerging from that encounter remains the least of the poet's concerns.[12] More distressing, if not potentially fatal, is the awareness that the "other" is inimical to the poet's self. To be seen by one's alleged likeness is to be threatened. When

[12]Fox in his review of Tennyson's *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* writes of the poet and his relations with objects that "He takes their sense, 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; and this consciousness gives to the description a most poetic colouring" (85).

Tennyson similarly seeks for companionable forms to inhabit, what emerges are the terrifying "shadows" threatening the inhabitant of "The Palace of Art." The assumption that in inhabiting an other the poet could securely and with reserve second his self invariably gives way to the reality that the world's multitudinousness provides no hospitable analogues. "Only this is sure," Browning writes in "One Word More," "—the sight is other" (l. 191).

The options for poets dealing with objective reality's recalcitrance are the untimely death Shelley's poet in *Alastor* experiences, the retreat and subsequent "return with others" the poetic anima of "The Palace of Art" proposes, and the defiant response of Roland in the face of the treacherous models (Giles and Cuthbert) he calls to mind. Searching out analogues ere he begins to "play" (l. 88) his part, Roland comes to recognize that neither his predecessors nor his past selves constitute fitting prototypes for his drama. Not only must he reject as inadequate and inimical those faces ranged along the hillside to view the last of him, he must reject as well any determinate sense of his own self as the "last." Life is tantamount to being seen and therefore threatened, to seconding inconclusively the self under various guises, to rejecting actively any notion of self as final or "last." And so the slug-horn blast endlessly returns the poem at its conclusion to the opening line/title of the poem.

The psychological complexity of such an aesthetic underscores why, in the midst of the artistic revolution occasioned by the romantics, critics like John Keble, Oxford Professor of Poetry from 1831-1841, advocated artistic reserve as a mark of the great poet. The expressivist orientation of the modern poetic simultaneously espoused disclosure and concealment of self, the clothing in an empirically verifiable other of the poetic self virtually silenced by its transmigration into an other. Wordsworth and Ruskin had studiously attempted to mitigate the solipsistic excesses of the romantic poetic by insisting that the artist's emotions—the basis of poetry—remain under the control of reason lest pathetic fallacy undermine poetic greatness. Since the physical world failed in the end to serve the subjective requisitions of the romantic poet for a prototype of self, engendering instead treacherous likenesses, the object depicted had to be seen as it was in itself because it could not function as the hospitable repository of the poet's being. This notion of the fatality of regarding the objective as the correlative of the subjective is critically important to Roland, as we will see, and it explains the significance of Nature's injunction-"See/Or shut your eyes" (ll. 62-63)—to the knight in what otherwise appears to be a dramatic monologue. In so many ways in Browning's quest poem, the poet juxtaposes antithetical elements and tendencies—as he does in the Shelley essay—to demonstrate that art, and certainly the new form of art Browning envisions, has as its origins the irreconcilable interplay of conflicting poetic impulses.

III

"Childe Roland" repeats a pattern Browning establishes in "Pauline," the going "through all conjuncture" and refusing to be content "with all the change of/One frame" (ll. 701-3). That pattern acknowledges the importance of three steps in the process of emerging selfhood: (1) "Myself stands out more hideously" (l. 64), (2) "I myself have furnished its first prey" (l. 652), and (3) "I supply the chasm/'Twixt what I am and all I fain would be" (ll. 676-7). Roland's acute awareness at poem's end of his standing *apart* from—instead of being *a part of*—his predecessors, of being their "game at bay" (l. 191), a "victim" (l. 6), recognizes the psychological liability of the poet's seconding himself and mounting images of his being on the retina of his eye for all to see. But it is the "chasm" occasioned by self-exposure and the consequent opening of the self to being a "prey" that is critical. The tension between what the self is and what it would be, far from an intolerable condition, constitutes the basis for the dialectical interplay of forces ensuring the "Incomplete." Every artistic seconding of self—those individual namings comprising *Men and Women*, for example—represents not only a factual marker of being in the historical present, but an acknowledgement by the poetic anima of the self evolving into something it no longer is. The resultant chasm constitutes that indeterminate position where identity is attempted and art occurs. It is the temporal locus in which the chronology of firsts and lasts is repudiated, where ongoing repetition attesting to fundamental differences transpires, and where the projected self becomes the prey of its own reflected being.

Roland's defiant slug-hom blast attests to this indeterminacy. The knight's acceptance of defiance as the only legitimate way of dealing with his situation, however, comes only after a prolonged effort on his part to make the objective and subjective aspects of his life square. After cataloguing in stanzas 8-14 the "penury, inertness and grimace" (l. 61) of the landscape he traverses, Roland incurs the displeasure of a Nature unsympathetic to his intolerable complaints. The paranoia Roland displays from the very beginning of his chronology, when he suspects the hoary cripple of directing him—"one more victim" (l. 6)—down the wrong road, renders readers of the childe's account similarly unsympathetic. The fact that the cripple's directions correctly identify the path leading to the tower, that the cripple suddenly disappears after Roland takes "a pace or two" (l. 50) down the path, simply corroborates the suspicion that Roland finds all in his view inimical and threatening. Objective reality serves simply as a screen onto which the knight projects the penury and grimace of his own being.

Following Nature's directive to cease his complaints and "shut your eyes" (l. 63), Roland unwittingly confirms those suspicions after obeying Nature's injunction. "I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart" (l. 85). The interior landscape Roland describes in stanzas 15-27, though, conforms exactly to the "ignoble" (l. 56) external landscape described in the first half of the poem. The solipsistic character of Roland's account of reality, the pathetic fallacy seemingly distinguishing his descriptions, however, appears to be undermined by Nature's insinuation that some divine force created such ignobility and by her assertion that "the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,/Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free" (ll. 65-66). Nature answers Roland's complaints with her own about the powerlessness of forces, physical or human, to alter the predetermined ignobility of things. The words of Nature in what otherwise seem to be Roland's monologue could easily be dismissed as the continued rantings of a childe ventriloquistically using an alter ego as the objective embodiment of his own complaints. Evolutionary speculation of the time, however, would appear to give credibility to Nature's intervention. Empirical testimony may not condone human complaining in this case, but it supports Roland's views of a landscape uninformed by solipsistic thinking or pathetic fallacy.

The solipsist's intention is to appropriate what is not-self and render that habitation an hospitable place from which to speak. The Duke, for example, attempts to obstetrically deliver from his last duchess the message he expects the envoy to deliver to the duke's prospective bride. His stammering midway through his monologue, however, acknowledges his inability to employ what he believes to be his. Roland, on the other hand, appears at virtually every turn to be highly successful: the road is not what he first thought, but the path that, all agree, leads to the tower; the ignobility of the external landscape is not a figment of his imagination but the exact replica of what the internal scene on which he turns his shut eyes.

Such conformity or equivalence, though, is far from pervasive in Roland's world. On two occasions the childe attempts to deal with his sense of inevitable failure in the quest. On both occasions, Roland employs the metaphor of fitness implied in his closing remarks about being seen as a living frame. Having closed his eyes as Nature directed, Roland confronts an internal ignobility requiring some palliative to make the vision bearable. "I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights," he recalls, "Ere fitly I could hope to play my part" (ll. 87-8). Roland assumes that in recalling suitable analogues of self, he can either steel himself for inevitable failure or discover the pattern of success in the quest. His recollection of Cuthbert and Giles, however, provides only analogues of "disgrace" (l. 95) and traitorous behavior (l. 102). Roland's attempt here to find a "fitting" prototype of the role he is expected to play suggests the mimetic view that an individual's life drama has some antecedent existence that it simply imitates. Not only is Roland's theatrical metaphor inappropriate for someone who at the apparent "last" of this drama defiantly rejects such finality; it is also demonstrably wrong as his unwitting choice of two disgraced or traitorous predecessors in the quest indicates.

Roland's preoccupation throughout much of his drama with failure (ll. 24, 38, 41) and coming to "some end" (l. 18) expresses both his understandable teleological concern to find the goal as well as the pessimism occasioned by his apparent inability to do so. Again, the metaphor of fitness is used to define Roland's condition. For all his long wanderings, he says, "my hopes/Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope" (ll. 20-21). As if to explain his meaning, Roland alludes to Donne's "Valediction Forbidding Mourning." The childe is like that dying man who, surrounded by friends come to take leave of him, seems by his continued breathing to refuse to go. It is a "shame" to stay (l. 36), Roland suggests, particularly since he is no longer "fit to cope" (l. 21).

Roland's reference to Donne is significant for two reasons, the first having to do with the meaning of "fit," the second having to do with the meaning of "last." In his closing observation about being seen as a "living frame" into which is placed the "last of" him, Roland acknowledges that although he may still be fit or capable of continuing on, were the quest not already concluded, he does not "fit" the scenario he imagines his predecessors proposing. Like the mourners at the bed of Donne's dying figure, Roland stays, or proposes to stay or persevere. He can only be regarded as "last" if what he appears to be at the historical end of the poem is simply the latest rendition or manifestation of the childe. As such, he can fit into no niche, especially into the living frame that ostensibly and apodictically defines his being.

If Roland's defiance understood in these definitions of fit and last serves as a metaphor for Browning's understanding of the poet, the dilemma confronting the modern artist is clear. An aesthetic oriented toward antecedents requires the masking of the artistic self. The poet in such a paradigm becomes the reutterer of some antecedent, immutable Truth. An aesthetic oriented toward self-expression, however, not only repudiates the idea of such antecedent facsimiles of self, but rejects as well the notion that the self in any given historical moments can serve as the prototype of what the individual is becoming. The definitive or absolute "naming" of self in a poem or in fifty poems is tantamount to spiritual death.

IV

Browning's identification of the objective poet with an "open watchtower" suggests that Roland functions like the watchman to report on life's "variegation[s]" as "they glance across" or "lay reflected" on his being. What results in that poetic report is something "projected from himself and distinct." But Roland's introspective analogue (stanzas 15-27) of the variegations of his physical journey indicates that the artifact emerging from his having closed his eyes and "turned them on my heart" (l. 85) represents the effluence of the subjective artist's soul, "the very radiance and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated." The emerging visions or pictures disclose remarkable equivalency, the objective and subjective views being informed by the same penuriousness.

The visual equivalency in "Childe Roland" of what Browning in the "Essay on Shelley" calls the "raw material" or outer semblance of things and the "spiritual comprehension" or interiorized vision manifests itself in the pervasiveness of pathetic fallacy in the poem. A mind unhinged by powerful emotion colors empirical reality according to the soul's impassioned condition. Such equivalency might just as easily be explained by the solipsistic attitude of someone who, in training for the sight, searches for objective representations of his own inner predispositions. Raw material in this state of mind provides hospitable habitations for the mind, whatever its disposition. The poet, understood in this

context, resembles Browning's David who goes the whole round of creation, pronouncing on God's handiwork and "returnin[ing] him again/His creation's approval or censure" ("Saul," ll. 240-1). The objective poet reutters "raw material"; the subjective poet repeats that material colored by his own mental dispositions.

If, as Thomas J. Collins argues, the Incarnation symbolically represents "the synthesis of the two poetic roles [objective/subjective]" (123), Browning has made it virtually impossible for artists in the modern era to synergistically fuse these dual poetic tendencies. Synthesis, in other words, is the telos or unattainable goal toward which the poet strives. I have attempted to argue here that instead of synthesizing in "Childe Roland" the objective/subjective artistic tendencies defined in the "Essay on Shelley," Browning instead maintains them in dialectical tension. The result is that equivalencies, however arrived at in the poem, only appear to argue reconciliation of opposites—of exterior and interior views. For Roland to acknowledge conformity between his spiritual vision and the raw materials of his universe, for the knight to find in external reality hospitable correlatives of his inner state, for the childe to accept that in finding the Tower "the last" of him has been apodictically seen is tantamount to a spiritual death his "living frame" repudiates.

If Browning's historiography posits a discernible goal toward which antithetical elements like flesh and soul ineluctably move, it also predicates fundamental indeterminacy or irresolution until that end is reached. In fact, without such indeterminacy and pervasive uncompanionability among elements, whether exterior or interior, the very notion of a "living" frame becomes impossible. To maintain such a dynamic, antithetical elements must for the duration remain in irreconcilable tension. Alleged equivalency, in other words, either betrays death or is the illusory explanation for pervasive seemings and discontinuity. Acquiescence and triumph are inimical to such an understanding of life as quest.

When Browning appended as epigraph to "Pauline" Marot's lines, "*Plus ne suis ce que j'ai ete/Et ne le scaurois jamais etre*," he acknowledged as the basis of his poetic efforts that as artistic questor he is forever out of the present moment, that poetry at best represents a trace of what the artist was, that inauthenticity is a deliberate stratagem necessitated by that fact that "I am no longer that which I was nor will I ever know how to be again." The psychological indeterminacy or betweenness and the philosophical absurdity Roland acknowledges as he confronts the not-self might, as I have suggested, more appropriately be regarded in terms of the "chasm" metaphor Browning employs in "Pauline." As the narrator "unlock[s] the sleepless brood/Of fancies" from his soul to be projected against Pauline's enclosing form, he presumes absolute equivalency between those fancies and their objective correlatives. The "raw material" of reality and art provides a conducive medium from which the ventriloquistic viewer or artist can attend to his echoing voice.

But in the moment of meditation consequent upon such presumption, awareness of divorce occurs, the chasm emerges, the offspring delivered of the generative act comes threateningly to regard its progenitor. Byron's Childe Harold defines in obstetric terms the correlation Browning writes of in December 1852 between subjective and objective art. Like the narrator of "Pauline," Childe Harold speaks of "endow[ing]/With form our fancy" until "we give/The life we image." Implicit in Byron's definition of art as a reflex of the artist's soul is the notion of artifact as both duplicate and rival antagonist of the parenting artist. The latter may, in fact, have given birth to the former, but an equality of these separate identities is maintained because both parent and offspring, gazer or projector and gazed at or projected depend for their existence on their threatening opposite. Identity is predicated on being seen, not on "training for the sight," and neither offspring nor parent, neither objective nor subjective poet, can any longer exist independent of the other's regard.

This tension is perhaps best illustrated structurally in the fact that "Childe Roland" does not as a poem conclude where logic dictates it should. If we accept as true Roland's admission that he has spent his entire life "training for the sight," then a poem chronicling the knight's having arrived at the object of his quest should conclude with the rhetorical question of line 181, "What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?" But the poem continues for 23 lines more. And in these concluding lines, Roland—and Browning—have an opportunity to answer with a "last" the question raised by the poem's beginning: "My *first* thought was." More importantly, however, these last 23 lines provide irrefutable evidence denying that Roland's life was not—and is not—about the sight, but about being seen and that as a result there can be no "last" of him so long as he is a living frame.

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Myths of Castration: Freud's "Eternal Feminine" and Rider Haggard's *She*

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Sigmund Freud, responding to the intimidating Louise N.'s request that he recommend something for her to read, suggests the popular African adventure novel, Rider Haggard's *She* (1887)[1]: "A strange book. ..full of hidden meaning . . . [representing] the eternal feminine."[2] Louise N. brushes this suggestion aside, and asks sarcastically: "Have you nothing of your own? . . . when are we to expect these so-called ultimate explanations of yours which you've promised even *we* shall find readable?" Freud feels the sting of her rebuke, and is overwhelmed with self consciousness regarding his as yet uncompleted works. That night he has a dream that his pelvic area is being publicly dissected, while Louise N. looks on and even participates:

> At the beginning of a dream . . . STRANGELY ENOUGH, *it related to a dissection of the lower part of my own body, my pelvis and legs, which I saw before me as though in the dissecting room, but without noticing their absence in myself and also without a trace of any gruesome feeling. Louise N. was standing beside me and doing the work with me. The pelvis had been eviscerated; and it was visible now in its superior, now in its inferior, aspect, the two being mixed together. Thick flesh-coloured protuberances . . . could be seen. Something which lay over it and was like crumpled silver paper had also to be carefully fished out. I was then once more in possession of my legs and was making my way through the town.* (*SE* 5: 453, Freud's italics)

Freud observes that his discomfiture before Louise N. arises from his awareness of how much of his "own intimate nature" must necessarily be exposed in order to complete his work on dreams. He notes that the preparation of his own body is "the self-analysis" involved in the work. But at this point he abruptly stops his inquiry into the significance of exactly what is being dissected. Observing that "further trains of thought, proceeding from my conversation with Louise N, go too deep to become conscious," he evasively diverts his analysis to the significance of *She* in the remainder of his dream. Freud's refusal to probe more deeply is provocative, and indicative of the process of repression that he would subsequently theorize in his works. An obvious conclusion to draw from the dissection of his pelvic area is that this woman's challenge to his capacity exposes feelings of impotence and vulnerability, even castration, but he fails to acknowledge this. The evasive maneuver to *She*, however, is revealing, for the content of the novel suggestively exposes the nature of Freud's unconscious anxieties that are, he claims, too buried for him to examine.

As the dream proceeds, Freud's anxieties blend with the plot of *She*. Following his dissection he arises and undertakes a journey that ends at a chasm that he must cross with the aid of two planks. He is terrified that he won't be capable of successfully navigating the chasm following the dissection. However, as he approaches it, he discovers two men lying on benches, with two children sleeping on the ground beside them. He realizes that it is not the boards but the children that would enable the crossing, at which point he

[1]*She* has been in continuous publication since it was first published in 1887, and has been translated into twenty different languages. The publisher, Charles Longman, observed that *She* sold so rapidly that they couldn't keep enough copies on the shelves (Cohen, 97-8). Sandra Gilbert observes that "*She* sold a nearly record-breaking thirty thousand copies within a few months" (*Partisan Review*, 444).

[2]*SE*, 5: 453. (Note: in Freud's account, he first cites the dream, and then describes the waking prompt for the dream.)

awakens from his dream "in a mental fright." A chasm is also central to the events of the novel. The heroine, She (Ayesha), is infused with supernatural capabilities and phallic power because of her union with the revolving, male-gendered pillar of fire located in the womb of the earth, that can be reached only by traversing a dangerous chasm with the aid of a plank.[3] This chasm is representative of sexual difference, for the one side has a huge phallic spur of rock jutting out into the void of the chasm, while the other side is feminized, with a clitoris-like "sugar-loaf" shaped rocking stone preceding the passage into the womb of the earth. While Ayesha is crossing the chasm and is poised on the tip of the spur of rock, a transfiguration occurs: "suddenly, like a great sword of flame, a beam from the setting sun pierced the Stygian gloom, and smote upon the point of rock . . . illumining Ayesha's form with an unearthly splendour" (273). This illuminating moment presents Ayesha as emblematic of this sexually redolent space of the chasm. She is a provocative, phallic female who routinely elicits both overwhelming desire as well as fears of inadequacy and castration in the men who encounter her.

Freud's dream evoking the space of the chasm and the castration anxieties associated with this (certainly Oedipal) space, situates his focus in the novel on the Oedipal drama, even before he had publicly theorized it. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in fact, suggest that Freud's exposure to Haggard's novels enabled his examination of the unconscious: "the very topography as well as the motion and direction of Haggard's quest-plots helped Freud conceptualize the psychic geography that was to be so crucial to his theory of layered personality" (43). *She* is, therefore, a provocative narrative to examine with reference to Freud and Haggard, for Haggard's novel lays out the psychosexual territory that resonated with Freud and entered into his subsequent psychoanalytic theories relating to sexual identity; and these theories in turn reveal Haggard's psychosexual anxieties that he expresses in the novel.[4]

Haggard says of the experience of writing the novel: "The only clear notion that I had in my head was that of an immortal woman inspired by an immortal love. All the rest shaped itself around this figure. And it came—it came faster than my poor aching hand could set it down" (*Days* 245). *She* rises up peremptorily from Haggard's unconscious.[5] But his creation reveals more than merely the creator. E. M. Forster would go so far as to assert that *She* "drained the whole reservoir of the public's secret desires" (Pocock 245). This is a startling claim. Evidently, *She* exposes something fundamental about society, specifically male society according to Regina Barreca, who notes that "*She* represents everything men long for, project onto, desire, and are appalled by in women."[6] *She* reflects the narcissistic fears and desires of the men who encounter her, and therefore her characterization reveals more about them than about the nature of the feminine.

In view of the idea that Ayesha's persona is rooted in male narcissism, it is interesting to note that Freud's definition of narcissism that he would theorize in "On Narcissism, An Introduction" (1914) reflects the novel's content, but in such a way as to spotlight Freud's misogyny based in his own narcissism. The novel confirms his perceptions of the female as the quintessential narcissist, remote and self absorbed, and of the male as self destructively obsessed with the inaccessible narcissistic woman. In "On Narcissism" he observes that the "purest and truest feminine type" is the narcissist, especially if she be beautiful. "[S]uch women love only themselves with an intensity comparable to that of the man's love for them. Nor does their need lie in the direction of loving but of being loved; and the man who fulfills this condition finds favor with them" (*SE* 14: 88-89). However, Ayesha's nature would seem to contradict Freud's assertion about female identity since her very existence is motivated by her consuming desire for the return of her lost love, Kallikrates, whom she murdered two thousand years previously because he refused to leave his wife for her. From this moment Ayesha has lived concealed in catacombs housing the embalmed dead—the scrupulously preserved corpse of Kallikrates in particular—waiting for his reincarnation. However, such a fixation is too unnatural, obsessive, and self-absorbed to legitimately bear the name of love. It instead indicates the narcissist's solipsistic attachment to the things she deems necessary to support her ego structure. Kallikrates' decision to honor his commitment to his wife is not permitted by the narcissist, who recognizes only her own needs and will, and so she kills him. Regina Barreca notes that

> She spends her life in tombs, in catacombs, narrow corridors, and confining spaces. The environment is a clear representation of her self-imposed emotional confinement. She cannot see the larger world except through the narrowness of her own immediate desire for the return of her lover . . . . She controls with her inability to love, and is representative of the dark guardian who mistakenly or manipulatively guards the objects of her desire. (xvi, xix)

Ayesha's manner of loving is based in self-love, not love that redounds to the health and happiness of herself and her beloved. She destroys what she claims to love. In view of this, Freud's assertion that Ayesha represents the "eternal feminine," as well as his subsequent claim that the "purest and truest feminine type" is the narcissist confirms his troubling misogyny.

Freud's treatise on narcissism goes on to observe that the narcissistic woman is the most erotically interesting to men. This woman is vain, self-seeking, charming as the self-absorbed child or the supercilious cat is charming. And her charm rests in the chase. The man is intrigued by her mystery and her elusiveness, but also tormented by his fear that she doesn't really need or love him, which compels him into greater and greater expenditures of libido in his pursuit of her. Ayesha's interaction with the two British male protagonists, Holly and Leo, exemplify this behavior. She is so elusive that her actual existence is in question. In England, Holly and Leo learn of her legend as a ravishingly beautiful, seemingly immortal African queen, and undertake a quest to Africa to discover her. After passing through life threatening challenges, they find her dwelling in elaborate isolation within her kingdom, attended on by deaf mutes. Her overwhelming beauty enslaves all men who look upon her, and so she keeps herself veiled so as to not be wearied with the attentions of her admirers. And yet, when it suits her purposes, she unveils herself to men she wishes to bewitch and manipulate. This, of course, is the case with the two protagonists. Ayesha's narcissism is again apparent as she coquettishly unveils herself before Holly and then vainly petitions him to praise her beauty:

> There, my Holly, sit there where thou canst see me. . . . blame me not if thou dost spend the rest of thy little span with such a sick pain at the heart that thou wouldst fain have died before ever thy curious eyes were set upon me. There, sit so, and tell me, am I not beautiful? Nay, speak not so hastily; consider well the point; take me feature by feature, forgetting not my form, and my hands and my feet, and my hair, and the whiteness of my skin, and then tell me truly hast thou ever known a woman who in aught, ay, in one little portion of her beauty, in the curve of an eyelash even, or the modeling of a shell-like ear, is justified to hold a light before my loveliness? (189-90)

Holly is overcome with desire and proposes marriage to her on the spot, but she archly informs him that she is not for him, but waits for another. Leo is the other, Kallikrates returned from the dead, though first Ayesha must kill the native woman who has become romantically involved with him. Ayesha brazenly justifies the deed, observing that "she stood between thee and me, and therefore have I removed her, Kallikrates" (228). In spite of, perhaps because of, her diablerie, both Holly and Leo are captivated, even against their better judgment. They lament of their fixation: "We could no more have left her than a moth can leave the light that destroys it. We were confirmed opium-eaters: in our moments of reason we well knew the deadly nature of pursuit, but certainly we were not prepared to abandon its terrible delights" (182). These men exemplify Freud's theories of the man's irrational, ego-depleting desire for a beguiling though unattainable object.

Freud observes that the man exemplifies "true object-love," sacrificing his ego health to bond with his desired object.[7] However, the extremity of the man's desire reveals that the narcissistic woman's capriciousness and cruel aloofness must fulfill the man's narcissistic needs. Freud, in fact, helpfully observes that the man's ego impoverishing approach to the love object "is doubtless derived from the original narcissism of the child, now transferred to the sexual object" (*SE* 14: 89). The original narcissism of the child refers to the child's merging identification with the maternal figure. Just as the young child has fluid ego boundaries in his interaction with his mother, so also the man dissipates his ego strength through the excessive libidinal attachment he forms with the love object. Therefore, through his interaction with the woman he expresses his repressed desire to resume this original merged state with his mother. Perhaps since this merging threatens his separate ego identity, and, most importantly, his male subjectivity founded upon a separation from the maternal figure, he creates the conditions to sabotage the attainment of his objective by loving an unattainable object. What is significant is the way the man's approach to the woman is rooted in his own psychosexual needs and how the mother/child dyad is a foundational component of those needs.

The basis for Freud's contention that the woman is quintessentially a narcissist is rooted in his theory of the Oedipal complex—central to his elaboration of the psychosexual development of both male and female subjectivity. According to the Oedipal complex, for the male child, castration anxiety enables him to identify with his father and claim authority, superiority, and privilege not accorded to the female. In the process he comes to accept that his mother is castrated. Consequently, his male identity is to a significant degree founded upon a perception of femininity as inferior, lacking, and powerless. For the female child, castration anxiety is not characterized by her fear of losing the penis, but rather the shameful acknowledgement that she is already castrated. Consequently, lack and envy of the boy's greater genital endowment is foundational in her psychic structure. Her penis envy induces her to discard her castrated mother as her sexual object and transfer her desire to her phallic father. In the process her penis envy is repressed and the groundwork laid for her feminine identity characterized by lack—which is why the female identity, according to Freud, is particularly prone to anxiety, hysteria, frigidity, and masochism. Penis envy is also the root cause of the female's narcissistic ego structure. Due to the resulting narcissistic wound to her psyche, she is perpetually grasping after reassurance of her lovability and desirability. Ayesha's phallic power may seem to invalidate her narcissism as Freud defines it; however, the scene where she is irresistibly drawn to join with the phallic pillar of fire, in spite of her mentor's strenuous warnings that it would violate

[3]Gilbert and Gubar in *No Man's Land* observe that the pillar of fire is a "theatrically rich sexual symbol . . . not just a Freudian penis but a Lacanian phallus" (20).

[4]In the preciptate manner of the composition of *She*, both Jung and Freud saw a fascinating example of a dream-text, "a means to understanding not only the man but his age" (Steibel 74).

[5]Henry Miller notes: "[Haggard's] method of writing these romances—at full speed, hardly stopping to think, so to speak—enabled him to tap his unconscious with freedom and depth" (93).

[6]Regina Barreca, Introduction, *She*, vii. Another critic, Sandra Gilbert, observes that the mysterious and powerful female heroine in *She* embodies the fantasies over the female sex occupying so many *fin de siècle* male writers (444).

[7]Freud's definition of narcissism focuses on sexual instincts, which he treats separately from other instincts. The sexual instinct, or libido, is distributed between ego libido and object libido. When libido flows out towards an object, ego libido is depleted, and vice versa. According to Freud, narcissism involves a withdrawal of interest, or investment of libido, in an object outside of the self, resulting in a strengthening of ego libido. He observes that women are characterized by (narcissistic) ego libido, whereas men are characterized by (anaclitic) object libido. Men, he observes, impoverish their egos in pursuit of their love interests. They expend their libidos outwards, are aggressive, and finally capture and penetrate into their love objects. For women, it is the opposite. They are self-enclosed and receive love rather than expend it (*SE*, 14: 82-88).

the natural order, actually confirms her penis envy (*Wisdom's Daughter* 345-52).

Fortunately, Freud's contention that penis envy is foundational to female psychosexual development has been widely criticized, in particular by his contemporary, Karen Horney, who also proposed that Freud's own narcissistic agenda determined his distressing conclusions about femininity. Laying Freud's interpretation of femininity aside, Horney argued for the acknowledgement of a primordial femininity inherent within the small female's incipient psyche, a positive identification with her intrinsic self, what she was created to be: a woman, not a man. Why, Horney asks, should the young girl found her identity on a process of negation because she is female rather than male? Horney theorized that the imbalance of psychoanalysis—wherein the male child comes off so much more well endowed and privileged than the poor female child, whose chief feature is her narcissistic wound haling from her comparatively woeful penis, the clitoris—is rooted in male narcissism. She contends that the male is envious of such fundamental female processes as pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing.[8] Horney's contention is useful in turning Freud's misogynistic theories about femininity back upon himself, observing that his narcissistic defenses provoke him to interpret femininity in a pejorative, even retaliatory, way.

Freud's treatments of the feminine and of narcissism, while provocative, are fundamentally undeveloped. He launched into the exploration of these areas only to shift his focus for most of his career to the ego, id, and superego (*Papers on Narcissism* 14). He left it to subsequent theorists to advance his incipient theory of narcissism that focuses primarily on the direction of the flow of sexual energy (libido), towards the self (narcissistic)—characteristic of women; or towards the other (anaclitic)—characteristic of men. His theory oversimplifies the complexity of the interaction between self and other. Later psychoanalytic theory expands this paradigm beyond the sexual function to incorporate the way a person negotiates the self/other formations of his or her identity.[9] Through repression the ego defends against that which violates the integrity of the ego structure, and that which is repressed is projected onto a convenient object or "other." These narcissistic defense mechanisms cloak the nature of the self in relation to the other, and invariably distort how one views the self and the other. Therefore, in a convoluted way the interactions with the other reveal the self. This more complex configuration of narcissism helps to account for Freud's prejudicial portrayal of the feminine based in the self-deluded processes of repression and projection.

The advances of subsequent theorists provide a more sophisticated model of narcissism through which to consider Freud's reactions to *She*, and Haggard's nature as revealed through *She*. David Punter, in *The Romantic Unconscious: A Study of Narcissism and Patriarchy*, gives a helpful encapsulation of this much more complex and continually shifting formulation of narcissism. He writes:

> It is the function of the ego to construct: to construct for itself a series of defences, and simultaneously to construct in the world a specular image of itself, which turns out to be an image of the defences themselves inscribed with the markings of evasion, which figure in the world as the mystery to be explored, the tiger face peering from the suspected unconscious. Both of these inseparable activities are represented in the search for the comprehensive, the bridge over the chasm, which is also the search for the originary. The outered shapes which the ego builds can take many forms; but typically, they are philosophical systems, the specular losing sight of its own (reflected) origins and turning into the speculative in a continuing falsification of the significance of reflection. (19)

Punter explores how the self creates of the other a mirror image, "inscribed with markings of evasion" to conceal that which the self is not prepared to acknowledge—hence repression and projection. But, "these markings of evasion" simultaneously constitute "the mystery to be explored." We are continually provoked to discover the complex workings of the self in reference to the other—"the search for the comprehensive, the bridge over the chasm." And yet there is a continual slippage in our efforts to bypass the chasm between self and other as we are simultaneously engaged in a "continuing falsification of the significance of reflection." Chasms accrue between people on numerous fronts, but sexual difference is perhaps the most poignant, since from infancy it is foundational in a person's psychosexual development. Freud's misogynistic theories represent how the chasm of sexual difference can become a vehicle to express repressed anxieties. And so elaborate is the mechanism of repression and projection, "inscribed with the markings of evasion," that the individual can remain wholly unaware of the way in which narcissistic defenses enter into the perception of the other.

Rider Haggard's fiction about empire deployed self/other constructs in relation to the broad and divisive categories of sex, race, and class, which his prejudices, unconscious needs, desires, and aggressions utilized in

[8]See Horney, "The Dread of Women," (19-21), and "The Flight from Womanhood," (60- 61); see also Young-Bruehl (42); Luce Irigaray observes: "The fact of being deprived of a womb [is] the most intolerable deprivation of man, since his contribution to gestation . . . is hence asserted as less than evident, as open to doubt" (23). Anne McClintock notes that the ambiguity of the man's contribution to reproduction in contrast to the woman's "visibly active role in producing a child" provokes men to "diminish women's contribution . . . by reducing them to vessels and machines—mere bearers—without creative agency or the power to name" (29).

[9]Theorists like Otto Kernberg (object relations theory), and Heinz Kohut (self/other functions and social psychology) would shift attention away from the Freudian model of narcissism that focused simply on libidinal investments. Kohut disliked Freud's psychobiological descriptions of people driven by sexual and aggressive impulses. He saw as fundamental to the self not the biological drives, but rather the desire for a sense of relationship with and responsiveness from others. (*Essential Papers on Narcissism* 1-16). Carl Jung likewise criticized Freud's treatment of the libido as too reductive.

strangely distorting as well as frequently illuminating ways.[10] Haggard's fiction reveals both efforts to protect the ego, yet, also, impulses to explore the nature of what the ego defends itself against out of an effort to develop a more comprehensive sense of self and of humanity in general. *She* is Haggard's most telling manifestation of the contradictory back and forth way the ego interacts with its environment. In particular, Haggard's portrayal of Ayesha reveals how his narcissistic needs in relation to the woman split Ayesha into an alternately idealized and dangerously phallic figure, and she elicits alternating reactions from her male admirers, an overwhelming desire for her, combined with a cringing fear of her emasculating power over them.[11]

I maintain Haggard utilizes his fiction, especially *She*, to work through his specifically oedipal problems of identity. Joyce McDougall theorizes that if oedipal castration fears, a central feature of the child's "early object relations and archaic sexuality," have not been successfully resolved, the fears are repressed rather than processed in a way that enables the child to move past the challenge, and these repressions are replayed in narcissistically conflicted self/other interactions until they are finally resolved (379). Haggard's adventure fiction serves the function of addressing his precarious masculine identity predicated upon an ineffective separation from the maternal figure. His narratives frequently involve a journey towards a womb-like space where the protagonists feel engulfed and threatened with annihilation. If we are to read his novels as indicators of unresolved psychosexual trauma, then difficulty in negotiating the challenges of sexual difference, moreover an archaic desire for recuperating the primary narcissistic tie with the maternal figure, "epitomized by life in the womb," (Laplanche and Pontalis 388) would seem to be dominant.[12] Haggard's biographers note that Haggard's fiction is influenced by his exceptionally intimate, fantasy-filled relationship with his mother.[13] Even as a mature man, Haggard makes a telling observation some twenty years after his mother's death: "No night goes by that I do not think of her, and pray that we may meet again to part no more" (Higgins 119). In view of this curious admission, the plot of *She* is suggestive, for the novel's objective is a union with a glorified female figure empowered with the forces of life within the womb. This seems to attest to Haggard's fantasy to merge with his mother, although the fantasy is a threatening one, for the novel concludes with Ayesha's ignominious death in the womb of the earth.

Possibly the ambiguity of Haggard's relationship to his heroine rests in his own confusion about sexual roles. Since in a patriarchal society, masculinity is founded upon a solidarity among men which excludes women from equations of influence and authority, an aggressive, authoritative, and phallic female like Ayesha would no doubt cause considerable psychic turmoil, particularly if the man's sense of his masculinity were insecure.[14] Freud theorizes that the ambivalent male child can become caught in the oedipal drama and fail to make the necessary transition to acknowledge his mother as castrated and align himself with his father and with masculine sociocultural structures. Although the child realizes his mother's castration, this realization is repressed and a fantasy substituted which maintains that she possesses the phallus—the result: a psychological investment in phallic femininity, as well as a precarious masculinity perpetually on the verge of feeling engulfed by the maternal figure.[15] Haggard's investment in phallic femininity indicates the tenuousness of his masculine identity within a society where one's sense of masculinity is predicated upon an acceptance of the mother's castration.

Ayesha's threat rests in her phallic power arising from her sexually charged union with the male gendered pillar of fire in the womb of the earth. She says of the experience, "it seemed to take the shape of a mighty man" with "green eyes of emerald like to those of tigers. . . . Arms it had also, blood-red, splendid arms that stretched themselves toward me as though to clasp me to that burning breast." Her union with the pillar is sexual: "The Fire possessed me, I was the Fire's, and in a dread communion, the Fire was mine" (*Wisdom's Daughter* 352). When Ayesha unites with the fire she partakes of its essence. Holly describes her with imagery reminiscent of the pillar of fire: "Life—radiant, ecstatic, wonderful—seemed to flow from her and around her." She has the ability to command flame and kill with lightning. Repeatedly the light in her eyes is described as a flickering flame.[16] In addition to the combination of male and female sexual characteristics in the figure of Ayesha, the pillar's location in the womb of the earth doubly combines male and female components.

[10]*Imperial Leather* by Anne McClintock examines the intimate interrelationship of the categories of sex, race and class in the colonial world. Lindy Steibel affirms Edward Said's seminal assertions about Orientalism. She notes that in the colonial relationship the portrayal of the colony says more about the culture that produced it than the object of the study (3).

[11]Lindy Steibel is not the first Haggard scholar to note the dualism in Rider Haggard, wherein his extraordinarily fanciful and sexual African romances belie his stodgy English persona. His African milieu is his place of excess, where his unconscious desires express themselves freely (8).

[12]In Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, the protagonists navigate a terrain configured after the female body complete with mountains named Sheba's Breasts that they scale, nearly dying of exposure at the top. They then proceed down through a valley and descend into a cavern in search of diamond mines, where they are trapped inside and nearly suffocate. David Bunn observes that Haggard's novels feminize the African landscape, "blending images of women, sexuality, and penetration, with an older image of utopian space (10-12); see also Rebecca Stott (78-9).

[13]Rothstein explores the nuances of the male narcicisstic personality disorder, focusing on the ways that defects in the parental role models can result in "intense and confusing oedipal situations that remain active and unresolved" (189).

[14]Heidi Hartmann defines patriarchy as "a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (14).

[15]Ruth Ellen Josselson observes that because of the significance of the maternal role, the path of the male child in forming his masculine identity is more traumatic than is the path of the female child in forming her female identity. She notes that a chasm forms in the male child's identity that enables him to consolidate acceptable masculine behavior patterns and separate himself from feminine traits. She also observes that once the male child detaches himself from his connection with his mother in order to claim his masculinity, the fear of being once again engulfed by her and returned to an unsexed state haunts his psychic development ever after. "The male child must draw tight and defined boundaries around himself and learn to relate to others across a gulf that both separates him and guards his masculinity" (225); see also Kaja Silverman.

[16]Freud helpfully observes that "the shape and movements of a flame suggest a phallus in activity: (*SE* 22: 190)

Laplanche and Pontalis in the *Language of Psychoanalysis* theorize that the "woman endowed in phantasy with a phallus . . . has two main forms: the woman is represented as having preserved the male's phallus inside herself, or else as having an external phallus, or phallic attribute" ("Castration Complex" 56-59; "Phallic Woman" 311). Haggard's location of the pillar of fire in the womb coupled with his evocation of phallic femininity in the figure of Ayesha indicates the former.[17] In addition, Ayesha possesses "an external phallus, or phallic attribute." A dominant component of her characterization involves a series of snake-like comparisons: "About the waist her white kirtle was fastened by a double-headed snake of solid gold" (118). "[T]he lovely face grew rigid, and the gracious willowy form seemed to erect itself. 'Man!' she half whispered, half hissed, throwing back her head like a snake about to strike" (119). "She stood up and shook the white wrappings from her, and came forth shining and splendid like some glittering snake when it has cast its slough" (143). "[A]nd with a sudden motion she shook her gauzy covering from her, and stood forth in her low kirtle and her snaky zone, in her glorious radiant beauty and her imperial grace, rising from her wrappings, as it were, like Venus from the wave, or Galatea from her marble, or a beautified spirit from the tomb" (172).

This snake imagery links Ayesha to another castrating figure—the Medusa. The Medusa has a complicated history. The perception arising from the Ancient Greek culture is of a monstrous woman with snakes for locks of hair who turns all men who look upon her to stone. Jean Pierre Vernant, observing that this figure is always depicted gazing fixedly at the spectator, describes her as a combination of bestial and human qualities:

> The eyes are staring; the gaze fixed and piercing. The hair resembles an animal's mane or bristles with snakes. The ears are overly large, deformed, at times like those of a cow. Horns sometimes grow from the skull. The gaping, grinning mouth . . . [reveals] rows of teeth, fangs, or wild-boar tusks. The tongue thrusts forward and protrudes outside the mouth. The chin is hairy or bearded, and the skin sometimes furrowed with deep wrinkles. (113)

Vernant observes that the Ancient Greeks were determined to establish a severe distinction between the adult male citizen and everyone else, who "always appear deformed . . .—barbarian, slave, stranger, youth, and woman" (111). The image of the Gorgo (Medusa) depicts the woman as grotesque in her alterity, an incapacitating figure who must not be looked at. To do so would result in the person being so fixated in the gaze with this threatening otherness as to become disoriented, losing one's self, even one's existence in the world of men (Vernant 137).

Alternative to this image of hideousness, another tradition locates Medusa in Africa as a queen, one of the legendary Amazon warriors, and a priestess noted for her wisdom and spiritual strength. She was a woman of such remarkable beauty and power that people feared to look upon her. "She wore her hair entwined with royal serpents, like the heads of Egyptian queens and High-priestesses." Norma Lorre Goodrich theorizes that Medusa is killed during territorial wars to remove her threatening power. She refers to her legend in Africa, specifically Libya, where following her death she was revered and where powerful female figures still resonate within African legend (176). Ayesha's characterization has much in common with the legend of the African Medusa queen (Cohen 105-10). Originally from Egypt, Ayesha was a priestess of Isis who wore the serpent as an emblem of her power. She is a mighty warrior who leads her armies to victory.[18] Most significantly, she is a figure with a Medusa-like gaze who debilitates the men who look upon her.

Ayesha's veiling indicates the male fear of the face to face encounter with a threatening female other. Her unveiling provokes astonished reactions from the male observers. When Leo views her, Holly observes: "I saw the power of her dread beauty fasten on him and take a hold of his senses, drugging them, and drawing the heart out of him." Leo says of the meeting that it was as though "all the manhood had been taken out of him" (172). When Holly first views She's face, he "shrank back blinded and amazed," and then curiously observes: "I have heard of the beauty of celestial beings, now I saw it, only this beauty, with all its awful loveliness and purity, was *evil*" (155). He explains that this perception rests in the impression of her "deep acquaintance with grief and passion . . . sin and sorrow." Apparently, Holly determines that She is evil merely because she has lived passionately. Finally Holly feels compelled "by some magnetic force" to look into her eyes, "and felt a current pass from them to [him] that bewildered and half blinded [him]."[19] The "current" passing between them indicates the reciprocity of the gaze that is too revealing and threatening to view directly, and so he averts his gaze, "lifting [his] hand to cover up [his] eyes" (156). Holly's behavior reproduces the behavior of Kallikrates two thousand years previously, who, in order to resist Ayesha's determination to seduce him away from his wife, "held his hand before his eyes to hide her beauty. . . . Then in her rage did she smite him by her magic and he died" (Barreca xi). The threat of Ayesha is the threat of an extraordinarily beautiful, passionate woman that the man attempts to resist through refusing to be entranced by her gaze.

However, the terror of the encounter does not reside in

[17]Powerful, anarchic women populate Haggard's adventure stories, Cleopatra in *Cleopatra* (1889), Mameena in *Child of the Storm* (1913), Meriamen in *The World's Desire* (1890). Haggard also frequently creates sexually ambiguous women, like Gagool in *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), and Hendrika the Baboon lady in *Allan's Wife* (1889). Etherington observes that these women frequently wear "golden snakes as their only item of jewelry" (79).

[18]See Haggard's *Wisdom's Daughter* (1923) for the history of Ayesha's life as a priestess of Isis in Egypt before going to Africa. See Haggard's *She and Allan* (1921) and *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1905), 167-174, for accounts of her power as a warrior and leader of armies.

[19]For Freud's theory of Oedipus Rex and blinding as symbolic castration, see Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (286) and Chapter VII of "An Outline of Psycho-Analysis," Young-Bruehl (365n).

the woman but in the power she wields over the man. By not looking the man may reduce the woman's power over him, but he also avoids confronting what can be gleaned from "the eye, the gaze, the reciprocity of seeing and being seen" (Vernant 135). Punter describes the narcissistic process in which the self inscribes into the interaction with the other "markings of evasion" so as to avoid realizations about the self. The male protagonists interact with Ayesha so as to shield themselves from too absorbing an involvement with her, and consequently they fail to move beyond rudimentary emotions of worshipful devotion, fear, and bewilderment. Moreover, Ayesha cannot emerge as a fully developed character because the men who interact with her, starting with her creator, are too limited in their approach to her to allow for a more penetrating encounter. Ultimately, Haggard creates She as the remote, inaccessible narcissist, because such a woman perpetuates the sexual divide that reinforces rather than challenges his limited perceptions of women. Her veiling hinders him from developing the self awareness that results only from self/other confrontations that would challenge his narcissistic illusions.

Vernant observes of the face to face encounter with the Gorgo:

> It is your gaze that is captured in the mask. The face of Gorgo is the Other, your double. It is the Strange, responding to your face like an image in the mirror. . . . It is a simple reflection, and yet also a reality from the world beyond, an image that captures you because instead of merely returning to you the appearance of your own face and refracting your gaze, it represents in its grimace the terrifying horror of a radical otherness with which you yourself will be identified as you are turned into stone.
>
> (138)

A person's narcissistic assertion of "radical otherness," is what the soul refuses to acknowledge, fears that are repressed and projected in such a way as to disguise the relationship to the self. To be turned into stone is to fully acknowledge the horror that lies within.

Haggard reveals through *She* one of his central horrors to be the psychosexual tensions provoked by sexual difference, an anxiety Ayesha as well as the Medusa embodies. Freud's "Medusa Head" reading illustrates how this mythic monster expresses the oedipal drama and castration anxiety. His approach to the Medusa is telling, since he focuses upon the monster after her decapitation when her power has been largely removed, or at least transmuted into a threatening image manipulated by others: Athena, who deploys the Medusa image on her shield to threaten the enemy, and Perseus who keeps the Medusa's decapitated head in a bag, brandishing it when necessary in his own defense. Freud, likewise, manipulates the image according to his own agenda of asserting the woman's castration so that the male child can experience the oedipal rite of passage.

For Freud, the Medusa is the embodiment of the anxiety circulating around the young boy's first horrified recognition of the female's genitals and his own potential castration: "To decapitate = to castrate. The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration linked to the sight of something . . . it occurs when a boy, who has hitherto been unwilling to believe the threat of castration, catches sight of the female genitals, probably those of an adult, surrounded by hair, and essentially those of his mother. . ." (*SE* 18: 273). Freud's provocative concentration of images begins with the daring equation: "To decapitate = to castrate," then moves quickly to the child's sense of horror upon viewing the female genitals, and later shuttles back to a description of the Medusa Head: "The hair upon Medusa's head is frequently represented in works of art in the form of snakes, and these once again are derived from the castration complex . . . [but] serve as a mitigation of the horror, for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror." In fact, Freud continues, the Medusa makes the "spectator stiff with terror, turns him into stone . . . [but] becoming stiff means an erection," which reassures the spectator that he still possesses the penis. Freud's analysis cleverly conveys the acuteness of the young boy's horror and confusion, while simultaneously revealing the extraordinary suggestiveness of the Medusa's head, now covered in snakes signifying castration as well as the penis, and now covered with hair curling about the woman's genitals, likewise signifying castration.[20] Moreover, the horror of both of these images ultimately reassures the child that he has the penis, as he experiences an erection (Hertz 166). Freud's use of the Medusa myth is adroit, yet the brazenness of his deployment of the female other in the service of his oedipal theories is also troubling. Much as the young boy captured in the moment of exquisite narcissism in reference to his penis utilizes the body of the woman (the mother) to assuage his anxieties, Freud, again, recklessly expresses his own narcissistic fears with recourse to a hideous femininity.

However, if Freud seems determined to assert the male child's realization of his genital difference and superiority at the expense of the castrated mother, his reading also bridges sexual characteristics, as the female and male genitals combine and transform from one moment to the next. This conflation of the male and female genitals captures the threatening, frequently noted, sexual ambiguity of this mythic monster. When Perseus manages to behead Medusa by reducing the encounter to viewing her image refracted through Athena's shield, from out of the severed neck springs Pegasus, conflating the neck with the womb, the head with the female genitals (Vernant 113, 136). Perseus's beheading of the Medusa combines with her castration, yet out of the castration springs life, demonstrating the female ability to procreate—threatening to feelings of male supremacy. However, the male sexual organ participating in the imagery through the coiling snakes, the lolling tongue makes of the Gorgo a figure that is both male and female, beast and human. In one sense this combination of counterparts describes a world that has ceased to be ordered and comprehensible and therefore reassuring. However, it reflects, as well, the consistent, albeit threatening, movement

[20]For an exhaustive and precise reading of Freud's "Medusa's Head," see Thomas Albrecht's "Apotropaic Reading: Freud's 'Medusa's Head'" *in Literature an Psychology.*

to form a correspondence with the "radical otherness."[21] Freud, even as his Medusa reading is laced with his misogynistic need to assert the woman's powerlessness, also, through his metamorphosing images of the male and female genitals suggests a correspondence that alludes to a rapprochement.

Like the Medusa, the denouement of *She* describes both the troubling alterity of a femininity that has moved outside of acceptable, domesticated boundaries, encroaching on the territory of the phallic, as well as a movement to bridge the threatening sexual difference. The conclusion indicates the confused jumble of desires a man can exhibit in relation to a provocative figure like Ayesha—including the repressed desire for maternal union, the simultaneous need to remain separate, and the ego fears associated with the oedipal drama. Ayesha takes the male protagonists on a journey to encounter the pillar of fire in the womb of the earth so that they, too, can join her as glorified figures. The experience in the womb initially suggests a joyous union. Holly observes: "'. . . it was as though the bonds of my flesh had been loosened, and had left the spirit free to soar to the empyrean of its unguessed powers. . . . I seemed to live more keenly, to reach to a higher joy, to sip the goblet of a subtler thought than ever it had been my lot to taste before'" (217). Life in the womb epitomizes the primary narcissistic tie between infant and mother. As the travelers stand in awed wonder, maternal associations surface. Ayesha instructs the men to "muse upon thy mother's kiss" (218), and as the party waits for the arrival of the pillar of fire, Ayesha places her arm around Leo and kisses him upon the forehead, and Holly observes: "'It was like a mother's kiss'" (219).

However, this moment of maternal union ends tragically. The pillar of fire appears and thunders towards them. Terrified, the men fall to the ground before it and hide their faces in the sand, perhaps because the phallic femininity of this space evokes the men's fears of castration. To allay their fears, Ayesha enters the pillar first, clothed only in her long hair and golden snake belt.[22] As the revolving fire twines around her form, Holly describes her as "'the very Spirit of the Flame'" (219). Initially Ayesha's phallic nature augments even further, but then this rejuvenating moment drastically miscarries. This is Ayesha's second joining with the pillar, and, in effect, it neutralizes her former glorious transformation. Suddenly the weight of her two thousand years falls upon her; her mass of beautiful hair falls from her head; she turns into a shriveled hag, and, shrieking over her degrading humiliation, dies. The phallic snake imagery collapses with the following reference: "the gold snake that had encircled her gracious form slipped over her hips and to the ground." The mesmerizing, castrating gaze of her eyes likewise disintegrates: "She raised herself upon her bony hands, and blindly gazed around her, swaying her head slowly from side to side as does a tortoise. She could not see, for her whitish eyes were covered with a horny film" (221).

Ayesha is a mediating figure for Haggard in confronting the trauma over sexual difference. However, the determination to destroy her indicates his refusal to confront the self revelatory implications of her. In effect, Haggard, like Perseus in his approach to Medusa, reduces Ayesha to a reflection of concealment, and this deception conducts to her destruction. His narcissistic needs result in opposing agendas in reference to his heroine. Her fascinating appeal indicates Haggard's yearning for the "immortal woman inspired by an immortal love" reminiscent of his infantile bond with the maternal figure; her destruction indicates his unconscious aggression towards the phallic, castrating woman who threatens his autonomous, masculine identity. Morton Cohen observes that Haggard was a psychologically fragile person, and "*She* represents his search for psychological peace" (Cohen 114). Read as a portrait of Haggard's unconscious trauma, *She* reveals the psychosexual anxieties that lurk behind the engrossing adventure story.

Thirty years after writing *She* at "white heat," Haggard attempts to resuscitate his heroine in a sequel: *Ayesha, the Return of She*. This novel is much less successful, for it attempts to illuminate She's mystery, but instead merely reveals Haggard's pedestrian mind in reference to the "woman question." The plot takes place twenty years after the events of *She*. Holly and Leo are living in England, having passed their lives in despair over the loss of Ayesha. Leo is on the verge of committing suicide when he receives a vision indicating where he will again encounter her. The two men travel to the location (Tibet) and discover another veiled form. However, this form upon unveiling is not the glorified Ayesha, but the shrunken, hag-like figure. What finally enables Ayesha to resume her former glory is Leo, who insists that he still loves her, even though she is hideous. With his declaration of love, Ayesha's glorious beauty returns. She and Leo make plans to marry, but Ayesha tells him he must join with the pillar of fire and become likewise glorified, or a union with her would destroy him. Leo refuses to take this step, and instead petitions Ayesha to give up her glory: "forget the ambition that gnaws unceasingly at thy soul; I say forget thy greatness and be a woman and—my wife" (178). In other words, being a woman is inconsistent with greatness.

Out of love for Leo, Ayesha relinquishes her power:

> Hitherto, with all her loveliness, the heart of Ayesha had seemed like that winter mountain wrapped in its unapproachable snow. . . . But now everything was altered. . . . Ayesha grew human . . . Radiant and more radiant did she seem to grow, sweeter and more sweet, no longer the veiled hermit of the Caves, no longer the Oracle of the Sanctuary, no longer the Valkyrie of the battleplain, but only the loveliest and most happy bride that ever gladdened a husband's eyes. (179)

Haggard's agenda in this sequel is clear—a woman's happiness is found in the eyes of her husband. Without a man, power and greatness are insignificant. Moreover, it is the powerless woman that gladdens the man's eyes.

In 1894 Haggard wrote an article for the *African Review*, entitled " A Man's View of Woman," in which he expressed the belief that woman was created for man, to be his helpmate in the real business of life, and a fantasy vehicle for his imaginative pleasure. He believed that the "feminine mystique" was a permanent fixture of the male imagination, and that it was impossible for women to extricate themselves from its effects. This, Haggard felt, was the chief obstacle to woman's emancipation. Although he sympathized with the oppressiveness of the masculine influence that women labored under, he saw no solution, except to hope for "a better life beyond the grave when the schism between the male and female parts of the human soul should finally be healed." This insight into Haggard's position on the "woman question" is an illuminating view of the events of *She*. He rejects the woman's movement because it hinders the woman from fulfilling her primary role as man's helpmate and the vehicle for male desire, and this subverts his efforts to heal the rift created out of sexual difference. His heroines who defy male authority and live powerfully and self reliantly away from men struck a chord of buried fear in Haggard, as it did in many Victorian men, that women would reach the point where they no longer needed men (Mill 29).

Ultimately *She* expresses the plight of the woman entrapped within the man's narcissistic ego needs. It is significant that Haggard locates She in a mythic space removed from history and his social sphere so that he might better manipulate her in accordance with his psychological and social agendas.[23] Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time" examines the sphere of the woman's experience as delineated within patriarchal society, in which the woman participates in "monumental time"—mythic and mystical—as distinct from "linear history, or cursive time" where men move and act in ways that situate them in history. She notes that it has been the objective of feminism to insert the woman within historical time to enable her to act in spheres other than and in addition to those dictated by her sexual nature and biology. Kristeva envisions a future in which sexual difference and castration anxiety cease to be the modes through which individuals orient themselves in society, noting that the achievement of feminism has been to reveal the deadliness of a "social contract" that depends upon such divisiveness (189-90, 209). Haggard's *She*, and Freud's insistence upon woman's lack and powerlessness epitomize the intransigence of the misogynistic, male privileging perspective. Ayesha symbolizes the myth of femininity thriving within the intractable *fin de siècle* male imagination that feminism has endeavored to systematically dismantle.

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[21]For Freud, the small child's Medusa encounter with the female gentials provokes a horror that persists throughout life. He observes in his article, "Fetishism," that when the boy first realizes that his mother has no penis, his narcissism that attaches with force to this particular organ rebels with horror at the thought. Freud then draws a very telling connection: "In later life grown men may experience similar panic, perhaps when the cry goes up that the throne or altar are in danger" (*SE* 21: 153). The grown man who confronts some challenge to his sense of security feels a corresponding horror and instabiltiy that he felt in early childhood in reference to his penis. What is significant is the way in which narcissism arising from his primal experience, an experience that is now repressed, can be evoked in reference to challenges to one's ego stucture later in life.

[22]Jean Pierre Vernant observes that in ancient Spartan and Lacedaimonian marriage rituals, the bride's head is shaved as a sign of submission and domestication. The male keeps his hair long as a sign of his virility. "In shaving the head of the young bride, everything that could be still considered masculine and martial—and wild—in her femininity is extirpated in her new matrimonial state. The face of the Gorgo must not be introduced into the husband's house under the mask of the bride" (120).

[23]Showalter examines Haggard's *She* as a manifestation of his ambivalence over female power, expressed through escapist romantic tales that play out his secret desire in "an anarchic space that can be safely called 'primitive'" (81). The imagery in *She* supports a fascinating correlation between Ayesha's phallic nature and an image of a phallic, specifically racial promontory that greets the Englishmen as they approach the African coast. Holly observes, "'It became edged with fire of the growing light behind it. Then I started, as well I might, for I perceived the top of the peak . . . was shaped like a negro's head and face, whereon was stamped a most fiendish and terrifying expression'" (45). Not just the defiantly unconventional female, but also the racial other is associated with an irrational, unbridled, fearsome sexual potency that is threatening and castrating to the white male observer.

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Pace University

Coming in

The Victorian Newsletter

Maria K. Bachman, "Scandalous Sensations: *The Woman in White* on the Victorian Stage"

Edward H. Cohen, "The Epigraph to Henley's *In Hospital*"

Gary Scharnhorst, "Kate Field and Anthony Trollope: The Gaps in the Record"

Ernest Fontana, "Metaphoric Mules: Dickens's Tom Gradgrind and Dante's Vanni Fucci"

Beth A. Boehm, "Nostalgia to Amnesia: Charles Dickens, Marcus Clarke and Narratives of Australia's Convict Origins"

Books Received

Efron, Arthur. *Experiencing Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Deweyan Account*. Value Oriented Book Series #162. Amsterdam, New York: Rodofi, 2005. Pp. xvii + 248. $72.00 (paper). "There are of course novels in which the narrators are patently different from the selves of their creating authors, but it never has felt to me that *Tess* is one of these, despite the truism that a narrator is not the same as an author. Possibly the well-known critical doctrine that a fictional narrator must not be mistaken for the author's own voice is premised on an error that John Dewey would not have allowed, namely the presupposition that the every day voice of a person is the real self's voice, and the literary one is not. The self (which I do not dismiss as an unreal figment) can have several modes of expression, and several varieties of voice. With Hardy, a man who in *Tess* is writing his thirteenth novel, the narrative voice (or voices) had become an integral part of his self. In Dewey's terms, narrating novels had become a deeply engrained creative 'habit' of Hardy's self. By the time he wrote *Tess*, the act of narration would have 'left an enduring impress' upon him" ([1]).

Hack, Daniel. *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2005. Pp. xi + 225. $39.50. "This book explores Victorian fiction's engagement with 'the material,' especially the materiality of writing. . . (1).

"Rejecting both conflationary and exclusionary or rigidly hierarchical stances, this study seeks to keep distinct four primary, contemporary referents of *materiality*—economic, physical, linguistic, and corporeal—while at the same time keeping them all in play, precisely in order to keep open the question of their relationships to one another. My approach is historical and critical rather than theoretical: instead attempting to decide what should count as 'material,' I examine how the conditions, components, and consequences of writing now conjured by that term were put into discourse in the mid-nineteenth century. Against the grain of most criticism, whether materialist or idealist, I argue that attention of these 'material' aspects of writing does not by itself constitute reading against the grain: on the contrary, such attention corresponds to the Victorians' own, which anticipates and solicits it. As we will see, prominent novels and discussions of authorship often treat the 'material' parts and props of writing—including writing designated as 'literary'—as neither insignificant and transcendable nor scandalous and regrettable, but rather as potential sources of meaning, value, and power" (1-2).

Hassett, Constance W. *Christina Rossetti: The Patience of Style*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2005. Pp. xiii + 278. $39.50. "Chapter 1, 'Questions of Desire in *Goblin Market and Other Poems*,' opens by exploring Rossetti's deep interest in the paradoxes of desire and then takes up the bittersweet two-mindedness that energizes her most admired lyrics [11].

"Chapter 2, 'Influence and Restraint: Victorian Women Poets and the Rossettis," examines Rossettian intertextualities [12].

"Chapter 3, 'The Nonsense and Wisdom of *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book*,' looks at Rossetti's collection of 121 original poems for children [12].

"Chapter 4, 'Ambitious Triangles: Rossetti and the Sonnet Tradition,' examines Rossetti's great, revisionary sonnet sequences, *Monna Innominata* and *Later Life* [13].

"Taking Christina Rossetti's response to the untimely death of Dante Gabriel Rossetti as a traumatic point of reference, chapter 5, 'Rossetti's Finale: *The Face of the Deep* (1892) and *Verses* (1893),' provides an account of the urgency, spiritual honesty, and consummate skill of the best of the late-life poems" (14).

Houston, Gail Turley. *From Dickens to Dracula: Gothic, Economics, and Victorian Fiction*. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture. New York: Cambridge UP, 2005. Pp. xiv + 165. $75.00. "In this study, I argue that Gothic tropes register, manage, and assess the intense panic produced and elided by the unstable Victorian economy . . . . Concomitantly, I show that, however self-consciously scientific economic discourse becomes in the nineteenth century, it is frequently accompanied by terrifying phantom appendages" (1).

McLaughlin, Kevin. *Paperwork: Fiction & Mass Mediacy in the Paper Age*. Critical Authors and Issues Series. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005. Pp. 181. $49.95; £32.50. "The most challenging aspects of the mass media confronting the individual and collective subject emerge at dynamic and highly divisible moments of reading—what [Walter] Benjamin somewhat cryptically associated with the springing up of a 'dialectical image.' At such moments, we might say, the mass media becomes 'criticizable.' In this sense, the following chapters approach the mass mediacy of the nineteenth century by way of literary criticism. The genre may seem outmoded in this context—overtaken by forces separating it from the traditional aesthetic categories of self-contained work, on the one hand, and self-conscious author or critic, on the other. But then again, Benjamin suggests, this separation was characteristic of a certain concept of criticism from the start" (28).

Moskal, Jeanne and Shannon R. Wooden, eds. *Teaching British Women Writers 1750-1900*. New York Etc.: Peter Lang, 2005. Pp. [xi] + 235. $29.95 (paper). Contents: Jeanne Moskal, "Introduction"; Shannon R. Wooden, "We Can Do It! Putting Women's Texts to Work"; Kristine Swenson, "Teaching a 'Highly Exceptional' Text: Krupabai Sattianadhan's *Saguna* and Narratives of Empire"; Rebecca Shapiro, "Teaching English Women's Conversationist Rhetoric"; Kathryn T. Flannery, "Eliza Haywood: Mainstreaming Women Writers in the Undergraduate Survey"; Rick Incorvati, "The Poetry of Friendship: Connecting the Histories of Women and Lesbian Sexuality in the Undergraduate Classroom"; Elizabeth A. Dolan, "A Subversive Urn and a Suicidal Bride: Strategies for Reading Across Aesthetic Difference"; James R. Simmons, Jr., "Pedagogy and Oppositions: Teaching Non-Canonical British Women Writers at the Techinical University"; Elisabeth Rose Gruner, "Short Fiction by Women in the Victorian Literature Survey"; Lawrence Zygmunt, "'This Parlitcular Web': George Eliot, Emily Eden, and Locale in Multiplot Fiction"; Jeanne Moskal, "Making the Student a Scholar"; Patricia L. Hamilton, "Beyond 'Great Crowds' and 'Minor Triumphs': Teaching Women Playwrights from the British Romantic Period (1790-1840)"; Diane Chambers, "Working within a Community of Learners: Teaching Christina Rossetti at a Christian College"; E. J. Clery, "Canon-Busting: Undergraduate Research into Romantic-Era Women's Writing in the Corvey Collection"; Peaches Henry, "Teaching 'Recovered' Victorian Female Intellectuals"; Nicole Meller Beck and Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, "Everybody Learns and Everybody Teaches: Feminist Pedagogy and Co-editing Mary Ward's *Marcella*"; Gina Luria Walker, "'Can Man Be Free/And Woman Be a Slave?' Teaching Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Women Writers in Intersecting Communities"; David E. Latané Jr., "Who Counts? Popularity, Modern Recovery, and the Early Nineteenth-Century Woman Poet"; William B. Thesing, "Changing Course(s) at Mid- and Late Career: Teaching the Lives/Teaching the Works/Teaching the Teacher"; List of Contributors.

Ouida. *Moths*. Ed. Natalie Schroeder. Broadview Editions. Peterborough, ON: Broadview P, 2005. Pp. 627. $22.95 (CDN), $18.95 (US), £10.99 (UK), $28.95 (AUST) (paper). "The text of *Moths* used in this edition is based on the Copyright Edition, the 1880 Tauchnitz Collection of British Authors Edition, vols. 1878, 1879, and 1880.

I chose this edition because it was the earliest one I could locate and it was in the original three-volume format. I also consulted the 1893 Peter Fenelon Collier Edition (New York) when I found errors in Tauchnitz that might have been due to type-setting. As many of Ouida's contemporary reviewers noted, her novels are filled with grammatical errors in English, French, and Italian. I have not attempted to correct grammatical errors, but I have silently corrected punctuation, spelling, and misplaced or missing accent marks.

Ouida was also criticized for padding her novels with obscure allusions. I have made every effort to identify the allusions with the help of colleagues, friends, and members of the Victorian list.serv. Unfortunately, some of them proved to be so obscure (as in the case of Chaucer's heroine 'with strait glaive and simple shield') that they remain a mystery" (41).

Strange, Julie-Marie. *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914*. Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories. Cambridge; Cambridge UP, 2005. Pp. [x] + 294. $85.00. "This book argues for a flexible and inclusive definition of a working-class culture of death which embraces difference and seeks to privilege alternative languages of loss. The vast majority of bereaved families participated in death rites which were not only expected performances of mourning, but were also imbued with shared understandings of decency, dignity, custom and respectability. In the context of common burial rites, therefore, it is possible to identify a culture of bereavement. However, it is imperative to recognise that whilst the rituals of mourning were inscribed with shared social meaning they were also appropriated by individuals and invested with personal significance. Moreover, personal concepts of death and grief were elastic and subject to perpetual reinterpretation. Overall, the working-class culture of death was a social forum for mediating a private discourse of grief and condolence. Thus, whilst images bequeathed by Dickens continue to offer a colourful representation of 'Victorian' cultures of mourning, there is little of Dickens or his caricatures in this celebration of death" (26).

Taylor, Julia. *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2005. Pp. ix + 203. 38 illus. $44.95. "The underlying aim of each of these chapters is to suggest that hybrid genres like narrative painting and illustration are ideologically significant, their meanings generated by an unstable relation between word and image that is bound up in other relations: between country and colony, white and black, male and female. The differences of the textual and visual collude in the differences of nation, race, and gender. Perhaps, indeed, this had already been recognized and explained, by a certain Tennyson Longfellow Smith. It might be no coincidence that his attempts to redefine the sexually fallen woman take place across the borderline between a poem and a picture" (19).

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