

The Victorian Newsletter

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George Eliot and the Victorian "Historic Imagination"

Brian Rosenberg

It happens on occasion that a seemingly insignificant literary work — a bit of correspondence, or an entry in a journal — articulates better than more deliberately ambitious studies the spirit of an age or the central idea of an intellectual movement. Keats' famous letter to his brothers, for instance, its definition of negative capability uncomfortably paired with a discussion of table manners, manages to be both original and representative, capturing in a single elusive phrase the widespread Romantic concern with objectivity. Think too of Swift's letters in defense of *Gulliver's Travels*, Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, or Gide's "Journal of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*." Significant in a similar way, I believe, is a short notebook entry made by George Eliot sometime between 1872 and 1879, entitled by the author "Historic Imagination."¹

To call George Eliot representative is not to say anything new, one of the commonplaces of Eliot criticism being that her intellectual and artistic development epitomizes the most decided trends of the nineteenth century. The brief note on "Historic Imagination," however, is almost uniquely concentrated, enlightening, and paradigmatic, even for a writer so centrally located as Eliot. Its subject — the effective incorporation of history into art — preoccupied Victorian writers as it has preoccupied no others before or since; its argument echoes and crystallizes many of the major theoretical statements of four decades; and its application extends from fiction to poetry, social criticism, and other kinds of historical recreation. Understand these fifteen sentences and we understand much about what writers like Eliot, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens, and Browning were trying repeatedly to accomplish.

These are large claims, especially for a fragment that is less a coherent argument than a series of repetitions and reformulations gradually giving force to a few central ideas. A brief summary of those ideas, however, will begin to show how thoroughly they are the products of the time:

- (1) The writing of history is extremely, perhaps uniquely important.
- (2) This writing should be neither completely factual nor completely imaginary, but somehow should combine concrete facts with the artist's shaping vision.
- (3) Concrete facts should range in scale from the most mundane to the most extraordinary, bringing together in historical writing a rigorous particularity and an awareness of what surpasses the typical.

(4) Imaginative recreation of historical material should draw from it some meaning — moral, psychological, spiritual — which transcends the specific historical moment and applies as well to other places and times. Understanding history, that is, should allow us to see in the past the seeds of the present and future.

(5) This intimate relationship between past and present must inevitably affect the style and structure of imaginative historical writing.

(6) Only the heroic figure — frequently the artist — can see within his or her own time the transcendent, ahistorical meaning.

These assertions, admittedly simplified versions of Eliot's own, derive in part from her comprehensive reading of contemporary artistic and theoretic treatments of history. Though no full consideration of Eliot's thought can afford to ignore Continental writers like Comte, Feuerbach, and Hegel, I wish to focus here specifically on her relation to nineteenth-century English historiography. Especially relevant, in ways I hope to show, are Carlyle's historical writings, particularly the essays of the early eighteenthirties, Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* and *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Dickens' historical novels *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, and Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book*. This is by no means an exhaustive list of Eliot's English sources and influences, but it does begin to suggest their immense variety and importance.

The first three sentences of "Historic Imagination" develop most of the ideas I have outlined:

The exercise of a veracious imagination in historical picturing seems to be capable of a development that might help the judgment greatly with regard to present and future events. By veracious imagination, I mean the working out in detail of the various steps by which a political or social change was reached, using all extant evidence and supplying deficiencies by careful analogical creation. How triumphant opinions originally spread — how institutions arose — what were the conditions of great inventions, discoveries, or theoretic conceptions — what circumstances affecting individual lots are attendant on the decay of long-established systems, — all these grand elements of history require the illumination of special imaginative treatment.²

The primary English source of Eliot's, and the age's, great interest in the "grand elements of history" is undoubtedly Thomas Carlyle, worshipped by Ruskin, admired by Dickens, judged by Eliot the most influential writer of his time.³ History had of course been an important subject for

1. The entry was originally published in *Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book*, ed. Charles Lee Lewes (1884). All references here are to the version reprinted in *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 446-447. Lewis, in the preface to his volume, dates the entries in "Leaves from a Note-Book," unpublished during Eliot's lifetime, between

the appearances of *Middlemarch* (1871-72) and *Theophrastus Such* (1879). "Historic Imagination" is the fourth of twelve entries.

2. "Historic Imagination," p. 446.

3. Eliot writes that "there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle's writings," in "Thomas Carlyle" (1855). See *Essays of George Eliot*, pp. 212-215.

the artist before Carlyle — the novels of Scott tell us that — but it had not so clearly recommended itself as the most meaningful subject of all. Between 1830 and 1833 Carlyle published in *Fraser's Magazine* "On History," "On Biography," and "On History Again," defining in some detail the theory and practice of historical writing and filtering into English thought the ideas of several influential German predecessors. "History," he asserts, "is not only the fittest study, but the only study, and includes all others whatsoever."⁴ It "lies at the root of all science" and is "the first distinct product of Man's spiritual nature; his earliest expression of what can be called Thought."⁵ Among the many disciples of Carlyle was Ruskin, who in 1848 echoed a number of Carlyle's strictures in "The Lamp of Memory," the chapter of *The Seven Lamps* devoted in part to an analysis of "historical" architecture. One of the advantages of Gothic is that it "admits of a richness of record altogether unlimited"⁶; the absence of such record "is no slight, no consequenceless evil: it is ominous, infectious, fecund of other fault and misfortune."⁷ Less melodramatic by nature than Carlyle or Ruskin, Eliot nevertheless shares their belief in the value of historical picturing.

The exhortation to combine fact and imagination in historical writing dominates the early portion of Eliot's fragment. Its title already suggests a mixture of the real ("Historic") and the fictitious ("Imagination"), a suggestion repeated in the phrase "veracious imagination" as well as in the pairing of "extant evidence" with "analogical creation" and "elements of history" with "imaginative treatment." Here the influence of her contemporaries is most apparent. Carlyle distinguishes the historical Artist, able to "inform and ennoble," from the Artisan who labors "Mechanically"⁸; Ruskin, in *The Stones of Venice*, praises the Gothic builders for their exceptional ability to unite fact with design⁹; and in the prefaces to *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens specifically defines his enterprise as the combination of verifiable truth and artistic vision.¹⁰ Browning above all describes in detail the artist's ability to fuse fiction and historical accuracy. *The Ring and the Book*, like "Historic Imagination," embodies in its title the opposite extremes of fancy and fact. The Book is "fanciless fact, the documents indeed,"¹¹ what Eliot calls the "extant evidence," which fancy binds and forms into art, as the goldsmith fashions the ring from the shapeless ingot. The result is "Prime nature with an added artistry,"¹² the "one way possible of speaking truth."¹³ There is, so far as

I can tell, no substantial difference between Browning's statement and Eliot's, five to ten years later, that the "elements of history require the illumination of special imaginative treatment." In both cases imagination is seen not merely as a means of filling in gaps in historical record, but as the only available way of bringing life and relevance to inert factual material.

The historical "elements" Eliot identifies range from the extraordinary to the common, from the "conditions of great inventions, discoveries, or theoretic conceptions" to the "circumstances affecting individual lots." Victorian historians in general often combine a Carlylean interest in great men or great movements with a Wordsworthian interest in the details of everyday life: in fact, Eliot would argue, the two are inseparable since the common circumstances and grand inventions thoroughly infiltrate and affect one another. Carlyle himself recognized this as early as 1830 (though he seems, in his later historical writings, frequently to forget it): "he who sees no world but that of courts and camps," he argues,

and writes only how soldiers were drilled and shot, and how this ministerial conjurer out-conjured that other, and then guided, or at least held, something which he called the rudder of Government . . . will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called a Historian.¹⁴

Subsequent writers go even farther in their desire to abandon the grandeur of courts and camps. Ruskin argues that "it is well to have," in both poetry and architecture, "not only what men have thought and felt, but what their hands have handled, and their strength wrought, and their eyes beheld, all the days of their life."¹⁵ If this is not quite Elizabeth Browning's "flat experience of the common man,"¹⁶ it is certainly Robert Browning's "pure crude fact/Secreted from man's life,"¹⁷ without which the historical consideration of grand ideas and movements could have no firm foundation. This desire to unite the momentous and the mundane, best known to the Victorians from the histories of Scott and Macaulay, as well as the desire to unite historical fact and artistic vision, leads to works depicting both Savanorola and Romola, Mirabeau and Cholet the wine-merchant, Doge Francesco Foscarelli and the stone-carvers of the Ducal Palace, Pope Innocent XII and Pompilia, Lord George Gordon and Barnaby Rudge. The great man who lived and the humble one who might have are, for Eliot and others, equally necessary elements in any accurate historical picture.

Historical accuracy is important, Eliot writes, because

4. "On History Again," rpt. in *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Essays* (New York: Dutton, 1972), p. 91. All references to "On History" and "On History Again" are to this edition.

5. "On History," p. 80.

6. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1848; rpt. New York: Noonday Press, 1974), p. 174.

7. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 171.

8. "On History," p. 85.

9. See also *The Seven Lamps*, p. 174.

10. See the "Preface to the Third Edition of *Master Humphrey's Clock* (*Barnaby Rudge*), 1841, and the "Preface to the First Edition" of *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859.

11. *The Ring and the Book*, I, 141.

12. *The Ring and the Book*, I, 28.

13. *The Ring and the Book*, XII, 839-840.

14. "On History," p. 87.

15. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 169.

16. *Aurora Leigh*, V, 369.

17. *The Ring and the Book*, I, 34-35.

it "might help the judgement greatly with regard to present and future events." Again she is drawing on an old idea that was given special force in the middle years of the nineteenth century. Historians from Herodotus to Hume have recognized that history could be, in Carlyle's words, a "Schoolmistress," but none had implored us so vehemently as Carlyle to "search more and more into the Past; let all men explore it, as the true Fountain of Knowledge; by whose light alone, consciously or unconsciously employed, can the Present and Future be interpreted or guessed at."¹⁸ We study history not merely to learn lessons or establish connections, but to make apparent continuities that already exist on some deeper level, to unite ourselves in "clear conscious relation" to the past as in "dim unconscious relation" we are already united.¹⁹ History, more Prophet than Schoolmistress, should not merely instruct the intelligence but should, in Eliot's words, "instruct the *imagination* in true comparison."²⁰ Precisely what this comparison should teach us varies to some extent from author to author: for Carlyle, who treated history as temporal scripture, and for the Ruskin of the eighteen-fifties, the lesson is largely religious and derives from the omnipresence of God in the world; for Dickens, Browning, and Eliot it is more secular but similarly moral and universal. None of these authors, I should emphasize, believes naively that human nature remains unchanged through the centuries — Carlyle writes that the "inward condition of Life . . . is the same in no two ages"²¹ — but all believe that some transcendent meaning lies embedded in historical record.

The form historical instruction was most often to take in the Victorian Age became clear with the publication in 1836 of Pugin's *Contrasts* and six years later of Carlyle's *Past and Present*. These two juxtapositions of medieval history and timely social criticism helped popularize the technique of injecting awareness of present conditions into a partially historical work and helped generate, among other things, the ominous, comparative openings of *The Stones of Venice* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. Ruskin, remember, likens the eminence of ancient Tyre and Renaissance Venice to the present eminence of England, and uses the destruction of the first two as an admonition to the third.²² Dickens compares the contradictory conditions in France before the Revolution to the prevailing conditions in the English Empire at mid-century.²³ Neither writer allows these connections to emerge gradually from the text, but makes them overtly and forcefully in the initial paragraph. Immediate historical linkings of this kind make "conscious" at the very start those "dim unconscious" but undeniable connections earlier noted by Carlyle.

Several writers of the period emphasize historical continuity by emphasizing the unchangeability of the surrounding physical world. The prose map of Europe with which Ruskin begins "The Nature of Gothic" defines symbolically the Gothic spirit and embodies its permanence in the permanence of the mountains and lakes. Eliot begins *Romola* with her own prose map of the Caucasus and the "snowy Alpine Ridges"²⁴ which seems to echo Ruskin and underscores even more clearly the continuity between present and past. And Browning, who ends *The Ring and the Book* by "Linking our England to his Italy,"²⁵ visits in Book I the roads, rivers, and hills which, nearly two centuries earlier, had formed the backdrop for his story, suggesting through their continued presence its continued moral significance. Like Ruskin and Eliot, he begins by externalizing and thereby clarifying those connections between past and present which "might help the judgement greatly."²⁶

I should add that for Eliot, and to a lesser extent for her contemporaries, ignorance of the past means not only ignorance of the present and future but confusion about personal identity and motive. Since we are almost literally created by the past, the study of history is in part the study of ourselves and should teach us both what we are and what we are meant to do in any given circumstance. Maggie Tulliver is, in this light, acting the part of Eliot's supreme historian when she draws strength from the past to refuse Stephen Guest, just as Browning's Guido Franceschini is playing the historian when he explains himself in his stunning second monologue.

In the fourth sentence of the notebook entry Eliot discusses the aesthetic implications of veracious imagination:

But effective truth in this application of art requires freedom from the vulgar coercion of conventional plot, which is become hardly of higher influence on imaginative representation than a detailed "order" for a picture sent by a rich grocer to an eminent painter — allotting a certain portion of the canvas to a rural scene, another to a fashionable group, with a request for a murder in the middle distance, and a little comedy to relieve it.²⁶

This demand for freedom from conventional plot, perhaps explaining the unconventional plot of *Romola*, reflects the prevailing belief that imagination must do more than merely adorn a basically factual narrative, that to be effective it must organize and respond to the demands of the historical material. Macaulay, a more traditional historian than any thus far discussed, states in his "Essay on History" that "a perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque."²⁷ R. G. Collingwood, in his

18. "On History," p. 85.

19. "On History," p. 80.

20. "Historic Imagination," p. 447. The italics are my own.

21. "On History," p. 82.

22. *The Stones of Venice*, Volume I, 1851; rpt. in *The Genius of John Ruskin: Selections From His Writings*, ed. John D. Rosenberg (New York: George Braziller, 1963), p. 139. All references to *The Stones of Venice* are to this edition.

23. See *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859; rpt. New York: Penguin, 1970), p. 35.

24. *Romola*, 1862-63; rpt. in *The Standard Edition of the Works of George Eliot* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1884), I, 1.

25. *The Ring and the Book*, XI, 870.

26. "Historic Imagination," pp. 446-447.

27. Quoted in R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946), p. 241.

own essay on "The Historical Imagination," objects as Eliot would that "this is to underestimate the part played by the historical imagination, which is properly not ornamental but structural. Without it the historian would have no narrative to adorn."²⁸ "Structural" imagination, with which Macaulay, despite his pronouncements, was generously endowed, leads Browning to abandon conventional plot in *The Ring and the Book*, where the same story is told ten times and the ending revealed halfway through the first Book. Carlyle to abandon traditional historical tense and person in *The French Revolution* and move regularly from the past to the present and from third to first-person plural, even Dickens to move from "it" to "we" in the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities* and to describe the Manettes' climactic escape from Paris in the first person and the present tense.²⁹ To write imaginative history that brings the past alive in the present requires freedom from the "vulgar coercion" of stylistic and structural restrictions, freedom to find the voice and form most appropriate for the vitalization of pure, crude fact. All the writers I have mentioned, including Eliot, of course rely frequently on conventions of style and plot, but this only emphasizes more strongly the importance of their occasional, radical departures.

Eliot continues:

For want of such real, minute vision of how changes come about in the past, we fall into ridiculously inconsistent estimates of actual movements, condemning in the present what we belaud in the past, and pronouncing impossible processes that have been repeated again and again in historical preparation of the very system under which we live. A false kind of idealisation dulls our perception of the meaning in words when they relate to past events which have had a glorious issue: for lack of comparison no warning image rises to check scorn of the very phrases which in other associations are consecrated.³⁰

Again, "real, minute" vision of the past should lead to sharper perception of the present and future. But such vision, in Eliot's own work, is far from available to everyone. In *Romola*, an even fuller attempt than *Middlemarch* at recreating an actual movement in the past, Eliot limits vision which transcends the purely temporal and empirical to Savanorola and Romola, both characters of heroic spiritual or moral nature. With these two she would include, I believe, the genuine artist, whose sight, aided by the "illumination" of "special" imagination, also passes beyond the empirical fact. The visual metaphor, suggested above by the words "vision," "perception," and "image," ties Eliot not only to traditional religious imagery but to a number of Victorian predecessors. A Carlylean hero like Mirabeau, for instance, "did before all things see, with that clear flashing vision, into what was,

into what existed as fact."³¹ Sidney Carton, perceiving just before his death the implications of the historic moment, repeats the word "see" fifteen times in a page without once using it literally. For Ruskin, it is "the far sight . . . that, above all other attributes, separate[s] man from man, and near[s] him to his Maker."³² Caponsacchi, Pompilia, and the Pope, the heroic characters in *The Ring and the Book*, all "reach into the dark"³³ to see what cannot be empirically proven and therefore what eludes popular institutions and opinion. And Elizabeth Browning, who writes in *Aurora Leigh* that "poets should/ Exert a double vision,"³⁴ ends by having her heroine/artist called "my dear sight" by a man literally blind and urged to "Gaze on, with inscient vision toward the sun."³⁵ In every case, there is the suggestion that the hero and the artist alone have the ability to see, within their own time, the transcendent, ahistorical meaning.

Eliot ends her notebook entry, finally, with two emphatic, complex, and richly suggestive sentences that restate its central ideas:

I want something different from the abstract treatment which belongs to grave history from a doctrinal point of view, and something different from the schemed picturesqueness of ordinary historical fiction. I want brief, severely conscientious reproductions, in their concrete incidents, of pregnant movements in the past.³⁶

She rejects both "grave history" and "ordinary historical fiction," rejecting thereby the incompatible extremes of fact or theory without imagination and imagination without carefully investigated fact. "Schemed picturesqueness," as much a "parasitical" beauty for Eliot as for Ruskin,³⁷ she would associate with novelists like Scott, the established standard for writers of historical fiction and still a favorite of Eliot's, and Dickens, who voices in the preface to *A Tale of Two Cities* his desire to be "popular and picturesque."³⁸ "Abstract treatment" belongs to the philosophers and traditional historians. In the grey area between these poles lie, to varying degrees, most of the historical works I have discussed as well as Eliot's ideal historical art form. That art form should be "severely conscientious" and "concrete," that is, thoroughly grounded in fact, even while it remains a "brief" reproduction, that is, concentrated and organized by the artist's creative vision. It should deal with "pregnant" movements, movements that give birth to subsequent events and ideas that bear importantly on the present and future.

It would be convenient if Eliot's note on "Historic Imagination" illuminated what is best in her own fiction, but clearly that is not the case. In *Romola*, her fullest attempt at historical recreation, she does indeed attempt

28. *The Idea of History*, p. 241.

29. Of course Dickens is following Carlyle's model throughout *A Tale of Two Cities*.

30. "Historic Imagination," p. 447.

31. *The French Revolution: A History* (1837; rpt. New York: Modern Library, no date), p. 345.

32. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 176.

33. *The Ring and the Book*, X, 1367.

34. *Aurora Leigh*, V, 183-184.

35. *Aurora Leigh*, IX, 907, 913.

36. "Historic Imagination," p. 447.

37. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 179.

38. *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 29.

to combine concrete fact and imaginative vision, but the blend is unsuccessful precisely because the fictional narrative does not spring naturally from the historical background. As Avrom Fleishman notes, "There is nothing in the main movement of the plot . . . that could not be situated in another time and place."³⁹ And despite the attention often given to the recreation of the period before the first reform bill in *Middlemarch*, it must be admitted that the primary interest of that great novel lies elsewhere.

"Historic Imagination" is meaningful mainly as a synthesis of the English historical theory of the age, suggesting above all similarities which clarify George Eliot's place at the center of Victorian thought and history's place at the center of much important Victorian art. It should be read for its ability to illuminate more substantial readings.

Columbia University

The Victorian Historical Sense and Modernism

Louis Menand

Literary modernism advertised itself — one might even say invented itself — as a reaction against the literary traditions of the nineteenth century. We now understand this to have been a kind of strategy, though a strategy that was pursued for different, not always literary, purposes by different writers and critics of the Modernist period, and we no longer take those writers and critics at their word when we read of their complete rejection of the values and traditions of the previous century. It is accepted today that Modernism did not spring full-blown from the heads of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, or, for that matter, Remy de Gourmont. We take the stridency of the Modernists' reaction against British literature of the previous century as a signal of the strength, even of the fatality, of the connection between the two traditions. What I would like to suggest is just such a fatality. I would like to suggest that the very idea of Modernism — the idea of a cultural movement that could be thought of as Modernistic — was an idea predicated on the nineteenth century's own imagination of itself, which is to say, on the nineteenth century's imagination of history. Or to put it another way, I want to argue that Modernism's sense of its own historical identity was derived from and inseparably bound up with the Victorian sense of history. I have had, necessarily, to cover a good deal of ground in a fairly superficial manner, but I have tried to lend some degree of specificity to my argument by emphasizing the work of two writers who have increasingly been thought of as standing in an important relation to each other, Alfred Tennyson and T. S. Eliot.

The imagination of history implies the imagination of oneself in relation to that history; imagining the past is a way of imagining oneself. "The 'spirit of the age' is in some measure a novel expression," wrote the young John

Stuart Mill in 1831. "I do not believe that it is to be met with in any work exceeding fifty years in antiquity. The idea of comparing one's own age with former ages, or with our notion of those which are yet to come, had occurred to philosophers; but it never before was itself the dominant idea of any age."¹ Still in the stage of his enthusiasm for the optimistic science of Utilitarianism, Mill concluded the fifth of his essays on "The Spirit of the Age" with the hopeful remark that he and his contemporaries were probably headed toward a "healthier state," and promised to "resume my subject as early as possible after the passing of the Reform Bill."² This fifth essay was the last.

Such optimism was not restricted to those Victorians whose faith lay in liberal principles. Two years before Mill's essay in the *Examiner*, Carlyle had written for the *Edinburgh Review* a piece called "Signs of the Times," which, though hedged about with transcendental dubieties, ends with an expression of hope: "Indications do we see in other countries and in our own, signs infinitely cheering to us, that Mechanism is not always to be our hard taskmaster, but one day to be our pliant, all-ministering servant; that a new and brighter spiritual era is slowly evolving for all men."³

In October 1833, shortly after these meditations on the progress of the century, Alfred Tennyson learned of the death of his friend Arthur Hallam. Tennyson's grief, though famous, was not wholly inconsolable. By the end of the year he had written or sketched out "The Two Voices," "Ulysses," "St. Simeon Stylites," "St. Agnes," "The Beggar Maid," "Tithon" (the early version of "Tithonus"), and part of *In Memoriam*, and he had begun what was eventually to be the last of the *Idylls of the King*, the "Morte d'Arthur": in short, a career.⁴

39. *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 159-160.

1. John Stuart Mill, *The Spirit of the Age* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 1.
2. Mill, pp. 93-94.
3. Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," in *Scottish and Other Miscellaneous* (London: Dent, 1915), pp. 244-245.
4. See Charles Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. 146.

What had happened, apart from some interesting evidence for speculation about the link between emotional stress and creativity, was that Tennyson had found his true poetic mode, and almost overnight he had changed from an accomplished and minor disciple of Keats into the major poetic voice of his time. The mode was the elegy: Tennyson wrote in a great variety of forms, but the dominant note is almost always the elegiac. It is the appropriate note for the century; it was as the subjects of elegies that the great Victorians liked to think of themselves.

The form of the elegy is a familiar one: the speaker stands in the present moment and contemplates someone (or, perhaps, something) that is now dead. It is customary to say that the emphasis is in part on the object of the speaker's meditations — Edward King or Arthur Hallam — and in part on the speaker himself as he was in the past — the young Milton or the young Tennyson. *In Memoriam* is, of course, the classic elegy of the Victorian period, but Tennyson was adept at manipulating the relation between speaker and object: in "Ulysses," for instance, the figure of Hallam has been distanced and becomes "the great Achilles, whom we knew," while the drama centers on the speaker (Ulysses/Tennyson) and his relation to his past self. In the "Morte d'Arthur," the elegist becomes a character in the poem itself. This poem was literally written between sections of *In Memoriam* in Tennyson's manuscript book.⁵ Here is its ending:

Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.⁶

The figure of Sir Bedivere does a sort of double duty here, for he has a status as a historical figure, a contemporary of King Arthur, but also one as our contemporary: he represents Tennyson and through him Tennyson's readers as he watches either Hallam or the idealism of medieval chivalry, depending on our reading of the poem, recede into the past. It is appropriate that the poem should end with the disappearance of the barge bearing Arthur over the horizon for once the grandeur of Arthur has ceased to reflect on him, as light reflects on objects and so defines them, Bedivere is nothing.

What is interesting about this 1834 version of the "Morte d'Arthur" is that it is described, in the frame that surrounds the poem, as only the eleventh of the twelve books on Arthur that the poet, Everard Hall, had written and attempted to destroy. What was meant to follow? The return of Arthur? The establishment of a new order, reviving the Arthurian spirit? Certainly some token of renewal is implied, some hope for the post-Arthurian world, and in this Tennyson's poem resembles those

essays of the same period by Mill and Carlyle with their suggestions of the propriety of optimism.

But when the "Morte d'Arthur" was used again, in 1869, as "The Passing of Arthur," it became not the eleventh but the twelfth book of the *Idylls of the King*. As if to acknowledge his new perspective on the poem, Tennyson added twenty-nine lines at the end that, though they seem to offer a hint of the future, actually close off the poem completely. The wailing has died away, but still Bedivere climbs the hill for a sight of the barge, and, this time like Tennyson himself reflecting on his own poem and its predecessor of 1834, again he hears a cry, or the echo of a cry.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Even to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light,
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.⁷

What has happened is that the King, who throughout the poem has been identified with the sun, has become merged with his symbol, so that as Arthur "sets," so to speak, a new sun, though it is only the real, literal sun of the nineteenth century, rises in his place. But there is to be no thirteenth book; a notion of history as progress has been replaced by a notion of history as a cycle. Civilizations, as Tennyson's Merlin never tires of telling us, rise carrying with them the seeds of their fall; in their destruction are the germs of the new order.

This image of Bedivere on the hill, watching over a landscape that has become empty, I take to be the representative image not only of Tennyson's poetry, from "Mariana" onward, but of the Victorian writer's relation to the past generally: "The first of the leading peculiarities of the present age," John Stuart Mill had written, "is, that it is an age of transition."⁸ The Victorian writer stood on Bedivere's hill, straining for a glimpse of the past he might use to orient himself in the iron time. His identity was the reflection of the past moment: left in the present, he was a cipher. Matthew Arnold before the Grande Chartreuse, John Ruskin before St. Mark's or almost anywhere; and when the future turned out to be characterized by the same formlessness, the same homelessness, as the present, the result was frequently bitterness and a sense of betrayal.

"All ages are ages of transition," grumbled Tennyson in 1887, more than fifty years after Mill's announcement, "but this is an awful moment of transition . . . I tried in my 'Idylls' to teach men these things, and the need of the

5. Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1897), I, 109.

6. "Morte d'Arthur," II, 269-272.

7. "The Passing of Arthur," II, 462-469.

8. Mill, p. 6. Mill is, of course, referring to a political, not explicitly a cultural, state of affairs; his essays were a response to the imminent passage of the First Reform Bill. There is, nevertheless, an implication about the state of culture in Mill's remark, just as there are distinct political implications in the remarks of Tennyson and Eliot quoted later on.

Ideal. But I feel sometimes as if my life had been a very useless life."⁹ There would have been many in 1887 to agree with this self-assessment. "Tennyson's death in 1892 surprised us," said Oscar Wilde. "We had not thought he was still alive." This remark, like most of Wilde's, is two-edged, revealing both the insouciance with which the writer of the Nineties viewed his predecessors and the cavalier despair with which he acknowledged the weight of their presence: Tennyson's position in the literary tradition was so dominant that it befitted a dead rather than a living poet. The whole idea of a decadence involves — and Wilde's remark is a perfect example of this — an agreement about one's place and the place of one's contemporaries in the historical process. A decadent writer, when he thought of himself as a decadent, as many did, had no practical use for history or for tradition, since he chose to be totally defined by them. His chosen role is to act as the object of history's lesson; he enacts the alienation and uselessness, the sense of an ending, that the past has burdened him with — but he does not seek to change it, only to show how perverse it can become. This state of affairs cannot last very long, for what does a generation that has a decadence for its heritage build upon?

"The decadence is far decayed," wrote T. S. Eliot in 1917. "Time has left us many things, but among those it has taken away we may hope to count *A Reboours*, and the *Divigations*, and the writings of miscellaneous prose poets."¹⁰ "Decadence," for Eliot in the years of the First World War, was a term that could be used to describe the whole of the Victorian tradition. "[T]he generation after 1830," he wrote in 1919, "preferred to form itself upon a decadence, though a decadence of genius: Wordsworth; and upon an immaturity, though an immaturity of genius: Keats and Shelley; and the development of English literature was retarded."¹¹ And he wrote elsewhere: "Conspicuously the Victorian period is anti-professional. Carlyle as an historian, Ruskin as an economist; Thackeray, who could write such good prose as the Steyne episode, and considered himself a kindly but penetrating satirist; George Eliot who could write *Amos Barton* and steadily degenerate. Decadence in art is caused by mixed motives. The art of the Victorians is spoiled by mixed motives, and Oscar Wilde finally added ingredients to the mixture which made it a ludicrous emetic."¹²

These attacks by Eliot on the Victorians were joined, of course, by his fellow contributors to the *Egoist* and the *Athenaeum*, by Pound, Wyndham Lewis, T. E. Hulme, various members of the Bloomsbury circle, and so on. But in this same period, Eliot was writing poetry that patterned itself after a characteristic Victorian mode. Edmund Wilson noticed this in *Axel's Castle*, though, because of that work's prefabricated version of literary

history, he failed to perceive its true lineage. Eliot's quatrain poems — "Burbank with A Baedeker; Bleistein with a Cigar," "A Cooking Egg," the Sweeney poems — are based on a contrast of the past with the sordid present. The development of this theme of past versus present in modern literature Wilson attributed to Flaubert,¹³ but if we look for a programmatic application of it as a method for making a criticism of life, we find it not only in Flaubert but at the heart of Victorian writing and thought. From A. W. Pugin's *Contrasts* in 1836 to the monastery of Carlyle's *Past and Present* to George Eliot's historical novel *Middlemarch* to Ruskin's cautionary history *The Stones of Venice* and his defense of the Gothic, the Victorians constantly wrote about contemporary life by holding up to it the picture of a nobler, or at least a more culturally organic, era. The contrast and its associated nostalgia inform the *Idylls of the King*, Arnold's "The Scholar-Gipsy," the spirit of the Oxford Movement. And its persistence in the English tradition explains much about Modernist thought, not least its reactionary temper. Yet this mode of understanding one's own time by taking the perspective of a Bedivere has an odd effect, an effect seen clearly in the work that took the method to its extreme. *The Waste Land* is a poem in which the speaker of the elegy, the subject, has become lost in the rubble of fragments of history. The mirror he looks into, the mirror of the past, reflects not a single image of the present moment but a fractured and distorted heap of voices, images, quotations. The poet's voice has disappeared, as Tennyson's Bedivere foretold, in the chaos of the present moment.

What the Modernists learned from the Victorian experience, what saved them from the fatalism of the decadents, was that one might invent one's own past, one's own tradition. The very idea of a "modern" literature depended upon such an assumption, and it could only happen in an age when writers still felt in a powerful way what Nietzsche called the nineteenth century's "sixth sense": the historical sense.¹⁴ That is, what the Modernists shared with their Victorian predecessors was an acute self-consciousness about their position in the historical process. The great revolution undertaken by the Modernists was the abandonment of the received tradition and, simultaneously, the institution of traditions of their own devising (something Pater perhaps had taught them how to do). Thus, in the three famous essays on the metaphysical poets in *Homage to John Dryden*, Eliot attacked the poetic tradition of the nineteenth century as escapist and at the same time established a new line based on Dante, the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets, and the French Symbolists. Pound had undertaken the same sort of enterprise in his criticism, and in the *Cantos* he virtually ransacked history for historical models:

9. H. Tennyson, *Memoir*, II, 337.

10. T. S. Eliot, "The Borderline of Prose," *The New Statesman*, 19 May 1917, p. 158.

11. T. S. Eliot, "The Romantic Generation, If It Existed," *The Athenaeum*, 18 July 1919, p. 616.

12. T. S. Eliot, "Professional, Or . . ." *The Egoist*, 4 (April 1918), 61.

13. Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1890-1930* (New York: Scribner's, 1931), p. 100.

14. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 224.

Homer, Malatesta, John Adams, and Confucius are among his King Arthurs.

The cultural tradition I have been trying to suggest existed in the period between roughly 1830 and 1930 is one that partakes of a common assumption about the relation between the past and the present; I have tried to show how that manner of perceiving the relation between oneself and one's imagination of history led, by an inner logic of its own, to the idea and thus the actuality of a decadence and then a modernism, and that the experimentation with the past carried on by Modernist writers led, though they had not intended it to, to a breakdown of the historical sense. For what distinguishes this period of 1830 to 1930 from our own, I suggest, is precisely our lack of such a sense. Lionel Trilling, in a famous article directed against the ahistorical methodology of the New Criticism, wrote in 1942 that critics were neglecting a real way of experiencing literature when they failed to take into account our sense of its pastness; but underlying his admonition there lay the fear that his contemporaries had indeed lost that sixth sense of which Nietzsche spoke: "And since there never was a time when the instinct for divining — and 'quickly'! — the order of rank of cultural expressions was so much needed, our growing estrangement from history must be understood as the sign of our desperation."¹⁵ This was a problem that continued to worry Trilling, and he returned to it thirty years later in the final chapter of *Sincerity and Authenticity*, where he speaks of the contemporary disillusionment with the very idea of history.

Trilling was, I would suggest, right about this disillusionment: it is something we have learned from

Modernism. In order to have faith in the past, no matter how intractable the present moment may seem for art, one must believe that its history can be written. One of the reasons that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers turned to the past for their themes and settings was that the present was understood to be too chaotic, too mundane, too vulgar, or too "eventless" for art. The Modernists solved this problem by halves: half of *Ulysses* is Homer, half of *The Waste Land* is *The Golden Bough*. But when one sees history to be first something that might be invented and re-invented and then something that might be a complete if necessary fiction, one loses any faith in the idea that the past can teach us something that the present cannot; the past becomes the weapons our contemporaries use against us and the lies our fathers told us.

The signal, for me, that we have lost that historical sense is that we have not any name for our own moment. We call the culture of the last thirty or forty years "contemporary" or "post-Modernist" or even, for those who take the long view of these things, "post-Romantic" or "post-humanist," but these are ways of avoiding placing ourselves within the limits of any historical identity. We are, perhaps, "post-movement," or at any rate "post-cultural movement." I am not at all sure that this is a bad state of affairs for art to find itself in. But this problem of identity is no doubt one that will someday be settled for us. For that, as a character says in a Tom Stoppard play, is why we have these conferences.

Princeton University

Carlyle's Incidental Montage: *The Guises* and the Theory of Transcendent Historicism

Rodger L. Tarr

That Carlyle's theories of history have, for more than a century, been the subject of considered and ill-considered debate seems a minor point to make. In fact, the name Thomas Carlyle has become synonymous with history — history, that is, which finds its methodological impetus somewhere between the constraints of Calvinism and the freedoms of Romanticism. Carlyle is an enigma in the annals of historical consciousness. He creates history while he records it. He prods, cajoles, even threatens; and he is seldom if ever objective. His method is manipulation; and his object is to dovetail fact into personal crescendo. His historical conscience is tainted. It is indifferent to the classicism of Gibbon; it abhors the plodding of Macaulay; yet, paradoxically, it embraces the

mis-devotion of Saint Simon and argues the orthodoxy of biblical revelation. Carlyle's notions of history traverse the dialectical, as he shudders in terror — Blakean terror — at the always impending apocalypse. Indeed, his conflagration, *The French Revolution*, left him without peer. The editorial Mill was stunned into direct quotation; the anonymous Thackeray was pleased by its uniqueness; and the emerging Emerson was left to say that a new Homer had been born. But, as quickly as the cannons had announced the birth of a new advocate of history, they lapsed into silence, to recharge briefly for *Oliver Cromwell*, and still later for *Frederick the Great* and *Early Kings of Norway*. Modernity has done little to alleviate the sounds of silence. Carlyle as historian remains a moun-

15. Lionel Trilling, "The Sense of the Past," in *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Viking, 1950), p. 196.

tain as yet unconquered.

There are many reasons for this failure of the modern to correct and to elucidate. Certainly, primary among them is the want of holograph copy. In the case of *The French Revolution* only fragments are extant; in that of *Oliver Cromwell* only a part of the blueprint has survived; and in the case of *Frederick the Great* the literally thousands of pages of text, notes, and proofs leave even the heroic faint-hearted. Without a manuscript exegesis in tenuous, and is more reconstructive than restorative. However, there is the recently discovered *The Guises*, a completed history which, I believe, provides us with some answers regarding Carlyle's method: or, at the very least, it tells us a great deal about the disposition of Carlyle's historical imagination in the year of its composition 1855.

The Guises, ostensibly a history of France from the middle ages through the seventeenth century, is more remarkable for its failings than for its successes. Clearly, it seems written to subordinate fact to fabulation. It is more a discourse on the art of history than a record of history itself. In the end it becomes a forum for Carlyle's theory that history is shaped not evolved, that it is the incidental not the monumental which augurs events, what George Eliot was later to call those nameless "unhistoric acts" which shape our destinies. If Carlyle had intended monument, he surely would have chosen the Queen Mother and sometimes Regent, Catherine de Medicis. Instead he chose those incidental to the throne, those whose unhistoric acts were nevertheless responsible for the course of western history. They were la maison de Guise. Descendants from Charlemagne, pretenders to the throne, the family of Guise was at the pinnacle of power in the French Renaissance. They were at once the most feared and the most beloved family in France. Warriors, statesmen, cardinals of Catholicism, they fought to the end to deny Huguenotism a place in French life. Yet, with the whole canvas of France before him, a subject of the immensity that historians plead for, Carlyle retreats. His subject is incident, his object truth. His is a Hebraistic dance through the Hellenistic splendor of Renaissance France. He dismisses the intrigues of court, he seems uninterested in the ramifications of Trent, he wanders aimlessly through the Wars of Religion. His subject is man, not men. His story is, in his own words, told "in cold blood."

Carlyle's method in *The Guises*, as elsewhere, is to brandish, to withhold the thrust long enough for the reader to see the blade of his imagination. He relies upon fact, but only as an immediate vehicle to propel us beyond it. Carlyle's method is literally to use his historical imagination to frustrate phenomenon and to make it subordinate to prophecy. His movement through history is both linear and cyclical. It is Coleridgean. Yet Carlyle's historical manner allows him to accomplish what Coleridge would not have attempted, the shaping of the transcendent in the form of history. Carlyle's narrative method, like Chaucer's, works from incident to character to conclusion. He never loses sight of the fact that it is the

pilgrim, linear man, who gives reason to incident and purpose to conclusion. This linear protrusion allows for the paradoxical level of cyclical intrusion, a point where Carlyle the subjective pilgrim becomes the objective narrator, and Carlyle the subjective narrator becomes the objective pilgrim. We are reminded of his theory that "Narrative is linear; Action is solid."

One of the early, and most poignant, passages from *The Guises* is case and point for Carlyle's simultaneous linear and concentric methods. It demonstrates not only the movement from incident to character to conclusion, it is an excellent example of how Carlyle takes phenomenon and shapes it into history. After recording the factual detail of James V of Scotland and his place in the Guise realm, Carlyle turns to James's disastrous defeat at Solway Moss and ends with this elliptical account of the King's death:

Poor James was but 30 when he died. We know the end he made: not a successful one at all, poor man; not so wise as it might have been, had he lived to twice the age. . . . He would not but go and have a stroke at his big uncle, merely to say to him, Uncle Hal, I too am King. And the nobility, — they all followed him as if dragged by ropes drawn by sheer force; and ran away at the first brush of battle, without fighting at all. The proud young King, all the prouder that he was poor, took to bed broken hearted; and never rose again. His wife likewise took to bed, but for a different reason. His wife was in fact as they say, brought to bed; at this juncture urged probably by those agitating circumstances. Word was brought into the King's sickroom that Her Majesty was happily delivered. "And what has she got?" said James feeling now death upon him. — "a daughter" — "Out, out!" the poor King turning his face to the wall. "It cam with a lass" (crown came to us by Elizabeth Moor), "and it will gang with a lass." — and these were the last words he spoke. In the clouds of thick darkness, turned from daylight, and seeing to be all failure and vanity, the proud young soul passed away. . . .

Here we have an excellent example of Carlyle's dovetailing phenomenon into character to achieve prophetic conclusion. Indeed, he makes a mockery of fact. His intention is clearly not to capture sense, rather essence. It is poetic, in Emerson's terms Homeric, and it turns a dreary account of the Scots' defeat by the English into an epic failure of comitatus. James, according to Carlyle, did not die from defeat but from a broken heart. The center of Carlyle's perception is James, not the ignominy of Solway Moss. The method is fabulation and the result dramatic. Almost in parody, Carlyle is able to turn death into life. Mary Queen of Scots is born before our eyes, not in triumphal fanfare, but with the predilection that her life too will be shaped by "clouds of thick darkness." With James's death came the beginning of the end of French Catholicism in Scotland. Yet as if in afterthought Carlyle remarks that James was a "celestial cherubim" when set in relief to the "pig-iron interests" of Victorian England. The circle has now been shaped and the prophecy concluded.

Another dramatic example of Carlyle's method of pre-

... serving the incidental in the face of larger issue comes later in *The Guises* when he describes the infamous St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Again, the incident is set, the participants located, and the conclusion drawn. And once again, phenomenon gives way to fabulation as Carlyle intuits the scene at the Louvre:

... On Sunday night 24 August 1572 there burst out such a scene as the world never saw before or since, in Paris and over France — the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The horrible phenomena of which I have not now the spirit to describe [Carlyle's cancellation]. To kill these accursed Huguenots at one fell swoop. . . . That was the plan of . . . Catherine de Medicis, and the official authorities of France: the king himself, wretched excitable mortal, was seen firing down on the fugitive Huguenots, from a window in the Louvre; the valet who loaded for him, musket after musket, has testified the fact: Catherine his mother sat unconcerned, not firing, quietly waiting; . . . the scene resembled that of September 1972 but . . . far out did it in depth and horror; . . . Toesio burst out; and delirious human beings brandishing the crucifix along with the dagger and the torch of the furies. Huguenotism is butchered in the Louvre itself; Henri is hidden trembling; wounded servants, ran to the young wife for shelter, who screamed if she could and sat or hovered about all night in a phantasmal mood among murders and murdered. Singularly like September; only 100-fold bigger, more infernal looking.

Although similar in method and movement to the passage on James V, the language of apocalypse here replaces the earlier metaphor of reflection. Carlyle himself is agitated. The scene, the Louvre, is commanding; the participants mere shadows of human beings; and the conclusion predictable — the Guise-planned annihilation of Protestantism is the work of the Devil, "infernal looking." Carlyle does not allow us to escape to the sanctuary of historic objectivity. We are bombarded with Miltonic paradoxes, surrealistic metaphors, and passionate language. But the result is always the same: man shapes events, not events man. Phenomenon once again is made incidental. In passages like this one, Carlyle leads us past incident, through characterization, to theory — his theory: here that even in heroism might does not always make right. We are propelled by the transcendence of his imagination; like Ahab we sail through the mask of phenomenon to noumenon. Carlyle insists that we join the pilgrimage, the land of historical wonder is the goal.

That Carlyle was aware that he was leading his readers on an historical odyssey seems certain enough. His manuscript copy abounds in asides to himself and to his readers. His audience was before him as he wrote, and he was continually reminded that his purpose was evaluation not record. Indeed, a great deal of his writing seems to come from memory. His digressions are legion (one is reminded that more than 500 of the approximately 1700 paragraphs of *The French Revolution* have nothing to do with the history *per se*), and the following one on the value of Voltaire's *Henriad* tells us a great deal about this historian's view of history:

How much better had a real *history* not an unimaginably *Dry-*

asdust one, a condensed arranged intelligent and intelligible image according to fact . . . been to all readers. They were a *fact*, — voice of God speaking from the whirlwind of things. Voice unintelligible to the thick of hearing to the dull impious vulgar learned and unlearned; no task of literature can be conceived so literary as that of interpreting said voice of God in an approximately true manner.

Here we have Carlyle's definition of history. Voltaire's *Henriad* prospers because it is not "Dryasdust." It is, in Carlyle's words, a "real *History*!" precisely because it is a "condensed arranged intelligent and intelligible image [emphasis mine] according to fact," the "voice of God speaking from the whirlwind of things." Fabulation triumphs once again.

Carlyle's subjective intrusions are more often than not tests to excite his readers' instincts, to anger, to defy, to ridicule. The language of sarcasm and irony becomes his weapon. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his descriptions of the French monarchy. Francois II is described as a "handsome tall man"; his successor Charles II as a "poor hectic boy"; the infamous Henri III as a "wretched little Marpeace"; and the conciliatory Henri IV as "beneficent great-hearted." These portraits are ample evidence of Carlyle's willingness to shape history to his cause. Yet he is also capable of being ambiguous, as seen in his paradoxical description of Catherine de Medicis as being "brisk-eyed even hectically vivid." Whether it is the aristocracy or the indigent, Carlyle's Rembrandt-like brush seldom fails. His method here of forcing the reader from objectivity by placing history in emotional context continues as we cross the channel to Britain. He not only chooses what he wants us to know, but he chooses how we are to know it. James V of Scotland is a "gallant dashing young fellow"; his wife, Marie de Guise, later Regent of Scotland, is a "bright young Princess"; and their celebrated daughter, Mary Queen of Scots, is an "unfortunate being." Lord Darnley, Mary's suitor, is sarcastically dismissed as a "booby." And, Carlyle is quite willing to go outside the annals of history to employ his Cervantesque humor. As if to understate the significance of the Spanish Armada, he sets it in relief to the birth of Thomas Hobbes: "crabbed little Hobbes, Philosopher of Malmesbury, hardly yet 15 inches long, and not like living, lay packed in downy wool to give the little witch a chance." Life, Carlyle asserts, is surely "double or quits."

The Guises, then, is Carlyle's microcosm for his macro-philosophy of history. He kaleidoscopes fact into a memory that in turn succors itself in his limitless imagination. Yet, in the end Carlyle was not blind to his own inadequacies (and here again manuscript copy is invaluable). At one point he becomes so exasperated at not being able to remember dates and sequences that he writes in disgust: "Pfooh-h-h!" As humorous as such a remark is, it does speak to the basic weakness and strength of Carlyle's historical imagination. His world was that of the noumenon, and this fact caused him considerable pain as a writer. It would have been easier for him to plod like

Macaulay or to record like Gibbon, but his world lay beyond in the hierglyph of truth. We may be critical of him for not fulfilling our expectations, but then he was critical of himself for the same reason. His last words in *The Guise* reflect his epic-like despair: "Allah is Great; men are not great." One last time the human paradox is subordinated to the larger truth.

I see, then, Carlyle's theory of history as implosive. He works upon word and image, the hierglyphs of fact, to transform the readers' perceptions. We instinctively look for phenomenon, only to be propelled beyond it. Our historical consciences are contradicted by Carlyle's transcendent consciousness. His intent seems to be to destroy that vestige of reality upon which his histories are formed. We must succumb, or be defeated, Carlyle does not provide us with a sanctuary. His historical eye may well be formed in phenomenon, but it is focused in the noumenon.

Hence, as readers we are fronted with irreconcilable paradoxes. If we demand fact for its own sake, we are disappointed; and, if we expect linear definitions for cyclical issues, we are frustrated. Indeed, Carlyle's implosive technique seems geared to deny us access to the imaginable. He cares little about the fact of James's defeat at Solway Moss; he ignores the imprecations of Catholic Mary and Protestant Elizabeth; and he views with disdain the politics of intrigue between Catherine de Medicis and Philip of Spain. He is, in fact, bored with the inexorable-ness of fact. He is pained to place history in logical context. His histories are art forms not documents — discourses, rather, on what *should* be perceived instead of what is perceived. To use the words of Eugene O'Neill, Carlyle writes from "tears and blood."

Illinois State University

The Historical Imagination: Browning to Pound

Adena Rosmarin

That age is gone:
Pieire de Maensac is gone.
I have walked over these roads;
I have thought of them living.

— Ezra Pound, "Provincia Deserta"

To imagine ourselves thinking, writing, loving, and dying in another time is to imagine ourselves as other selves. It is also to define ourselves as such. Here we have the central and inevitable paradox of all acts of historical imagination: they free us from the present even as they heighten our awareness of its ineluctable presentness; they expand the borders of our historical and personal selves even as they define them. It is a paradox which finds perhaps its most striking embodiment in Victorian literature.

Having moved beyond the provincially of antiquarianism, wherein the present is costumed in the various trappings of the past, the Victorians had become painfully and profoundly aware of the pastness of the past, of having come on the scene too late, of having lost Eden. Arnold's "The Scholar Gypsy" and Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* are replete with this quintessentially Romantic

nostalgia. But we also find — in writers like Macaulay and the early Tennyson — a myopic privileging of the present and a complacent delight in its presentness. We find, that is, a tendency to endorse either the past over the present or the present over the past.

These endorsements — so obviously antithetical — are also profoundly similar in origin and purpose. First, both arise from the increasing awareness of an immense difference between *then* and *now*. Second, both define the past by the needs of the present. Such a past was recreated, with however a studious regard for historical accuracy, less for its own interest than to serve the present interest of the present writer. Whether arguing for progress or for decadence — the poles which magnetized Victorian thought — the concept of historical time invoked was the same: ineluctably linear, intensely felt, and unashamedly rhetorical.¹ Thus the temporal and persuasive understructures of Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra" ("The best is yet to be") and Arnold's "To Marguerite — Continued" ("For surely once . . . we were/ Parts of a single continent"), of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" and Ruskin's *The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* are continuous. But a past which exists in order to

NOTES

¹ This paper was written during my year as an Andrew W. Mellon Faculty Fellow at Harvard University. I would like to thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Harvard University, and, in particular, Jerome Buckley. I would also like to thank Robert Casillo.

The following editions were used: Robert Browning, *The Complete Works of Robert Browning*, ed. Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke (New York: F. De Fau & Co., 1910); Matthew Arnold, *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (New York:

Oxford Univ. Press, 1950); Ezra Pound, *Personae: The Collected Shorter Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1926); T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1952).

¹ For a discussion of the notions of progress and decadence, particularly in Victorian literature, see Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress, and Decadence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966).

reassure or threaten the present must lose immediacy, vitality, complexity, and seriousness. Such a past must, in short, become facile insofar as it is polemical.

Thus the best literature of the time was powerful and, indeed, characteristic insofar as it displayed less of this moral and temporal certainty (as we shall see, the two certainties, or uncertainties, are kin). Its acts of historical imagination do not deny the interpenetration of past and present but invite it; they please even though – and indeed precisely because – they edify more than they placate. Such acts invite us to feel the past *as though* it were the present and to dwell in the minds of others – past others – *as though* they were our present selves. I will take as my texts certain dramatic monologues by Browning and then – as a foil – a poem by Pound which looks like a dramatic monologue but which, significantly, is not.

Browning's "Cleon" invites us to participate in the spiritual despair of its speaker, a Hellenistic Leonardo, a man who knows and has done everything his world has to offer, a man who has everything but the hope of eternal life. We do not decline the invitation, and for some 335 lines of this 353 line poem we dwell in the speaker's increasingly painful and threatening despair:

Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified)
By power and (insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase –
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy –

Dwelling in such a mind is not comforting for the reader, and because it is not the poet must work to sustain the conflation, work to counter our anticipated attempts to pull back, to deny, and to judge. Thus he makes the speaker self-conscious, able to anticipate and contain our judgment within his own; he isolates him in his world, granting his vision poignancy as well as power; he makes him introspective, a turning-inward which we replicate; he grants him eloquence, a verbal grace which secures our adherence to the vision it articulates; he grants him the ability to imagine beauty as well as pain, thereby lifting his vision from the distancing monotony of solipsistic complaint. These rhetorical strategies foreclose the luxury of distance, either the distance of nostalgia or that of condescension. We *become* Cleon, and the momentum of our acquiescence carries us through even the vision of his death, through both the longing for release and the denial of even the possibility:

I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy.

But no!

Zeus has not yet revealed it: and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Up to this point we have traveled with Cleon. We have seen with Hellenistic eyes; we have enlarged our repertoire of selves. As in all lyrics, we have understood the speaker as he understands himself, from within, and, again as in all lyrics, we take the poem's meaning and the speaker's meaning to be the same. But the final stanza changes everything:

Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one.
As if his answer could impose at all!
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

The lyric alliance is shattered here not only because Cleon rejects the very salvation he seeks but also because he rejects it for reasons which must strike us, no matter what the state of our belief, as inadequate and incriminating. His suddenly revealed prejudice, both racial and intellectual, his perverse refusal to submit Paul's "secret" to his habitual intellection, his too-eager acceptance of the bystander's opinion – all overwhelm the ethos of the first part. The stunning impact of the final line – "Their doctrine could be held by no sane man" – measures our distance from Cleon and the self the poem has invited us to be. We stand, as it were, surprised in belief.

And it is this stance and this surprise which reveal the poem to be polemical. Wrenched from the speaker's side, we no longer admire the paragon of Hellenism but condemn the paradigm of its hubris. Thus the long first part of the poem evokes our empathy not for its own sake but to secure the force of our judgment. Returned to the Victorian era, we are graced – quite literally it would seem – with a superior historical perspective and, by implication, with a superior moral perspective as well.

While the act of judgment in "Cleon" acquires impact and significance from the act of empathy which precedes it, the very sharpness with which these acts are delimited diminishes the poem. Our superiority to Cleon is easier and our return to our present selves more ready than the reverberations of the first part warrant. As we move to Browning's finest monologues we find that, while both acts are always definitely and definitively present (or, as Robert Langbaum has put it, there is always sympathy and judgment), the distinction between them becomes more difficult.² We find, in other words, that the act of empathy increasingly threatens to subvert the act of judgment or, to be more precise, to convert it into a self-judgment.

Like "Cleon" and like all dramatic monologues, "The

Bishop Orders His Tomb" depends for its effect upon the split between the speaker's meaning and the poem's meaning; we perceive, that is, the earthly vanity of the bishop even as it is made clear that he does not share our perception. But we are not allowed our perception until we have dwelt in this vanity, both enjoying its glories and suffering its torments.

As in "Cleon" we share a vision of death:

I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass.
And see God made and eaten all day long.
And feel the steady candle flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense smoke!

The difference between this vision and Cleon's is the difference between a Hellenistic and a Renaissance spirit. What is *not* different is the mode of our sharing; we become the Bishop as we read, much as we became Cleon. And, as we left Cleon, we leave the Bishop:

And leave me in my church, the church for peace.
That I may watch at leisure if he leers —
Old Gandolf — at me, from his onion stone.
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

These concluding lines confirm the Bishop a lecherous hypocrite and, as they do, return us to our present selves. But because the return seems more the natural consequence of the speaker's character and less the contrivance of the poet's polemics, the poem is finer and more difficult than "Cleon."

The difficulty and fineness of "Andrea del Sarto" are similar; we are led to understand that Andrea's search for self-knowledge is an exercise in self-deception, but we earn our understanding only by participating in both search and deceit. And, in what is perhaps Browning's greatest Renaissance vision, we find the comic conflict of body and spirit to be as much ours as Fra Lippo's.

These poems always demand we judge their speakers; they always return us to our present, which is to say, to our Victorian selves; they always reaffirm the norms of the time in which they were written. But the greatest of these poems allow this return and reaffirmation only after our active and serious dwelling in the past. Thus my opening paradox: they bind us to our present but only after freeing us; they remind us of ourselves, but first they invoke our potential to be others.

Let us now turn to "The Ballad of the Goodly Fere," a poem Pound wrote to protest "a certain sort of cheap irreverence."³ And the poem is indeed as intensely persuasive in its purpose — which is to make the reader see Jesus as "a man o' men" — as any of Browning's

monologues. But unlike Browning, Pound does not focus his poem on the speaker, the Apostle Simon Zelotes, and his failure to see, but rather on what he sees and the intensity of his vision:

He cried no cry when they drave the nails
And the blood gushed hot and free,
The hounds of the crimson sky gave tongue
But never a cry cried he.

I ha' seen him cove a thousand men
On the hills o' Galilee,
They whined as he walked out calm between,
Wi' his eyes like the grey o' the sea

We come away from this poem with a sense of having seen with ancient eyes, of having experienced that most extraordinary time. But unlike the dramatic monologues, this poem does *not* ask us to judge that vision or our experience. Rather, our vision and the speaker's remain conflated; the poem's meaning and the speaker's meaning remain one. As with the monologue the vision which this and similar poems, called mask lyrics, invite us to share comes into being in a particular time and through a particular personality.⁴ But unlike the dramatic monologue the vision is not bound to its historical point of origin. Thus Zelotes projects himself forward in time in anticipation of our modern vision:

If they think they ha' slain our Goodly Fere
They are fools eternally.

Whatever the state of our religious belief, the very endurance of Christianity sets us at the speaker's side against those who "are fools eternally." As is always the case in the mask lyric, the prophecy is self-fulfilling, and, precisely because it is, it protects the speaker from our historical discounting. In "The Ballad of the Goodly Fere" this protection combines with the striking novelty of an intensely physical Jesus and the linguistic vigor of the speaker to structure our imaginative belief in the transcendent vision which concludes the poem:

I ha' seen him eat o' the honey-comb
Sin' they nailed him to the tree.

The archaism and diachronic distance of the monologic vision favored by the Victorians thus gives way to the layered synchronism of the mask lyric favored by the moderns.⁵ A familiar passage, written within a few years of Pound's poem, glosses this distinction for us:

the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the past-

2. For a discussion of the dramatic monologue in terms of sympathy and judgment see Langbaum's *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. 1957).

3. Ezra Pound, "How I Began," *T. P.'s Weekly*, 21 (6 June 1913), p. 707.

4. The term "mask lyric" was, as far as I know, first used by Ralph W. Rader in his "The Dramatic Monologue and Related Lyric Forms," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Autumn 1976), 131-151.

5. Most of the early poems of Eliot and Pound are mask lyrics. Pound's translation poems are particularly telling instances of the synchronic historical imagination. See also Edward Arlington Robinson's "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford."

ness of the past, but of its presence: the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.⁶

Eliot, of course, is speaking of the reflexive relationship between tradition and the individual talent, but he is also articulating a new poetic impulse: the speaker of a mask lyric, a speaker such as Prufrock, is conscious of himself and his pastness and of us and our presentness in a way that speakers of dramatic monologues are not. It is his awareness of himself as both timeless and temporal that makes him forever our contemporary, that insists we address him as "*mon semblable - mon frère*." It is his articulate awareness which transforms the monism of the Victorians into a pluralism that frees us of our privileged status and allows us to dwell in many minds and many pasts.

It would be as difficult to overestimate the extent and significance of this shift in historical consciousness as it is to ascertain its causes. Hugh Kenner has suggested two reasons why the "archaizing sensibility" dissolved or, put otherwise, why historical time convoluted. "One . . . was the growing awareness that since about 1870 men had held in their hands the actual objects Homer's sounding words name. A pin, a cup, which you can handle like a safety pin tends to resist being archaized."⁷ Such grantings of palpable presence to the past both collapsed time, rendering it profoundly discontinuous, and conflated times, rendering them profoundly continuous: one result of Schliemann's discovery of Homer's world was Joyce's discovery of that world in Dublin. The other reason

Kenner advances is the discovery of the cave paintings at Altamira: "They simply existed outside of history. No felt continuum reached back to them, with dimming aerial perspective, as it did for instance to the age the Pre-Raphaelites favored. Time folded over; *now* lay flat, transparent, upon *not-now*."⁸

The impact of these two discoveries is undeniable: in 1902 Picasso visited Altamira, and Eliot, within a few weeks of visiting a similar cave in 1919, wrote the passage quoted above.⁹ One wonders, however, why these visits assumed such significance. One also wonders: why Eliot's deliberate fracturing of poetic tradition, the search for poetic ancestry among the Jacobean and French Symbolists? why Pound's far-flung searches? why the palimpsestic linguistics of the *Cantos* and the pastiche allusiveness of "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land*? why the analogous visual experiments of Picasso and Braque? To answer that the foregoing all constitute attempts to discard old continuities of correspondence and chronology for new, synchronically structured coherencies is more rephrasing than answer. One also needs to consider the rhetorical and philosophical contexts of the discarding.

Analysis of a particular text in which such a discarding takes place — for example, Eliot's "The Metaphysical Poets" — reveals that an atemporal structure is no less rhetorical than those which are overly temporal, that the assertion of equality and synchronism among various historical epochs is inherently as polemical a gesture as the more obvious chronologizing indulged in by the early Victorians. For just as the invocation of linear historical time can and has been explained as a strategy for arguing the superiority of industrial civilization, Eliot's rearrangement of English poetic tradition can be explained as a strategy for arguing the superiority of early modern poetry.¹⁰ The attempt is at once apologetic and heuristic. To convince his readers he tutors them in new ways of reading and, in doing so, recapitulates Wordsworth's

6. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1932; new ed., 1964), p. 4. See also Pound's similar assertion in *The Spirit of Renaissance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat the Charm of the Pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1919): "It is dawn at Jerusalem while midnight hovers above the Pillars of Hercules. All ages are contemporaneous . . . This is particularly true of literature, where the real time is independent of the apparent, and where many dead men are our grandchildren's contemporaries, while many of our contemporaries have been already gathered into Abraham's bosom . . ." (p. vi).

The notion of synchronism implies the possibility and, indeed, even the necessity of retrospective literary influence. Thus Eliot: "The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered . . ." ("Tradition," p. 5). And, more radically, Harold Bloom: "The peculiar strength and achievement of *Winter Words* is not that we are compelled to remember Shelley when we read it, but rather that it makes us read much of Shelley as though Hardy were Shelley's ancestor . . ." (*A Map of Misreading* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975], p. 23).

7. *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 29.

8. *The Pound Era*, p. 30.

9. Kenner speculates that the cave which Eliot visited was Grotte de Niaux. Eliot had joined Pound and his wife on a summer walking tour through southern France, but the Pounds, apparently, did not accompany him on this particular excursion. See Hugh Kenner, "The Poem in the Cave," in *Allegory and Representation: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1979-80*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981).

10. See Michel Foucault's radical and influential attack on the notion of temporal or historical continuity in his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). The notion of "archaeology" — "a discipline devoted to silent monuments, inert traces, objects without context, and things left by the past" — is essentially synchronic (recall Kenner's analysis of the impact of Schliemann's discoveries). The "objects" this notion enables Foucault to unearth are not the underlying continuities of the traditional historian but the various strategies which have constituted discourse. The notion, however, is no less strategic for being metastrategic, nor is it immune to ideological manipulation. The impetus to explain, to discover the "rules," "laws," and "regularities" of the newly uncovered synchronic continuities — continuities which, according to Foucault, are unlike diachronic continuities in that they uncover themselves — permeates Foucault's work. In its structure, its premises, and in its

similar and similarly successful attempt over a century earlier: both poets reject their immediate ancestors — Tennyson and Browning for one, Gray for the other — to return to one less immediate, less particularized, and less threatening — the linguistic complexities of the metaphysicals for one, the “language really spoken by men” for the other.¹¹ The point is that assertions of temporal continuity and discontinuity do not exist in a rhetorical vacuum but are themselves articulated in order to give philosophical substance and, hence, suasive force to the arguments in which they are embedded.

This shift in historical consciousness, as revealed in terms of literary genre and poetics, was but one manifestation of a profound shift in our notions of reality, knowledge, and language. The reverberations were felt in virtually all disciplines precisely because this shift was essentially philosophical in nature. Thus it is no accident that while an impenetrable opacity and ungraspable elusiveness were appearing at the heart of physical reality, the poet and novelist were discovering human reality to be similarly opaque and elusive. By 1931 Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem had formalized the conceptual unease generated by a universe whose newly revealed curvature and randomness were moving it beyond the ken of Euclidean geometry and Kantian teleology.¹² And Virginia Woolf, in her remarkable essay, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” tells us that “in or about December, 1910, human character changed.”¹³ Not quite serious about the arbitrary date, she could not be more so about her point: “All human relations have shifted . . . And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.”¹⁴ D. H. Lawrence makes a virtually identical assertion in his famous letter to Edward Garnett (June 5, 1914): “You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable *ego* of the character.”¹⁵

Because the very essence of human reality seemed suddenly to have changed, the old ways of character portrayal, as in the novels of Galsworthy, Wells, and Bennett, were just as suddenly obsolescent. The Edwardian tools for rendering character, in Woolf's

words, “laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things,” giving “us a house in the hope that we may be able to deduce the human beings who live there.”¹⁶ But character no longer had the socially grounded stability and psychic shallowness which rendered it discoverable and communicable in terms of externals. Taking its place, Lawrence announced, is “another *ego*, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable.” The radical implications of this revision were fully revealed some years later:

Ah, but we die to each other daily.
What we know of other people
Is only our memory of the moments
During which we knew them. And they have changed since then.
To pretend that they and we are the same
Is a useful and convenient social convention
Which must sometimes be broken. We must also remember
That at every meeting we are meeting a stranger.

— T. S. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party*

The old literary forms and techniques were dead, then, because they were unable to plumb the ineffable depths of this new and fluid reality. But they were also dead because they were unaware not only of the inherent limits of this inquiry but of the inherent limits on its communicability. Wittgenstein's pronouncement — “what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence” — is perhaps the most famous doubting of our linguistic powers, but Woolf's musing in *To the Lighthouse* is probably the most eloquent:

Mrs. Ramsay sat silent. She was glad, Lily thought, to rest in silence, uncommunicative; to rest in the extreme obscurity of human relationships. Who knows what we are, what we feel? Who knows even at the moment of intimacy. This is knowledge? Aren't things spoilt then. Mrs. Ramsay may have asked (it seemed to have happened so often, this silence by her side) by saying them? Aren't we more expressive thus?

The irony inherent in such expressive revelations of what, presumably, can neither be revealed nor expressed does not undercut the text so much as it dramatizes its self-aware complexity. Indeed, this reflexive drama is among

treatment of the “discursive formation” as a self-sufficient text, his argument betrays its intriguing if unconsciously ironic similarity to that of Eliot and later formalist criticisms.

For a rich and consciously formalist analysis of the tropological explanatory strategies of nineteenth-century historians, see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973). See also his “Foucault Decoded,” in his *Topics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978).

11. See “The Metaphysical Poets,” in *Selected Essays*, particularly p. 247, and William Wordsworth, “Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*,” in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Snyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 137. (The phrase is from the 1850 edition of the Preface.)
12. See Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History,” in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970). Kant develops his notion of history in terms of how

“world events must develop if they are to conform to certain rational ends” (p. 51). For Heisenberg's own unfolding of the implications of his formulation, see Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958). For a rich development of the implications of Gödel's theorem, see Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Random House, 1980).

13. In Woolf's *Collected Essays*, I (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 320.
14. *Collected Essays*, p. 321.
15. *Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Diana Trilling (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc., 1958), p. 75.
16. *Collected Essays*, p. 322.
17. *Letters*, p. 75.
18. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 3. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1927), pp. 255-56.

the most telling and characteristic persuasive strategies of the early modern text:

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still.

—T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"

The shift in historical imagination explored in this paper is one variant of the self's increasing doubting, however articulate, of its capacity to know itself and other selves and of its capacity to express that knowledge in words (the two doubtings are, if not one, inextricably connected). As we have seen, the dramatic monologue assumes our capacity to infer the inner character of the speaker from represented verbal gesture. The genre depends, that is, upon the "old stable *ego*." It also depends upon a double leap of the historical imagination: we must remove from our present to the writer's present and thence to the speaker's present, all the while respecting the discreteness of these pasts and presents. Concurrent with these temporal movings and removings are those negotiated among reader, speaker, and poet. Thus, the return to the Victorian present at the end of "Cleon" is simultaneously a revelation of the previously implicit presence of the implied author. The impact of the poem is only fully described in terms of our sudden awareness of the discontinuities of history and of persons. Browning, in his most complex and sustained exercise of the historical imagination, *The Ring and the Book*, does attempt to transcend the perspectival limitation of the individual monologue and, thereby, to structure a more accurate representation of the past. The attempt is modern in its recognition of the inherent inadequacy of the single perspective, but it remains characteristically Victorian precisely because each individual speaker is diminished by this formalization of his partiality. Because the reader anticipates in all the perspectives, his is necessarily superior to any particular one.

Only by juxtaposing past and present with the *speaker's* awareness can he become the reader's equal. Thus the mask lyric, by conflating persons — reader, speaker, and poet — and presents — reader's, speaker's, and poet's — would grant us access to other minds and times in the way that we in life have access only to our own: from within. In terms of the opening paradox, the mask lyric, like the greatest of the monologues, invokes our potential to be others, but, unlike the monologue, it does so without inviting our judgment of those others or their times. The two genres, then, superficially so similar, register in their radical difference nothing less than a profound shift in our conception of human reality and human time.

My remarks imply that the historical imagination of the early moderns was more sophisticated than that of the Victorians — and if self-consciousness is the key ingredient of sophistication, then this is indeed the case. But today we suspect that the monist spectacles of our present selves are more value-laden and harder to remove than Eliot and Pound thought. If this is so, then one might also suspect that the acts of historical imagination represented by Browning's monologues are no more naive than they ought to be.

These suspicions suggest we conclude that our attempts to become others are, at best, only provisional and, as such, can have no lasting value. But I will venture a more optimistic — and paradoxical — conclusion and suggest that it is the very provisionality of these attempts that makes them possible and valuable. Because we are *not* branded with the imprint of every mind in which we dwell, we can entrust ourselves more fully to any given mind and to many minds in turn. And it is the sum of these provisional dwellings in the minds and times of others which can move us beyond ourselves and our time. For it is the process itself, the tutoring in empathy which such repeated acts of imagination afford, which is of irreplaceable value.

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Imitation in "The Lady of Shalott"

Nathan Cervo

"The Lady of Shalott" first appeared in *Poems* (1833). Severely revised, it was republished in the 1842 collection which included "Morte D'Arthur." Both poems feature an identity water-journey by a dying personage of mysterious origin, the Lady from her "silent isle" and Arthur to "the island-valley of Avilion." Ambiguous symbols which denote both death and purity reflect the essential nature of the central figures: "lilies" and the "swan"-barge; and a swan-song accompanies both the Lady and Arthur in their movement toward final identity: "a carol, mournful, holy" and "some full-breasted swan/ That, fluting a wild carol ere her death. . . ." Although not embarking directly from it, Arthur leaves the earthly Camelot by dying, whereas the opposite is true of the Lady of Shalott. It is her corpse that arrives at Camelot. Previous to their beginning to die, Arthur had been visionarily engaged with human events, with history; and so had the Lady, though on a different level of vision — that of keen eyesight. If we may say that Arthur resembled a chivalric Odysseus, we may also say that the Lady was a Penelope with no need to unravel her work, because she had no suitors, false-hearted or true: "She hath no loyal knight and true./ The Lady of Shalott." She had no temptation to stray from her task, bound to it as she was by nature as to a marriage vow.

In 1871 Tennyson repeated some of the natural detail first delineated in "The Lady of Shalott" in "The Last Tournament" where "the yellowing woods" and Dagonet dancing "like a wither'd leaf before the hall" echo "The pale yellow woods were waning" and "The leaves upon her falling light." (The Lady is an autonomous force of nature, an anima, "the lower, earth-bound, bodily soul, the yin principle, and is therefore feminine."¹) Fittingly, the name of the last tournament is "The Tournament of

the Lost Innocence," evoking a post-Edenic loss of rapport with our natural environment which, fallen along with us, may often be experienced as numinous but seldom as pneumatic.² Regarding "The Last Tournament," R. B. Wilkenfeld persuasively argues: "As the complex verbal framework out of which the narrative is built makes abundantly clear, Arthur's realm was populated by fools, and it is no surprise to discover he was, himself, the greatest fool of all. He endured and that was his greatness; he died for his vision and that was his folly."³ As a purely natural, autonomous force, the Lady cannot thrive in such a realm. Entering the precincts of Camelot, she dies. For Camelot is the domain of the animus, where ideals out of touch with nature perish ignominiously or dissipate themselves in wholly unconscious projections,⁴ in identity/grail-quests which strike us as the pursuit of an *ignis fatuus*. The formalism that undergirds Camelot (considered as a heruistic symbol helping us to find personal equilibrium) is reactionary and has its counterpart in rationalistic etiquette. The principles of Mill's logic, for example, are so current among the intelligentsia of the period and so inimical to Tennyson's poetic muse that Camelot is set up as an anti-rationalistic citadel; but the truth is that Tennyson's Camelot is the offspring of Victorian rationalism. Reaction to something is a form, often invertedly parallel, of imitation. The Lady is able to see and copy things and events as embodied designs of the radical nothingness of the fallen world. She represents Tennyson's aesthetic muse, settling for incident as incarnate *meaning* but nonetheless valueless.⁵

Even Lancelot cannot enter the Lady's bower of undiluted consciousness⁶ unless the poet himself is unwilling to be true to his task, which is to be a "Poet of Sensation."⁷ Lancelot is perceived only as sensation parallel to the act of consciousness: "And as he rode his armour

1. All references to Jung are to *Psyche and Symbol*, ed. Violet de Laszlo, (New York: Anchor Books, 1958). "Commentary on the Secret of the Golden Flower," p. 333.
2. Much of Tennyson's earlier poetry may be described as Eucharistic rather than grail-questing (pneumatic rather than numinous). Jung, "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," p. 219: "The vision, which in all probability has the character of a dream, must be regarded as a spontaneous psychic product which was never consciously aimed at. Like all dreams, it is a product of nature. The Mass, on the other hand, is a product of man's mind or spirit, and is a definitely conscious proceeding. To use an old but not antiquated nomenclature, we can call the vision *psychic*, and the Mass *pneumatic*. The vision is undifferentiated raw material, while the Mass is a highly differentiated artifact. This is why one is gruesome and the other beautiful." Strictly speaking, the numinous is daemonic (Socratic sense) as well as demonic. Hence, the grail may not inappropriately be thought of as Puckish, a Will-o'-the-Wisp, where mischief and malice are identical.
3. "Tennyson's Camelot: The Kingdom of Folly," *University of Toronto Quarterly* (April, 1968), pp. 281-294. This quotation is to be found on page 293.
4. Jung, "Aion," p. 8. "As we know, it is not the conscious subject but the unconscious that does the projecting. Hence one encounters projections, one does not make them. The effect of projection

is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one. Projections change the world into the replica of one's unknown face." Tennyson's "Sir Galahad" shows how motion itself may be illusory and isolate one from an environment he is merely using (or abusing) to pass through.

5. Jung, "Aion," p. 27. "But the psychic phenomenon cannot be grasped in its totality by the intellect, for it consists not only of *meaning* but of *value*, and this depends on the intensity of the accompanying feeling-tones." ("I am half sick of shadows," said/ The Lady of Shalott.")
6. Consciousness makes for "synchronicity" (Jung, pp. 228 and following), which is the meaning of the Lady's copies. The distinction that Jung makes between Western and Chinese ways of cognition is to the point here ("Foreword to the I Ching or Book of Changes," pp. 227-228): "While the Western mind carefully sifts, weighs, selects, classifies, isolates, the Chinese picture of the moment encompasses everything down to the minutest nonsensical detail, because all of the ingredients make up the observed moment."
7. The phrase is Hallam's (*The Englishman's Magazine*, 1831): "Mr. Tennyson belongs decidedly to the class we have already described as Poets of Sensation."

ring./ Beside remote Shalott." In the first version of the concluding stanza, the Lady goes to Camelot as an anima more than equal to the animus there, as an identity. In the revised stanza, she appears to have been reduced only to a "lovely" surface. This is to say that Tennyson retreated from the principles involved in what Hallam had praised as "aesthetic poetry." He surrendered his muse in that revised stanza. For the Lady had perceived Lancelot as proffering only a "dot"⁸ of a world to which she had full claim, and that "dot," for all its swagger, profoundly quiescent and static: "A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd/ To a lady in his shield." The "shield" here functions as a mandala.⁹ Paradoxically, Camelot, as far as she is concerned, has the same pseudo-vitality as the marmoreal-brede figures on Keats' Grecian Urn. In contrast to the static temporizing (their inability to break the circle of "moral" conventional routines) of Camelot, she is "All breathing human passion far above,/ That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,/ A burning forehead, and a parching tongue." (Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*). She is not unhappy in her work, singing "a song that echoes cheerly," and "in her web she still delights." As I said before, she is Tennyson's Aesthetic Muse, the anima of consciousness that can prove to the world of the animus that imitating it thoroughly means presenting a terrible death-efigy of herself. To convey the meaning and the value of the incidents reflected in her mirror to her own nature is to reduce her from "the fairy/ Lady of Shalott" to a "dot" (so to speak), a fragment of the mirror (the medium of consciousness, the imagination) "with glassy countenance." It seems to me that the concluding stanza of the 1833 version better suits the meaning of the poem, where instead of Sir Lancelot's asking God to lend grace to a "lovely" dead surface, the "parchment on her breast" suggests the parched

condition of the Lady as she approaches overheated Camelot, whose many towers bespeak hubris and titanic will rather than the platitudinous coolness of aesthetic contemplation. In the original version, the poet's scorn of "The well-fed wits at Camelot" is clear enough; and so is the nature of the Lady's accusation and, indeed, her own challenging identity: "The web was woven curiously,/ The charm is broken utterly,/ Draw near and fear not — this is // The Lady of Shalott." It is Tennyson here rebuking the rationalistic jibes, the animosity,¹⁰ directed against such aesthetic poetry as "Mariana."

In "The Lady of Shalott" (1833) Tennyson remained true to his muse. Although dead, she still identifies herself, confronts, and rebukes Camelot's "well-fed wits." On her island bower she sings "by the moon" (imagination) a "fairy song." She recognizes rationalism (the "sun") as incidental to or, in its less parching aspects, ancillary to the life of nature ("the leaves"). With the appearance of Lancelot, "The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,/ And flamed upon the brazen greaves." The negative-evaluation words here are "dazzling," "flamed," and "brazen." In contrast to Lancelot's brass, Wilkenfeld's "realm of fools," is the Keatsian "realms of gold" ("On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer"), the poetic imagination. Tennyson's earlier poems "The Poet's Mind" and "The Poet" are to the point here. Tennyson tells us ("The Poet"): "The poet in a golden clime was born,/ With golden stars above." The world of brass, even when played upon by the poetic imagination and its shapes duly recorded ("when the moon was overhead"), hardly proves satisfying: "I am half sick of shadows,"¹¹ said/ The Lady of Shalott."

It is not appropriate in this brief newsletter to go beyond these altogether new indications as to how "The Lady of Shalott" is to be read or appreciated. In the light of my

8. Jung, "Aion," p. 31: "Experience shows that individual mandalas are symbols of order, and that they occur in patterns chiefly during times of psychic disorientation or reorientation. . . . To the conscious mind the mandala appears at first as an unimpressive point or dot, and a great deal of hard and painstaking work as well as the integration of many projections are generally required before the full range of the symbol can be anything like completely understood." The "dot" of Arthur's "swan"-barge is particularly interesting in this connection, and the Round Table may be seen as a "magical circle" (Jung, p. 31), a mandala. Hence, what we seem to be dealing with in the two 1842 poems, in Arthur's going and the Lady's coming, is the mythos of Camelot qua polity (without King Arthur) of the fallen world. Such a world, profoundly dead and inert for all its shows to the contrary, is visited by pneumatic beings who then give way to the new mandala, the new order, and return to the pleroma. But Aestheticism does not pretend to be anything more than poetic science; its pleroma is the sensorium. Hence, given the unconscious society (Von Hartmann's Social Unconscious) of Camelot, the Lady can only function, that is, be meaningful by imitating the polity's mores, which she does, according to her own principles, by arriving as a corpse. Seen as Camelot's genius, Arthur may in fact be an instance of the "antimimon pneuma" (Jung, p. 35): ". . . a false spirit of arrogance, hysteria, woolly-mindedness, criminal amorality, and doctrinaire fanaticism, a purveyor of shoddy spiritual goods, spurious art, philosophical stutterings, and Utopian humbug."

9. To the aesthete, the mandala would be equated with a kind of dot in the pointillism of sensation, the nervous system being the unifying principle of differentiation. The Lady's web has many such

dots. She proves to Camelot how famished and exhausted (sung out) she would be if she settled as a matter of course for the crumb, the mythic dot, they take so seriously. The Lady's death is a timeless mythos and a timeless put-down of Camelot. An anima, she transcends the time-space continuum.

10. Jung, "Aion," p. 14: "In both its positive and its negative aspects the anima-animus relationship is always full of animosity, i.e., it is emotional and collective. Affects lower the level of the relationship and bring it closer to the common instinctual basis, which no longer has anything individual about it. Very often the relationship runs its course heedless of its human performers, who afterwards do not know what happened to them." "The Lady of Shalott," as one might expect all genuine poetry to do, performs this "animosity," "the anima-animus relationship."

11. See note 5. See Jung, "Aion," pp. 6-9. We read (p. 7): "The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort." For the Aesthetic Poet, the temptation is to take his subject as something less valuable than subscribing to grandiose conventions and generalities and becoming their mouthpiece or special pleader. In "The Lady of Shalott," the "shadows" exist only outside of her domain, her "silent isle."
And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
When she transforms them by means of the texture of her "magic web," they become transformed "with colors gay." The world is redeemed by art, always with aesthetic distance maintained. Once this distance is traversed, the Aesthetic Muse, the Lady of Shalott, dies.

remarks, the reader may see in the revised final stanza Tennyson's retreat from the fathomless anima character of the original version, a character he was no doubt upholding in "The Poet's Mind":

Vex not thou the poet's mind
With thy shallow wit;
Vex not thou the poet's mind,
For thou canst not fathom it.

(These words were true enough before the advent of Jung.) In abdicating his aesthetic task, Tennyson no longer imitated the phenomenal world (including the psychic phenomenon of the anima) as he perceived it but, so to speak, hedged his bets. He imitated the animus of his audience, marring a perfectly clear and powerful original

concluding stanza by paying undue attention to such a critic as John Stuart Mill, who objected to the "lame and impotent conclusion" of "The Lady of Shalott." The "parchment on her breast," the "charm," the identity ("This is I, / The Lady of Shalott") is gone. Instead we cringe at Tennyson's lack of resolve, his palinode ("she" being the muse of aesthetic poetry): "She has a lovely face; / God in his mercy lend her grace." One is left wondering why it is left up to God to do what the poet should have done. Grace accompanies courage in a good cause, honest and beautiful execution. What we are left with in the second version is Lancelot's patronage and pathos.

Franklin Pierce College

Adrian's Shrug: A Note on the "Wise Youth"

Thomas J. Campbell

Adrian shrugged. Whenever the Wise Youth encountered a mental difficulty he instinctively lifted his shoulders to equal altitudes, to show that he had no doubt there was a balance in the case — plenty to be said on both sides, which was the same to him as a definite solution.¹

Is this the shrug of cynical complacency, of mental and moral indolence? Is it a sign of resignation in the face of life's inevitabilities? Is it perhaps the characteristic gesture of one who recognizes the multiplicity of human experience and who therefore refuses to impose mechanistic systems on life? I suspect the shrug encompasses all these possibilities as well as others. It is precisely this sort of ambivalence that surrounds Adrian

Harley in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, making him at once attractive, elusive, and thematically telling. Somehow it won't do simply to label and dismiss him as a parasite, as if that stock tag indicated the range of his functioning in the novel.² It seems to me he is more than a mere self-serving Epicurean, a toady in the employ of a man whose philosophy he inwardly opposes, but to whom he outwardly offers up the expected ingratiating responses in the hopes of obtaining the long-desired Alpine adventure. Such a one-dimensional reading of Adrian misses the more subtle significations of his character.

Perhaps most obviously, Adrian functions as an antidote to the self-indulgent romanticism of the blossoming Richard. The overly soft pastoralism of

1. George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 166. All subsequent quotations are from this edition of the novel and will be identified by page numbers in parentheses within the text.

2. Critics, when they have dealt with Adrian at all, have generally dismissed him as a morally disreputable character. As early as 1911 Joseph Warren Beach expressed the commonly-held negative view of the Wise Youth when he referred to "the low-minded and cynical Adrian Harley" in *Comic Spirit in George Meredith* (London: n.p., 1911), p. 38. Since then most commentators on the novel have regarded Adrian similarly. Walter F. Wright, in *Art and Substance in George Meredith* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1953), p. 45, misses the mark altogether, calling Adrian "a ridiculous gallant." But V. S. Pritchett puts the familiar case against Adrian this way in *George Meredith and English Comedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), p. 62: "Sir Austin has attached to his family a parasitic and worldly young tutor called the Wise Youth, who never commits himself, and takes his pleasures on the sly." Though Jacob Korg, in "Expressive Styles in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*," *NCF*, 27 (1972), 253-267, is interested to show the novel's experimental modernism in its wildly diversified styles — styles dictated by and reflective of this "debate of addled minds," this "fool's symposium" (266) — yet he does refer slightly to the style, the tone of voice associated with Adrian, Adrian, one of the band of "serenely ignorant theorists" (256), the "monomaniacs" (258) inhabiting the novel, shares with the others "the vice of blind presumption" (257). What Adrian himself contends is a "Chesterfieldian insight on human folly," Korg dismisses as "no more than an instinct for

majorities" (257). More damningly, "the signals [of Adrian's voice] are overt, sneering irony, classical parallels, and an irresponsible flexibility in making literary allusions. . . . It often makes use of parallels that sacrifice pertinence for the sake of wit, ingenuity, and display" (262). This is the voice which weaves Shakespearean echoes from *Richard III* into the narrative of Richard's seduction by Mrs. Mount; and Korg finds that "the parallel it suggests is malicious enough, but it has the further effect of putting Richard's fall at a theatrical distance in accordance with Adrian's attitude that life is a play" (263). Finally, Lionel Stevenson sums up much of the criticism of the preceding years when, in "Meredith and the Art of Implication," *The Victorian Experience: The Novelists* (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1976), 191-192, he suggests that, even if drawn somewhat sympathetically, Adrian is "an unscrupulous worldling . . . a parasite, a mischievous meddler, and a habitual seducer of girls." No matter how persuasive we may find his worldly logic, "Adrian Harley is the most despicable character in the book" (180). Evaluations more favorable to Adrian are far fewer. Two which agree to some extent with my own here are those by Judith Wilt, *The Readable People of George Meredith* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975) and Frank D. Curtin, "Adrian Harley: The Limits of Meredith's Comedy," *NCF*, 7 (1953), 272-282. Wilt admits that though he is made "dishonest, perverse, sexually unsavory, and fat into the bargain," "still Adrian is hard to give up" (1145). And Curtin sees Adrian as "Meredith's spokesman, his assistant in pointing up the comedy" (275), and as representative of the comic spirit, though he is not Meredith's ideal, having as he does "no heart" (277).

Richard and Lucy is neatly balanced by Adrian's cynical laughter. The excessive lyricism, both in sentiment and language, in the love passages (Chapters 23 and 24) borders on the embarrassing. The rhetoric, overblown and self-conscious, becomes merely sentimental. Adrian counters this uncontrolled emotionalism and pulls the drama earthward. It is he who checks Richard's fanciful chivalric notions with the sensible reminder that "men were animals, and he an animal with them" (99). Richard, of course, rejects this sensible admonition; yet because he refuses to accept Adrian's imperfect world, because his sense of reality does not allow for an admission of human failing, Richard is restricted to merely Quixotic gestures — the reclamation of Mrs. Mount, the duel with Mount-falcon — which ultimately involve him in a double betrayal of Lucy. Adrian is the necessary counterweight not only to Richard's idealistic excess, but also to Lucy's immaculate sense of duty and purpose, Mrs. Doria's chicanery, Clare's martyrdom, Mrs. Berry's intrusiveness, and certainly to Sir Austin's partisanship, vengefulness, and hypocrisy. Though an egoist like some of the others, his egoism lacks a certain aggressive edge; it is strangely tolerant and flexible, almost benign.

Though in the service of Sir Austin and hence of his system, Adrian subverts both. Adrian does not see man as a machine. To him it is folly to attempt to imprint Richard's nature with a rational plan. Scientific systems that propose subordinating nature to reason fly in the face of human experience. Systems choke vitality. Yet Sir Austin insists on playing God; he aspires "to be Providence to his son," to create a paradise of reason, free from the temptress Eve. Adrian finds such grandiose, pretentious, and ultimately doomed projects wrong-headed, though of course amusing. Because he has an "instinct for the majorities," (25) he goes along, however, accommodating himself to the facts and enjoying as much as he can.

Adrian is an astute observer of life rather than an active participant in it. It is through him that we get an unobstructed view of the proceedings.

He had no intimates save Gibbon and Horace, and the society of these fine aristocrats of literature helped him to accept humanity as it had been, and was: a Supreme Ironic procession, with Laughter of Gods in the background. (26)

Standing back from the fuss, alert to the underlying irony, and urbane in articulating it, Adrian is able to take his prince as he finds him (66). His satire is gentle, bemused, detached, not corrosive, brutal, or personal. When he smoothly questions Richard and Rip about the rick burning, he exposes their falsehoods while savoring their discomfort. Yet he is never wantonly malicious or vituperative. He has, rather, a clear sense of persons as characters in a play; and in this particular instance, the roles are acted out for his amusement (64). He is aloof, in the audience; and it is *his* laughter we hear, not the Gods'.

Though he may seem a trifle, there is a sense of depth lurking beyond his surface insouciance. He is one of those on whom nothing is lost. He sees that "in real life all hangs together," and he does not wonder, as do fools, that "this great matter comes out of that small one" (225). He recognizes that everybody's fate, as he tells Austin, is in the process of being decided (66). He relates cause and effect, promptly and clearly; and he is quick to apprehend the truth behind a lie or to discover a motive cleverly disguised.

That Adrian is clear-sighted is, I think, apparent. And this quality makes him a value carrier in the novel. The sobriquet "Wise Youth" is not misleading. He is not wise simply because, as the Scrip says, "wisdom goes by majorities"; he is un-muddled, well-grounded, undeluded about himself or others. As such, he functions as a kind of truth-bringer. When he presents the wedding cake to the assembled family, he is the glorious vehicle for bursting illusions all round. He sheds his particular brand of light on the others not because he feels compelled by any moral imperative, but rather for the sheer amusement the situation promises. His motives may be questionable, but his analyses are invariably acute, and we value him accordingly.

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Carlyle's Secret Debt to Schiller: The Concept of Goethe's Genius

Lee C. R. Baker

Few scholars have recognized Thomas Carlyle's debt to Friedrich Schiller.¹ In the main we cannot be blamed for this critical lapse since Carlyle himself has put us off the track. In a journal entry of March 1823 Carlyle questions the validity of Schiller's claims for aesthetics. "One is tired to death," he complains, "with his and Goethe's *palabra* about the nature of the fine arts."² Although he later changed his mind,³ there is yet another false trail upon which Carlyle sets us — he attributes some important Schillerian concepts to Goethe. One of Carlyle's letters to John Stuart Mill provides us with the clue which explains why critics have failed to perceive Carlyle's debt to Schiller. Writing to Mill to praise his recently published essay "What is Poetry," Carlyle explains: "That characteristic you fix on is worthy of noting; I find in it indeed a kind of relationship with that old Unconsciousness which, as Goethe hinted to me, is an element in most great things."⁴ As we will see, Carlyle has confused Schiller's ideas with Goethe's, for Carlyle ascribes to Goethe an opinion about unconsciousness which comes from Schiller.

When Carlyle claims that Goethe had intimated to him the importance of unconsciousness, he is referring to Schiller's essay *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. There Schiller says that "genius always remains a mystery to itself."⁵ Carlyle especially likes this thought since he translates it on two separate occasions, once in his notebook entry for March 1823 and later in his *Life of Schiller* (1825):

The character of child-like simplicity. . . which genius impresses on its works, it shows also in its private life and manners. It is bashful, for nature is ever so; but it is not prudish; for only corruption is prudish. It is clear sighted, for nature can never be the contrary; but it is not cunning, for this only art can be. It is faithful to its character and inclinations; but not so much because it is directed by principles, as because after all vibrations nature constantly renews her primitive demand. It is modest, nay, timid, for genius is always a secret to itself; but it is not anxious, for it knows not the dangers of the way which it travels.⁶

We are forced to conclude that Schiller's concept of the naive is the basis for Carlyle's well-known concept of the

unconscious.⁷ And moreover Carlyle is guilty of an unintentional affective fallacy — he unconsciously ascribes Schiller's concept of unconsciousness to Goethe.

But why does Carlyle forget Schiller? The answer is that Schiller's aesthetic writings themselves give Carlyle warrant for seeing Goethe as the preëminently unconscious artist. In *Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller defines two poetic types: one is naive in the sense that he is spontaneous, unself-conscious, and disregards analysis of any kind. He is close to nature, close to the sensuous immediacy of his environment. The other is sentimental because he, unlike the naive poet, feels his alienation from external nature and from his own instincts. He longs for this harmony, but he remains self-conscious. His intellect always mediates between his feeling and his expression. He is therefore sceptical of the spontaneous enthusiasm of the naive poet. Schiller initially considered Goethe an example of the first poetic type, while he saw himself as representative of the second.

In his *Life of Schiller* Carlyle indicates his understanding of these two poetic types by describing the fundamental opposition between Goethe's and Schiller's characters. "No two men, both of exalted genius, could be possessed of more different sorts of excellence, than the two that were now brought together, in a large company of their mutual friends. The English reader may form some approximate conception of the contrast, by figuring an interview between Shakespeare and Milton" (*Works*, 25.90). Goethe-Shakespeare is calm, tolerant, a man of broad interests. Schiller-Milton is struggling, earnest, feeling intensely but narrowly, "at war with the one half of things, in love with the other half" (*Works*, 25.90-91). In another discussion of the unconscious in his essay "Characteristics," Carlyle again points out the essential difference between Shakespeare and Milton in a typically Schillerian mode. Beginning with the significant phrase from Schiller's *Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, Carlyle writes that "on the whole, 'genius is ever a secret to itself'; of this old truth we have, on all sides daily evidence. The Shakspeare [sic] takes no airs for writing *Hamlet* and the *Tempest*, understands not that it is anything surprising; Milton, again, is more conscious of his faculty, which accordingly is an inferior one" (*Works*, 28.5). It is not surprising, then, that Carlyle attributes Schiller's concept of the unconscious to Goethe, for Schiller's foremost example of the unconscious artist is Goethe. Carlyle prefers Goethe over Schiller as a poet because Schiller himself had shown Carlyle the greater preëminence of

1. See Frohwalder Küchler, "Carlyle und Schiller," *Anglia*, 26 (1903), 1-93, 939-446; Frederic Ewen, "Carlyle," *The Prestige of Schiller in England, 1788-1859* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932), pp. 134-47; and G. B. Tenyson, *Savior Called Resartus* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), p. 42.
2. *Two Note Books of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (1898; rpt. Mamaroneck, N.Y.: Paul F. Appel, 1972), pp. 41-42. Hereafter cited as *TNB*.
3. See Hill Shine, *Carlyle's Fusion of Poetry, History, and Religion by 1834* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1938), p. 8, who believes Carlyle's conversion to Schiller occurred by 1825.
4. See *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*,

Duke-Edinburgh Edition, ed. C. R. Sanders and Kenneth J. Fielding (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1970-), VI, 404. Hereafter cited as *CL*.

5. *Naive and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime: Two Essays*, trans. Julius A. Elias (New York: Ungar, 1966), p. 97. Hereafter cited as *NSP*.
6. *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Edinburgh Edition, ed. H. D. Traill (New York: Scribner's 1903-04), XXV, 198. Hereafter cited as *Works*. The Edinburgh Edition is a reprint of the Centenary Edition. Cf. *TNB*, 40.
7. Schiller's influence in this regard is also noted by Küchler, pp. 407, 441-44, and, following him, by Ewen, pp. 146-47.

Goethe. Schiller probably suggested the contrast between Shakespeare and Milton as well, since he names Shakespeare as one of the great naive geniuses (*NSP*, 97).

The matter is further complicated, however, by Schiller's theoretical attempts to fuse the naive and sentimental states into a third state which has characteristics of the first two. In *Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller describes a state which is a union of the two basic poetic types. Speaking in general psychological terms, Schiller identifies three different conditions of man: 1) the first, naive state of "pure nature" in which man "functions as an undivided sensuous unity"; 2) the second, sentimental "state of civilization" in which "the correspondence between his feeling and thought which in the first condition *actually* took place, exists now only *ideally*"; and 3) the third state, "the higher concept under which both can be subsumed. . . ." (*NSP*, 111-12). Schiller provides a more thorough account of the steps in this process of synthesis in this *Aesthetic Letters* (see *NSP*, 217n). And, as he tells Goethe in a letter which Carlyle read, "You will, in these Letters, find a portrait of yourself, beneath which I would gladly have subscribed your name, were it not that I dislike to forestall the feelings of thoughtful readers. No one, whose judgment can be of any value to you, will mistake it, for I know that my conception of it is good, and that it is faithfully drawn."⁸

Carlyle proves himself one of these valued readers because he recognizes Goethe as an artist who has achieved the third stage, the aesthetic state. Carlyle regards Goethe not simply as a naive artist of the first state, but as one who reaches the greatest heights of poetic activity because he manages to combine the two opposing qualities associated with the naive and sentimental types, that is, the *Stofftrieb* of the naive and the *Formtrieb* of the sentimental. Carlyle considers Goethe to be "a clear and universal man" (*Works*, 26.208; 27.400), "the Uniter, and victorious Reconciler, of the distracted, clashing elements of the most distracted and divided age that the world has witnessed since the Introduction of the Christian Religion" (*Works*, 27.434). "The thing that was given this man to reconcile," Carlyle explains, ". . . was the inward spiritual chaos; the centre of all other confusions, outward and inward" (*Works*, 27.435). As a result of his successful resolution of these psychological contradictions,

Goethe's "poetry is no separate faculty, no mental handicraft; but the voice of the whole harmonious manhood: nay, it is the very harmony, the living and life-giving harmony of that rich manhood which forms his poetry" (*Works*, 26.208). Thus, when Carlyle claims that Goethe has "the skill to temper enthusiasm with judgement" (*CL*, 2.300), he does not mean that Goethe is a sceptic, but rather is pointing to Goethe's fusion of *Stofftrieb* and *Formtrieb*. Carlyle sees that Goethe's

lofty enthusiasm, which, wandering wildly over the universe, found no resting place [as shown in the *Sorrows of Young Werther*], has here [in *Wilhelm Meister*] reached its appointed home and lives in harmony with what long appeared to threaten it with annihilation. . . . Here the ardent high-aspiring youth has grown into the calmest man, yet with increase and not loss of ardour, and with aspirations higher as well as clearer. For he has conquered his unbelief; the Ideal has been built on the Actual. (*Works*, 26.224-25)

Goethe's renewal of his naive character after having experienced the doubts associated with the speculative, sentimental phase impressed Carlyle, for Goethe conquered his sceptical alienation to achieve a new internal harmony. Goethe experienced the process of aesthetic education described by Schiller; he had become, in other words, the aesthetic man. Carlyle considers Goethe "the first of the moderns" because he had found the way to new faith in an age of doubt. He had overcome the dangerous negativism associated with the Enlightenment's narrow emphasis on analysis to achieve a higher naive condition. And it is Schiller's *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* and the *Aesthetic Letters* that provided Carlyle with the pattern of conversion which he finds Goethe embodying. Thus we see that Carlyle borrows from Schiller an important psychological pattern which he thought he borrowed from Goethe. That he did so is not a subconscious rejection of Schiller or his theories. Carlyle had always associated the two men together since they had been such close friends and literary collaborators. But since it was Goethe who manifested what Schiller described, it is only natural that Carlyle would finally confuse the two men's thinking.

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8. *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe*, trans. L. Dora Schmitz (London: Bell, 1877), I, 23.

Arnold and Bolingbroke

Joseph Carroll

In his 1877 essay on Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, Matthew Arnold depicts the English Civil War as an inglorious conflict between equally benighted contestants, "a strife of imperfect intelligences and tempers illiberal."¹ In support of this view, Arnold appeals to the judgment of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke. "Let us consult a great writer, too little read. *Who now reads Bolingbroke?*" asked Burke scornfully. And the right answer is, so far as regards, at any rate, the historical writings of Bolingbroke: "Far too few of us; the more's the pity!" But let us hear Bolingbroke" (VIII, 200). Arnold's independent judgment of Bolingbroke's merit is founded on a long and thorough acquaintance with his political and historical works. According to the reading lists in his *Note-Books*, Arnold had, between 1865 and 1868, read *A Letter to Sir William Windham, The Idea of a Patriot King, Reflections upon Exile, A Dissertation upon Parties, Letters on the Study and Use of History, and Remarks on the History of England*. In 1869 he reread the *Reflections upon Exile* and in addition read one of Bolingbroke's essays on religion, *A Letter Occasioned by one of Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons*. The amount of attention Arnold devoted to Bolingbroke, and the high admiration which, on more than one occasion, he expressed for him, present us with a question: what is it in Bolingbroke that appealed to Arnold, why did Arnold think him important, and what sort of impact did Bolingbroke have on Arnold's own work?

It is widely recognized that when Arnold came to praise the eighteenth-century writers, he emphasized their development of a serviceable prose style.² And it is true

that when Arnold first mentions Bolingbroke, in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, it is to commend his style as an orator and writer of prose (III, 352 and 364).³ There are, however, other, more doctrinally substantial ways in which the Augustans could be of use to Arnold. Limiting our focus, in this article, to the case of Bolingbroke, we shall try to show that Arnold responded not only to Bolingbroke's style, but to his ideas as well. Bolingbroke offers an interpretation of English history that Arnold could assimilate to his own work. Arnold revises his views on the English Civil War in accordance with the interpretation given by Bolingbroke, and he draws from Bolingbroke's historical analyses valuable suggestions for the direction of contemporary political policy.⁴ Finally, Bolingbroke's political philosophy, in its basic terms, displays striking parallels to that of Arnold.⁵ There are, of course, other major sources and confirmatory influences for Arnold's political ideas — Burke, Dr. Thomas Arnold, Heinrich Heine, even John Stuart Mill — but there is one essential respect in which Bolingbroke stands out from among the other native influences on Arnold's political thinking.⁶ Arnold finds in Bolingbroke a distinguished precedent for his own attempt to establish his political principles on the ground of "right reason," i.e., universally valid, a priori laws of political and social value.

There are certain obvious limitations on the significance of Bolingbroke's influence on Arnold. The scope of Arnold's interests is broader than Bolingbroke's, and his conception of culture richer and fuller. Bolingbroke is concerned almost exclusively with political history and, unlike Arnold, he regards literature as of inferior utility in education.⁷ Bolingbroke remains important to Arnold, nonetheless, because he is one of the first English writers both to expound and to practice a doctrine of a systematic historical study aimed at identifying the leading principles of social and political life.⁸ Taken together, the

1. *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960-77), VIII, 206. All further quotations from Arnold will be cited parenthetically in the text by volume and page number.
2. On the whole, there has been remarkably little detailed commentary on Arnold's relations to Augustan literature, and the little there has been tends to emphasize the ideological and temperamental differences between the Augustans and Arnold. Geoffrey Tillotson, in *Criticism and the Nineteenth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1951), stresses Arnold's affiliations with the Romantics and depicts his attitude towards the Augustans as one of insensitive and uninformed hostility. Similarly, E. K. Brown's article, "Matthew Arnold and the Eighteenth Century," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 9 (1940), does less to open up than to close off this field of inquiry. Apart from these two essays, commentary on Arnold and the Augustans is limited to passing remarks in studies concerned with other topics.
3. Arnold's remarks on Bolingbroke's style are very general. There is a perceptive and sympathetic appraisal of Bolingbroke's style in Bonamy Dobrée's *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 296-9. Also see G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England* (New York: John Lane, 1917), p. 225, cited in Jeffrey Hart, *Viscount Bolingbroke: Tory Humanist* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 164.
4. Perhaps the best specialized treatment of Arnold's response to his contemporary political milieu is that of Patrick J. McCarthy in *Matthew Arnold and the Three Classes* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964).

5. For recent treatments of Bolingbroke as a political theorist, see Hart, *Viscount Bolingbroke*; Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., *Statesmanship and Party Government: A Study of Burke and Bolingbroke* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963); and Isaac Krannick, *Bolingbroke and his Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968).
6. Lionel Trilling, in *Matthew Arnold* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1939), gives considerable attention to Dr. Thomas Arnold and emphasizes throughout the influence of Burke. Edward Alexander, in *Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965) offers an exhaustive analysis of Arnold's response to Mill. The most detailed study of Arnold and Heine is that of Ilse-Maria Tesdorpf, *Die Auseinandersetzung Matthew Arnolds mit Heinrich Heine* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1971). Tesdorpf maintains too rigidly the thesis that Arnold, in contrast to Heine, was concerned not with political but with "inner" freedom. Actually, Heine is probably the main non-English writer who confirms Arnold's belief in the "rational" character of his political values.
7. Bolingbroke, *The Study and Use of History*, in *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841), II, 183.
8. See Bolingbroke, *Works*, II, 186 (*Study and Use of History*). For a description of Bolingbroke's place in the history of historical writing, see Isaac Krannick, *Lord Bolingbroke: Historical Writings* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), p. xlviii. George H. Nadel, in a 1962 article, remarks that the *Study and Use of History* is still "one of the few major works about the idea of history in English." "New Light on Bolingbroke's Letters on History," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 23 (1962), 557.

Study and Use of History, the *Letter to Sir William Windham*, and the *History of England* provide a concise and cogent history of modern Europe, especially in relation to England, and they contain many illuminating references to analogous events and circumstances in the ancient world. Bolingbroke consistently and convincingly alludes to large bodies of empirical data that he suppresses for brevity and from which he draws out only those main lines of policy and behavior that mark a major political figure, characterize a nation, or define an era. This is Arnold's own method.

From the spirit and tenor of Bolingbroke's historical doctrine Arnold could receive stimulus and encouragement for his own efforts. From the practical historical writings of Bolingbroke, particularly his discussions of religious sectarianism and of the English Civil War, Arnold receives a more palpable sort of assistance. Arnold, like Bolingbroke, regards national union as a primary good, and national division as a primary evil.⁹ One of the main sources of division is religious dissent, and in trying to bring the Dissenters back into the national fold, both by conciliating them and by humbling their pretensions, Arnold draws directly on Bolingbroke. The problem of contemporary sectarianism occupies a central place in the Preface to *Culture and Anarchy*, and Arnold's proposed solution to this problem models itself in part on Bolingbroke's analysis of Queen Elizabeth's policy towards the Dissenters. In "Falkland" Arnold uses Bolingbroke's analysis of the English Civil War to help correct the Dissenters' self-serving interpretation of their own history.

Arnold opposes sectarianism on the grounds that if a man is "not in contact with the main current of a national life, like the member of an Establishment," he is much more likely to give an undue significance to the freaks and fancies of his own religious imagination (V, 238). He is likely, that is, to exaggerate those failings of eccentricity and arbitrariness to which as an Englishman he is already too much inclined (see III, 241, "The Literary Influence of Academies"). To inhibit this propensity, Arnold would have the Dissenters submit to creeds and ceremonies that derive their authority not from individual conviction, but from tradition and common consent. Recognizing that official persecution only confirms the obstinacy of opinion, he suggests a compromise. He argues that the main body of Protestant Dissenters are Presbyterians, and that their chief difference with the Church of England is not a point of doctrine, but a point of church government, the "considerable and important, though not essential principle, of the congregation's share in the church-management" (V, 249-50). To resolve this difference, he proposes to readmit the Presbyterian form of church government into the established church. "And thus, — through this concession on a really considerable point of difference, — that endless splitting into hole-and-corner

churches on quite inconsiderable points of difference, which must prevail so long as separatism is the first law of a Nonconformist's religious existence, would be checked" (V, 250).

The policy Arnold recommends is largely a reversion to the policy of Elizabeth as Bolingbroke explains it, and the consequences he anticipates from this policy are the same as those Bolingbroke supposes would eventually have resulted from Elizabeth's policy had that policy been continued in the reign of James I.¹⁰ Arnold says that Bolingbroke is "on a matter of this kind a very clear-judging and impartial witness," and he quotes from the relevant passage in the *History of England*, a work that is "far too little read" (V, 248). (He omits several sentences not relevant to his own immediate purpose, but his skillful condensation neither distorts Bolingbroke's intent nor diminishes the vigorous lucidity of his prose.):

The measures pursued and the temper observed in Queen Elizabeth's time tended to diminish the religious opposition by a slow, a gentle, and for that very reason an effectual progression. There was even room to hope that when the first fire of the Dissenters' zeal was passed, reasonable terms of union with the Established Church might be accepted by such of them as were not intoxicated with fanaticism. These were friends to order, though they disputed about it. If these friends of Calvin's discipline had been once incorporated with the Established Church, the remaining sectaries would have been of little moment, either for numbers or reputation; and the very means which were proper to gain these friends were likewise the most effectual to hinder the increase of them, and of the other sectaries in the meantime.

(V, 248; from *History of England*, letter 18)

Arnold maintains that the effect of sectarianism on the sectaries themselves is that in "provincially they abound" (V, 237), and in Bolingbroke he finds both suggestions for a practical political program that would correct this provinciality, and a standard of that "intellectual maturity" by which it could be judged and found wanting (I, 24; and see III, 352).

One of the keynotes of provinciality is "smugness," and while laying plans for operating on the cause of this distemper, Arnold does not neglect to minister to the effect. In *Culture and Anarchy* he pursues this end directly by denouncing the "hideousness" of middle-class, dissenting culture. In "Falkland" he seeks to counteract the Dissenter's complacency by undermining their historical identity. He quotes a dissenting journalist's contention that the Puritan revolution was dedicated to "truths assured of ultimate triumph" (VIII, 200), and in order to refute this contention he singles out three historical issues: Cromwell's foreign policy, the constitutionality of the Revolution, and the propagation of the spirit of liberty. In the interpretation he gives of these three issues Arnold demonstrates the impact Bolingbroke

9. Bolingbroke, *Works*, I, 339 (*History of England*).

10. Corroboration for this view of the matter could have come to Arnold from his father's brief comparison of Elizabeth and James

in lecture six of the *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* (New York: D. Appleton, 1857), pp. 267-8.

has had on his view of English history. On the issue of Cromwell's foreign policy, Arnold simply quotes Bolingbroke and seconds his judgment. Cromwell ignored the cardinal rule of balancing the European powers and joined with France against Spain. As a result, "Europe had to bear . . . the infliction of the Grand Monarch and of all he brought with him" (VIII, 201). On the issue of domestic policy, Arnold again seconds Bolingbroke, and in doing so he implicitly modifies his own former opinions. Finally, on the issue of liberty, Arnold seems to have drawn on Bolingbroke, and in any case shows himself in full accord with him.

Bolingbroke's analysis of the Civil War displays in an eminent degree the merits of judiciousness and impartiality for which Arnold commends him in *Culture and Anarchy*. He takes sides with neither party, and though he locates the origin of the conflict in the nefarious and impolitic absolutism of James I and Charles I, he finds little to approve in the behavior and attitudes of the Puritans. The resistance to James' assertions of divine right was carried on not in a spirit of justice and wisdom, but in "resentment and passion and prejudice and faction."¹¹ Consequently, when civil war broke out, "The English government was subverted, instead of being reformed." The conflict between Roundheads and Cavaliers was not a struggle of law against tyranny, but an entire collapse of law and civil process. Arnold himself, before reading Bolingbroke, had criticized the English Revolution, but the grounds of his criticism were not then the same as those of Bolingbroke. In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Arnold had compared the English Revolution of 1642 with the French Revolution, and while deprecating the "spiritual" significance of the English Revolution, he had granted its practical success and honorable motivation:¹²

[The French Revolution is] an event of much more powerful and world-wide interest, though practically less successful; it appeals to an order of ideas which are universal, certain, permanent. 1789 asked of a thing, Is it rational? 1642 asked of a thing, Is it legal? or, when it went furthest, Is it according to conscience? This is the English fashion, a fashion to be treated, within its own sphere, with the highest respect; for its success, within its own sphere, has been prodigious.

(III, 264)

In "Falkland" Arnold revokes this interpretation of the English Revolution and brings his views into alignment with those of Bolingbroke. The Revolution was, he now holds, neither "legal" nor successful. He quotes and

approves Bolingbroke's succinct summation:

Cavaliers and Roundheads had divided the nation, like Yorkists and Lancastrians. To reconcile these disputes by treaty became impracticable, when neither side would trust the other. To terminate them by the sword was to fight, not for preserving the constitution, but for the manner of destroying it. The constitution might have been destroyed under pretence of prerogative. It was destroyed under pretence of liberty. We might have fallen under absolute monarchy. We fell into absolute anarchy. (VIII, 200; quoted with a slight change from the *History of England*, letter 19)

Arnold's analysis of the plight of Falkland situates itself within this historical context. The peculiar pathos of Falkland's fate is that he was a man of heroic temper reluctantly engaged in a conflict where there was no hero's part to take.¹³ He knew that "the final victory" would be "neither for Stuarts nor Puritans. And it could not be for either of them, for the cause of neither was sound." (VIII, 204). The final victory, Arnold says, lay with "the spirit of English political liberty, as we now conceive it, and as, by the Revolution of 1688, it triumphed" (VIII, 203). Here, too, Arnold aligns himself with Bolingbroke, who in the *Dissertation upon Parties* argues that "the spirit of liberty" first formed the English Constitution, and that this constitution achieved its culminating poise in the Revolution of 1688.¹⁴

The main purpose of Bolingbroke's historical writing is to fashion a coherent theory of the English Constitution, its nature and development, and to relegate to this Constitution the authority of reason. Arnold, too, seeks to fashion a rationalist political ideology, and though he does not base his effort on a theory of the Constitution, his conception of a rational social order is similar to that of Bolingbroke. Before drawing out this parallel, we should consider the ways in which Bolingbroke and Arnold differ. In Bolingbroke's view the English Constitution provides the best conceivable form of government, a mixed monarchy in which the monarch acts as medium and executor of the national will manifested in the commons. From Arnold's perspective, the balance of powers comprising the Constitution, because it rests on fast-decaying habits of feudal subordination, no longer seems adequate to sustain public order (V, 117). Arnold retains Bolingbroke's belief in the symbolic function of royalty, "in its idea the expression of the collective nation, and a sort of constituted witness to its best mind" (V, 153-54), but to use the monarch as the actual vehicle for the national will no longer seems a real alternative to him.¹⁵

11. Bolingbroke, *Works*, I, 429 (*History of England*).

12. Arnold's distinction between the rational motivation of the French Revolution and the practical motivation of the English seems to reflect the influence of Heinrich Heine, who speaks of the French Revolution as "that world-epoch when the doctrine of freedom and equality so triumphantly arose out of that general source of understanding that we call reason" (my translation). *Sämtliche Schriften*, eds. Klaus Brügge et al. (München: Karl Hanser, 1968-76), II, 598 (from *Travel Sketches*, "English Fragments"). Heine says that in England "no modern reforms have ever derived from a principle, but only from practical necessity." 597.

13. In designating Falkland a "martyr" Arnold was anticipated by his father, but Dr. Arnold's analysis of Falkland's plight differs from Matthew Arnold's. Dr. Arnold maintains that Falkland felt that the Cavalier cause was "habitually just, and habitually the weaker, although now bewildered and led astray by an unwanted gleam of success." *Introductory Lectures*, p. 276.

14. Bolingbroke, *Works*, II, 84-5 and 107.

15. Dr. Thomas Arnold also remarks that in the person of the monarch "that common life . . . which we could not find represented by any private members of the state, is brought to a head, as it were, and exhibited intelligibly and visibly in the government." *Introductory Lectures*, pp. 28-9.

He proposes instead that England adopt the idea of the "State," or "the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals" (V, 117).

Bolingbroke recognizes that the structure of English society, and thus the structure of the Constitution, has changed in the past, but he tends to regard its contemporary form as a culminating poise. If it is to change further at all, he thinks, it can only degenerate. He does not foresee any development in which the contemporary form would no longer be adequate, if duly upheld, to maintain public order. Whereas Arnold argues that all institutions must adapt themselves to new circumstances under the one guiding criterion of a progress towards perfection (II, 29 and V, 219), Bolingbroke believes that the Constitution can survive only by means of a frequent reversion to its original principles.¹⁶

Having duly noted these necessary qualifications, we may now mark the close accord that exists between Arnold and Bolingbroke in respect to the ideal relations between the individual and the State. The political principles that Arnold defines as corollaries to the idea of perfection are the same as those which Bolingbroke identifies as the original principles of the English Constitution. Bolingbroke conceives of the Constitution as Arnold conceives of the State, as a corporate entity in which the will and interest of individuals are subordinated to the good of the whole. Bolingbroke outlines the course of English history as a perpetual struggle between the "spirit of liberty" and the "spirit of faction." By "faction" he means any political coalition joined for the purposes of private or party interest in disregard of or conflict with the best interests of the nation.¹⁷ By "liberty" he does not mean "doing as one likes," but rather participating freely in the duties of a citizen. The "friends of liberty" are, he holds, "friends to order, and enemies to licence."¹⁸ Or, as Arnold puts it, "the only perfect freedom is, as our religion says, a service" (V, 207).¹⁹

For both Arnold and Bolingbroke the polar deviations from the spirit of liberty are anarchy and tyranny. Anarchy consists of a collapse of social order amidst the diverse assertions of individual wills, and tyranny consists of an order maintained through the arbitrary power of one will. Both of these extremes betray a defect of just authority, and Arnold and Bolingbroke alike locate just authority in what they call "right reason." Arnold describes the State as "the power most representing the right reason of the nation, and most worthy, therefore, of

ruling" (V, 124). Bolingbroke declares that "to govern a society of freemen by a constitution founded on the eternal rules of right reason, and directed to promote the happiness of the whole, and of every individual, is the noblest prerogative which can belong to humanity; and if a man may be said, without profaneness, to imitate God in any case, this is the case."²⁰

Arnold's idea of the State as the nation in its collective and corporate character is originally drawn from Burke (II, 377), but his designation of right reason as an authority for the State is entirely alien to Burke's anti-rationalist bias. Burke declares the authority of the State to be founded on hereditary rights of prejudice and confirmed sentiment.²¹ It is in opposition to the ideology of traditional authority that Arnold develops his doctrine of criticism (III, 109), and he requires of criticism not only the destructive power of analytical acuity, but also a power of evaluative affirmation. His advocacy of a political rationalism similar to that of Bolingbroke is symptomatic of a broader tendency in his whole line of thinking, the rejection of Romantic subjectivism and a reversion to the neo-classical belief in the existence of objective standards in every field of experience, morals, aesthetics and politics. There is, Arnold thinks, "a certain ideal centre of correct information, taste, and intelligence" (V, 147), and he extends this standard of correctness to political morality by way of "the best self." The best self is the self that recognizes the claims of a common life and a common reason, and so mediates among the impulses of individual passions. "By our everyday selves . . . we are separate, personal, at war; we are only safe from one another's tyranny when no one has any power; and this safety, in its turn, cannot save us from anarchy. . . . But by our *best self* we are united, impersonal, at harmony" (V, 134). Arnold's idea of the "ordinary self" corresponds to Bolingbroke's "spirit of faction," and the "best self" corresponds to the "spirit of liberty." Thus, while abandoning Bolingbroke's devotion to a fixed form of government, Arnold remains in agreement with Bolingbroke on the spiritual content of political life.

Ultimately, of course, Arnold requires more of man than political rectitude. Bolingbroke can be of little assistance to him in his campaigns for poetry and religion. But then, Arnold was one of the most eclectic thinkers of his eclectic age. He took what was useful to him from wherever he found it, and it is clear that in Bolingbroke he found a writer of stylistic distinction who gave clear and forceful expression to political ideas congenial to Arnold himself.

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16. Bolingbroke, *Works*, II, 397 (*Patriot King*).

17. Bolingbroke, *Works*, I, 410 (*History of England*), et passim.

18. Bolingbroke, *Works*, II, 95 (*Dissertation upon Parties*).

19. Here again, the opinions of Dr. Thomas Arnold, though not so systematically organized as those of Bolingbroke or Matthew Arnold, converge with them. Dr. Arnold declares that if liberty is to mean

only "that we may do nothing, or that we may please ourselves, then liberty, so far as we are concerned, is valueless." *Introductory Lectures*, p. 278.

20. Bolingbroke, *Works*, II, 91 (*Dissertation upon Parties*).

21. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *Works* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1826), II, 49-52, and 95-6.

The Key To All Mythologies — A Possible Source of Inspiration

Katharina M. Wilson

The battle over the possible historic identity of Edward Casaubon in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* still rages on. Robert William Mackley, Mark Pattison, Herbert Spencer, and Dr. R. H. Brabant, just to name a few, have been put forth as possible models for the pedant scholar of *Middlemarch*.¹ George Eliot herself, as Gordon Haight records, when asked from whom she drew Casaubon, replied by pointing "with humorous solemnity which was quite in earnest" to herself.² But, as the editors of the *Middlemarch Notebooks*, John C. Pratt and Victor A. Neufeld, most appropriately remark, "in the creation of Edward Casaubon, George Eliot was concerned with something much more fundamental than caricaturing certain unpleasant acquaintances and events in her life: she was portraying a whole set of prevailing attitudes and ideals, ideals that to her mind were hindering rather than furthering the search for truth."³

The essentially composite nature of Casaubon's character cannot be seriously doubted by anyone even vaguely aware of George Eliot's remarkable list of readings before and during the writing of *Middlemarch*. The question, however, remains as to why she chose to use the name of Casaubon (rather than any near contemporary scholar's) for her *Middlemarch* character. Yet aside from the obvious tragic irony underlying the appellation of Edward Casaubon, who cannot lay claim to being even a pale shadow of the great classical scholar, no attempts have been made to suggest a possible source for the connection of the name with a rambling and confusing piece of work. In the present note I propose such a connection which may have provided George Eliot with the initial idea of fathering Casaubon's name on her *Middlemarch* pedant.

Will Ladislav says in Chapter 22: "The subject Mr. Casaubon has chosen is as changing as chemistry: new discoveries are constantly making new points of view. . . . Do you not see that it is no use now to be crawling a little way after men of the last century — men like Bryant — and correcting their mistakes?" Edward Casaubon, as has been argued, subscribes to ideas that have been invalidated by new discoveries but of which he is unaware

because of his linguistic limitations.⁴ Thus, as Harvey points out, "Casaubon, through ignorance, is a complete anachronism, lost in the labyrinth of an exploded pseudo-science."⁵ Technically speaking, Casaubon's work in progress, *The Key to All Mythologies*, is a set of notes and annotations on recommendations of what others have said. During their Italian journey, Casaubon sums up his labors and says to Dorothea: "I have been led farther than I had foreseen, and various subjects for annotations have presented themselves which, though I have no direct need of them, I could not pretermitt."⁶

While there are certainly numberless works that could qualify as models for an unfinished, rambling, unfocused, anachronistic work of scholarship, even as models for a book which corrects the mistakes of men of the last century and annotates various subjects, I am aware of only one that combines these qualities with the name of the great French scholar Isaac Casaubon: the confusing and often convoluted encyclopaedic compilation in three languages, the *Dittionario Novo Hebraico Molto Copioso Dechirato in Tre Lingue* of David de Pomis.⁷

The book, also referred to as the *Zenah David*, was published in Venice in 1587. Dedicated to Pope Sixtus V, it contains "numerous discourses of scientific and historical nature;" it deals, among other things, with true and false myths, and tests for ascertaining the genuineness of miraculous and mythical items. Occasionally, the work is described as a Talmudic dictionary⁸ and it contains sets of Rabbinic teachings. David describes himself as a Hebrew linguist, philosopher, and physician from the tribe of Juda — "one of the four distinguished Roman families which were brought by Titus from Erez Israel to Italy."⁹ This most complicated work was made even more confounding by the erudite marginalia and annotations of none other but the great Isaac Casaubon himself, who, to top it all, added an Arabic vocabulary to this trilingual maze.¹⁰

The *Dittionario*, bearing Casaubon's name on the title page, was probably purchased by Patrick Young, King James I's librarian in 1614 together with the acquisition of many of Casaubon's works for the Royal library.¹⁰ Casaubon, one will recall, had received an official invita-

1. According to Gordon Haight, *George Eliot, A Biography* (New York, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 448, "the most commonly accepted original was the rector of Lincoln College, Mark Pattison who published his *Life of Isaac Casaubon* in 1875." See also *George Eliot's Middlemarch Notebooks*, eds. John Clark Pratt and Victor A. Neufeld (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1979), p. li.

2. Haight, p. 450.

3. *Middlemarch Notebooks*, p. li.

4. Alan Mintz, *George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), p. 116.

5. W. J. Harvey, "The Intellectual Background of the Novel Casaubon and Lydgate," in *Middlemarch, Critical Approaches to the Novel*, ed. B. Hardy (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 35.

6. *Dittionario Novo Hebraico, molto copioso, Dechirato in tre lingue, con bellissime annotazioni e con l'indice latino e volgare; de tutti li suoi significati. Lexicon Novum Hebraicus: luculentissimum quantum nunquam antea triplici lingua perspicue explanatum.* (Apud Joannem de Gara: Venetiis, 1587).

7. *Jüdische Nationalbibliographie*, vol. 5, p. 66.

8. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, pp. 844-5. The description is on the title page of the *Zenah David*.

9. Casaubon's addition of the Arabic vocabulary has misled some to believe that the *Dittionario* was written in four languages. Thus, for example, *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*.

10. For this and the subsequent information on the whereabouts of the text, I am grateful to the librarian in the division of printed books in the British Museum.

tion from the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1610 to reside in England. He was graciously received and soon became one of King James' favorites on whose request he undertook the arduous task of editing the *Annals of Baronius*.¹¹ Casaubon's annotated copy of the *Dictionario* arrived at the British Museum as part of the "Old Royal Library" when the Museum was founded in 1735.¹² It has remained in the Museum since that date. Thus, George Eliot could easily have seen it there.

George Eliot was familiar with the work of Isaac Casaubon and spent a summer in his birthplace, Geneva. In her *Middlemarch Notebook* she remarks: "Curious to turn from Shakespeare to Isaac Casaubon, his contemporary."¹³ "It is curious indeed," observe the *Notebook's* editors, "especially when one notes the significance of the name Casaubon for George Eliot. There is a marginal check mark to this passage in what appears to be her own ink. To the 'curious' reader such as George Eliot was, the ironies implicit in Casaubon's obscurity versus Shakespeare's fame provide an important clue to *Middlemarch*."¹⁴ Moreover, Gordon Haight points out that both Mr. and Mrs. Mark Pattison consulted George Eliot about the last chapter of *The Life of Isaac Casaubon*, a biography which Mr. Pattison published in 1875. They did so, presumably, because of their awareness of George Eliot's interest in and great familiarity with the French scholar's work.¹⁵

More specifically, George Eliot was interested in etymologies (which the *Dictionario* supplies copiously), in philology, and in antiquarian curiosities. She spent long hours in the British Museum collecting historical and

philological background materials for her novels. She may have seen the *Dictionario* as early as 1860 when she was gathering information on late medieval Italy for *Romola*, but in the unlikely case that she did not discover the book on her own, she was very likely to have done so through her Hebrew tutor and friend, Emmanuel Deutsch. Deutsch was a German Jew who came to work as a cataloguer of books in the British Museum in 1855. George Eliot met him in 1866 and he was "soon a frequent caller at the priory."¹⁶ Deutsch was, the *Dictionary of National Biography* remarks, "a Hebrew scholar of the first rank . . . Seldom has the department of printed books acquired the services of so variously accomplished a man."¹⁷ He was a prolific writer, and his works include articles on the Talmud, Semitic philology, and the Tandrás.¹⁸ It would have been inconceivable had he not encountered the *Zemah David*, de Pomis's Talmudic dictionary-lexicon during his eighteen years as a cataloguer of printed books at the British Museum. As George Eliot's friend, fellow intellectual, and fellow scholar, he is very likely to have remarked on the great Casaubon's perversion of industry in annotating the *Dictionario*. In addition, he may have suggested the *Dictionario* as an encyclopaedic, lexicographic, etymological and antiquarian curiosity for their Hebrew lessons.¹⁹

Could it be suggested, then, that, perhaps, an obviously great scholar's not so obviously great work stood godparent at the birth of *Middlemarch's* Edward Casaubon?

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11. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 3 pp. 1168, 1169.
12. Information confirmed by the department of Printed Books, British Museum.
13. *Middlemarch Notebooks*, p. 160.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
15. The fact that the *Zemah David* is not included in the 11th chapter of Mark Pattison's *Life of Isaac Casaubon* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), pp. 475-484, does in no way suggest lack of familiarity with the work. None of Casaubon's "annotative" works are included even though at least in one instance Pattison was familiar with them. In the *Life* he refers to Casaubon's annotations of

Calvin's work but he does not include that item in the final chapter containing Casaubon's works. See Haight, p. 149.
16. Haight, p. 469.
17. *DNB*, vol. 5, p. 373.
18. *Literary Remains of the Late Emanuel Deutsch* (London: John Murray, 1874).
19. Interestingly, in chapter 62 just before Mr. Casaubon's death and directly preceding his request that Dorothea mark the pages of his notes to the *Key*, Dorothea, in a dreary state of mind, considers, but rejects reading a book on Jewish antiquities.

Carlyle's Historical Imagination: Untrue Facts and Unfactual Truths

Beverly Taylor

Because recent historiographers have emphasized "the fictive character of historical reconstructions" and "challenged history's claims to a place among the sciences,"¹ we see no paradox in combining the terms *history* and *imagination*. Yet most nineteenth-century historians, philosophers, and even book reviewers would probably have deemed the phrase "historical imagination" essentially incongruous, for they generally maintained that history could and should be a rigorous science. Consequently they wrangled over what constituted historical methods of inquiry and even argued whether historical fiction, such as Walter Scott's novels, furthered or impeded the study of history. Thomas Carlyle's reviewers frequently debated whether his works were historical or imaginative, or could truly be both simultaneously, and John Stuart Mill anticipated that the questionable coupling of history with an imaginative style in *The French Revolution* would draw considerable critical fire. Having compelling personal reasons (thanks to his maid) to hope that Carlyle's work would succeed financially, he forestalled its "hasty condemnation" by defending Carlyle's style and commending the one aspect of the work which he confidently assumed would appeal to Victorian tastes — its historical validity.²

At the heart of this quarrel of the age with Carlyle's imaginative treatment of history lay the growing nineteenth-century enthusiasm for approaching the past less through fiction, legend, or intuition, than through documents — the concrete evidence so necessary to a self-consciously scientific century. By examining Carlyle's attitudes toward historical "fact," his process of writing history by suppressing facts in order to abstract truth, and his use of documents as evidence about the past, we may more clearly understand the Victorian historical imagination — which produced not only informed fictive recreations of the past, but also imaginative visions of the present and future. Before investigating Carlyle's attitudes, we may briefly recall the context which nineteenth-century historicist practices created for imaginative literary depictions of earlier times.

Pursuit of the past in documents, aided by a dozen important historical societies formed between 1834 and 1846, affected even imaginative portrayals of past ages. Before reshaping the Tristram legend, for example,

Swinburne conducted research of sorts, reading all available extant medieval versions of the story. Swinburne doubtless intended to craft a poem rather than to describe customs or events of the Middle Ages. He selected episodes on aesthetic, not historical, grounds, for he planned to include "everything *pretty* that is . . . in keeping with the tone and spirit of the story."³ Significantly, he also aimed to portray the Middle Ages more authentically than Tennyson had done in the *Idylls of the King*. Swinburne proposed to correct the faulty medievalism of the Poet Laureate's "Morte d'Albert," which had merely dressed Victorians in medieval costume and actually reflected the modern "divorce-court" more than the courtly past.⁴ Reviewers, more often than poets, evaluated the general authenticity of such imaginative representations. Commentators on Tennyson's *Idylls* and Morris' *Defence of Guenevere* volume, for instance, debated which poet had rendered the Middle Ages more genuinely. In such a climate, where critics upbraided poets who reshaped legend for distorting the past, Mill was no doubt wise to argue that although *The French Revolution* should be judged as "an epic poem," it was also "the truest of histories," based on "irrefragable authority" collected by a "historical day-drudge."⁵

Carlyle's research clearly rivaled that of professional historians of the period — in volume and duration if not in meticulousness. His hyperbole notwithstanding, we can readily accept his claim that the volumes on Oliver Cromwell "had been a continual toil and misery to me: four years of abstruse toil, obscure speculation, futile wrestling and misery."⁶ Yet despite his industrious pursuit of the past through documents, his wariness of attested "fact" became a familiar refrain. He frequently cautioned, in the metaphoric figure of Dryasdust, that studying facts all too often produced tedium more than enlightenment. This pedant Dryasdust had long before Carlyle's work become a familiar target in reviews of nineteenth-century historical fiction. In 1822 Sir Walter Scott had invented a fictitious Dryasdust, who criticized the novelist's license with historical facts, so that Scott in his own voice could defend the methods of his fiction. Against Dryasdust's charges, Scott countered that he sought only to entertain, and in no way to induce readers "to neglect the severer and more accurate sources of information" for

1. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 1-2.

2. Mill, unsigned review of *The French Revolution in The London and Westminster Review*, 27 (July 1837), 17-53; cited in *Thomas Carlyle: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Jules Paul Seigel (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), pp. 52-68.

3. Letter to Edward Burne Jones, 4 November (1869?), *The Swinburne Letters*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), II, 51.

4. "Under the Microscope," in *Swinburne Replies*, ed. Clyde Kenneth Hyder (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 56-57.

5. Mill, in *Carlyle: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 52, 54, 58.

6. Preface to *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, I, in *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Centenary edition, ed. H. D. Traill, 30 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-99), VI, xx. All subsequent references to Carlyle's works will be identified parenthetically by volume and page numbers in this edition.

the "frothy and superficial knowledge" in his fictions.⁷

Since Carlyle aimed to write history rather than fiction, he objected to the Dryasdust mentality for reasons other than the aesthetic concerns of Scott. Carlyle's Dryasdust insisted not only on the fidelity to fact urged by Scott's hypothetical critic, but also on comprehensiveness. To Carlyle, the Dryasdust historian ultimately accumulated so many facts that he could not discern the larger patterns of truth, being rather like the blind man who examines the tail of an elephant and then confidently judges that the beast closely resembles a snake. On such grounds Carlyle castigated an earlier biographer of Cromwell not so much for garbling dates (though he criticized such inaccuracies) as for having missed overall patterns: The "imbecile" Reverend Noble has "gone into much research of old leases, marriage-contracts, deeds of sale and suchlike: he is learned in parish-registers and genealogies, has consulted pedigrees . . . goes much upon heraldry." But his "large heap of evidence and assertions" proves "worthless"; the result is "not properly a Book, but rather an Aggregate of bewildered jottings" lacking analysis and arrangement (*Oliver Cromwell*, VI, 15, 16).

Carlyle's use of source materials betrays his paradoxical sense that recorded evidence about the past is both an asset and a liability for a historian. After amassing facts, the historical writer must suppress details in order to isolate larger truths. Because men are necessarily immersed in the familiar and petty, one can rarely assess the essential nature of his era: "No age ever seemed the Age of Romance to *itself*," Carlyle declared. "Roland of Roncesvalles . . . found rainy weather as well as sunny; knew what it was to have hose need darning; got tough beef to chew, or even went dinnerless, was saddle-sick, calumniated, constipated . . . and oftenest felt, I doubt not, that this was a very Devil's world, and he, Roland himself, one of the sorriest caitiffs there" ("The Diamond Necklace," XXVIII, 327). Although Roland might not recognize his role in history or the essential nature of his age, the writer distanced by time and place might abstract this essence in part because his factual knowledge about life in Charlemagne's day was limited.

For the nineteenth-century historian who had begun to perceive history as the experiences of men rather than as "empty invoice-lists of Pitched Battles and Changes of Ministry" (325), as Great Events, too much Dryasdust detail produced what Hegel termed the "psychology of the valet, namely the detailed analysis of small, human peculiarities which have nothing to do with the historical mission of the person concerned."⁸ The genuine history of the heroism and romance of Roland could not be written from the trivia of his individual experience or from a list of Great Events, but had to be abstracted by the poetic imagination — "your Turpins and Ariostos" who discovered the "music" of Roland's age (327).

But once the poet — or the rare historian — had dis-

tilled the essence of an age, or of an individual who represented the age, he had to embody this abstraction in concrete detail to re-supply a sense of life lost in the process of distillation. The larger truth discerned by stripping away factual detail must be outfitted anew in human garb, which could be supplied only by a strong intuitive sense of what is true and common to human experience. When Carlyle declared that Roland must have known hose that needed darning, he supplied details that one must "see well" simply by "thinking of it," or by imagining what must be true for men of all ages. On these grounds Carlyle praised the historical fiction of Walter Scott, whose vivid local color showed "that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men. . . . Not abstractions were they . . . but men, in buff or other coats and breeches, with colour in their cheeks, with passions in their stomach, and the idioms, features and vitalities of very men" ("Sir Walter Scott," XXIX, 77-78). But Carlyle also insisted that Scott illustrated only one part of the abstracting and endowing process of the historical imagination, for he began at the end of the sequence by clothing historical characters in lifelike detail without having first abstracted the general principles of their age. Carlyle therefore charged that "much of the interest of [Scott's] Novels results from what may be called contrasts of costume. The phraseology, fashion of arms, of dress and life, belonging to one age, is brought suddenly with singular vividness before the eyes of another" (76). The novelist's picturesque detail illustrated the surface but not the "essence of . . . Biographies" which constitutes history ("On History," XXVII, 86). Because his characters were fashioned "from the skin inwards" and remained "deceptively painted automata" ("Sir Walter Scott," XXIX, 75), Scott's historical fictions were fit only for "harmlessly amusing indolent languid men" (76).

In contrast to the superficial depictions which Carlyle attributed to Scott, his own vividly realized historical scenes rarely depend on descriptive details of dress, custom, or the language of a specific time and place. His memorable touches represent characters' feelings, thoughts, and motives — as imagined by the writer; the more concrete buff trousers, tough beef, and constipation are left to the reader's imagination. In general, Carlyle's approach to writing history is, first, to study the facts supplied by documents; then to suppress such facts as inhibit an organized overview of the abstracted patterns of "truth"; and finally, to supply imagined details to endow figures with life. This procedure involved some rather startling use of historical documents.

Those of us who write papers by quoting Carlyle's words on history and facts and then recording our sources in accurate footnotes, must find Carlyle's documentation in "The Diamond Necklace" truly astonishing. In this account of a hoax culminating in the disappearance of a

7. Prefatory letter to *Peveril of the Peak*, cited in *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John O. Hayden (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), p. 266.

8. George Lukács, "Scott and the Classical Form of the Historical Novel," in *Scott's Mind and Art*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), pp. 112-13.

fabulous necklace from the court of Marie Antoinette, Carlyle seems in numerous footnotes to cite the sources of his information. But as he identifies the memoirs and legal documents that he studies, he focuses on the unreliability of each one. He describes his principal source as a "bound collection of such Law-Papers (*Mémoires pour* etc.) as were printed and emitted by the various parties in that famed 'Necklace Trial.' . . . It is one of the largest collections of Falsehoods that exists in print; and, unfortunately, still, after all the narrating and history there has been on the subject, forms our chief means of getting at the truth of that Transaction." He continues, these are "not, of course, Historical statements of truth; but Culprits' and Lawyers' statements of what they wished to be believed; each party *lying* according to his ability to lie" ("The Diamond Necklace," XXVIII, 334). After assessing these collected sources, Carlyle throughout the narrative discounts individual testimony on particular points: One witness is "vague" — "yet sometimes you *do* catch him, and hold him." He "mistakes," misdates, and "wilfully misrepresents" (343). Another "requires to be read with scepticism everywhere; but yields something in that way" (347). One offers "endless confusion," while others confuse when Carlyle juxtaposes their conflicting testimony (370-71). Combined, these evaluations reveal that Carlyle's ostensible sources are not actually sources of his "historical" account. The footnotes cite his reading material, but not his evidence. Finally, the "truth" affirmed by Carlyle's history is what he has intuitively determined to be truth, even though it remained unstated by the mistaken and lying participants in the events. All he knows about the incident "comes to us borne . . . on a whole illimitable dim Chaos of Lies!" (334).⁹

The problem of piecing truth from rags of falsehood arises from the nature of this source material. As memoirs and autobiographies, they afford only limited, subjective perspectives; and as legal depositions, they represent biased efforts to avoid criminal prosecution. But what would seem to be the least desirable sort of evidence for history actually serves Carlyle's thematic purposes and historicist procedures ideally. Although autobiographies and memoirs provide the least reliable testimony, their subjectivity also permits the most intimate, though

fragmented, entry into the past. They allow the historian to reconstruct earlier men not from the skin inward, as Carlyle charged Scott had done, but from the heart outward. (This ambivalence of autobiographical testimony as the least reliable yet richest access to the history of an individual or an age is precisely what underlies the historical imagination of Browning's dramatic monologues.) Moreover, first-person observations, which have little claim to evidential integrity, allow the historical writer the greatest freedom in selecting and arranging details in order to distill the essence of an event or age. Thus Jocelin of Brakelond's *Chronicle* provided both the authority of first-hand evidence and the vulnerability of any subjective account. Carlyle could selectively follow as much of Jocelin's account as revealed Bishop Samson to be heroic, and then suppress, as biased testimony, the many passages that would have belied Carlyle's view of the medieval ideal.

Carlyle's sense that the historian is, first, a "sifter" (335)¹⁰ who abstracts truths from ostensible fact, and, second, an "editor" who establishes the most meaningful (not the most literal) version of the "Letter of Instructions" ("On History Again," XXVIII, 167) from the past, today rates more highly with historiographers than at any time in the last hundred years. But to us as students of Victorian letters, his use or abuse of historical documents more significantly represents a recurrent Victorian assertion. In showing that historical documents, like other physical evidence, have no greater claim to authority than the human imagination has, Carlyle insisted like many contemporary writers that scientific perceptions be wedded to intuition, imagination, and faith. Like Tennyson, Carlyle admonished that knowledge may come while wisdom lingers. As a writer who beheld with the "historical eye" ("The Diamond Necklace," XXVIII, 379) events which occurred only in his imagination and who listened to the "silences" of Cromwell's letters (*Cromwell*, VI, 13), Carlyle is most significant as a historian not of previous ages, but of the spirit of his own.

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9. See comments on Carlyle's use of his sources in Carlisle Moore, "Carlyle's 'Diamond Necklace' and Poetic History," *PMLA*, 58, (1943), 554-55.

10. In his review of *The French Revolution*, Mill referred to Carlyle as "a sifter of testimonies"; *Carlyle: The Critical Heritage*, p. 58.

Books Received

- Braun, Thom. *Disraeli The Novelist*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981. Pp. x + 149. \$19.50. This is not a critical biography; it does not provide close analyses of the novels, but is about D's life as novelist, as distinct from his life as politician.
- Browning, Robert. *Robert Browning: The Poems*. Ed. John Pittigrew, supplemented and completed by Thomas J. Collins. 2 vols. New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981. Vol. I, pp. xxxiv + 1191; Vol. II, pp. xxxvi + 1167. \$45.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper per vol. The much needed carefully edited edition of all poems the editor could find and/or get permission to print (some previously unpublished) except *The Ring and The Book*, plays printed between 1837 and 1846 (save *Pippa Passes*) and the "transcript" of the *Agamemnon*. The basic copy-text (collected edition of 1888-89) has been collated with "textually significant editions," available manuscripts, proofsheets, and copies with holograph alterations. To the texts have been added 370 pp. of notes which include "a generous selection of manuscript and textual variants" as well as references "to much of the best scholarship and criticism." Plus "dates, sources, textual details, biographical" references, etc. This is a splendid addition to the fine editions which are only now becoming available for major Victorian writers.
- Clegg, Jeanne. *Ruskin and Venice*. London: Junction Books, 1981. Pp. [vi] + 233. £12.50. A careful sifting of published and unpublished material to document Ruskin's changing attitudes toward Venice, which he visited eleven times over some 53 years.
- Doyle, Mary Ellen. *The Sympathetic Response: George Eliot's Fictional Rhetoric*. Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1981. Pp. [viii] + 183. \$19.50. The author's claim that her book is chiefly a practical application of some of Wayne Booth's observations in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* describes the limitations of her work.
- Gerin, Winifred. *Anne Thackeray Ritchie*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981. Pp. xvi + 310. \$29.95. This promises to be the standard biography of a charming woman who knew practically everybody.
- Gilmour, Robin. *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981. Pp. [x] + 190. \$19.95. This readable introduction to the subject "begins with Addison and ends with Trollope" and concentrates on Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope. There are curious omissions, but students will find it helpful.
- Hallam, Arthur Henry. *The Letters of Arthur Henry Hallam*. Ed. Jack Kolb. Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1981. Pp. xx + 840. \$45.00. This handsome volume includes all known surviving letters and fragments by and to AHH generously annotated. There are 248 letters or fragments, more than two thirds of them previously unpublished, essentially covering 8 years, 1825 to 1833, a helpful 38 pp. introduction, and a careful index. A fine and necessary edition.
- Hewison, Robt., ed. *New Approaches to Ruskin: Thirteen Essays*. London, Boston, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. Pp. xiv + 229. \$22.50. Subjects of the essays range from "Sermons on the Pentateuch" (unpublished essays written by Ruskin at 12 or 13) through *Modern Painters*, "The Nature of Gothic," *Unto This Last*, "Traffic," *Fors Clavigera*, *Proserpina*, *Stones of Venice*. An interesting and various collection.
- Jones, David. *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. Pp. xii + 245. \$32.00. Includes chapters on arson and the rural community (East Anglia), crime in the industrial community (Merthyr Tydfil), crime in London, crime and police in Manchester, the poacher, and the vagrant.
- McSweeney, Kerry. *Tennyson and Swinburne as Romantic Naturalists*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981. Pp. xviii + 222. \$25.00. Tennyson belongs to the first generation of post-Romantic artists, Swinburne to the second. McSweeney traces the "naturalistic vision through the work of both poets," analyzing ten of Tennyson's poems plus parts of *In Memoriam* and *Idylls* and a number of Swinburne's earlier pieces and four of those from his later career. There is also a chapter on Swinburne's Tennyson and one on Swinburne and Tennyson.
- Super, R. H. *Trollope in the Post Office*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1981. Pp. xvi + 135. \$10.00. "This is the story of a civil servant who was also a novelist, and who consciously drew upon his own experiences in the writing of his fictions. No small part of the aim of this book is to show the connection between the two aspects of his life."
- Tennyson, Alfred. *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*. Vol. I, 1821-1850. Eds. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1981. Pp. xxxviii + 366. \$30.00. The first of three projected volumes includes letters from 1821?, Tennyson at age 12, through 1850, Tennyson made laureate, more than 530 letters in all. The edition includes a witty and informative 23 pp. introduction, copious helpful annotations and an index. As the editors say, Tennyson is revealed as "the living, pulsing, breathing, man, husband, father, homeowner, householder, income-earner, worrier, patient, invalid; selfish, self-indulgent, self-pitying yet generous, egotistical and altruistic, introverted and extroverted, gruffly sentimental, vulnerable and studiously self-protective, anti-social recluse and social lion (and, in the old sense, lionizer)."

Victorian Group News

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Seventh Brontë Conference will take place at the University of Leeds 2-7 August 1982. There will be a series of lectures that will explore the 19th century circumstances of Charlotte and Emily Brontë's development as writers. Special emphasis will be given to Charlotte's interest in teaching, including her friendship with Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, and the place of music in life in Haworth Parsonage. For further details write: Director of Special Courses, Department of Adult Education and Extramural Studies, The University, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK.

Professor Wendell S. Johnson is serving as editor of a special issue of the *Browning Institute Studies*, the topic of which is "Victorian Modernism." Papers should be sent to Professor Johnson at the following address: Ph.D. Program in English, Graduate Center, CUNY, 33 West 42nd St., New York, NY 10036. Papers will be accepted up to Sept. 1, 1982.

Victorians Institute. The Victorian Institute solicits papers for its 1982 Conference, the topic of which is "The Profession of Authorship in the Victorian Period." Scholars are invited to submit papers of no more than 12 pages by June 1, 1982. Please address inquiries or papers (2 copies please) to: Virginia Fowler or Nancy Metz, Department of English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA.

Dickens Society Annual Award. A prize of \$250 will be awarded by the Dickens Society at its annual meeting in December for the best, first article-length publication on Dickens (i.e., more than five printed pages in length), appearing between June 1981 and June 1982. (Article-length chapters on Dickens from books – either wholly devoted to Dickens or concerned with a wider subject – may be submitted.) The award is intended to encourage young scholars, but those who have published previously on subjects other than Dickens are also eligible. Entries (three copies or offprints) should be sent as soon as possible but no later than 31 August 1982 to Sylvia Manning, Secretary-Treasurer, The Dickens Society, Department of English, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90007.

An interesting and useful series – Victorian Research Fiction Guides – is being published by the English Department, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Queensland 4067, Australia (address correspondence to P. D. Edwards). The first five Guides are Joan Huddleston, *Sarah Grand: A Bibliography*; Jane Crisp, *Jessie Fothergill: A Bibliography*; P. D. Edwards, *Edmund Yates: A Bibliography*; Sue Thomas, "Time," "Murray's Magazine," and "The Quarto:" *Indexes to Fiction*; Margaret Versteeg, Sue Thomas, Joan Huddleston, *Index to Fiction in "The Lady's Realm."*

Back Issues of *VNL*, at a cost of \$3.00 per copy, are available in limited quantities for the following numbers: 38, 41, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60.