

# The Victorian Newsletter

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## Dying to Know\*

George Levine

I will be dealing in this paper with a lot of chestnuts, but I hope that in a very short space, I can roast them in a slightly different way. And I begin with the point made by Susan Cannon: "for cultured early Victorians, natural science provided a norm of truth. There cannot, as Victorians were fond of saying, be two truths, and the norm by which proposed truths were judged was, explicitly or often implicitly, the norm of natural science" (2). My freshly roasted argument will be this: that the establishment of science as the supreme and incontestable mode of knowing required more than its material and, the culture would have insisted, vulgar technological improvement of the conditions of life. The new capitalist / industrial society established its values on the great moral and religious traditions of the West. Science had to be, and was, not only an epistemological but a moral model.

I am not simply invoking the well-known fact that early Victorian science was dominated by clergy and seemed compatible with religion. What I want to emphasize is that the very form of scientific self-description and apologetics was the form of religion. And for both, the ideal condition—beyond desire, beyond prejudice, beyond earthly limitations—was death. The shape of modern science, with all its white-coated, professional, and deadly implications, was not determined by its hostility to religion but by the absorption of its forms.

There is a high moral tone about Victorian discussions of science that it would be a mistake to dismiss as spurious, hypocritical, self-promoting, although one might want to end by calling it all of those names. In our own times, one prominent philosopher of science has claimed that the scientific "community enforces standards of honesty, trustworthiness and good work against which the moral quality of Christian civilization stands condemned" (Harré 1). Holier than thou, indeed. The ideal of Christianity is the imitation of Christ, death to the world. "Thou fool," says Paul, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die" (I Cor. 15: 36). This, too, is the ideal Victorian science.

The pattern develops immediately, with the great Renaissance burst of scientific activity. As Bacon put it in *The Great Instauration*, "if I have made any progress" in the pursuit of truth, "the way has been opened to me by no other means than the true and legitimate humiliation of the human spirit." Arguing that the development of modern science contrasts with the contemporary religious movement of the Reformation, Whitehead uses language that makes the analogy between science and religion inescapable: "The way in which the persecution of Galileo has been remembered is a tribute to the quiet commencement of the most intimate change in outlook which the human race had yet encountered. Since a babe born in a manger, it may be doubted whether so great a thing has happened with so little stir" (3).

In the development of Western science, ethics and epistemology are one, and the pursuit of knowledge is a paradoxically heroic, an epic undertaking, since its success—which must always be limited—is entirely dependent on the capacity to refuse heroism and suffer, to restrain one's desire, one's ambitions, one's feelings.

The most obvious Victorian model for this is Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, my first chestnut. For Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, that ur-Victorian, knowledge comes as salvation comes, with annihilation of the self. The great Christian paradox, secularized and dressed up with the jargon of German romantic literature, reasserts itself. "Love not pleasure; love God." The annihilated self expands into the infinite, and all contradiction is resolved. "Make thy claim of wages a zero then; thou hast the world under thy feet."

Carlyle's peculiar parable of Teufelsdröckh's spiritual journey resonated for Victorian culture, and for its scientists as well, because it bore within it that traditional Christian paradox—a paradox that is central to empiricism, as well. Disempowerment turns into a new and higher power. And while Carlyle's task seems to be primarily if not exclusively to do with morality, with behavior and action, and with developing a new form of religion, it applies equally well to epistemology, to knowledge, and to the development of science. Within the terms of science, the Teufelsdröckean injunction becomes, love not pleasure; love knowledge.

It may seem a long way from empirical science to Carlylean mystifications. But the two are closely linked. For Carlyle, as for Bacon and Locke and John Herschel and G. H. Lewes, EXPERIENCE is central. True Baconian principles, as they were sometimes and I believe wrongly described at the time, run through Carlyle's analysis: "Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay properly Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices: only by a felt indubitable certainty of Experience does it find any centre to revolve itself around, and so fashion itself into a system" (195).

Or take another overdone chestnut: when, in "The Function of Criticism," Matthew Arnold first formulates the argument for the "best that has been known and thought," he insists on refusal of the practical. He accepts the characterization of his views as "embracing . . . the Indian virtue of detachment," and argues that "the mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are," but that so seeing is the supreme function of criticism. He can only do the "practical man" any service, says Arnold, "by the greatest sincerity in pursuing his own course, and by at last convincing even the practical man of his sincerity" (274-75). The model of Edmund Burke "returning upon himself," you will remember, is Arnold's ideal of critical disinterestedness:

\*A version of the paper was read at the English X section of MLA (Victorian) at the MLA Convention in Chicago, 28 December 1990.



That return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed in any literature. That is what I call living by ideas: when one side of a question has long had your earnest support, when all your feelings are engaged, when you hear all round you no language but one, when your party talks this language like a steam-engine and can imagine no other, —still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything *but what the Lord has put in your mouth.* (267-68)

Arnold wants to describe the world as in itself it really is. This, of course, is the project of science, although none of the apologists for science would be very comfortable with the idea of describing the unattainable Kantian thing in itself. To achieve this objective he must dismiss the Baconian idols—of the tribe, of the cave, of the marketplace, of the theater. Ironically, Arnold's argument parallels that of his friendly opponent, Huxley, who describes scientific procedures as marked by their openness to new ideas, their willingness to confront unpleasant truths, including the possibility that the scientist is wrong. For Huxley, the condition of science is doubt and skepticism—a perpetual questioning of accepted ideas.

The final figure in the Arnold passage is particularly interesting in the context of my argument: the true seeker of knowledge speaks not out of the self but with the voice of God. As with Biblical prophets and epic poets, the divine spirit speaks through the writer, whose location in time and space and body is transcended. The true scientist speaks not with the voice of muse or God, but with the impersonal voice of reality.

This figure is dominant in scientific writing. One speaks against one's own desires; the harsh unaccommodating real "strikes" the scientist. So Darwin talks of himself on the very first page of *The Origin of Species* as "driven to conclude." We are almost "compelled," so he writes, to attribute the reappearance of a family trait to "inheritance" (76). The constructed author of *The Origin* consistently concedes that certain facts would *force* him to give up his theory—would be fatal to it—though those facts never do turn up. The scientist must let the facts speak for themselves. And the Darwinian vision is only the most obvious manifestation of the insistence of science on facing the "hard, unaccommodating actual." For Whitehead, "the inevitableness of destiny," which is the supreme lesson of the scientific vision, "can only be illustrated in terms of human life by incidents which in fact involve unhappiness" (15-16). In the central narratives of Victorian fiction, the "illustrations" are dominant—from George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* to Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. The late nineteenth-century bleakness of vision of a world humanity never made may echo Greek tragedy, but, as Whitehead argues, "Fate in Greek tragedy becomes the order of nature in modern thought."

And that ruthless order, articulated by the spirit of reality through the mouth of the scientist, finds its almost inevitable expression in Darwin's theory of natural selection. Open to the terrors of nature, refusing to impose personal feelings and desires on nature, the scientist finds that Nature responds by

killing. In an ultimate ironic twist, however, "natural selection" becomes a formal, secular equivalent to the Christian notion that one must die in order to live.

The paradoxes I have been playing with are, I believe, reflections of a fundamental paradox at the source of the modern ideal of scientific knowledge. On the one hand Baconian emphasis on experience as opposed to authority implies the primary authority of the personal—the test of truth is its accessibility to personal observation and experience, or experiment. On the other, merely personal experience is inadequate, as Bacon and the true empiricists who followed all insisted. Truth is determined only insofar as the personal is transcended. One cannot trust personal experience since it is so pervasively informed not only by the limits of its own perspectives, but by the distortions created by desire. One way to put this is to say that one can know only that from which one is alienated. Empirical truth, like the eternal verities, must become "universal," be lifted out of the normal conditions of human life—out of place and time. But to be lifted out of place and time is to be dead.

The ideals of objectivity and disinterest are constructed out of a fundamental distrust of the personal and, by implication, of life itself. The self, which is the condition for all knowledge turns out to be the most potent obstacle to it. Teufelsdröckh's passage is through this paradox, from the energizing existential affirmation of self in the Everlasting No to the numerator Zero in the Everlasting Yea.

Science, in its very crusade to enhance life, adopts a rhetoric that implies at least the preliminary moral act of self-annihilation. The ideal of modern knowledge embodies the fundamental alienation implicit in a nineteenth-century conception of selfhood. As Feuerbach imagined it, the distinctive characteristic of the human is not consciousness but self-consciousness, the capacity to be conscious of one's own consciousness and to recognize oneself not merely as individual but as part of a species. "Science is the cognisance of species," he says, and through science humanity has "a twofold life" (2), an inner—general—nature and an outer individual nature. Matthew Arnold's "best self" is the critic's reformulation of this "inner" nature of the divided self. "Man," says Feuerbach, "is at once I and thou." His science, his religion, depend on his capacity to regard himself as an object—of both knowledge and feeling. To be human is to make oneself two—the observer and the observed. To know is both to register experience on one's senses and to deny the validity of the senses without the review of some critical otherness standing outside the limited self. As in Carlyle's "Characteristics," consciousness is the source of evil but the necessary condition, too, for recovery from it.

Theorists of science labored through these paradoxes. In John Herschel's *A Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*, he reaffirms the empiricist argument that the "only ultimate source of our knowledge of nature and its laws" is "EXPERIENCE." But to escape the epistemological curse of the personal and unique, he defines "experience" to mean, "not the experience of one man only, or of one generation, but the accumulated experience of all mankind in all ages, registered in books or recorded by tradition" (67-84). Experience begins to sound a lot like "the best that has been thought



and said," or the "current of true ideas" that inspires Arnold's great artists: the connections between the scientific empiricist project and Arnold's critical one are not far to seek.

The qualifications of experience to make it transcend the personal in the direction of Christian self-immolation is evident in almost all attempts to formulate the project of science. G. H. Lewes, who in his later life tried to work himself free from the constraints of Herschel's objectivity, nevertheless agreed (as surely did George Eliot) that knowledge depends on transcendence of the limits of the self even while it also must be traced back to experience. So knowledge, for him, "embraces much more than the visible." What is expressed in the abstract term Experience encompasses, he says, in language reminiscent of Arnold's and Herschel's, "the individual experiences of the race, organised in language, condensed in Instruments and Axioms, and in what may be called the *inherited Intuitions*" (29).

Experience thus becomes not Feuerbach's "outer" nature of mankind, but its "inner" nature—connecting it with the species, separating it from the merely individual, getting it as close to the universal and transcendent as is possible without admitting anything universal and transcendent. The effect of these scientific / cultural analyses remains dualistic, however, and consciousness remains alienated from itself.

The problem for many who recognized the alienation and mortality that lurked in the very successes of the new knowledge was how to locate a knowledge that is authorized by life, not death, by wholeness rather than alienation. Within the conversation among theorists of science there was, of course, an almost alternative tradition, formally described in William Whewell's extraordinary *History and Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*. There, Whewell discusses "the fundamental antithesis of philosophy," between "thought" and "fact." He insists, against the pure empirical inductivism of Herschel's science, that there can be no knowledge without an addition to the hard unaccommodating actual, that is, the forms of human consciousness. He invokes Wordsworth talking of "All the world of eye and ear, both what they half create, and what perceive" (See Whewell 31-32).

But Whewell's science, if perhaps to some extent reanimated in Whitehead and in modern theories, seems to have lost out to the more Herschel's empiricist and particularly to John Stuart Mill. Mill, with a more rationalistic sense of science and, therefore, a less satisfying one in the long run, reinvents that fundamental connection between epistemology and morality that I have been discussing.

Truth takes time and trouble. The world for sinners and for scientists is not what it seems. In his *System of Logic* Mill explains that "indifference to truth" does its dirty work not by directly producing error, but by "preventing the mind from collecting the proper evidence, or from applying to them the test of a legitimate and rigid induction" (2: 290). Similarly, Mill goes on in a Baconian purgation of intellectual / moral sins, bias does not work directly: "We cannot believe a proposition only by wishing, or only by dreading, to believe it." But it makes one "shrink from the irksome labour of a rigorous deduction. And it makes one look out eagerly for reasons . . . to support opinions which are conformable, or resist those which are repugnant, to his interest or feelings" (2: 290). "If the sophistry of the intellect could be rendered

impossible, that of the feelings, having no instrument to work with, would be powerless" (2: 291). Mill's philosophical project was to render the sophistry of the intellect impossible and thus render feeling powerless to do its damage. The assumption, of course, is that it is possible to give intellect priority over feeling.

The Kantian tradition espoused by Whewell is probably no less moralizing in its implications, but it at least allows for the possibility of human engagement with and construction of nature. As Whewell marvelously put it, "There is a mask of theory over the whole face of nature" (46). But the attempt to reduce the alienation of the human from nature, of self from self, which is part of Whewell's romantic project, found much fuller expression in narrative.

Unfortunately, I have no time to discuss how the ideal of self-annihilation for the sake of truth is handled by the novelists, and I will only remind you of Jenny Wren calling down to Riah from the roof: "Come up and be dead," or, in that same novel, of John Harmon's "death" in order to find out the truth of Bella Wilfer. But that the novelists had absorbed this epistemological / moral crisis into their very way of imagining the world seems to me self-evident. Science was not simply something out there inventing pasteurization and electric lights and internal combustion engines. It was shaping the way people thought they could know, and therefore how they thought they could behave.

Most obviously, George Eliot confronts these issues directly, through most of her writing struggling with the tragic consequences of accepting the scientific model of epistemological authority. That is Maggie's fate. But I will conclude by invoking only briefly, as a suggestion of how an alternative tradition might be imagined, with her comments on the almost prophetic Mordecai, in *Daniel Deronda*. Here, she self-consciously struggles to imagine a form of knowledge that will incorporate desire and that might be coherent with human aspiration. "Was such a temper of mind" as Mordecai's, she asks, "likely to accompany that wise estimate of consequences which is the only safeguard from fatal error, even to ennobling motive? . . . perhaps his might be one of the natures where a wise estimate of consequences is fused in the fires of that passionate belief which determines the consequences it believes in . . . in relation to human motives and actions, passionate belief has a fuller efficacy. Here enthusiasm may have the validity of proof" (571).

This question implies a model of science that is probably much closer to what, for example, Darwin really did than the more Baconian explanation he himself accepted, at least officially. Although I'm not sure that I want Mordecai as my model scientist either, his example suggests possibilities that our whole culture could certainly profit from, even in these post-Victorian times. The ideal of self-annihilation as the best authorization for knowledge, so centrally Victorian, so centrally scientific, has had too many annihilating consequences to remain unchallenged.

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## Poetry and the Scientization of Language: "Geist" Son of "Waldmann"\*

Peter Allan Dale

In England one can locate the definitive emergence of the scientific episteme in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century with the publication of William Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences* (1837) and John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (1843). Both argued with a cogency that only grew in effect as the century advanced, that the basis of any serious future knowledge must be scientific method. More controversially, they argued that this meant not just knowledge of physical nature but also knowledge of human nature and human practice.<sup>1</sup> Among other things, both called for the application of scientific procedures to that most fundamental of human practices, language. What this essay explores is one exemplary instance of the impact of scientific presuppositions on the understanding of language and how that understanding mattered, in another exemplary instance, to literary theory.

One immediate result of this scientization of language was the creation, and, eventually, the academic institutionalization of a particular discipline alternatively called philology or linguistics. Not a very striking result perhaps, except that aided by the luminous gaze of Foucault's synthesizing eye, we now see the emergence of a discrete discipline of linguistics as the beginning of language's authorization as something philosophically interesting in itself rather than as an ancillary to other sorts of things philosophy traditionally discussed: "language began to fold in upon itself, to acquire its own particular density, to deploy . . . an objectivity . . . of its own. It became one object of knowledge among others . . ." (Foucault 296).

As we also know from Foucault, though we hardly need him to know this, no knowledge in the nineteenth century, scientific or other, escapes the "fundamental code" of historicity. To know about anything—nature, mind, ethics,

society, etc.—was to know about its origins and the process of its development. "As soon as ever we pass beyond the mere statement of single facts [about language] and attempt to grasp the connexion as a whole . . ." wrote a prominent German student of language in 1880, "we come upon historical ground at once" (Paul xlvi-xlvii, cited in Crowley 19). The inescapable implication of historicity in the burgeoning science of language gives it its distinctively Victorian character. It also gives it its early name "comparative philology," a phrase as redolent of avant-gardism in 1860 as "poststructuralism" was to be some hundred years on. What being a comparative philologist meant was that by a fully self-conscious analogy with his fellow researcher in the physical sciences, the comparative anatomist, imagined this subject as a sort of ramifying tree with himself—or more precisely his capacity for speech—out on a high branch. His essential objective was to follow that branch down through various junctures to the trunk of the tree and ultimately its root, on which he could finally only speculate since it is the nature of roots to be hidden from view. Motivating this genealogical pursuit was a meta-linguistic assumption not so much under the ground as somewhere up in the sky—and one finds a similar assumption in one form or another motivating the century's entire preoccupation with historicity: behind, or better, before, the manifest diversity and division (branching) of human culture was an originary identity or totality in which, as one Victorian historian put it, all humankind turned out to be "members of one common primaeval brotherhood" (Freeman 302, cited in Crowley 17).

The next epochal move in the scientization of language study we are more familiar with because it belongs to our own era. This amounted to the liberation of language study from the discipline of historicity with its genealogical pursuit of

\*A version of this paper was read at the English X section of MLA (Victorian) at the MLA Convention in Chicago, 28 December 1990.

<sup>1</sup> I discuss this development at greater length in *Pursuit of a Scientific Culture: Science, Art, and Society in the Victorian Age*, 3-32.



totality. The exemplary text, of course, is Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1913). Saussure's self-consciously scientific displacement of diachronic with synchronic analysis of language decisively advanced the folding in of language upon itself by effectively deracinating language from an ordinary, geistly presence and insisting that the proper object of linguistic research is the analysis of language's present structure, not its past development.

But there is, of course, a still more profound shift in language study as one moves into the early twentieth century, and one which we must not lose sight of by focusing too exclusively on the discipline of philology/linguistics itself. Not unrelated to but at the same time independent of Saussure's disconnection of language from the problem of origins is a revolutionary recentering of philosophy, of human self-reflexivity in general, away from the question of spirit or consciousness and onto the meaning of language. Nelson Goodman has put the point memorably.

[Modern philosophy] began when Kant exchanged the structure of the word for the structure of the mind, continued when C. I. Lewis exchanged the structure of the mind for the structure of concepts, and . . . now proceeds to exchange the structure of concepts for the structure of the several systems of the sciences, philosophy, the arts, perception, and everyday discourse . . . (x)

What Goodman is describing—and there are many other versions of the same argument—is not the folding of language in upon itself but, in effect, its folding out upon everything else. Nineteenth-century historicity yields to twentieth-century linguisticity. Few today, I imagine, would have any serious quarrel with this version of the main movement of contemporary philosophy. What would be more controversial is the assertion that this critical shift of focus was significantly driven by the scientific episteme. Nothing, that is, seems more remote from our modernist and postmodernist beliefs about the primacy of linguistic structure in our interpretation of reality than what we take to be the objectivist presuppositions of Victorian positivism with its relentless pursuit of the thing as in itself it really and absolutely is. Yet as we examine the way in which science and language study impinged upon one another in the last century, and, beyond this, how both affected contemporary literary theory, we find suggestions of an intimate relationship between the growing desire to scientize our understanding of human behavior and the emergence of language as the ultimate preoccupation of humanistic study. How this worked in one signal instance is the subject of the following discussion.

Let me turn now to one particular mid-Victorian conjunction of science, language, and literary theory. Two Oxonians, prominent professors and polemicists both, are at the center of my concern, the great comparative philologist F. Max Müller and his sometime colleague and long-time friend

Matthew Arnold. And here we come to the point of my subtitle. We all know that the Professor of Poetry and Apostle of Culture owned in later life a small dachshund named Geist. What most of us do not know is that Geist was the son of Professor Müller's dog Waldmann (Müller 9). The intellectual relationship figured by this canine affiliation is essentially what I want to explore.

The *unscientific* approach to language prevalent in the first half of the nineteenth century may be broadly designated Romantic or more broadly still, given the well-rehearsed sources of Romantic ideology, *religious*. In the beginning, Friedrich von Schlegel told the audience of his lectures on the philosophy of language, God himself taught Adam language, "at once and in its totality." Though that "one primary language" is now lost to postlapsarian man, he continued, we can still find its vestiges, and these point us back to the "veiled original" (397-403). How this works Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench, the most widely read Victorian philologist before Max Müller, indicated in several books published in the 1850's. God has "impressed such a seal of truth upon language, that men are continually uttering deeper things than they know . . ." (13-14). What Schlegel and Trench and many other early nineteenth-century theorists of language represent, Hans Aarsleff has called the Adamicist school of philology, since for it, "Adam's name-giving was the key that opened our understanding of the nature of language." "Rightly understood," language "proves the Creator's continuing presence in Creation."<sup>2</sup>

For us the conjunction of language theory and literary theory is virtually an article of faith. Victorians certainly had no such presupposition. Yet it is arguable that every literary theorist and artist of the period practiced, however unself-consciously, on the basis of some identifiable assumption about the nature of language. From the retrospective of our own acute linguisticity, we are constantly excavating these assumptions. That the Romantic poetic is underwritten by the Adamicist understanding of language, we have long known without necessarily knowing the term or knowing anything about the contemporary philological enterprise it refers to. Archbishop Trench descends intellectually in a direct line from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose scattered hints on language (now reconstituted into coherent theory by several fine books<sup>3</sup>) he is, in effect, systematizing.

Coleridge's fundamental notion of poetic language is that it is in some sense a repetition of Scripture's original god-given or ur-language. "[I]ncorporating the Reason in images of the Sense, and organising . . . the flux of the Senses, by the permanence and self-circling energies of Reason, [Biblical language] gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are conductors . . ." (28-29). Modern poetry, in essence, aims at the recovery of this language, at this same reconciliation of mind and matter, spirit and nature. The poetic symbol is the "translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal" so that, precisely as with the Biblical symbol, "it partakes of the

<sup>2</sup> 365. Aarsleff correctly points out the close connection between this understanding of language and contemporary natural theology, in which evi-

dence of the Creator was found in "created" nature (369).

<sup>3</sup> See, e. g. Goodson, and McKusick



reality which it renders intelligible . . . ."<sup>4</sup> This is the familiar "rhetoric of Romanticism," where, Paul de Man classically argues, the symbol always "postulates the possibility of an identity," which is always "illusory" (207). At the same time, the illusion enables the poetic act, the scripting of "living" words that seem to echo God's original act of ventriloquy and thus return us to the once and future Edenic wholeness. As Trench puts it in what for him is not just a metaphor, what "treasures of paradise" lie hidden in words!

At the heart of the Victorians' well-known anxiety over whether poetry is still possible in their iron age lies nothing so much as the increasing difficulty poets have retaining the theological-cum-metaphysical beliefs upon which the received rhetoric of poetry depends. Tennyson, for example, cannot separate his anxiety over the absence of transcendent spirit in the dead Hallam, from his anxiety over his inability to achieve a fully poetic, Adamic language as when "the Word had breath, and wrought / With human hands the creed of creeds. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Nowhere, however, is the problem more self-consciously and extensively engaged than in the work of Matthew Arnold. The poetry, virtually from beginning to end, is about the impossibility of poetry, about finding at the apex of the Alpan way, not Wordsworth's renewed language "of the great Apocalypse, / The types and symbols of Eternity . . ." but a community of monks dedicated to silence.<sup>6</sup> What I am trying to suggest in no doubt excessively abbreviated juxtaposition of Arnold with his most burdensome Romantic precursor Wordsworth is that Arnold came to understand his own poetic failure specifically as a failure in language (see Reide, especially ch. 1). Believing this to be so I am increasingly inclined to read his subsequent critical discourse as repeatedly returning to the question, not what new order of ideas, but what new order of words is necessary to resume the possibility of poetry. Geoffrey Hartmann's aperçu is on the mark; "Arnold's fiction of presence was that [his] errand in the wilderness would end: that a new and vital literature would arise to redeem the work of the critic" (15). Only I'm inclined to think that Arnold came closer to finding the promised land than Hartmann allows. What prevented him, as we'll see, is a rather more commonplace fiction of presence.

In one of his earliest lectures as Professor of Poetry, Arnold nostalgically pursues the Adamicist ideal and the Romantic symbol it explicates. The highest power of poetry, he says, the power we find so abundantly in Wordsworth and especially Keats is the "natural magic" by which words are made to evoke the world of things "as in themselves they really are": "when [these poets] speak of the world, they speak like Adam naming by divine inspiration . . ." Speaking / writing in this way, poets succeed, he says, in reconciling the subjective self or spirit to the material world so that we are no longer "oppressed and bewildered by it," but "in harmony" with it. As Arnold is well aware, he is talking about the quintessential Romantic epiphany and its linguistic symbols,

talking about the same thing Coleridge was talking about in the remarks I earlier quoted. But belated, scholar Romantic that he is, he cannot name that epiphany without putting it in question: "I will not now inquire," he writes, "whether this sense is illusive, whether it can be proved not to be illusive, whether it does absolutely make us possess the real nature of things" (*Works* 3: 34, 13). The insertion of "now" only serves to remind us of how persistently Arnold as poet earlier inquired into the metaphysical illusion that enables the poet to write the language he here identifies as the poetic.

But the "now" in that sentence also signals that Arnold is *now*, as critic, inquiring into a very different problem, namely, into the *form* of language and the power it may yet retain as language after we have disposed of the illusory presence, the *Aberglaube*, it claimed to signify in Coleridge, Trench, et al. This inquiry continues in earnest in the lectures on Celtic literature (1866) in which Arnold seeks the key to natural magic, not in the primaevial language of Adam, but, as he is at pains to insist, *scientifically*, in the racial "sensibility" of a particular primitive people which "gives [them] a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life in nature" and which, he maintains, lies at the root of subsequent English poetic power: "it is in our poetry that the Celtic part in us has left its trace clearest . . ." The trace Arnold refers to here is not simply that of sensibility or racial identity; it is also linguistic. The science he is invoking turns out, after all, to be comparative philology "which in our time, has had so many successes" and which teaches us that "by the forms of its language a nation expresses its very self." More importantly than anything else, it teaches us that diverse forms of language, and implicitly diverse national selves, derive from an original unity, the "great Indo-European unity, comprising, Greeks, Latins, Celts, Teutons," and so on. Science has taken away from us our "fanciful unities," that is, the theological and metaphysical ones, "but at the bottom of her soul science recognizes a law of ultimate fusion, of conciliation" in the very nature of language.<sup>7</sup> Philology, in other words, shows us the way to a radically human unity grounded no doubt in psychology or ethology but, in fact, evidenced only in linguistic forms.

A number of notable things are happening here. Science has clearly emerged in Arnold's thought as the modern means of recovering totality—and it will remain in that privileged position with him for over a decade; science applied to the problem of language has demystified its provenance and authority, and made it a fundamentally human phenomenon; and finally science applied to the problem of poetry, through language, looks like establishing a new post-Romantic ground of poetic possibility.

Arnold is led to this development in his thought, as we see, by his general reading in the new comparative philology. But more specifically responsible is certainly his exposure through reading and no less through personal contact to ideas of the pre-eminent Victorian exponent of that movement Max

<sup>4</sup> Coleridge 80. See Stephen Prickett's placing of Coleridge's theory of poetic and biblical language in the Romantic Tradition (ch. 2). Prickett focuses on both these well-known passages from Coleridge.

<sup>5</sup> *In Memoriam* 36: 9-10. See my discussion of Tennyson's language in "Gracious Lies."

<sup>6</sup> See Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1850) 6: 638-39 and Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse."

<sup>7</sup> *Works* 3: 346-47, 361, 328, 334, 330.



Müller.<sup>8</sup> Müller, whose *Lectures on the Science of Language* came out in 1861, begins by insisting that the study of language be brought into the mainstream of modern thought and treated as a science. That science, no less than Darwin's, he says, is a science of origins, only in this case the origin of the *human* species (Darwin, of course, had not yet said anything publicly about the origin of his own species). What the scientific analysis of language already demonstrated was that all the major European races derived from a common Aryan people. Though science presently could not connect this Aryan stock with other primary linguistic / racial groupings, notably the Semitic (Arnold's later Hebraic) sensibility, Müller's confidence in the totalizing powers of science was such that he had little doubt but that a single linguistic / racial source would eventually be discovered for all the families of man. As for the Celts, they were the first, says Müller, to carry Aryanism to Europe from the Mediterranean basin (*Lectures* 1: 225), and this, I suspect, provides Arnold with a strong scientific justification for foregrounding this all but forgotten people (of which, of course, he considered himself a descendant). It also underwrites the political argument that, as always in Arnold's criticism, goes hand in hand with the poetic, namely, the "natural" necessity of "fusing all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogeneous . . . whole" (*Works* 3: 296). In the later more famous lectures that become *Culture and Anarchy*, this becomes an argument for pan-European wholeness under Arnold's new name for the Aryan strain, Hellenism.

What, no doubt, most appealed to Arnold about Müller's science was that it quietly, but definitively, took language away from the theists. To the contemporary Adamicists Müller said unambiguously, "the problem of the common origin of language has no connection with the statements contained in the Old Testament regarding the creation of man . . .," and, again, the new science "has taken away all excuse for those rapturous descriptions of language which invariably precede the argument that language must have a divine origin" (*Lectures* 1: 374, 406). Those "rapturous descriptions" of language could, indeed, be Coleridge's (not to mention Müller's contemporary Trench). Müller's text, in effect, demolishes the linguistic foundation of the Romantic poetic, and this Arnold was well-disposed to hear, especially since the philologist was offering an alternative faith. Broadly speaking, that faith was a kind of scientific humanism. We cannot affirm God or any transcendent Absolute, Müller says in several different ways, for the human mind is radically incapable of knowing any absolute or transcendent entity. If we are to believe in any unifying order, that belief must rest finally on the one thing we can know, "the human laws of reasoning." These we discover linguistically by following the forms of words back to their "roots," and "roots" are what Müller can become rapturous about. "There is something more truly wonderful in a root than all the lyrics in the world." Linguistic roots signify the "inward mental phases" or "faculties" which ultimately gener-

ate our moral and social universe" (*Lectures* 1: 406, 398, 404-05).

It is perhaps past time for simply saying that Müller is one of the best informed and most committed Kantians of the Victorian period. "No one," Müller will write at the close of his career, "deserves such careful study as Kant. I am glad to think the translation of the *First Critique* the best service I ever rendered to England" (*Science of Thought* 123). And in the "Preface" to that translation, he eloquently merges his philological and philosophical pursuits: "The bridge of thoughts and sights that spans the whole history of the Aryan world has its first arch in the Veda, its last in Kant's *Critique*" ("Preface" lxxvii). Recalling the remarks of Nelson Goodman quoted earlier, I note now a point I will return to at my close: the transmutation of Kant's critique into language philosophy that Goodman identifies as the crucial move of twentieth-century thought had a not insubstantial beginning among the Victorians.

But to return to the specifically poetic issue: Müller's linguistic Kantianism is rich in possibilities for delivering the later nineteenth-century poetic from the wilderness. These are possibilities—if I may be allowed simply to suggest an outcome I lack space properly to demonstrate—most fully articulated by the early twentieth-century neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer, whose philosophy of symbolic forms defines, better than any other contemporary theoretical statement, the aesthetic project of early modernism.<sup>9</sup> What we see in Arnold's later critical discourse is at once an approach to and suppression of these possibilities.

Skipping over *Culture and Anarchy* and turning to Arnold's Biblical criticism of the late 1860's and the 70's, we see—and Ruth apRoberts's work has been an immense service here—that comparative philology is very much at the heart of the matter. Arnold strives to revalidate the Bible for a scientific age by tracing its key words back to their true or root meanings, in particular, of course the word "God." Modern philology tells us, he says in *Literature and Dogma*, that the Aryan root of later words such as Theos, Deus, Deva, means "simply *shining* or brilliant." But it is not now Aryan roots that concern him but Semitic ones. The original meaning of the Hebrew word for God he notoriously finds to be not a metaphysical, personal first cause, but an immanent tendency to righteousness. This is "the common substructure of idea" on which the work resides, the substructure on which all mankind ought to be able to come together (*Works* 6: 171-72).

Here I must make a rather large jump. What we observe in the late Biblical criticism is that Arnold's shift to the search for Semitic or Hebraic linguistic roots has effectively driven the poetic, the object of his earlier pursuit of Aryan or Hellenic roots and his earlier criticism in general, into a position of unaccustomed antithesis, as he presses his new rhetoric of righteousness. That is, in his late writing on the Bible, it is not, in fact, the poetic that one finds at the root of language. On the contrary, the poetic becomes precisely that which car-

<sup>8</sup> Arnold refers to Müller's lectures in *Celtic Literature* (*Works* 3: 334) and his editor R. H. Super speculates on Müller's influence (3: 495) though more conservatively than I do. The best modern student of Müller and his influence is

Dowling, especially ch. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Note, e. g., Lentricchia's use of Cassirer, especially ch. 1.



ries us away from and obscures linguistic roots. Virtually identified here with the metaphoric, the poetic becomes what Müller had called a "disease of language," a process of semantic diremption that increasingly separates word from thing. We mistake Biblical language, Arnold tells us, if we fail to realize that its tendency is "literary, not scientific"; the language of poetry and emotion is "approximate" language, "thrown out, so to speak," at "being" (*Works* 6: 170-71, 189). The poetic is language, Arnold comes as close as he can to saying, that is uprooted from being, moving under its own autonomous momentum.

The fact is, the more Arnold pursues the notion of a primitive language of poetic power, the more he finds himself struggling with a fundamental antinomy: the original linguistic / poetic act is either a direct representation of what is there, the thing in itself, or it is a construction of that thing. At its origin language either *reflects* or *creates* the humanistic order that is meant to supplant the divine. To expand the point: what one has in Arnold's struggles with the problem of poetic language is a characteristic *aporía* in the concept of humanism that plays right through the nineteenth century and into our own era. Either the new kingdom of culture is within us, part of our intrinsic and permanent mental make, or we make it through our continuous human praxis.

As Arnold's shifting valuation of "poetical" language from the Celtic lectures to the Biblical criticism indicates, his choice always inclines to the humanism of the stable, mentalistic "substructure." But the late works increasingly deploy, even as they refuse, the alternative possibility. So tantalizing, indeed, is Arnold's antithetical treatment of the poetic in *Literature and Dogma* as the function of language which separates it from, rather than reunites it with, being, that several recent readers have forged a connection with Nietzsche. A more plausible, if less dramatic, connection, given Arnold's ineradicable humanism, would be, as I have suggested, with Cassirer, whose own humanism deliberately negotiates that turn to the poetic / linguistic *construction* of the human ideal that Arnold cannot quite manage: "Man's outstanding characteristic, his distinguishing mark, is not his . . . nature but his work. It is this work that . . . determines the circle of 'humanity.'" Our "common bond" is not a "substance" but a "function," the function of symbolic forming (74-75).

Müller struggled with the same *aporía* as Arnold but, in the end, moved definitively the other way, towards, not Nietzsche, whom we really don't need in these instances, but Cassirer and the modernist humanism of symbolic forms, or better, symbolic forming. The simple explanation for this is that, like Cassirer and unlike Arnold, he considered Kant the fountainhead of modern thought (Arnold's candidate was Spinoza). But we need to go a bit further than this and in the process to bring in briefly here at the close that other sort of science that has been conspicuously absent from my paper, natural science. Near the end of his career Arnold in a famous exchange with T. H. Huxley essentially collapsed before the Darwinist threat to humane letters. What can we do "under

the shock of hearing from modern science that . . . man is not the cynosure of things terrestrial?" he asks, and answers, we can contemplate a line from Homer that tells us to endure it (*Works* 10: 68). Müller was not nearly so inclined to resignation. When Darwin in the *Descent of Man* (1871) speculated that human language had evolved from animal signs, Müller was quick to respond to what seemed to him, and correctly so, an assault on the very foundation of any claim of human transcendence over the natural world. Language and finally language alone, he insisted, distinguished humanity from the animal and, beyond that, material essence to which the new evolutionary science would reduce it.<sup>10</sup> This was, in Müller's famous metaphor, the Rubicon on which he would take his stand against the excesses of an episteme which, we recall, he began his career by invoking as the arbiter of all knowledge. In this he came to see himself as continuing the battle Kant had waged against comparable threats to human spiritual freedom from scientific materialists in the late eighteenth century. I have followed Kant, Müller writes, "if Kant is right then Darwin is out of court" (*Science of Thought* 120). A generation later Cassirer will make precisely the same point in the face of what he calls modern "biologism."

Müller has followed Kant, but as he says in his last substantial book, *The Science of Thought*, "I go beyond him in my emphasis on language, on names as the source of knowledge" (124-25). Though this development was implicit in Müller's early philology, I would argue, that his late move toward linguisticizing, the Kantian epistemology is driven by nothing so much as the Darwinian threat. He follows Kant but no less importantly he aims to upset Darwin. Insofar as Darwinism puts in question the distinctiveness of human mental processes, Müller pushes the humanist defense onto the forms of language, which seem clearly unavailable to animals, and from which, he argues, one may deduce a definitively human capacity for reason, morality, or beauty.

There is a further effect of this argument with Darwinism. Müller's *Science of Thought* is actually about the relation between language and that mental substructure or presence it is supposed to signify, the presence, as we have seen, from which Arnold absolutely cannot release language. No more can Müller, but under the pressure of combating Darwinism, rhetorical exigencies push him not simply towards foregrounding language as the sign of our humanity, but towards giving language priority over thought to the point that he can, as he says, foresee a time when belief in "disembodied thought will be looked upon as one of the strongest hallucinations on the nineteenth century." When once we grasp that thought's "last consummation" is in language, we will have a "new departure for philosophy, nay . . . a new foundation for every system of philosophy which the world has ever known" (*Science of Thought* 50-51).

I am not, of course, announcing the discovery of a Victorian grammatologist. Müller is far too attached to Kant to qualify for such a role, and Kant, as we know, must go before one crosses the poststructuralist Rubicon. What I am wanting to indicate, finally, is how science, in its post-Darwinian

<sup>10</sup> See Müller's series of lectures against Darwin in *Fraser's* 7 n. s. (1873): 525-41, 659-78; 8 n. s. (1873): 1-24.



phase, increasingly forces the humanist hand, compelling it ineluctably towards a final release of language from the sub-structure of mind as the only remaining defense of human significance.

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## Thomas Carlyle and Dynamical Symbolism: The Lesson of Edward Irving

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Individuals, like nations, need myths against which to define themselves and create order (or the illusion of order) amidst a chaos of impressions and alternatives. Thomas Carlyle was no exception, emphasizing as he did the importance of the heroic will in humanity's progress and his own. He thought that history "is the essence of innumerable Biographies" (28: 46).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, he defined his own development against the lives of others, whose essences he interpreted and, in some cases, distorted to suit his own needs. Carlyle sought personal validation in judging them as failed or successful workers in humanity's ongoing search for meaning

in a universe where all things, including perceptions of God, must undergo continual metamorphoses to remain vital. Much like Friedrich Schiller and the other Germans whom he admired, Carlyle was mistrustful of egoism, an imprisonment in one's own perceptions which, at the extreme, leads to the solipsism and failure of will he thought he saw in S. T. Coleridge and his friend the minister Edward Irving.<sup>2</sup> A study of his relationship with the controversial Hatton Garden preacher will clarify the biographical implications of his belief that "Truth, in the words of Schiller, *immer wird, nie ist*; never is, always is a-being" (28:38). By ceasing to struggle men-

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Carlyle quotations are from the *Centenary Edition of the Works of Thomas Carlyle*.

<sup>2</sup> Though he emphasizes the need to transcend the ego to understand others, Carlyle notoriously colored his biographical portraits with his own personality. At the beginning of *The Life of Friedrich Schiller*, for instance, he

says it is important to "transport ourselves into his circumstances outward and inward" and "see as he saw, and feel as he felt" (25: 2). But this 1825 biography is as much about Carlyle as it is about Schiller, as his emphasis on the battle between will and fate illustrates.



tally and apply irony to their provisional definitions of truth and character, Carlyle thought, Irving and Coleridge became the prisoners of sense; like the Romantic writers who, according to Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, eat and drink nature rather than view it as a window into infinitude, they fell prey to the human impulse to seek finalities of interpretation through language and perception (*Sartor Resartus* 151-52).<sup>3</sup>

In his letters of the 1820's and 1830's, leading up to Irving's death in 1834, Carlyle does not hide a rivalry with the celebrated and then notorious minister, who courted Jane Bailie Welsh before Carlyle did. This rivalry also underlies the long portraits of Jane Welsh and Edward Irving, which he wrote in 1866 and 1867 following his wife's death.<sup>4</sup> It is with this rivalry in mind that the reader must judge the accuracy of his consistent contrast between his success and Irving's failure, which important aspects of the texts themselves call into question. On one level Carlyle contrasts his own progressive search for truth with the failures of Irving; this leads him in the *Reminiscences* to set much of his discussion in a Goethean framework, even in such details as his characterization of Mrs. Strachey as a "Schöne Seele" (beautiful soul) (233).<sup>5</sup> He implicitly contrasts his own renunciation of self and material happiness, and subsequent emergence into the "eternal blue of ether" (281), with the suicides of Frank Dixon, the "poor old maniac woman" at Muirkirk (226), and figuratively Irving himself, who would not recognize the self-destructive quality of his actions and associations. But these portraits posthumously collected in the *Reminiscences* also suggest a suspicion of defeat on Carlyle's part. A recognition of failure, finality, and guilt suffuses these pieces. His struggles are now in the past, his victorious year at Hoddam Hill in 1825-6 an idyllic, "russet-coated" memory (281). Above all the aged Carlyle seems guilt-ridden about his neglect of his wife, and seems determined to prove to himself that, all the same, she was justified in choosing him over Irving. Irving's fall seemed evident at his moment of greatest triumph. Carlyle was struck by the parallel in his own life, for in 1866 he was brought low by Jane Carlyle's death at the very time he was in Edinburgh to be installed as Rector at the University. Even words failed Carlyle in 1866; and like Goethe and Schiller, he regarded vital language as the "clothing" of progressive self-development: at the end of "Jane Welsh Carlyle" he writes that "on the whole there is no use in writing here. There is

even a lack of *sincerity* in what I write (strange but true). The thing I *would* say, I cannot. All words are idle" (167). Indeed, his literary career was over.

Irving and Carlyle were products of the Burgher Seceder church: his family were regular worshippers, and Irving was attracted to the sect for a while as a youth. The Burgher Seceders adhered to a simpler and stricter faith than that of the Established Church with which they had parted ways.<sup>6</sup> In retrospect this church, like much of the quiet Annadale world into which he was born in 1795, seemed a stark contrast to the bustling, chaotic London into which he and Irving descended to pursue their careers.<sup>7</sup> By the 1820's he concluded that his father's generation was the last for whom a naive, fervent faith in the traditional Christian God was possible. He writes in "Edward Irving" that "it began to alter just about that period, on the death of those old hoary Heads; and has gone on with increasing velocity ever since. Irving and I were probably among the last products it delivered before gliding off . . . into self-consciousness, arrogance, insincerity, jangle and vulgarity" (177). Carlyle detected a fear of modernity among these "cheerfully quiet, rational and honest people" (171, 176), who mistrusted the "sceptical free-thinking" of the time: "a man who awoke to the belief that he actually had a soul to be saved or lost was apt to be found among the Dissenting people, and to have given up attendance on the Kirk" (176).

In his idealization of his childhood faith in the *Reminiscences* Carlyle combines Edenic associations with his readings of the Germans. By the 1820's he was impressed with Schiller's argument in *Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, in refutation of J. J. Rousseau, that man must abandon his desire for lost childhood Arcadias and strive forward in culture to establish new forms of meaning.<sup>8</sup> Like Blake, he believed that the desire to retrieve a lost innocence associated with childhood is dangerous or, at best, impractical: having experienced the confusions of modern culture, man must approach a higher innocence (Schiller's "Elysium") through civilization, not by trying to escape from it (153-54). This idea influenced Carlyle's lambasting in *The French Revolution* of Anacharsis Cloutz for seeking through a phony brotherhood of man "the Paradise we lost long ago" (3: 23).<sup>9</sup> The older Carlyle admired the simple peasant parishoners who received "tongues of authentic flame from Heaven" (*Reminiscences* 179), which his too-heightened self-consciousness prevented him from

<sup>3</sup> For the most recent biography of Carlyle, see Kaplan. He covers the friendship between Carlyle and Irving in some detail. But more than a century after its appearance, Froude's biography is still the most important if problematic study of Carlyle's life, especially of his long apprenticeship and strained marriage. Like everyone who has written about Irving, he draws heavily on the long remembrance ("Edward Irving") Carlyle finished in 1867, the year after Jane's death. Froude included it with the *Reminiscences* he edited upon Carlyle's own passing (I have used the now standard C. E. Norton edition). The long controversy over the *Reminiscences* and the Froude biography still has not subsided entirely. Also useful is Drummond, who applies psychoanalytical techniques to Irving's life and religious opinions. See also Campbell, "Carlyle and the Secession."

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the first of his prose portraits was inspired by the death in 1832 of his father, James; the father's death inspired the son to explore "that section of the Past which he has made alive for me, in a certain sacred sanctified light" (*Reminiscences* 1).

<sup>5</sup> His admiration of the "beautiful soul" is but one stage in Wilhelm Meister's development towards the appreciation of a higher humanity in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Carlyle's translation appeared in 1824. In the

*Reminiscences* he praises Mrs. Strachey's "childlike mirth" and "innocent secular grace and gift" (233).

<sup>6</sup> In "Edward Irving, Carlyle and the Stage," Campbell writes that "each was deeply stimulated and affected by the proximity of a mind as powerful as his own, and sharing the same intellectual roots and education" (168).

<sup>7</sup> In "Carlyle and the Secession" Campbell writes that Ecclefechan, Carlyle's birthplace, "was no sleepy hollow, but rather a moderately industrial busy town, enjoying the through traffic which modern progress has removed from it" (48).

<sup>8</sup> Schiller sees a danger in peoples and individuals setting their innocent golden ages in a mythical time before the beginnings of civilization. By denying the value of art and culture, they place "that purpose behind us, toward which they should, however, lead us, and hence they imbue us only with a sad feeling of loss, not with joyous feelings of hope" (*Naive and Sentimental Poetry* 148-49).

<sup>9</sup> Cloutz's foreigners were simply Frenchmen dressed up for the occasion, according to Carlyle: "this is the faith of Anacharsis: That there is a Paradise discoverable; that all costumes ought to hold men" (3: 23).



experiencing. He decided that he could not recapture his past; nor could Edward Irving recapture the essence of his childhood faith through a verbal philosopher's stone like Corinthians 13, with its emphasis on speaking in tongues. Instead, Carlyle set out to construct a new language of the spirit, and eventually interpreted Irving as a man who fell prey to false tongues. The evangelical faith of the Burgher Seceders was doomed, unable to withstand the general spirit of scepticism that undermined his own Christianity at the University of Edinburgh, and which had crept into Annan even while he was still a child (176). By the 1820's he was convinced that scepticism and the other pressures of modernity must be engaged and, if possible, put to the service of a renewed belief; it seemed hopeless to evade scepticism by escaping into the past, whose exploration could only remind one of the contrast between adult mental conflicts and an idealized childhood unity. Only through dialectics, not the false unities of rational formulas, could truth be approached; hence Carlyle's ridicule of those who believed that the origins of Positivism lay in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, with its emphasis on engagement, conflict, and error as potential routes to self-discovery (307).

In differing ways Carlyle and Irving tried to adapt the perceived values of their upbringings to Britain's disorienting industrial revolution, which uprooted traditional religious and cultural values. He characterized Irving as having left his Scottish Arcadia much too soon, somewhat like Arnold's *Thyrsis*. Carlyle thought he succeeded because he had the good sense to steel himself morally with his long apprenticeship in Scotland, moving permanently to London only on the eve of his friend's death. Meanwhile, he moved beyond his initial fear of the irony of Voltaire and Gibbon to argue that scepticism may be useful in overthrowing outmoded norms and systems, a prerequisite to renewed spiritual affirmations. His estimations of Irving in the 1820's and 1830's became colored by his dialectical engagement with Goethe's ideas about toleration, irony, and humor.<sup>10</sup> Above all, Goethe's depiction of Faust interested him in the relationship of the spirit to the flesh in those who pursue truth. He wondered if the flesh could lead to the spirit or even evil to good. Denuded by 1817 of his simple childhood faith, he nevertheless believed in a spiritual principle (what Faust terms an "Unnameable"), and concluded that the modern devils of the mind were far more cunning than the old cloven-hoofed variety. Beyond interpreting others' lives to suit his needs, Carlyle modelled his life after literature which, at any rate, he regarded as a "shadowing forth" of the author's personality. Thus he regarded his pact with life as not unlike Faust's with Mephistopheles, when he declares, "if ever I say to the passing moment, linger, you are so beautiful, then you may throw me in fetters; then I'll gladly go to Hell."<sup>11</sup> To seek what Ten-

nyson later termed any "want-begotten rest" is to give up the struggle for meaning and identity, to rest satisfied with static perceptions of self and environment. To conquer the flesh and utilize evil to procure good, Carlyle decided, was a question of exercising insight and free will: man must "Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work" (*Sartor Resartus* 197). The danger was not in acknowledging the claims of material happiness or what he termed the "common," but seeing such things as ends in themselves. Any attempt to retrieve the past or bring back the dead letter represented for Carlyle as form of "rest" from struggle. This explains his disenchantment with Coleridge, who to his mind practiced a self-satisfied philosophical quiescence and ceased his struggle to formulate Kant's vital ideas in a British idiom. In Irving he perceived a more treacherous surrender to egoism based paradoxically on a sincere wish to help others spiritually. Egoism, which Faust identifies as the essence of the modern devil, was fed by celebrity in both men, who mistook sensuality for spirituality.

From Carlyle's perspective, Edward Irving failed to adapt Christianity to the revolutionary conditions of the metropolis, in contrast to his own life-long endeavor to test assumptions, look beyond appearances, and constantly construct new approaches to the spiritual. He thought his friend failed to develop the critical insight necessary to rise above the social and intellectual turmoil around him, and like William Hazlitt was struck by a theatrical flair that contrasted with an absence of self-consciousness among the Burgher Seceders. In retrospect, Irving lacked the consistency and direction Carlyle himself desperately sought during the 1820's as he fought the specters of atheism and nihilism.<sup>12</sup> He dismissed Irving's attempt to make Christianity a Truth again as essentially regressive, an edifice of words, rhetoric, and poses. In 1831 Carlyle tried to convince him that the Word of God is to be found, not in obscure Biblical passages, but in "the stars and on the rocks, and in the brain and heart of every mortal" (*Reminiscences* 299).<sup>13</sup> In other words, he tried without success to convert the preacher to natural supernaturalism; he wanted to convince Irving that words must be united with nature which, as with everything mortal, is in a never-ending state of flux and development. Unaware of his own distortions of Coleridge's personality to suit his needs, Carlyle was struck that Irving embraced the Sage of Highgate's theology while apparently ignoring its emphasis on the spirit rather than the letter of scriptural texts (Drummond 128). Irving failed to comprehend that Christianity, "like every truly vital interest of mankind," has to grow (*Two Note Books* 158).

Rather than living up to his considerable early promise and being "foremost in the van" of his generation's spiritual progress as it advanced towards "Promised Lands that lay ahead" (*Reminiscences* 299), Irving seemed to Carlyle in 1831

<sup>10</sup> For Carlyle's ideas about toleration, see Shine, who writes that in 1832, upon the death of Goethe, "the tolerant viewpoint lost perhaps its ablest single supporter in Carlyle's mind" (85).

<sup>11</sup> See *Faust I*, lines 1699-1702, in Goethe's *Werke*, vol. 3. The translation is mine.

<sup>12</sup> Tulloch writes that Irving seemed "incapable of revising his accumulated convictions" and was "wholly destitute of the critical intellect" (53).

<sup>13</sup> Froude argues that Carlyle's autobiographical sketches were less subjective

than Goethe's *Dichtung Und Wahrheit*, with its philosophy that the writer must choose and arrange facts to emphasize actual basic truths and the influence of past events on the present: none of the German's "involuntary freaks of memory can be traced to Carlyle's 'Reminiscences'" (1: 218). It is true that "Edward Irving" is generally accurate in its details and its recollection of emotions: this is confirmed by the letters Carlyle wrote when the events depicted there actually occurred. But Carlyle reads the events of his youth in light of his bereavement, which blunts his characteristic irony.



to be a false shepherd, an opinion still held in his 1866-67 biography. Though movingly eulogized by Carlyle upon his premature death in 1834 after his excommunication, he now seemed a rather pitiful, admonitory irrelevance, not a hero. In *Sartor Resartus*, written in 1830 and 1831, Carlyle symbolized his wise waiting to prepare for a public vocation in Teufelsdröckh's emerging from the "mountain-seat" where he experiences his "Everlasting Yea" to his "Watch-tower" above the chaotic city only after years of preparation. Teufelsdröckh must hush his internal "mad primeval Discord" before he successfully can assume his function as a prophet and avoid being consumed by his environment (*Sartor Resartus* 197). Given this fictional scheme against which he defined himself, it was not coincidental that, in eulogizing Irving, Carlyle depicted him as a man whose ego was fed and then consumed by his urban environment. As always, he tried to discern the quality of victory or defeat in the face: "the last time I saw him was three months ago, in London . . . he face was flaccid, wasted, unsound; hoary as with extreme age" (28: 323).

Irving became Carlyle's exemplary prophet manqué; what Froude terms an "unconscious rivalry" (1: 153) led him, not to create facts, but to organize and interpret them to achieve self-justification. Like Schiller and Goethe later on, he became Carlyle's fictionalized Doppelgänger. Thus Carlyle's fascination with rhetoric and its snares led him to focus on his friend's oratorical flair and its consequences; his difficulty in finding a permanent career (his search resembles that of Friedrich Schiller) led him to emphasize the ease of Irving's success, as if celebrity simply dropped into his lap. Their first meeting, as recounted in the *Reminiscences*, appears to be organized in a way to recall that between another older "celebrity," Samuel Johnson, and his younger future friend, Boswell; in both instances, for example, initial hostility gives way to affection (185). In sum, Irving was a consistent standard against which Carlyle defined his identity; in the end, the student superseded his master and demonstrated his master's shortcomings.

But this was the pattern with Carlyle, whose ironic dialectic presupposed the appreciation and then rejection of heroes. By 1829 he criticized Schiller as too nobly withdrawn from the "many-coloured stream of life," and in 1832 thought that even Goethe had nothing more to teach him. Carlyle extracted a lesson from each, though in the process he reformulated their characters. At worst they became mere echoes of Carlyle, their salient features highlighted to suit his own purposes. Thus in his writings he stresses Schiller's heroism in battling disease, which leaves on his face the marks of a spiritual victory against the flesh; this mirrors his own battle with "dyspepsia," which began about 1818 and was well underway by the time *The Life of Friedrich Schiller* appeared in book form in 1825. Similarly, he focused almost obsessively on Goethe's ideas about renunciation and work, for instance in *Past and Present*, where the poem "Symbolum" with its injunction to "Work, and despair not" becomes a repeated text (10: 237-38). In *Sartor Resartus* he stresses the

themes of duty and activity in *Wilhelm Meister*. Carlyle himself had long sought a purpose and vocation.

Carlyle's reworking of a conversation he had with Irving about Methodism illustrates his penchant to characterize the past in a way that validated his own philosophy over Irving's. In this instance, Irving is reduced to paraphrasing Friedrich Schiller at Carlyle's behest; at the same time, the exchange, which took place not long before he was excommunicated from the Kirk for his heretical ideas about Christ's divinity, is presented to underscore Irving's inability to distinguish sensual fervor from spirituality. He becomes Carlyle's marionette: as with Irving's statement that *Wilhelm Meister* contains more sense about Christianity "than I have found in all the Theologians I ever read!" (*Reminiscences* 307), the insightful words and the misguided actions are at variance. Carlyle recalls that, during a walk in the Scottish countryside, they both criticized the Methodists for confusing sense with spirit. Carlyle's youthful sentiments were not ecumenical. Methodism, according to Irving, had "far too little of spiritual conscience, far too much of temporal appetite" and seemed "an essentially sensuous religion, depending on the body, not on the soul!" In agreement, Carlyle "perhaps" added that he thought Methodism was "a religion so-called, and the essence of it principally *cowardice* and *hunger*; terror of pain, and appetite for pleasure, both carried to the infinite?" (287). Like his emphasis on Irving's belated discovery of Goethe near the end of "Edward Irving," this little dialogue reflects Carlyle's reworking of Irving's opinions to suit the terms of his own German dialectics; the "perhaps" in his recollection signals that the exchange is in part fictional, even if its essence is not. In the context of Carlyle's account of Irving's increasingly eccentric religious practices, the episode serves to illustrate his belief that the minister was adept at locating moral blindness in others, but not in himself. With the critic of another nation's culture in mind, Carlyle argues in "State of German Literature" (1828) that the seeker after truth constantly must seek new points of vision to avoid being fooled by his own "optical delusions" (26: 33). For this the ironic mode, which Irving did not understand, was essential.<sup>14</sup>

Carlyle applies the concepts of the 24th Letter of Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Man* to his discussion of Methodism in the *Reminiscences*. The German likens a heightened emotionalism in the religious sphere to utilitarian materialism. For instance, he states that a misdirected reasoning impulse underlies all so-called "unconditional happiness systems," including those that have all of eternity for their object (116). In its failure to use the material impulse to approach the absolute, which the play-impulse nurtured by art allows, the mind mistakes a sensual absolute for a genuine glimpse of the spiritual realm. Though he does not criticize any particular religious creed, he seems to have the German Pietists in mind, whose emotionalism influenced the Storm-And-Stress movement from which he had distanced himself by the 1790's. Schiller writes that man's impulse to realize absolute values often leads him, not towards Truth and Law, but to the infinite

<sup>14</sup> For an analysis of Carlyle's development of a philosophy of irony, see my article in *Philological Quarterly*.



expansion, in time and space, of self, existence, and well-being (116). Like Carlyle, he links egoism ("self") with this self-deception. In this prison of self religion becomes merely an extension of man's appetite carried to infinity, something like the "machinery" Carlyle excoriates in his important essay "Characteristics" (1831). However much he deceives himself that his spiritual orientation is genuine, its impetus is an "ideal of appetite," or what Carlyle translates in his *Reminiscences* as an "appetite for pleasure . . . carried to the infinite" (287).

Carlyle lumped Methodism, Byronic Romanticism, and Irving's religion together as expressions of material impulses disguised as pursuits of the spirit. In "Edward Irving" and in *Past and Present*, for instance, he links his bigoted perception of Methodism as a mere pain-and-pleasure religion to the explicitly materialistic philosophies of utilitarians like Bentham, whose economic result was Philosophical Radicalism and laissez-faire.<sup>15</sup> They are all mere expressions of appetite, sensuality, and egoistic self-absorption, according to Carlyle. Thus in *Sartor Resartus* he satirizes the utilitarian pursuit of material happiness as a parodic religion fit for an age that pursues success as a substitute noumenon: "not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold: there brandishing our frying-pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his Elect!" (161). Carlyle decided that, like the Romantic view-hunters who enjoy nature "chiefly as we enjoy the crystal cup which holds good or bad liquor for us" (*Sartor Resartus* 152), the Methodists, as well as Irving and his co-religionists, were sensualists without knowing it. At least the utilitarians knew they were materialists: Irving and excessive Romantics like Byron did not, according to Carlyle's estimation. Like Schiller, he perceives a subtle psychological affinity between social or economic and religious systems that are based on material rewards or punishments. In Irving's case the reward was fame and social acceptance, the punishment ignominy and career failure. According to this analysis, he had no moral sustenance once these props were removed: he was hollow within. To Carlyle he epitomized man's capacity for self-deception in pursuing what he thinks are spiritual or altruistic goals.

In "Edward Irving" Carlyle stresses the impact of Irving's unconscious materialism on his language and physical appearance. Even in 1808, during Irving's visit to his old school at Annan, Carlyle recalled an affected air and a "glaring squint" that marred an otherwise handsome face and seemed to suggest a latent weakness of character. "Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds," Teufelsdröckh declares in *Sartor Resartus* (197): in his recollection Carlyle points repeatedly to Irving's lack of insight, beginning with this scene. The absence of vision also leads to a breakdown of language; hence, in his presentation before the students, Irving revealed a self-conscious artfulness in his language, pronouncing "circle" as "circul." This seemed to betoken a "certain *preciosity*, which was noticeable slightly in other parts of his behavior" (180). A provincial who sought

recognition and justification in the Athens of the North, Irving manipulated language and appearance to appear sophisticated; here, Carlyle decided, lay the beginnings of a theatrical affectation which contributed to his fame but never brought him the spiritual happiness or the personal acceptance for which he yearned. Eventually he fell prey to the "Mud-gods" of the nineteenth century (*Reminiscences* 281), having failed to perceive the extent to which a sense-bound ego influenced his behavior. He became the role he played without knowing it.

In retrospect, Irving's theatrical sermons, from his days as a Licentiate in 1815-16 onward, suggested a rhetorical flair in Carlyle himself that might have gotten out of hand. Both men wanted to assume prophetic roles; their speaking styles hearkened back to the richer, more allusive language of a Milton or Hooker. Carlyle abandoned his ministerial vocation by 1815, after his second trial sermon on Natural Religion (*Reminiscences* 182), and in 1820 summoned the courage to inform Irving "that I did *not* think as he of Christian Religion" (225). But they continued to share a tendency towards "a certain inflation or spiritual bombast":

He affected the Miltonic or Old-English Puritan style . . . .  
At this time, and for years afterwards, there was something of preconceived intention visible in it, in fact of real "affectation" . . . to his example also, I suppose, I owe something of my own poor affectations in that matter.  
(195)

With his affectionate remembrance Carlyle mixes dismissal, suggesting that the mentor represented a danger to his friend, a limitation of perspective which must be repudiated in order to validate his own life's progress. Thus the mythic "theatrical" Irving was useful to Carlyle in creating (and recalling) his own myth of selfhood. In presenting a "theatricality" motif that runs throughout his account, the man who notoriously regarded all forms of fiction as lies used fictional techniques to emphasize the fictions of Irving's self-created persona, whose sensual essence he misunderstood. But Carlyle always called attention to his fictions, using the techniques of Romantic irony to break down the illusions he created; Irving failed to apply this ironic perspective to his own life. Carlyle thought he differed from Irving, not in lacking a predilection to the sensual, which he deemed inevitable in man's two-fold "sensuous-reasoning" nature, but in having a critical awareness of its subtle influences on human motivations. By keeping fictions ("theatricalities") at a distance and manipulating them ironically, Carlyle thought, it might be possible to develop and maintain something approaching a stable center of being, even if this meant reading and reorganizing the lives of others to reinforce one's sense of selfhood.

The "theatricality" motif reaches an important stage in Carlyle's recollection of the ceremonial laying in 1824 of the foundation stone for the Caledonian Chapel, which replaced the Hatton Garden facility and seemed to confirm Irving's popular success. Through imagery and structural juxtaposi-

<sup>15</sup> This sentiment is echoed in *Past and Present*, where he uses the denomination as a catch-all for religious faiths based on "diseased self-introspection" and "agonising inquiry" (10: 60).



tion Carlyle contrasts his own success at Hoddam Hill (1825-26) in defeating the "vile and soul-murdering Mud-gods of my Epoch" (*Reminiscences* 281), with the failure of Irving and his fellow "actors" to escape the "muddy chaos of rubbish and excavations" in which they wallowed both morally and literally (258). Irving's youthful "squint" has given way to a moral blindness that lands him and his parishioners in a "hopeless quagmire," defeated like all those who try to breathe new life into outworn symbols and make the world "an Eden" again (278). The ceremony seemed to offer a physical correlative to the confusion into which Irving's mind had fallen since coming to London. Years before, as Dr. Chalmers's assistant in the slums of Glasgow, he had sympathized with the plight of the impoverished weavers, instead of using the authority of his position to remain at a respectable distance: his were free communings "as man with men" (213).<sup>16</sup> But now, in a perverse irony of his fame, Irving seemed isolated. At the ceremony he and the "actors" were "shut off from us by a circle of rude bricklayers' planks" (258), symbolizing to an older Carlyle the degree to which success, ironically founded on a need for personal acceptance and love, seduced him away from humanity, especially the poor, without his really being aware of the change.

On the verge of apparent victory Irving was about to discover the transitoriness of fame, the dream-like quality of his attempt to retrieve the past with its unity of perspective and naive faith. Mistaking acting for essence, Carlyle believed, he wanted to build a revolutionary church on bad foundations consisting of "a fond credulity" and "some excess of *Self-love*, which I define always as 'love that others should love him,' not as any worse kind" (*Reminiscences* 254). In his sermons Carlyle continued to detect "a want of spontaneity and simplicity, a something of strained and aggravated, of elaborately intentional, which kept jarring on the mind" (254). Though Irving wished to retrieve a naive simplicity of faith, he seemed the prisoner of an overly self-conscious yet essentially blind "sentimental" mindset, to cite Schiller's terms for child-like innocence and adult experience. It seemed as if he wanted to retrieve the "naive" through the "sentimental," but merely ensnared himself in the latter, displaying a "fond credulity" towards his own "theatricalities" and an inability to transcend the world's concerns.

Carlyle describes the Caledonian Chapel as Irving's spiritual tombstone, much as "Edward Irving" and the other 1866-67 biographical portraits may constitute a finish to his own thwarted striving as a prophet: he, too, was brought low at his moment of greatest public recognition, which gives added dimension to his journal comment that the "Reminiscences of Edward Irving" are "more about myself than him" (*Reminiscences* 307). While riding towards Tottenham one evening in the 1840's, Carlyle cursed his friend's old church, addressing it as "the fatal tombstone of my lost Friend" (258). He also considered burning his text when it was completed (307), partly aware that its contents suggested his defeat as well as Irving's and a dead end to his search for

spiritual meaning. Still, Carlyle wished to find justification by exploring the past, for instance by contrasting the Caledonian Chapel with St. Paul's, whose architectural symbolism offered an analogy to his own life's quest. Irving's Chapel, constructed over a "muddy chaos," represented to Carlyle urban dislocation and the diseases of the modern soul. In contrast, St. Paul's suggested the possibility of unity, even in London, as an idealistic young Carlyle wrote in 1824: "it seemed to frown with a rebuking pity on the vain scramble which it overlooked: at its feet were tomb-stones, above it the everlasting sky" (*Letters* 3: 94).

Puritanical in disposition as he was, Carlyle was repelled by the diversity of modern life, against which even Edinburgh seemed tame. In an episode of self-caricature, recognized as such at the time as well as in the *Reminiscences*, Carlyle was even led to prefer the contents of the Paris morgue to the streets of Paris and the Théâtre Français, which he visited in 1824 with Irving, his wife, and some friends.<sup>17</sup> This mythologizing had its London cynosure in the figure of S. T. Coleridge, whom Carlyle mercilessly caricatured in the *Reminiscences* and his *Life of John Sterling* (1851). During his disappointing first visit to the Sage of Highgate he decided that Coleridge was imprisoned in a flaccid will. Coleridge appeared to be the flabby, volitionless symbol of a society that had misdirected its highest impulses into material absolutes, as if in Schiller's analysis of "unconditional happiness systems" in the twenty-fourth Letter of the *Aesthetic Education*. If Irving was the prophet reduced to tragic failure, Coleridge was the prophet demeaned to low farce. In the 1820's and 1830's Carlyle feared both fates. The fact that Coleridge had become the darling of high society, just as Irving was in the process of doing, hardly endeared him to a man who both sought and feared popularity (this helps explain his retreats to Hoddam Hill and, afterwards, to the solitude of Craigenputtoch), and had difficulty repressing the suspicion that his own success might be just another ephemeral fiction. Carlyle's Coleridge is the antitype to Teufelsdröckh, "a puffy, anxious, obstructed-looking, fattish old man." Focusing as usual on the face, he recalls thinking, "sensuality, such a *dissoluter* even of the features of a man's face" (*Reminiscences* 251, 252). His grasp on the language of metaphysics, like his physical appearance, was constipated; unlike Teufelsdröckh, he had no satiric aloetic "drug" to rectify the situation (*Sartor Resartus* 226). Coleridge's face resembled Irving's "flaccid, wasted, unsound" look not long before his death (*Works* 28: 323). While Carlyle does not explicitly link their features, the association at the back of his mind seems evident.

Not long after his disappointing first meeting with Coleridge, Carlyle visited the notorious Newgate prison with the penal reformer Elizabeth Fry. At the time he wrote of the inmates that it was not "their depravity that struck me, so much as their debasement. Most of them actually looked like *animals*; you could see no traces of a *soul* (not even of a bad one) in their gloating, callous, sensual countenances; they had never *thought* at all, they had only eaten and drunk and made

<sup>16</sup> Drummond writes that "in those days it was Carlyle, not Irving, who was nervous and abnormal, and needed to be told to 'pull himself together'" (40).

<sup>17</sup> See *Reminiscences* 272 and *Letters* 3: 181 where, after describing the corpse

of that suicide, Carlyle wrote Jane that "to live in Paris for a fortnight is a treat; to live in it continually would be a martyrdom."



merry" (*Letters* 3: 241). The word "sensual" and the focus on appetite are central here. Implicitly he linked the prisoners with S. T. Coleridge and the others he regarded as mistaking the flesh for the spirit. The Newgate prisoners represented to Carlyle the concept of "brute Nature" he derived in large measure from Schiller's criticism of the "crude lawless impulses" of the revolutionary masses in the *Aesthetic Education* (35). On the surface Coleridge with his interest in German philosophy and mysticism, seemed the opposite of these men; but Carlyle dismissed his words as obfuscatory endeavors to satisfy his disciples with the appearance of a philosophy which had not, in reality, been worked out. Coleridge's "Kantism" was no less a "theatricality" than Irving's pulpit oratory. Carlyle believed his irony enabled him to discern in him a "sensuality" invisible to others. He regarded Coleridge as morally akin to these prisoners because of his sensuality, but with this difference: like the satirical Dead Sea Apes in *Past and Present* (1843), Coleridge thought that he thought. But the Newgate prisoners never had the opportunity to squander mental resources as he did. He lost his soul because he did not make use of it.

At the beginning of his first visit to London, Carlyle tried to convince himself that Irving, with whom he stayed for several weeks, was still a "Herculean" man who could wage war successfully with "London the great Nineveh of modern Europe" (*Letters* 3: 89). He had been out of touch with the now famous minister for most of the preceding two years, but hoped that Irving's spirit still reflected the unspoiled Scottish countryside. His hopes soon gave way to the belief that Irving could not distinguish between the "ideal of fancy" and the "actual of fact." He recalled that "it was as the former that my Friend . . . strove to represent" his London career "to himself, and to *make it be*; and it was as the latter that it obstinately continued being!" (*Reminiscences* 244). Even in 1824, fame seemed to be passing Irving by for new favorites. In October of that year Carlyle wrote his father that he hoped Irving would find the mental strength to rise above the temporary adversities whose effects, viewed rightly, might actually be salutary: "he begins to see that . . . he must content himself with patient well-doing and liberal tho' not immoderate success" (*Letters* 3: 167). But from Carlyle's perspective this was just another failed resolution.

In the years that preceded his second visit to London in 1831, Carlyle developed in natural supernaturalism a philosophy directly at variance with what he saw as Irving's failed attempts to breathe new life into the dead letter of traditional Christianity. He became especially perturbed at Irving's growing interest in speaking in tongues, which he based on a literal reading of Corinthians 13. To understand why Carlyle drifted apart from his friend, it is helpful to consider his important year at Hoddam Hill farm in Scotland, which he termed "one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life" (*Reminiscences* 281). Also important are the ideas about dynamical symbolism and the dangers of egoism in *Sartor Resartus*, which he completed

just before he left Craigenputtoch for London in 1831. Here he reproduces his struggles for direction and meaning in "mythic" terms, much as in his biographical writings he searches the lives of others for mythic meanings applicable to his needs.

At Hoddam Hill in 1825 and 1826, Carlyle began to articulate more fully to himself his rejection of traditional Christianity and his search for a new form of belief that would preserve its unnameable spiritual essence. He understood even more clearly than before the essential difference from Irving he had first expressed in 1820 at Drumclog Moss.<sup>18</sup> He believed that during his residence there he learned that life cannot be an arcadian retreat, separate from time's stresses and, by extension, those of modern culture. Though not like Irving seduced by "writing in an ancient Book," Carlyle thought that there were temptations in his own experience no less dangerous. Above all, he had been tempted to escape the pains of civilization by embracing the varieties of unconsciousness he associated with excessive Romanticism. Life was full of paradoxes, among them the lesson of his year's retreat into nature that he must engage life directly, not retreat from it. Carlyle was now convinced that the unbounded ego eventually will seek its dissolution through one form of suicide or another; hence the need for limits, duty, and society. The ego can withstand the terrors of loneliness, which may lead to the myth of a Godless universe, for only so long before it seeks rest from its struggles. Though he enjoyed living at Hoddam Hill, therefore, Carlyle soon began to feel a bit like Johnson's Rasselas, who cannot be happy with "rest" in the Happy Valley, and realizes that his painful self-consciousness is after all what separates him from "the rest of the animal creation" (Johnson 76).

Not long after he came to Hoddam Hill, Carlyle wrote Mrs. Montagu that, though time seemed like a placid sea in this peaceful rural setting, he could not ignore a more frenetic time beckoning from outside, the sort that inspires Teufelsdröckh to declare that "our whole terrestrial being is based on Time," in which it is our duty "to move, to work—in the right direction" (*Sartor Resartus* 127): time "is rolling onwards . . . to the rocks of worldly difficulty and distress" (*Letters* 3: 349). Time was a "seedfield" for his ambitions (*Sartor Resartus* 9). To evade its changes was to cease developing and deny his own humanity. Carlyle decided that the consciousness of time is both a blessing and a curse, in other words, paradoxical like the rest of life.

For this and his rejection of idyllic escapes he found confirmation in Schiller's *Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. There the German perceives a futility and even a danger in man's seeking to hold on to the past in any sense: he cannot return to an idyllic past or "Arcadia," but must strive forward within culture towards a higher Elysium. Schiller rejects utopian schemes for human perfection, which like Carlyle he associated with the French Revolution; he mistrusted objective rational schemes that ignore the subjective individual. In the *Aesthetic Education* he argues that art offers a fleeting higher

<sup>18</sup> "It was here, just as the sun was sinking, [Irving] actually drew from me by degrees, in the softest manner, the confession that I did *not* think as he of Christian Religion, and that it was vain for me to expect I ever could or

should. This, if this were so, he had pre-engaged to take *well* of me,—like an elder brother, if I would be frank with him" (225).



harmony which rewards the mentally tenacious person who perseveres amidst culture's evils and oppressions. Hardly a person to place such hope in beauty, Carlyle regarded work itself as the reconciler of psychological divisions. But like Schiller, he rejected the temptation to escape modern society, which he articulated in terms of man's tendency to seek a symbolical finality, epitomized for him by Irving's escape into Corinthians 13 and his own Byronic disgust with civilization during the 1810's and 1820's. By 1825 he decided that nineteenth-century belief required, not escape, but reformulation in terms that included the modern experience. Several years after Hoddam Hill, Carlyle wrote that the task at hand is to "embody the divine Spirit" of Christianity in a "new Mythus" (*Sartor Resartus* 194). Elsewhere, with Goethe's *Faust* in mind, he argued that "the angels and demons that can lay prostrate our hearts in the nineteenth century, must be of another and more cunning fashion than those who subdued us in the ninth" (*Works* 26: 251).

The ideas Carlyle articulated to himself at Hoddam Hill influenced his characterization in *Sartor Resartus* of Teufelsdröckh, who becomes the hero Irving could not be by repudiating both Romantic escapes from responsibility and static notions about religion. The eccentric German professor, who combines seraphic and Mephistophelean qualities (32), argues that Christianity is "symbolic" and "will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest" (224). He skeptically analyzes secular and religious orthodoxies, but he also affirms the spirit. This enables him to put a potentially self-destructive power of denial into the service of Truth. Teufelsdröckh is born mysteriously into a world that affords him a temporary unconscious unity with himself and his environment. This is symbolized by his "one and indivisible" yellow serge outfit and by the Futterals's cottage, which Carlyle depicts as united with its natural environment, "embowered in fruit-trees and forest-trees, evergreens and honeysuckles" (83). Thus his childhood is idyllic and naive according to Schiller's concepts.<sup>19</sup> In "Idyllic" we find Teufelsdröckh in a rural environment inspired by the rural Scotland Carlyle loved but decided he eventually must desert for London; the "simple version of the Christian faith" (99) practiced by Teufelsdröckh's mother was inspired by the Burgher Seceders. Carlyle looked back on his childhood with a complex mixture of nostalgia and criticism. Similarly, in recounting his past the adult Teufelsdröckh both idealizes and critically places it within the context of a growth of self-awareness that has taken him beyond psychological division towards a reintegration of the self. He states that man cannot

recapture the "sweetest Dreams" of his peaceful youth once he has developed the self-consciousness and the alienation that typify the modern condition. Like Carlyle in his letter to Mrs. Montagu, Teufelsdröckh contrasts the unconsciousness and the restfulness of his childhood environs with the rough journey into time, action, and conflict that everyone must take. Still, even in adulthood he receives emotional sustenance from recalling his childhood golden age.

Teufelsdröckh longs for the spiritual awareness he has lost in the process of growing from the "sportful sunlit ocean" of slow childhood time to the frenetic "quick-whirling Universe" associated with the adult variety.<sup>20</sup> In maturity he accomplishes this by seeing nature and the "common" symbolically, that is, through natural supernaturalism. But as a youth he uses infantile evasions of responsibility to try to regain his lost happiness. These evasions are as sensual in essence as the moral shortcomings Carlyle thought he saw in Irving, Methodism, S. T. Coleridge, and London society in general, with its "Puseyisms, Ritualisms, Metaphysical controversies and cobwebberies" (*Reminiscences* 282). On his way towards the "Everlasting Yea" Teufelsdröckh illustrates Schiller's observation in *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* that through frustration or despair many people abandon the struggle to regain psychological integration on a higher level. They opt instead for what he terms an "indolent rest," equivalent to the "unconditional rest" the Lord identifies as mankind's bane in *Faust I*. In approaching love and nature as mere escapes from responsibility, Teufelsdröckh's ego paradoxically yearns for its own powerlessness. Peckham writes that Carlyle saw "the inherent tendency of the mind to be satisfied with its structure; instead of using its powers to engage with reality, it tends to sink back into a gratifying manipulation of the symbolic structure, or to think that its structure is final" (184).

So it is with Teufelsdröckh in "Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh." In his suicidal escape into nature he confuses sense with spirit and appearance with essence, no less than Irving and his fellow actors did, but differently. Previously he sought symbolical finality in the way he loved Blumine, pursuing emotional happiness as a right and regarding neither her nor the emotion itself as symbolic of a universal force. Blind to the fact that everything in the universe is, "in the transcendental sense, symbolical as well as real," the beauties of nature appeal only to his senses; the Aeolian harps in the breath of dawn, far from inspiring his spirit and activity, merely lap him "into untried balmy Rest" (*Sartor Resartus* 220, 143). Once betrayed by his friends Towgood and Blumine, he turns to the Byronic and Werterean Romantic

<sup>19</sup> Teufelsdröckh is naive in being limited to nature and unaware of the striving for the ideal that comes with growing up. Despite the "dark ring of Care" that is evident even in his childhood, his early education is based on passive learning and naive observation: "his existence was a bright, soft element of Joy; out of which, as in Prospero's Island, wonder after wonder bodied itself forth, to teach by charming" (97).

<sup>20</sup> For Schiller's influence on Carlyle, see my essay in *VII*. Carlyle was influenced by his assertion in *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* that we tend to regard the child as a holy object because we are reminded of the psychological harmony with nature we have lost since embarking on the path of reason, self-awareness, and social alienation. We are similarly attracted to the physical nature around us because the idea of nature, including the comfortable sense of unity it affords, has disappeared from our internal beings. Both longings

are founded on a need for spiritual wholeness; in effect, we are lamenting our lost childhood innocence. That is all right as long as we keep things in perspective. We must remember, for example, that the child is limited to the nature with which he is in such blissful unison, and hence is temporarily unable to contribute to the progress of culture. Schiller argues that as adult social beings we must struggle for psychological reintegration within culture, and not seek to regain it by giving up the fight altogether. Neither infantile evasions nor escapes into comfortable systems that conveniently ignore the modern experience can save us. We should contemplate the naivete of childhood and the beauties of nature, but only to gain the moral sustenance to continue the struggle within culture required of everyone who seeks to better his lot and thus contribute to the betterment of humanity (*Naive and Sentimental Poetry* 83-88).



excess Carlyle associated with sensuality and arrested development. He mistakes sense for spirit and is left with a nihilistic vision; exemplifying Goethe's association of Romanticism with sickness, he pursues an even more absolute "untried balmy Rest" than before by embracing a womb-like "his Mother and divine" (151). A chapter later, in "The Everlasting No," he is horrified by a superficially contradictory inverse image, a perception of the universe as a lifeless machine, and of man as an animal driven by his appetite alone. But paradoxically the loss of God impresses on him "the Infinite nature of Duty . . . living without God in the world, of God's light I was not utterly bereft" (162).

Teufelsdröckh's longing for oblivion in nature leads him to feel "as if Death and Life were one" (151), but this is a false unity: when he learns through renunciation how to resolve his inner contradictions in "The Everlasting Yea," he realizes that the two are quite different. He needs to be indifferent to death and material happiness, and concentrate on dynamic "production" in this world. Furthermore, nature no longer seems like the womb-like "his Mother and divine" towards which his earlier death wish drew him. Instead, within nature's forms there is a masculine and dynamically active creator and destroyer of forms, and symbols. As Carlyle liked to put it, nature "bodies forth" a "Divine Idea."<sup>21</sup> Teufelsdröckh becomes convinced that, as a latter-day prophet, he must emulate the dynamic symbolism of nature and avoid sterile symbolical finality; hence his clothes philosophy and natural supernaturalism.

This is the new path to belief Carlyle articulated to himself by the time he made his second trip to London in 1831. He saw Irving several times in Scotland after 1825. But their correspondence dropped off and they drifted even farther apart than before. Froude writes that Irving's letters, "once so genial and transparent, became verbose and stilted. Though 'faith and principle' escaped unscathed, his intellect was shattered" (2: 162). Still, there was no hostility between them, just distance and, at least on Carlyle's part, a rather puzzled incomprehension. When the preacher visited Comley Bank in 1827, Carlyle recalled, "he talked with undeniable self-consciousness, and . . . religious mannerism . . . This was, I think, the *nadir* of my poor Irving; veiled and hooded in these miserable manifold *crapes* and formulas, so that his brave old self never *once* looked fairly through" (*Reminiscences* 286).

In 1831, while in London to find a publisher for *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle confronted Irving about his "Tongues-religion" based on Corinthians 13. Due to the turmoil in the book trade caused by the controversy surrounding the proposed Reform Bill, he was temporarily unsuccessful in selling his book. He was completely unsuccessful in bringing Irving around, but in trying to reason with him Carlyle revealed the self-confidence he had gained in writing what he called his "medicinal Assafoetida for the pudding Stomach of England" (*Letters* 5: 305). Now Carlyle was thoroughly convinced that his friend was a failed prophet, and that he had come down from rural Scotland with a message more relevant to a

nineteenth-century society marked by revolutions in every sphere: "O dear O dear! was the Devil ever busier than now; when the Supernatural must either depart from the world, or reappear there like a chapter of Hamilton's 'diseases of Females.' But Teufelsdröckh [sic] will and shall (in spite of the Devil) make his appearance" (5: 351-52).

Carlyle found Irving surrounded by "ignorant conceited fanatics" and what he termed "*lall-lalling* hysterical" mad women, who were encouraging him to persist in his support of speaking in tongues and other innovations at his church. One night he and Jane Carlyle left Irving's house "full of distress, provocation and a kind of shame," having witnessed his credulous enthusiasm during a demonstration of "what they called the Tongues." In vain Carlyle tried to convince Irving that he had created a religious edifice that "soared far above all human science and experience." Having lost touch with reality and nature, his friend failed to appreciate that religious doctrines appropriate to another day and age could not suffice in the revolutionary nineteenth century (*Reminiscences* 298-99). The young Carlyle had achieved the self-justification he had long sought, and to which he turned in remembrance in the twilight of his career.

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<sup>21</sup> Rosenberg associates this perception of nature with Carlyle's marked patriarchal leanings (50-51).



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## Images of Middle-Eastern Women in Victorian Travel Books<sup>1</sup>

Charisse Gendron

Nearly all Victorian travelers to Egypt, Turkey, and Arabia addressed the issue of the condition of Middle-Eastern women. As Eliot Warburton put it in *The Crescent and the Cross* (1844), foreign women are the first item of interest "to the moralist as well as the epicurean" abroad (1: 59). Some Western travelers—Lamartine, Flaubert, Warburton himself—were indeed epicureans, and today must face the charges of those who see the history of "Orientalism" as one in which the West attempted to recreate the East as a fantasy of the exotic Other. According to this analysis, announced in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the male traveler's sense of boundless adventure in journeying to the Middle East, where he sheds his inhibitions and tests his will, is epitomized in his freedom to consider as sex objects women towards whom he bears no social responsibility (188-90, 207-08, 309). In any case, he encounters in the Middle-Eastern woman one whom he has already possessed, erotically and culturally, through Western appropriation of the tales of the Arabian Nights. As Algerian writer Malek Alloula suggests, however, the epicurean's gaze meets resistance in the practices of the harem and the veil, a resistance that generates in him an obsession to penetrate the obstacles to his desire (7, 14).

This analysis implies that the Victorian traveler's view of Middle-Eastern women will be colored by both his nation's sense of manifest destiny in the East and by his own sexuality, unleashed by the encounter with the exotic Other and by the opportunity in writing to refashion the encounter according to the requirements of his fantasy. In general terms, I accept this analysis; as I hope to show, however, from a literary point of view the analysis becomes most interesting when we look at travel books by women as well as men and see that no absolute national ideology and no single personal sexuality exist, but rather variations that produce significantly different images of women.

And what of the other category of travelers for whom women are the primary item of interest, according to Warburton? These are the moralists, whose concerns in the Middle East are with the institutions of slavery and polygamy. Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau are clear exam-

ples of this category, although the categories do not always remain distinct. The Victorian interest in the Woman Question at home and slavery in America lead even such epicureans as Warburton to make judgments about the harem system. Travelers with a moral agenda difficult to separate from a political agenda, particularly missionaries and colonial administrators, have of course received their share of anti-orientalist criticism. Barbara Harlow, for example, writes of colonial European efforts to discourage the practices of suttee in India, female circumcision in Kenya, and veiling in Algeria and Iran as attempts "to collaborate with the women under the pretext of liberating them from oppression by their own men" (Alloula xviii). And, since critics tend to argue that "professional Orientalism" is inseparable from "personal" or literary descriptions of the Middle east (Said 157), I am not surprised to find Leila Ahmed, in a recent article in *Feminist Studies*, categorizing people who disapprove of harems, from the seventeenth-century traveler George Sandys to American feminists of the 1980's, as Western ethnocentrists.

Although neither Alloula, Harlow, Said, nor Ahmed reproves Harriet Martineau specifically, their arguments might easily include her. Ahmed, for instance, insists that ethnocentrism prevents Westerners from seeing that the segregation of women from the world of men may oppress women less than the integration of women in a man's world (528). Martineau, who worked for women's education and against slavery and prostitution, did not see the harem as a space defined by women for women, and Ahmed herself admits that for Middle-Eastern women "it is . . . impossible, in an environment already so negatively primed against us, to be freely critical—a task no less urgent for us than for Western feminists—of our own societies" (527). Her defense of traditional Islamic social structure is implicitly refuted by turn-of-the-century Egyptian feminist and nationalist Huda Shaarawi, who, according to her memoir *Harem Years*, incorporated Western thinking into her political campaigns to abolish the veil as well as to achieve for Egypt autonomy from Western Europe (7, 99, 112, 130).

Rather than to reject Victorian moralists out of hand as

<sup>1</sup> This article was written with the help of a research grant from Middle Tennessee State University. I thank the Syndics of Cambridge University for permission to quote from Kinglake's papers.



culturally prejudiced or worse, I believe that the more interesting endeavor is to see how they contribute to an ongoing dialogue among Western and Eastern writers over the sometimes competing claims of feminism and nationalism. As with the epicureans', the moralists' judgments are not monolithic; they depend, not only on a writer's national ideology and personal sexuality, but upon his or her sexual politics—what he or she considers to be the proper role of women. Although sometimes these determining factors only can be inferred, let us attempt to analyze how they shape images of women in the books of four Victorians in the Middle East: Alexander Kinglake, Eliot Warburton, Harriet Martineau, and Lucie Duff Gordon.

As a young man recently down from Cambridge in 1834, Alexander Kinglake toured the Middle East. Ten years later, he published an account of his experiences in a travel book that is, as the preface boasts, "quite superficial in its character," "thoroughly free" "from all display of 'sound learning and religious knowledge'" (*Eothen* xxi-xxii). *Eothen* made a sensation, and is still classed with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters from Turkey and Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* as a gem among travel books. Also in 1844, Kinglake published "The Rights of Women," an ironical review of Richard Monckton Milnes's poetic defense of the harem, *Palm Leaves*. Kinglake's familiar tone in this review, in which he teases the poet about his mustachios, suggests that he knew Milnes as a member of the London literary world where Kinglake was welcomed for his conversation. Among his personal friends were Lucie Duff Gordon, the poet Bryan Procter and his wife Anne (known for her wit as "Our Lady of Bitterness"), and Caroline Norton, a writer who used her scandalous separation from her husband to publicize the injustice to women of England's marriage and property laws (Rose 182-83). Kinglake himself never married. In *Eothen*, he brings to his description of Middle-Eastern women a taste for the company of intelligent women with liberal views, as well as a bachelor's playful gallantry, quite another thing from desire.

To understand fully Kinglake's attitude towards the harem system, which puts women at an intellectual and moral disadvantage by denying them knowledge and freedom of choice, we must consider his ideal of social intercourse between men and women. This ideal is a battle of wits. In "The Rights of Women," for instance, where he proceeds from the harem to women at home, he encourages his countrywomen to abandon the pursuit of "Nothing" as a topic of conversation in favor of literary debate, which he envisions as an intellectual skirmish with erotic overtones: "how good for the taste and judgment, how stimulative of the intellect, how favourable for the love of fairness and fair play, is the gentle strife thus provoked!" (119). Kinglake, in this respect typical of the men who built the British empire, loves a challenge: in *Eothen* he tells us that he traveled to the East to strengthen his will (xxvi). The desert tests his will, but Eastern society, particularly intercourse with women, provides no challenge. "Behind me I left . . . women hushed, and swathed, and turned into waxen dolls—love flown, and in its stead mere royal, and 'Paradise' pleasures," he writes at the close of his journey, when he again faces the West. "Before me there waited glad

bustle and strife—love itself, an emulous game—religion a cause and a controversy, well smitten and well defended . . . wheels going—steam buzzing—a mortal race, and a slashing pace, and the devil take the hindmost" (355-56). Kinglake prizes the "emulous game" of love, with no insistence that it lead on to paradisaic pleasures. The harem system of sequestration and surveillance, by eliminating a woman's choice as to whether she will remain faithful to her spouse, puts an end to the game. "Now it is not of course by establishing a rivalry between husbands and lovers that domestic happiness is to be secured," Kinglake concedes in the review of *Palm Leaves*, "but still, when the wholesome possibility of rousing emulation is excluded by brutal force, the subjection and humiliation of woman are complete" ("Rights" 99). Subjected and humiliated, Kinglake opines, women are no fun.

Kinglake earns the modern reader's admiration by standing up to the demand by Mrs. Sarah Stickney Ellis, author of Victorian conduct books, that women practice self-abnegation in the service of husband and children. "We are made up of our foibles and faults," he writes in a section of "The Rights of Women" devoted to Ellis's tracts *The Women of England* . . . and *The Wives of England* . . ., "and to destroy all these one after the other is to extinguish sweet human nature—to efface us from out of the earth" (120). Kinglake's equal disapprobation of the Victorian angel and the Oriental odalisque reminds us that the first has merely consented to internalize the suppression externalized in the harem system. He reserves his approval for women who resist being turned into wax dolls, for instance the "romping girls of Bethlehem" described in *Eothen*. In this perhaps fictionalized account, the Christian girls are free of both the modest veil that paradoxically marks the Moslem woman as a sex object and of the unnaturally confined manners of the English drawing room. "[I]f you will only look virtuous enough to prevent alarm, and vicious enough to avoid looking silly," Kinglake writes,

the blithe maidens will draw nearer and nearer to you . . . .  
And if they catch a glimpse of your ungloved fingers, then . . .  
. . . will they make the air ring with their sweet screams of delight and amazement, as they compare the fairness of your hand with the hues of your sunburnt face, or with their own warmer tints . . . . And when they see you, even then, still sage and gentle the joyous girls will suddenly, and screamingly, and all at once, explain to each other that you are surely quite harmless and innocent—a lion that makes no spring—a bear that never hugs . . . . But the one—the fairest and the sweetest of all, is yet the most timid: she shrinks from the daring deeds of her playmates . . . . But her laughing sisters will have none of this cowardice; . . . they seize her small wrist and drag her forward by force, and at last . . . they vanquish her utmost modesty, and marry her hand to yours. The quick pulse springs from her fingers and throbs like a whisper upon your listening palm. (207-10)

Of course, while praising the innocently bold girls of Bethlehem, Kinglake mildly satirizes them; they are *farouche*, not quite rational creatures. Even so, the passage celebrates gentle strife between near-equals, in which man, with his



advantages of physique, education, and worldly experience, agrees to be "a bear that never hugs," and woman, though compelled to join hands, retains a certain wildness, a "quick pulse" indicative of independent life.

Similar to the game here described between man and woman is the game Kinglake plays with his audience, in which he again acts the part of the bear, although he never hugs. His irreverent approach to sacred Victorian topics, including womanhood and religion, raised eyebrows. John Murray refused to publish the manuscript, and Eliot Warburton, to whom the book is dedicated, warned in a review of it that the author goes rather far (56). Yet while Kinglake makes use of a rhetoric of wickedness, of seduction and betrayal, he actually insinuates nothing base. The description of the romping girls of Bethlehem, for instance, sports with the notion of sexual compromise in the tradition of *The Rape of the Lock* and *A Sentimental Journey*, a tradition appreciated by women like Lucie Duff Gordon, sophisticated and virtuous, who had nothing but praise for *Eothen* (71).

His love of the game assures that Kinglake will endorse freedom for women; it also assures that he will never be completely serious. In "The Rights of Women," sounding very much like John Stuart Mill, Kinglake asserts that "[m]en may have in their helpmate the virtues enforced by compulsion, or the virtues that spring from free will, but they cannot have both" (106). But he gives a skeptical twist to the distinction between freely willed and compulsory virtue in *Eothen*, where he plays on the cliché of the veiled woman's increased opportunities to sin:

She turns, and turns again, and carefully glances around her on all sides, to see that she is safe from the eyes of Mussulmans, and then suddenly withdrawing the *yashmak*, she shines upon your heart and soul with all the pomp and might of her beauty . . . She sees, and exults in your giddiness—she sees and smiles; then, presently, with a sudden movement, she lays her blushing fingers upon your arm, and cries "Yumourdjak!" (Plague! meaning, "There is a present of the plague for you!") (41-42)

This *femme fatale* seems to embody the fear of death Kinglake confesses to have suppressed while sojourning in plague-ridden Cairo (244). His more overt intention is comically to defame the image, perpetrated by Milnes's poem *Palm Leaves*, of the Middle Eastern woman as the cloistered beloved, source of solace and inspiration for her world-weary husband. The poem goes wrong from the start, as Kinglake points out in his review, by taking the "audacious poetical licence" of occupying its harem with but a single wife. By "importing into Mahometan countries a system of strict monogamy," Milnes sentimentalizes the harem and, implicitly, the subjection of women (106-07). Although the description of the hypocritical, malicious veiled woman in *Eothen* seems less flattering than that of Milnes's wife, Kinglake, in his review, assumes the Middle-Eastern woman's perspective sufficiently to see that, as one of several wives or concubines, she could hardly enjoy the crucial position in the home afforded her by Milnes. He prefers the hard-headed account of another traveler to the region, Mrs. Poole, who, "[a]t the very time that

our bard was wandering on the banks of the Nile, as blind as Homer . . . was visiting many a hareem, and carefully counting the wives" (108).

The test of a traveler's attitude towards women is his or her description of those who make no attempt to charm: old or work-worn women; women who dress or act like men; savage women whose arts, if any, are alien to the traveler. While Kinglake advocates a kind of equality in social interactions between men and women, he—like most Victorians, notably Ruskin—prefers that women remain different from men, that they be traditionally feminine. In unveiled Bedouin women, for instance, who work like pack animals but carry themselves like free beings, he finds that

[t]he awful haggardness that gave something of character to the faces of the men was sheer ugliness in the poor women. It is a great shame, but the truth is, that except when we refer to the beautiful devotion of the mother to her child, all the fine things we say and think about women apply only to those who are tolerably good-looking or graceful. These Arab women . . . may have been good women enough . . . but they had so grossly neglected the prime duty of looking pretty in this transitory life that I could not at all forgive them. (218-19)

I, for one, forgive Kinglake for attending to the prime duty in this transitory life of being amusing and self-ironic, even while confessing his gravest sins. Among male Victorian travelers to the Middle East, I can think of only one—Charles Doughty—who does not display a double standard which makes women whom the writer considers unattractive less human than men. Curiously, this reaction seems to have less to do with sex than with ideology, since writers express it when sex would not seem to be in question. The homosexual Edward Lear, for instance, in the wilds of Albania, describes a group of women who dress and work like men as "unfeminine and disagreeable," even though their eyes express "something pensive and pleasing" (104-05). And the feminist Florence Nightingale, sailing up the Nile in 1849, associates the unfeminine—nakedness, indecorum—with the demonic: "Four Ethiopian women, perfectly black, were washing in the river, dancing on the clothes like imps, not with movements like human creatures" (87). Kinglake does not go so far as Nightingale in expressing the fear of chaos underlying the double standard; he simply admits, in his role of "man about town" in the Middle East, that he is prejudiced against plain women. Yet this role itself seems to mask anxieties about the nature of women, glimpsed in Kinglake's comment that the confinement of women in harems was a logical outcome of "forty centuries experience of the married state" in the Middle East ("Rights" 95).

If part of my argument is that art, as represented by Kinglake's persona, can absorb a certain amount of political incorrectness, I shall attempt to prove it further by Eliot Warburton's negative example. His *The Crescent and the Cross* was published the same year as *Eothen*, imitates *Eothen* in content and style, and yet offends where *Eothen* delights. Warburton, whose cautious review of *Eothen* strikes me as hypocritical, lacks Kinglake's distancing irony, and manages in *The Crescent and the Cross* to be heavy-handed as both



epicurean and moralist. Describing slaves in the market he echoes Kinglake's phrase about wax dolls to compliment English women at the expense of Georgians and Circassians: "The sunny hair and heaven-blue eyes, that in England produce such an angel-like and intellectual effect, seemed to me here mere flax and beads; and I left them to the 'turbaned Turk' without a sigh" (1: 56). Warburton's fondness for English angels, compared to Kinglake's zest for "love . . . an emulous game," blunts the point of the comparison between free women and slaves, and sounds sanctimonious. But he reveals his latent cynicism towards both Western and Middle-Eastern women—a grosser form of Kinglake's sexual skepticism—in the further comment: "As for the Georgian and Circassian beauties . . . their only ambition, like that of many fair maidens in happier lands, is to fetch a high price; and their only hope is to be first favorite in the harem—whose harem they care not" (1: 57).

Warburton seems to conflate two episodes from *Eothen* in his description of the young Christian women of Damascus who come to the Franciscan convent to confess, "which," Warburton says with a leer, "if their tongue be as candid as their eloquent eyes, must be rather a protracted business" (2: 156). His flock of "fair penitents" recalls Kinglake's romping girls of Bethlehem, while his insinuation that the women use their veils to entice men "while wandering about these cloisters, waiting till the little confessional is vacant, or, perchance, until they have more to say to its cowed occupant," suggests Kinglake's Cairene *femme fatale*. Warburton, however, imagines wickedness only in terms of sexual license, and parades his fair penitents like prostitutes. Posing as a satirist, Warburton reveals himself as a sensualist, never more so than when he broaches the topic of the unfeminine woman. He describes the typical Arab woman in the market place as "an ugly, old, sun-scorched hag, with a skin like a hippopotamus, and a veil-snout like an elephant's trunk; her scanty robe scarcely serving the purpose of a girdle; her hands, feet, and forehead tattooed of a smoke color; and there is scarcely a more hideous spectacle on earth" (1: 69). This seems an elaboration of Kinglake's description of the Bedouin woman, but, where Kinglake then disarms the reader by admitting the injustice of judging women according to sexual criteria, Warburton aggravates the offense by continuing: "But the Lady of the Harem, on the other hand—couched gracefully on a rich Persian carpet strewn with soft pillow cushions—is as rich a picture as admiration ever gazed on."

If Kinglake's art neutralizes much of the nationalist and sexist aggression of which Victorian travelers stand accused, and which are more clearly exposed in Warburton, we cannot defend Harriet Martineau's *Eastern Life, Present and Past*, published in 1848 when she was forty-six, on the grounds of art. Martineau wrote to inform and persuade rather than to entertain, although she sometimes used fiction to illustrate a point. The sister of Unitarian minister James Martineau, her early interest in religion survives as moral fervor in her travel books condemning slavery in America and the harem system in Cairo and Damascus. Her feminism, which derived force from her moral training but which also sprang from her own wide interests and achievements, made her question the acquiescence of other women in the assumption that their sex should be concerned exclusively with love

and marriage. She questioned this assumption in the novels of Charlotte Brontë as she did in the lives of women in the harem. Her contemporary Lucie Duff Gordon suggests in *Letters from Egypt* (1865) that Martineau's opinions blinded her to the humanity of the Egyptians, so that "the difference of manners is a sort of impassable gulf, the truth being that their feelings and passions are just like our own . . . [H]er attack upon harems [is] outrageous; she implies that they are brothels" (120-21). Undeniably, Martineau's puritanical streak jaundiced her view of the harems so invitingly depicted by her worldly eighteenth-century predecessor, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. At the same time, I disagree with Duff Gordon that Martineau failed to see an important reality of women's lives in the Middle East of the last century. Her analysis of the relationship between slavery, polygamy, and the harem is acute. She never implies that a harem is literally a brothel, but Duff Gordon is correct if she means that to Martineau the distinction between concubinage and prostitution would be slight.

Martineau's prudery seems to mark her as a insular traveler, as when she dismisses Egyptian female dancing as a "disagreeable and foolish wriggle" (250). Such remarks seem less arbitrary, however, if we see them as part of a larger reaction against what she saw as the over-sexualization of women's lives under the harem system. By any account, the structure of the harem defines women as sexual property and discourages them from the pursuit of learning that might allow them to redefine themselves. "[T]he only idea of their whole lives," Martineau complains, "is that which, with all our interests and engagements, we consider too prominent with us . . . . There cannot be a woman of them all who is not dwarfed and withered in mind and soul by being kept wholly engrossed with that one interest" (263-64). Not all readers will share Martineau's apparent lack of interest in sex, but some will pause thoughtfully over her assertion that the master's eunuchs, who are both his slaves and surrogates, not only bully the women of the harem but frequently establish emotional and physical intimacy with them (265). If this is true—and Huda Shaarawi attests to the bullying part at least (39-40)—harem women are rehearsed endlessly in their role as sexual possessions, and to think of the harem as separate female space becomes impossible.

Sex aside, one sees how the intrepid Martineau, who wrote books on economics, traveled in barbarous America, and ironed her clothes in the desert, would suffer under the passivity of harem life. She writes of a visit among women who assume that, like themselves, she has nothing but time: "To sit hour after hour on the deewán, without any exchange of ideas, having our clothes examined . . . and being gazed at by a half-circle of girls in brocade and shawls . . . is as wearisome an experience as one meets with in foreign lands" (263). To make matters worse, Martineau, like Florence Nightingale after her, must put up with the condescension of harem women who fail to understand that her unmarried, independent status is voluntary: "Everywhere they pitied us European women heartily, that we had to go about traveling, and appearing in the streets without being properly taken care of,—that is, watched" (263). If Martineau seems sensitive on this point, she had probably been similarly pitied at home, where even most Englishwomen were not as self-reliant as



she. When she defends women's interests, however, she is thinking not only of herself; one of my favorite passages, expressing concern with Middle-Eastern women's digestions, calls for the introduction of jump ropes into the harem (269). More important, and this argues against the insularity of her views, Martineau contrasts "the cheerful, modest countenance of the Nubian girl busy about her household tasks" in primitive Upper Egypt with "the dull and gross face of the handmaid of the harem" in civilized Cairo. What matters to Martineau, in contrast to Warburton, Kinglake, Nightingale, and Lear, is the practical freedom and social usefulness the woman enjoys, rather than her physical attractiveness or conventional femininity. That Martineau describes as modest a woman who was probably half-naked is significant.

In spite of claiming to find Milnes's *Palm Leaves* to be a beautiful poem, Martineau effectively challenges the assumptions of Western supporters of the harem. Watching the antics of eunuchs, wives, and concubines who might have been monogamous and free in Nubia, she realizes that two systems of oppression can support each other, that "slavery and polygamy . . . can clearly never be separated" (265). She follows up the implications of Montesquieu's defense of polygamy, that Middle-Eastern men must be allowed amiable companions in addition to child brides, by suggesting that society think of marriage in terms of companionship to begin with and that women be educated appropriately (266). She answers those "cosmopolitan" philosophers who view the harem system as intrinsic to Middle-Eastern culture that "[i]t is as pure a conventionalism as our representative monarchy, or German heraldry, or Hindoo caste," and so not above reform (264). Her most irrefutable argument, however, may be implicit in her description of a visit to a Damascus harem:

But the great amusement was my ear trumpet. The eldest widow . . . put it to her ear; when I said "Bo!" When she had done laughing, she put it into her next neighbor's ear, and said "Bo!" and in this way it came round to me again. But in two minutes, it was asked for again, and went round a second time—everybody laughing as loud as ever at each "Bo!"—and then a third time! (268)

Seclusion in the harem has not liberated these women from patriarchal structures; it has infantilized them.

Martineau is a moralist rather than an epicurean, not only in her response to the condition of Middle-Eastern women, but also in her approach to writing, which is journalistic rather than artistic. Her counterpart, Lucie Duff Gordon, more subtly blends an ability to entertain not unlike Kinglake's with a desire to inform the English people about the situation in Egypt, where in the 1860's a corrupt government was starving and conscripting the peasants in order to support French projects. Duff Gordon, once described by Kinglake as "so intellectual, so keen, so autocratic, sometimes even so impassioned in speech, that nobody feeling her powers could go on feebly comparing her to a . . . mere Queen or Empress" (Ross 7), wields in *Letters from Egypt* the aristocratic tolerance of one whose London house was open to writers and parliamentarians and who, as a German translator, helped to support her noble but poor hus-

band. She values the forms of courtesy, but overlooks infractions of puritanical religious and sexual codes. Her comment on traditional Egyptian dancing, rather unusual for a Victorian, is that the dancer "moved her breasts by some extraordinary muscular effort, first one and then the other; they were just like pomegranates and gloriously independent of stays or any support" (115).

If her worldliness helps Duff Gordon cross the gap between Western and Eastern manners, however, she is not merely one of Martineau's fashionable cosmopolitans. Tuberculosis impelled her to live in sun-baked Nubia from 1862 until her death in 1869. She makes a cross-cultural passage, in the Forsterian sense, living among her Egyptian servants in Luxor, nursing the people, and vindicating Islamic customs in the letters collected and published in 1865. Although she remains Christian and faithful to her absent husband, her identification with Egyptian culture and irritation with Western prejudices prevent her from judging the harem system according to external standards. She tells the story of a Turkish man who, when teased by an Englishman for having several wives, replies

"Pray, how many women have you, who are quite young, seen (that is the Eastern phrase) in your whole life?" The Englishman could not count—of course not. "Well, young man, I am old, and was married at twelve, and I have seen in all my life seven women; four are dead, and three are happy and comfortable in my house. *Where are all yours?*" (101)

Candidly admitting the polygamous behavior of men in both West and East, Duff Gordon here prefers the Islamic system as more responsible and less hypocritical.

This judgment, however, does not address the consequences of the harem system, beyond physical security, for women. Duff Gordon's privileged position in rural Egyptian society may partly account for her distance from this question, especially during the earlier part of her sojourn, before she had visited a harem in Cairo. Although she lived very simply, she held a position of respect in local society. The villagers accepted that, as a foreigner, she would go unveiled and associate with the most learned men, sheiks and magistrates. She confesses her attitude towards the women's society when she writes of a French journalist's visit as "a very agreeable interlude to the Arab prosiness, or rather *enfantillage*, on the part of the women" (203). Even in England male society lauded Duff Gordon as the exception, the "manfully-minded" woman, in George Meredith's phrase (xv). Such a progressive woman, however, could not remain unmindful of the difficulties facing all women in the nineteenth century, and Duff Gordon, having made clear her advocacy of Egyptian culture, shows in later passages her concern for the victims of its sexual double standard. When the crew finds a woman's body off her houseboat on the Nile, the pilot explains, "'most likely she has blackened her father's face, and he has been forced to strangle her, poor man.' I said 'Alas!' and the Reis continued, 'ah, yes, it is a heavy thing, but a man must whiten his face'" (239). When she finally visits a Turkish harem in Cairo, she concedes that the first wife must find it "rather a bore to have to educate little girls for her husband's use" (333). "Alas" and



"rather a bore" do not sound like harsh condemnations—she saves those for French-Egyptian politics—but given her urbane view of foreign marital customs, the phrases carry weight.

Duff Gordon knows how to praise when she sees another woman who has lifted herself above social expectations. She says of a Cairene widow:

I am filled with admiration at her good sense and courage. She has determined to carry on her husband's business of letting boats herself, and to educate her children to the best of her power in habits of independence. I hope she will be successful, and receive the respect such rare conduct in a Turkish woman deserves from the English. (235-36)

Fascinating to compare with previously mentioned passages describing traditionally unfeminine Middle-Eastern women is Duff Gordon's account of an "eccentric" Arab woman traveling through a Nile village

dressed like a young man, but small and feminine and rather pretty, except that one eye was blind . . . . I was told—indeed, I could hear—that her language was beautiful, a thing much esteemed among Arabs. She is a virgin and fond of travelling and of men's society, being very clever, so she has her dromedary and goes about quite alone. No one seemed surprised, no one stared, and when I asked if it was *proper*, our captain was surprised. "Why not? If she does not wish to marry, she can go alone; if she does, she can marry—what harm? She is a virgin and free." (110)

Duff Gordon's account of this wealthy, militant, and free virgin transcends the sexual criteria that underlie Kinglake's gallantry, Warburton's cynicism, and Nightingale's horror of the unfeminine. Most characteristic of all, she takes the opportunity to compliment the Egyptians for accepting one who has escaped the harem system.

In an article admitting how poorly the English can behave in the East, E. M. Forster salutes Duff Gordon for transcending race prejudice (244). She is not discussed by the anti-orientalist critics mentioned above. Obviously, neither Duff Gordon's cultural openness, Kinglake's irony, nor Martineau's abolitionist commitment provides a rationale for Victorian England's imperialist activities in the Middle East. Perhaps, even, by traveling to and writing critically about the region these writers contributed to that British sense of ascendancy so advantageous to imperial ventures. I feel, however, now that critics of imperialism and Orientalism have established the connections between Victorian politics and travel literature, that politics and literature may be separated somewhat again. Our political analysis continuously evolves, and from where I sit Martineau's *Eastern Life* addresses the global issue of the oppression of women, whereas Said's *Orientalism* and Alloula's *The Harem* exhibit a male bias: in Said's discussion of Arab sexuality as a revolutionary force, his representative Arab is male (311-16); Alloula worries about how Western men, by gazing at forbidden Algerian women, displace Algerian male society (122). The point is that, dangerous as Victorian travel books may seem in the

mass, the best of them contribute individual versions of cultural history that may be read in numerous ways. Kinglake's *Eothen* and Duff Gordon's *Letters from Egypt* even may be read, with a clear conscience, for pleasure.

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## The "Condition of England Question": *Past and Present* and *Bleak House*

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Dickens's debt to Carlyle for the social criticism which informs his novels of the early 1850s is generally acknowledged. The novelist's friendship with and great respect for the "Prophet of Chelsea" is well-documented (there have been two book-length studies on the subject), and he remained an ardent admirer even after the appearance in 1850 of Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, which repelled many with its reactionary virulence. The question of one author's influence over another is always a difficult one, and is no less problematical in this case for all that is known about the closeness of Dickens and Carlyle. A more rewarding line of inquiry is a comparative study, a search for clues of parallel modes of thinking, for ideas in both authors that show them reacting in common against an issue that caught their mutual attention (in this case the "influence" is society's over both men rather than that of one man over the other). Still, a careful study of *Bleak House*, the first installments of which began to appear in 1852, and Carlyle's *Past and Present*, published almost ten years earlier in 1843, turns up a startling number of thematic and stylistic similarities. Whether or not these similarities demonstrate Carlyle's influence over Dickens, at the very least they offer powerful evidence of commonly held ideas and habits of thinking, evidence as strong as the wealth of biographical information about their friendship.

At the core of both *Bleak House* and *Past and Present* is the bold assertion that the institutions which are supposed to hold English society together have failed miserably to do so. The pervasiveness of this failure is shocking: Dickens exposes the paralysis of the court system, the misguided notions that lie behind philanthropy, and the specious character of evangelical Christianity. Carlyle levels a finger at money-worship, the irresponsibility of an idle aristocracy, and the shallowness of the entire political system. Even such basic social institutions as the family are shown by Dickens to have atrophied, as in the case of the Jellyby household, brought to squalor by Mrs. Jellyby's philanthropic hobby-horse.

For a solution to the decay of these institutions Carlyle and Dickens look to the individual rather than society as a whole. Carlyle demonstrates the nobility and effectiveness of honest work through the historical example of a twelfth-century abbot at the monastery of Bury St. Edmunds, whose devotion to his brothers makes their "institution" a thriving one. Dickens illustrates the same principle with such characters as Esther Summerson and Allan Woodcourt, whose efforts as individuals counteract much of the spoilage of Britain's social institutions. It is this belief in the power of the individual that saves *Past and Present* and *Bleak House* from utter pessimism.

Not only is Dickens's message much the same as Carlyle's, but his *delivery* of it is Carlylean. The pulpit rhetoric of Carlyle's style, termed the "prophetic vocative" by William Oddie (34), shows up frequently in *Past and Present*: "In the centre of the world-whirlwind, verily now as in the oldest

days, dwells and speaks a God. The great soul of the world is just. O brother, can it be needful now . . . to remind thee of such a fact? . . . (14). Dickens's third person narrative voice, who alternates with Esther in telling the story, often uses such language. At one point the narrator proclaims that the putrescence of Tom-all-Alone's, the lane of property which is tied up in Chancery Court, "shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. Verily, what with tainting, plundering, and spoiling, Tom has his revenge" (553). An important aspect of Carlyle's "preaching" voice in *Past and Present* is his use of repetition to underscore a point; hence, the repeated references to the "cash-payment nexus" and "Mammon worship" (to cite two of the best-known Carlylisms). Dickens employs a similar kind of sermonizing repetition with stunning effect in order to place the blame of the death of poor Jo, the crossing sweeper, on English society as a whole: the boy is

Dead, your majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women born with heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day. (572)

The institution which Dickens condemns as the most egregious in its shortcomings is, of course, Chancery Court, where the suit of Jarndyce and Jarndyce has ground on for years. In the opening chapter of the novel, his description of the physical aspects of the Court itself becomes a metaphor for its sluggishness and its stultifying effect on all who come into contact with it: the members of the bar are "running their goat-hair and horse-hair warded heads against walls of words," while the solicitors generate "mountains of costly nonsense" (6). Dickens stresses the lack of humanity in the Court by continual references to its members as wigs and silk gowns (reminiscent of Carlyle's "Philosophy of Clothes" in *Sartor Resartus*, in which clothes are potent symbols of men and ideas). While Chancery Court is not the central evil of Carlyle's concern in *Past and Present*, he makes significant reference to it. He quotes his friend Sauerteig (a fictitious German author), who finds in Chancery Court an emblem for the way the English squander life rather than show a proper reverence for it: "A Chancery Lawsuit: justice, nay justice in mere money, denied a man, for all his pleading, till twenty, till forty years of his life are gone in seeking it" (126). The figurative language Carlyle uses to condemn the muddle of the legal system—"Oceans of horse-hair, continents of parchment" (16)—plainly anticipates Dickens's "horse-hair warded heads" and "mountains of costly nonsense." Even Jarndyce's coinage of "Wiglomeration" to describe the tangled proceedings the Court seems to have been prefigured by Carlyle's description of justice "amid such mountains of wiggeries and folly" (134).

One of Dickens's most effective tools for criticizing Chancery Court is his parody of the Lord of Chancery in the



figure of Krook, the rag and bone shop proprietor whose foul and cluttered "court" is a disturbing mirror image of Chancery. Krook's grotesque demise by spontaneous combustion suggests the strength of Dickens's anger and frustration with the legal system: he seems to be calling for a similar symbolic purge by conflagration in Chancery itself. Carlyle was fond of using the imagery of fire to demonstrate the need for change and the annihilation of outworn institutions. In *Sartor Resartus*, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh calls his "Spiritual New-birth" a "Baphometric Fire-baptism" to emphasize the intensity of the experience (128). And although George Ford identifies the many references to fire in the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* as a source of inspiration for Krook's peculiar death (117), another possible source is the warning in *Past and Present* about the danger of quacks: "Why do not all just citizens rush, half-frantic, to stop him, as they would a conflagration?" (93). Krook, a lesser quack symbolizing the greatest of quacks in *Bleak House*, actually becomes a "conflagration," fulfilling Carlyle's warning about the danger posed by such charlatans.

Dickens's criticism of the institution of philanthropy is scarcely less caustic than his assault on Chancery. He deplores the practice of "telescopic philanthropy" (33), that is, devoting time and money to causes that are continents away, rather than taking care of the distressed and impoverished at home. The charitable organizations which commonly met at Exeter Hall in London were guilty of this practice and were a vulnerable target for Carlyle's pen. In his strictures against their attentions to the poor of Africa and the West Indies, he often comes across as an unregenerate racist, but his concern with the issue is, like Dickens's, to point out the neglect of the homeless and hungry in England. Dickens identifies this terrible neglect early in *Bleak House*, describing how Jo the crossing sweeper

sits down to breakfast on the door-step of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts . . . . He admires the edifice, and wonders what it's all about. He has no idea, poor wretch, of the spiritual destitution of a coral reef in the Pacific; or what it costs to look up the precious souls among the cocoa-nuts and bread-fruit. (198-99)

Mrs. Jellyby, who devotes all her energies to the cultivation of coffee for "the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger" (38), is described by A. E. Dyson as a character who "might have been specially designed to please" Carlyle (175). Hers is a decidedly severe case of farsightedness: her eyes seem to Esther as if "they could see nothing nearer than Africa" (37). In her zeal for her cause she ignores not only the poor of England, but also the basic needs of her own family. Her pet charity is just the sort of enterprise which raises Carlyle's ire in *Past and Present*: "These Yellow-coloured [the English poor], for the present absorb my sympathies: if I had a Twenty Millions, with Model-farms and Niger Expeditions, it is to these that I would give it!" (275).

The money-worship which seems in Carlyle's opinion to have enslaved England is an illness which has infected many of the characters of *Bleak House*. In addressing this phenomenon of "Mammonism" Dickens turns from contemplating institutions to examine individuals. As Blair G.

Kenney notes, this Mammonism "is a moral filth perpetrated by certain people whom both authors [Carlyle and Dickens] indict: not the guilt of a system, but of individual human beings, the worshipers of Mammon . . ." (38). Just as Carlyle asserts that money-getting has replaced Christianity as the religion of England, Dickens interprets the moneylender Smallweed's obsession with money as a religion: "The name of this old pagan's God was Compound Interest. He lived for it, married it, died of it" (257). Tulkinghorn's dogged pursuit on the trail of Lady Dedlock's secret brands him with the mark of Mammon, for the precious interests of his legal clients which he is so fierce to guard are at bottom his own interests. His selfishness has made his soul dead to any sense of humanity or fellow-feeling. In what could well serve as a character portrait of Tulkinghorn, Carlyle declares that "To a deadened soul, seared with the brute idolatry of Sense, to whom going to Hell is equivalent to not making money, all 'promises,' and moral duties, that cannot be pleaded for in Courts of Requests, address themselves in vain" (149). It is essentially Mammonism which makes Chancery such a monstrosity, since the settlement of wills is its business. Just as money-worship is what drives such parasites of the Court as the lawyer Vholes, it is Mammonism to which such thralls of the Court as Richard Carstone succumb.

Christianity, displaced by money-worship as the religion of England, has in Dickens's view become just as self-serving as Mammonism, judging from the examples of the evangelical Mr. Chadband and Mrs. Pardiggle. As Jo so astutely observes shortly before his death, "Mr. Chadbands he was a prayin wunst at Mr. Sangsby's and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he was speakin' to his-self, and not to me" (571). Chadband's habit of "piling verbose flights of stairs" (237) stands in direct opposition to the virtuous silence of the hero of *Past and Present*, the Abbot Samson. He demonstrates his religion by simple devotion to his work, not by spouting slogans. As Carlyle notes, "is not this comparative silence of Abbot Samson as to his religion, precisely the healthiest sign of him and of it?" (119). Mrs. Pardiggle is no better than Chadband: swishing sanctimoniously into the squalid hut of a brickmaker's family, she reveals that she is more concerned with whether they have been to church, or whether they have read any of her tracts, than with their well-being. Unlike Samson who goes about his tasks in silence, Mrs. Pardiggle proclaims proudly to the poor family that "I enjoy hard work; and the harder you make it, the better I like it" (98). Chadband and Pardiggle are fitting illustrations of Carlyle's complaint in *Past and Present* that evangelical Christianity is "at bottom, but a new phasis of *Egoism* . . ." (119).

The class of people in the best position to reform England's social institutions, the aristocracy, is in the view of both Carlyle and Dickens an idle class. Far from wishing to reform Chancery, Sir Leicester Dedlock thinks of it "as a something, devised in conjunction with a variety of other somethings, by the perfection of human wisdom, for the eternal settlement . . . of everything"; and he is "of a fixed opinion, that to give sanction of his countenance to any complaints respecting it, would be to encourage some person in the lower classes to rise up somewhere . . ." (16). The apathy of this view would hardly qualify Sir Leicester for Carlyle's



much-longed-for "Aristocracy of Talent" in *Past and Present* (32). The social circle of the Dedlock's embodies the dilettantism which Carlyle deplors as the most prominent feature of the British aristocracy. As Michael Goldberg justly observes, "Dickens' portrait of the influential Chesney Wold set with its political sinecures and outmoded attitudes is scrupulously consistent with Carlyle's picture of the same social group in *Past and Present*" (68). The portrait Dickens paints of the Dedlocks is not wholly unsympathetic: Lady Dedlock's plight and the cruel measure of punishment she receives for her "sin" of conceiving Esther out of wedlock are genuinely tragic and moving. Her fall seems nonetheless a fulfillment of Carlyle's prophecy of the precarious state the idle aristocracy will come to: "A High Class without duties is like a tree planted on precipices; from the roots of which all the earth has been crumbling" (180).

The idea of a "do-nothing" aristocracy also lies behind two ostensibly comic characters in *Bleak House*, Harold Skimpole and "Deportment" Turveydrop. Skimpole, who has made a profession out of dilettantism, illustrates in caricature the pernicious effects of a parasitic aristocracy. In *Past and Present* Carlyle lashes out at those who embrace the Skimpolian philosophy: can there live a man content, he asks, "to sit serene . . . and have all his work and battling done by other men? . . . here *he* sits; professes, not in sorrow but in pride, that he and his have done no work, time out of mind" (180). Dickens strengthens the case against Skimpole by showing his considerable role in the ruin of Richard Carstone. He "borrows" money from him until Richard is impoverished, and then he introduces him to the insidious Mr. Vholes, who finishes the task of killing off the poor youth. Old Turveydrop has the same comic veneer as Skimpole, but he has an equally odious character underneath. As Kenney remarks, "His 'deportment' is a shield for the exploitation of his frail son, who does all the work while Turveydrop lives on the money" (39). His preposterous display of old Regency dandyism is the perfect target for Carlyle's exhortation to "Descend, O Donothing Pomp; quit thy down-cushions; expose thyself to learn what wretches feel, and how to cure it!" (181).

Carlyle views the burgeoning class of industrialists as a potential savior for the nation, as a kind of replacement for the apathetic aristocracy. Rouncewell the ironmaster in *Bleak House* is a representative of this new class, a self-made man who becomes an active advocate for reform in the political system. But just as Carlyle observes that the "Millo-crazy" is still "steeped too deep in mere ignoble Mammonism, and as yet all unconscious of its noble destinies" (174), Dickens indicates that Rouncewell's entry into politics for the party opposing Sir Leicester's may have arisen from the same selfish motive which drives the Baronet—that of seeking control over others. Rouncewell's opposition to his son's marrying a girl of the servant class even though his mother comes from that same class implies that he has adopted the superficial values of the aristocracy, the class which, according to Carlyle, his kind is supposed to displace, not emulate.

Rouncewell's new-found class-consciousness is one example of a growing tendency toward social stratification that led people to deny their human bond to those of *all* classes. Dickens makes a powerful case for the undeniable brotherhood of all mankind by having Jo unwittingly infect

Esther and Lady Dedlock with his sickness. The depiction of disease spreading from the lowest to the highest level of society as a proof of this brotherhood hearkens back to *Past and Present*. Carlyle tells the story of the poor Irish widow in Scotland whose typhus is spread to the neighbors who deny her:

The forlorn Irish Widow applies to her fellow creatures, as if saying, "Behold I am sinking, bare of help; ye must help me!" . . . They answer, "No; impossible: thou art no sister of ours." But she proves her sisterhood; her typhus-fever kills *them*: they actually were her brothers, though denying it! (151)

The pride which causes Lady Dedlock to deny *her* own "brothers" ironically leads to her ruin, for it forces her to seek out the grave of her lover Hawdon (Esther's father) surreptitiously with Jo as her guide, thus bringing her into contact with his disease. In a broader sense, this infectious retribution is part of Dickens's prophecy of the vengeance which the squalor of Tom-all-Alone's will wreak on society. Just as Carlyle points out that in terms of economy it would have been wise to save the widow (in order to save the others who succumb to her sickness), Dickens demonstrates the danger to society of telling outcasts like Jo to "move on" continually (559). By moving on, he manages to infect not only one of the highest on the social ladder, Lady Dedlock, but also those on the middle and lower rungs, Esther and Charley Neckett.

It is significant that Dickens casts Allan Woodcourt as the person who is most willing to help Jo; for in the story of the Irish widow, Carlyle has a "humane Physician" question the denial of the poor woman (151). Woodcourt, already distinguished as a doctor by his aid to fellow shipwreck victims in the Indian Ocean, actively seeks to heal Jo at the considerable risk of catching the disease himself. According to Kenney, this doctor fits the Carlylean hero pattern: "Woodcourt, whose role is that of the healer . . . is not unlike Carlyle's Abbot Samson who busied himself with practical work while he remained silent about his religion" (37). Esther, too, seems to fit this pattern. While her self-effacing manner has evoked disdain from some critics, her devotion to duty and disregard for her own happiness conform to the ideas of the hero propounded in *Past and Present*. Her position of humility is like Abbot Samson's role as his brothers' "servant . . . who can suffer from them, and for them" (94). Esther truly suffers for the cousins Richard Carstone and Ada Clare, and she suffers from Jo by her disfigurement from the pox. Carlyle views the pursuit of happiness as an impediment to a man's doing his duty: "The only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself about was, happiness enough to get his work done" (157). Thus Esther, though understandably saddened by the scarring effects of her illness, does not waste time bemoaning her fate, but rather is simply thankful that she "could go, please God, my lowly way along the path of duty . . ." (443). The true saviors of society, then, are not governing bodies or charitable institutions but selfless workers like Abbot Samson, Woodcourt, and Esther.

The stylistic and thematic similarities between *Past and Present* and *Bleak House*, even if they do not "prove" the influence of the one on the other, provide a strong case for the



congeniality of the authors' sensibilities. Some commentators have made an issue of Carlyle's occasional disparaging references to the novelist in order to question whether there really was any sympathy between their temperaments. The infamous reference to Dickens in *Past and Present* as "Schnuespel the distinguished Novelist" is often quoted out of context as evidence of Carlyle's contempt. But the passage in its entirety is actually an assertion that in a hero-less era, even the social role of a popular novelist like Dickens, "though small, is something" (60). The passage implies that Dickens might put his gift for the language to greater use than writing entertaining novels (and of course the social criticism that runs through them proves that he did). Part of Carlyle's purpose in *Past and Present* is to show ways that language can be put to more effective use. In the process of demonstrating this he exposes the factitious and fraudulent character of much writing and speechmaking, placing some of the blame for England's infirm state on "Saynothingism in Speech" (152). Professional jargon and affected styles of speaking block the progress of real action:

"No man in this fashionable London of Yours," friend Sauerteig would say, "speaks a plain word to me. Every man feels bound to be something more than plain; to be pungent withal, witty, ornamental. His poor fraction of sense has to be pricked into some epigrammatical shape, that it may prick me." (152)

Dickens takes up this indictment in his stinging exposure of the shallow language of the law profession. The florid, ornate

language of "Conversation Kenge" and the convoluted law speech of Guppy reflect the insincerity of the legal world. If, as Carlyle proposes, "Insincere Speech, truly, is the prime material of insincere action" (153), then the remedy appears to lie in the kind of quiet devotion to duty that leads to *sincere* action, as seen in the heroes of *Past and Present* and *Bleak House*.

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## Oliver Twisted: Narrative and Doubling in Dickens's Second Novel

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In *Oliver Twist* many of the themes Dickens would dwell upon in his later, more mature works (the plight of the poor, orphans and inheritance, the angel/harlot opposition, the urban labyrinth) already appear in embryonic, but not completely undeveloped, form. In addition to these, there is an emergent interest in psychology and motivation which has not always been remarked. By working through clues provided by one of the embedded narratives in this novel (indeed, embedded narratives themselves grow in importance in the later works; cf. Little Dorrit's fairy tale of the Princess and the Little Woman) it is possible to construct a reading that takes into account many facets of the typically convoluted plot, and to see Dickens, even this early in his career, addressing the problems of psychological complexity which would obsess him throughout his works.

To note an importance in brief narratives embedded in the larger structures of novels is nothing new. From the Man of the Hill's "History" in *Tom Jones* to the numerous units of *The Golden Notebook*, these miniature tales usually provide some sort of object lesson for a protagonist and can sometimes, as with Kafka's "Parable of the Law" in *The Trial*, give the reader cues for understanding larger thematic and organizing structures in the major narrative. *Oliver Twist* is a novel rife with such narratives, so full of them, indeed, that Albert Hutter has remarked that "the dominant activity of the book is storytelling . . ." (3).<sup>1</sup>

The examples of this activity are many. Several critics have noted the use by Fagin of "a history of the lives and trials of great criminals" (196) to help corrupt Oliver; Charley Bates's greatest fear about the Artful Dodger's arrest is that

<sup>1</sup> Steven Connor echoes Hutter's conclusion, finding that the novel "is a narrative which concerns itself with narratives," and that it aligns these narratives

with "the regulation and legitimation of power, as well as with resistance to it" (3).



his past will "p'raps not be there at all" in the Newgate calendar (390), though he is reassured by Fagin that "we'll read it all in the papers" (391). Fagin's interest in narrating reappears during his last night alive, when, as he establishes the proper narrative of his sentencing,

he began to remember a few disjointed fragments of what the judge had said, though it had seemed to him, at the time, that he could not hear a word. These gradually fell into their proper places, and by degrees suggested more: so that in a little time he had the whole . . . To be hanged by the neck, till he was dead—that was the end. (468-69)

Even the orphans are referred to by Bumble as being "all in one story," in regard to Oliver's supposed criminal influence (173).

Narrative is of concern on an even larger scale when it is seen as the subject of the entire novel. The establishment or suppression of the history which preceded Oliver's birth, the narrative that will result in his establishment in society, is of paramount importance to several characters. "Let me hear your story," Mr. Brownlow says to Oliver early in the novel (146); three pages later Grimwig asks Brownlow, "And when are you going to hear a full, true, and particular account of the life and adventures of Oliver Twist?" echoing in his last seven words the sort of extended description which frequently graced the title pages of novels of the period (cf., for example, *The Personal History of David Copperfield*). As D. A. Miller points out, this is an effort "to articulate an original 'story' over the heterogeneous and lacunary data provided in the 'plot' . . . [which] will entitle [Oliver] to . . . a full integration into middle-class respectability" (132).

With such a consistent orientation around narratives and narrative processes, it is interesting that one prominent narrative, at the heart of the main story line, seems initially to have little to do with the rest of the novel and has been relatively ignored in the criticism. I refer to the story of Conkey Chickweed, told in Chapter 31 by the Bow Street officers, Blathers and Duff.

Related in what is ostensibly an attempt to aggrandize the reputation of Bow Street, the story concerns Chickweed, a publican who is robbed one night of 327 guineas in gambling receipts. He claims to have sighted and pursued the thief the night of the robbery and several times after, but to no avail. Finally Jem Spyers, an aptly named officer, is dispatched to the tavern to help in the event of future sightings. After two or three (Blathers is not sure) more wild goose chases, Spyers correctly accuses Chickweed of having robbed himself, with the goal of collecting "all manners of benefits and subscriptions" (279) which followed on the bankruptcy he suffered as a result of the robbery. This tale, Blathers exclaims, is "[b]etter than any novel book I ever see!" (278).

This narrative's value in the scheme of the book has been minimized by Philip Collins, who terms it a way in which Dickens "holds up the action for two pages . . ." (202), while

Miller, in his Foucauldian reading, sees it as an illustration of "the unity of both sides of the law in the delinquent context, the same unity that has allowed cop Blathers to call robber Chickweed 'one of the family'" (129). This seems to me to misread Blathers's comment and, as a result, to put perhaps too ideological a cap on the episode. Stephen Knight claims that the officers "play no crucial part in the plot or the implicit meaning of the novel" (18). And Arnold Kettle, finally, who sees the novel's greatest strength in its evocation of poverty, feels that the officers are

incidental "characters" . . . [who] have no part in the underlying pattern of the book and are therefore . . . without symbolic significance . . . merely eccentrics, comic relief, with all the limitations the phrase implies. (124)

What all these viewpoints have in common is that each sees the Chickweed narrative only as a unit to be interpreted in a narrowly literal way. Even Miller, who gives it the broadest reading, can use it only inasmuch as for him it is an example of a theme he detects in the novel as a whole. I would like to contend that this brief episode can be used as a method of interpreting key psychological themes in the novel, and that it provides a program for reading several important passages which follow soon after it.<sup>2</sup> As Northrop Frye has maintained a propos embedded narratives, they "establish the main story as one of a category of stories, giving it broader significance than it would have as an isolated story" (12). Blathers, whose name seems intended to refute any statement that might come out of his mouth, is nevertheless correct when he compares his story with a "novel-book," and is accurate too when he states that the Chickweed episode is a "piece of business like this," that is, resembling the peculiarities of Oliver's case (278).

In the chapter following the Chickweed narrative, Oliver and his protectors go to London to follow up on and substantiate his story. Their first stop is at Sikes's house, where Oliver had earlier been held captive. "That, sir, . . . That house!" he cries to Dr. Losberne (286), who subsequently kicks "at the door like a madman." He is answered by "a little ugly hump-backed man," who claims who have lived there for 25 years (287). Inside the house, "not a vestige of anything, animate or inanimate; not even the position of the cupboards; answered Oliver's description!" (287). By the end of the encounter, Losberne terms the man a "ridiculous old vampire," while the narrator calls him a "misshapen little demon" (287). Though the doctor goes on to promise "I shall find you out, some day, my friend" (287), the episode is never again dealt with in the novel.

This incompleteness poses a clear problem. Harry Stone sees the episode as a fault in the work: "[i]t is not necessary, and it is not explained" ("Fairy Tales" 38). Terming it a "loose end" (38), he views it as an example of Dickens's incomplete control over fairy-tale motifs at this point in his career. It might also be interpreted as an example of how "the excellent doctor had never acted upon anything but impulse all

<sup>2</sup> Connor also mentions the Chickweed narrative, but reads it as merely a way "to intimidate Losberne into revealing the truth . . ." (12). More importantly, Michal Ginsberg demonstrates the relevance of the Chickweed story to

Oliver's situation but reads the two together as a key to the novel's narratorial rhetoric (232-33).



through his life" (288); this quality is a drawback later in the novel when Rose is afraid to share Nancy's confidences with Losberne since she "was too well acquainted with that gentleman's impetuosity . . ." (367). I would suggest, however, that a clear parallel with the Chickweed story is also already taking shape, a parallel further established by episodes following closely upon this one.

The party's next stop in London is at Brownlow's; this too should serve to verify Oliver's story. Brownlow's house, though, is "To Let" (288), and Brownlow "gone to the West Indies, six weeks before" (289). Here we see Oliver not only coming up against another dead end in his quest for justice, but also the repetition of a phrase important earlier in his life, "To Let." This wording appears in relation to Oliver's expulsion from the orphanage early in the novel when, at the close of Chapter 3, "the public were once more informed that Oliver Twist was again To Let, and that five pounds would be paid to anybody who would take possession of him" (68). It will later prove fruitful to note here that Oliver was at that point understood by those "letting" him "to be under the exclusive patronage and protection of the powers of wickedness, and an article direct from the manufactory of the Devil himself" (60), and that Brownlow's house bears this subtle hint of Oliver's origins.

The third important episode appears soon after the others. This is the incident at the end of Chapter 34 in which Oliver wakes from a dream about Fagin's quarters to find Fagin and Monks looking at him through the window of the Maylies' rural cottage. Oliver has, at this point, been involved in what the narrator describes, in a famous and mystical passage, as

a kind of sleep that steals upon us sometimes, which, while it holds the body prisoner, does not free the mind from a sense of things about it, and enable it to ramble at its pleasure . . . It is an undoubted fact, that although our senses of touch and sight be for the time dead, yet our sleeping thoughts, and the visionary scenes that pass before us, will be influenced, and materially influenced, by the mere silent presence of some external object; which may not have been near us when we closed our eyes: and of whose vicinity we have had no waking consciousness. (309)

This is worth noting since when Oliver first encounters Monks, shortly before this episode: "[t]he circumstance did not dwell in his recollection long . . . for when he reached the cottage, there was enough to occupy his mind, and to drive all considerations of self completely from his memory" (298). This is in odd and suggestive contrast to the fact that, after the earlier encounter with the hunchback, Oliver could not forget it, "waking or sleeping . . . for months afterwards" (287).

These passages all suggest an unusual psychological dimension to the encounters which they concern. The pursuits and dead ends are in close connection with dream states and

with "considerations of self." But this is to get ahead of the conclusion of the Fagin/Monks episode. After Oliver awakens and alerts "the inmates of the house" (311), the villains cannot be found. "The search was all in vain," the narrator reports, with "not even the traces of recent footsteps, to be seen" (312). An interesting echo occurs at this point as the doctor refers to the strangeness of the incident by remarking that "Blathers and Duff, themselves, could make nothing of it" (313).

This is another passage which Stone finds faulty, claiming that here "with the unmarked ground—surely an indication that Fagin and Monks are not simply metaphorical demons but real devils—[Dickens] makes storybook enlargement subvert his central realism" ("Fairy Tales" 38). The failure Stone sees, like Kettle's criticism of Blathers and Duff, lies again with an insistence that the novel be understood as fundamentally realistic. What I would like to propose, in order to make sense not only of the Chickweed story but also of the episodes I have just been considering, is that the novel be viewed not as realistic (in the sense of concrete mimetic correspondence to reality), but rather as a psychological investigation revolving around the understanding of Oliver and his half brother Monks as doubles, the two halves of a split self.

Such a view can be arrived at by seeing Oliver's pursuits of various figures after the Chickweed narrative as being a mirror image of that narrative. This assumes, then, some stain of guilt in Oliver's lamb-like innocence, even though Dickens refers to the child in the novel's "Preface" as "the principle of Good" (33). If Oliver is said to be pursuing others in an attempt to draw suspicion of responsibility for his lot away from himself, it is clear that we cannot organize such a reading along the paths of realism. There is quite literally no point in the book at which blame can be attached to Oliver for what is happening to him.<sup>3</sup> But, if a more surreal psychological reading is pursued, the responsible half of a split psyche can be relegated to Monks, who is, after all, instrumental both in suppressing and establishing Oliver's true status in society.

It might be charged at this point that such a reading imputes too great a psychological ingeniousness to the young Dickens. A digression into his use of doubles in the other two autobiographical novels (*David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*) and his interests in mesmerism may help to show how such a reading of *Oliver Twist* is possible.

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Barry Westburg argues for seeing *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations* as a trilogy of sorts. "Some buried, personal 'text,'" he feels, "no doubt stood behind *Oliver Twist*, which later became the pre-text for *David Copperfield*, which, in its turn, became the pre-text for *Great Expectations*" (xvi). With this view in mind, the use of doubling in the two later novels might logically be seen as demanding some embryonic appearance in the earlier work.

In *David Copperfield* it has become commonplace to see the relationship between David and Steerforth as involving

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that such a reading has never been proposed. In his "The Hero-Villain of *Oliver Twist*," Jonathan Bishop suggests that Oliver commits an "original 'crime' of seizing life at the expense of his mother's death" (16).

Bishop fits this reading into a Freudian interpretation which settles on Oliver as "an extension of Sikes's body" and the housebreaking as a vindictive rape fantasy (16).



some sort of psychological projection (largely concerning Em'ly and Rosa Dartle) through which, as Westburg puts it, Steerforth "lives out David's desire for aggressive adult sex and pays for it, leaving David with clean hands and innocent memories" (88). This is in accord with E. Pearlman, who notes that "David would do what Steerforth can do" (402). Pearlman goes farther than Westburg, however, by pointing also to Uriah Heep as a figure sharing psychological connections with David. In this wise, "Heep is freighted with the baser elements of human nature which are apparently missing from David's character" (392).

This relationship can be pointed to at several critical points in the novel (Pearlman analyzes David's dreams in Chapters 16 and 35) but is perhaps most clear in Chapter 25, "Good and Bad Angels." It is here that Heep is loaded with a number of Satanic, bad angel, characteristics, among them Agnes's charge that "[h]e is subtle and watchful" (429), and David's references to his "shadowless red eyes, which looked as if they had scorched their lashes off," "a snaky undulation pervading his frame" (437), "his splay foot" (439), and a final "leaden dread, as if I had had some meaner quality of devil for a lodger" (443).

It is no coincidence that all this appears in conjunction with Heep's interest in Agnes, an attraction he credits to David's once having said "that everybody must admire her" (438). Toward the scene's close David claims that Heep

seemed to swell and grow before my eyes; the room seemed full of the echoes of his voice; and the strange feeling (to which, perhaps, no one is quite a stranger) that all this had occurred before, at some indefinite time, and that I knew what he was going to say next, took possession of me. (441)

As in the passage from *Oliver Twist* concerning the dream about Fagin and Monks, the fantastic description here tips the reader off to the unusual psychological activity taking place in the protagonist. And again, such activity revolves around the presence of an evil figure threatening, yet in some way related, to him.

The relationship between David and Heep in regard to Agnes is further tied up in this chapter by David's mention, at the start, that an opening line for the letter of apology he is writing to Agnes "associated itself with the fifth of November . . ." (425), and his noting, later, that Heep is wearing "a great Guy Fawkes pair of gloves" (436). This shared conspiratorial aspect seals the psychological bond between the characters and gives credence to Pearlman's assertion that "Uriah Heep represents what David fears he is or might become; Steerforth, briefly, stands for what David wishes to be, but can neither achieve nor reject" (393).

In *Great Expectations*, tighter and more compact than *David Copperfield* in many ways, psychological doubling works in a more simplified, yet no less probing, fashion. The parallels between Pip and Orlick in this work have been well remarked, most notably by Julian Moynihan in an article written in 1960. Working from the repeated assertions of guilt which Pip makes, Moynihan finds in Orlick a second self for Pip who seems to act for the protagonist's darker desires. Parallels show up repeatedly: the two work together, Orlick

assaults Pip's sister (while the discovery of the crime leads Pip to consider, "I was at first disposed to believe that I must have had some hand in the attack" [147]), both are intimately involved with Satis House, and both act as partisans for convicts (Moynihan 65). There are also, of course, Orlick's involvement in Pumblechook's assault (which follows Pip's early desire to see him dead), and "his dancing at Bidley" (159), whom Pip himself designs to marry (a correspondence which lines up closely with the David / Agnes / Heep triangle until Joe Gargery intervenes).

Moynihan finally feels that Orlick "has only existed, essentially, as an aspect of the hero's own far more problematic case" (73). Harry Stone echoes this reading, calling the doubling part of "a fairy-tale Gestalt," but goes further. For him Orlick is "in psychological terms a projection of Pip's darker self"; but, "in cosmic terms a manifestation of nascent evil" ("Fire" 667,674). Here, as with Heep, the use of the double transcends the ordinary events of the narrative and becomes correspondent to a nearly allegorical rendering of cosmic forces.

Though Moynihan and Stone both argue convincingly (their evidence, indeed, seems conclusive), their cases have been maligned. Elizabeth Drew, writing in 1963, complains that

Recent criticism . . . makes a good deal of [Orlick] as . . . the embodiment of evil in Pip's own nature . . . but this particular kind of psychological subtlety seems quite foreign to Dickens. (203)

Drew errs when she terms such a treatment "subtlety." To imply that a suspicion of the subconscious in a mid-nineteenth-century writer is overly ingenious is to ignore the frequency of this sort of motif in many Victorian novels. It is not always accomplished, to be sure, through the use of the double, but other methods (such as the stag tapestry and the bow-window room in *Middlemarch*) occur readily enough. And Dickens, as Masao Miyoshi points out, regularly "deforms an individual into two or more parallel or contrasting characters," Pip being "the most outstanding example of surrogation" (269).

This literary "deformation" of one self into two or several has often been traced to the emergence of mesmeric theory in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was in the mesmeric trance that

unfamiliar impulses appeared, foreign to the patient's usual character, and as if revealing a second personality, which might be the reverse of the first; and the investigators concluded that these incongruous characteristics had lain dormant in some part of the mind inaccessible to the rational consciousness. (Tymms 26-27)

This idea of a dualism of self was then exploited through the figure of the double; the subconscious could be projected onto a separate character. Tymms remarks Dickens's use of the double in two works, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, commenting that in the former it is "comparatively insignificant," and in the latter it is "characteristic of the non-psychological approach of the time, presenting a somber



variant of the farce of mistaken identity" (87). Tymms's work, however, was published in 1949; in the time since, as we have seen, readers have generally been more open to the complexity of Dickens's psychological approach.

Fred Kaplan, in his important study *Dickens and Mesmerism*, first traced the importance of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century psychological theory and practice for Dickens's fiction. Kaplan shows that Dickens was reading avidly about mesmerism as early as January, 1834 (5); that he attended Mesmeric demonstrations as early as January, 1838 (3); and that he referred to mesmeric theory in his works as early as in "Our Parish" from *Sketches by Boz* (1836) (109). All these dates place Dickens's interest in mesmerism firmly around the years during which he was working on *Oliver Twist*, 1836 through 1838.

Kaplan insistently links doubling to mesmerism in Dickens's works, claiming a centrality for the device "beginning with *Oliver Twist*" (119). For Kaplan this doubling frequently results in the individual's being "split into two parts, two separate characters in the plot, two parts of a single larger metaphor" (119). It is in this passage, and one later in his work where he refers to Oliver and Monks as "split aspects of a single self" (153), that Kaplan becomes (to my knowledge) the first and only critic to countenance this bond.

The relationship of the half brothers falls perfectly into line with what Kaplan refers to elsewhere as "partial doubles," wherein one character "represents an opposite or a similar aspect of the other," to whom he or she may be "related biologically"; both are "in some way important to the novel in which they appear" (127). If we then consider the statement that "Oliver's expectations for the future have been suppressed by the heavy mulch of his past" (Kaplan 160), we see Monks coming into play not only as the suppressor of an inheritance (which we know him for a fact to be), but also as the past itself, an integral and blighted aspect of Oliver's own personality.

As we return to the novel, this digression should serve to underline at least two important considerations concerning Dickens's psychological use of character. The first is that a doubling relationship between Oliver and Monks is not unusual from the perspective of the autobiographical novels. In both *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* these relationships are important and, as we might expect, more refined than the one that appears in the earlier work. To be sure, the Oliver / Monks relationship does not follow the wish fulfillment model that both the Steerforth / David and the Pip / Orlick relationships do. Such complexity, I would argue, should at this stage in Dickens's career be neither expected nor sought.

As a second consideration, however, it must be admitted that the historical data concerning Dickens's knowledge and manipulation of mesmeric theory clearly shows that he had, by the time he wrote *Oliver Twist*, an understanding of—and interest in—the mechanisms of the unconscious which do not preclude, but rather anticipate, doubling in this early work.

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Even if this internal and external evidence for seeing the Oliver / Monks relationship as an example of doubling is admitted, the task of pointing out how and why such a relationship operates in the novel remains. As Tymms remarks (though perhaps overstating the case), Dickens is capable of utilizing doubles with relatively little significance resting on the dualism (the identical Flintwinch brothers in *Little Dorrit* are one such example). In *Oliver Twist*, though, more seems to be at work, and it involves, as I have suggested above, looking at the novel in what may be a far more surreal way than is customary.

This is not to deny, however, that several critics have noted the novel's unreality, not in the sense of literary apprenticeship, but in the febrile and quasi-allegorical nature of the work. Graham Greene states bluntly that "[i]t is a mistake to think of *Oliver Twist* as a realistic story," suggesting further that "we are lost in the interstices of one young, angry, gloomy brain . . ." (53). Elsewhere it has been said that the worlds of criminality and respectability in the novel "are twin sides of the same coin of fantasy," and that, since "[e]verything in the novel means something else . . . nobody and nothing exists merely in itself" (Bayley 51, 54). Finally Steven Marcus contends that "the force which both parties exert in their contention for Oliver seems as concentrated and intense as a nightmare or the struggle for a soul" (79).<sup>4</sup>

A struggle for a soul is precisely what occurs; it takes place between Oliver and Monks as the two sides of one psyche, and climaxes in two lengthy catechistic scenes at the novel's close. Before getting to this, however, it is helpful to see how Monks is discernibly tied to Oliver, how these two characters can be perceived as a split self.

One link between the two is obvious: it is their common blood. Both sons of Edward Leeford, they have a bond through paternity which is as inescapable as it is eventually undeniable. And Monks, as the eldest son, significantly shares his father's full name. On top of this, Monks demonstrates an uncanny ability to turn up in Oliver's path. Late in the novel, while talking to Rose Maylie, Nancy reveals that "'Monks . . . had seen [Oliver] with two of our boys on the day we first lost him, and had known him to be the same child that he was watching for, though I couldn't make out why'" (362). This describes the handkerchief theft of Chapter 10, where Oliver is significantly mistaken for a thief and taken up by Brownlow. This chain of events is referred to later by Fagin, as he affirms to Monks that "if it had never happened, you might never have clapped eyes upon the boy to notice him, and so led to the discovery that it was him you were looking for" (244).

Monks appears, then, at the moment when Oliver is first implicated in a criminal act in London. This appearance jibes with the suggestion that Monks has a tie to darker aspects of Oliver's psyche; it is almost as if he has been bodied forth by the mere suggestion that Oliver could be involved in crime and, thus, guilt. Though we remember that early on Oliver is

<sup>4</sup> The considerable number of readers who have been struck this way by the novel would also include Bishop, who suggests that the book's "exaggerations and coincidences have a dreamlike importance" (14), and Sylvia Manning,

who claims that "*Oliver Twist* is almost purely fantasy—in the sense of nightmare [sic] and wish-fulfillment—and the story is halted at the completion of its childish dream" (69).



suspected at the workhouse of being "under the exclusive patronage and protection of the powers of wickedness, and an article direct from the manufactory of the Devil himself" (60), it is Monks who is later addressed by Brownlow as a person "in whom all evil passions, vice, and profligacy, festered, till they found vent in a hideous disease which has made your face an index even to your mind" (439). About this disease more later; for the moment it is enough to see that there is a strong tie in the way that Oliver's character is misread, and Monks's read correctly.

Along with the chance crossing of paths at the London theft, a coincidence which sets the main plot machinery in motion, there are other important moments at which Oliver and Monks come into close proximity. One, already mentioned, is that during which Oliver encounters Monks in the country village. This meeting is obviously unplanned by either party, as Monks cries "What the devil's this? . . . Who would have thought it! Blast him, he'd start up from a marble coffin, to come in my way! . . . What are you doing here?" (297-98). The two are led again by fate into confrontation, this one ending, appropriately, with Monks "writhing and foaming, in a fit" (298).

This seeming attraction is overtly pointed to by Monks. When he and Fagin observe the sleeping Oliver shortly after the incident above, he asserts that

If a crowd of devils were to put themselves into his exact shape, and he stood among them, there is something that would tell me how to point him out. If you buried him fifty feet deep, and took me across his grave, I fancy I should know, if there wasn't a mark above it, that he lay buried there. Wither his flesh, I should! (309)

Here we see Monks's discourse during this episode to be just as important to the action as Oliver's mental state (see above). As Oliver is released into a dream state that brings forth images of Fagin's haunt, Monks is moved to remark the attraction, one which goes beyond mere outward appearance, between the two of them.

This connects with another remark, reported later by Nancy but attributed to Monks. She quotes him as saying that "he'd be upon the watch to meet [Oliver] at every turn in life, and if [Oliver] took advantage of his birth and history, he might harm him yet" (363). Meeting Oliver "at every turn in life" corresponds to one of the central tropes of doubling, the ineluctable attraction Monks remarks. Examples of this statement crop up repeatedly in well-known examples of this psychological device: James Hogg's Gil-Martin tells Wringhim that "wherever you are, there must my presence be with you" (220); in *Frankenstein* the Monster warns Victor, "I shall be with you on your wedding night!" (161); in Poe's "William Wilson," contemporaneous with *Oliver Twist*, the narrator complains of being "scrutinized" by his double with "impertinent supervision" (563). Interestingly, Monks ties such supervision to personal "history."

Apart from all these broad hints, there is further evidence of a more physical nature. As remarked above, Oliver and Monks are half-brothers and thus bonded by blood; they also share similar physical disorders: Oliver's syncope and Monks's seizure. Oliver collapses repeatedly throughout the

novel. These collapses are not always fainting fits, but are usually important to analysis of the scenes in which they occur. Early on, when Limbkins attempts to "let" the orphan, "Oliver [falls] on his knees . . ." (66). At Fagin's, shortly after his first arrival, "he [sinks] into a deep sleep," and follows his reading of the criminal narratives by which Fagin hopes to corrupt him by "falling upon his knees . . ." (66, 197). At the hearing for the handkerchief theft (an incident close, we should remember, to what will later prove to be Monks's entrance into the narrative) Oliver falls "to the floor in a fainting fit" (122-23). During the central housebreaking episode Oliver is left unconscious and prostrate by Sikes (255); when he returns to the Maylie's house after this he appears "sunk down against one of the pillars of the little portico . . . speechless and exhausted" (258, 261).

In Monks's case, as already noted, an unnamed seizure disorder accompanies (or, as Brownlow suggests, manifests) his evil tendencies. This is shown not just in the country village and during Brownlow's interrogation, but also during his meeting with the Bumbles, when, "removing his hands suddenly from his face, [he] showed, to the unspeakable discomposure of Mr. Bumble, that it was much distorted, and discoloured" (337). At this point, symbolically, "a peal of thunder" has just shaken "the crazy building to its centre" (336). This accompanies, appropriately, more plotting on Monks's part against Oliver. Regarding his fits, Monks explains that "thunder sometimes brings them on" (337).

With these final examples, then, one can see a link between the half-brothers based on their corresponding physical reactions to the actions of the plot. And it is notable that these plot developments nearly always relate to some sort of confrontation between the nearly allegorical forces of good and evil in the novel. Both characters are transparent in this respect, as transparent to us as Oliver is to Monks. If all these ties do show, as I contend, a split-self or doubling relationship at work in the novel, the final task remains of showing this relationship's importance to the outcome of the plot.

Like so many of Dickens's novels, this one ends with a denouement full of climactic testimony and a final closure which accounts for the futures of the main characters. For Oliver, of course, this closure entails his restoration to his proper inheritance and place in society. This does not come about, however, without Monks's revelation of the narrative which led up to Oliver's birth in the workhouse.

This whole scene (which comprises most of Chapter 51) has the odd effect of diminishing Monks's importance in an inverse ratio to Oliver's. If, again, the two characters are seen as halves of one psychic entity, then this process serves to repress the darker half, to remove it from the ascendancy it has been in through much of the novel. It is surely more than a coincidence that a doctor is present for all of this. Westburg argues that in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* "psychic growth is envisioned as the overcoming of [an] emergent dualism in favor of something like monism—that is, the perception of a total structure in experience" (43). For Oliver such a "total structure" would allow him to take his place in society through the transmission of his inheritance. Though society itself is never totalized in the novel (it always appears as a manichean dualism) the individual still may be to the extent that he or she absorbs the meaning of the past into a



more empowering future. This surely has an analog in the scene at hand; it is here that Oliver first understands the dualism as such (i. e. finds out that Monks is his relation) and can then internalize this knowledge in "a total structure of experience."

Westburg discusses the beginning of this chapter, where Oliver arrives in the village and sees things "smaller and less imposing in appearance than he remembered . . ." (455), terming it "the psychically significant experience of return," and a "repetition and reversal" (9). If this terminology has the aroma of psychoanalysis about it, that is not to put too contemporary a Freudian reading on the novel. This return is a "working through," a way for the split-self to achieve wholeness again. This wholeness occurs, however, not through a parity of the halves but through the repression by one of the other.

The method for dealing with Monks as "the heavy mulch" of the past (Kaplan 160) is to enclose him, not to soften his character or to create any sort of brotherly love (or balanced integration) between him and Oliver. "'You have the story there,'" Monks tells Brownlow, referring to documents, but Brownlow counters, "'I must have it here, too,' . . . looking round upon the listeners" (457). In this storytelling situation, the listeners enclose the teller, and the narration is a command performance.

After the series of revelations which establish Oliver's lineage and inheritance Monks is permitted to leave England. As with Tom Gradgrind's case in *Hard Times*, blood ties prohibit punishment to the full extent of the law. But it should be remembered that transportation was little, if any, better than imprisonment to many prisoners at the time the novel takes place. In Chapter 53 his future is detailed:

Monks, still bearing that assumed name, retired with is portion to a distant part of the New World; where, having quickly squandered it, he once more fell into his old courses, and, after undergoing a long confinement for some fresh act of fraud and knavery, at length sunk under an attack of his old disorder, and died in prison. (475-76)

Monks perishes doubly enclosed, not just exiled from England but also in jail. This sort of confinement finds its analog in the beginning of the novel, when Oliver is still in the employ of Mr. Sowerberry. Here Sowerberry tells him "your bed's under the counter. You don't mind sleeping among the coffins, I suppose? But it doesn't much matter whether you do or don't, for you can't sleep anywhere else" (74).

Again the enclosure is double; Oliver is inside the shop and under a counter. As with Monks the oppression reeks of mortality, so it is unsurprising that "[t]he recess beneath the counter in which [Oliver's] flock mattress was thrust looked like a grave . . . and he wished, as he crept into his narrow bed, that that were his coffin . . ." (75). As with the balance between who controls whom in this novel, though, the double enclosure shifts from one brother to the other during the course of the action. As Oliver emerges from enclosure to come to grips with his dark past, that past can in turn be shut away. Once the truth about the inheritance and Oliver's relationship to Rose are recovered, the rest can be exiled from

consciousness.

The actions of Conkey Chickweed, we see, related in a seemingly unimportant way by a seemingly unimportant character, serve a pivotal role in the plot of *Oliver Twist*. By seeing Oliver's wild goose chase for elements of his "history" as being equivalent to the wild goose chase of a man after a criminal who turned out to be himself, one can appreciate the possibility that Monks becomes this evil aspect of the self, the "mulch" which keeps an informed and structured goodness, integrated into society, from being Oliver's lot. While Oliver remains a naive and homeless waif his virtue is worth little, except for his daily survival. But once he is able to retrieve the darker aspects of himself, shrouded with scandal, and appropriate them toward a virtuous future, his story can achieve closure.

Dickens's intention in this matter must remain a moot point, but I do not think it is too much to say that a consciousness of such psychological themes could have manifested itself in his writing at this point. That the author wanted, with the Chickweed episode, to tip readers off to a strong undercurrent of psychological drama in the novel may be doubtful. But the narrative is there, and it seems reasonable to look for some way to make sense of it. We continue to learn to see Dickens's interest in psychology, both in theory and in practice, shining forth through the art of his novels.

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## Dickens, Dickens, Micawber . . . and Bakhtin

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About mid-way in the career of the very, very popular novelist Charles Dickens, there occurred so remarkable a sequence of narrational acts that I am tempted to use one of my students' favorite words and speak of it as unique. Certainly, I can think of no parallel example in another writer.

The sequence I refer to began at some moment between the years 1845 and 1847, for a reason or reasons we can do no more than conjecture about: Charles Dickens began writing an autobiography. The pages we have today run from what Dickens termed the "evil hour" in 1824, when James Lamert offered his parents employment for their twelve-year old son in a shoe-blackening factory, to the God-sent occasion later in that year when John Dickens, newly released from the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison, quarreled with Lamert and removed the boy from his place in the factory (Forster 23, Tick).

That moment in 1845 or 46 or 47 when Dickens took up his pen was followed by two remarkable steps. First, having told no one of its origin or existence, Dickens locked away the unfinished manuscript in a desk drawer somewhere for perhaps a year. Then, with the existence of these pages still utterly secret, Dickens opened the drawer and copied out a number of passages into an early chapter of a work in progress, a novel to be called "The Personal History of David Copperfield, the Younger." At some subsequent time, though once again we do not know precisely when, Dickens forwarded the original manuscript to John Forster, who evidently agreed both to keep the novelist's confidence and to publish the fragment in a posthumous biography. When in 1872 Forster's monumental study of Dickens appeared, family and friends alike were astonished to learn the contents of the pages narrating the heretofore secret autobiography. And so this curious sequence ends.

We know that when he began composing his autobiography, about twenty-five years after the events, Dickens told nobody of the 1824 family debacle; not a soul other than

family knew of Warren's Blacking or John Dickens's incarceration for debt. Suddenly and, indeed, mysteriously, Dickens begins composing a detailed account of the troubled period. This narrative, a part of which was to be echoed in Chapter XI of *David Copperfield*, contains the only veritable account we have of the great writer's crisis months.

Like any putative autobiographer, save that his creative resources were so immense, Dickens had to decide how he wished to depict himself, which is to ask what sort of boy-hero the thirty-five year old, world-famous novelist would create as narrator. By whatever means we try to answer this (and you shall hear my own attempt soon), we have to concede that the recounting of those gloomy 1824 months constituted a "story," a special kind of fiction. Of course, such is the case for virtually every autobiographical episode, but made extraordinary here first because of Dickens's secrecy about both the real events and his autobiographical manuscript, and then because this long-suppressed "story" was to be made "story" a second time, concealed in the narrative of a first-person *bildungsroman*. We have what amounts, then, to a wholly private fiction being formally refictionalized and, as it were, floated before the public's eyes—like one of Mr. Dick's kites.

What I mean to do in this brief paper is touch upon "the redescriptive power of narrative fiction," a useful phrase I take from Paul Ricoeur. I shall look yet again at the Autobiography and at Chapter XI of the novel in order to try to understand how *histoire* in this remarkable (if not unique) case, has been affected by *discours*. But let me apologize for those Frenchisms, which the structuralists have made so fashionable nowadays. If I could pronounce Russian, I would use their terminology, for I intend to rely a good deal for my theoretical scaffolding on some formulations of Mikhail Bakhtin.

"When the novel becomes the dominant genre," Bakhtin writes in the first essay in his *Dialogic Imagination*,



"epistemology becomes the dominant discipline" (15). As some of you will probably recall, Bakhtin at this early point in his study is contrasting the modernish novel with the ancient epic, a form which he insists was determined by memory rather than knowledge. I shall correlate autobiography with the epic only as an heuristic exercise, as a means of highlighting what novelistic energy alone can do. So that when Bakhtin goes on, in a later essay, to say: "The idea of testing the hero, of testing his discourse, may very well be the most fundamental organizing idea in the novel, one that radically distinguishes it from the epic," (388) I have got myself into the position, I hope, at least theoretically, to scrutinize mirror passages in the *Autobiography* and novel with an eye to comparing their effects.

At any rate, let us observe what happens when I try. The *Autobiography* opens with a paragraph of background information about "Warren's Blacking, 30, Strand," then shifts to a personal note with these lines:

It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me, that, even after my descent into the poor little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me—a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally—to suggest that something might have been spared . . . to place me at any common school . . . No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so, if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar school, and going to Cambridge. (23-24)

The autobiographical hero goes on to make several other allusions to his culpable parents before he concludes with the bitterest of them all, this specifically to his mother's indifference. Musing about the dispute between his father and James Lamert, the narrator recalls that, "My mother set herself to accommodate the quarrel, and did so next day. She brought home a request for me to return next morning . . . My father said I should go back no more, and should go to school. I do not write resentfully or angrily: for I know how all these things have worked together to make me what I am; but I never afterwards forgot, I shall never forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back" (35).

Some Dickens critics have very understandably cited this passage in drawing up a psychological profile of the novelist; my own interest in it, however, is as a mode of narrational strategy. I refer to it in order to understand how the self-pitying and angry notes we heard at the outset from this narrator are consistent throughout.

Chapter XI of *David Copperfield* is entitled "I begin Life on my own Account, and don't like it." It opens with portions of the initial lament we just heard, but ends this way:

As I walked to and fro daily between Southwark and Blackfriars, and lounged about at meal-time in obscure streets . . . I wonder how many of these people were waiting in the crowd that used to come filing before me in review again . . . When my thoughts go back now, to that slow agony of my youth, I wonder how much of the histories I have

invented for such people hangs like a mist of fancy over well-remembered facts! When I tread the old ground, I do not wonder that I seem to see and pity, going on before me, an innocent, romantic boy, making his imaginative world out of such strange experiences and sordid things. (136)

Now, though I hope not to force the issue, perhaps you already glimpse the direction of my thought: that ultimately David's response is different from that of the autobiographical narrator, not only in degree but in kind. The grim shoe-blackening factory is replaced in the novel by a slightly less grim wine-bottling establishment, but otherwise what befalls the two narrators is nearly the same: betrayal and abandonment by parents (or surrogate parents); social humiliation, and the stirring of survivor's pride; both boys suffer the alienation of working-class streets, acute distress at bizarre prison visitations, and wrenching loneliness. Yet their notes of despair, even when the sentences themselves form a perfect echo, come to us with different reverberations.

The *Autobiography* (like the ancient epic) is monologic, to use Bakhtin's term, and is therefore untested by any second voice. Whereas by page 3 of Chapter XI, David is introduced to "a stoutish, middle-aged person, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes, with no more hair upon his head (which was a large one, and very shining) than there is upon an egg . . ." (151). This is Mr. Micawber, of course, and Mr. Micawber, garrulous, circumlocutious, preposterous, becomes, in the Bakhtinian phrase, a participant in the narrative, an expression of otherness. His participation, along with that of the equally preposterous Mrs. Micawber, converts David Copperfield's experience into a dialogic narrative. The resulting interanimation of language, I believe, serves to test and modify David's discourse.

See what happens when that test is in place! Just before Micawber makes his appearance, David and the autobiographical hero share this lament:

"No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these every day associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in . . . was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written." (25)

But after the introduction of Micawber, even when the self-pitying words are themselves similar, the now multivoiced discourse undercuts David's emotional urgency. Both narrators, for example, will exclaim that "from Monday morning until Saturday night," they had "no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no assistance, no support, of any kind, from any one . . . so help me God." But preceding David's words is a long paragraph about the Micawbers, which ends with these lines:



Mrs. Micawber was quite as elastic. I have known her to be thrown into fainting fits by the king's taxes at three o'clock, and to eat lamb chops breaded, and drink warm ale (paid for with two teaspoons that had gone to the pawnbroker's) at four. On one occasion, when an execution had just been put in . . . I saw her lying (of course with a twin) under the grate in a swoon, with her hair all torn about her face; but I never knew her more cheerful than she was, that very same night, over a veal-cutlet before the kitchen fire, telling me stories about her papa and mama, and the company they used to keep. (128-29)

David's lament, identical with that of the autobiographical narrator, is contextualized in such a way as to become harmonic; his self-pity resonates with sympathy, and his anger is diffused by wonder.

In his book-length study of Dostoevsky's poetics, Bakhtin argues that the famous first-person narrative known as *Notes from Underground* "is not a personal document but a work of art" (*Problems* 227). The basis for Bakhtin's discrimination here is the narrative's "acute dialogizing." "From the very first sentence," Bakhtin tells us, "the hero's speech has already begun to cringe and break under the influence of the anticipated words of another, with whom the hero, from the very first step, enters into the most intense internal polemic" (227-28). What we do not find in Dickens's autobiographical pages is any trace of dialogizing. No voice is permitted to question or probe or dispute the narrator's proud, angry apologetics. The resulting tone is very close to what I think Bakhtin meant by a discourse of pathos, whose goals, conscious or not, are self-justification and accusation.

I am led to this conclusion by biographical deduction. Dickens had kept the unhappy events of 1824 a secret from the world for more than twenty years when he found himself confiding the details to paper. His created narrator proved to be angry as well as wistful, agitated as well as proud. And this came about, I think, not because Charles Dickens resented the past but because he regretted the decades of silence since that past had occurred. He was angry less with his parents than with himself. As I interpret them, the autobiographer's mixed tones express a narratological defense against the otherwise inadmissible truth that the author lacked sufficient confidence and courage to admit to his family, friends, and millions of loyal readers that "I am the man who was that boy."

But evidently Dickens's monoglossic defense did not placate his troubled spirit for long. He thus retrieved his pages and recopied certain key passages, but this time created a second voice—which brought about wondrous change.

Towards the end of Chapter XI, David tells us:

Mr Micawber, about this time, composed a petition to the House of Commons, praying for an alteration in the law of imprisonment for debt. I set down this remembrance here, because it is an instance to myself of the manner in which I fitted my old books to my altered life, and made stories for myself, out of the streets, and out of men and women; and how some main points in the character I shall unconsciously develop, I suppose, in writing my life, were gradually forming all this while." (135).

These gently reminiscing lines contrast with the autobiographical voice whose author would become the world's best-known and best-loved novelist but who could never bring himself publicly to acknowledge that portion of his life.

David Copperfield, you recall, overcomes both his personal pride and his class anxiety—and brings himself to confess all his past. We learn this when, towards the end of the novel, Uriah Heep attempts to shame David into silence by threatening to tell everyone about those degrading days spent in the London streets, information Uriah has elicited in his slimy way from none other than Mr. Micawber. But though Aunt Betsy, Agnes, Traddles, and Mr. Dick are all present, David does not flinch or blush, for he has already told his past to these intimate friends. We might note, by way of contrast, that the autobiographical narrator concludes with these defiant words: "From that hour until this at which I write, no word of that part of my childhood . . . has passed my lips to any human being" (35).

I want to suggest, then, that Micawber's participation in David's narrative profoundly distinguishes Dickens's pair of fictional counterparts. Micawber's antic discourse, with its rococo vocabulary and childish sentiments, tests David's rhetoric, finally purging it of much of his predecessor's self-pitying indignation. After all, what youngster could be unaffected by such parting words as these from the impoverished, hopeless Micawber:

"Copperfield, farewell! Every happiness and prosperity! If, in the progress of revolving years, I could persuade myself that my blighted destiny had been a warning to you, I should feel that I had not occupied another man's place in existence altogether in vain. In case of anything turning up (of which I am rather confident), I shall be extremely happy if it should be in my power to improve your prospects." (141)

Which touching address might very well invite a new consideration, one I can do no more than mention here: that Mr. and Mrs. Micawber come into creative existence as a result of Dickens's desire or need to forgive his parents in this, his second autobiography. If this is so, then the dialogic form achieved what Bakhtin insisted it could, transforming the memory of the *Autobiography* into the novel's knowledge—through whose agency Dickens's smoldering resentment became something closer to understanding, if not forgiveness. Perhaps, too, we should speak of Dickens's need to forgive himself!

Now a last element in what I fear is becoming a too complex equation. Critic after critic has described *David Copperfield* as an idyllic or even sentimental novel, delightful and charming, to be sure, but neither probing nor profound. A majority of us today seem to favor the post-*Copperfield* works, the so-called darker phase novels, say from *Bleak House* on. I interpret this to mean that the less forgiving narrator of the *Autobiography* was diverted only temporarily from his hurt and defiant discourse by the Micawberish influence in *David Copperfield*. The hero of that dialogic narrative, heroic enough even to confess his past, was not only too idealized but too risky for Dickens to resume.



With publication of *David Copperfield*, then, Dickens's masquerade was over. No one now was ever to learn that D. C. was in truth C. D. But the subterfuge, however brief, seems to have triggered serious narrational self-questioning, for thereafter all the novels' concluding rays of sunshine are somehow shadowed by clouds, and henceforth good characters suffer along with the guilty. In short, what Bakhtin called "the auto-criticism of discourse" took the narrative form, in Dickens's later work, of self-doubt and even guilt—thereby making the later narrative voices, rather ironically, all the more sympathetic to our own anxious needs.

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## In Defense of Latimer: A Study of Narrative Technique in George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil"

Millie M. Kidd

George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil," a long-neglected horror tale, originally published in 1859, has recently been drawn from obscurity by those who recognize its artistic merit and would show how, despite its apparent anomaly, it fits into and illuminates the rest of the author's works. Henry James's review for *Nation* in April, 1878<sup>1</sup> called it "a fine piece of writing," and Eliot's publisher John Blackwood felt it to be a powerful story, but its Gothic elements plus the grimly pessimistic clairvoyant narrator led readers for generations to see the piece as an aberration in the works of an author otherwise known and appreciated for her realism. Consequently, it has been largely ignored or else dismissed as so much "spook stuff" (Thale 13). The first serious and thorough study was Elliott Rubenstein's "A Forgotten Tale by George Eliot" in 1962, which stresses the story's modern thematic concerns and links it to the rest of the George Eliot canon. Similarly, U. C. Knoepfelmacher sees it as a "phase" in the author's artistic development and traces possible origins to her personal life. More recent studies have tended to focus on the tale as an expression of George Eliot's aesthetic.<sup>2</sup> Beryl Gray's "Afterword" to a recently published single volume of "The Lifted Veil" is characteristic not only in its treatment of possible biographical sources and influences but in its attitude toward Latimer, the protagonist who chronicles his own history. Regardless of the approach critics take, whether they see Latimer as the embodiment of George Eliot's theme of unfulfillment (Rubenstein), as a kind of fetish punished and destroyed by his creator in the hope of banishing the religious and philosophical doubts she had unveiled in *Adam Bede* (Knoepfelmacher), or as an interesting "deviant" (Hardy), all seem to agree that he is deliberately painted as unattractive, that

he is the cause of his own demise, and that his nihilistic views are not those of the author.

I believe the story has generally been misread, and I suggest that a careful narrative study will reveal Latimer in a more favorable light than he has commonly been seen and that he embodies one aspect of the author's world view which, despite the tale's prevailing mood of gloom, is not nihilistic.

To begin with, most of George Eliot's novels figure forth a helpful narrator (usually identifiable with the author herself) who strives to elicit the reader's sympathy for individual characters through direct entreaty. Because "The Lifted Veil" employs the first person narrator as a dramatized agent,<sup>3</sup> two questions immediately pose themselves: Why did she deviate from her usual method of narration? And how reliable is the narrator? One obvious answer to the first question is simply that George Eliot wanted to try her hand at a different way of storytelling. The answer I propose, however, encompasses the second question as well: because there is no one to intercede or to interpret for Latimer, his account of his predicament calls forth our deepest sympathy, and we are led to trust him because his values and judgments are much like our own. His solitary account, written in total isolation without the support of a friendly narrator and without any certainty that anyone will ever read it, creates an "almost unbearably poignant sense of his alienation and helplessness in a chaotic friendless world" (Booth 274). He tells us he was a fragile, nervous boy whose mother died when he was very young, leaving him alone with his emotionally distant but exacting father and his arrogant, self-gratulatory older brother Alfred. He describes his father as an "intensely orderly man, in root and stem a banker, but with a flourishing graft of the active landholder,

<sup>1</sup> See "George Eliot's 'Lifted Veil' and 'Brother Jacob'" (131); the review first appeared in *Nation* (25 April, 1878): 277.

<sup>2</sup> These include Handley, Eagleton, McKenzie, Viera, and Gilbert and Gubar.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase and some of the ideas about first person narrators included here come from Booth 274-309.



aspiring to county influence: One of those people who are like themselves from day to day, who are uninfluenced by the weather, and neither know melancholy nor high spirits" (5).

We accept Latimer's estimate of himself and others from the start because he seems to value the same things we value, and his judgment of himself approaches the way we assess our own worth. He describes himself as a shy, sensitive boy with a love of poetry and the humanities. By contrast his father sees little intrinsic value in an education grounded in the classics, but, recognizing its importance in the attainment of an aristocratic position, he sends Alfred to Eton and Oxford to make the necessary connections to assure his political future. On the other hand, he sends Latimer to Geneva to study science and natural history, hoping to remedy what he believes are "defects" in the young man's character and to prepare him for a "practical" career. The environment at Geneva proves uncongenial to Latimer's "unpractical" and unanalytical nature, and he must resort to studying literature and the classics "by the sly." His creative imagination and poetic energy thus forcibly repressed, Latimer turns inward. Suddenly, one day following a bout of illness, he discovers that he possesses a certain visionary power. Initially exulting in the belief that it is a manifestation of latent poetic talent, he soon comes to realize the darker implications of this power:

... this superadded consciousness, wearying and annoying enough when it urged on me the trivial experience of indifferent people, became an intense pain and grief when it seemed to be opening to me the souls of those who were in a close relationship to me . . . . (19)

Latimer's "gift" of vision, bestowed on him without his asking for it, further diminishes his sense of self. The lifting of the veil that separates his consciousness from that of others allows their "stream of thought" to flood his mind, making audible "a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness" (26). This is the same heightened capability George Eliot describes in *Middlemarch*: "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence" (Ch. 20). Latimer's ability to penetrate the veil deprives him of the illusions necessary to human experience. What he perceives is neither a romantic revelation of divinity nor the horror of sin and evil but rather the more terrifying vision of "a blank prosaic wall" (49).

The anguish he experiences as unwilling witness to the petty, selfish motivation and meanness underlying human actions contributes to our growing conviction that the cause of Latimer's catastrophe is the impact of a crass, unresponsive world on a sensitive individual, not as Beryl Gray says, "his misinterpretation or misapplication of what is revealed to him" (72). Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Romola serve as other examples of sensitive individuals who collide with an unsympathetic world, so it is not farfetched to see Latimer as such a protagonist as well. Because Latimer sees himself, rightly, as a victim of the "bourgeois nightmare of repetition"

(Lessing 95), and because he is the only sensitive person visible in an otherwise indifferent, superficial world, we unite with him rather than blame him for his own isolation.

As Latimer's sense of loneliness and helplessness intensifies, so does our involvement. At no point do we survey him from an intellectually or morally superior position; at no time is there an indication that he is at fault or deluded about his situation. Some commentators consider his attraction to his brother's fiancee, the cold-hearted Bertha, "wilful blindness"<sup>4</sup> because he is irrationally drawn to her despite his ghastly prevision of their possible future life together. However, these readers fail to see how Latimer's description of the conflict he feels between his foreknowledge and his passion translates that willfulness into a simple need for love:

Behind the slim girl Bertha, whose words and looks I watched for, whose touch was bliss, there stood continually that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth—with the barren, selfish soul laid bare . . . urging itself perpetually on my unwilling sight. Are you unable to give me your sympathy—you who read this? Are you unable to imagine this double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? Yet you must have known something of the presentiments that spring from an insight at war with passion. (31)

This direct appeal, disarming and forthright, tends to make us equate Latimer's views with those of the author, or at least with one facet of her nature, for the voice in this passage resonates of George Eliot's omniscient narrators who make similar bids for reader sympathy in her fiction from *Scenes of Clerical Life* to *Daniel Deronda*. Here, however, the appeal lacks the ironic twist that undercuts the case for an Amos Barton, or a Casaubon. When Latimer asks us to imagine his dual frame of mind, most of us have little difficulty recalling a similar conflict at some time within ourselves. Unlike Lydgate, who is completely taken in by the beauty and artful ways of Rosamond (for whom Bertha is a precursor), Latimer sees beneath the surface to the inner person but is unable to let go of his one last vestige of hope for love. Thus, he is, in some ways, even more pathetic than Lydgate.

Later, when we are reminded that the protagonist is writing in retrospect, his words reflect the wisdom and insight he has gained from his experiences:

In after-days I thought with bitter regret that if I had foreseen something more or something different . . . when I looked on my brother's face for the last time, some softening influence would have been shed over my feeling towards him . . . . But this is one of the vain thoughts with which we men flatter ourselves. We try to believe that the egoism within us would have easily been melted, and that it was only the narrowness of our knowledge which hemmed in our generosity . . . . Our tenderness and self-renunciation seem strong when our egoism has had its day . . . . (32)

<sup>4</sup> Gray, Knoepflmacher and Rubenstein, for example.



At moments like these, with all his selfish needs and egocentric concerns laid bare, Latimer seems eminently more human and more comprehensible than the superficial, unreflective creatures who surround him—the fox-hunting, philistine Alfred, the cold-hearted Bertha, and the dispassionate, controlling father—all of whom lack warmth and humanity.

In Eliot's earlier works the omniscient narrator's bids for reader sympathy made us aware that we were witnessing a fictive world controlled and manipulated by a higher being. The absence of such an intermediary here between ourselves and the protagonist, combined with the fact that he is the only sensitive person apparent, renders our sense of his isolation more complete and lends greater impact to his appeal for our compassion. In other instances where Latimer uses collective pronouns to generalize about his circumstances, he sounds very much like the narrative voice in Eliot's other works, and he displays a wisdom one cannot easily dismiss as the ravings of a deranged mind as others have suggested. At one point, for example, he observes, "Our sweet illusions are half of them conscious illusions like effects of colour that we know to be made up of tinsel, broken glass, and rags" (45). The sweet illusion that Latimer refers to is, of course, Bertha Grant, whose soul remains the only one into which he cannot see, and for this reason he believes her to be different from everyone else when in fact she is simply *more* trivial and cruel than all the others.

His unintentional ability to penetrate the veil of illusion to the pettiness and malice in the hearts of those around him causes Latimer to shrink more deeply into himself—"The horror I had of again breaking in on the privacy of another soul, made me, by an irrational instinct, draw the shroud of concealment more closely around my own . . ." (55). Despite the sense of shame and alienation resulting from his involuntary intrusions into the thoughts of others, his sensitivity toward his fellow creatures and his ability for self-criticism remain intact. He admits, for example, the antipathy between himself and his brother, Alfred, whose brash, arrogant nature clashes with his own. While he was "perpetually exasperated with the petty promptings of [Alfred's] conceit and his love of patronage, with his self-complacent belief in Bertha Grant's passion for him, with his half-pitying contempt for me," at the same moment it occurs to Latimer that "my selfishness was even stronger than his—it was only a suffering selfishness instead of an enjoying one" (37). Admittedly, at the root of such self-chastisement might lie another kind of egoism—perfectionism; however, his self-judgment is more severe than his criticism of Alfred, revealing his greater depth of understanding and his ability to tolerate those whose values and temperaments are vastly different from his own. Furthermore, these instances of self-examination and self-effacement are disarming; they give his report a ring of authenticity that helps to win our trust and respect. It is, after all, difficult to feel superior to a man who sees his own faults more clearly than anyone else can. Irony works only against those who are blind to their own folly.

Bertha remains the one, last mystery for Latimer: her "thoughts and emotions were an enigma to me amidst the fatiguing obviousness of the other minds around me" (44).

She leads him to believe she loves him, and he marries her eighteen months after his brother is killed in a hunting accident. But salvation through love that is awarded to protagonists in Eliot's earlier works is denied Latimer, and marriage—the traditional stronghold of hope, renewal, and continuity—becomes for him a deadening experience. His relationship with Bertha is not unlike that of Lydgate and Rosamond, which it prefigures. Bertha, like Rosamond, has a shallow, unimaginative nature that renders her "unable to conceive the fact that sensibilities are anything else than weaknesses," and leads her to believe that after marriage she will have the upper hand. After their marriage, however, her heart is revealed to Latimer, and she finds herself powerless "because I could be acted on by no lever within her reach. I was dead to worldly ambitions, to social vanities, to all the incentives within the compass of her narrow imagination" (49). Like Lydgate, Latimer perceives that he is in part to blame for finding himself shackled to this vain, petty creature, and he makes no attempt to separate from her or to change her; they live together aloof from one another.

Knoepfmacher blames Latimer for the rift in the marriage: "The thought that his wife might respond to a lever within his own reach does not occur to him; he makes no effort to overcome the alienation that has crept into his marriage" (155). However, there is no indication that this Lamia dressed in green leaves and emeralds would respond to his efforts at reconciliation any more than Rosamond is able to meet Lydgate half-way. Eliot makes it clear that Lydgate is to some extent accountable to "spots of commonness" for his tragic union with Rosamond. Latimer has no such flaw in his character, and when he explains how he was attracted to Bertha, we understand his need:

There is no tyranny more complete than that which a self-centered negative nature exercises over a morbidly sensitive nature perpetually craving sympathy and support. The most independent people feel the effect of a man's silence in heightening their value of his opinion—feel an additional triumph in conquering the reverence of a critic habitually captious and satirical: no wonder then, that an enthusiastic self-distrusting youth should watch and wait before the closed secret of a sarcastic woman's face, as if it were the shrine of the doubtfully benignant deity who ruled his destiny. (22)

Like Rosamond, Bertha is the embodiment of crass, mundane forces that work against and destroy the idealism of extraordinary individuals like Lydgate and Latimer.

We are inclined to accept Latimer's assessment of his plight not only because he has won our confidence, but because he is also able to see himself in the uncomplimentary light in which his wife regards him: "I saw myself in Bertha's thought as she lifted her cutting grey eyes, and looked at me: a miserable ghost-seer, surrounded by phantoms in the noonday, trembling under a breeze when the leaves were still, without appetite for the common objects of human desire, but pining after the moonbeams" (48). This insight comes not from any supernatural vision but from Latimer's ability to put himself in Bertha's place. He obviously understands his wife and him-



self better than she comprehends either of them, and that insight makes him morally superior to her and renders his case even more tragic.

There are those who believe Latimer's misery is perpetuated by his inability to love (e. g. Knoepfelmacher 154). I disagree. Following the death of his brother, Alfred, he shows genuine pity and affection for his grieving father, who has never given Latimer any warmth or understanding: "My father had been one of the most successful men in the money-making world: he had had no sentimental sufferings, no illness . . . . But now, at last, a sorrow had come—the sorrow of old age, which suffers the more from the crushing of its pride and its hopes . . ." (42). Although Latimer is able to perceive how trivial and prosaic his father's life has been, he also senses the depth of the old man's suffering at the loss of his favorite son, and gradually his tenderness wins his father's genuine affection. Furthermore, after his marriage deteriorates to a state of "polite and irrevocable alienation" (56), Latimer continues to feel sorry for his estranged wife: "There was still pity in my soul for every living thing, and Bertha was living—was surrounded with possibilities for misery."

The fact that Latimer is telling his story in retrospect from the point of view of a man who has foreseen in full detail the time and the circumstances of his own death colors his words with a hue of veracity and reliability. Not only does he perceive the truth of his relationship with his father, he learns that isolation in marriage is the worst solitude of all, and for him the marriage trap becomes a paradigm for the individual trapped alone in the darkened universe.

The horror of that alienation is the real theme of this story, and that alienation is the result of his seeing too clearly the reality behind the surface world. While it is difficult to account for the gross misreadings of this simple tale, I don't believe the fault lies with George Eliot's handling of the theme. When her publisher John Blackwood asked her permission in 1873 to republish the story in a new *Tales from Blackwood* series, she declined permission on the grounds that the time was not right. In her letter she emphasizes her wish to justify the story's painfulness, not its unorthodoxy, making clear it is the *idea* that is important to her: "I care for the idea which it embodies and which justifies its painfulness" (*Letters* 5: 380). She attaches a motto to help clarify that idea, and the motto, slightly altered, has been taken as epigraph to the tale:

Give me no light, great heaven, but such as turns  
To energy of human fellowship;  
No powers save the growing heritage  
That makes completer manhood.

The question that comes to mind is, does "The Lifted Veil" fulfill the idea that the motto expresses? Beryl Gray asserts that Latimer's curse "is not, as he thinks, his clairvoyance, but his inability to reconcile these discoveries with his immediate desire for what does not properly belong to him" (73). The prayer contained in the motto makes clear the danger associated with clarity of vision, and the plea is for the speaker to be spared this danger. Like the spirit in Shelley's sonnet of 1818 "Lift not the painted veil," the fault lies not in the seeker of truth but in the world he finds hidden behind the veil. Like the spirit in the poem Latimer is a "splendour," a

"bright blot" on a "gloomy scene."

We have no reason to believe that Latimer's vision is partial or incorrect; there is no other character more positive or more reliable who can offer an alternative, completer vision or who could expose Latimer's perception as inadequate or diseased. The only possible candidate would be his old friend Dr. Meunier, and he is disqualified because his attempts to resuscitate Bertha's maid Mrs. Archer extend Latimer's vision beyond the grave and destroy his one last hope for salvation.

George Eliot's other visionaries—Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda*, Romola's brother Dino, and Jubal in the poem of that name—like Latimer, are in rebellion against a domineering, controlling father yet remain for the most part passive. They are all physically frail and cursed with "the poet's sensibilities without his voice." For each the ability to penetrate the veil of reality brings pain, suffering, and alienation, and none achieves the divine power to which he aspires. The agony and defeat suffered by these characters do not represent a punishment visited upon them by their creator; rather it is a merciless depiction of the clash of the extraordinary individual and his expectations for growth and self-fulfillment against the reality of a cruelly impersonal world. Some readers feel this story is atypical of George Eliot in its nihilistic world view, but this theme of alienation and defeat runs throughout her work. "The Lifted Veil" may be called nihilistic only in the most conventional sense of the word, for as Wayne C. Booth explains it, "most so-called nihilistic works are . . . really works of active protest or even of affirmation" (299). We have every reason to believe that George Eliot shared Latimer's loss of faith and, to some degree, his feelings of alienation. By the same token we have no reason to think she does not share his final bitterness against the darkness and his last effort to fight that darkness with the "light" of his written narrative. Because Latimer's account does have an implied reader, a narratee, because he addresses his story to an audience he hopes to be sympathetic, it certainly cannot be considered nihilistic in the purest sense of the word. To be so, his only motive would have to be the act of writing itself. Throughout his account he calls into question one code of values and implicitly suggests another which George Eliot undoubtedly endorses. He is, therefore, not only the spokesman for George Eliot but a spokesman who carries real power to move and to instruct.

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## The Diachronic Frame of Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur"

Roger Platizky

In comparing the frame of Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur" to the inset, Richard Jenkyns regards the prologue as

an elaborate and rather flat preamble that expresses Tennyson's sense that the age of epic poetry is passed, vanished like the dinosaurs. Life now is cozy and jolly, like the Christmas party, but not the stuff of which epic is made. (30)

Jenkyns aligns this view with Matthew Arnold's lament that the Victorian Age is "wanting in moral grandeur" (30). Tennyson's frame, therefore, would serve primarily as a criticism of his contemporary culture in sharp contrast to the heroic world of Arthurian legend. While Tennyson could well agree with Arnold (and Carlyle) that the Victorian poet needed to revitalize heroic literature to provide ethics, traditions, and models of social behavior sorely lacking in the industrial, skeptical, and scientific world, Jenkyns's view of Tennyson's frame as flat does not account for Tennyson's careful use of diachronic language with which he not only offsets frame from inset, but also interrelates them to encode a view about historical literature and social value.

Arguing against the critical consensus that the two parts of "Morte d'Arthur" are antagonistic in tone and style and that "The Epic" was added by Tennyson in 1842 solely to serve as an apology "for telling an old-world tale," J. S. Lawry demonstrates how the frame and inset are interrelated and how the former "presents a defense and recovery of heroic attitudes, of an heroic form in literature" (400).<sup>1</sup> Although he agrees with Jenkyns that the mock-heroic imagery of the prologue and the banality of the action suggest "that progress has been, in reality, degeneration, and that modern man is incapable of heroism and poetry," Lawry adds that "The whole poem presents the 'Morte' as an agency of faith and its effect as a gesture of that faith" (401-02).

A third case can be made for the relationship between the frame and inset of "Morte d'Arthur": Tennyson's juxtaposition of past and present ages has a double edge—it neither represents the degeneration of all faith in the modern age nor the restoration of faith through the "gesture" of the poem. Instead, the poem moves simultaneously in both, seemingly opposite directions. What one initially notices in comparing the frame to the inset is comic disparity rather than similarity or organicity. At first, the frame seems self-consciously to

mock its own form and sincerity, which is rather surprising in a poem that was written in deep despair over the death of Arthur Hallam; none of the Christmas descriptions in *In Memoriam* share the tone of those described in the prologue. Furthermore, the enclosed, carefree, festive, youthful, and comfortable (if insipid) ambience of Francis Allen's "odd nook" where games are played, girls are kissed, and drinks are emptied contrasts sharply with the funereal wasteland expanse of Lyonesse, the ordeal of Bedivere, and the crisis of Arthur's faith. At Francis Allen's there seems to be little threat of time, or death, or felt sorrow for man's fallen state—forfeits being just a game and the most heroic action, slipping on the ice.

But let us take another look at that ice. That the speaker of the prologue emphasizes he slipped "from the outer edge" of the pond *three* times (10-11) contrasts ironically with Bedivere's three temptations; that the speaker *plays* on the ice almost mocks the passage in the poem where Bedivere, in an act of loyalty and charity, carries the mortally-wounded Arthur across a death-range of "frozen Hills," "icy caves," "barren chasms," and "bare black cliff" (183-88). Moreover, when the speaker of the prologue recalls how he "bumped the ice into three several stars," one recalls Bedivere's plaintive allusion to the Three Kings and to the Epiphany: "Such times have not been since the light that led / The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh . . . (232-33). Tennyson's juxtaposition of these analogous references suggests a symbolic linkage. This is the case, as Hartley Coleridge writes, where "a respect for words and forms survives the notions of feeling which gave those words and forms a meaning" (29). If one sees the modern age of the frame as a deterioration of the heroic age represented by the rest of the poem, then the stars that once symbolized the miracle and constancy of faith are now merely drawn at random on a godless firmament of ice.

If one looks at the ice-skating image from a different perspective, however, the contrast in frame and inset reminds one of W. H. Auden's allusion in "Musée des Beaux Arts" (559) to Breughel's painting *The Census at Bethlehem*, in which children skate with abandon "on a pond at the edge of the wood" while "the aged are reverently . . . waiting / For the miraculous birth." The gap between generational needs in Auden's poem is compatible to the two ages—the heroic and the modern—that are juxtaposed in "Morte d'Arthur." Representative of the aged or fathering age, Bedivere awaits the rebirth

<sup>1</sup> Lawry adds that Edward Fitzgerald's "offhand treatment of both 'Morte' and its so-called 'frame' . . . perhaps is responsible for this misapprehension."



of Arthur (as a type of Christ) in contrast to the speaker of the prologue who skates with abandon across the ice on Christmas-eve, the night before the miraculous birth is ritually reenacted. For believers, this ritual makes the passage of time seem an illusion since the celebration of Christ's birth becomes an anchor in time. But in the prologue such an anchor is missing: "there was no anchor, none, / To hold by" (20-21). For this reason, just as in Auden's poem, where suffering occurs "While someone is eating or opening a window / Or just walking dully along," the festiveness in Francis Allen's seems to imply a temporal and cultural obliviousness or indifference both to the passion of Christ and to the suffering of Bedivere and Arthur. Yet, in the epilogue the speaker of "The Epic" longs, too, in a dream for a "miraculous birth." The Messianic image of Arthur's return in the end of the poem, which is accompanied by the clear pealing of a hundred bells that ring in the Christmas morn" (cf. *In Memoriam*, 106: 1-32), dramatizes this need even for modern men, who are still searching for transcendent truths although, like Bedivere, they have their timeless doubts.

Therefore, even though the frame and inset may seem to be antagonistic in tone and style, there is a bridge between this gap that links constancy even within change: "Though much is taken, much abides." When he gives Arthur the thematic words, "The old order changeth, / Yielding place to new," Tennyson implies not primarily a severance between old and new, but also a voluntary or necessary withdrawal of the old, which yields to the new and, at the same time, is the stock onto which the new order is engrafted—as a form that may be better suited to time's perpetual climate of change. Just as the Arthurian romance emerges typologically from Christian rituals, which themselves are rooted in pagan rites, so too is the frame of "Morte d'Arthur" a derivative form that partakes of its literary stock. Although time may alter man's perception of and response to the forces that order the universe, the desire for faith in that order remains constant. Thus, even though the celebrants at Francis Allen's wonder about "the general decay of faith" and how "all the old honour had from Christmas gone, / Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games" (7-8, 16), their way of responding to this dilemma is ancient: they tell a story in an effort to reembrace their faith.

Representing this eternal struggle for faith, Tennyson links present modes of expression to past ones, even while he seems to be setting off the modern age from the heroic, by exploiting the diachronic uses of language. Ironically and also appropriately, the blank verse that shapes Francis Allen's "old nook" also surrounds Everard Hall with the very style of expression he repudiates: "Why take the style of those heroic times?" (35). Hall, as if anticipating the objections of the critics, had apologized for his poem because "a truth / Looks freshest in the fashion of the day" (30-32). Clearly, since "new" truths spring from old, new words derive from old roots, and new poetic utterances evolve from old genres, Tennyson is pointing up the paradox of "fashionable" truths. Showing the diachronic nature of utterance, Tennyson puts

Middle-English expressions into Everard Hall's lexicon. When Hall uses the phrase "chaff and draff" to describe his Arthurian poem, he could readily be one of Chaucer's characters using this cliché. In addition, the word "quoth" to describe the way Everard pontificates is as time-bound as are the wassail bowl and sacred bush that link his setting historically with the rituals and utterances of the past.

Tennyson also connects the present and past diachronically by adapting the text of an earlier poet, Malory. According to Robert Scholes, the "poet's paradigmatic system is paradoxically diachronic" because the words a poet uses in his own context reverberate and "take on meaning from their incarnations in the utterances of his great predecessors" (30). For Tennyson, who like many Victorian writers modeled his own style on that of classic authors and valued etymology, such influence is important. Just as Malory had adapted the pre-medieval stories of Arthur to represent the values of his own Christian culture, Tennyson adapted the story of Bedivere's temptations, the miracle of the Lake, and Arthur's death to serve a purpose in an age that was increasingly growing more skeptical about the meaning of faith. In addition, the title "The Epic" provides a sign that links the past and the present by showing how a heroic form, even as it evolves in time into a more adaptive "species"—like Mastodons into elephants—is diminished of power at the same time that it partakes of that power in retrospect. "Morte d'Arthur," consequently, and the frame partake of a legacy of heroic echoes even when the once high-sounding language may now seem inflated: "a mouthing out of hollow oes and aes" (50). Although Hall says in the prologue that one should not "Remodel models" because "nature brings not back the Mastodon," Tennyson's implication is more open-ended. Although the allusion to extinct Mastodons shows how the mighty (including mighty Kings and genres) have fallen in time, that nature does bring a form of the Mastodon back in the more adaptable species of the elephant shows that the old order yielding to the new may actually be more viable for a given culture. Indeed, if one views historical process as uniformitarian rather than as catastrophic,<sup>2</sup> nature is always remodeling models even though the originals no longer exist in the same space except as fossils or relics.

In an unpublished sonnet to his friend C. R. Weld, Tennyson demonstrates that he was fully aware of the historical, and I would argue literary, paradox of loss and gain:

The constant spirit of the world exults  
In fertile change and wide variety,  
And this is my delight to live and see  
Old principles still working new results.  
Nothing is altogether old or new  
Though all things in another form are cast,  
And what in human thought is just and true  
Though fashioned in a thousand forms will last.  
But some high-thoughted moods and moulds of mind  
Can never be remodelled or expressed

<sup>2</sup> For a good analysis of how catastrophism and uniformitarianism shaped Victorian thought, see De Beer.



Again by any later century,  
As in the oldest crusts of earth we find  
Enormous fossilbones and shapes imprint  
Of ancient races that have ceased to be. (291-92)<sup>3</sup>

The epilogue of "Morte d'Arthur in an ambiguous way also hints at this theme of cultural loss and gain. When Hall ends his recitation, the "last light, that long / Had winked and threatened darkness, flared and fell" (273-74). Although Allen's fireplace can still bring light into the darkened room, the image of "threatened darkness" is not a hopeful one. Yet, it also recalls the final image of the "Morte" in which Bedivere sees the hull of Arthur's vessel as "one black dot against the verge of dawn" (271). Both hope and despair are mirrored by these images that intermingle light and darkness. Against the threat of darkness in the "Morte" is Merlin's promise of resurrection (23) and Arthur's hope that he will heal his "grievous wound" in Avilion (256). Doubt also clouds the epilogue since only the speaker has a dream in which King Arthur returns, his grievous wound healed. In contrast, the Parson, who should be the spokesman for spiritual renewal, sleeps during the reading of the prayer-like poem. Although Dwight Culler views the Parson's sleeping as complimentary to the poem's worth (71), which transcends in language his own spiritual emptiness and rantings about schism and geology, the role of the Parson appears more substantive. Like one of Chaucer's friars, also framed by a prologue, Tennyson's Parson Holmes is a little more worldly than he should be: he drinks enough from the wassail bowl to fall asleep during Hall's reading, and he is included syntactically among those who have kissed all the girls under the sacred bush. In a more negative way, his sleep suggests spiritual inertia. Although he laments "the general decay of faith," the Parson unwittingly participates in it. In fact, he seems to know more about schism and geology than he does about spirituality or faith. Furthermore, the Parson's mode of communication is satirically described as "harping" (15), "hawking" (16), and "grunting" (276). Sounding like an evolutionary throwback, the Parson reminds the reader of Arthur's complaint to Bedivere in the "Morte":

For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift no hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
(250-54)

Thus, dereliction of faith also binds the different parts of the poem as well as past and present historical moments. The Parson, indeed, seems to "nourish a blind life within the brain": he is sent to sleep with sound and awakened by silence (275-76). Can he then be receptive to the Word? Notably no one in the poem holds the worldly Parson as an anchor of faith. Francis holds to Everard Hall, the poet, and Hall holds to the wassail bowl. Figuratively, therefore, the poet, not the

Parson, becomes the voice of faith—at least for the duration of the poem—and the wassail bowl becomes the poet's cultural talisman, his Excalibur. One might say that the wassail bowl functions in the poem as an alembic into which the distillations of historical time and literary language are poured. In this alembic, the dross of the present is mixed with the ore of the past, thereby forming an amalgam of both, which is the poem itself. In this way Tennyson, realizing that he lives in an age in which Lyell's voice is heard above Homer's and the factory is more crowded than the church, finds a form that accommodates both old and new, so that the poem can speak both for the sense of cultural loss and the desire for renewal. Throughout the frame of the poem, Tennyson's use of diachronic language conveys that time and mankind are forever linked by the problem of keeping faith amid the darkness. For even the "smouldered log" of the modern age can still, with human effort, send "a blast of sparkles up the flue" (286-87). And even the Arthurian ghost of a fathering age can make its tracks visible on a firmament of ice and its spirit felt through heroic whispers.

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<sup>3</sup> For a brief but interesting commentary on this poem and others of its type, see Stevenson (63-66).



## Books Received

*Approaches to Teaching Eliot's "Middlemarch."* Ed. Kathleen Blake. *Approaches to Teaching World Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1990. Pp. 187. \$34.00 cloth, \$19.00 paper. Contains a section on materials—editions, readings for both students and teachers, bibliographies and journals, etc.; and a section on approaches—with essays by 16 critics grouped under the following headings: "Some Critical Trends in the Classroom," "Considering the Reader's Situation," "Focusing on the Text, Expanding the Context," and "Conclusions: Considering the Teacher's Situation." Also includes a Chronology of the writing and publication of *Middlemarch* and a *Middlemarch* genealogy.

Chittick, Kathryn. *Dickens and the 1830s*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. Pp. xiv + 208. \$34.50. "In considering the development of Dickens during [the years 1833-1841] and how his writing changed the conventional generic expectations of the novel, one is in fact considering the literary criticism of the 1830s . . . . During the 1830s, books of biography and literary criticism filled the newspaper columns under 'Literature,' while novels were found among the ephemeral notices . . . . The Victorian novel has many beginnings, and Dickens's insistence on remaining a Fleet Street man is one of them. The discussion of how his works moved from the 'Magazine' columns to the 'Literature' columns is both a historical and a critical one" (ix-xi).

Douglas, Lord Alfred. *"Two Loves" and Other Poems: A Selection*. East Lansing, MI: Bennett & Kitchel, 1990. Pp. 65. \$10.00. Includes 21 poems, mostly sonnets and short lyrics, but also "When the King Comes He is Welcome, A Tragedy in One Act," notes to the poetry and a brief bibliography.

Hayman, John. *John Ruskin and Switzerland*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1990. Pp. [x] + 141. \$39.95. Includes more than a 100 of Ruskin's drawings of Switzerland, including 23 never before published, partly the fruits of his intention between 1855 and 1865 to illustrate with his own engravings an account of Swiss history; drawings by J. M. W. Turner and daguerreotypes by Frederick Crawley for comparison; an 11 pp. introduction, an appendix of Ruskin drawings not included, and a brief selected bibliography.

*The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*. Ed. Thomas Pinney. 2 vols. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1990. Vol. 1—1872-1889. Pp. xxxviii + 386. \$42.50; Vol. 2—1890-1899. Pp. 390. \$42.50. The set \$75.00. Includes an introduction, a Kipling Family Tree, and a Chronology. "Though it aims to be generous and fully representative, this is a selected, not a 'complete,' *Letters* . . . . For the first two volumes the number [of letters selected] is 459 of 1333 available" (xvi-xvii). The editor "aimed, first, at providing a kind of biographical narrative through the letters . . . and included letters that document the details of the composition and publication of his works . . ." (xvii).

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *My Sister and I*. Trans. Oscar Levy. 1951. Los Angeles: Amok, 1990. Pp. lxxiv + 255.

\$9.95 paper. Includes brief essays concerning the authenticity of the work as Nietzsche's by A. K. Placzek, Walter Kaufman, Samuel Roth, and Walter Stewart.

Neufeldt, Victor A. *The Poems of Patrick Branwell Brontë: A New Text and Commentary*. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 1050. New York & London: Garland, 1990. Pp. liv + 536. \$62.00. Includes a 25 pp. intro. and 172 pp. of commentary on the poems.

Powell, Kerry. *Oscar Wilde and the Theatre of the 1890s*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. Pp. ix + 204. \$39.50. "Many of the most popular dramas which precede Wilde's own work lapsed into oblivion . . . having never been published, or printed in cheap acting editions . . . It is this vanished but essential context of Wilde's theatrical career that needs to be recaptured, and to that end some 'desperate raids on oblivion,' to use a phrase of Max Beerbohm's, cannot be dispensed with" (3).

*Selected Letters of William Michael Rossetti*. Ed. Roger W. Peattie. University Park & London: Pennsylvania State UP, 1990. Pp. xxxiv + 728. \$49.50 607 letters from July 1843 to Feb. 1919 to 113 recipients.

Trollope, Anthony.\* *Ayala's Angel*. 1881. Intro. Alice Thomas Ellis. London: The Trollope Society, [1989]. Pp. xvi + 532. £21.95. The edition corrected against the first edition.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Can You Forgive Her*. 1864-65. Intro. David Skilton. London: Trollope Society, [1989]. Pp. xxi + 739. £24.95. Text from the two-volume first edition, illustrations by Hablot Knight-Browne (Phiz) and E. Taylor.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Dr Wortle's School*. 1880. Intro. John Rae. London: The Trollope Society, [1989]. Pp. xvi + 199. £18.95. Edition checked against the serial version.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Lady Anna*. 1873-1874. Intro. Paul Johnson. London: The Trollope Society, [1990]. Pp. xvi + 335. \$41.50. Edition follows the text of the serial version, checked against the first book edition.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Phineas Finn*. 1867-1869. Intro. J. Enoch Powell. London: The Trollope Society, [1989]. Pp. xix + 631. £23.95. Edition follows the text of serial version with illustrations by Millais.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Eustace Diamonds*. 1871-1873. Intro. P. D. James. London: The Trollope Society, [1990]. Pp. xvii + 647. \$53.50. Edition follows the text of the serial version.

\*The Trollope novels are the initial ones of the proposed set to be published at the rate of four a year. The special sale price for the subscription to the entire set of 48 with original illustrations is \$1200. Volumes may also be purchased in sets of four: the first set published in 1989—*Phineas Finn*, *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Dr Wortle's School*, and *Ayala's Angel*—is available for \$130.00 + \$20.00 handling until May 1, 1991; the second set—*The Eustace Diamonds*, *Lady Anna*, *Phineas Redux*, and *Rachel Ray*—at \$160.00 + \$20.00 handling. Individuals contact The Trollope Society, 9a North Street, London SW4 0HN, UK; library and institution orders to Pickering and Chatto Publishers Ltd., 17 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5NB, UK.



# Victorian Group News

## Announcements

The Yale Center for British Art will hold a four-week institute "to explore certain aspects of culture and society in nineteenth-century Britain—resident faculty: Patrick Brantlinger, Linda H. Peterson, Duncan Robinson, Anthony Wohl. Participants—full-time faculty teaching in American colleges or universities, and foreign faculty who have been teaching in this country—will receive a stipend of \$1,000 plus an allowance for meals and travel. Director, Yale Center for British Art, 1080 Chapel Street, P. O. Box 2120, Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520. Application deadline 1 March 1991.

"Transatlantic Connections" will be the topic of the 1991 Conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals in Washington, D. C. in November 1991. Papers (about 10 pp.) on any aspect of the relationships between British and North American periodicals in the Victorian era are invited. Proposals for sessions also welcome. Submissions by 1 April 1991 to Dean Christopher C. Dahl, McComsey Hall, Millersville University, Millersville, PA 17551 or Dean Richard Fulton, Clark College, 1800 E. McLoughlin, Vancouver, WA 98663.

In celebration of Punch's humorous arts and to coincide with his 150th birthday a conference is being held at the University of London. Richard D. Altick will speak on Punch's early years, Roy Foster on Punch and the Irish, Frankie Morris on Sir John Tenniel, Anthony Burton on Richard Doyle, Leonée Ormond on George du Maurier, Andrew Sanders on Thackeray, Lionel Lambourne on Phil May, Michael Slater on Douglas Jerrold and Amanda-Jane Doran on Punch's early illustrators. For information: Michael Slater, English Dept., Birkbeck College, Malet St., London WC1E 7HX.

The *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Studies* will continue publication under the editorship of Julie F. Codell, Director, School of Art, Arizona State U., Tempe, AZ 85287-1505. Please send all mss to this address. Issues will be semi-annual and subscription rates \$25 individual, \$40 institutional. The first issue to be published by ASU is scheduled for fall, 1991.

"Foreign Women in English Literature." Mss are being sought for a collection of essays which consider the experience of foreign women in England as portrayed in 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-century English literature. Two-page abstracts or completed mss (MLA Style) should be sent to M. Button, English Dept., Lincoln University, Lincoln University, PA 19532. Include an abbreviated vita. Deadline 1 April 1991.

The Berg Collection of the New York Public Library will exhibit more than 100 items from its collection of Charles Dickens's work. *Charles Dickens: His Life and Work*, on view from 12 Oct. 1990 to 13 April 1991, portrays Dickens's life and works through ms fragments of stories and novels, autograph letters, first editions and presentation copies, prompt-copies, playbills from performances based on his novels, photographs, and illustrations of an assortment of his memorable characters.

### Notice

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