

The Victorian Newsletter

Editor

Ward Hellstrom

Managing Editor

Louise R. Hellstrom

Number 105

Contents

Spring 2004

Page

"Italian Counterpoint: Henry James and John Ruskin in Florence" by Kevin Swafford	1	27	"Dickens, Robert Louise Stevenson and the South Sea Idols" by Rodney Stenning Edgcombe
"The Aesthetics of Adventure: The Dark Sublime and the Rise of the Colonial Anti-Hero" by Andrew Libby	7	28	"Hood's 'Craniology' and the Head of Christopher Casby in <i>Little Dorrit</i> " by Rodney Stenning Edgcombe
"Rehearsing <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i> : Dickens, Macready, and the Pantomime of Life?" by Greg Hecimovich	16	29	Coming in <i>The Victorian Newsletter</i>
"Lady Audley as Sacrifice: Curing Female Disadvantage in <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> " by Nicole P. Fisk	24	30	Books Received

Cover: Richard Doyle 1849

The Victorian Newsletter is sponsored for the Victorian Group of the Modern Language Association by Western Kentucky University and is published twice annually. Editorial and business communications should be addressed to Ward Hellstrom, CH 106, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101; e-mail ward.hellstrom@wku.edu; fax 270-745-2533. Please use *MLA Handbook* for form of typescript. MSS cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscription rates in the United States are \$5.00 for one year and \$9.00 for two years; foreign rates, including Canada, are \$6.00 per year. Checks should be made out to *The Victorian Newsletter*.

Italian Counterpoint: Henry James and John Ruskin in Florence

Kevin Swafford

Though the brilliant and often controversial art criticism and social commentary of John Ruskin loomed large in the minds of many nineteenth-century Americans and western Europeans, Henry James boldly proclaimed in his essay "Italy Revisited" that Ruskin would never be fruitfully read in Florence because the general tone of his Florentine commentary is antithetical to the place where art is "spontaneous, joyous, irresponsible" (379). Although both writers were drawn to Florence for similar reasons (both were deeply passionate about Italy in general: Ruskin made twenty-three separate trips; James made fourteen), there are dramatic differences in their experiences, judgments, and visions of the city. As we might expect, the contrasts in their perceptions of Florence are rooted in radically different aesthetic and artistic sensibilities. What is of interest is the critical relationship between the two. It is tempting to see the particular style and perspective of each writer as offering counterpoints to the other's aesthetic foundations. In this, Florence becomes the real and imaginary space that allows Ruskin and James to rehearse their aesthetic visions while musing on the personal and social significance of the sublime inscribed within the changing figure of Florence.

Though Ruskin does not have Henry James in mind when writing *Mornings in Florence* or any of his late-Italian art criticism or travel writings, the mode of his discourse, in general, stands in contrast to the foundational aesthetic sensibilities expressed through James's Florentine commentary. James, on the other hand, does write in conscious opposition to Ruskin. Indeed James's "travel" pieces on Florence are more than simply impressions on the art, "experience," and culture of that great city—they are also calculated critical responses to Ruskin's aesthetics and his mode of criticism (and thus also his social critique—for the two are intimately bound in the work of Ruskin).

James recognized the genius of Ruskin and acknowledged the significance of his art criticism in general; however, he had little use for Ruskin's late Italian art criticism and travel writings. But why is this the case—what is it that Ruskin does in his late criticism that grates upon James? In particular, what is it that Ruskin perceives (or misperceives) in Florence that causes James to refigure Florence in a decidedly different light? The immediate answer is fairly direct: for James, Ruskin's Florentine commentary represents a one-dimensional brand of art criticism that does not allow for a variety of aesthetic insights, experiences, and pleasures. Indeed, pleasure itself is lost in what James perceives as the monolithic vision of Ruskin. But this only a part of the story. Ultimately, James writes his Florentine commentary as a corrective of Ruskinian

aesthetics and all that it represents. His revision of Ruskin is twofold: 1) in relation to Ruskin's style (which reveals his approach to art, aesthetic experience, and reception) and 2) in relation to the type of criticism that Ruskin practices in *Mornings in Florence*.¹

No matter what they thought of Ruskin's ideas, Victorians, generally, felt that he was a master stylist: a writer who wrote superior prose. Ruskin himself was very much aware of the general perception concerning his abilities as a stylist. In the preface to *Ariadne Florentina*--a series of Oxford lectures on Florentine culture and the tradition of wood and metal engravings--Ruskin addresses the issue of style and offers us a suggestion on what might have motivated the form and tone of his late art criticism. He writes: ". . . my vanity is set on having it *known* of me that I am a good master, not in having it *said* of me that I am a smooth author. My vanity is never more wounded than in being called a fine writer, meaning--that nobody need mind what I say" (250). During the late stages of his career Ruskin had sorely felt that his audience had failed to take heed of his words. As a result, the late style of Ruskin's art criticism (exemplified for James in *Mornings in Florence* and *St. Mark's Rest*) can be seen in part as a response to the failure of his audience to recognize his authority (Ruskin, "the master") and to act upon his wisdom. The style of *Mornings in Florence* is authoritative to the point of being, at times, dictatorial. This dimension of Ruskin's late work is recognizable as an essential part of his ethos. Indeed, Ruskin's rhetoric would lose much of its *raison d'être* without the stylistic guise and performance of absolute authority. But placed alongside of James's writings on Florence (which are, as we shall see, reflective and inviting, respectful of the likelihood of a variety of perceptions and experiences in relation to the culture and art of Florence), Ruskin's style appears strikingly limited.

The difference in style is indicative of different aesthetics and conceptions of the use and function of art, culture, and criticism. For Ruskin, there are absolute truths behind artistic creations and aesthetic experiences. The concept of "the idea" is the foundation on which Ruskin builds all of his art criticism. Indeed, important art for Ruskin must contain an ideational essence, which, once discovered, allows him to write as though he knows the truth. In full confidence, Ruskin informs us of what is and is not valuable and what we can and cannot rightfully experience and think in relation to certain works of art. Ultimately, in Ruskin's aesthetic, there are finite experiences--which are the endpoints of knowing truth (singular and universal).² For James, in contrast, aesthetic experience is potentially

¹*Mornings in Florence* was originally written as a series of Oxford lectures but published as an art guide book for Anglo/American travelers to Florence. The work has long been out of print and is thus relatively obscure now.

²For Ruskin, what we come to think and know is more important than what we feel in relation to art.

infinite--thus it is democratic, anti-authoritarian (though we might also characterize aspects of it as socio-historically relative), and antithetical to any perceived ideational essence. James tells us in a famous passage that "experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spiderweb of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every airborne particle in its tissues" ("The Art of Fiction," 34-35). According to James, there is an enormous amount of unpredictability in the (inter)subjective response to art, given the vastness and multiplicity of human consciousness and experience. James suggests that art's meaning is configured in the expansiveness and variability of its experience. Ultimately, for James, the work of a valid artist must, if it counts for anything, constitute, first and foremost, an experience, as opposed to an "idea," which is always secondary to the experiential.

Just as primary objects of art must constitute a legitimate experience for James--so too must art criticism. Art criticism should link to the sensuous experience of aesthetic reception. If there is a dramatic gap between response and commentary, experience and criticism--then the commentary is necessarily flawed, for, according to James, the primacy of aesthetic experience occurs in the process of individual reception. The aesthetically responsive mind "takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations" ("The Art of Fiction" 35). "Revelation" is here the trope of the process of aestheticizing experience. It is also a conceptual model that will allow James to fashion part of his criticism of Ruskin's "style." James notes in "Italy Revisited" that Ruskin's performative style creates an overall tone to his Florentine commentary that is removed from the realm of aesthetic experience itself. Claiming to quote a friend, James writes, "One may read a hundred pages of this sort of thing [i.e. *Mornings in Florence*] . . . without ever dreaming that he is talking about art. You can say nothing worse about him than that" ("Italy Revisited," 379). In other words, those who experience Florence imaginatively and impressionistically (who convert "the very pulses of the air into revelations") will find Ruskin alien. The implication is that Ruskin himself must no longer know the aesthetic sublime; it has escaped him and has been replaced by a cantankerous view of art and modernity that results in an irritable and authoritarian style of writing.

If infinite possibility of experience makes the aging art and buildings of Florence all the more alluring for James, who takes particular delight in the Florentine palaces and villas, seeing in them the unabashed expression of joy in the presence of the "rare," Ruskin's response, by contrast, is rooted in an overwhelming sense of decay and loss. For Ruskin, the vitality of life that created the treasures of Florence seems all but passed, and it is this fact that allows Ruskin to rehearse his critique of modernity. Both *Mornings in Florence* and *St. Mark's Rest*³ reflect what had become a matter of irritation for Ruskin by the 1870s: namely, the

direct interrelationships between social and political realities and the sense of cultural decline in the historical movement of modernity. Like so many places, nineteenth-century Florence was in part a disappointment for Ruskin. From his journal dated November 13, 1840, he tells us, concerning the Duomo, that he does not believe it to be great architecture, though it does express a "barbarous style" (one of the essential elements in Ruskin's theory of the Gothic). In fact, Ruskin's first experience is such that he does not know what to think of the building--it has left him surprised and unable to order his feelings into communicative thought. The impression is "overwhelming"--not what Ruskin had come to expect. Two days later, Ruskin writes that he cannot make up his mind about Florence itself, though the pervasive feeling is one of "grievous disappointment." In his mind, Florence signifies in part the moral, social, and cultural decline of modernity in that contemporary Florentines apparently no longer revere the truths of the past masters, nor seek to create a culture that might allow for the replication of past achievements.⁴ The sense of loss that is behind much of Ruskin's commentary is transformed into anger at what he perceives as the destructive follies of contemporary Florence and its apparent immunity to the allure and ethical importance of the artistic expressions of the past.

And yet, for all of that, there are little experiences and impressionistic moments in and outside of Florence that Ruskin cherishes. The art in the sacristies and choirs of Santa Maria Novella (particularly lesser known works of Ghirlandaio and Oreagna, along with the novitiate work of Giotto), Santa Croce, and the upper passage of San Marco (where Ruskin studied closely the work of Fra Angelico) are of profound beauty and significance for Ruskin. He also describes his drawings and studies in the rose-garden of San Miniato and along the cypress avenue of the Porta Romana as "memorials of perhaps the best days of early life" (*Praeterita*, 332). Like James, Ruskin seeks the "rare" that can be found in Florence; the problem is the imposition of aesthetic decay, decline, and indifference that disrupts its reception. The seemingly absolute break with the past becomes Ruskin's means of judging the present. Indeed, whereas the Florence of the past speaks of social, cultural, and artistic vibrancy, it lingers in the present to remind Ruskin of how different (and degraded) modern Florence is from its past. The loss of a particular *type* of culture (one that is socially ordered and committed to the moral centrality of art) is what Ruskin cannot tolerate.

James too is aware of loss.⁵ When reflecting on the Florentine villas of the Renaissance, James tells us that they communicate a "way of life that doesn't wince at such refinements of peace and ease," despite the fact that the villas also "look as if they had stories--none in truth predominately gay" ("Italy Revisited," 373). Part of James's fascination with Florentine architecture and art is that they appear to have outlived their original use and now exist as beautiful, though often sad, reminders of different lives and experiences. Rus-

kin himself would agree with James on this point. But here also is the experience and knowledge from which their criticism and vision of Florence will develop and differ. Sounding the keynote of the essential contrasts between the two writers, James differentiates regret from resentment:

I have already spoken of the way in which the vast aggregation of beautiful works of art in the Italian cities strikes the visitor nowadays--so far as present Italy is concerned--as the mere stock-in-trade of an impecunious but thrifty people. It is this spiritual solitude, this conscious disconnection of the great works of architecture and sculpture that deposits a certain weight upon the heart; when we see a great tradition broken we feel something of the pain with which we hear a stifled cry. But regret is one thing and resentment another. ("Italy Revisited," 375)

According to James, Ruskin's criticism of the cultural present via the artistic achievements of the past is rooted in a resentment of the changes of history itself.⁶ Cities and people change. Seen through James's lens, Ruskin's complaint against history is that it has not turned out as he would wish. One may regret that contemporary Florentine culture and society appear to be consciously disconnected from the great works of the past (the moral and aesthetic alienation of the present from the past is one of the key points that Ruskin emphasizes throughout *Mornings in Florence* and elsewhere); but this apparent fact is certainly no cause for resentment and judgment. James continues:

I couldn't turn over many pages [of *Mornings in Florence*] without observing that the "separateness" of the new and old which I just mentioned had produced in the author the liveliest irritation. With the more acute phases of this condition it was difficult to sympathize, for the simple reason, it seems to me, that it savors of arrogance to demand of any people, as a right of one's own, that they shall be artistic. . . . When a people produces beautiful statues and pictures it gives us something more than is set down in the bond, and we must thank it for its generosity; and when it stops producing them or caring for them we may cease thanking, but we hardly have a right to begin and rail. ("Italy Revisited," 375)

Whereas Ruskin would have a return of what he perceives as the ethical essence of the Florentine culture of the past (particularly that of the pre- and early Renaissance) in order to resurrect the conditions that produce the aesthetic sensibilities and works of art that he values, James's disposition is far more gracious to time and cultural change. For James, there is no universal moral or social imperative necessarily inscribed within the creation and care of art. Art continues according to need (for amusement or instruction), not in the service of universal truth. No thought could be more

antithetical to Ruskin than this. Indeed, according to Ruskin, social environments and art communicate ethical dispositions. Inter-subjective social relations are made manifest through the emergence, development, and care of social and cultural space and objects. Thus, because social environments and art communicate ethics, they can be judged along the axis of truth and morality.

We see the rehearsal of this essential Ruskinian idea in all of the instances that James identifies as Ruskin's "railings" against modernity. Throughout *Mornings in Florence* we are shown how modern Europe has seemingly turned away from the ethical care and concern for art. Take for example Ruskin's critique of nineteenth-century London, which he offers as an aside to his extended discussion of Cimabue and Ghirlandaio. According to Ruskin, the art of the Florentine masters provided truth, beauty, and instruction to the people of Florence. As great artists they are separated from average people--and yet their work unites them, for it is offered as a gift of labor and duty to the people of Florence. In the enactment of their duty, the masters of the Florentine school provide the populace with something "true" to look at. Ruskin will contrast this mentality, this sense of social being and the relationship between art and populace with the commercialism of the nineteenth century. Whereas the Florentine artists of the past created much to be admired, the "masters" of modern London (and by implication all of Europe) offer "nothing to look at!" Concerning the modern "frescoes" of London, Ruskin writes:

Nothing to look at! That is indeed--you will find, if you consider it--our sorrowful case. The vast extent of the advertising frescoes of London, daily refreshed into brighter and larger frescoes by its billstickers, cannot somehow sufficiently entertain the popular eyes. The great Mrs. Allen [a contemporary beauty], with her flowing hair, and equally flowing promises, palls upon repetition, and that Madonna of the 19th century smiles in vain above many a borgo unrejoiced; even the excitement of the shop-window, with its unattainable splendours, or too easily attainable impostures cannot maintain itself in the wearying mind of the populace. . . . (*Mornings in Florence*, 33)

Instances of the sublime of the past have an ethical civic function: they instruct, entertain, and unite (in the sense of ordering and stabilizing social gradations). In contrast, "beautiful" images offered to the "popular eyes" of the nineteenth century do not fulfill essential aesthetic needs and apparently have no real function other than selling products and fantasies. What is lost for Ruskin in the movement of history is made quite clear in his praise of Cimabue. Ruskin argues that the importance of Cimabue is not to be found in the skill of his technique (the laying of colors more skillfully and in new ways); rather it is the contemplative quality of the artist and his ability to communicate the ethical truth of the

³*St. Marks Rest* was published as an art guide for travelers to Venice.

⁴It should be noted that this idea does not fully manifest itself in Ruskin's work until the art criticism of the 1870s. Prior to Ruskin's late criticism, Florence is primarily a place of ambivalence.

⁵According to Leon Edel, Florence for James is a place of beauty and meditative withdrawal ("The Italian Journeys of Henry James," 13)--a per-

ception we see rehearsed in a variety of James's writings. The idea of Florence as a place of "meditative withdrawal" can be understood subjectively and socially. At the level of social understanding, Florence is in fact, as Ruskin would have it, withdrawn from other places (given its grand past) and yet caught up in the historical process of alteration and decline.

⁶It is interesting to note that soon after meeting Ruskin and dining with him at his home, Denmark Hill, James concluded that Ruskin was essentially ill-equipped to face the complexities of modern reality. In a letter to his mother, James describes Ruskin as "scared back by the grim face of reality into the world of unreason and illusion" (qtd. in *Henry James: A Life*, 95).

On some level, James must have felt that Ruskin's frustration with modern life was symptomatic of his inability to face its immense complexities. The allure of the past for Ruskin thus becomes a desire to escape certain unique experiences of modernity.

aesthetic sublime: "First of the Florentines, first of European men--he attained in thought, and saw with spiritual eyes, exercised to discern good from evil--the face of her that was blessed among women; and with his following hand, made visible the Magnificat of his heart" (*Mornings in Florence*, 33). For Ruskin, the commodification of the beautiful cannot make visible the heart's delight, for no such thing can exist in a culture that does not feel the necessity of making art pleasing and ethically instructive, but rather makes the pursuit of material wealth paramount.

In one sense, James will agree with Ruskin--fine works of art often amuse and instruct. However, how one is amused or instructed is widely variable. Ultimately, James reacts to Ruskin's line of criticism because he believes that Ruskin has in fact missed the mark in his understanding of the possible use and experience of Florentine art. Ruskin's criticism is foreign and antithetical to James's own experiential knowledge of art and aesthetics because it seeks to limit the possibilities of thought, pleasure, and instruction in the assessment of the beautiful. Brilliantly, James does not argue with Ruskin's aesthetics and critical judgments; but rather, reveals his difference and critique through his style, offhanded comments, and impressionistic, and often ironic, observations.⁷ As a result, the high tone of Ruskin is frequently transformed into comedy through the sarcasm and wit of James. In response to Ruskin's *St. Marks Rest* we get the following:

[Ruskin] has indeed lately produced several aids to depression in the shape of certain little humorous--ill-humorous-pamphlets (the series of *St. Mark's Rest*) which embody his latest reflections on the subject of our city and describe the latest atrocities there. These latter are numerous and deeply to be deplored; but to admit that they have spoiled Venice would be to admit that Venice may be spoiled--an admission pregnant, as it seems to us, with disloyalty. Fortunately, one reacts against the Ruskinian contagion, and one hour of the lagoon is worth a hundred pages of demoralized prose. This queer late-coming prose of Mr. Ruskin is all to be read, though much of it appears addressed to children of tender age. It is pitched in the nursery-key, and might be supposed to emanate from an angry governess. ("Venice" 385)

St. Marks Rest was certainly not written to humorously aid melancholic readers, but rather to instruct travelers on the past grandeur of Venice and the social decay of modern Venetians. Here, as elsewhere, James effectively reverses the rhetorical intent of Ruskin's commentary by not taking it seriously, seeing it as little more than the bad humor of a disgruntled moralist. Indeed, the urgency and seriousness of Ruskin's "queer late-coming prose" is recast as "light literature." The effect is scathing:

Occupying one's self with light literature in a great religious edifice is perhaps as bad a piece of profanation as

any of those rude dealings with which Mr. Ruskin justly deplores; but a traveler has to make the most of odd moments, and I was waiting for a friend in whose company I was to go and look at Giotto's beautiful frescoes in the cloister of the church. My friend was a long time coming, so that I had an hour with Mr. Ruskin, whom I called just now a light *litterateur* because in these little *Mornings in Florence* he is forever making his readers laugh. ("Italy Revisited" 377)

James's laughter results from the disjunction between the aesthetic conclusions and stylistic tone of Ruskin's commentary and the myriad possibilities of aesthetic perception and response. And yet, James allows that how one reads Ruskin is a matter of taste--though he is apparently either a source of comedy or reverence, depending upon one's own aesthetic sensibilities and needs:

Nothing in fact is more comical than the familiar asperity of the author's style and the pedagogic fashion in which he pushes and pulls his unhappy pupils about, jerking their heads toward this, rapping their knuckles for that, sending them to stand in corners and giving them Scripture texts to copy. But it is neither the felicities nor the aberrations of detail, in Mr. Ruskin's writings, that are the main affair for most readers; it is the general tone that, as I have said, puts them off or draws them on. ("Italy Revisited," 379)

The vision here of Ruskin is not far removed from the description of the monstrous master Mr. Creakle in Dickens's *David Copperfield*. Clearly, Ruskin's tone puts James off. In part, Ruskin's paternalistic guise and rhetorical style are an affront to James because they brashly assume that one person's aesthetic experience and perception can dictate and override another's. James reminds us ". . . there are a great many ways of seeing Florence, as there are of seeing most beautiful and interesting things, and . . . it is very dry and pedantic to say that the happy vision depends upon our squaring our toes with a certain particular chalkmark. We see Florence wherever and whenever we enjoy it, and for enjoying it we find a great many more pretexts than Mr. Ruskin seems inclined to allow ("Italy Revisited," 378). The sensibility expressed in passages such as this is essentially democratic and must necessarily stand in opposition to the limitation of experiential possibilities framed by Ruskin. Furthermore, the style of James's commentary is non-exclusive--utterly avoiding the rhetorical guise of "the master"; whereas the rhetoric of Ruskin's discourse seeks to establish and maintain a distance between the knowing author (Ruskin) and his ignorant/seeking audience.

According to James, part of the result of Ruskin's performance of authority (coupled with the nature of his critical conclusions) is a writing style that is ironically not *aesthetic*--but self-consciously political and proselytizing. Ruskin's style and critique suggest that he does not see or experience

tively to assent." James refusal to argue with Ruskin reflects a similar disposition as that expressed toward Besant.

Florence at all--rather his understanding, vision, and commentary are inscribed and determined by a moral imperative that seeks to instruct us on what we are *required* to experience and know. We will not find in *Mornings in Florence* Ruskin posing the question "what is the experience of this beautiful object, building, or landscape for me?" for subjective aesthetic experience is meaningful to Ruskin only to the extent that it reflects the overarching truth content of the object itself (i.e. the ethical universality of the object). For James, the experience of the beautiful and sublime requires a different tone and disposition altogether. He writes: "If the reader [of *Mornings in Florence*] is in daily contact with those beautiful Florentine works which do still, in a way, force themselves into notice through the vulgarity and cruelty of modern profanation, it will seem to him that this commentator's comment is pitched in the strangest falsetto key" ("Italy Revisited," 379). According to James, Ruskin's writing does not communicate the sensuous experience of the aesthetic sublime (which is partially proven through his strange "falsetto key"). Indeed, the concept of the sublime (abstractly conceived within a specific socio-historical ideology) overshadows its physical experience to the extent that the sensuous is withdrawn from Ruskin's text and all that is left is ideological abstraction.

Of course, James will not flatly deny the perceptions of Ruskin--they very well may accord with Ruskin's own aesthetic experience (though, again, this is nearly impossible to determine given the fact that subjective experience is hard to trace behind the rhetoric of authority and ethical critique rehearsed throughout Ruskin's prose); but rather he opposes Ruskin's implicit claim that his view of Florence is the only one that is true. The idea of one truth not only rubs against the grain of what James perceives as the overarching characteristic of Florence and Florentine culture, but it is also an affront to the essential subjective dimension of aesthetic response. We get a very clear view of James's ire toward Ruskin's brand of criticism in the following:

I had really been enjoying the good old city of Florence, but now I learned from Mr. Ruskin that this was a scandalous waste of charity. I should have gone about with an imprecation on my lips. I should have worn a face three yards long. I had taken great pleasure in certain frescoes of Ghirlandaio in the choir of that very church [Santa Maria Novella]; but it appeared from one of the little books that these frescoes were as naught. I had much admired Santa Croce and had thought the Duomo a very noble affair; but I had now the most positive assurance I knew nothing about them. After a while, if it was only ill-humour that was needed for doing honour to the city of the Medici, I felt that I had risen to a proper level; only now it was Mr. Ruskin himself I had lost patience with, not the stupid Brunelleschi, not the vulgar Ghirlandaio. Indeed, I lost patience altogether, and asked myself by what right this informal votary of form pretended to run riot through a poor charmed *flaneur's* quiet contemplations, his attachment to the noblest pleasures, his enjoyment of the loveliest of cities. The little books seemed invidious and insane. . . . ("Italy Revisited, 377)

All the resentment, frustration, and bitterness that James reads in Ruskin's late criticism are projected here. Through James's response, Ruskin's guise of authority is recast as tyrannical. But this response is perhaps to be expected, for the flaneur cannot but feel ill-disposed toward the moralist who would deny the very essence of his being--which is the leisurely pursuit of the sensuous experience of the charmed and the beautiful within the urban space.

For James, Florence promises something more, and yet less defined, than Ruskin's criticism allows. James experiences Florence as, at least in part, a place of secrets and mystery. In "The Autumn in Florence," James offers this impression: ". . . the very quality of the decline of the year as we at present here feel it suits peculiarly the mood in which an undiscourageable gatherer of the sense of things, or taster at least of 'charm,' moves through these many memoried streets and galleries and churches. Old things, old places, old people, or at least old races, ever strike us as giving out their secrets most freely in such moist, grey, melancholy days as have formed the complexion of the past fortnight" (375). The notion of aesthetic meaning revealed through metaphoric mists and somber light is dramatically different from the "instructive" conception of aesthetic meaning found in Ruskin. For Ruskin, art (and the art of cities) mean only to the extent that they communicate some definitive idea; for James, the opposite is at least equally true. The "purpose," if such a thing in fact exists, of the Florentine aesthetic is not to direct thought to some ideological conclusiveness, but rather to foster an openness and receptivity to the sense and charm of things. In other words, contra Ruskin, definitive conceptualization (or ideology) is not the primary communicative end of artistic expression. In fact, we are told that in Florence "aimless contemplation grows less and less ashamed" ("The Autumn in Florence," 376) precisely because the mutability and vastness of potential aesthetic response necessarily frustrates and explodes rigid, purposeful intellection. Florence as an emblem of aesthetic mutability is thus forever amiable, for it invites people to partake in the sensuous and variable pleasure of beauty:

The memorials of the past here address us moreover with a friendliness, win us by we scarcely know what sociability, what equal amenity, that we scarce find matched in other great aesthetically endowed communities and periods. Venice, with her old palaces cracking under the weight of their treasures, is, in her influence, insupportably sad; Athens, with her maimed marbles and dishonoured memories, transmutes the consciousness of sensitive observers, I am told, into a chronic heartache; but in one's impression of old Florence the abiding felicity, the sense of saving sanity, of something sound and human, predominates, offering you a medium still conceivable for life. The reason of this is partly, no doubt, the "sympathetic" nature, the temperate joy, of Florentine art in general. ("The Autumn in Florence" 381)

Although James describes the Florentine Renaissance as "one of the happiest periods of human Taste" (380), he does not suggest that the essential joyousness of Florentine culture

⁷One recalls James' response to Sir Walter Besant in "The Art of Fiction" that he should "find it difficult to dissent from anyone of these [Besant's] recommendations" and yet at the same time "should find it difficult posi-

ends with the Renaissance. Rather, there is an ease of character that continues into modernity, despite social and historical changes:

A part of the essential amiability of Florence, of her genius for making you take to your favour on easy terms everything that in any way belongs to her, is that she has already flung an element of her grace over all their undried mortar and plaster. Such modern arrangements as the Piazza d'Aseglio and the *viale* or Avenue of the Princess Margaret please not a little, I think—for what they are!—and do so even in a degree, by some fine local privilege, just because they are Florentine. The afternoon lights rest on them as if to thank them for not being worse, and their vistas are liberal where they look toward the hills. ("The Autumn in Florence" 378)

Ultimately, elegance and cheer are the essence of Florence for James—and these qualities can be experienced despite the ravages and shifts of time (an idea that escapes Ruskin in his critique of modernity). James writes that all objections to the Florentine present are "too vain, and that he would be too rude a critic here [in Florence] who shouldn't be in the humour to take the thick with the thin and to try at least to read something of the old soul into the new forms" ("The Autumn in Florence," 377). Presumably, one cannot truly object to the present if at all sensitive to the achievements of the past, for the "old soul" lingers and inscribes itself into the new. Indeed, the artistic monuments of the past do not beckon us to judge the folly of the present but rather to cultivate a sympathetic feeling toward others and for the diversity and wonder of beauty and art. As James tells us, the privilege of art is "to make us friendly to the human mind and not to make us suspicious of it" ("Florentine Notes," 402).

The critical contrasts between James and Ruskin certainly go beyond mere differences in character and taste. At the core, what is at stake, for both, is the (inter)subjective and social significance of art, past and present. For Ruskin, the dissipation of the ethical authority and social centrality of art is part of the tragedy of modern culture. Throughout his writings, Ruskin tells us that vibrant art reflects and encourages social cohesion and stability in the intersubjective or shared understanding of its ultimate meaning. The failure to know the truth about art, or art as the expression of the true, is socially dangerous and destructive for it facilitates a breakdown of various levels of social authority. James intimates, however, that to speak of the truth about art is misguided precisely because such language seeks to control and limit the subjective and social capacity of aesthetic response. Indeed, if one's aesthetic experiences are nullified by an authoritative (totalizing) critique, then art certainly must lose its broad social significance. For James, the subjective reception and response to the aesthetic sublime is ultimately free from the containing language of authority.

In the perception of the autonomy of art and aesthetic experience, we may mark one of the historical shifts from a paradigmatic brand of Victorian aesthetics (represented most clearly in the work of Ruskin) in which the finality of truth stands as the critical object of experience and understanding,

to that of British Modernism, where the aesthetic sublime is deemed to be always already in excess of any commentary that would abstract and limit the possibility of subjective response and knowing. Arguably, the first full-blown critical expression of the shift from Victorian to Modernist aesthetics is found in Walter Pater's *The Renaissance*. We discover that Pater is very much in line with the sensibility expressed in James's Florentine commentary, when he writes: "Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness" (xix). A bit later, we find Pater expressing an essential Jamesian idea: "What is important is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal" (xxi). Throughout James's work there is a conscious rejection of a "universalizing" or "essentialist" approach toward art and aesthetic experience, but nowhere does it manifest itself so clearly as in his Florentine essays and his response to the Florentine criticism of John Ruskin. Ultimately, James's Florence is emblematic of the fluidity, or mutability, of the aesthetic and thus it will not tolerate one frame of vision for it invites all.

Works Cited

- Edel, Leon. *Henry James: A Life*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.
- _____. "The Italian Journeys of Henry James." *The Sweetest Impression of Life: the James Family and Italy*. Eds. James W. Tuttleton and Agostino Lombardo. New York: New York UP, 1990. 8-21.
- James, Henry. "The Art of Fiction." 1884. *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*. Ed. James E. Miller, Jr. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1972. 28-44.
- _____. "The Autumn in Florence." 1873. *Italian Hours*. 1909. New York: Horizon Press, 1969. 375-387.
- _____. "Florentine Notes." *Italian Hours*. 1909. New York: Horizon Press, 1969. 391-427.
- _____. "Italy Revisited." 1878. *The Art of Travel*. Ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel. New York: Doubleday, 1958. 370-383.
- _____. *Selected Letters*. Ed. Leon Edel. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987.
- _____. "Venice." 1882. *The Art of Travel*. Ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel. New York: Doubleday, 1958. 384-414.
- Maves, Carl. *Sensuous Pessimism: Italy in the Works of Henry James*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973.
- Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. 1893. Ed. Donald Hill. Berkeley: U of California P, 1980.
- Ruskin, John. *Ariadne Florentina*. 1873. *Ruskin's Works*. New York: Merril and Baker, n.d.
- _____. *Mornings in Florence*. 1877. *Ruskin's Works*. New York: Merril and Baker, n.d.
- _____. *Praeterita*. 1889. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978.
- _____. *St. Mark's Rest*. 1882. *Ruskin's Works*. New York: Merril and Baker, n.d.

Bradley University

The Aesthetics of Adventure: The Dark Sublime and the Rise of the Colonial Anti-Hero

Andrew Libby

One of the most fascinating and appealing qualities of the sublime is its elasticity, the many changes in meaning and form that it admits. First conceived of as a rhetorical description in praise of lofty, elevating sentiments that lift up the spirit with a sense of awe and wonder, the sublime swelled into a full-blown aesthetic category in the eighteenth century. British philosophers such as Joseph Addison, John Baillie, Joseph Priestley, James Usher, Alexander Gerard, Hugh Blair and, most notably, Edmund Burke, enlarged the traditional definition of the sublime established by Longinus and reworked it as an aesthetic concept highlighting the complexities of affective expression. Part of a larger project to establish standards for taste and to find regulative principles for emotional responses to the sensory world, the sublime became central to a secular language directed towards understanding how people saw the world around them, how they defined themselves as subjects, and how they related to each other as individuals. At a time of increasing skepticism towards epistemological certainty guaranteed by religious faith, aesthetics offered a new avenue for knowledge and understanding, one grounded in individual perception and empirical sense. More than anything else, aesthetics promised the possibility for reconciling the general to the particular, symbolically connecting the sensory world to a harmonious moral and rational order.

But the sublime complicates this new form of knowledge-production. As a signifier of excess, the sublime shows moments in which reason and rational enquiry are inadequate for understanding the world around us. Indeed, for Burke and his contemporaries, the sublime encounter is a moment of fear and trembling that overwhelms, at least temporarily, the powerful authority of the self. In the presence of the sublime, the mind is so filled with its object, it can entertain no thoughts on any other subject; it is a moment of terrifying paralysis that temporarily suspends the activities of the mind. For Burke in particular, terror is the ruling principle of the sublime and any "delight" one might feel in the presence of something as awesome as the sublime turns on pain rather than on pleasure.¹

¹For Burke, the sublime is a type of double signification, a quality found in the sublime object itself as well as the affective experience of the perceiving subject. Thus, his *Enquiry* is an attempt to distinguish both the causes and effects of the sublime and, as Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla note, he moves between "psychological explanations of sublime affect and descriptions of the qualities of external objects that occasion the sublime" (12). For this to be a rational basis for inquiry, however, Burke is limited to investigating what he terms the "efficient cause" of the sublime, insisting that the standard for both Taste and Reason have fixed principles that are the same for all individuals, and rejecting the notion that anyone can come to a conclusion about the "ultimate cause" of such an experience. Burke defends his empiricist model this way: "If the imagination is not affected according to some invariable and certain laws, our labour is like to be employed to very little purpose; as it must be judged as a useless, if not an absurd undertaking, to lay down rules for caprice, and to set up for a legis-

As a matter of interest in nineteenth-century literary studies, the sublime has long been associated with the Gothic novel and romantic poetry; less has been said of the sublime in relation to Victorian literature however. With the notable exception of a few Victorianists such as George Levine in *The Realistic Imagination* and Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes*, the sublime has been important to critics only so long as it has remained elevated on the highest of romantic mountaintops or hidden in the gloomiest of Gothic towers. This inattention to a Victorian version of the sublime is not entirely surprising, however, given that the Victorians tended to downplay aesthetic concerns themselves. Broadly speaking, the Victorian period was a historical moment devoted more to the ideals of industrial progress, capitalist efficiency, utilitarian social reform, and empire-building than to connecting individuals through shared aesthetic pleasures and beliefs.² Despite the determined efforts of Victorian cultural critics such as John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and William Morris, aesthetics was no match for the atomized social order that accompanied industrialization in the nineteenth century; individuals pitted aggressively against one another in the marketplace were joined more forcefully by abstract political rights than through the aesthetic realm of sentiments and taste.

Even realism, the dominant literary genre of the period, tended to resist traditional aesthetic categories by its emphasis on detailed descriptions of the commonplace and the everyday. In keeping with the rise of bourgeois individualism, Victorian realism was a genre of non-transcendence motivated by an impulse to reproduce "objective" reality, whereas aesthetics concerns itself with questions of affective response, judgments of taste, and moments of rapturous transport. The tension between these two registers is reflected in Victorian criticism that generally focuses on social and cultural history more than on aesthetics. But such inattention to aesthetic concerns is much to be regretted and this essay is an attempt to redress this neglect and to locate the sublime within a Victorian context. Specifically, I will be looking at what it means that the sublime comes down

lator of whims and fancies. . . we do and we must suppose that as the conformation of their organs are nearly, or altogether the same in all men, so the manner of perceiving external objects is in all men the same, or with little difference" (12-13).

²As John Ruskin noted, the Victorians were more interested in celebrating their industrial achievements than celebrating the aesthetic pleasure such achievement might make possible: "It is long since you built a great cathedral; and how you would laugh at me if I proposed building a cathedral on the top of one of these hills of yours, to make an Acropolis! But your railroad mounds, vaster than the walls of Babylon; your railroad stations, vaster than the temple of Ephesus, and innumerable; your chimneys, how much more mighty and costly than cathedral spires! your harbors; your warehouses; your exchanges!—all these are built to your great Goddess of 'Getting-on'; and she has formed, and will continue to form, your architecture, as long as you worship her" (*Traffic* 242-243).

from the mountaintop--that it migrates from Mont Blanc to the heart of darkness--in the Victorian period and the ways in which aesthetics are implicated in the furious nineteenth-century enthusiasm for empire and Pax Britannica.

The site of both terrifying savagery and outstanding heroism, the sublime takes on political meaning in pro-imperialist Victorian adventure fiction as an aesthetic sanction for the values and prejudices under which British imperialism prospered and British cultural hegemony was defended. Specifically, moments in adventure fiction in which heroic exploits are written in the register of the sublime present opportunities for the British protagonists to fulfill their exotic desires and to contain native resistance to their power. As pro-imperialist propaganda, the stories use the sublime to teach the reader how to convert native savages to Christianity; how to fight back in threatening and dangerous situations; how to maintain moral integrity in the face of almost-certain death; how to promote British commercial interests in the colonial territories; and how to preserve racial purity while in close proximity to sexually tempting and treacherous women. Rather than a check on British power, the sublime encounter becomes an occasion for pro-imperialist writers to use the aesthetics of literary representation to reinforce the economic, political, religious and scientific ambitions used to justify and encourage British imperialism.

Responding to an eager audience of British boys hungry to read about soldiers, missionaries, and explorers living on the fringes of Great Britain's expanding empire, adventure fiction found renewed popularity and, to some degree, renewed cultural prestige in the mid-to-late Victorian period. Though awash in violence, fighting, killing, and cannibalism, adventure stories were more than bloody entertainment; they prepared young readers to imagine themselves as colonizers, tempting them to issue forth from Britain in search of places to explore, civilize, and rule. The ideological power of these narratives is determined by the willingness and capacity of the young, male readers to reduce the distance between themselves and the characters they were reading about. Rather than regarding characters from a distance, smiling at their foibles and mildly appreciating their successes, adventure stories encouraged the reader to indulge in courageous suffering and triumphant conquests in a more immediate way, replacing the characters with images of themselves, the readers, plunging into the action. When the distance between reader and text can be reduced in this way, adventure stories become a means for instilling the joys, fears, and desires of imperialism into the young, almost always male, Victorian reader. Because the heroes in these stories typically insist that they are just ordinary men acting as any other ordinary man would act upon finding himself accidentally swallowed up in extraordinary circumstances, the characters' exploits fit neatly into the fantasies of the readers themselves.

Moreover, by representing the colonial territories as a site where power and virtue could be linked without question to the white, male European protagonist, pro-imperialist adventure fiction worked to displace cultural and political

threats engendered by industrialization and territorial expansion onto the colonial "Other." Traditional class and gender hierarchies coming under attack at home were translated into a colonial context in which white, male European adventurers could comfortably reaffirm their superiority to the natives through firmly entrenched hierarchies based on racial difference. Rather than cruel profiteers, the British are represented as conquerors motivated by the ideals of "civilization" and "progress." As powerful victors, their triumphs get associated with the positive qualities of the sublime--vigor, boldness, bravery, and magnanimity--and their successful encounters against terrifying natives make the British protagonists stronger, more invulnerable, and more heroic than they were before their adventures began. Stripped down, it is a logic which says that the British are great because they are able to tame enormous savagery. But to see how the savages and savage landscapes are represented in the register of the sublime, and to recognize that it need not be so, is to understand the assumptions and prejudices on which pro-imperialist adventure narratives are based and in the ways in which ready-made aesthetic categories were used to sanction the ideology of British empire-building.

By the 1880s, several centuries of geographic and ethnographic "discovery," commercial trade, and Christian missionary evangelicalism was reaching its climax and empire was beginning to feel the weight of its own success. In 1884, the Berlin Conference systematically divided Africa between the leading European colonial powers and, as a result, new territorial acquisitions came to be ruled on an increasingly formal basis. The "New Imperialism," as it was later called, was characterized by an increasing sense of urgency to annex as much land as quickly as possible while there was still unexplored, unmapped, unsettled land left to be had. As British foreign secretary Lord Rosebery noted in 1893, the world was not "elastic." Thus, Britain needed to stake its claim to as many foreign territories as possible before other colonial powers--Germany, France, Belgium, and the United States--did so. Rosebery sums up his version of imperialism this way: "We have to consider that countries must be developed by ourselves or some other nation" (qtd. in Bongie 18).³

To some adventure writers, the increasingly rapid acquisition of colonial territories in Africa was cause for alarm. Geographic exploration, capitalist expansion, and technological progress threatened to turn the world into what James Buzard calls "the beaten track" and to turn would-be explorers and adventurers into nothing better than bourgeois tourists. The threat that the world was rapidly becoming smaller and that opportunities for heroic adventure were diminishing--that there was nothing left to see or do--complicated earlier Victorian confidence in British imperialism and gave rise to fears that adventure, mystery, and conquest were part of an increasingly distant past. Soon, H. Rider Haggard complained in 1894, there would be no secret places left for adventurers, explorers, or romance writers to pursue the "ancient mystery of Africa" that haven't already been ruined by the "pestilent accuracy of the geographer" (qtd. in Brantlinger 239). This depressing view of

ency, dominion, or commonwealth by 1878 and the number increased to eighty-five percent by 1914 (8).

the world that Haggard associated with late-Victorian "New Imperialism" still inspired wild adventure stories, however. Indeed, for many writers, Haggard included, these stories came to serve as nostalgic compensation for a world increasingly deprived of faraway places, romantic quests, and exotic horizons.⁴

But the concern, even antipathy, towards geographic exploration and colonial expansion from Victorian adventurers and adventure writers suggests a shift away from the close relationship between romance fiction, empire-building, and the thrilling sublime encounters that had characterized adventure stories throughout much of the nineteenth century.⁵ Because imperialism is, to some degree, the process by which "Otherness" abroad is done away with and reconstituted as "Sameness," the very conditions which romance requires--mystery, wilderness, danger--were just those that were diminishing in the aftermath of the Berlin Conference.⁶ The warring natives and savage cannibals who were the enemies of imperialism only a few decades earlier were now an endangered species that romance writers needed to protect, at least in their imaginations. As John McClure notes: "Without the unordered spaces, or spaces disordered by war, it is impossible to stage the wandering and disorientations, the quests and conquests and conversions, the ordeals and sacrifices and triumphs that are the stuff of romance" (2-3). Indeed, the nearer that Great Britain and other colonizing countries came to completely annexing, exploring, mapping, and converting the rest of the world, the more uneasy adventure writers became.

Specifically, in novels of empire written in the 1890s by Robert Louis Stevenson, H.G. Wells, and Joseph Conrad, the brave, daring escapades and extraordinary opportunities for heroism and glory that had long been standard fare in pro-imperialist Victorian adventure fiction are muted, replaced by narratives focused on decay, disease, and corruption. In Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide*, Wells's *The Island of the Dr. Moreau*, and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the heroes of empire are recast from brave heroes to misguided fanatics and profiteers who aggressively pursue their own individual ambitions with little regard for the consequences of their extremism or the ethical compromises their obsessions demand. The role of the sublime in these novels is essen-

⁴As Chris Bongie notes, what is at stake in adventure fiction is "the evasion of a now ineluctably modern, technological, and democratizing civilization. The adventure novel is deployed as a symbolic form uniquely suited for preserving, in a (spatially or temporally) distant locale, whatever seemed no longer to have a place in the rapidly changing world of the industrial revolution" (12).

⁵In *The Political Unconscious*, Frederic Jameson notes that the raw materials for romance depend on regions unconquered and unchanged by rationalization, industrialization, and centralized rule. At one time, Jameson argues, Europe itself was such a place and writers drew upon the histories of apostles, saints and martyrs as the basis for their romances. But, as a result of economic modernization, Europe exhausted its supply of dramatic incidents and was forced to look elsewhere, to as yet unexplored regions in Africa, the South Pacific, Asia, and the Arctic, to find reserves of magic and mystery and to fulfill its longing for romances of conquest and adventure.

⁶In "About Fiction," Haggard describes what he sees as the corrupted state of exploration, travel, and adventure in contemporary Victorian society this way: "There are now royal roads to everything, with staring placards, whereon he who runs may learn the uses of advertisement; but it is dusty work to follow them, and we may think that our ancestors on the whole found their voyaging shadier and fresher business" (174).

⁷In the British aesthetic tradition, the notion of a "dark" sublime, one that is astonishing as well as malignant, received significant attention during the eighteenth century. Writers including David Hume, John Baillie, Adam Smith, Hugh Blair, and James Beattie, among others, wrote on the distinction between sublime heroism and ethical action. Essentially, they argued

tially amoral and anti-social and it reveals itself as much through the cruel excesses of their "civilizing" missions as it does through the grand scale of their colonial desires. It is a non-transcendental aesthetic rooted in irrationality, fear, and self-preservation, one that reverses the heroism typically associated with sublime conquest in adventure fiction. White men spread misery rather than enlightenment, depravity rather than salvation, and the imperial promise of "progress" and "civilization" quickly mutates into a grotesque parody of British idealism. Stevenson's John Attwater, Wells's Dr. Moreau, and Conrad's Mr. Kurtz are men with neither internal nor external checks on their desires; the way in which they abuse their power exposes both the anti-heroic nature of late Victorian imperialism and the false rhetoric used to prop up a corrupt and dying colonial system.

In these novels, the sublime is not introduced through confrontations with rude nature, but instead is occasioned by human cruelty and injustice. For just as the physical world can be the site of terror and astonishment, so too can human violence be experienced on aesthetic terms. As Joel Black asks: "Why shouldn't the malevolence and the inscrutable purpose of the murderer--the heir of Cain, the transgressor of the sixth commandment--be capable of stirring us with awe?" (14). Such a prospect suggests a conflict between our aesthetic sensibilities and our moral judgments, yet this kind of dissonance is possible because the sublime need not be evidence of humankind's moral nature, but may instead be evidence of humankind's potential for corruption, viciousness, and malevolence. Like Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Attwater, Moreau, and Kurtz are great without being good, powerful without being just. In the tradition of the "dark" sublime, these figures have the ambition and energy to bring forth admiration, but not approval; they are symbols of the grand dream of empire turned towards mean, contemptible, and selfish ends. Their cruelty and despotism undermines the aesthetic sanction that taming the sublime guarantees in the logic of British empire-building and the way they abuse their power exposes both the excesses of late-Victorian imperialism and the anti-heroic nature of a colonial system built on the false authority of British moral superiority.⁷

that virtue is the most potent source of the awe, but that it is not a necessary condition of the sublime. Thus, as Beattie points out in *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (1783), we want to approve of what we admire, but this need not be the case. As in the case of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "there are no qualities that can be called good in a moral view. . . yet there is the grandeur of a ruined archangel: there is boldness, which no power, but what is Almighty, can intimidate. These qualities are astonishing: and, though we always detect his malignity, we are often compelled to admire that very greatness by which we are confounded and terrified" (183). Frequently citing military leaders and "splendid conquerors" as figures of the sublime, Beattie and others readily admitted that successful conquest tempers the rashness, folly, and injustice which it brings forth. Such is the force of the sublime, John Baillie argued, that even those men "who in one light can be esteemed no other than the butchers of the human race, yet when considered as braving dangers, conquering kingdoms, and spreading [the] terror of their name to them of distant nations, tower over the rest of mankind, and become almost the objects of worship." It is this way, Baillie notes, that empires can be thought of as grand, "though they partake nothing of virtue" and empire-builders thought of as sublime though the world suffers for their ambition, (94). In the context of late-nineteenth-century imperialism, the logic of this "dark" sublime unmasks the pretence of Britain's "civilizing mission." Rather than occupying a position of moral authority and benevolence, powerful and domineering men like Stevenson's Attwater, Wells's Moreau, and Conrad's Kurtz misdirect their heroic energy towards contemptible and mean ends and eventually corrupt all that they themselves have created.

³As Edward Said notes in *Culture and Imperialism*, European powers held sixty-seven percent of the world as either a colony, protectorate, depend-

Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide* (1894), written partly in collaboration with his step-son Lloyd Osbourne, was the last novel he published before his death and one that he called "as grim a tale as was ever written, and as grimy, and as hateful" (qtd. in Beckson 357). The novel takes place in Tahiti, a site for tricksters, con-men and criminals fleeing more established and "civilized" areas, and focuses on the lives of three miserable beachcombers who are attempting to salvage some profit and dignity from their failed lives. The three become involved in a series of confrontations, some of which turn ugly and violent, before washing up on a pearl-fishing island ruled by a strong-willed religious tyrant, John Attwater. It is, as Stevenson once wrote to his editor Sidney Colvin, the story of bad men, weak men, and strong men with weaknesses. Wells's *Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), published shortly after *Ebb-Tide*, also focuses attention on the questionable dealings of a group of outcasts living on the fringe of empire. The novel tells the story of a half-mad scientist, Dr. Moreau, who has converted a deserted island into a laboratory for cruel experiments in vivisection. Moreau is obsessed with creating a new race of human beings, of perfecting the work of evolution, even as, over time, he populates the island with his failures, a grotesque, dangerous band of semi-human monstrosities. As such, *The Island* becomes a post-Darwinian nightmare, a cautionary tale that emphasizes the hazards of unchecked scientific investigation and the danger of uncompromising ambition. Like *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1901) centers on the fallout from unrestrained desire, this time in the pursuit of ivory in the heart of "darkest" Africa. The story traces Marlow's determined effort to find Mr. Kurtz, whose descent into savagery in the unexplored regions of the Belgian Congo speaks to the corruption and emptiness of Europe's "civilizing" mission. In each of these novels, European power is still written in the register of the sublime. Yet, different from earlier, pro-imperialist adventure stories, the characters who most closely approximate the heroic energy associated with the sublime--Attwater in *Ebb-Tide*, Moreau in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*--represent power unmoored from its ethical base. As such, the power they wield is debased and becomes a means for pursuing either personal wealth or celebrity at the expense of other, more noble ends. In this way, the presence of the sublime in these novels functions as an index of the characters' depravity, malignancy, and anti-heroism, their abuse of power a symbol for the failings of imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century. In the context of these novels, the sublime turns out to have little, if anything, to do with the ethical exercise of power, a realization that strikes at the heart of Victorian notions of piety, racial superiority, and civilized progress.

The Ebb-Tide was originally intended to be the middle part of a trilogy of "south sea yarns" that Stevenson planned to co-author with Osbourne, the first part published separately as *The Wrecker* (1892) and the third part never written. The process of writing *The Ebb-Tide* was both intermittent and laborious for Stevenson: the novel took three separate periods of writing and five years to complete, without Osbourne, between February and June 1893. At one point, he confided to editor, Sidney Colvin, that he halted at each

paragraph and struggled with every sentence, calling his lack of assurance while writing *The Ebb-Tide* "a strange doom; after [I have] worked so easily for so long" (qtd. in *The Ebb-Tide*, An Introduction). Colvin was not particularly sympathetic, however, doing little to encourage or reassure Stevenson. Though a long-time friend to Stevenson, he tended to have little praise for Stevenson's South Seas writings and he had a particularly strong dislike for the harsh setting and unseemly characters of *Ebb-Tide*. What Colvin objected to most was Stevenson's unwillingness to introduce the bold optimism and manly behavior that had characterized Stevenson's earlier romances like *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* into this novel. But by the 1890s, Stevenson saw that the South Seas were better suited for bleak tales of criminals and vagabonds than they were for delightful, heroic adventure stories featuring intrepid and honest European imperialists.

Indeed, the opening line of *Ebb-Tide* presents Tahiti as a lost paradise, a once-lovely island now polluted by European trade and misguided visions of progress: "Throughout the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease" (3). As the novel opens, colonial activity still proceeds with vigor in Tahiti, though the island is contaminated by an epidemic of smallpox brought by a Peruvian trading vessel. Of the three types of Westerners in the South Seas that Stevenson mentions--those who "mounted the steps of thrones and owned islands and navies"; those who marry native women "sprawl in palm-leaf verandahs and entertain an island audience with memories of the music hall"; and those "less pliable, less capable, less fortunate"--the first half of the novel focuses attention on the latter. Robert Herrick, the disappointing son of an English gentleman; Captain Davis, a disgraced, alcoholic sea-captain; and Huish, an ill-bred, mean-spirited lower-class Englishman make up the "trio" of the novel and live together in an abandoned calaboose on the beach. Driven together by accident, common misfortune, and desperation, the threesome are the "most miserable English-speaking creatures in Tahiti" and are absolutely ill-suited for each other's company. They relentlessly expose each other's weaknesses and frequently get involved in vicious, sometimes violent, disagreements.

Of the three, Herrick is by far the most sympathetic. Well-educated and kind, Herrick spends much of his time on the beach reading from a tattered copy of Virgil that he carries around, stopping on occasion to recall pleasant images from his childhood: "the busy schoolroom, the green playing fields, holidays at home, the perennial roar of London, and the fireside, and the white head of his father" (4). Though a successful student at Oxford, perfectly honest in his dealings with others, and disinclined towards alcohol, Herrick's career was nonetheless one of failure and "unbroken shame" (5). He was not exactly incompetent; rather, Herrick tended to neglect his business affairs. He had no interest or consistency in practical matters, continually let his duties go undone, and was discharged from job after job until he ended up thoroughly disgraced and left with few options other than to escape from England for a different kind of life elsewhere. Though aware that a fortune could be made quickly in either pearls or copra, Herrick was more of a drifter than a profiteer and he "entertained no hope to reinstate himself or help

his straightened family; he came to the islands (where he knew the climate to be soft, bread cheap and manners easy) a skulker from life's battle and his own immediate duty. Failure, he had said, was his portion; let it be a pleasant failure" (6).

Formally, the novel is split into two sections, "The Trio" and "The Quartet." In the first part, Davis learns that *The Farallone*, a schooner bound for Australia with a cargo of California champagne is anchored in the harbor. The officers on the ship have died from smallpox and no one is willing to board the contaminated ship. Davis successfully pleads for a commission from the Colonial Board to captain the ship, prevents the Polynesian crew of three from deserting, and boards the ship with Herrick and Huish. At Huish's urging, Davis pilots the ship away from Australia and towards South America, hoping to land in Peru or Ecuador and sell the cargo and ship illegally in local markets. Once they are underway, however, Davis and Huish indulge in a series of drunken celebrations, consuming case after case of the champagne they are intending to sell. Once they discover that only the top layer of cargo holds champagne and that they have been double-crossed by the ship's owners--the ship was intended to be scuttled and the owners were to collect the insurance--the trio begin to quarrel fiercely among themselves and are in danger of starving at sea. Fortunately for them, they spy a small, uncharted atoll in the distance that Davis knows to be a privately owned pearling island. Initially hoping only for provisions to help them on their way, Huish and Davis hatch a plan to plunder the island and murder the owner of the pearling operation if they get a chance.

With the introduction of John Attwater--pearl entrepreneur, missionary, soldier--the trio form a new Quartet. Attwater is instantly suspicious of Huish and Davis and favors Herrick as his confidante. He is less vulnerable than initially appears and boasts of his excellent marksmanship and apparent willingness to be as ruthless as necessary to have his way. Undeterred by Attwater's bravado, Huish still plans to attack him by hurling a bottle of vitriol in his face. It is a barbaric scheme and Davis only reluctantly agrees after Huish insists upon violence with unwavering savagery. "I ain't afryde of Attwater, I ain't afryde of you, and I ain't afryde of words. You want to kill people that's wot you want; but you want to do it in kid gloves, and it can't be done that w'y. Murder ain't genteel, it ain't easy, it ain't safe, and it tykes a man to do it" (117).

Huish comes within range of Attwater, but the instant before he throws the acid, Attwater steps forward and calmly shoots him in the head and walks away. Any threat to his island from the trio is now clearly over. Herrick and Davis are at his mercy and are relieved to find that they are not to be punished, but rather that Attwater forgives them their trespasses and entreats them to stay with him as long as they choose. And yet, Attwater, though victorious and in control at the end of the story is less heroic than it appears at first glance. If the weak-willed Herrick and wishy-washy Davis are one type of men drifting on the edge of empire and the ruthless and sinister Huish another, Attwater is yet a different kind of anti-hero. More disciplined and successful than any of the other three, Attwater nonetheless embodies the corruption and rotteness of a fading empire through his misuse of power in the name of justice and duty

Attwater's fanatic cruelty is not apparent at first, however; initially, he seems rather charming. He invites the trio to dine with him and entertains them in high spirits, flattering each of them in turn. When Herrick asks him what brought him to the islands, Attwater cites a variety of reasons--the thrill of romance, the adventure of the high seas, restless curiosity--that seem both innocent and praiseworthy. But when he mentions an interest in missionary work, the tone of his speech abruptly changes and the more despotic side of his character is revealed. He criticizes missionary work in the South Seas for its soft touch and lapsed ways: "They go the wrong way to work; they are too parsonish, too much of the old wife, and even the old apple-wife. Clothes, clothes, are their idea; but clothes are not Christianity, any more than they are the sun in heaven, or could take the place of it! They think a parsonage with roses, and church bells, and nice old women bobbing in the lanes, are part and parcel of religion. But religion is a savage thing like the universe it illuminates: savage, cold and bare, but infinitely strong" (83). From this, Attwater launches into full-scale, Old Testament, fire-and-brimstone rhetoric, telling the shocked trio that on his island, he is "a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge" and the maker of a "new people" (84). Far more than an isolated pearling station, the island is Attwater's private universe which he commands with the absolute authority of a religious megalomaniac. Calling the natives he encountered when he first arrived there "beggars," Attwater blames their recent death from smallpox on divine anger: "The angel of the Lord smote them and they were not!" (84). Even his interest in the religious salvation of his servants doesn't make Attwater into much of a benevolent colonial master. He is a harsh, unsympathetic judge, as interested in profit as he is in religion. Calling himself a "man of the world" as much as he is a Christian, Attwater explains to his company that no good ever came from either befriending the natives or treating them as equals (146).

In the stories he tells it becomes clear that Attwater is less a missionary than a vengeful religious patriarch, imposing fear and exacting punishments upon those in his dominion. In this way, Attwater embodies the aggressive and malevolent nature of the "dark" sublime. He is like the sublime anti-hero Adam Smith described a century earlier in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* come to life, a man "of the most perfect self-command, whom no difficulty can discourage, no danger appal [sic], and who are at all times ready for the most daring and desperate enterprises, but who, at the same time, seem to be hardened against all sense either of justice or humanity" (247). Attwater humbles and diminishes those weaker than himself in a manner that undercuts the rhetoric of damnation and salvation used to justify imperialism and exposes the corrupting nature of late-Victorian colonial profiteering. It is, in essence, a kind of role reversal. Rather than converting the sublime, Attwater abuses the power that he wields, hurting those he has come to help. He brings terror rather than salvation, death rather than progress, and yet continues to think of himself as the heroic representative of light and progress. It is an ironic misrecognition, yet one that makes visible Stevenson's critique of Victorian colonialism.

Attwater's cruelty is never more evident than in the "queer case" he tells to the trio. One of his natives, whom

Attwater calls *Sullens* because of his mischievous and unrepentant behavior, gets into trouble over and over again until Attwater is weary of punishing him and he is weary of being punished. One time, as Attwater readies to deliver yet another whipping, *Sullens* turns towards him with a "spark" in his eye and looks prepared to speak. But this, according to the rules laid out for the natives on the island, is "cause for further punishment." As Attwater tells the trio: "Now, the regulations of this place are formal upon one point; we allow no explanations. None are received, none allowed to be offered" (98). Two days later, however, Attwater realizes he has miscarried justice, forces another native whom he calls *Obsequious* to climb a tree, and shoots him like a "whimpering" dog just after he confesses.

Attwater's matter-of-fact, emotionless recitation of these events to the trio speaks to both his uncompromising sense of abstract justice and his complete lack of mercy. His power on the island is absolute and even though *Obsequious* "recited his crime [and] recommended his soul to God" at the last minute, his reversal was not nearly enough to temper Attwater's harsh judgment. Herrick, however, is horrified and hysterical when he hears the tale, calling Attwater a "monstrous being, Murderer and hypocrite! Murderer and hypocrite! Murderer and hypocrite!" (99). And yet, such denunciations have no effect on Attwater. His island is run according to his own unshakable notions of duty and honor and there is no one strong enough to check the exercise of his power or the way in which he administers justice. At the end of *Ebb-Tide*, Attwater is still firmly in command of his pearling station; he burns *The Farallone*, forgives both Herrick and Davis, and invites them to stay on the island with him to form a newer, more disciplined, and more productive "trio." Davis agrees readily, accepting salvation from Attwater as part of his resurrection, but Herrick demurs and his future remains uncertain at the end of the novel. One thing seems clear, however; he has no interest in joining up with Attwater and remaining with him on the island as part of the pearling operation. Even though he has few options other than returning to his days drifting along the beaches of the South Sea islands, Herrick sees Attwater's religious megalomania and inflexible principles as a dangerous combination, one that has polluted the small island retreat and undercut the principles of progress and civilization which Attwater adopts to sanction his profiteering in the South Seas. In the end, it is clear that Attwater has little to fear and much to gain from the severe order he imposes on those around him; yet equally clear is that he is neither a worthy victor nor his island an outpost of "progress" for those under his rule. In this way, Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide* speaks to both the excesses of unchecked power and the frustrating inability to successfully challenge that power when it is abused in the name of religion, justice, duty, and work by those who profit from it.

Published just two years after *Ebb-Tide*, H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) adopts a similar motif; once again, a hidden colony in the South Seas is ruled by a strange and destructive white man. This time, however, the ironic triumph Stevenson writes for Attwater is replaced by the more horrific vision of Moreau lying dead at the hands of his own grotesque creation. The novel, one of five scientific romances Wells wrote between 1895 and 1901, is an evolu-

tionary parable, a story warning not of a frightening future, but of a dangerous and bloody present. It is the story of a half-mad scientist, Dr. Moreau, who has transformed an isolated island atoll into a fiendish laboratory for his scientific experiments. The novel's protagonist, Edward Prendrick, has been shipwrecked and reluctantly rescued by an assistant to Moreau who takes him to their hideaway. The island is populated with Moreau's weird creations and Prendrick eventually learns that these deformed figures are the results of Moreau's cruel fascination with vivisection. He recalls that Moreau had been, until a few years back, a prominent physiologist in Europe known for his scientific work on blood transfusions. But he had been "simply howled" out of England when "a wretched dog, flayed and otherwise mutilated" escaped from Moreau's laboratory and a newspaper story the same day reported accusations against him for vivisection. But now, far from the scrutiny of his peers, Moreau continues the practice, experimenting on a variety of animals ranging from leopards to pigs to dogs to giant sloths.

As he explains to Prendrick, the creatures on the island are "animals carved and wrought into new shapes," the result of his life-long interest in "the plasticity of living forms" (53). For Prendrick, Moreau's grotesque creations are a source of both disgust and fascination. He is most unsettled by their physical deformities--the clumsy curve of the spine and hunch of the shoulder, the forward bend of the neck, the malformed ears, the disproportionate shortness of the legs in relation to the body, and the strangely colored eyes--yet comes to appreciate, even befriend, a few of them. Moreau, however, abandons the creatures as soon as he creates them, disgusted with his partial successes and eager to begin anew with another combination of animals. To Prendrick's accusations of cruelty, Moreau dispassionately defends his experiments, citing the systematic nature of his research and his expertise in medical science. Noting that previous experiments in vivisection have been conducted "by tyrants, by criminals, by the breeders of horses and dogs," Moreau sees himself instead as a scientific crusader, "the first man to take up this question armed with antiseptic surgery" (53). He talks of his work in grandiose terms, imagining himself as God-like in his power both to create a new species of rational animals and to command from afar those whom he has already experimented upon. Unconcerned with the cruel nature of his surgeries and the suffering it occasions for his victims, Moreau emphasizes instead the steadiness of his pursuit and the tremendous scope of his ambition: "Each time I dip a living creature into the bath of burning pain, I say: this time I will burn out all the animal, this time I will make a rational creature of my own. After all, what is ten years! Man has been a hundred thousand in the making" (58-59). His authority and capacity to inflict pain and suffering on those around him make him a figure of the sublime in the novel and his eventual downfall suggests Wells's critique of Victorian notions of scientific progress in the absence of ethical restraints on the use of power.

Ambitious, yet inflexible, Moreau is sublime in his God-like impulse, a man of great energy and infinite genius who imagines himself as a would-be deity creating life by the miracle of his own genius. But like his literary predecessor, Victor Frankenstein, Moreau is a failed creator. Formed

through excruciatingly painful and bloody surgery, none of Moreau's beast-people ever approximate the version of humanity he desires for them. Moreau is deeply discouraged by his lack of success and hateful towards the monstrosities he creates, but Prendrick sees with some relief the way the beast-people eventually revert to their ordinary forms as time passes: "how, day by day, the human semblance left them; how they gave up bandagings and wrappings, abandoned at last every stitch of clothing; how the hair began to spread over the exposed limbs; how their foreheads fell away and their faces projected" (97). Moreau continues to perform his surgeries with fevered energy, yet the further he proceeds in his attempts to burn out all the animal in his creations, the more he injures the idealism underlying his ambition and distorts the practice of his science. In the end, Moreau is confounded by his incapacity to bend nature to his will and punished for his efforts to destroy and re-create wholly as a testimony to his own rationality and genius. Though his desires and energy are sublime in scope, the savage cruelty he inflicts compromises the ethical basis of his experiments. It is science without restraint and the result is a nightmarish world of pain and suffering "masquerading as the natural order of things, the true state of affairs" (McConnell 92).

But even before their reversion, Prendrick comments on the gross inhumanity of Moreau's experiment in a different light. Though put off by the creatures' various deformities, he sees them as "poor brutes" whose physical suffering during Moreau's surgeries turns into psychological torment once they have left his laboratory. If they were "beasts" before the experiments, what Moreau has turned them into is something far more frightful; they are neither human nor animal but some unsatisfying combination of the two. "Before they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as things may be. Now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fretted by a law they could not understand" (74). Read in the context of late-Victorian anxieties about the efficacy and motives of British empire-building, Prendrick's comments speak to the exploitative nature of imperialism and the shameful assumption that natives, like the animals Moreau experiments upon in his laboratory, are disposable objects open to the bloodthirsty whims of Western science. As McConnell notes, an interpretation of Darwinian theory which insisted that non-Western peoples were "largely non-human until they could be trained to humanity by their white captors and governors" was still widespread in the late-nineteenth century and was often invoked to justify domination, if not necessarily violence, in the name of civilization and progress. In this regard, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is not only a critique of sublime power unchecked by ethical constraints on science, but also a caution against believing that "western man is the only conscious agent in a universe of blind flux, [and] has the right to assimilate God-like powers and God-like arbitrariness and be wary of justifying our brutality, our tyranny over 'races' or non-European members of our species assumed to be less civilized than ourselves" (102). For, if anything, Moreau's failed experiments show the ugly side of civilization and the degree to which

scientific curiosity and the pursuit of rationality can cause suffering for those who are its victims as well as those like Dr. Moreau who use their power indiscriminately to achieve those ends.

Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide* and Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* clarify the ways religion and science get exploited as a pretext for saving and civilizing others; Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* speaks to the excesses of capitalist expansion and individual greed that accompanied imperial progress. For as Conrad recognized, the way in which imperialism was practiced in the late-nineteenth century was no longer guided by "an unselfish belief in the idea--something you can set up, and bow down before." Rather, the taking of land from those with darker complexions and "slightly flatter noses" was ugly and mean and motivated by an insatiable desire for money and power (*Heart of Darkness* 10). Because the nature of nineteenth-century European empire-building, if not all empire-building, was combative and exploitative, it reduced human relationships to questions of power and registered value in terms of profit and domination. It was a system of vast inequality, one in which the powerful few prosper at the expense of the many they use. As Conrad succinctly noted in his essay "Autocracy and War" (1905), European imperialism was little more than a fight for "improving the nigger (as a buying machine)" (qtd. in McClure 96). Yet, even in a situation that appears to be one of complete domination and submission, as in King Leopold's Congo that Conrad chose as the setting for *Heart of Darkness*, the thoroughness by which the European colonizer imposes his will on the natives is also the cause of his ruin. The more he is able to exercise his power, the more frenzied his ambitions become. In the case of Conrad's Mr. Kurtz, the fantasy of total power and control becomes increasingly urgent the more power and control Kurtz accumulates until he can neither see nor understand anything other than his own single-minded pursuit of fortune and fame. In the end, he is undone by the enormous scope of his desires and by the anti-heroic conditions of late-Victorian colonialism which encourage his ambitions.

Of Conrad's deep antipathy towards the kind of colonialism practiced by the Belgians in the Congo there is little doubt. There are moments in *Heart of Darkness*, however, where Conrad is willing to make some qualified defenses of imperialism as the expression of a certain kind of heroic idealism. He connects the British ships entering and leaving the Thames to early Roman explorers, casting each in a romantic light. He envisions them venturing outward from the Thames gloriously conquering new territory and earning the right to spread their civilization around the world. He sees them as "bearers of a spark from the sacred fire" and contemplates how the "dreams of men" become "the germs of empire" (8). Yet Marlow's reverie is brief and shortly thereafter he admits that, truly, the Romans were conquerors rather than colonists, their administration "a squeeze," and their dominance simply a function of superior power. He is not yet ready, however, to condemn British imperialism in quite the same way. The British are different, he asserts, because of their devotion to efficiency, their willingness to colonize for the sake of a larger idea, something unselfish

and true and worthy of the power which backs it. But this distinction, as Marlow's tale is to show, is deceptive, used to protect a corrupt system well after it has lost its idealism. It is the hypocrisy and the hollowness of imperial rhetoric as much as the greed and cruelty it covered up for that Marlow finds most offensive in his attack on late-nineteenth-century imperialism: "More revolting to see without a mask was that falsehood which had been hiding under the words which for ages had spurred men to noble deeds, to self-sacrifice, to heroism. What was appalling was . . . that all the traditional ideals of honour, glory, conscience had been committed to the upholding of a gigantic and atrocious fraud" (282).

There are perhaps no more loathsome characters in Conrad's novel than the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, the grasping band of white men in new suits and tan shoes who pass by Marlow at the Central Station on their way to root out more ivory from the interior. These men are simply profiteers, "sordid buccaneers" whose whole purpose is to "tear treasure out of the bowels of the land" (33). Trudging through the Congo to find ivory with no thoughts of adventure, exploration, and discovery and no ethical principles to guide them, they strike Marlow as the very worst kind of imperialists that Europe has produced. They are selfish and greedy, but what makes them even worse is that, as Marlow points out, they have no sense that there is any other way to proceed in the Congo or any other values with which to guide their actions: "There was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world" (33).

Yet, as bad as the Eldorado Exploring Expedition is, the rest of the white men Marlow encounters on his journey up-river to meet the famed Mr. Kurtz turn out to be little better. Initially, Marlow is impressed with the chief accountant of the Outer Station who, dressed immaculately in white trousers and a light coat, a high starched collar, white cuffs and freshly polished boots, manages to maintain appearances in difficult circumstances. At first glance, Marlow interprets the fine clothes and strict personal discipline as "an achievement of character," but his initial respect is tempered by the awful conditions at the Outer Station. Marlow is demoralized by the site of wretched natives crawling like animals away from the chain gangs to die quietly in the grass and by the accountant's apparent indifference to the misery over which he presides. As Marlow recognizes, the chief accountant is a different kind of imperialist. He is not one of the "strong, lusty, red-eyed devils" who mistreat and bully the natives as they work, but rather a disciplined bureaucrat who has little inclination to think of imperialism as anything more than an opportunity for profit. He is interested only in maintaining orderly records and remains perfectly unsympathetic to the human cost that the ivory trade he promotes so efficiently has occasioned.

Though appalled by the indifference to suffering he encounters at the Outer Station, Marlow is disturbed even more by the "flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" that he was to become acquainted with farther up-river (20). Confined to the Central Station for three months while waiting for repairs to his steamship, Marlow is treated with hostile suspicion by the Station

Manager and his nephew, who associate him with the same "gang of virtue" that initially sent Mr. Kurtz to the interior. Marlow quickly comes to understand that the benevolent sentiments and elevated rhetoric used to sanction colonialism back home has little place deep in the interior. Uninterested in notions of "progress" or "civilization," the manager and his nephew spend most of their energy wandering about the station plotting their own career advancement and calculating how much time they must spend in the Congo before returning to Europe. They mock Kurtz's apparent humanitarian impulses and dismiss his interest in "humanizing, improving, instructing" as "pestiferous absurdity" (34). But for Marlow, the dramatic image of Kurtz "setting his face towards the depths of the wilderness" and paddling back to the interior with a handful of natives awakens him from his growing lethargy and excites in him a curiosity to meet the mysterious white man whom no one seems to understand, yet who inspires both fear and respect from those who have met him.

Kurtz, supposedly, is different from all of the others. He is characterized by one of the agents at the Central Station as "an emissary of pity, and science, and progress," a man of both sympathy and intelligence who has come to the Congo to uplift the natives and to make a profit at the same time. Kurtz's turn towards savagery suggests the difficulty of sustaining such contradictory objectives, however. It is a balancing act that proves to be Kurtz's undoing as he directs his remarkable energy and hypnotic eloquence towards the accumulation of more and more ivory at the expense of his benevolent intentions, a situation that points to the way the sublime is aggressively anti-heroic and detached from ethical action in the context of late-Victorian imperialism. Conrad is vague as to the detailed nature of Kurtz's descent into savagery, instead using phrases like "unspeakable rites" and "monstrous passions" repeatedly to emphasize the psychological depth of Kurtz's despotism and greed. But the farther Marlow proceeds towards the Inner Station, the more clearly he begins to understand what has happened to Kurtz. When he spots the circle of heads attached to stakes which decorate the entrance of the Inner Station, he is finally able to articulate what it is that makes Kurtz so fascinating and so dangerous: "Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, there was something wanting in him--some small matter which when the pressing need arose could not be found under his magnificent eloquence" (57-58).

But if Kurtz is hollow at the core as Marlow sees it, there is yet another reason for the fiercely unscrupulous way he exercises control over those around him. Kurtz is savage because colonialism is a savage situation, one predicated on relationships in which power is necessary and strength is rewarded. If he is heroic at all, it is because he can invoke the grandeur of the sublime through "the unbounded power of his eloquence--of words--of burning noble words." When he speaks, he has the capacity to "charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch-dance in his honor" (51). But because he is involved in the inglorious business of ivory trading, any version of sublime greatness he embodies is darkened by the impossible contradiction between colonial profiteering and colonial benevolence. On his deathbed, Kurtz tells Marlow that he was on the "threshold of great things," but because the moral ideas he

had come to the Congo with have been compromised by "shadowy images" of awesome wealth and fame, the tremendous scope of his ambition and the sublime capacity of his hypnotic voice have become little more than narcissistic, self-aggrandizing fantasies (65). It is heroic greatness misdirected and, in the end, it is hard not to wonder if Marlow's description of Kurtz's voice as "one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean without any kind of sense" is the inevitable result (48-49).

What condemns Kurtz in the end is his pamphlet. As Marlow notes, it is an exalted piece of rhetoric that inspires both reverence and enthusiasm for Europe's civilizing mission. It is a beautifully written piece of pro-imperial propaganda, "a magic current of phrases" that preach a message of benevolent and useful service. But the premise upon which Kurtz makes his argument--his belief that natives must necessarily see Europeans as "supernatural beings" with the "might of a deity"--suggests the way Kurtz has already been poisoned by the potential of his own power (50). It is through Kurtz that Conrad registers his protest of imperialism and his indictment of the civilization which created him and, in the end, the darkness that Kurtz sees when he speaks of "the horror!" is not any kind of savagery native to Africa itself, but rather the savagery of his own heroic energies turned toward ignoble ends. To know that "all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" is to know that his desperate plea to "Exterminate all the brutes!" is not the product of one man's failure, but rather the result of an exhausted and disingenuous colonial system that mistakes cruelty for virtue, uses violence in place of moral force, and turns its heroes into madmen.

Works Cited

- Ashfield, Andrew and Peter de Bolla, eds. *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Baillie, John. "An Essay on the Sublime." *The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Black, Joel. *The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Culture*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1991.
- Bongie, Chris. *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin-de-Siècle*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1991.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness. British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. 1756. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990.
- Buzard, James. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.
- Conrad, Joseph. "Extracts from Correspondance, July 22, 1896 to December 3, 1902." *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Robert Kimbrough. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988. 198-212.

- _____. *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Robert Kimbrough. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988.
- Costa, Richard Hauer. *H. G. Wells*. Boston: Twayne, 1985.
- Gerard, Alexander. "An Essay on Taste." *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 168-172.
- Green, Martin. *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.
- _____. *Seven Types of Adventure. An Etiology of a Major Genre*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991.
- Haggard, H. Rider. "About Fiction." *Contemporary Review* (1887): 172-180.
- Hennessy, Maurice N. "The Congo Free State: A Brief History, 1876-1908." *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Robert Kimbrough. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988.
- Jameson, Frederic. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.
- Levine, George. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterly*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- McClure, John. *Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.
- _____. *Late Imperial Romance*. London: Verso, 1994.
- McConnell, Frank. *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Priestley, Joseph. "Lectures on Oratory and Criticism." *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 119-123.
- Ruskin, John. "Traffic." *Unto This Last and Other Writings*. Ed. Clive Wilmer. London: Penguin Books, 1985.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Smith, Adam. "The Theory of Moral Sentiments." *The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. "A Gossip on Romance." *Memories and Portraits*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902. 247-274.
- _____. "A Humble Remonstrance." *Memories and Portraits*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902. 275-299.
- _____. *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartet*. Ed. Peter Rindcliffe and Catherine Kerrigan. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995.
- Usher, James. "Clio; or, a Discourse on Taste." *The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*. Ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Wells, H. G. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. 1896. New York: Dover, 1996.

Rehearsing *Nicholas Nickleby*: Dickens, Macready, and the Pantomime of Life

Greg Hecimovich

Every good actor plays direct to every good author, and every writer of fiction, though he may not adopt the dramatic form, writes in effect for the stage.

Charles Dickens, speech to the Royal General Theatrical Fund.

Three years after William Charles Macready attacked his theatrical manager, Alfred Bunn, and three years after Macready's triumphant return to the stage as MacBeth, Charles Dickens dedicated *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* to the embattled actor. Macready had, in a sense, rehearsed for the part. He earned the dedication. That is not to say that Dickens wished to portray Macready in *Nickleby*; but, rather, that Macready's well-publicized adventures captured for Dickens the prevailing theme of his new work: "The Pantomime of Life." There has been no substantial critical work done to explore why Dickens dedicated the novel to the actor.¹ By recounting the events at the inception of the Macready-Dickens friendship, we can mark Dickens's debt. Dickens's latest sketch *Nicholas Nickleby* points to what the Macready "Fight" had so publicly announced, to what Dickens's earlier *Sketches* continually suggested: the inextricable link between the public and private stage. Macready helped Dickens fashion for the novel the popular technique of pantomimic expression.

"Sketches at Dinner"

On 27 April 1836, while he waited for his dinner at the Garrick Club, William Charles Macready read a droll collection of prose pieces titled *Sketches by Boz*. He had not yet met the young author. At the time, Macready was a man in need of comic diversion. Just the day before, on his way to the theater with his friend Dow, he stopped to read a playbill. "What's that?" Dow exclaimed. "The first three acts of *Richard the Third*? Impossible!" But it was true. Alfred Bunn, theatrical entrepreneur and director of Dury Lane, had without warning truncated *Richard the Third* with *The Jewess* and the first act of *Chevy Chase*. Bunn wanted to fill his house with paying customers; Macready wished to realize on stage the full glory of English drama. "You will not do it?" cried Dow. "I tell you, William, you must declare it to Cooper, before witnesses; declare that you will go on to ask the audience whether it wants the play truncated or complete." It was impossible to argue, however. Macready reflected that with a family to support he could not well throw away his engagement at Drury Lane and sacrifice 250 pounds. Necessarily he would press on. Macready thought over his predicament and leafed through *Sketches by Boz* (Macready 377-78).

He particularly liked the theatrical pieces. There was a sketch about a private family theatrical. In "Mrs. Joseph Porter" Sempronius Gattleton and his family attempt to produce *The Tragedy of Othello*. However, the tragedy collapses into comedy when Mrs. Joseph Porter and her brother arrive. Mrs. Joseph Porter's brother was "a man who remembered all the principal plays of Shakespeare from beginning to end." He was "not only perpetually quoting [Shakespeare] himself, but he could never sit by, and hear a misquotation from the 'Swan of Avon' without setting the unfortunate delinquent right" (*Sketches* 424). Together brother and sister sabotage the performance, scripting, as it were, a farce. Under their predatory gaze, the Gattleton troupe misplaces its costumes, forgets its lines, and errs in its musical score—all to the delight of the audience. By the end of the piece, as the author makes clear, Mrs. Joseph and her brother are the performance.

Amused by the theme of audience-as-theater, Macready read on. In "Astley's," Macready followed the drama of "Pa" and "Ma" and "their three little boys and a little girl" (*Sketches* 105). In "Greenwich Fair," the theme of audience-as-theater is extended to include the pantomime. Here, too, what happens off the stage is more important than what happens on the stage. "There is no master of ceremonies in this artificial Eden," the author writes; "all is primitive, unreserved, and unstudied" (118). Dickens thus relates the tale of a pantomime in which "four clowns . . . are engaged in a mock broadsword combat" with a "gentleman" impersonating a "Mexican chief" who "paces up and down" with a "ferocious air" (113). Dickens suggests that the real pantomime is not the staged one, but, rather, the "primitive, unreserved, and unstudied" pantomime of the audience. Rather than the harlequinade performed between the clowns at the "very center and heart of the fair," the sketch emphasizes the harlequinade performed on the periphery. There are "Love-sick swains, under the influence of gin and water." There are "fair objects" of affection who "enhance the value of stolen kisses, by a vast deal of struggling, and holding down of heads" (113). In the sketch, the pantomime of the stage tumbles beyond Richardson's booth and becomes the pantomime of Greenwich Fair.

Macready's meal arrived. He put the *Sketches* aside and turned his attention to his dinner and looked over the newspaper. He could not have known, as he ate silently, that two days later he would appear in the same paper he was reading, *The Age*. Ironically, his appearance there would outstrip anything performed by Mrs. Joseph Porter and her brother, "Pa" and "Ma," or the Greenwich Fair pantomime. He would out-perform for a time even the theatrical imagination of the burgeoning writer of the *Sketches* himself. Two days

later Macready drafted, with professional skill, his own comic-tragedic pantomime.

"Great fight. M-----y and B--n"

His performance as Richard III did not go well ("tetchy and unhappy, [I] pushed through the part in a sort of desperate way as well as I could") (Macready 379). The third act ended on the choice of Richard of Gloucester as "King Richard, England's worthy King." Macready passed stiffly from the stage, his work as Richard ill done. On his way to the dressing room, he passed the door to Bunn's office. The humiliation of the truncated performance was too great. He became again the avenging monarch. As if he had been touched by the magic wand of a harlequin, or suddenly become a villain in a drama, he threw open the theater manager's door. Bunn was sitting at his desk, the room darkened except for a shaded lamp (Bunn piously affirmed later that he was checking bills previous to their payment the following morning) (Bunn 209). When Bunn looked up, he saw the long black hair, the fierce eyes, the padded costume.

"You damned scoundrel!" cried Macready. "How dare you use me in this manner!"

Macready rushed the theater director. Startled, Bunn rose to his feet. "There, you villain—take that!" Macready struck Bunn a back-handed slap on the face. Bunn fell back and made some inarticulate reply.

After a second blow, Bunn went down with a black eye and a sprained ankle ("I was accustomed to write with my leg twined around the chair," he confided to his journal later) (Bunn 209). Stained with blood, lamp oil, and ink, Bunn struggled to defend himself. He managed to right himself on the bad ankle and wrestle Richard III to the sofa. When Bunn took hold of the tragedian's hand—the same hand that had galvanized Victorian tragedy with its apt gestures—he bit into the index finger.

"You rascal!" growled Macready. "Would you bite?"

"Murder! Murder!" shouted Bunn.

It took the prompter, a call-boy, and a scene-painter to separate the two. Macready was hustled out of the theater by his friends. Bunn was carried to his bed.²

Eleven days later when Macready took to the stage again—this time as Macbeth at Covent Garden—he was greeted heartily by his fans. Backstage he was nervous. The newspapers had picked up the incident and Macready did not know how the public would respond. When Shakespeare's Sergeant mentioned Macready's character in the first scene, he heard applause—and then laughter:

For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution,
(Like Valor's minion) carv'd out his passage
Till he fac'd the slave. (1.2: 16-20)

Macready feared that his Macbeth would not be taken seriously. His fears were quickly put to rest. There was no

²See Macready (379-384); Bunn (2: 33). Also see Trewin (117-119) and Downer 147-149.

laughter at the start of Scene III—the pit rose first and then the whole house. The crowd waved its hats and handkerchiefs, and roared in approval. Macready entered as Macbeth. "The cheers lasted so long," Macready wrote later, "I was nearly overcome" (Macready 384). "So foul and fair a day I have not seen," he thundered.

He received no less than two encores. Never had he acted Macbeth "more really or altogether better." After a third encore, the curtain was dropped and cries of "No" rang out in the theater again (384). The curtains were partially lifted once more and Macready returned to the stage. Dressed as MacBeth, he delivered an impromptu soliloquy made ironic in light of the public and private performance that had transpired eleven nights earlier. Stained by broad patches of stage blood, Macready proceeded:

Ladies and Gentleman,—Under ordinary circumstances I should receive the manifestation of your kindness with silent acknowledgment; but I cannot disguise from myself the fact that the circumstances which have led to my engagement at this theater, after an absence of many years, are uppermost in your minds. . . . (Macready 385-386)

When he finished, the curtain closed on Macready's *Macbeth*. Significantly, the young "Boz" was in the audience, observing it all.

"The Pantomime of Life"

Macready's performances made a deep impression on Dickens. The year following Macready's *Richard III*, Dickens's *Memoirs of Grimaldi* came out for Chapman and Hall. His edition of a life of the famous pantomime clown included an introduction in which Dickens comically recalled his own precocious though "intense anxiety" to know what clowns "did with themselves out of pantomime time, and off the stage."

As a child, we were accustomed to pester our relations and friends with questions out of number concerning these gentry;—whether their appetite for sausages and such like wares was always the same, and if so, at whose expense they were maintained; whether they were ever taken up for pilfering other people's goods, or were forgiven by everybody because it was only done in fun; how it was they got such beautiful complexions, and where they lived; and whether they were born Clowns, or gradually turned into Clowns as they grew up. On these and thousand other points our curiosity was insatiable. Nor were our speculations confined to Clowns alone: they extended to Harlequins, Pantaloons, and Columbines, all of whom we believed to be real and veritable personages, existing in the same forms and characters all the year round. (*Memoirs* 1: xi-xii) (*Pieces* 1)

In rewriting the memoirs of the century's greatest pantomime clown, Dickens recalled the traveling pantomimes as providing his own first theatrical experience. He remembered

¹Valerie Gage's excellent chapter on Macready and Maclise in her recent *Shakespeare and Dickens* do touch on the Dickens/Macready relationship,

but only as it relates to Shakespeare. The following is a much broader study focused on Dickens/Macready.

shortly afterwards being brought up to London when he was seven and eight "from remote country parts in the dark ages of 1819 and 1820 to behold the splendour of the Christmas Pantomimes and the humour of Joe" (Forster 93). Dickens was informed that on the occasion of his first visit to the pantomime he clapped his "hands with great precocity" (93).

No doubt, years after his first theatrical experience at the Christmas pantomimes, the shifting circle of Macready's public and private performances also fascinated the young author. Indeed, the night of Macready's performance as Macbeth, Charles Dickens returned to his quarters to complete an article he was to publish in *Bentley's Miscellany*. The essay grew out of the work he was doing on *Memoirs of Grimaldi*. His thesis in "The Pantomime of Life" was simple: "We are all actors in the Pantomime of Life" (*Sketches* 675) (*Bentley's* 291). Dickens was fascinated by the intersection of an "actor's" private and public performances. Clearly, Macready's performances as Richard III and as Macbeth extended Dickens's theoretical interest in the pantomime. Dickens closes his essay the night he saw Macready's *Macbeth* by quoting Shakespeare: "All the world is a stage, / And all the men and women merely players." Perhaps it was Macready's performance which suggested to Dickens his "new reading" of Shakespeare: "All the world's a Pantomime," he writes, "and we are all actors in the Pantomime of Life" (*Sketches* 675) (*Bentley's* 291).

In "The Pantomime of Life," Dickens sets out to animate the way in which everything from political processes, to City banking, to merchant counting-houses, to the tradesman's shops inform a giant pantomime. "Let us take a slight example," Dickens begins. "The scene is a street: an elderly gentleman, with a large face and strongly marked features appears" (*Sketches* 668). Dickens explains how the "strongly marked features" determine the "elderly gentleman's" character. One can tell his wealth and self-indulgent manner from "the adornment of his person," from the "joyous and oily manner in which he rubs his stomach." Dickens describes how this "elderly gentleman" "loses his footing and stumbles" in the "fancied security of wealth," in the "possession and enjoyment of all the good things of life" and how "the audience" roars to see his fall, how they set and cuff him "unmercifully," screaming with delight. The elderly gentleman, then, becomes a real-life clown. "A pantomime is to us a mirror of life," Dickens writes, "nay more we maintain that it is so to audiences generally, although they are not aware of it, and that this very circumstance is the secret cause of their amusement and delight" (*Sketches* 668-669).

Dickens extends his discussion of the pantomime to elaborate on the role of the clown. "Our political pantomime never was richer than at this day," Dickens writes, "We are particularly strong in clowns." Accordingly, Dickens describes the "wand of office" which the clown feels held over his head by his "leader or harlequin." For Dickens, the commencement of a session of Parliament is "neither more nor less than the drawing up of the curtain for a grand comic

pantomime." His "Majesty's most gracious speech" at the opening of a parliamentary session "may be not inaptly compared to the clown's opening speech of "Here we are!" Under this formulation, political power becomes the harlequin's "magic wand" swaying parliamentary opinion according to self-interest:

There mere waving it before a man's eyes will dispossess his brains of all the notions previously stored there, and fill it with an entirely new set of ideas; one gentle tap on the back will alter the colour of a man's coat completely; and there are some expert performers who, having this wand held first on one side and then on the other, will change from side to side, turning their coats at every evolution, with so much rapidity and dexterity, that the quickest eye can scarcely detect their motions. (*Sketches* 674-675)

Consistently, Dickens reminds his readers that the roles of the pantomime are fluid. Harlequins of life are just ordinary men, "to be found in no particular walk or degree, on whom a certain station, or particular conjunction of circumstances, confers the magic wand" (*Sketches* 673). And so are clowns. "Some people talk with a sigh of the decline of pantomime," Dickens writes, "And murmur in low and dismal tones the name of Grimaldi. . . . Clowns that beat Grimaldi all to nothing turn up every day. . . ." (*Sketches* 673). The harlequinade, then, is part of the pomp and circumstance of social and political interaction, where "coats" turn "at every evolution" and "expert performers" are animated to meet the demands of a power—both ascendant on and off the stage.

Significantly, Dickens's emphasis on the importance of the clown figure in both his introduction to the *Memoirs of Grimaldi* and "The Pantomime of Life" led him to a deeper understanding of Macready's dramatic genius. After he completed work on Grimaldi's *Memoirs* and "The Pantomime of Life," Dickens cultivated a relationship with the eminent tragedian. John Forster introduced him, and Dickens became one of a handful of enthusiasts whom Macready considered to be his "council" or "committee."³ Indeed, the "pantomimic expression" that Dickens admired in Macready's productions became a leading subject for discussion among the group, provoking a now famous review of Macready's 1838 production of *King Lear*. The authorship of the essay is disputed, though the review is generally acknowledged to be consistent with Dickens's view of Macready's art. Close consideration of the review serves to illuminate Dickens's artistic maturation and its debt to Macready's dramaturgy.

In the review, the author applauds Macready for his creative use of pantomimic techniques. The review begins by commending Macready for recognizing the importance of the Fool. At the time, Macready's production was unique for maintaining the Fool. Standard practice was to remove him and free the work of "vulgarity." In "The Restoration of Shakespeare's 'Lear' to the Stage," the author makes clear

of hot gin to soothe his voice when John Forster entered the room with a young friend. "Macready," he said, "here is Boz." "I was very glad to see him," recorded Macready (*Reminiscences* 416).

that Macready succeeds because of the Fool:

[Lear's] gigantic sorrows could never be presented on the stage without a suffering too frightful, a sublimity too remote, a grandeur too terrible— unless relieved by quiet pathos, and in some way brought home to the apprehensions of the audience by homely and familiar illustration. At such a moment that Fool rose to [Shakespeare's] mind, and not till then could he have contemplated his marvellous work in the greatness and beauty of its final completion. (*Collected* 124)

As in pantomime, the clown figure proves central to the force of Macready's drama. Only with the Fool—a "homely and familiar illustration"—can pathos be rendered, only then can the drama's "marvellous work" reach "final completion":

The Fool in the tragedy of *Lear* is one of the most wonderful creations of Shakespeare's genius. The picture of his quick and pregnant sarcasm, of his loving devotion, of his acute sensibility, of his despairing mirth, of his heartbroken silence—contrasted with the rigid sublimity of Lear's suffering, with the huge desolations of Lear's sorrow, with the vast and outraged image of Lear's madness—is the noblest thought that ever entered into the heart and mind of man. (*Collected* 123-124)

The author recognized in Macready's *Lear* that love of the Fool "is associated with Cordelia" (*Collected* 125). It is through the "pantomimic expression" of the Fool/King that Macready "fills the stage with true and appalling nature" (*Collected* 125). As the author notes, Macready's restoration of the Fool enables the production to express with renewed force Lear's impudence and futile rage (126).

After establishing the importance of Macready's restoration of the Fool, the review focuses on Macready's dramatic gestures. The author notes the way in which Macready's physical expressions "ascend with the heights of Lear's passion" through all "its changes of agony, of anger, of impatience, of turbulent assertion, of despair, and mighty grief," until "on his knees with arms upraised and head thrown back, the tremendous Curse burst from him amid heaving and reluctant throes of suffering and anguish." The review records another sublime moment in the second act: Lear evinces his "anxious and fearful tenderness" through his "self-persuading utterance of 'hysterias passio.'" (*Collected* 125). The sublime is expressed through Macready's "elevated grandeur" as he appeals to the heavens through "terrible suppressed efforts," "pauses," and "reluctant pangs of passion." The author notes Lear's speech, "I will not

³That Dickens held "The Pantomime of Life" as a cherished axiom is suggested by his faithful adherence to "pantomimic expression" throughout his artistic career. In the last decade of his life, Dickens continued to regard the pantomime as a model for "true Art." In "A Sermon in the Britannia Theatre" (1860), he maintained that the pantomime was chiefly a moral form (416-421). (See Charles Dickens "A Sermon in the Britannia Theatre," *All the Year Round* 2 [1860]: 416-421.) At the same period, an article in Dickens's *All the Year Round* attempted to reconcile the typical harlequinade mixture of realism and fantasy by concluding that "pantomime is truth—truth coloured, condensed, elaborated—but truth itself" ("Paradise" 31). A generation later, George Bernard Shaw made a similar observation, with reference to Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*. The entire novel, he wrote, proved an extended harlequinade, as it explored the harlequinade of life:

trouble thee, my child," crediting it with "greatness in power and beauty." The ultimate triumph, however, comes in a "noble conception" original to Macready. Macready has his Lear "hide his face" on the arm of *Goneril* and say—"I'll go with thee: / Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty, / And thou art twice her love!" Thus the author credits the performance with "deep simplicity as well as agony of pathos." The "pantomimic expression" of Macready's gestures provides the audience with a sublime feeling "beyond physical distress" (*Collected* 127).

The author of the review praises Macready's "pantomimic" techniques. Macready's physical gestures expand the significance and range of Shakespeare's dramatic action, while the presence of the clown enlarges and broadens the audience's sympathies. It is tempting to consider the substance of the review—if not the review itself—as the work of Dickens. Indeed he continues the thread the same month with his latest number of *Oliver Twist*. Dickens writes: "It is the custom on the stage: in all good, murderous melodramas: to present the tragic and the comic scenes, in as regular alternation, as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky, well-cured bacon" (26). Dickens proceeds by following the edict. For Dickens, as for Macready, the "mimic life of the theater" rests in the comic-tragic alternation of "pantomimic expression" predicated on "homely and familiar illustration."⁴ The "pantomimic expression" Dickens discerned in Macready's tragic scenes served to lend force and poignancy to his comedy.

In a review written four years after *Oliver Twist*, Dickens makes explicit the pantomimic nature of his "bacon principle." Describing Macready's Benedick in the Covent Garden production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Dickens celebrates the "broad" and "overstrained" quality of Macready's comic acting:

As [Macready] sat, uneasily cross-legged, on the garden chair, with that face of grave bewilderment and puzzled contemplation, we seemed to be looking on a picture of Leslie. It was just such a figure as that excellent artist, in his fine appreciation of the finest of humour, might have delighted to produce. Those who consider it broad, or farcical, or overstrained, cannot surely have considered all the train and course of circumstances leading up to that place. If they take them into reasonable account, and try to imagine for a moment how any master of fiction would have described Benedick's behaviour at that crisis—supposing it had been impossible to contemplate the appearance of a living man in the part, and therefore necessary to describe it all—can they arrive at any other conclusion than that such ideas as are here presented by

"Jingle, Jon, Sam Weller and the Fat Boy form a harlequinade pure and simple, in which Mr. Pickwick himself, in spite of the affection which Dickens conceived for him as he warmed to his work, and as success encouraged him to take himself seriously, figures as the king of pantaloons. Our love and esteem for the "angel in tights and gaiters" must not blind us to the fact that Mr. Pickwick repeatedly gets drunk, and is tumbled head over heels, knocked about with fire-shovels and carpet bags, cuffed, cheated, mulcted, duped, haled before the magistrate, put in the pound, and pelted with turnips and rotten eggs, not to mention mistaking a lady's bed for his own and getting into serious trouble in consequence. But it must be confessed that the Pickwickian harlequinade, as a harlequinade, is incomparable." (qtd. Eigner 6-7).

³They met formally when Dickens was finishing *Pickwick* and Macready had put his career back together. On 16 June 1837, just a year after Macready's split from Bunn, Macready was resting after having acted Othello. His face was blackened with cork, and he sipped from a tumbler 18

Mr Macready would have been written down? Refer to any passage in any play of Shakespeare's where it has been necessary to describe, as occurring beyond the scene, the behaviour of a man in a situation of ludicrous perplexity; and by that standard alone (to say nothing of any mistaken notion of natural behaviour that may have suggested itself at any time to Goldsmith, Swift, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Scott, or other such unenlightened journeymen) criticise, if you please, this portion of Mr Macready's admirable performance. ("Macready as Benedict" 58)

For Dickens, the same truths that animated Macready's tragic performances informed his comic ones. From his *Sketches*, to *Oliver Twist*, to Macready's Shakespeare, Dickens studied the uses of pantomimic expression. With "The Restoration of Shakespeare's 'Lear' to the Stage," Dickens identified the pantomimic techniques that he wished to make his own. His new understanding of Macready's art paved the way for his next and most fully realized harlequinade performance: *Nicholas Nickleby*. But first Dickens had to pass through his own rehearsal.⁵

"Dickens's Audition"

Macready knew "Boz" the aspiring actor before he knew "Boz" the successful novelist. Macready likely didn't remember, but he had had an appointment to observe "Boz" years earlier. "Boz" no doubt remembered. At the time, a young Charles Dickens was attempting to become an actor, and he had succeeded in earning an audition at the Lyceum for George Bartley. Years afterward, in a letter to Forster, Dickens remembered the audition. In the letter Dickens describes how, with characteristic energy, he studied to prepare himself for the stage. He attended the theater almost every night for three years. He would study the bills first and then go to the best performance he could afford. When possible, he attended the performances of Macready at Drury Lane. Otherwise it was pantomimes, comedies, farces, extravaganzas, spectacles, ballets, operas, and melodramas. For "three or four successive years" he regularly attended the *At Homes* of the comedian Charles Mathews, whom he idolized for his "traveling entertainments" that emphasized imitation and mimicry.⁶ When he wasn't a court reporter, or attending the theater, the aspiring actor practiced his own mimics for the stage. According to Dickens's account, he would go over even such minor things as "walking in and out, and sitting down in a chair. . . often four, five, six hours a day." Dickens prescribed to himself "a sort of Hamiltonian system for learning parts; and learnt a great number" (Ackroyd 210-211). He practiced studiously the theatrical prescriptions of the day. As Paul Schlicke has noted in his excellent *Dickens and Popular Entertainment*, "The underlying assumption of such prescriptions is that stereotyped expression creates an objective manifestation of

human emotion. The acting was considered natural because it was an imitation of agreed exterior signs of feeling" (78). Just as Dickens's methods of comic characterization attributed essential significance to external appearance—such as the "wealth and a self-indulgent manner" present in the "adornment" of the "gentleman" in "The Pantomime of Life"—so, too, acting practice of the day was based on the audience's acceptance of gesture as true expression of inner disposition. In addition to Hamilton's prescriptions, Dickens was likely aware of Rede's *Road to the Stage*, which contained a lengthy section laying down precise rules by which the passions were to be presented:

Fear, violent and sudden, opens the eyes and mouth very wide, draws down the eyebrows, gives the countenance an air of wildness, draws back the elbows parallel with the sides, lifts up the open hand (the fingers together) to the height of the breast, so that the palms face the dreadful object, as shields opposed to it. . . . *Death* is exhibited by violent distortion, groaning, gasping for breath, stretching the body, raising it, and then letting it fall; dying in a chair, as is often practised in some characters, is very unnatural, and has little or no effect. (Rede 79,93) (Schlicke 77)

These were some of the "gestures" that Dickens "learnt by great measure" and they would become a part of his fictional repertoire. These were also the gestures that Dickens admired in Macready—stage master of the extemporized pantomime.

Dickens believed himself prepared for his attempt to gain the stage. He explained the day of his audition to Forster:

I wrote to Bartley, who was stage-manager, and told him how young I was, and exactly what I thought I could do; and that I believed I had a strong perception of character and oddity, and a natural power of reproducing in my own person what I observed in others. This was at the time when I was at Doctors'-commons as a shorthand writer for the proctors. And I recollect I wrote the letter from a little office I had there, where the answer came also. There must have been something in my letter that struck the authorities, for Bartley wrote me almost immediately to say they were busy getting up the Hunchback (so they were) but that they would communicate with me again, in a fortnight. Punctual to the time another letter came, with an appointment to do anything of Mathew's I pleased before him and Charles Kemble, on a certain day at the theatre. My sister Fanny was in the secret, and was to go with me to play the songs. I was laid up when the day came, with a terrible bad cold and an inflammation of the face; the beginning, by the bye, of that annoyance in one ear to which I am subject to this day. I wrote to say so and added that I would resume my application next season. I made a great splash in the

gallery soon afterwards; the *Chronicle* opened to me; I had a distinction in the little world of the newspaper, which made one like it; began to write; didn't want money; had never thought of the stage but as a means of getting it; gradually left off turning my thought that way, and never resumed the idea. I never told you this, did I? See how near I may have been to another sort of life? (Forster 59-60)

Dickens's one serious attempt to become a professional actor was a failure. He suffered from acute stage fright and the application was never renewed. Macready, Bartley, and Kemble attended the auditions of other aspiring actors.

Dickens was not so disheartened that he did not go on to suggest to Macready, after the two had formed a friendship, that the tragedian should adapt *Oliver Twist* for Macready's company at Covent Garden. The actor turned down the offer. The refusal did not deter Dickens from submitting to Macready a farce a month later. At the beginning of December 1838 Dickens visited Macready and read to him *The Lamplighter*, which Dickens had written in collaboration with Mark Lemon. "The dialogue is very good, full of point . . ." Macready recorded in his diary, "but I am not sure about the meagreness of the plot. He reads as well as an experienced actor would—he is a surprising man" (Ackroyd 277). If Macready was Dickens's model, he would have to answer his model in print. Except for amateur theatricals, which Dickens participated in his whole career, and except for the theatrical readings at the end of his life, Dickens's real stage would forever be *Pickwick*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and those works that followed.⁷ With Macready's influence suffusing the ambitions of the would-be actor and playwright, Dickens set forth to stage his monument to the famous tragedian. This time the performance would be staged in prose.

"Nicholas Nickleby Takes to the Stage"

Toward the end of January 1838 Dickens wrote that his month's work was done and he could finally begin work on *Nickleby*, a project that his theatrical interests had been shaping for some time. "They are all done, thank God," Dickens wrote, "and I start on my pilgrimage to the cheap schools of Yorkshire (a mighty secret of course)" (94). A week later he began his novel. On 6 February, two days after his review of Macready's *King Lear*, Dickens began to stage the performance. The social ills of Yorkshire schools became one of Dickens's determining subjects. He wrote Forster: "I mean to strike the heaviest blow in my power for these unfortunate creatures" (Johnson 225). Despite "the blow" he announced to Forster that he wished to strike against Yorkshire schools, Dickens's portrait of Squeers and his household manifests more the brilliance of ebullient theatrical performance than polemical satire. What Dickens sets out to be a political attack becomes a theatrical performance. When Squeers arrives on the scene in Chapter 4, Dickens's writing becomes energized. There is more delight than indignation in our glimpse of Squeers's inspection of the diluted milk of his students. "Here's richness!" he cries. Dickens arrogates

to himself the role of harlequin in the chapter as he touches with his wand the Squeers tribe. Instantly, it is animated: Mrs. Squeers wipes her hands on a pupil's curly head to complete the ceremony of brimstone and treacle; Young Wackford Squeers sucks his finger in an ecstasy of sated gluttony; Fanny Squeers pours forth her fury in a letter to the uncle of her romantic betrayer. The reality of the iniquity at Dotheboys Hall is not the grim iniquity Dickens had traveled to Yorkshire to see first-hand, but rather that iniquity as it would be performed in a pantomime. The adamant gestures Dickens had admired as a part of Macready's "pantomimic expression" become a part of his own repertoire.

Squeers himself is undoubtedly costumed as a pantaloone figure. "He had but one eye, and the popular prejudice runs in favour of two" (31). Just as the pantaloone figure is often disguised only enough to trick the clowns but not the audience, so, too, with Squeers. His "over clothes" are transparent, and Dickens exposes his pantaloone mask immediately: "He wore a white neckerchief with long ends, and a suit of scholastic black; but his coat sleeves being a great deal too long, and his trousers a great deal too short, he appeared ill at ease in his clothes, and as if he were in a perpetual state of astonishment at finding himself so respectable" (31). Mrs. Squeers is another triumph of Dickens's technique of "pantomimic expression." Her search with Squeers for the spoon to administer "treacle" takes on the puppet violence of a comic harlequinade. "Poor Smike," one of the novel's many fool figures, becomes the object of the Squeers's abuse:

A vast deal of searching and rummaging ensued, and it proving fruitless, Smike was called in, and pushed by Mrs. Squeers, and boxed by Mr. Squeers; which course of treatment brightening his intellects, enabled him to suggest that possibly Mrs. Squeers might have the spoon in her pocket, as indeed turned out to be the case. As Mrs. Squeers had previously protested, however, that she was quite certain she had not got it, Smike received another box on the ear for presuming to contradict his mistress, together with a promise of a sound thrashing if he were not more respectful in future; so that he took nothing very advantageous by his motion. (83)

Just as Macready's *Lear* traverses the axis of the Fool/King, so Dickens's *Nickleby* follows suit. The comic pantomime of Squeers's "school" is followed by the tragedy of Smike's neglect. "Poor Smike" expresses anguish in a manner similar to Macready's *Lear*: "[I]n the silence of his own chamber, he sunk upon his knees to pray as his first friend taught him, folding his hands and stretching them wildly in the air, falling upon his face in a passion of bitter grief" (218). Dickens's Smike, like Macready's *Lear*, uses highly stylized gestures to throw into relief the "pathos" at the core of the drama's comic violence.

In Chapter Two, Dickens opens the curtain on Ralph Nickleby, a usurer, promoting a "bubble company." Ralph is seen in association with a cast of other clowns: "Mr. Bonney, a pale gentleman in a violent hurry," "Sir Matthew Pupper," and "three Members of Parliament" (10). Together

to imitate Macready, whom he (the performer) had never seen!" (Gager 73). Dickens, like Macready, understood the fluid relationship between comedy and tragedy.

⁶For accounts of Dickens's engagement with the theater see Johnson and Ackroyd.

⁷For a general discussion of Dickens's theatrical prose see Garis

⁵It was thus that one of the children who acted in Dickens's private adaptation of James Robinson Planche's comic extravaganza, *Fortunio and the Seven Gifted Servants*, recollected that Dickens wanted some of the lines parodying Macbeth to be delivered in Macready's characteristic style: "we remember Mr. Dickens's unsuccessful attempts to teach the performer how

they take part in the floating of a new joint-stock enterprise: the "United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company." As Mr. Bonney notes of the joint-stock enterprise, "It's the finest idea that was ever started. . . . Why the very name will get the shares up to a premium in ten days." Like the pantaloons figure in the *Sketches*'s "Greenwich Fair," Mr. Ralph Nickleby controls this "speculating business," using it to line his own pockets and the pockets of his associates. At the stock-directors's meeting the reticent Ralph Nickleby breaks up the convention by stating: "And when [the stocks] are at a premium. . . . When they are, you know what to do with them as well as any man alive, and how to back quietly out at the right time" (10). He is, without doubt, the master of ceremonies.

But as in Macready's *Lear*, "pantomimic gesture" for Ralph Nickleby includes a tragic register. Ralph Nickleby is thwarted in the novel and his ultimate exclusion from all that is gentle, warm, and life-affirming lends a haunting Lear-like quality to his futile struggles for power and wealth. By the time Dickens's pantomime of greed is played out, Ralph Nickleby's character assumes a tragic force. As Ralph and his plots begin to unravel and as the infamy of Ralph's own life begins to close in on him, Dickens evokes pathos from the audience. Ralph's anguish is mimed. After Ralph loses "ten thousand pounds" to the intercession of Peg Sliderskew in his financial plots, Dickens stages the result:

Striving, as it would seem, to lose part of the bitterness of his regrets in the bitterness of these other thoughts, Ralph continued to pace the room. There was less and less of resolution in his manner as his mind gradually reverted to his loss; at length, [he] dropp[ed] into his elbow-chair and grasped its sides so firmly that they creaked. (741)

As events continue to unravel for Ralph, his presence before the reader proves more and more theatrical, more and more pathetic. He appears on stage in Chapter 59 thus:

Ralph sat alone, in the solitary room where he was accustomed to take his meals, and to sit of nights when no profitable occupation called him abroad. Before him was an untasted breakfast, and near to where his fingers beat restlessly upon the table, lay his watch. It was long past the time at which, for many years, he had put it in his pocket and gone with measured steps downstairs to the business of the day, but he took as little heed of its monotonous warning, as of the meat and drink before him, and remained with his head resting on one hand, and his eyes fixed moodily on the ground. . . . That he laboured under some mental or bodily indisposition, and that it was one of no slight kind so to affect a man like him, was sufficiently shown by his haggard face, jaded air, and hollow languid eyes: which he raised at last with a start and a hasty glance around him, as one who suddenly awakes from sleep, and cannot immediately recognise the place in which he finds himself. (675)

Here the mask of the harlequinade is dropped, and the face of greed is revealed. True to the pantomime, Dickens steps for-

ward to provide the moral: Greed is self-consumption. Ralph's manipulation of family leads to a stylized madness that resembles the "true and appalling nature" Dickens recognized in Macready's pantomime of *Lear*.

Because theatricality becomes the cohering force in the novel, Nicholas's experience with the Crummles troupe is telling. Not surprisingly, the pantomime actor Mr. Folair provides Nicholas his first glimpse into the world behind the curtain. Mr. Folair leads Nicholas beyond the threshold into the world of Mr. Crummles:

At the upper end of the room, were a couple of boys, one of them very tall and the other very short, both dressed as sailors—Or at least as theatrical sailors, with belts, buckles, pigtailed, and pistols complete—fighting what is called in play-bills a terrific combat, with two of those short broad-swords with basket hilts. . . . The short boy had gained a great advantage of the tall boy, who was reduced to mortal strait, and both were overlooked by a large heavy man, perched against the corner of a table, who emphatically adjured them to strike a little more fire out of the swords, and they couldn't fail to bring the house down, on the very first night. (265)

Nicholas's view behind the curtain resembles Dickens's. It is as if Dickens inverts the Macready-Bunn altercation. Here Mr. Crummles—a surrogate for Dickens—directs the fight: "The little 'un has him; if the big 'un doesn't knowck under, in three seconds, he's a dead man. Do that again boys" (265). Dickens's intent is clear. If Macready's stylized performances on and off the stage ultimately provided a technique to diffuse the confrontation with Bunn, so Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* discovers a similar principle. Toward the end of his tenure with the Crummles troupe, Nicholas masters the lesson. Challenged by Mr. Lenville, who proposes to "pull" Nicholas's nose, Nicholas contemplates resorting to violence (as he has done with Sir Mulberry Hawk). But Mr. Crummles's series of stage embraces—a public manifestation of private feeling—suggests to Nicholas a more appropriate public expression. As Lenville looks Nicholas up and down, utilizing the stock stage convention to signal defiance, Nicholas takes up the game. Nicholas breaks Lenville's ash stick in half and bows to the crowd of spectators. The same diffusion of violence that led to Macready's extemporized soliloquy as MacBeth operates to point the way to Nicholas. Nicholas transforms life into art as a technique for giving positive expression to dangerous impulses.

Significantly, the main plot of *Nicholas Nickleby*, like the main plot of the Crummles's performances, is a melodrama of heroes and villains, in which innocence is threatened, wickedness defeated and virtue rewarded. It is the plot of pantomime. Like the mimic world of the pantomime—like the very real world of Victorian tragedy—theatricality spills out beyond the stage. Michael Booth's comments on the pantomime ring true:

Man's plight is often created by the transformation, misbehaviour, and relentless hostility of objects and mechanical devices: things are not what they seem to be, or rather they are, but then they change frighteningly into

something else. Nothing can be relied on; the very ground itself dissolves under the feet of the helpless characters. Such comedy is almost cosmic in its implications; audiences were really laughing at the yawning gulfs in man's own life. As is usual in extreme forms of comic theatre, a terrible seriousness underlies the jollity and "animal spirit" of pantomime. . . . (7-8)

In staging *Nicholas Nickleby*, Dickens suggests the "relentless hostility" that men and women harbor for one another. In the novel's presentation of the Yorkshire schools and Ralph's greed, "things are not what they seem," and "violence and abuse" taint and transform all that they touch. "Pantomimic expression" provides a technique for rehearsing and managing a personal response. Thus Mr. Lenville undertakes to pull Nicholas's nose before the assembled company; Mr. Crummles impersonates the bride's father at Miss Petowker's wedding; Squeers and Ralph put up false fronts to the world for their own selfish motives; Miss LaCrevevy paints miniatures of people not as they are but as they would be; Mr. Lillyvick thinks so entirely in terms of his occupation as a collector of water-rates that without his being aware of it the role becomes his sole identity. Dickens invites his reader, as Crummles invites Nicholas, to take part in "pantomimic expression," but not as a self-interested show in an attempt to arrogate power and wealth (the tragic mime of Ralph Nickleby), but, rather, as a strategy for interacting peacefully in a world where "nothing can be relied on." Macready helped Dickens rehearse the techniques that provided, as Mr. Curdle puts it, "a unity of feeling, a breadth, a light and shade, a warmth of colouring, a tone, a harmony, a glow" (295).

According to Dickens's eldest son, Dickens himself was "a born actor." A friend of Dickens remembered him "saying he believed he had more talent for the drama than for literature, as he certainly had more delight in acting than in any other work whatever" (Ackroyd 474). Carlyle said of him that ". . . his chief faculty was that of a comic actor," and Douglas Jerrold joked that "if you only give him three square yards of carpet he would tumble on that like a street acrobat." Indeed, in a Macready-Crummles-like moment, he was once seen by a contemporary helping a policeman arrest a vagabond in St. James's Park: "His voice, his air, his walk made one think of some artist called upon to represent all this upon a stage." And so Dickens had a penchant for the stage, the stage that spilled out beyond the proscenium of his novels, beyond the pit of his journalistic work, beyond the theater of his mind. His skills as an actor—Dickens notes himself—were matched only by his authority as a stage manager and director: "I was born to be the Manager of a Theatre" (Ackroyd 475). And, indeed, like the actor and friend to whom Dickens dedicated his most theatrical work, Dickens came to manage his own theater. In Dickens's case, it would be a theater of prose, where he could express, in his own way, the power that he had admired in Macready's "pantomimic expression." Dickens would continue to draw inspiration from the most famous actor of his day, and, indeed, like Macready, his public and private dramas would contain no small hint of the pantomime. It was thus that Dickens sat down to write Macready on the same afternoon

that he closed the curtain on *Nicholas Nickleby*, asking the great tragedian if he could dedicate to him the completed drama:

So, let me tell the world by this frail record that I was a friend of yours and interested to no ordinary extent in your proceedings at that interesting time when you shewed them such noble truths in such noble forms—and give me a new interest in, and association with, the labour of so many months. (*Letters* 1: 582-83)

Works Cited

- Ackroyd, Peter. *Dickens*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.
- Axton, William. *Circle of Fire*. Lexington, Kentucky: U of Kentucky P, 1966.
- Bunn, Alfred. *The Stage both Before and Behind the Curtain*. 3 vols. London: 1840.
- Booth, Michael. "Introduction to Volume Five," *English Plays of the Nineteenth Century*. Vol. 5: *Pantomimes, Extravanzas and Burlesques*. Ed. Michael Booth. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976.
- Dickens, Charles. "Astley's" in *Sketches by Boz*. 1836-37. Oxford Illustrated Dickens. London: Oxford UP, 1989.
- _____. *Collected Papers*. Dickens Nonesuch Edition, Vol. 1. London: 1937.
- _____. "Greenwich Fair" in *Sketches by Boz*. Oxford Illustrated Dickens. London: Oxford UP, 1989.
- _____. "Introduction to Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi." London: Richard Bentley, 1838, 1: xi-xii.
- _____. *The Letters of Charles Dickens*. Vol. 1. Ed. Madeline House and Graham Storey. The Pilgrim Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- _____. "Macready as Benedict." (*The Examiner*, 4 March 1843) in *The Amusements of the People and Other Papers: Reports, Essays, and Reviews 1834-51*. Volume 2. *Dickens's Journalism*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996.
- _____. "Mrs. Joseph Porter" in *Sketches by Boz*. Oxford Illustrated Dickens. London: Oxford UP, 1989.
- _____. *Nicholas Nickleby*. 1838-39. Oxford Illustrated Dickens. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.
- _____. *Oliver Twist*. 1837-38. Oxford Illustrated Dickens. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- _____. "The Pantomime of Life" in *Sketches by Boz*. Oxford Illustrated Dickens. London: Oxford UP, 1989; *Bentley's Miscellany* 1 1837.
- _____. "Paradise Revisited," *All the Year Round* 15 (1866) : 31.
- _____. "A Sermon in the Britannia Theatre." *All the Year Round* 2 (1860): 416-421.
- _____. *Sketches by Boz*. 1836-37. Oxford Illustrated Dickens. London: Oxford UP, 1989.
- Downer, Alan Seymour. *The Eminent Tragedian William Charles Macready*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1966.
- Eigner, Edwin M. *The Dickens Pantomime*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989.
- Forster, John. *The Life of Charles Dickens*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902.
- Gager, Valerie L. *Shakespeare and Dickens: The Dynamics of Influence*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Garis, Robert. *The Dickens Theatre*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

- Johnson, Edgar. *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and His Triumph*. 2 vols. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952.
- Macready, William Charles. *Reminiscences and Selections from His Diaries and Letters*. Ed. Sir Fredrick Pollock. New York: Macmillan and Co, 1875.
- Page, Norman. *A Dickens Companion*. New York: Schocken Books, 1984.

- Rede, Leman Thomas. *The Road to the Stage*. London, 1827.
- Schlicke, Paul. *Dickens and Popular Entertainment*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1985.
- Trewin, John Courtenay. *Mr. Macready: A Nineteenth-Century Tragedian and His Theatre*. London: George G. Harrap and Company, 1955.

East Carolina University

Lady Audley as Sacrifice: Curing Female Disadvantage in *Lady Audley's Secret*

Nicole P. Fisk

As Mary Elizabeth Braddon's most popular novel, *Lady Audley's Secret*, has received much attention: it is both a paradigm of the sensation fiction genre and a recognized forerunner of detective fiction. One of the debated "norms" of the sensation fiction genre to which *Lady Audley's Secret* presumably adheres is a resolution that involves a triumph of conservatism, especially where the masculine/feminine boundaries imposed by patriarchal society are concerned. Most critics agree that Lady Audley, Braddon's transgressive heroine, is "contained" at the end of the novel, thereby allowing the boundaries of female limitation, which she has attempted to destroy, to re-establish themselves. Whether one is meant to read Lady Audley's containment as Braddon's approval of conservatism, and therefore patriarchal power, or as Braddon's recognition of a woman's disadvantage in patriarchal society, the general consensus is that, in the end, the transgressive woman is successfully suppressed. A more careful textual reading, however, reveals that women are not suppressed at the end of the novel; on the contrary, they are able to cross the boundaries imposed by patriarchal society quite easily and to relocate themselves in a new, genderless society.

Of Braddon, David Skilton writes, "Like George Eliot, Braddon lived a life which made her acutely aware at every turn of a woman's disadvantages, and like George Eliot, though in a different fictional mode, she used her experience in framing many of her novels" (x). In *Lady Audley's Secret*, each of the major female characters suffers some sort of disadvantage, either from filial or marital obligations. Alicia Audley, Lady Audley's stepdaughter from her second marriage, and Clara Talboys, Lady Audley's sister-in-law from her first marriage, share the same disadvantage in the obligations they owe their respective fathers. Phoebe Marks's disadvantage rests in her obligation to her husband. Lady Audley herself is the ultimate disadvantaged woman since she faces both filial and marital disadvantages. However, unlike Alicia, Clara, and Phoebe, Lady Audley shirks these undesirable obligations, thereby challenging patriarchal power. In the end, Lady Audley serves as a sacrifice: even though she is prevented from exercising her female independence by being locked away in an asylum, she has opened the

way for the remaining female characters to achieve domestic power and to fashion a new life. Rather than killing female independence by containing Lady Audley, Braddon suggests that female independence is loosed with three times its previous power.

Motherless and sisterless, Alicia and Clara have neither reprieve from their respective fathers' rule, nor a fellow sufferer with whom to sympathize. Their situations, at times, become almost unbearable because both fathers suffer from poor judgment; Sir Michael Audley's weakness is his attraction to Lucy "Graham" Audley, whereas Harcourt Talboys's weakness is a lack of compassion for Clara's brother, George. Alicia, who has "reigned supreme" over her widowed father throughout her childhood, discovers that her "day [is] over" as soon as Sir Michael remarries (4); further, since Alicia dislikes the new Lady Audley, she is frequently reprimanded by her once lenient father, who will hear no criticism, however just, of his new wife. As a result, Alicia chooses to spend "most of her time out of doors, riding about the green lanes" (4). Yet, despite all the fresh air she receives, she still suffers oppression "in the constrained atmosphere of the Court" (293). As soon as she alights from her horse, she must either face Sir Michael, who threatens to shoot her dog for failing to "make friends" with his wife (103) or Lady Audley, who brags about her control over her husband (279).

Clara, whose tyrannical father is compared to "Junius Brutus" (185), has been trained to submit to strict household orders and to conceal her feminine passions, especially for her brother George; for this reason, Robert Audley, the detective-hero of the novel, initially assumes that she is a "cold, hard, and [. . .] heartless automaton" (204). This initial judgment is, of course, hastily made, and one expects Robert to be more astute. After all, he witnesses Harcourt's treatment of Clara straight away; the latter cannot drop a reel of cotton without being told to "keep [her] cotton in [her] workbox" (187). When Clara is free to express herself, she speaks of growing up in an "atmosphere of suppression" (200) and makes very telling "if I were a man" statements. She asks Robert, "Shall you or I find my brother's murderer?" (199), though she knows that he is more free than she

is to do so; she later tells Robert, "If I were a man, I would go to Australia, and find him [George], and bring him back" (439), thereby calling attention, again, to a task she, as a woman, is not allowed to perform. Both Alicia's and Clara's visions of happiness seem to depend on breaking free of, or triumphing over, patriarchal rule.

Phoebe is treated well and paid generously in Lady Audley's employ, and she gives up her independent position reluctantly to marry her cousin, Luke. Phoebe and Luke, who are "play-fellows in childhood, and sweethearts in early youth" (26), seem, in their early adulthood, to be the victim and perpetrator of domestic violence, respectively. Phoebe confesses to Lady Audley, "I don't think I can love him" (107), but when pressed by her mistress to break her engagement, she argues, "I tell you I must marry him. You don't know what he is. It will be my ruin, and the ruin of others, if I break my word" (108). So, after marrying Luke to placate her fear of being "murdered [. . .] for being false to [her] word" (107), Phoebe discovers that her wifely duties include trying to control her "brutally obstinate and ferocious husband," a husband made more brutally obstinate and ferocious "in his drunkenness" (303). Her ambitions are repeatedly discouraged, both before and after her marriage. Either Luke responds to her attempts at gentility by saying "When you're my wife, you won't have over-much time for gentility" (26), or, referring to her "rustling silk" wedding dress (110), asks "Why can't women dress according to their station? You won't have no silk gowns out of my pocket, I can tell you" (112). The image of Phoebe on her wedding day, with "red rims" around her eyes "from the tears she had shed" (112), is not quickly forgotten by the reader.

Lady Audley is the ultimate disadvantaged woman. She begins her life as Helen Maldon financially disadvantaged (she is of a poor family) and genetically disadvantaged (her mother is diagnosed as "mad," a condition that is believed, at least by Lady Audley, to pass from mother to daughter). Like Alicia and Clara, Lady Audley is expected to depend on a father with poor judgment, a father who is described as "a tipsy old half-pay lieutenant," often absent and often drunk (19). Like Phoebe, she is also expected to depend on a husband who dishonors his vows; George Talboys, Lady Audley's first husband, abandons her "to try [his] fortune in a new world," vowing to "never look upon her face again" unless he succeeds (21). She expresses more vehemence against her disadvantages than any of the other female characters, saying, "I looked upon this as desertion, and I resented it bitterly--I resented it by hating the man who had left me with no protector but a weak, tipsy father" (353). This resentment inspires her to become her own protector, an independent rather than dependent woman.

Unlike Alicia, when Lady Audley is displeased by her father's actions, she leaves; Mr. Maldon writes a letter to his landlady that records her desertion and reveals his shock, a shock arising, no doubt, from the assumption that, in a patriarchal society, only men have the power to abandon: "We had a few words last night upon the subject of money matters [. . .] and on rising this morning I found that I was deserted!" (250). Unlike Phoebe, when Lady Audley is displeased by her husband's behavior, she takes a new one: Lady Audley vows, "His shadow shall not fall between me

and prosperity" (354), convinces herself that she has "a right to think that he is dead" (354), and proceeds with her plan to marry Sir Michael. Finally, unlike Clara, when Lady Audley wants to act, she does so, instead of merely fantasizing about what she would do if she were a man. It is not coincidental that George's letter and Lady Audley's letter are almost identical; George writes "[I am] going to try my fortune in a new world" (21) and Lady Audley writes "I go out into the world [. . .] to seek another home and another fortune" (250).

Although Lady Audley acquires quite a home in Audley Court and quite a fortune, her success is short-lived. George reappears and, then, mysteriously disappears again; Robert, convinced that Lady Audley is culpable in his friend's disappearance (and rightly so), persists in his investigation until he uncovers her carefully buried history. With the help of Dr. Mosgrave, Robert manages to put Lady Audley in an asylum, despite the fact that her initial diagnosis reveals no trait of madness. Before even seeing her, Dr. Mosgrave explains that she "ran away from her home, because her home was not a pleasant one," she "committed the crime of bigamy, because by that crime she obtained fortune and position," and she "employed intelligent means" while "carry[ing] out a conspiracy that required coolness and deliberation in its execution" (377). After seeing her, Dr. Mosgrave maintains "the lady is not mad," but because she has the "cunning of madness with the prudence of intelligence," he concludes that she is "dangerous" and should be removed from society (379). Lynn Voskuil points out that Dr. Mosgrave's comments veer "from analysis to innuendo" (624). She asks, "Just what did Mosgrave see that alarmed him so?" (624). Although Voskuil concludes that Dr. Mosgrave "is confounded by the challenge of diagnosing [Lady Audley as] an actress" (634), it seems more likely that the doctor recognizes intelligence, as he says he does, as well as self-assertion, characteristics that, when possessed by a female, threaten the patriarchy.

Throughout most of the novel, the reader assumes that Lady Audley is dangerous because she is guilty of George's murder. Yet, although she attempts to kill George by pushing him into an abandoned well, he is neither killed nor seriously injured. Significantly, she sheds no blood in the novel; even Luke, the one "casualty" of a fire she starts, is determined to have died more from the "habits of intoxication" than the fire, since he "was not much burnt" (407). Although Lady Audley is not guilty of murder, she is guilty of overstepping a woman's boundaries, and is therefore dangerous to patriarchal society. Robert attempts to kill off female independence by removing her. His motive is clearly stated in the text; after seeing the "bright defiance" in her "blue eyes" (269), he says, "The more I see of this woman, the more reason I have to dread her influence upon others; the more reason to wish her far away from this house [Audley Court]" (274). With Sir Michael's permission, Robert assumes responsibility for Lady Audley after Dr. Mosgrave's diagnosis and sends her "far away" to an asylum in France, where she subsequently dies. Yet, despite his efforts, Lady Audley's "influence" has already infiltrated society, the age-old boundaries of patriarchal society have already been crossed, and the remaining female characters are

able to walk through quite easily.

After Lady Audley's expulsion from Audley Court, Alicia and Clara break free from the patriarchal rule of Sir Michael and Harcourt by marrying Sir Harry Towers and Robert, respectively. While one might not find marriage much like liberation, these marriages have much in common with Lady Audley's loveless marriages to George and Sir Michael, both of which she confesses were mercenary (350-51). Although Alicia and Clara are financially well off and, therefore, do not need to marry, they do so, for reasons other than love. Throughout the novel, Alicia is more interested in Robert than anyone else; notably, she is least interested in Sir Harry Towers, who tells "stupid" stories (115) and is, in general, a "stupid creature" (330). She refuses the latter's first proposal and, when she abruptly accepts him in the final chapter, the reader remembers her earlier dismay at the thought of being Lady Towers. However, the reader also recognizes that, in marrying Sir Harry Towers, she frees herself from her earlier disadvantage, just as Lady Audley does. Alicia will not remain at Audley Court to be mistreated by the next "Lady Audley" who turns her father's head; rather, she will be mistress of her own estate, ruling over both her incompetent husband and her aging father, who "remove[s] to a house [. . .] on the borders of his son-in-law's estate" (446).

Like Alicia, Clara never professes to love the man she eventually marries. She acts as a necessary catalyst for Robert, who is normally quite inactive; as passionately as Robert feels for George, he would have given up his investigation if it were not for Clara's supplication (199). Of course, Clara's "if I were a man" statements suggest that she would prefer to act herself, rather than acting through a man who is not all that willing to act on his own. She prays that her hand will "be the hand to avenge his [George's] untimely death" (200) and, although Robert does repeatedly refer to a "hand [. . .] stronger than my own" that is "beckoning me forward" (257), her "action" is still indirect. But, like Alicia, at the end of the novel she recognizes an opportunity to cure her earlier disadvantages. Marrying Robert not only frees her from her tyrannical father's rule, but also gives her the opportunity to act, despite her sex. After Robert proposes to Clara and professes his love, he asks "in a low pleading voice," "Shall I go to Australia to look for your brother?" (440). Clara gives "no answer" to his proposal until the latter question is rephrased. Only when Robert asks, "Shall we go together, my dear love, and bring our brother back between us?" does Clara accept.

Although Phoebe's future is less clear than Alicia's and Clara's, she is, at least, freed from her disadvantageous match to Luke. She is in a position similar to Lady Audley's at the beginning of the novel, with one advantage; Phoebe's first husband, unlike Lady Audley's, is irrefutably dead. In an early conversation between Lady Audley and Phoebe, the former says, "Do you know, Phoebe, I have heard some people say you and I are alike? [. . .] You are like me [. . .] Why, with a bottle of hair dye [. . .] and a pot of rouge, you'd be as good-looking as I any day, Phoebe" (58). And, significantly, the similarities between the two women go far beyond mere physical resemblance:

There were sympathies between her [Lady Audley] and this girl [Phoebe], who was like herself inwardly as well as outwardly--like herself, selfish, cold, and cruel, eager for her own advancement, and greedy of opulence and elegance, angry with the lot that had been cast her, and weary of dull dependence. (199)

At the end of the novel, Phoebe has the freedom to fashion a new self, as well as the memory of Lady Audley's encouragement to do so. Phoebe's cunning, evinced by her ability to manipulate Lady Audley in money matters, leaves the reader with little doubt of her eventual success.

Throughout the novel, Braddon repeatedly urges her readers to imagine a world ruled by women, most often via Robert's misogynistic musings about "petticoat government" (207). Meeting (and, consequently, falling in love with) Clara provokes Robert's bitterest diatribe against women; he says, "I hate women [. . .]. They're bold, brazen, abominable creatures, invented for the annoyance and destruction of their superiors" (207). He recognizes that the oppression of women has produced a "stronger [. . .] noisier [. . .] more persevering [. . .] [more] self-assertive sex" and, although he says, "let them have [freedom of opinion, variety of occupation]" (207), he qualifies it by saying "but let them be quiet--if they can" (207). Denying a woman voice is, in fact, denying her "freedom of opinion [and] variety of occupation," and Robert knows this. After observing Lady Audley at her tea-table, he again "imagine[s] all the women of England elevated to the high level of masculine intellectuality" (223) and concludes that their "legitimate empire" should remain the "tea-table" (222). Yet, by the end of the novel, Robert "submit[s]" to Clara and "do[es] what she tells [him], patiently and faithfully" (207), just as he predicts he will.

Chiara Briganti refers to Audley Court, which is closed up at the end of the novel, and to a "fairy cottage [. . .] between Teddington Lock and Hampton Bridge" (445), which is Robert's and Clara's home and the final scene in which all the remaining characters (except Phoebe) can be found; Briganti writes, "The world from which she [Lady Audley] has been expelled closes upon itself and can survive only by sealing her out" (207). Yet, Lady Audley is not "sealed out," because Alicia, Clara, and Phoebe have taken on her independence and, although the patriarchal world does indeed die, a new world is thriving. In the final chapter, the reader is introduced to Robert's and Clara's baby and, in a novel in which gender is initially of the utmost importance, this baby remains genderless. Lady Audley has defied her filial and marital obligations, has successfully entered into a man's world, and, although she does not survive the journey, she has enabled other women to do so. Robert's and Clara's baby remains genderless because it no longer matters whether it is male or female.

Braddon presents extraordinarily modern ideas about female equality in *Lady Audley's Secret*, but she masks those ideas well in a seemingly conservative nineteenth-century novel. In the final chapter, she writes: "I hope no one will take objection to my story because the end of it leaves the good people all happy and at peace" (446-47). This flattery,

similar to that employed by Lady Audley, should, according to Deirdre David, be expected: "Victorian women intellectuals are both complicit with and resistant to the powers generating their authority to speak. [. . .] They were both collaborators and saboteurs in the world that enabled their very existence as women intellectuals" (225, 230). Nicholas Rance adds, "One might say that Braddon has written the novel which she wanted to write, while advertising [. . .] that 'invariably to make us comfortable' was what readers asked of the English novelist" (124). Braddon sends Lady Audley to the asylum to make her conservative reader "comfortable" but, by doing so, she also forces her reader to compare the heroine's "insanity" with that of her mother.

As a child, Lady Audley visits her mother in an asylum, expects to see "a raving, strait-waistcoated maniac" (349), and is surprised by "a golden-haired, blue-eyed, girlish creature, who seemed as frivolous as a butterfly, and who skipped towards [her] with [. . .] yellow curls decorated with natural flowers, and saluted [her] with radiant smiles, and gay, ceaseless chatter" (350). Lady Audley's mother, trapped in a state of ideal femininity, lacks all her daughter's qualities, such as intelligence and self-assertion--and the former is, indeed, mad. As it is, Lady Audley's "madness" is questionable. She is more of a martyr than a madwoman. But, if she had lived to lose all of her defining characteristics

in the asylum--all of the characteristics that Alicia, Clara, and Phoebe emulate with such success--she would, no doubt, have been the very image of her mother.

Works Cited

- Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret*. Ed. David Skilton. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Briganti, Chiara. "Gothic Maidens and Sensation Women: Lady Audley's Journey from the Ruined Mansion to the Madhouse." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 19 (1991): 189-211.
- David, Deirdre. *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*. New York: Cornell UP, 1987.
- Rance, Nicholas. *Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists: Walking the Moral Hospital*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1991.
- Skilton, David. "Introduction." *Lady Audley's Secret*. By Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Ed. David Skilton. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987. vii-xxiii.
- Voskuil, Lynn M. "Acts of Madness: Lady Audley and the Meanings of Victorian Femininity." *Feminist Studies*. 27.3 (2001): 611-39.

University of South Carolina

Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson and South Sea Idols

Rodney Stenning Edgcombe

In *Little Dorrit*, which depicts the Calvinist, Sabatarian London of 1825, Dickens inadvertently slipped forward thirty years in his effort to present the South Sea islands in dystopic terms, to suggest the continuity of their brutal superstitions with those of a nominally enlightened city:

No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world--all *taboo* with that enlightened strictness, that the ugly South Sea gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves at home again. (28)

According to T. W. Hill, "this reference may be specifically to the images from Easter Island which, when Dickens was writing *Little Dorrit*, had recently been added to the National Collection" (197).

I think we also catch an oblique glimpse of these same idols in *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit's* predecessor, for their proto-Cubist lines seem to have inspired his conception of Mr. Gradgrind. There Dickens presents his foursquare, stony figure as the emanation of a milieu identical with that of *Little Dorrit's* London. Compare "a plain, bare, monotonous vault" with "Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close, stale" (*Little Dorrit* 28) and "Nothing for the spent toiler to do, but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his six days:

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. (1)

The square forehead, cavernous eyes and thin, wide mouth are all of them data that might have been assembled from an Easter Island idol, an idea pursued in the title of the next chapter, "Murdering the Innocents." On the one hand this alludes to the medieval conception of Herod as a ranting tyrant (which Dickens would have known through Hamlet 3.2.16), and, on the other, to the figure of Moloch with which Milton's hymn "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and *Paradise Lost* would have familiarized him: "First *Moloch*, horrid King besmear'd with blood / Of human sacrifice" (221). Imaging Mr. Gradgrind as a stony figure to which children are regularly sacrificed, Dickens thus foregrounds an idolatry of rationalism.

In his next novel, he would shift the emphasis slightly to an idolatry of wealth, in pursuit of which human nature regresses beneath a semblance of progress to the extent that

Dibdin's "right little, tight little island" becomes all commutable to those of the South Seas, both under sway of square-browed, monolithic idols: "The day came, and the She-Wolf in the Capitol might have snarled with envy to see how the Island Savages contrived these things now-a-days" (609). Dickens has no patience with ideal, Rousseauvian solutions to the pressing social issues of the time, for which reason he assigns them to Society's chief goddess, and the consort of its dominant idol:

"But," resumed Mrs Merdle, "we must take it [Society] as we find it. We know it is hollow and conventional and worldly and very shocking, but unless we are Savages in the Tropical seas (I should have been charmed to be one myself--most delightful life perfect climate I am told), we must consult it. It is the common lot.["] (239)

The Easter Island idols, introduced early in the novel as brooding presences associated with sacrifice, serve to unravel Mrs Merdle's implied opposition of an industrial hell and a pre-developmental paradise.

Although there is no allusion in Robert Louis Stevenson's correspondence to *Little Dorrit*, he refers repeatedly to many other novels by Dickens, from *The Pickwick Papers* to *Edwin Drood*. I think, therefore, that we can safely assume that he must have read *Little Dorrit* as well, for his knowledge of the oeuvre is as deep as it is wide. For example, in a letter from Vailima of 1891, he tells how a servant "comes steering into my room of a morning, like Mrs Nickleby, with elaborate precaution; unlike her, noiseless" (7: 140), recalling not only the incident but the very phrasing of the relevant novel: "coming into the room with an elaborate caution, calculated to discompose the nerves of an invalid more than the entry of a horse-soldier at full galop" (724). It seems highly likely then, that Stevenson remembered Dickens's attitude to the "ugly South Sea gods in the British Museum," and chose to invert the values he had attached to them. After all, Stevenson wrote with first-hand experience of Pacific culture, aware of its distance from Calvinism and the Protestant work ethic, for which he entertained a horror that matched Dickens's. Thus, in the

Hood's "Craniology" and the Head of Christopher Casby in *Little Dorrit*

Rodney Stenning Edgecombe

This is how Dickens describes Christopher Casby in Chapter 13 of *Little Dorrit*:

Patriarch was the name which many people delighted to give him. Various old ladies in the neighbourhood spoke of him as The Last of the Patriarchs. So grey, so slow, so quiet, so impassionate, so very bumpy in the head. Patriarch was the word for him. . . .

final paragraph of his verse epistle "To S. C.," the idols figure as creatures displaced rather than "at home again" as they had been in *Little Dorrit*:

Lo, now, when to your task in the great house
At morning through the portico you pass,
One moment glance, where by the pillared wall
Far-voyaging island gods, begrimed with smoke,
Sit now unworshipped, the rude monument
Of faiths forgot and races undivined:
Sit now disconsolate, remembering well
The priest, the victim, and the songful crowd,
The blaze of the blue noon, and that huge voice,
Incessant, of the breakers on the shore. (*Penguin Book of Victorian Verse* [330])

Stevenson hasn't progressed much beyond Dickens's revulsion at the hard-edged contours of the monoliths ("rude monument"), but, unlike the novelist, he feels a distinct affinity with the culture that gave them birth, half-effacing the terror of the victim (which would have loomed larger for Dickens) by subordinating it to a catalogue of island beauties.

Works Cited

- Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. 1854. Intro. Dingle Foot. London: Oxford UP, 1955.
- _____. *Little Dorrit*. 1855-57. Intro. Lionel Trilling. London: Oxford UP, 1953.
- _____. *Nicholas Nickleby*. 1838-39. Intro. Sybil Thhornike. London: Oxford UP, 1950.
- Hill, T. W. "Notes on *Little Dorrit*." *The Dickensian* 41 (1945): 196-203.
- Macbeth, George, (ed.). *The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse*. Harmondworth: Penguin, 1969.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*. Ed. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew. 7 vols. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1995.

University of Cape Town

A curious datum in this account of the Casby skull is its bumpiness, a datum that, taken in conjunction with the way Dickens segues into the disappointment of the *philanthropists* who observe it, suggests that he might here have alluded to lines from Thomas Hood's "Craniology." There can be no doubt that Dickens shared his friend's contempt for the pseudo-science of phrenology:

No murderer died by law disaster
But they took off his sconce in plaster;
For thereon they could show depending,
"The head and front of his offending:"
How that his philanthropic bump
Was mastered by a baser lump;
For every bump (these wags insist)

Has its direct antagonist,
Each striving stoutly to prevail
Like horses knotted tail to tail! (153)

Works Cited

- Dickens, Charles. *Little Dorrit*. 1855-57. Intro. Lionel Trilling. London: Oxford UP, 1953.
- Hood, Thomas. *The Poetical Works of Thomas Hood With Memoir, Explanatory Notes, etc.* London: Frederick Warne, n.d.

University of Cape Town

Coming in

The Victorian Newsletter

- Melissa Schaub, "Sympathy and Discipline in *Mary Barton*."
- Andrew Radford, "Unmanned by Marriage and the Metroplis in Gissing's *The Whirlpool*."

Books Received

- Bizup, Joseph. *Manufacturing Culture: Vindications of Early Victorian Industry*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville and London: U of Virginia P, 2003. Pp. xii + 229. \$39.50. ". . . [A] word is in order regarding the parameters of this study. Because my main concern lies with proindustrial appropriations of the language of aesthetic culture, I do not give direct attention to such matters as the rise of particular industries, the institutionalization of art education, or even the actual social conditions that accompanied Britain's industrialization. I do, however, take up these subjects as they inform my analysis of Victorian proindustrial rhetoric. . . . [M]y primary aim is not to discern the 'true' state of the manufacturing population in the 1830s and 1840s but to show how various representations of that population contribute to different rhetorical agendas" (15).
- Browning, Robert. *The Complete Works of Robert Browning with Variant Readings and Annotations*. Vol. XIV. Eds. John C. Berkey, Michael Bright, David Ewbank, Paul D. L. Turner. Waco, TX: Baylor UP; Athens: Ohio UP, 2003. Pp. xxvi + 463. \$70.00. Includes: *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus, La Saisiaz, The Two Poets of Croisic and Dramatic Idyls, First Series*.
- Campbell, Elizabeth A. *Fortune's Wheel: Dickens and the Iconography of Women's Time*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2003. Pp. xxiii + 253. \$42.95. "The revolution in Dickens's wheel image--from a sign for linear progress to a tragic emblem of fate and female power--develops most visibly in those novels devoted to serious consideration of 'women's time. . . .' First, Dickens's narratives begin to turn from the picaresque to the domestic after he becomes a father several times over, and thus becomes intimately involved with the cycles of maternal reproduction. . . . Second, this new focus on domesticity inevitably engages Dickens's imagination with a consideration of women's sphere and its proper limits: with a historical moment when 'female sensibility' became a matter of public discourse that included the introduction of gendered conceptions of time. And third, Dickens's abiding fascination with the female in the roles of daughter, sister, companion, lover, mother, and destroyer informs his mature novels to such an extent that women literally take control in and of his narratives, so that these novels can be said to be written under the influence of women's time. I therefore trace Dickens's development of female characters and his new sensitivity to women's concerns from the 1840s to the mid-1850s, when women's time was clearly the focus of his art. The bulk of this study will be a close consideration of Dickens's 'women's' novels, the three works that seem to have been written with a female audience and/or women's concerns particularly in mind: *Dombey and Son, Bleak House, and Little Dorrit*. The final chapter, on *Great Expectations*, shows the results of these deliberations on women and time: the theme seriously explored in *Little Dorrit* of a world governed by women is parodied rather bitterly here, thereby suggesting that the era of 'men's time' is over and that women have gained full control in both the public and private spheres" (xxi).
- Carlyle, Thomas. *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*. Ed. Mark Cumming. Madison, Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2004. Pp. 521. \$99.50. "The Carlyles have been splendidly served by the editors of their *Collected Letters*, and are being increasingly better served by new editions of their works. But the information on them is dispersed throughout a number of different volumes, and there is need for a convenient, one-volume reference work that offers a quick, accurate account of central topics in Carlyle studies and directs the reader towards the fuller account that can be found elsewhere. It is hoped that the present volume will fill that need and become the first port of call for students and scholars" (7).
- Carpenter, Mary Wilson. *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality, and Religion in the Victorian Market*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2003. Pp. xxii + 206. \$39.95. "The English Family Bible with Notes came into existence as a distinctively national commodity, and so it remained, designed and redesigned to appeal to the changing desires of British family consumers" (xvi). "The Victorian women writers on whose work I focused, then, were to be understood not merely as captives of a reigning Protestant capitalist ideology, but as active participants in a market in part defined by their choices of what to buy" (xvii).
- Foote, Lorien. *Seeking the One Great Remedy: Francis George Shaw and Nineteenth-Century Reform*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2004. Pp. xi + 224. \$39.95. Francis George Shaw, the son of a wealthy and socially elite Boston family, was the father of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, who died leading his African American 54th Massachusetts Regiment in the assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina. "Frank Shaw's contemporaries were [well] informed [about him]; indeed, a great many Northerners considered him one of the most respected reformers of his time. Not only was he a central figure in several of the major reform movements of the nineteenth century, he was also in the inner circle of an elite group of interconnected men and women who had a disproportionate influence over the nation's economic, political, and cultural life in the 1800s" (2).
- Gilbert, Pamela K. *Mapping the Victorian Social Body*. Albany: SUNY P, 2004. Pp. xxii + 245. \$65.50 (cloth), \$21.95 (paper). "This volume. . . . combines attention to medical and social maps, sanitary mapping narratives, and literature to demonstrate the impact of such representations on nineteenth-century understandings of space. The social body, a concept of increasing importance in this period, in which liberal government was coming to be understood as primarily a process of understanding and managing population with the goal of a more perfect realization of that population's potential--for health, productivity, and so forth--was persistently spatialized and represented in terms of geography, especially urban geography. . . . This book will be concerned with detailing the history of some of these maps in both England and in British India, along with examples of some of the other texts and discourses which depended upon or responded to them, and exploring the reorganization of social space they both documented and contributed to. Specifically we shall examine the development of the understanding of the social body as a concept specifically tied to an emerging vision of modern, abstract space populated by modern, structurally equivalent bodies" (xiii-xiv).
- Glavin, John, ed. *Dickens on Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Pp. xii + 225. \$65.00 (cloth), \$24.00 (paper). Contents: Gerhard Joseph, "Dickens, Psychoanalysis, and Film: a Roundtable"; John Bowen, "David Copperfield's Home Movies"; Regina Barreca, "David Lean's *Great Expectations*"; John O. Jordan, "*Great Expectations* on Australian Television"; Allesandro Vescovi, "Dickens's 'The Signalman' and Rubini's *La Stazione*"; Murray Baumgarten, "Bill Murray's Christmas Carols"; Robert M. Polhemus, "Screen Memories in Dickens and Woody Allen"; John Romano, "Writing after Dickens: The Television Writer's Art"; Pamela Katz, "Directing Dickens: Alfonso Cuarón's 1998 *Great Expectations*"; Miriam Margolyes, "Playing Dickens"; Kamilla Elliott, "Cinematic Dickens and Uncinematic Words"; Garrett Stewart, "Dickens, Eisenstein, Film"; Marguerite Rippey, "Orson Welles and Charles Dickens 1938-1941"; Steve J. Wurtzler, "*David Copperfield* (1935) and the US Curriculum"; Jeffrey Sconce, "Dickens, Selznick, and *Southpark*"; Martin F. Norden, "Tiny Tim on Screen: A Disability Studies Perspective"; Kate Carnell Watt and Kathleen C. Lonsdale, "Dickens Composed: Film and Television Adaptations 1897-2001."
- Golden, Catherine J. *Images of the Woman Reader in Victorian British and American Fiction*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2003. Pp. xvi + 287. \$55.00. "Like the Victorians, we must read fiction and book illustration of the period with 'bifocal lenses.' Together, fiction and illustration offer a verbal and visual collage of diverse viewpoints in a cultural context. It is my hope that in examining concurrent competing visions of the woman reader, this investigation will spark further scrutiny of the complexities of our own reading habits as well as those of the Victorians. Verbal and visual representations of the Victorian woman reader are not only our pictorial legacy: they are a portal into reading ideologies pervasive on both sides of the Atlantic, influential in our present reading practices" (14).
- Goodlad, Lauren M. E. *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character & Government in a Liberal Society*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2003. Pp. xv + 298. \$45.00. "In the introductory chapter, 'Beyond the Panopticon,' I set up a number of theoretical and historiographic premises for the books as a whole. . . ." (xi). "In 'Charity, the Novel and the New Poor Law' I ask what was at stake for Britain's self-consciously moral governing classes when poor law practices were altered to suit a rationalized politico-economic conception of the individual in society. . . . Chapter 3, 'Is There a Pastor in the House,' is an in-depth analysis of *Bleak House* (1852-53) from the point of view of midcentury politics, sanitary reform, philanthropy, and policing" (xii). "In chapter 4, 'An Officer and a Gentleman,' I describe the resolution of this crisis [the middle-class revolt against government by the upper tier of 'Barnacles'] in the context of civil service reforms. . . . In chapter 5, 'A Riddle without an Answer,' I examine the relation between *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) in nineteenth-century educational reforms. . . . 'Duelling Pastors, Duelling Worldviews. . . offers a comparative analysis of two visions of national pastorship, each undergirded by a distinctive philosophy of character" (xiii).
- Graham, Maria. *Journal of a Residence in Chile During the Year 1822, and a Voyage from Chile to Brazil in 1823*. Ed. Jennifer Hayward. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2003. Pp. xxiii + 336. \$69.50 (cloth), \$24.50 (paper). ". . . Graham was one of the first professional women travel writers, sailing to India, Europe, and South America and writing well-received books about each journey. Her visits to Chile and Brazil were particularly noteworthy; not only did she travel alone through South America at a time when European women rarely did so, but her visits coincided with the early days of South American independence and thus she provides invaluable firsthand descriptions of dramatic events and figures" [vii].
- Macdonald, Gina and Andrew F., eds. *Jane Austen on Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Pp. xii + 284. \$70.00 (cloth), \$25.00 (paper). Contents: Gina and Andrew F. Macdonald, "Introduction"; "Short 'Takes' on Austen: Summarizing the Controversy between Literary Purists and Film Enthusiasts": Roger Gard, "A Few Skeptical Thoughts on Jane Austen and Film"; Gaylene Preston, "*Sense and Sensibility*: Ang Lee's Sensitive Screen Interpretation of Jane Austen"; Kate Bowles, "Commodifying Jane Austen: the Janette Culture of the Internet and Commercialization through Product and Television Spinoffs"; Harriet Margolis, "Janeite Culture: What Does the Name 'Jane Austen'"

Authorize?"; Jocelyn Harris, "'Such a transformation!': Translation, Imitation, and Intertextuality in Jane Austen on Screen"; Jan Fergus, "Two *Mansfield Parks*: Purist and Postmodern"; Penny Gay, "*Sense and Sensibility* in a Postfeminist World: Sisterhood Is Still Powerful"; Paulette Richards, "Regency Romance Shadowing in the Visual Motifs of Roger Mitchell's *Persuasion*"; Tara Ghoshal Wallace, "Filming Romance: *Persuasion*"; Hilary Schor, "Emma Interrupted: Speaking Jane Austen in Fiction and Film"; Ellen Belton, "Reimagining Jane Austen: The 1940 and 1995 Film Versions of *Pride and Prejudice*"; David Monaghan, "*Emma* and the Art of Adaptation"; John Mosier, "Clues for the Clueless."

McDonagh, Josephine. *Child Murder and British Culture 1720-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Pp. xiii + 278. \$65.00. "This present work sets out to establish both a genealogy of ideas of child murder, and a map of their cultural transmission and diffusion. In each of the chapters, I follow the figure of the murdered child across a broad array of texts: parliamentary debates, legal cases, medical records, scientific tracts, economic theories, political speeches, sermons, newspaper reports, travel literature, the archives of colonial bureaucracy, and, of course, works of imaginative literature. The latter are particularly important in this study, because, more noticeably and symptomatically than other kinds of texts, they act as receptacles for the motifs and preoccupations of the time, and reveal a great deal about both the parameters and mechanisms of the cultural imaginary" (11).

Olsen, Victoria C. *From Life: Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Pp. [xv] + 320. \$29.95. "This is the story of photography's struggle to become an art form and one determined middle-aged woman's struggle to become an artist. . . . She lived the first half of her life as a stereotypical nineteenth-century daughter, wife, and mother. She gave parties, collected money for charities, and raised six children. Then one day in 1864 she reinvented herself as a photographer and put all her formidable energy into pursuing models, money, and acclaim. She was surrounded by geniuses and related to great beauties, and she started photographing many of them. Her move from private to public life, from amateur to professional, from the domestic sphere to the art world reflects the transformations of her times. Despite her famous eccentricities and her singular talent, her life and work illuminate the most rarefied parts of Victorian culture and society. She lived within a charmed circle at the center of Victorian culture, and it is in part her own work that keeps that Victorian past before our eyes" (3).

Perkins, David. *Romanticism and Animal Rights*. Cam-

bridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Pp. xv + 190. \$60.00. "Fellow feeling for animals, compassion, kindness, friendship, and affection are expressed in every time and place and culture . . . Perhaps no argument for kindness to animals was ever made that had not already been made long before. In England, however, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, there was a change, a gradual, eventually enormous increase in the frequency of such expressions. Kindness to animals was urged and represented in sermons, treatises, pamphlets, journals, manuals of animal care, encyclopedias, scientific writings, novels, literature for children, and poems. . . . To what extent all this writing registered or helped bring about a general change of mind, and to what extent it contributed to developments in the actual treatment, are questions that cannot be answered with much certainty. I pursue them briefly . . . but the literature itself, the discourse is my primary subject" (ix).

Thomas, David Wayne. *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004. Pp. xv + 229. \$45.00, £31.50. ". . . I argue in this study that aesthetics cannot be reclaimed . . . unless we reassess the character of modern liberal culture as well. Thus I offer here not so much an account of aesthetic value as a preliminary reconsideration of liberal agency, understood as a crucial feature of modern aesthetic culture" [ix].

Vaughan-Pow, Catherine, compiler. *Indexes to Fiction in "The Windsor Magazine" (1895-1910)*. Victorian Fiction Research Guide 32. Queensland: School of English, Media Studies and Art History, University of Queensland, 2004, Australia 4072.

The Victorian Supernatural. Eds. Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Pp. xv + 305. \$65.00. Includes: Richard Noakes, "Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian England"; Louise Henson, "Investigations and Fictions: Charles Dickens and Ghosts"; Eve M. Lynch, "Spectral Politics: The Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant"; Pamela Thurschwell, "George Eliot's Prophecies: Coercive Second Sight and Everyday Thought Reading"; Adam Roberts, "Browning, the Dramatic Monologue and the Resuscitation of the Dead"; Colin Cruise, "Baron Corvo and the Key to the Underworld"; Nicola Bown, "What Is the Stuff Dreams Are Made of?"; Michaela Giebelhausen, "Holman Hunt, William Dyce and the Image of Christ"; Roger Luckhurst, "Knowledge, Belief, and the Supernatural at the Imperial Margin"; Carolyn Burdett, "Romance, Reincarnation and Rider Haggard"; Geoffrey Gilbert, "The Origins of Modernism in the Haunted Properties of Literature"; Steven Connor, "Afterword."

Victorian Group News

Announcements

Elizabeth Gaskell and Manchester: Identity, Culture and the Modern City. Call for papers: A Conference to Be Held on 19/20/21 July 2005 at the Manchester Centre for Regional History, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Elizabeth Gaskell was the most important of the novelists of the world's first modern industrial society. This conference explores her cultural and literary legacy up to the present day. Possible themes for the papers include: 1) Gaskell and other nineteenth-century literary figures and movements; 2) Manchester's cultural and literary significance before and beyond the nineteenth century; 3) Literary representations of the industrial north-west; 4) Sense of place in the changing city: the social and the built environment; 5) Rewriting the post-industrial (and post-modern) city; 6) Insiders and outsiders: migrant culture and urban identities; 7) Official and unofficial narratives of the city.

Comparative and interdisciplinary papers are welcome, as are exhibitions and multi-media presentations,

Send abstracts of paper (200-400) words of proposals to Dr. Craig Horner, c.horner@mmu.ac.uk; www.mcr.mmu.ac.uk/gaskell

Deadline for submission 30 September 2004.

Notice

The number of your address label is the number of the last issue covered by your subscription. Renewals should be made at the rate of \$5/yr. or \$9/2 yrs.—\$6/yr. foreign and Canada

Back issues of VN, at \$4 a copy (indexes \$5) are available for the following numbers: 8, 20, 23, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, indexes.