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Page

Cover: "Meekness and Mr. Pecksniff and his charming daughters" Hablot K. Browne from *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844)

The Haunted Self: Visions of the Ghost and the Woman at the *Fin-de-siècle*

Hilary Grimes

The ghost story was an enormously popular genre for the female pen. Jessica Amanda Salmonsen has argued that as much as seventy percent of ghost stories published in British and American magazines in the nineteenth century were written by women (x). Furthermore, at the *fin-de-siècle*, dozens of women ghost-story writers appeared in magazines and collections of short stories, including women who have received some recent critical attention (M. E. Braddon, Vernon Lee, and Margaret Oliphant) and others who have been almost forgotten critically (Helena Blavatsky, Anna Bonus Kingsworth, and Mary Louisa Molesworth). Even women writers not usually connected with the ghost story genre experimented with the form, including Harriet Beecher Stowe.[1]

Many critics have considered why so many Victorian women turned to the genre, most arguing that the ghost story, because itself a form designed to tell incendiary tales, to chill the bones and to sensationalize, allowed for what otherwise would have been unacceptable. In addition, because they were best-sellers, ghost stories were often written for financial reasons. They also provided a means for women to express their anxieties and resentments in a male-dominated society (see Frye).

Clare Stewart has discussed the way women's ghost stories were received in the Victorian period, suggesting that their reception "was intimately bound up with perceptions of womanhood and delineations of femininity" (108). The domestic woman was the ideal, and the reading/writing woman was often seen as oppositional and even dangerous to this ideal; therefore, women's ghost stories were often treated ambiguously, both by critics and by the public at large. Janet Beizer has suggested that factions of the male medical community were openly hostile towards reading women and warned against the dangers of novels:

> Virtually every nineteenth-century medical text on hysteria offers a prophylactic to the (implicitly male) reader seeking to protect his wife, daughter, or woman patient from the ravages of the female condition. The barrier that physicians recommended almost unanimously is illiteracy. (55)

The medical community also warned against the dangers that writing posed for women. During her mental break-downs, Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was prescribed the "rest cure" in which she was forced to remain in bed and during which time she was, above all else, not to write, as this was seen as health-threatening (see Lee 175-200). Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) wrote her Gothic short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) ironically showing that the boredom, depression and insanity that the "rest cure" was

meant to prevent, actually worsened these symptoms. In "The Yellow Wallpaper" the depressed narrator is forbidden to write, and it is this loss of a creative outlet which plunges her deeper into despair and madness. Writing, which was seen as productive, and even healing by women writers, was often viewed as extremely dangerous by male doctors, who demanded that women stifle creativity in favor of health.

Although reading and writing were considered hazardous activities, seen to bring out the unknown dangers of being female (especially in the case of hysteria), increased female production of the ghost story in the late nineteenth century suggests that these women were aware of the similarities between the unknown dangers of the reading/writing female and the unknown dangers or ghosts which haunt the premise of the ghost story. The writing woman was haunted, not just by ghosts, but by her own desire to create in a society resistant to female expression.

Indeed, while the ghost story does indeed often express, as Vanessa D. Dickerson suggests, "eruptions of female libidinal energy [. . .], thwarted ambitions [and] cramped egos," (8) these are both a product of frustration with the female role in society and also, and what she and other critics have so far ignored, an implication that women were haunted by themselves, haunted by the very fact of their being women.

But, an examination of women's ghost stories has not yet fully explored the reasons for and significance of their popularity at the *fin-de-siècle*. The end of the century was a particularly peculiar time to be a woman: it was the era of the hysterical female, the New Woman, and the suffragette. Why, then, in a period when women were trying to redefine the roles women were to play in contemporary society and the coming century was the ghost story the popular choice for the female pen? Although I believe financial common sense was an important factor in determining the popularity of the form, I would argue that women's ghost stories offer more than an outlet for suppressed and repressed female ideas and feelings. The "scientization" of the occult world, along with the quickly changing environment of the way women were viewed legally, socially, and morally at the moment in which the writing and publication of women's ghost stories increased, is a phenomenon which must be granted closer inspection if we are to better understand these ghostly texts, and the climate in which they were written.

I argue that women's ghost stories of the 1880s and 1890s share a discourse with the contemporary internalization of the occult into the emerging discipline of psychology. This newly occulted psychology had direct and powerful implications for visions of women and female identity, and more specifically was a phenomenon which directly allied ghostliness, women, and the mind. I begin by examining W.

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[1] See, for example, Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House," first published in 1871 (in Williams, *Penguin Book of Classic Fantasy by Women*).

T. Stead's *Real Ghost Stories* (1891) in order to explore theories of the unconscious mind as being a haunted site and to demonstrate that for many Victorians the haunted aspects of the mind were comparable to late Victorian ideas about gender roles, and in particular to the "ghostly" role of women in society. I also outline late Victorian theories on mental science with a particular emphasis on double consciousness and hysteria in order to represent how the female mind in particular was perceived. I use a close reading of a ghost story by Mary Louisa Molesworth to demonstrate the impact of occulted mental science on female identity and the affinity between the woman and the ghost.

Publisher and journalist W. T. Stead (1849-1912) gained enormous popularity with his publication of *Real Ghost Stories* in 1891, which sold over one hundred thousand copies in a week (Basham 154). *Real Ghost Stories* was a compilation of accounts of encounters with ghosts, and also gave Stead's theories on the ghost's relationship to the human mind. Stead theorized that the concept of the subliminal consciousness haunted the waking one. In the chapter entitled "The Ghost that Dwells in Each of Us" in *Real Ghost Stories*, Stead asks "[B]efore disputing about whether or not there are ghosts outside of us, let us face the preliminary question, whether we have not each of us a veritable ghost within our own skin?" (11).

Stead's ideas about the "ghosts within us" suggest that he would have been familiar with F. W. H. Myers' most famous and influential theory of subliminal or double consciousness.[2] Myers developed his theory through a series of articles he published for the Society for Psychical Research in the 1890s. He first postulated the idea as early as 1885 in "Automatic Writing, or the Rationale of the Planchette" in which he argued that automatic writing is a result of a second self within who is responsible for the words written (233-249). In "Multiplex Personality" he suggested that there could be more than one inhabitant of the mind: the self could be doubled and a stranger could live within (132-38).

In *Real Ghost Stories*, Stead suggested that the stranger within us all, the ghost that haunted us and who made up the basis for double consciousness, was gendered. More specifically, Stead's vision of female identity at the *fin-de-siècle* led him to conclude that the ghost within us was female. His comparison between the unconscious mind, theories about hypnotism and gender relations is as follows:

> [T]he new theory supposes that there are inside each of us not one personality but two, and that these two correspond to the husband and wife. There is the Conscious Personality, which stands for the husband. It is vigorous, alert, active, positive, monopolising all the means of communication and production. So intense is its consciousness that it ignores the very existence of its partner, excepting as a mere appendage and convenience to itself. Then there is the Unconscious Personality, which cor-

responds to the wife who keeps cupboard and storehouse, and the old stocking which treasures up the accumulated wealth of impressions acquired by the conscious personality, but who is never able to assert any right to anything, or to the use of sense or limb except when her lord and master is asleep or entranced. [. . .] It is extraordinary how close is the analogy when we come to work it out. The impressions stored up by the Conscious Personality and entrusted to the care of the Unconscious are often, much to our disgust, not forthcoming when wanted. It is as if we had given a memorandum to our wife and we could not discover where she had put it. But night comes; our Conscious Self sleeps; our Unconscious housewife wakes, and turning over her stores produces the missing impression; and when our other self wakes it finds the mislaid memorandum [. . .]. (12)

When Stead compares the unconscious personality with women, he is also comparing women and the ghostly. Stead suggests that not only is our mind a haunted site, but that the ghost who haunts it projects Victorian concepts about female identity and the female role in marriage. If we can discuss a metaphorical female haunting of the mind at the *fin-de-siècle*, then we must take into account what the implications are for women writing about haunting at the end of the century. If woman is already haunted, what do her own ghosts stories reveal about her identity and about her own ideas about women? Women's ghost stories at the end of the nineteenth century inscribe women as phantoms per se, not only in the socio-political framework of Victorian society, but also in that they represent what is fearful and unknowable about the mind.

Women writing ghost stories at the end of the late-nineteenth century had to confront many conflicting visions about what female identity was, especially since theories about the female body and psyche were undergoing a number of transformations during the last thirty years of the century. Elaine Showalter has suggested, for example, that the increase in female illness at the end of the century was partly a construction by a male-dominated society, which considered the female to be dangerous, and by the very nature of her gender, the other that was already ill. She argues that this increase of female activism in the 1880s and 1890s significantly coincides with a rise in female mental illness. She suggests that this increase of female insanity during a period when women were struggling for greater personal and political freedom can be seen as indicative of male discomfort with liberated women (*Female Malady* 121). Male doctors and the male-dominated Victorian society were increasingly alarmed by the possibility that the woman would no longer be the "angel of the house": "Feminism, the women's movement, and what was called 'the Woman Question,' challenged the traditional institutions of marriage, work, and the family" (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 7). The figure of the

woman at the end of the century had become culturally and socially unpredictable and threatening, and both her body and her mind were represented by male society as unexplored territory.

Significantly, from 1870 until the First World War, hysteria was newly defined and seen to be an epidemic (Showalter *Female Malady* 129). Hysteria, perhaps more than any other nervous disorder in the nineteenth century was explicitly connected with the unknowability and uncontrollability of the female body. Until the 1880s, hysteria was believed by many doctors to be directly related to the female reproductive organs. Hysteria was often viewed as a symptom of "uncontrolled sexuality," an excessive femininity which Showalter argues was fearful for male psychiatrists (*Female Malady* 74). Janet Beizer, however, points out that by the 1880s and 1890s, hysteria was beginning to be seen by the medical community as a "neurological" disorder (7). Freud's *On Hysteria*, published in 1895, although preoccupied with the bodily symptoms of the illness, suggested that hysteria was a sickness of the mind. He argued that the illness was a result of "psychical trauma" from the patient's past, a trauma which he later qualified as being almost necessarily sexual (Breuer 56).

My aim here is not to discuss the problems, complications and ongoing debates about hysteria, but to point out two particularly interesting phenomena within the discourse on hysteria: firstly, that the male medical community in the nineteenth century wrote about hysteria in such a way that it made women and, in particular female bodies seem unmanageable, fearful and even monstrous, and secondly, that at the end of the century, hysteria was beginning to be internalized as an illness of the mind and not just of the body. Thus, arguably, the female mind can be seen as the new site of the unknown and the fearful at the *fin-de-siècle*. As I have suggested earlier, women, the occult, and theories acting as precursors to psychoanalysis were closely interconnected in the late Victorian period. Freud's use of the term "double conscience" (Breuer 62-63) in his writings on hysteria suggests F. W. H. Myers' work on the dual personality and subliminal consciousness and also connects both Myers and Freud to the spiritualist movement, where by the end of the nineteenth century it was suggested that mediums and automatic writers were not being contacted by spirits, but rather that these phenomena were a result of the "subliminal self" (Owen 238). Ghosts were still haunting at the end of the century, but the ghosts were now strongly allied with mental science and with the self: it was the self which was ghostly, and the mind which was haunted. And it was women and the female mind that were constructed as being particularly haunted.

Mary Louisa Molesworth's (1839-1921) ghost stories exemplify this haunted female identity haunting the *fin-de-siècle*. More specifically, the women in Molesworth's ghost stories demonstrate, alongside a sense of fear of the ghosts that appear within their pages, an affinity with them, a compassion and sympathy for the ghostly. Perhaps this connec-

tion is the manifestation of the subtle recognition that the ghosts they see are only reflections of themselves and their own frustrated desires and ambitions. The most moving example of this alliance between the ghost and the woman can be found in Molesworth's "Lady Farquhar's Old Lady, A True Ghost Story" (1888). The plot itself is fairly predictable: Lady Farquhar and her family are staying in an old country house, Ballyreina, in order that Lady Farquhar can recover her health. There, Lady Farquhar sees the ghost of an old woman three times. She subsequently discovers that the old woman was probably the ghost of the eldest Miss Fitzgerald, who used to inhabit Ballyreina but whose family lost all of their fortune and were forced to move to the Continent. Miss Fitzgerald died abroad, exactly a year before Lady Farquhar inhabited the house.[3]

What is curious about the story is what the story seems not to say about Lady Farquhar. Why is it that she feels such empathy for "my odd lady" (272), and also so protective of her? When Lady Farquhar is asked by the narrator to give an account of her ghost she speaks of it with a certain sorrowful hesitation, as if fearful of somehow betraying Miss Fitzgerald: "All that I feel is a sort of shrinking from the subject, strong enough to prevent my ever alluding to it lightly or carelessly. Of all things, I should dislike to have a joke made of it" (273). She also tells of her guilt and grief for somehow not being able to help the ghost:

> I cannot now describe [the ghost's] features beyond saying that the whole face was refined and pleasing, and that in the expression there was certainly nothing to alarm or repel. It was rather wistful and beseeching, the look in the eyes anxious, the lips slightly parted, as if she were on the point of speaking. I have since thought that if *I* had spoken, if I *could* have spoken—for I did make one effort to do so, but no audible words would come at my bidding—the spell that bound the poor soul, this mysterious wanderer from some shadowy borderland between life and death, might have been broken, and the message that I now believe burdened her delivered.
>
> (280-1)

Significantly, Lady Farquhar's sightings seem to coincide with a particularly unhappy or anxious time in her life, although what is making her unhappy is always kept hidden from the reader. She is at Ballyreina because "I had not been as well as usual for some time (this was greatly owing, I believe, to my having lately endured unusual anxiety of mind)" (274). She never elucidates this comment, and only refers to her nervous constitution again in order to assure the narrator that she is "not morbid, or very apt to be run away with by [her] imagination" (273). But it is during this time of anxiety that she sees the ghost, and it seems this is also the case when she is suffering from any kind of mental agitation. For example, she sees the ghost for the second and third times just after receiving a letter which is "a very welcome and dearly-prized letter, and the reading of it made me very

[2]Freud was certainly aware of Myers' work in double consciousness and was a corresponding member of the S. P. R. in the late-nineteenth century. Many links can be made between the occulted mental science of the *fin-de-*

siècle, and the canon of Freudian psychoanalysis that developed in the twentieth century. See Crabtree, Luckhurst, and Thurschwell.

[3](272-85). See also Molesworth's collection of short stories—*Four Ghost Stories*.

happy. I don't think I had felt so happy all the months we had been in Ireland as I was feeling that evening" (279). Who sent the letter, or what its contents are (although there is some mention of current foreign affairs) and why they have made her so happy are never clear, but directly thereafter she sees the ghost. That she sees the ghost at moments of extreme emotion suggests that what she sees is more than a woman who like herself is seeking to be disburdened, but also that in a sense she is looking at herself. The ghost seems to be a projection of all of Lady Farquhar's unspoken anxieties and hopes in this story (and here it is interesting to remember that she is also unable to speak to the ghost), manifesting itself in a reflection of inner turmoil. Lady Farquhar does seem to see the ghost, but she seems in a sense also to be that ghost whose history, like her own in this tale, might reveal "many a pitiful old story that is never told" (284). Farquhar is haunted by herself here, by her own silence about her own thoughts and past, as well as by the actual ghost of Miss Fitzgerald.

Women writers writing about ghosts and ghostly women were also rewriting themselves, creating a new way of visualizing female writers. The rise of the ghost story written by women in the 1880s and 1890s marked not only the death of the woman and her reappearance as a ghost in her fiction and in social constructions about women, it also marked the ghost story as a site of the birth of the female author. The vision of the Victorian woman ghost story writer at the *fin-de-siècle* is a haunted one, a Gothic revisioning of female selfhood, but it is also a vision of the power and expression of the female pen.

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The Case of the Anomalous Narrative: Gothic "Surmise" and Trigonometric "Proof" in Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Musgrave Ritual"

Nils Clausson

"I have tried to make the reader share those dark fears and vague surmises which clouded our lives so long, and ended in so tragic a manner." -Watson in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

" ...a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes." -George Orwell, "Shooting an Elephant"

"For the mystery story has always been a genre in which appalling facts are made to fit into a rational or realistic pattern." -Geoffrey Hartman. "Literature High and Low"

The anomaly of Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes stories is that at the same time they have enjoyed the enduring and deserved admiration of generations of readers, they have suffered the equally enduring but undeserved neglect of literary critics. At least Sir Walter Scott had a high literary reputation before he lost it. Conan Doyle remains on the periphery of the Victorian canon because he continues to be seen primarily as writing a sub-literary genre, the detective story. Even his best novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, has been read more closely in Hollywood than in the academy. "Conan Doyle was not able to legitimize detective fiction as 'serious,'" Jon Thompson has recently observed; "he could give it a new popularity, but he could not give it full literary respectability" (75). As Jacqueline Jaffe pointed out in 1987, "Arthur Conan Doyle is of one of the few remaining Victorian writers who has not been 'rediscovered' by contemporary critics" (127). Despite some recent scholarly and critical discussions of Conan Doyle's relation to late nineteenth-century cultural developments (most notably by Lawrence Frank and Jon Thompson), and a few striking analyses of some of the stories (collected in John A. Hodgson's *Sherlock Holmes: The Major Stories with Critical Essays*), not much has changed since 1987. Conan Doyle is absent, for example, from Lyn Pykett's 1996 collection *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* merits a Norton Critical Edition but not *The Hound of the Baskervilles* or *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. A revaluation of Conan Doyle as an important if not major late-Victorian writer is long overdue, and as a step towards that revaluation, I offer a re-reading—and a revaluation—of "The Musgrave Ritual" from *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, the second collection of Holmes stories. But changing how we read and value "The Musgrave Ritual" will first require a change in our expectations, and hence our valuation, of the detective story as a genre.

The case against the detective story has nowhere been more rigorously argued than in Geoffrey Hartman's influential 1975 essay "Literature High and Low: The Case of the Mystery Story." "Most popular mysteries," says Hartman,

are devoted to solving rather than examining a problem. Their reasonings put reason to sleep, abolish darkness by elucidation, and bury the corpse for good. Few detective novels want the reader to exert his intelligence fully, to find gaps in the plot or the reasoning, to worry about the moral question of fixing the blame. They are exorcisms, stories with happy endings that could be classified with comedy because they settle the unsettling. As to the killer, he is often a bogeyman chosen by the "finger" of the writer after it has wavered suspensefully between this and that person for the right number of pages. (220)

Hartman sums up his attack thus: "The *surnaturel* is *expliqué*, and the djinni returned to the bottle by a trick. For the mystery story has always been a genre in which appalling facts are made to fit into a rational or realistic pattern" (216). This formidable critique is one that many critics would still feel compelled to agree with—even those who, after extolling by day the complex, moral ironies of Jane Austen, succumb at night to the illicit pleasures of P. D. James. The counter-argument to this attack is that of the thousands of novels published every year very few want readers to exert their intelligence, to uncover gaps, or to worry about moral questions of any kind. While it is true that most best-selling mysteries don't achieve the status of art, neither do most sonnets and comedies. Nor do they aspire to, but this failing is not due to the limitations of their genres. And we judge the sonnet and comedy as genres not by the thousands (probably tens of thousands) of sonnets and comedies that linger in well-deserved obscurity, but by the happy few that have made it into the canon. But Hartman assumes that the mystery story is intrinsically flawed as a genre. However, just as the best comedies—Shakespeare's and Molière's, for example—do not, despite their happy endings, "settle the unsettling," neither do the best mysteries "move from sensation to simplification, from bloody riddle to quasi-solution" (Hartman 217). This pattern is not, as Hartman, claims, a defining property of the genre. He has, in fact, defined the detective story in such as way as to preclude artistic success for any example of the form.

As I hope to show, it is simply not true that "The Musgrave Ritual," which is universally regarded as a classic detective story, puts reason to sleep and abolishes darkness by elucidation, or that it does not want readers to use their intelligence, to find gaps in the plot or reasoning, or to

worry about the moral question of fixing the blame. Rather "The Musgrave Ritual," like the best detective stories, embodies a tension between two contrary pressures: the desire to dispel, or even explain away, mystery and the recognition that real mysteries can't be rationally explained, that the light of reason cannot fully elucidate the darkness. And this doubleness is essential to the narrative structure of the detective story as a genre. Indeed, it has much in common with many postmodern narratives.

Before proceeding, however, I want to distinguish this double plot from the double plot that Peter Brooks in his analysis of "The Musgrave Ritual" in *Reading for Plot* (1985) has offered as an exemplary instance of narrative structure. Ever since the theories of the Russian formalists were absorbed by Western critics, it has been a commonplace of narratology to distinguish between plot and discourse, that is, between what happened and the subsequent narration of those events. The detective story has been taken as a paradigmatic example of this distinction, since there are two stories in the classic detective story: the original crime as committed by the murderer, and the detective's investigation of the crime leading to his narration of the original events in what amounts to a repetition of them. "[The detective] novel," says Todorov in his famous essay on detective fiction, "contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation" (44). In other words, the detective story lays bare the essential property of all narratives: to tell a story is to tell what has already happened. For Brooks, "The Musgrave Ritual" consists of two principal stories: Brunton the butler's de-coding of the Musgrave family ritual, leading to his discovery that it is a set of directions to find the original crown of the Stuart kings, a discovery that precipitates his death; and, second, Holmes's re-plotting, or re-enactment, of Brunton's actions in order to "solve" the mystery of the butler's sudden disappearance (Brooks 23-29). Without denying the narratological usefulness of this distinction, I want to suggest that in addition to the narrative of the crime and the narrative of the solution, there is another pair of narratives in "The Musgrave Ritual": these are the narrative of the solution to mystery of the Musgrave Ritual (a mystery that Holmes solves by applying his "analytic method" of reasoning from effects to originating causes, which amounts to a duplication of Brunton's solution); and the narrative of Brunton's "murder," which, since it cannot be explained by analytic reasoning (or any kind of reasoning), can only be "surmised" by an act of the literary imagination—the very thing that Holmes habitually condemns in Watson's literary narratives of the Great Detective's cases. And further, I want to suggest that this second pair of narratives is even more important as a generic structural property of detective fiction than the double plot of the crime and its re-telling in the narrative of the investigation because the tension between these double narratives is what ensures that the darkness is never abolished by the elucidations of reason.

This double narrative of the solvable and the unsolvable mystery is mirrored in the double Holmes who is introduced, appropriately enough in this remarkably complex tale, by

Watson's framing narrative, which introduces Holmes's narrative of the case of the Musgrave ritual, a case that antedates Watson's friendship with Holmes. (Technically, I suppose, it is not a frame narrative since Watson does not close the story, but nevertheless Watson is re-telling us Holmes's narrative as one of the "adventures" of Sherlock Holmes.) The function of Watson's frame narrative is not only to introduce Holmes so that he can tell his story of the Musgrave ritual; it also introduces us to a double Holmes whose doubleness mirrors the double narrative of "The Musgrave Ritual." Watson introduces this double Holmes in the opening sentence: "An *anomaly* which often struck me in the character of my friend Sherlock Holmes was that, although in his methods of thought he was the *neatest and most methodical of mankind*, and although also he affected a certain quiet primness of dress, he was none the less in his personal habits *one of the most untidy men* that ever drove a fellow-lodger to distraction" (223; italics added). In other words, this is going to be a story about anomalies, inconsistencies, contradictions, gaps. The anomaly (from the Latin a = not + homos = same) in Holmes is also the anomaly in "The Musgrave Ritual." Watson has perceived an anomaly in Holmes, and the reader, playing detective, expects to find a matching anomaly in the story. One of the meanings of anomalous is equivocal, and, as we shall see, this is certainly an equivocal story. Another meaning is "deviating from the normal or common order, form, or rule." And "The Musgrave Ritual" is anomalous in this sense too: most readers expect detective stories to start with the discovery of the body and work back to the anterior events. The investigation in the "The Musgrave Ritual," however, ends with the discovery of Brunton's body, the last link in Holmes's "whole long chain of surmise and of proof" (132).

Holmes's narrative, it turns out, is as anomalous as his character. On the one hand, it seems to focus primarily on explaining, clarifying, elucidating. And Holmes will succeed completely in doing what he set out to do: solve the riddle, or break the code, of the Musgrave ritual and reconstruct, to his satisfaction, the events that happened in the weeks leading up to the mysterious disappearance of first Brunton, the butler, and then Rachel Howells, the second housemaid, from Hurlstone Manor, the Musgrave family residence. On the other hand, although Holmes succeeds in constructing what he calls his chain of surmise and proof, this narrative, which entirely satisfies Holmes, contains enough gaps, surmises, and anomalies to leave the reader feeling not that the unsettling has been settled but rather that Holmes has left important questions unanswered, that his narrative is not "whole." In other words, there is a gap between Holmes's conviction that everything has been logically explained and the reader's feeling that "appalling facts" have not been "made to fit" into a "rational pattern." Yet it is to the success of this case—the third he undertook—that Holmes attributes his current "position" (116) as a renowned consulting detective. The case that launched the career of the great Sherlock Holmes turns out to be one in which a suspected murderer has escaped scot-free. What could be more anomalous?

The two most striking things about Holmes's solution to the mystery (or, more accurately, the mysteries) are, first, his initial confidence that he can easily solve the case, after hearing Reginald Musgrave's narrative of events that Musgrave himself calls "the most extraordinary and inexplicable business" (117) and before visiting the scene of the mysteries; and, second, the simplicity and ease with which he actually does decode the riddle of the ritual. In response to Musgrave's question about the meaning of his family's ritual and the reason for Brunton's interest in it, Holmes airily replies, "I don't think that we should have much difficulty in determining that . . ." (124). And he confides to Watson that before he began his investigations at Hurlstone Manor he was convinced that the three mysteries (the meaning of the ritual and the disappearance of the two servants) must be connected: "I was *already* firmly convinced, Watson, that there were not three separate mysteries here, but one only, and that if I could read the Musgrave Ritual aright I should hold in my hand the clue which would lead me to the truth concerning both the butler Brunton, and the maid Howells" (125; italics added). For Holmes, the real and the "only" mystery is the Musgrave Ritual, and once he solves it (which, with a little elementary trigonometry, he does quite easily), the case will be solved. One can certainly see why a reader, fresh from a reading of "The Musgrave Ritual," might agree with Hartman that "[m]ost popular mysteries are devoted to *solving* rather than *examining* a problem" (220; italics added). But such a response is not produced by Conan Doyle's story if it is read with attention to its anomalies. Rather it is produced by the reader's conventional expectations about detective stories: (1) Detective stories are devoted to solving a problem. (2) "The Musgrave Ritual" is a detective story. (3) QED: "'The Musgrave Ritual' is devoted only to solving the problem of the Musgrave Ritual." To arrive at such a conclusion, however, is to assume that Holmes's view of the mystery is the one that the story asks the reader to adopt. But is it?

To read the mystery the way Holmes does is to ignore its doubleness, its duplicity, its anomalousness. Consider again the opening, the inconsistency between Holmes's personal untidiness and the neatness he exhibits in his professional investigations. He certainly *appears* to exhibit methodical tidiness in the "whole long chain of surmise and of proof" that constitutes his explanation of the events that Musgrave, along with the reader, finds "most extraordinary and inexplicable." But is not his "long chain" just a little too tidy? For what Holmes has done is solve a problem rather than examine it. Or rather solve only one problem and fail to examine another. He has in effect explained away what is "extraordinary and inexplicable" by defining the problem too narrowly as simply a re-telling of Brunton's solution to the Musgrave Ritual. There is no doubt that much of what Holmes reconstructs actually happened as he says it did. Yet everything seems too pat. "These were all the factors which had to be taken into consideration," he tells Watson after re-telling Musgrave's narrative of the mystery, "and yet none of them got quite to the heart of the matter" (123). But what is "the heart of the matter"? For Holmes it is "the starting-

point of this chain of events," "the end of this tangled line" (123), namely the hidden meaning of the Musgrave Ritual and the reason that it was composed in the first place. Brooks agrees with Holmes: "The key must lie in the ritual itself . . ." (24). But this mystery is the "heart of the matter" only if we come to the story with the assumption that Holmes is going to solve a problem or elucidate a mystery.

However, even if we accept that most of the events happened as Holmes says they did, there is still much more to this "extraordinary" case than a two and a half centuries old ritual. Holmes's narrative answers the questions he wants answered, but what of the questions his narrative poses yet leaves unanswered? First, what exactly is the crime? Property belonging to the Musgrave family has been stolen, but theft is not what Holmes is investigating. The attempted theft (nothing is actually stolen) is discovered after the investigation begins; it does not initiate it. The mystery starts as nothing more than a missing person's case. More importantly, has the butler actually been murdered? An affirmative answer is not self-evident, though Holmes surmises (after rejecting other possibilities) that he has because the maid (he also surmises) had a motive to kill him. But there is a remarkable difference between Holmes's method of reconstructing Brunton's discovery of the meaning of the ritual and his reconstruction of events *after* Brunton solved the riddle. The first narrative is told with mathematic, indeed with trigonometric, precision and tidiness as Holmes methodically measures the height of the elm tree and calculates the hiding place. "The central part of the tale," says Brooks, "displays a problem in trigonometry in action" (24). And this is all done very easily. (After all, even a butler can do it!) Holmes's language describing his solution to the ritual is revealing. "It was *perfectly obvious* to me," he tells Watson, "that the measurement must refer to some spot to which the rest of the document alluded" (125; italics added). "As to the oak," he says, "there could be no *question* at all" (125; italics added). "Besides, there is *no real difficulty*. [. . .] Of course, the calculation now was a *simple* one" (127; italics added).

But when Holmes comes to the events of the "midnight drama" (130) that culminate in Brunton's death, the narrative abruptly changes register: a "simple" exercise in trigonometry turns into a Gothic tale. Having duplicated Brunton's actions, Holmes next tries to reconstruct what happened between Brunton and Howells on the night of his death. He begins by logically reconstructing their initial actions. They must have managed to lift the heavy flagstone from the underground chamber, and clearly Brunton must have entered and handed up the contents of the box to Howells:

> "And now how was I to proceed to reconstruct this midnight drama? Clearly, only one could fit into the hole, and that one was Brunton. The girl must have waited above. Brunton then unlocked the box, handed up the contents presumably—since they were not to be found—and then what happened?

It's at this point that the language dramatically changes as Holmes imagines a pure Gothic melodrama:

"What smouldering fire of vengeance had suddenly sprung into flame in this passionate Celtic woman's soul when she saw the man who had wronged her—wronged her, perhaps, far more than we suspected—in her power? Was it a chance that the wood [supporting the stone] had slipped and that the stone had shut Brunton into what had become his sepulchre? Had she only been guilty of silence as to his fate? Or had some sudden blow from her hand dashed the support away and sent the slab crashing down into its place? Be that as it might, I seemed to see that woman's figure still clutching at her treasure trove and flying wildly up the winding stair, with her ears ringing perhaps with the muffled screams from behind her and with the drumming of frenzied hands against the slab of stone which was choking her faithless lover's life out.

"Here was the secret of her blanched face, her shaken nerves, her peals of hysterical laughter on the next morning [reported by Musgrave to Holmes]. But what had been in the box? What had she done with that? Of course, it must have been the old metal pebbles which my client had dragged from the mere [pond]. She had thrown them in there at the first opportunity to remove the last trace of her crime." (130-31)

This narrative of speculation and surmise is completely at odds with Holmes's trigonometric reconstruction of the earlier events of the story. And this second narrative does just the opposite of what Hartman says the generic detective plot does.

Holmes's two narratives do not form a single "chain of events" (116). His imagining of what happened at "this midnight drama" (130), as he calls it, is a product not of logic and rational proof but of his fervid imagination. It's pure fiction. Notice how many of the sentences are questions, not statements, and notice, too, such revealing words and phrases as "perhaps" (used twice), "Be that as it might," and "I *seemed to see* that woman's figure. "The language of the whole evocation of "this midnight drama" is not the language of "methodical thought" but of Gothic romance. Later, Holmes characterizes his narrative of the "extraordinary" events at Hurlstone as "the whole long chain of surmise and of proof which I had constructed." But this phrase raises the question, Which part is "surmise" and which part is "proof"? Proof belongs exclusively to the decoding of the ritual; surmise, to the imaginative creation of a Gothic tale, a "midnight drama," of vengeance wreaked by a wronged woman on the unfaithful man who wronged her. And surely it is this psychological and moral mystery in the present, which Holmes can never fully explain, and not the historical puzzle dating from the seventeenth century, that is really "the heart of the matter."

Clearly, then, there are two mysteries in the story: on the one hand, the mystery of the Musgrave ritual and, as Holmes says, "the large [historical] issues which proved to be at stake" (116); and on the other hand, whether Brunton's death was murder and just how culpable Howells is. Holmes expects to easily solve the first mystery using his analytic methods—and he does. He is equally convinced that he has

solved the second mystery, that he has "proof' that Howells committed murder. But he has only imagined what could have happened, not proved what in fact did happen. The only witness, Howells, has disappeared, and the story ends not with the sense that darkness has been abolished by elucidation, but with yet another even more questionable "surmise" on Holmes's part: "Of the woman [Howells] nothing was ever heard, and the *probability* is that she got away out of England, and carried herself, and the memory of her crime, to some land beyond the seas" (133; italics added). She apparently has left Hurlstone, but on what grounds is it probable that she got away "out of England"? There is some circumstantial evidence that she may have murdered Brunton, but the only evidence that she has "got away out of England" (and "got away" with the crime?) is that she has not yet been found in England. Holmes's "surmise" that she left England is even more speculative than his imaginative account of "the midnight drama."

Holmes can easily re-enact and duplicate Brunton's steps in solving the mystery of the Musgrave Ritual, but from the point at which Brunton descended into what became his "sepulchre" (131), Holmes's powers of reason and deduction turn out to be powerless, and so he has to substitute imagination and "surmise." What happened in that dark "sepulchre" is "the heart of the matter" in "The Musgrave Ritual"; the ritual itself is really a red herring that distracts Holmes (and also the reader!) from the real mystery in the story. (The Musgrave Ritual is not really a mystery at all, but a puzzle that can be solved-even by a lowly butler. Indeed, it was originally constructed so that it could be decoded.) But at the end of the story, the death of Brunton remains unsolved, as the real mystery always does at the end of a good detective story. (The real mystery in *The Maltese Falcon* is not who killed Archer, but whether Brigid O'Shaughnessy really loves Spade and whether there really is a Maltese falcon—and neither of these questions is answered.) If Howells has committed murder, she has escaped, with little likelihood of her being caught and punished. And even if she were caught and brought back to England, the strongest charge that could be brought against her is some form of negligent manslaughter, since proving criminal intent would be impossible. Which may be the reason Holmes is so eager to imagine her out of the country, for if she is still in the country she could be apprehended and then her alleged "murder" of Brunton may be exposed as the weak link in Holmes's "long chain of surmise and proof." If she were found not guilty, the result would certainly not leave Holmes's reputation in a good light. But, of course, all of this is sheer speculation and surmise—*the very thing that the example of Holmes's's Gothic narrative encourages the reader to indulge in*. Ironically, this is a story that elicits the very kind of unfounded "surmises" that Holmes's "analytic" narrative is intended to lay to rest.

The second part of Holmes's "long chain of surmise and proof," then, is not constructed as a logical proof but imagined as a "drama," or more precisely as a romantic melodrama that turns into Gothic tragedy. It is a purely literary narrative. The theatrical metaphor is first introduced

by Musgrave, who casts Brunton as a Don Juan in a rural romantic drama. "He [Brunton] was a bit of a Don Juan," he tells Holmes, "and you can imagine that for a man like him it is not a very *difficult part to play* in a quiet country district" (118; italics added); he then goes on to recount the romantic triangle of Brunton, Howells and Janet Tregellis as "our first drama at Hurlstone" (118). Then he adds that "a second [drama] came to drive it [the first] from our minds, and it was *prefaced* by the disgrace and dismissal of butler Brunton" (118; italics added). Holmes later picks up the theatrical metaphor begun by Musgrave to create his "midnight drama" between Brunton and Howells, imagining himself as a playwright: ". . . now I had to ascertain how that fate [death] had come upon him, and *what part had been played* in the matter by the woman who had disappeared" (129; italics added). But he cannot, as he did with Brunton's earlier steps, literally retrace them, but only imagine them "So far I could follow their actions *as if* I had actually seen them" (130; italics added). Whereas the earlier part of the narrative takes the form of a trigonometry problem and its solution, the final part is imagined as a Gothic revenge tragedy.

But in reconstructing the "midnight drama" by imagining the events "as if [he] had actually seen them," Holmes violates the injunction, which twice in the stories he impresses upon Watson, not to introduce imagination and feeling into his narratives of their cases. In *The Sign of Four*, for example, Holmes expresses his disappointment with the "small brochure" to which (at Holmes's suggestion) Watson has given the romantic title *A Study in Scarlet*. "Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science," he insists,

"and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid. [. . .] The only point in the case which deserved mention was the curious analytical reasoning from effects to causes, by which I succeeded in unravelling it." (*Sign* 5)

Holmes makes a similar criticism of Watson's stories in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches":

"You have erred, perhaps . . . in attempting to put colour and life into each of your statements, instead of confining yourself to the task of placing upon record that severe reasoning from cause to effect which is really the only notable feature about the thing. [. . .] If I claim full justice for my art, it is because it is an impersonal thing—a thing beyond myself. Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell. You have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales. " (270)

Clearly, Holmes has not followed his own advice, for in "The Musgrave Ritual" he has done precisely what he accuses Watson of doing. He does not confine himself to "placing upon record that severe reasoning from cause to

effect," or to the "analytical reasoning from effects to causes" by which he "succeeded in unravelling" the Musgrave Ritual. In fact, he has worked a melodramatic love story into what should have been a pure exercise in trigonometry! At the heart of "The Musgrave Ritual" is Holmes's Gothic story of a jilted lover and her "vengeance . . . on the man who wronged her." However, the only facts that Holmes knows for certain are that Brunton had been "engaged to Rachael Howells," and then had "thrown her over . . . and taken up with Janet Tregellis, the daughter of the head game-keeper" (118). As for the vengeance plot, that is pure "surmise" on Holmes's part as he "reconstruct[s]" the events he imagines took place. When "analytical reasoning" no longer serves, Holmes is forced to fall back on the artistic imagination. And so he has "degraded" what should have been a demonstration of "analytical reasoning from effect to causes" to a sensational revenge tragedy (Holmes at one point calls the events "tragic" [132]). The story, then, implies a criticism, in the name of the artistic imagination, of the very foundation upon which Holmes's project of analytic reasoning rests, but on which he cannot rely to tell the "whole" story.

The story enacts this criticism by constructing Holmes as the double of Brunton the butler, both of whom are self-made men who live by their wits. "I have taken to living by my wits" (117), the self-employed Holmes tells the aristocratic Musgrave whom he (like Brunton) works for. Holmes and Brunton are also alike in being the only two men in England to have solved the Musgrave Ritual, and Brunton, an unemployed school teacher, takes advantage of his native intelligence and his good fortune to have been hired by Musgrave to grasp at the main chance, just as Holmes saw in this case an opportunity to launch his spectacular career. Brunton anticipates that his solution to the Musgrave ritual will make him rich, and the solution to it is what in fact makes Holmes famous. What Holmes says about Brunton's motive applies to himself: "Evidently . . . he saw something in it [the ritual] . . . from which he expected some personal advantage" (125).

Even more pertinently, Musgrave makes a comment about Brunton that also applies to Holmes: "I have said," he tells Holmes, "that the man was intelligent, and this very intelligence has caused his ruin" (118). Musgrave is of course referring to Brunton's dismissal, which has "ruined" his career as a butler, but his words also prefigure the butler's horrible death, which is indirectly the result of the superior intelligence that has enabled him to decipher the Musgrave Ritual. But his superior intelligence has come at the price of an underdeveloped understanding of the emotions, especially those of women, with the result that he unintelligently places his life in the hands of a woman he has jilted. If we assume that Holmes's "midnight drama" is true, Brunton can measure the height of the elm tree, but not the depths of a jilted woman's heart. Holmes's emotions are similarly underdeveloped, as Watson famously pointed out in the opening of "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first Holmes story to appear in The *Strand Magazine*. Holmes has no difficulty in putting himself in Brunton's place and imagining

how he would have proceeded to solve the riddle. But he, like Brunton, cannot do that with Howells; when he tries, he produces a sensational Gothic story of a jilted lover who seals her ex-lover in a tomb (like the mad protagonist of Poe's "A Cask of Amontillado"). As it turns out, Brunton's "ruin" was due not so much to his "intelligence" and "insatiable curiosity" (118) as to his inability to put himself in Howells's place and "imagine" how he should have proceeded under the same circumstances. As Brunton's double, Holmes has the same limitations. "I put myself in the man's place, and, having gauged his *intelligence*, I try to imagine how I myself should have proceeded under the same circumstances" (129; italics added). This strategy works fine for solving the Musgrave Ritual (just as it enabled Dupin to figure out where Minister D____ "hid" the purloined letter). But Holmes (like Brunton) cannot put himself in "the woman's place" and gauge her emotional state with comparable accuracy, and so he has to rely on the literary conventions of melodrama and the Gothic to imagine what took place. It is surely significant that Holmes is not the double of the woman he believes to be the murderer in the story he narrates, but of the male murder victim. Holmes deliberately tries, in the name of analytic reasoning, to suppress his emotions, but they return (the return of the repressed?) in the form a Gothic nightmare of a "demented" (122) Welsh woman, "fiery and passionate" (123) in contrast to Holmes's cold logic, whose smouldering fires of vengeance suddenly spring into flame. It is especially significant that Holmes explains Brunton's motive as rationally comprehensible self-interest: ". . . he saw something in it [the ritual] which has escaped all those generations of country squires, and from which he expected some personal advantage" (125). But Howells's motives are less amenable to rational explanation. She is "of Welsh blood, fiery and passionate," a woman whose "smouldering fire of vengeance had suddenly sprung into flame." The mixed metaphor is revealing: it connotes both fire suddenly bursting into flame and a wild animal springing like the flame of a fire. Both images suggest forces that, unlike Brunton's and Holmes's cold calculation, are beyond the powers of "analytic reasoning" to comprehend. Which is why Holmes, despite himself, must rely on the powers of the very artistic imagination that he attacks in Watson's stories—stories that expose the limitations of Holmes's much-vaunted reasoning powers.

According to Hartman's criteria, "The Musgrave Ritual" should not be what everyone—Holmes fans and literary critics alike—agree it is: a classic detective story. "Few detective novels want the reader to exert his intelligence fully," says Hartman, yet stimulating the reader's intelligence is precisely what Conan Doyle's story does. (It is also, of course, a story about the limitations of intelligence.) "Few detective novels want the reader . . . to find gaps in the plot or the reasoning," yet finding gaps in the plot and in Holmes's reasoning is precisely what the story invites us to do and what I have been doing in this essay. "Few detective novels want the reader . . . to worry about the moral questions of fixing the blame," yet the moral question of who is to blame for Brunton's death is what the story

does ask the reader to worry about. And finally, most popular mysteries, according to Hartman, are "exorcisms . . . because they settle the unsettling." But it is Holmes, not "The Musgrave Ritual," who attempts to exorcise mystery by settling the unsettling. The story keeps the mystery permanently unsettled—which is why, I suspect, we keep reading the Holmes stories, while the vast majority of lesser detective stories are rarely read twice.

The reason that the Holmes stories are not considered literary is not just that they are detective stories, and hence sub-literary. They are also outside the canon because they are not Modernist short stories: they do not show us a character in a moment of insight, self-awareness, or revelation. There isn't a single epiphany in the lot of them. Nor do they appear receptive to the Modernist reading that has created the canon of the modern short story. But "The Musgrave Ritual" stands up well to a close reading. And it also does brilliantly what we expect a good postmodernist story to do: comment reflexively on its own status as a narrative and question the power of Reason to represent Truth. "Postmodernism," says Diane Elam, "is the (never fully present) time in which there is a loss of credulity in master narratives. It marks the time when narrative knowledge . . . no longer provides an authoritative way of understanding past events" (11). And so, while I have no desire to turn Arthur Conan Doyle into a pre-postmodernist, to the extent that the Holmes stories question the "master narrative" of the Holmesian triumph of reason, there is hope that they might, one day, make it into a new, postmodern canon of fiction.

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Browning's "Childe Roland": The Visionary Poetic

Lawrence J. Starzyk

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

Browning's description of the objective poet anticipates some of the concerns of the poet's celebrated quest poem written within a month of the publication in December 1852 of his "An Essay on Shelley." The object of Roland's search turns out to be "blind as the fool's heart" (1. 182), not vigilant as the watchtower that is representative of Browning's objective poet. The latter's "openness" permits the empirical facts of the universe to be registered or reflected along the parapet without tinge of the watchman's personality. The former's blindness, on the other hand, threatens destruction to anyone dependent upon this "mocking elf' that "Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf / He strikes on" (ll. 184-6).

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

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

successive perfect works, examples of which, according to what are now considered the exigencies of art, we have hitherto possessed in distinct individuals only."

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

Near the conclusion of his quest, in the line immediately before announcing his discovery of the tower, Roland speaks of having spent his life "training for the sight" (1. 180). Having acknowledged his dedication to the quest, the knight suddenly sees what he has sought. The poem, however, concludes not with an expression of triumph at having succeeded where his predecessors failed, at having discovered, that is, what had for so long been sought. The poem ends, rather, with Roland's acknowledgement that he is *seen*. Of his predecessors in the quest, Roland remarks in the concluding stanza, "There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met / To view the last of me, a living frame / For one more picture!" (ll. 199-201). The long quest journey to find the tower ends by focusing on Roland himself being found or seen. The juxtaposition again of tower—of object gazing out upon the landscape—and pictures—the self subjected to an other's gaze—is dramatized at poem's end as it is in the essay on Shelley. Terms—objective and subjective—which in the prose essay can be juxtaposed but not reconciled are, in the poem, I argue, imaginatively synthesized to explain not only the text but also the poetry of the poem.[6]

I

One of the intriguing elements of "Childe Roland" is the poem's circularity. Like the snake with its tail in its

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

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

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

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

[5]An early critic, Joseph Milsand (*Revue Contemporaire*, 1856), perceptively noted of Browning's *Men and Women* that the collected poems represented

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

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

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

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

Roland's awareness of himself, and his awareness of others' awareness of him, as the framing device for pictures, like Browning's identification of the subjective poet's act with pictorial mountings, suggests an ekphrastic understanding of selfhood and the poetic process. The result of the creative act is an image, something to be seen. And poetry becomes the verbal deliverance from the mute visual of the message the artist intends.[10] Roland's giving voice—his slug-horn blast—to the "last" of himself framed before his predecessors' gaze, however, is not simply an act of defiance asserting his refusal to be regarded as "last"; it is also a recognition of the threat posed by the gazing predecessors ranged along the hillsides to view his apparent end. Like his most famous ekphrastic poem, "My Last Duchess," "Childe Roland" acknowledges both the terror and the triumph of

seeing and being seen. If the objective poet avoids such exposure by factually representing what is, and if the subjective poet opens himself to the full force of his reader's/viewer's threats by equating his self with his creations, the objective/subjective poet can at least attenuate these threats by concealing himself in the poetic personae of his creations.[11]

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

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

II

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

Browning's earliest published work, "Pauline" (1832),

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

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

[9] My reading of the concluding lines explicitly refutes Maxwell's contention that the "living frame" "can also be the actual body of [the dead] Roland" (332) and Bloom's assertion that Roland "dies as a living picture, framed by

'all the lost adventurers my peers'" (Ringers in the Tower, 165-166). My analysis also rejects the position taken by many critics that Roland dies in pursuit of the Tower, a view represented by such readings as Anne Williams's, who interprets the poem as representing "a preparation for death" (40).

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

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

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

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

More telling for our purposes here, however, is the dilemma arising from the contest in the artist between objective and subjective tendencies in a poem like "Pictor Ignotus" (1845). If the unknown painter can be regarded as representing in Browning's work the conflict between the warring tendencies a poet must address, then the Pictor dramatizes, not the dialectical or paragonal relationship of these tendencies, but the requisite disjunctively to choose one and repress or deny the other. Browning's Pictor acknowledges that great art requires of the artist the "seconding my soul" (l. 7), "Of going—I, in each new picture—forth" (l. 26). The Pictor's monologue, however, makes clear that such personal exposure or equation of artifact with self is precisely the price for being known and that, conversely, the anonymity he

chooses will forever relegate him to the "same[ness]" (ll. 60,61) artists of a lower order achieve. The Pictor, of course, does not equate the known artist with the subjective poet nor the unknown artist with the objective. But what he does convey is the dilemma confronting all aspiring artists who must choose how to resolve aesthetically the tension between self-disclosure and self-denial. What is unfortunate for the Pictor is how he resolves this tension. Instead of entertaining the possibility of dialectically holding these antithetical tendencies in tension, he chooses instead to consider them disjunctively and accordingly rejects self-disclosure or "seconding" for the self-annihilation synonymous with artistic anonymity.

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

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

Browning's Roland seems conflicted by these alternative approaches to existence. But it is less the seeming incompatibility of these diametrically opposed modes of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

III

"Childe Roland" repeats a pattern Browning establishes in "Pauline," the going "through all conjuncture" and refus-

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

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

Following Nature's directive to cease his complaints and "shut your eyes" (l. 63), Roland unwittingly confirms those suspicions after obeying Nature's injunction. "I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart" (l. 85). The interior landscape Roland describes in stanzas 15-27, though, conforms exactly to the "ignoble" (l. 56) external landscape described in the first half of the poem. The solipsistic character of Roland's account of reality, the pathetic fallacy seemingly distinguishing his descriptions, however, appears to be undermined by Nature's insinuation that some divine force created such ignobility and by her assertion that "the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,/Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free" (ll. 65-66). Nature answers

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[12]Fox in his review of Tennyson's *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* writes of the poet and his relations with objects that "He takes their sense, feelings, nerves, and brain, along with their names and local habitations; still it is himself in them, modified but not absorbed by their peculiar constitution and mode of being. . . for a moment the identification is complete, and then a conscious-

ness of contrast springs up between the reports of external objects brought to the mind by the sense and those which it has been accustomed to receive; and this consciousness gives to the description a most poetic colouring" (85).

Roland's complaints with her own about the powerlessness of forces, physical or human, to alter the predetermined ignobility of things. The words of Nature in what otherwise seem to be Roland's monologue could easily be dismissed as the continued rantings of a childe ventriloquistically using an alter ego as the objective embodiment of his own complaints. Evolutionary speculation of the time, however, would appear to give credibility to Nature's intervention. Empirical testimony may not condone human complaining in this case, but it supports Roland's views of a landscape uninformed by solipsistic thinking or pathetic fallacy.

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

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

Roland's preoccupation throughout much of his drama with failure (ll. 24, 38, 41) and coming to "some end" (l. 18) expresses both his understandable teleological concern to find the goal as well as the pessimism occasioned by his apparent inability to do so. Again, the metaphor of fitness is used to define Roland's condition. For all his long wanderings, he says, "my hopes/Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope" (ll. 20-21). As if to explain his meaning, Roland alludes to Donne's "Valediction Forbidding Mourning." The childe is like that dying man who, surrounded by friends come to take leave of him, seems by his continued breathing to refuse to go. It is a "shame" to stay (l. 36), Roland suggests, particu-

larly since he is no longer "fit to cope" (l. 21).

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

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

IV

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

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

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

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

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

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

But in the moment of meditation consequent upon such presumption, awareness of divorce occurs, the chasm

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

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

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The Picture of Dorian Gray, or, The Embarrassing Orthodoxy of Oscar Wilde

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"What's Iago's motive? Was he just *sinful*?"
They thought they knew but waited for a hint.
He raised his hands and wept, "Evil, fucking Evil."
And he meant it. *And he knew what he meant.*
    —B.H. Fairchild "On the Passing of Jesus Freaks from the College Classroom"

Oscar Wilde is one of those rare authors perhaps equally famous for his life as for his works. When Wilde was a student at Oxford he enthralled his colleagues by decorating his room with blue vases full of lilies (the known symbol of the Pre-Raphealite Brotherhood), and is reported to have caused a stir by showing up to gallery openings in a coat made to resemble a cello. The son of a woman who had reinvented herself by claiming her maiden name, Elgee, was a corruption of the surname of the great Italian poet Dante Aligheri, Wilde inherited his mother's sense of flare and daring. With his ubiquitous green carnation, flamboyantly feminized dress and clever epigrammatic sayings, Wilde cultivated the dandyish persona of "the aesthete in the marketplace" (Sloan 9) when he was through at Oxford, soon winning fame on both sides of the Atlantic for his easy wit and effulgent flamboyance. Wilde was highly adept at networking and self-promotion, essentially managing to turn himself into a walking advertisement for his plays, prose, poetry, and aesthetic philosophies. When the artistic freedom and experimentation of the "New Hedonism" surfaced in the 1880s and 90s, Wilde became the "presiding spirit of this emerging new culture" (Sloan 19).

The Picture of Dorian Gray was first published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in July 1890. It met, for the most part, with criticisms of immorality. "It is not made sufficiently clear," complained the *Scots Observer*, "that the writer does not prefer a course of unnatural iniquity to a life of cleanliness, health, and sanity" (*Critical Heritage* 75). *The Daily Chronicle* took a similar tone, alleging that "Mr. Wilde's book has no real use if it be not to inculcate the 'moral' that when you feel yourself becoming too angelic you cannot do better than rush out and make a beast of yourself" (*Critical Heritage* 72). These allegations were entirely unexpected by Wilde, who thought that he had written an obsequiously moral book. "I cannot understand how they can treat *Dorian Gray* as immoral," Wilde wrote to Arthur Conan Doyle in April 1891: "my difficulty was to keep the inherent moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect" (*Letters* 478). Wilde made several public attempts to address his critics on this point. In a rebuttal letter to the *Daily Chronicle* dated 30 June 1890, he wrote that "what I want to say, so far from wishing to emphasize any moral in my story, the real trouble I experienced in writing the story was that of keeping the extremely obvious moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect" (*Letters* 435). A letter to the *St. James' Gazette* (26 June 1890) again asserts the self-evidence of a moral in *Dorian Gray*:

They will find that [*Dorian Gray*] is a story with a moral, and the moral is this; All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment . . . Yes; there is a terrible moral in *Dorian Gray*—a moral which the prurient will not be able to find in it, but which will be revealed to all whose minds are healthy. Is this an artistic error? I fear it is. It is the only error in the book.   (*Letters* 430-1)

These letters demonstrate Wilde's initial strategy for the public defense of *Dorian Gray*: to address his critics and detractors head-on by contending that indeed there is a moral. Wilde's publication of the famous "Preface" in the *Fortnightly Review* (March 1891) marked an abrupt change of strategy. Rather than arguing that *Dorian Gray* does have a moral, Wilde was now alleging that "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book" (3). What the "Preface" does, in effect, is to articulate Wilde's version of the "art for art's sake" credo, distancing the work itself from the standards of what Dorian, parroting Lord Henry, calls "middle class virtue" (106).

Wilde's main purpose in the "Preface" (which was included in the 1891 book edition of *Dorian Gray*) was the obfuscation of what he considered to be an excessively apparent moral conclusion. When Wilde wrote to the *St. James' Gazette* on 26 June 1890, he began a long series of evasive maneuvres that would continue until his eventual imprisonment. Aside from being ambiguous, Wilde's suggestion in the *St. James' Gazette* letter that the "moral" of *Dorian Gray*—"all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment"—is a massive understatement of the novel's essentially orthodox morality. *Dorian Gray* is far more overtly Christian than Wilde's generically ethical statement seems to indicate. It conveys an orthodox rendering of the objective world, and reinforces this orthodoxy by maintaining the hierarchy of the Christian cosmological schema in its end. It can be inferred from the great efforts Wilde took to cultivate an outlandish persona that the last thing he wanted to appear was orthodox. Wilde's changes for the 1891 version of *Dorian Gray*, as well as much of his subsequent public commentary on the novel, are designed to obscure the fact that he had written a book with an ostensibly Christian moral. Wilde seems to have truly believed his own dictum about the apparentness of the moral being the novel's "only flaw," and its Christian sensibility must have been that much more shaming for the "presiding spirit of [the] emerging new culture" of the "New Hedonism."

Given Wilde's blatant public pronouncements that *Dorian Gray* had an overt moral, the claim of the preface that "there is no such thing as an immoral book" cannot be taken at face value. It should be evident by this point that "moral" is a problematic term when talking about *Dorian Gray*. Wilde's use of "moral" in the preface seems to imply the classical signification of the word as a broad collection of teachings or philosophies (*OED*). This points to morality as a comprehensive (and presumably internally coherent) system, precisely the kind of metanarrative that Jean-François Lyotard avowed his postmodern incredulity for.

Wilde was unable to think of himself as entirely outside the assumptions of his age, but the "Preface" does allow for the looser senses of "moral" as the "teaching or practical lesson of a fiction or fable" (*OED*) and as a vehicle for "import, meaning, and signification" (*OED*). In the distance between these senses of "moral," Wilde is both anticipating some important notions of postmodern narrative theory and creating a novel whose somewhat scripted trajectory towards the "teaching or practical lesson" manages to lead to a plurality of viable access points. My "window into Wilde," as it were, is what I'll call the "subtle/evil" interplay.

One of Wilde's less obtrusive edits for the 1891 version occurs in a description of the book that Dorian receives from Lord Henry. In the 1890 version the book is said to contain "metaphors as monstrous as orchids, and as *evil* in colour" [emphasis mine] (Planet .PDF 155). For the 1891 version, Wilde deleted the word *evil* and in its place wrote *subtle*. Another such linkage occurs in the passage where Dorian is contemplating the sins of his forbearers. The 1890 version reads: "he felt that he had known them all, those strange terrible figures that had passed across the stage of the world and made sin so marvellous, and evil so full of *wonder*" (Planet .PDF 186). In his edits for the 1891 edition, Wilde substituted *subtlety* for *wonder*. The result is that evil becomes "so full of subtlety" (138); again, subtleness and evilness are directly linked.

Wilde's first generation critics seem to have been reacting against the presence of *sin* in *Dorian Gray* more than the presence of *evil*. The difference is important. "Evil" refers to "the antithesis of good in all its principal senses"—in Old English, the word is "the most comprehensive adjectival expression of disapproval, dislike, or disparagement," but is seldom used in modern colloquial English (*OED*). Evil is remarkably unobtrusive in *Dorian Gray*. It is "crafty, treacherously or wickedly cunning, insidiously sly, [and] wily" (one of the *OED* definitions of "subtle"). "Sin," on the other hand, refers to "an act which is regarded as a transgression of the divine law or an offence against God; a violation (especially willful or deliberate) of some religious or moral principle" (*OED*). And while *evil* is subtle in *Dorian Gray*, *sin* is anything but.

As a novel that plumbs the depths of evil, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* needs a solid conception of "good" as its backdrop. Given Wilde's cultural context and his own religious upbringing, that conception of the good could be supplied by little other than a Christian understanding of the world. The cosmology of *Dorian Gray*, then, is consistently Christian; the drama of the plot is enacted on a stage of Christian doctrine with set-pieces of Christian values. *Dorian Gray* presents a universe in which God exists and offers humans some capacity to know good and evil, as well as the "free will" to choose whichever course of moral or immoral action they see fit. The critics who reacted against Wilde's "immorality" either failed to recognize this or simply took for granted a fixedly Christian rendering of the objective universe. They focussed instead on the fact that the characters exercise their God-given free will to operate, for the most part, as moral agents indifferent or oblivious to the

consequences of their cosmological circumstances. Charges of immorality against *Dorian Gray* also take for granted Wilde's indebtedness to the Christian account of human nature. The Genesis story finds Adam and Eve in an unspoiled world. They are morally righteous, and have been given only one directive from God to sustain this condition: Don't eat the forbidden fruit. In Genesis, *evil* enters the Garden as an external entity in the character of the serpent. The serpent tempts Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree; they do, and their action is a *sin*. After committing their "original sin," Adam and Eve are condemned to leave the Garden and to contend with all manner of hardship and difficulty. Furthermore, their moral condition has been permanently altered: having *sinned* they have allowed *evil* into their souls, and it will continue to dwell inside them and influence their spiritual status on a permanent basis. One of the central questions of Christian theology is the tension between humanity's post-lapsarian proclivity for evil and the doctrine of "free will," the idea that we have been given the capacity to choose good. The apparent problem is that emphasis on the freedom of humanity seems to detract from the glory of God, while emphasis on absolute divine predetermination seems to detract from human agency in making moral decisions. A large part of the moral complexity of Wilde's novel is in his fidelity to this schema—no theologian has been able to devise an entirely satisfying response to these seemingly contrary strains of Christian thought, and Wilde makes no attempt to do so either. Free will and predestination are both viable factors in determining human action in *Dorian Gray*, and neither can be said to trump the other. Dorian's downward slide is a result of bad moral decisions, in which he conversely recognizes his own agency and a sort of fatalistic inevitability (I will return to this point throughout). Both of these concepts relate to the problem of evil, which Christian tradition has tended to present as an active spiritual entity that fights to steer humanity away from "good" (i. e. God). In the New Testament this "evil" is personified by the devil (Satan), a real, if immaterial, personage. In the Christian cosmology, then, good and evil are both external forces and internal spiritual conditions, and their motivators are seldom clearly distinguishable (i. e. is someone good because he exercises free will to be so or because God has empowered his goodness?). Because of Adam and Eve's colossal gaffe in the Garden of Eden, humanity is permanently predisposed toward evil; however, at the same time we remain imbued with some capacity to choose the good. As Dorian tells Basil, "each of us has Heaven and Hell in him" (150).

In *Dorian Gray* Lord Henry functions as loosely equivalent to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Like the serpent tempting Adam and Eve, Lord Henry enthralls Dorian with the false prospect of having *sin* without *evil*. Lord Henry is constantly associated with "sin": it is his stock word for any forbidden pleasure or social transgression that purports to pepper the dullness of life. Part of his *subtlety* is the casual charm with which he belittles right conduct. In the Christian schema the eternal consequences of Lord Henry's positions are dire, but his charm and social grace sneak them in under

the moral radar of his listeners. "You are really quite comforting," (41) the Duchess of Harley tells him at Lady Agatha's dinner party, because he has helped her to feel comfortably absolved of her own moral responsibilities. But while Lord Henry is constantly associated with the word "sin," he is never once referenced as being "evil." This is another gesture on Wilde's part toward the subtlety of evil; Lord Henry's "evil" influence is always packaged in the guise of wit, insight, and charm. He is manipulative, "crafty, wickedly cunning, insidiously sly, and wily" (to again suggest one of the *OED* definitions of *subtle*). He delights in "charm[ing] his listeners out of themselves" (42).

In the 1995 film *The Usual Suspects*, Kevin Spacey's character gives an interesting insight into the subtlety of evil: "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was making the world believe he didn't exist." This is exactly what Lord Henry does in *Dorian Gray*. He poses as a detached observer, toying with Dorian out of indifference rather than malevolence. "It was no matter how it all ended, or was destined to end" (57), Lord Henry muses about his project of subverting Dorian. But this detachment is affected as a guise to conceal the depth of his evil and the extremity of his moral position. Rather than a charming socialite or harmless epicurean decadent, Lord Henry is a Nietzschean *ubermensch* who believes himself to have thrown off the constraints of externally imposed morality. His teleological purpose is to "be in harmony with one's self" (76). Lord Henry's mistake here is the cosmological equivalent of Satan's great error in *Paradise Lost*: "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (44). Both responses are forms of hubris: they fail to recognize their proper place in the divine hierarchy.

Lord Henry's moral position in *Dorian Gray* is akin to that of the devil; he is the initial serpent in the Garden, and continues to coax Dorian to evil throughout the novel. The Garden of Eden typology of the initial temptation scene is reinforced through "the great cool lilac-blossoms" (23) and "stained trumpet of . . . Tyrian convolvulus" (25). From the moment they are alone in the Garden, Lord Henry goes to work enthralling Dorian with his theories. He begins by sharing with Dorian one of the "great secrets of life"—"to cure the senses by means of the soul and the soul by means of the senses" (23). Lord Henry continues by exhorting Dorian to "Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be nothing . . . . A new Hedonism—that is what our century wants. You might be its visible symbol. With your personality there is nothing you could not do" (25). The temptation to throw off the expectations of morality in pursuing a "new Hedonism" is compounded by the ever-declining prospect of Dorian's youth: "We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to. Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!" (25). Lord Henry's temptation is twofold: he lays before Dorian the prospect of realizing the desires of his soul and simultaneously goads him into sacrosanct belief in the supremacy of his fleeting youth and beauty. Before leaving Basil's studio to walk together in the garden, Dorian tells

Lord Henry that "there is some answer to you, but I cannot find it" (21). The answer is, of course, something akin to Sir Thomas's pronouncement on Lord Henry at Lady Agatha's: "A dangerous theory!" (42). But Dorian cannot find this answer, and is beguiled by Lord Henry into the emotional state that gives rise to his tantrum upon returning to Basil's studio.

In the fit of anger and frustration prompted by Lord Henry's tempting, Dorian unwittingly completes the Faustian deal: he calls for his youth to be maintained and the effects of his aging to be reflected in the countenance of the portrait. But Dorian has not yet sinned, and does not yet realize that the deal is in effect. For a time it is uncertain whether he will fall into sin at all, or, to use the language of Lord Henry, whether he will find the courage to rise above "middle class virtue." "You will always be fond of me," Lord Henry tells Dorian, because "I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit" (77).

The Picture of Dorian Gray can be read partly as a stichomythic struggle for the soul of its eponymous protagonist. This struggle occurs between Lord Henry and Sybil Vane. It is a classic battle of influence: angel on one shoulder and devil on the other. After Dorian tells his friend about Sybil, Lord Henry muses to himself about the incompleteness of his influence: "the lad was premature. He was gathering his harvest while it was yet spring. The pulse and passion of youth were in him, but he was becoming self-conscious" (57). That Dorian sees Sibyl as a counter-influence to Lord Henry is clear: "'Her trust makes me faithful, her belief makes me good. When I am with her, I regret all that you have taught me. I become different from what you have known me to be. I am changed, and the mere touch of Sibyl Vane's hand makes me forget you and all your wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories'" (75). Dorian's decision to marry Sibyl is a *de facto* resolution to embrace the goodness she represents. But the trouble with Sibyl is that, theologically, she represents an ideal that can never be fully realized. Her goodness is literally too good to be true; in the Christian context, even the regenerate sinner remains tainted by the effects of the original fall from grace in the Garden of Eden. Sibyl's name "Vane" hints at the "vainness" of pursuing the ideal she represents—there is a sense of predetermination to Dorian's fall that is never really resolved against his "free will" to choose right action. Dorian's pursuit of earthly perfection (which is the ultimate end of goodness) is dispelled in the same way that Sibyl's poor performance has shown her "'the hollowness, the sham, the silliness of the empty pageant in which I had always played'" (84). It is the shattering of this ideal of goodness that leads Dorian to his own "original sin": the rejection of Sibyl. Following the pattern of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, evil's first appearance has been external to Dorian through the character of Lord Henry. But the choice to sin is Dorian's own, and he does, permanently inviting evil into his heart and ushering him into a post-lapsarian state. As Dorian leaves Sibyl, the consequences of this "original sin" are evident immediately in the surrounding world:

> Where he went he hardly knew. He remembered wandering through dimly-lit streets, past gaunt black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses. Women with hoarse voices and harsh laughter had called after him. Drunkards had reeled by cursing, and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes. He had seen grotesque children huddled upon doorsteps, and heard shrieks and oaths from gloomy courts. (86)

This sinister cityscape foreshadows the inner descent that Dorian has set in motion by his treatment of Sybil Vane. It is finally when he realizes the significance of the change in the paintinga "touch of cruelty in the mouth" (87) that the word sin is associated with him for the first time in the novel: "He had uttered a mad wish . . . that . . . the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and his sins" (88). Terrified by the ugliness of his sin, Dorian makes his second resolution to be good:

> One thing, however, he felt that [the painting] had done for him. It had made him conscious how unjust, how cruel, he had been to Sibyl Vane. It was not too late to make reparation for that. She could still be his wife. His unreal and selfish love would yield to some higher influence, would be transformed by some nobler passion, and the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him would be a guide to him through life, would be to him what holiness is to some, and conscience to others and the fear of God to us all . . . here was a visible symbol of the degradation of sin. Here was an ever-present sign of the ruin men brought upon their souls. (93)

Dorian's appeal to "some higher influence" again raises the question of free will versus divine predestination. The moment calls to mind the Christian doctrine of sanctification, in which the regenerate sinner, having turned to God for deliverance from evil, is aided by the work of the Holy Spirit to more fully manifest the character of God while still on earth. For Dorian it is not too late: through the work of God's "higher influence" and "nobler passion" he will be able to make things right with Sybil and atone for his sin. His statement here recognizes the flaw of seeking goodness through purely human means (i.e. through the "ideal," of Sibyl). However, Dorian's pledge to be "transformed by some nobler passion" also seems to recognize his own strong complicity in the arrangement. In this sense, free will is never far from the moral action in *Dorian Gray*, and the "ruin men brought upon their souls" is seen both as self-imposed and as a predetermined consequence of human susceptibility to sin.

The first testing ground for Dorian's renewed conviction to "be good" is the suicide of Sibyl Vane. No one recognizes this fact more than Lord Henry, whose first action is to write to ask that Dorian not see anyone before he comes (95). Picking up the stichomythic line of analysis, one can conceive that Dorian may have stuck to his commitment to "be transformed by some nobler passion" if Lord Henry

hadn't got to him first. It even appears for a time as if he will, having refused to open a letter on the grounds that Lord Henry "cut[s] life to pieces with his epigrams" (95). As it happens though, Lord Henry is the first to break the news to Dorian that Sybil Vane has committed suicide. Realizing the importance of the situation, Lord Henry leaves no holds barred in tempting Dorian back to evil (he goes so far as to offer his own sister as bait, and it becomes apparent later that Dorian has taken this bait [see pages 96 and 145]). But it is ultimately Dorian's own cold indifference to Sybil's death that leads him back down Lord Henry's path:

> "So I have murdered Sybil Vane," said Dorian Gray, half to himself—"murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife. Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden. And to-night I am to dine with you, and then go to the Opera, and sup somewhere, I suppose . . . ." (96)

There is very little between this realization and Dorian's final decision to embrace sin once and for all:

> He felt the time had come for making his choice. Or had his choice already been made? Yes, life had decided that for him—life, and his own infinite curiosity about life. Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins—he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all. (102)

Dorian's statement here is an inverted approximation of Martin Luther's famous "here I stand I can do no other." While Luther could do nothing but to affirm his beliefs in the certainty of God's truth because that was the way things are, Dorian finds himself unable to resist the recognition of his own depravity for the same reason. Dorian's decision is not a manifesto or a declaration, but a querulous moment of acceptance. Lord Henry had tempted him with the false belief that he could be the master of his own sins; in reality, the reverse turns out to be true. Evil has made Dorian its subject here, and the statement above is Dorian's recognition that he will be ruled by it acceptingly. All of this occurs with remarkable subtlety: Dorian conveys the sense that the choice has effectively been made for him, and signs the papers of his servitude to sin with his fatalistic "that was all." While this moment seems to represent the triumph of predetermination over free will, Dorian is still faced with the responsibility of acting on his freedom and accepting the consequences for his actions. In the Christian schema, Dorian is never beyond the reaches of God's grace: all he needs to do is repent of his sins and ask for it.

When Basil comes to visit Dorian the morning after this affirmation of evil, he has one last chance to pick up Sybil's mantle as stichomythic angel. Basil isn't up to the task, however, and doesn't even attempt to steer Dorian back toward goodness. Dorian tells Basil circumspectly of his decision to live beyond "middle class virtue" (106), and Basil decides that "he could not bear the idea of reproaching

[Dorian] any more . . . after all, his indifference was probably a mere mood that would pass away (107). Then, in the throes of his newly embraced evil, Dorian plays the devil's subtle/evil trick on Basil. Rather than managing to discover the secret of Dorian's hesitance to display the painting, Basil ends up confessing the "secret of his own soul" (9), his "curious artistic idolatry" (14) for Dorian. It isn't until years later that Basil works up the resolve to confront Dorian, and it is this decision that leads to his death:

> "Good God, Dorian, what a lesson! What an awful lesson!" There was no answer, but he could hear the young man sobbing at the window. "Pray, Dorian, pray," he murmured. "What is it that one was taught to say in one's boyhood? 'Lead us not into temptation. Forgive us our sins. Wash away our iniquities.' Let us say that together. The prayer of your pride has been answered. The prayer of your repentance will be answered also. I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished."
>
> Dorian Gray turned slowly around, and looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes. "It is too late, Basil," he faltered.
>
> "It is never too late, Dorian. Let us kneel down and try if we cannot remember a prayer. Isn't there a verse somewhere, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, yet I will make them as white as snow?'"
>
> "Those words mean nothing to me now." (151)

Basil re-emphasizes the possibility for Dorian to be redeemed by his own free choice, assuring Dorian that his "prayer of repentance" will be answered in the same way as his "prayer of pride." That "it is never too late" underscores the continued viability of free will in the redemptive schema—Dorian can yet choose to change, and his prayer will be answered. Dorian, however, believes he has fallen too far into an evil he sees as inevitable: he tells Basil that the possibility for true penitence means "nothing to me now." But while he reasserts the viability of free will for Dorian, Basil himself is something of an "elect" character. "'I couldn't be happy if I didn't see [Dorian] every day,'" Basil tells Lord Henry in the opening chapter: "he is absolutely necessary to me'" (12). Lord Henry is shocked by Basil's admission: "'How extraordinary! I thought you would never care for anything but your art'" (12). Basil responds that "'[Dorian] is all my art to me now'" (13). When Lord Henry asks to meet Dorian, Basil pleads with him not to "'take away the one person who gives my art whatever charm it possesses'" (16). This "curious artistic idolatry" for Dorian is the essence of Wilde's reworking of the doctrine of election in the preface: "they are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty" (3). Basil is incapable of seeing past Dorian's beauty to discern his true moral character; he derides those who "treat art as if it were meant to be a form of autobiography" (14), yet has revealed the secret of his own soul in the picture rather than that of Dorian. Basil is unable to see into his friends' souls. He is consistently unwilling to assume the worst of Lord Henry: "'I don't agree

with a single word that you have said, and, what is more, Harry, I feel sure you don't either'" (12). This inability to look below the surface of things is tantamount to being "elect" in the sense of the preface: to Basil, "beautiful things mean only Beauty." But this naivete is writ largest in the context of Basil's "artistic idolatry" for Dorian. In the scene that leads to his murder, Basil tells Dorian that

> sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed. People talk sometimes of secret vices. There are no such things. If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the moulding of his hands even. (143)

Basil goes on to specifically address Dorian: "you . . . with your pure, bright, innocent face, and your marvellous untroubled youth—I can't believe anything against you" (143). With his seeming ability to gaze directly into Dorian's soul, Lord Henry stands in stark contrast to Basil. "I should have to see your soul," Basil tells Dorian upon finally realizing his mistake, "but only God can do that" (146). But Basil's assessment is only half-complete: presumably the devil can gaze into the human soul as well. When Basil is finally afforded the glimpse into Dorian's soul that Lord Henry has been privy to all along, the moment is terrifying: "the rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful" (150). It is through this fear that Basil's "election" carries over to the Christian schema. His terror at the prospect of sin leads him eventually to a penitence something like that of Proverbs 9 v. 10: "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (NIV). Following Jesus's logic in Mark 9 v. 40 ("whoever is not against us is for us"), the "fear" of the Lord is largely the same thing as Basil's "fear" of sin. This "elect" fear of sin first asserts itself during Basil's initial meeting with Dorian. The painter tells Lord Henry that "'I had a strange feeling that Fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows. I grew afraid, and turned to quit the room. It was not conscience that made me do so: it was a sort of cowardice'" (10). Part of Basil's election, then, in the Christian sense, is that he fears the sins that he knows Dorian will cause him to commit. Yet it is seemingly by predestination that Basil becomes acquainted with Dorian in the first place: after having these fearful premonitions he tries to "escape" (10) the meeting, only to be forced back into it by the host of the party, Lady Brandon. As such, the novel's only overtly "elect" character is not beyond the responsibility of making moral choices out of his own free will. Basil sins in his "artistic idolatry" for Dorian, and realizes he is punished for it: "'I feel . . . that I have given away my whole soul to some one who treats it as if it were a flower to put in his coat, a bit of decoration to charm his vanity, an ornament for a summer's day'" (14). In the end though, Basil's soul departs from the novel with an upward spiritual trajectory; free will and election are equally at play in Basil's penitence, and the tension between the two is again left unresolved.

In one of his rebuttal letters to the *Scots Observer*, dated 13 August 1890, Wilde described Dorian Gray as having an

"ethical beauty" (*Letters* 446). To recognize this "ethical beauty" is to recognize that Dorian must either be punished for his sins or must seek God's forgiveness. Wilde was acutely aware that a novel about a suicide and two grisly murders, among other assorted sins, cannot be a thing of beauty unless it culminates in some form of moral comeuppance. He sets this pattern in motion with the opening salvo of the preface: "the artist is the creator of beautiful things" (3). In the words of Neil Sammells, *Dorian Gray* "is ethically beautiful and beautifully ethical: it invokes the satisfactions of design" (54). The moral, then, is delivered as a moment in the plot, but is enforced more thoroughly in the general structure of the novel. The fact that the actual occurrence of the "moral" takes up less than half a page is irrelevant: it has been inevitable from the very first sentence. However, despite the structural inevitability of a "moral" ending *Dorian Gray* does lead readers through some alarming moments of moral uncertainty. The most devastating of these is the death of James Vane.

Sybil's brother had pledged to his sister that "'as sure as there is a God in heaven'" (79) he would avenge any wrong that Dorian caused her. James's reappearance in the plot falsely signifies the long anticipated moment of moral comeuppance for Dorian. It brings the sense that the "ethical beauty" will soon take effect, that Dorian will soon pay for his sins in a moment of poetic justice. When James is accidentally shot by Sir Geoffrey it is the most morally ambiguous moment in *Dorian Gray*. More than at any other time, the structure of the novel and the cosmology of its universe are threatened by James's death. James had pledged that "as sure as there is a God in heaven" he would kill Dorian for any transgression against Sybil. When James dies rather than Dorian, it simultaneously throws into question the structural progression of the plot (will Dorian receive his "ethically beautiful" end?) and the cosmology of the novel's universe (is there no God in heaven?). It is from the ashes of this most devastating moment that the possibility of goodness asserts itself a third and final time.

To this point in my analysis, Dorian has failed at two major attempts to "be good": the first is his failed love for Sybil Vane, and the second is his cold indifference to her death. The number of Dorian's failed resolutions resonates with several important biblical threes. Three is, of course, the number of members in the divine Trinity, but it is also the number of times Jesus was tempted in the desert, the number of days before he rose from the dead, and the number of times Peter denies Jesus. In *Dorian Gray*, Basil's arms convulse three times when Dorian is stabbing him: "three times the outstretched arms shot up convulsively, waving grotesque stiff-fingered hands in the air" (152). Basil's arms, then, loosely form the shape of a cross three times before his death one for each of Dorian's failed resolutions to be good. Another noteworthy "three" occurs when Dorian goes into hiding upon the return of James Vane: "it was not until the third day that [Dorian] ventured to go out" (192). Christ was tempted three times in the desert and overcame each temptation: Dorian fails in his three successive resolutions to be good. Christ remained entombed three days

before rising from the dead to conquer the sins of the world; Dorian's rise from a three day "entombment" (his hiding from James Vane) marks the penultimate moment to the structural and moral crisis of James Vane's death. Dorian, then, is loosely configured as a reverse-Christ figure. He fails to overcome the temptations of evil and works as a destructive force in the lives of others (rather than as an agent of redemption). "'You have a wonderful influence,'" Basil tells Dorian, "'let it be for good, not for evil'" (145).

Dorian's third and final resolution to be good has to do with his relationship to Hetty, "simply a girl in a village" (201) whom he has fallen in love with. Dorian recounts to Lord Henry the story of their relationship, and how he has decided to "'leave her as flower-like I had found her'" (201) because "'I have done too many dreadful things in my life . . . [and] am not going to do any more'" (200). Lord Henry replies by asking Dorian

> "do you think this girl will ever really be contented now with any of her own rank? I suppose she will be married some day to a rough carter or a grinning ploughman. Well, the fact of having met you, and loved you, will teach her to despise her husband, and she will be wretched. From a moral point of view, I cannot say that I think much of your great renunciation. Even as a beginning it is poor. Besides, how do you know that Hetty isn't floating at the present moment in some star-lit mill-pond, with lovely water-lilies around her, like Ophelia?" (201)

After this painful allusion to the suicide of Sybil Vane (who had played Ophelia), Lord Henry goes on to paint an Ophelia-like image of Basil's death: "'I see him lying now on his back under those dull-green waters with the heavy barges floating over him, and long weeds catching in his hair'" (204). Lord Henry's subtle/evil is at its cruellest here: having already short-circuited Dorian's attempt to confess the murder of Basil Hallward (203), Lord Henry casts Ophelia as an emblematic reminder of Dorian's composite sins against Sibyl, Hetty, and Basil. As if this isn't enough, Lord Henry brings up another terribly sensitive issue for Dorian: the painting. Dorian accordingly looks to Hamlet to explain his hatred for the thing: "Like the painting of a sorrow / A face without a heart" (204). Wilde's technique here is cleverly understated. As the answer to "Ophelia" is presumably found in *Hamlet*, it is by confronting his sins that Dorian stands a chance of being freed from them. Lord Henry continues his baiting though, and one of the cruellest moments in the novel ensues: "'by the way, Dorian,' [Lord Henry] said, after a pause, 'what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose —how does the quotation run? —his own soul?'" (205). Lord Henry's subtle/evil is again at its subtlest here, as he pretends to remember the quotation imperfectly. The words are those of Jesus from Matthew 16 v. 26, making the eternal ramifications of Dorian's evil abundantly clear: he profits absolutely nothing, because his soul has succumbed to evil. At this point, however, readers still don't know for certain if Dorian's third resolution to be

good has been successful. Dorian doesn't either, and decides to check the portrait in his attic to see if it has altered in accordance with his "goodness" to Hetty. Much to his dismay, Dorian finds the picture "more loathsome . . . than before—in the eyes there was a look of cunning, and in the mouth the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite" (211). At this, his lowest point, Dorian looks upward: "there was a God in heaven who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven . . . nothing that he could do would cleanse him till he had told his own sin" (212). Confession is the only answer, but Dorian cannot manage to feel the remorse from which confession comes. Rather than admitting his sins to God and begging for forgiveness, Dorian decides to destroy the painting. He takes the same knife he had used to stab Basil, and plunges it into the canvas. In doing so he restores the natural relation bewteen portrait and subject. Dorian is found dead on the floor, "withered, wrinkled, and, loathsome of visage" (213), while the painting is returned to resemble Dorian's pre-lapsarian state of moral beauty. He has recognized the error of being mastered by evil while thinking himself master, but it has been too late: Dorian has been unable to find the remorse that leads to confession. As such, the "moral" of *Dorian Gray* (i. e. the "teaching or lesson") is far more overtly Christian than Wilde suggested to the *St. James' Gazette*: *Dorian Gray* is a thorough demonstration that the post-lapsarian soul is utterly susceptible to both external and internal evil, and that the proper response to this condition is penitence and confession. The moral complexity of the novel exists in Wilde's fidelity to the complexity of the Christian cosmological schema. The confusion isn't about how humanity should respond to the power of evil, but about what motivates and directs evil as a force. In keeping with the unresolved tension between human free will and divine predetermination, human beings are found to be both complicit in the evil they perpetrate and the victims of a spiritual imperative they are inadequate to fulfil.

The effectiveness of Wilde's tactic in the preface can be assessed in two arenas: that of the novel, and that of his famous trial. In terms of getting the moral complexity of *Dorian Gray* recognized, Wilde's changes have worked remarkably well. If there can be said to be a critical consensus on *Dorian Gray* it is that the "moral" is notoriously difficult to pin down. In terms of obfuscating the obvious orthodoxy of the novel's "moral" conclusion, Wilde has been equally successful: the reading I have presented here is, as far as I understand it, somewhat idiosyncratic. But Wilde's attempt to argue the views of the preface as a real-life defense in his trial met with considerably less success. Neil Sammells has argued that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* challenges the conventional assumption that a novel could be read with the "direct simplicity" (55) of cracking open a nut to access the kernel within. During Wilde's trial, prosecutor Edward Carson tried to "crack the nut" of *Dorian Gray* to show the moral degeneracy of its author. Throughout the trial Wilde clung to the line of defense he had first asserted in the preface: that art has no influence on action. In *Dorian Gray* Lord Henry feeds Dorian the exact same line: "'art has no

influence upon action . . . it annihilates the desire to act'" (208). When asked during the trial if literature can have a moral or immoral effect, Wilde replied that: "'I do not believe that any book or work of art ever produced any effect upon conduct at all'" (Goodman 53). "'The aim is not to do good or evil,'" Wilde continued later, "'but trying to make a thing that will have some quality of form or beauty, wit, emotion, and so on'" (Goodman 53). The trial transcripts contain pages and pages of examples where Wilde is, almost verbatim, repeating the claim of the preface that "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book." In the end the author whose main character had been "poisoned by a book" (208) couldn't get away with denying that "art ever produced any effect upon conduct at all." The penalty was undeniably disproportionate to the crime: Wilde was sentenced to two years in jail, and finished his life in exile as a broken man.

It is finally here that I turn to this paper's epigraph from B.H. Fairchild's "On the Passing of Jesus Freaks from the College Classroom." Judging from his "posing" in the preface and during the trial, the Christian moral of *Dorian Gray* didn't resonate very powerfully with Wilde. It wasn't until his imprisonment that Wilde seems to have felt the brokenness of being complicit in evil. Fairchild describes the depth of this in the lines

> He raised his hands and wept, "Evil, fucking Evil."
> And he meant it. *And he knew what he meant.*

What may be seen as a corresponding moment of brokenness occurs for Wilde in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (published in 1898):

> Ah! Happy they whose hearts can break
> And peace of pardon win!
> How else may man make straight his plan
> And cleanse his soul from Sin?
> How else but through a broken heart
> May Lord Christ enter in?

Wilde was released from prison in 1897 an utterly broken man; he fled to the continent, where he lived under the name "Sebastian Melmoth" (martyr and wanderer) until his death in 1900. Shortly before his death, Wilde was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Given the depth of the brokenness in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," it is reasonable to conclude that this conviction was genuine. Perhaps the

latently Christian moral of *Dorian Gray* had finally begun to resonate with its author. As such, the symbolic action of setting his spirit on the path to penitence through baptism may be seen as Wilde's last-minute attempt to avoid the fatal mistake of his best-known protagonist.

A note on quotations from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: I used two copies of the text: the 1890 serialized version that appeared in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* (available in e-book form from Planet .PDF) and an edited version of the 1891 book edition (edited by Robert Mighall). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from *Dorian Gray* are taken from Mighall's edited 1891 version. Please see below for citation information.

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Dickens, Hunt and the Waiter in *Somebody's Luggage*

Rodney Stenning Edgecombe

In 1850, Leigh Hunt republished many of his *London Journal* essays (1832) in one volume. While Dickens would almost certainly have read this later collection (which Hunt called *The Seer*) in the name of friendship, it's possible that he had already encountered "The Waiter" in the earlier

forum, and that he remembered it when he came to write his *American Notes* a decade later. Here Hunt had depicted London waiters as men of few words—so few, indeed, as sometimes to utter nonsensical replies:

He would drop one of the two syllables of his "Yes, Sir," if he could; but business and civility will not allow it; and therefore he does what he can by running them together in the swift sufficiency of his "Yezzir."

"Thomas!"

"Yezzir."

"Is my steak coming?"

"Yezzir."

"And the pint of port?" "Yezzir."

"You'll not forget the postman?"

"Yezzir."

For in the habit of acquiescence Thomas not seldom says "Yes, Sir," for "No, Sir," the habit rendering him unintelligible. (1:46)

Compare this passage from *American Notes*, no doubt based on first-hand observation, but also in all likelihood heightened and shaped by the recollection of Hunt's waiter. Despite the difference—the unruffled, equable drift of Dickens's dialogue as opposed to the staccato urgency of Hunt's—the joke in both passages centers on all-purpose signifiers a la Humpty-Dumpty: "When I use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less" (*Through the Looking Glass* 229):

BROWN HAT. (Still swinging; speaking very slowly; and without any emotion whatever.) Yes, Sir.

STRAW HAT. Warm weather, Judge.

BROWN HAT. Yes, Sir.

STRAW HAT. There was a snap of cold, last week.

BROWN HAT. Yes, Sir.

STRAW HAT. Yes, Sir.

A pause. They look at each other, very seriously.

STRAW HAT. I calculate you'll have got through that case of the corporation, Judge, by this time, now?

BROWN HAT. Yes, Sir.

STRAW HAT. How did the verdict go, Sir?

BROWN HAT. For the defendant, Sir.

STRAW HAT. (Interrogatively.) Yes, Sir?

BROWN HAT. (Affirmatively.) Yes, Sir.

BOTH. (Musingly, as each gazes down the street.) Yes, Sir. (190)

Dickens still found life enough in this comic device when, decades later, he incorporated it into *Little Dorrit*:

"ALTRO!" returned John Baptist, closing his eyes and giving his head a most vehement toss. The word being, according to its Genoese emphasis, a confirmation, a contradiction, an assertion, a denial, a taunt, a compliment, a joke, and fifty other things, became in the present instance, with a significance beyond all power of written expression, our familiar English "I believe you!" (8)

The possibility of Hunt's influence upon this and upon the earlier work, though arguable, remains moot.

However, one could make a much stronger case for the direct relevance of "The Waiter" to *Somebody's Luggage*,

which Dickens published twelve years after *The Seer*. Take the opening paragraph of the first chapter:

The writer of these humble lines being a Waiter, and having come of a family of Waiters, and owning at the present time five brothers who are all Waiters, and likewise an only sister who is a Waitress, would wish to offer a few words respecting his calling; first having the pleasure of hereby in a friendly manner offering the Dedication of the same unto JOSEPH, much respected Head Waiter at the Slamjam Coffee-house, London, E.C., than which a individual more eminently deserving of the name of man, or a more amenable honour to his own head and heart, whether considered in the light of a Waiter or regarded as a human being, do not exist. (318)

Dickens establishes the writer's credentials with that relentless ploche (a rhetorical scheme of repetition) that he often favors. The iteration entertains us with its solemn earnestness but it also assures us that we are about to receive the last word on waiters, an inward, privileged view in opposition to Hunt's impersonal, external, impressionistic portrait—"we felt irresistibly impelled to sketch him" (1:45).

The "sketch" in question presents the waiter as a figure more mysterious than familiar—so much so that we are scarcely able to imagine him in the act of eating:

To see him dine, somehow, hardly seems natural. And he appears to do it as if he had no right. You catch him at his dinner in corner—huddled apart,—"Thomas dining! "—instead of helping dinner. One fancies that the stewed and hot meats and the constant smoke, ought to be too much for him, and that he should have neither appetite nor time for such a meal. (1:46)

But even as the narrator of the Dickens story plants his family tree, its branches swarming with waiters like himself, he seems to confirm, with Hunt, that waiters represent a subspecies of humankind ("We speak of the waiter properly and generally so called,—the repesentative of the whole, real, official race" [1:45]). With a tone that is difficult to characterize—one isn't sure where facetiousness yields to reportage—Hunt suggests that waiters are a separate "people" in a world apart ("But his world is the tavern, and all mankind but its visitors" [1:46]). Dickens takes over this idea, for even while his narrator pretends to be singing "carmina non prius audita"—"the songs not heard before" of Horace's *Odes* 3.1 (168-69)—he recycles Hunt's propositions with little change. The word "calling" presents the waiter as a quasi-priest, man and office distinct: "whether considered in the light of a Waiter or regarded as a human being."

That is the chief point of contact. But Dickens has also used Hunt's essay as a point of departure, for even as his narrator attempts to generalize, his conduct, not least his elaborate prose (the antithesis of "the silent or monosyllabical" mode that Hunt finds typical), reveals him as the sort of

waiter that the *Seer* excluded from view. Not wanting to complicate the outline of what, after all, was a Theophrastan "character," Hunt had skirted "the humourist or other eccentric genius occasionally to be found in it" (45). Dickens reverses the emphasis, relishing his speaker's piquant oddity. He is never funnier nor more endearing—for there is never a breath of patronage—than when writing with the persona of an uneducated aspirant. The narrative of *Somebody's Luggage* often adopts the orotund idiom of the after-dinner speech—an idiom that, as Dickens shrewdly realizes, would have been all too familiar to waiters—but it often slips and slides. For example, in the elaborate proem to the story, would-be elegance founders on a faulty article ("a individual"), a malapropism ("amenable") and a fractured concord ("do not exist"). Funnier still is the Augustanism of "Sol gave him warning to depart" (modelled on such lines as "Sol thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray" in Pope's *Rape of the Lock* [218]), placed in bathetic harness to the realities of London transport ("in a four-wheeler [365]). As so often in Dickens, the comedy engulfs, and energetically voids, any objection on grounds of probability—nowhere more so than when, with the evidence of the written record screaming its contradiction, the waiter construes "A. Y. R" (*All the Year Round*) as an encryption of "Out-dacious Youth Repent" (360), and then misspells (in lieu of mispronouncing) the message from the publisher: "the ole resources of that establishment was unable to make out what they meant" (365). All this, of course, owes nothing to Hunt, but it gives an interiority to the portrait that countervails the essayist's disengaged stance.

Again and again we get the sense that the persona behind *Somebody's Luggage* is trying to correct public "misprisions" about the craft of waiting—the sort of "misprisions" that had been assembled in "The Waiter." For example, whereas Hunt distinguishes between young, unskillful waiters and mature, sure-footed veterans—

When young, he was always in a hurry, and exasperated his mistress by running against the other waiters, and breaking the "neguses." As he gets older, he learns to unite swiftness with caution; declines wasting his breath in immediate answers to calls; and knows, with a slight turn of his face, and elevation of his voice, into what precise corner of the room to pitch his "Coming, Sir." (46)

—Dickens's narrator suggests that these clumsy apprentices don't deserve the name, and that waiters, like Minerva, come into the world fore-armed with their expertise:

In case confusion should arise in the public mind (which it is open to confusion on many subjects) respecting what is meant or implied by the term Waiter, the present humble lines would wish to offer an explanation. It may not be generally known that the person as goes out to wait is *not* a Waiter. It may be generally known that the hand as is called an extra, at the Freemasons' Tavern, or the London, or the Albion, or otherwise, is *not* a Waiter. (318)

Even so, try as he might, he can't help reinforcing the stereotype embodied in Hunt's essay, and this in spite of the clash between impersonal second-person pronouns and the extremely specific and personal details they are made to vector when he tries to bring *sui generis* into line with *genus omne*:

Hence your being smuggled into the pantry, and that—to add to the infliction—by an unwilling grandmother. Under the combined influence of the smells of roast and boiled, and soup, and gas, and malt liquors, you partook of your earliest nourishment; your unwilling grandmother sitting prepared to catch you when your mother was called and dropped you; your grandmother's shawl ever ready to stifle your natural complainings; your innocent mind surrounded by uncongenial cruets, dirty plates, dish-covers, and cold gravy; your mother calling down the pipe for veals and porks instead of soothing you with nursery rhymes. (318)

In that conceit of imbibing the smells of waiterdom through a mother's milk one hears an echo of Hunt's claim that "the stewed and hot meats and the constant smoke, ought to be too much for him, and that he should have neither appetite nor time for such a meal."

By the same token, the unidiomatic plurals for "veal" and "pork" recall Hunt's notation of waiterspeak, with a vocabulary and syntax of its own:

Even a loaf with him is hardly a loaf; it is so many "breads." His longest speech is the making out of a bill *viva voce*—"Two beefs—one potatoes—three ales—two wines—six and twopence"—which he does with an indifferent celerity, amusing to newcomers who have been relishing their fare, and not considering it as a mere set of items. (46)

But Dickens takes the joke of itemized speech, with its broken concords ("one potatoes") and plural takes on nouns one more usually conceives in quantitative terms ("Two beefs") one stage further. Here even the tenets of arithmetic fall victim to the waiter's way of inventorying the world:

Physicians being in vain, your father expired, after repeating at intervals for a day and a night, when gleams of reason and old business fitfully illuminated his being, "Two and two is five. And three is sixpence." (319)

At first blush, this looks like the raving of old Chuffey in *Martin Chuzzlewit* ("Yes. I'll sum up my forty—How many times forty—Oh, Chuzzlewit and Son" [318] but we realize on reflection that, in *articulo mortis*, the waiter is offering a penny discount to a party of four.

It is also worth noting that, when it suits him, Dickens's narrator implies that waiters never venture beyond the world of the tavern

["]You sometimes have a holiday?"

Seeing the great danger I was in, I had the presence of mind to answer, "Never!" To make it more final, I added, "Never, not from the cradle to the grave." (364)

Comic deception though it be, this denial half confirms the Parthian shot of Hunt's essay:

Once a year (for he has few holidays) a couple of pedestrians meet him on a Sunday in the fields, and cannot conceive for the life of them who it is; until the startling recollection occurs—"Good God! It's the waiter at the Grogram!" (47)

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Three Victorian "Medieval" Poems: "Dover Beach," "The Windhover," and "The Higher Pantheism"

Nathan Cervo

In her book *Tennyson & Madness*, Ann C. Colley writes, about "much of the [Victorian] public and a majority of physicians," that

their understanding of madness as a moral disease might be "Victorian," but it was also an heir to, or at least a variation on, the medieval idea that madness was a disease visited on those who had sinned. Madness was a punishment to cleanse the wicked of their excesses. . . . This association of madness with evil or sin also helps explain why the nineteenth-century physicians and laymen persisted in wanting to punish the insane and put "the fear of God" into them. Perhaps even the Victorian anxiety over the acquisition of wealth and new technology also parallels the medieval period's sense of madness as being the price of acquiring or knowing too much. (22-3)

From a medieval perspective, it may be said that the entire Victorian Age was mad, driven so by preferring, in prctice, the worship of Mammon to Christianity. As Christianity increasingly lost its intellectually persuasive hold on people, they came to believe, under the influence of Darwin, that they knew too much to believe in anything claiming to transcend nature as process. As process, nature signified only itself. This idea, I believe is expressed in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem "The Woodspurge":

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,--
I sat now, for the wind was still.
Between my knees my forehead was,--
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!

My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.
My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.
From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,--
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

Stripping the woodspurge of its symbolic aura, Rossetti is conscious of it simply in its character of material construct.

Whereas, as Susan E. Lorsch writes in her book *Where Nature Ends*, a Victorian poet like Gerard Manley Hopkins "can remember nature's quiddity because, for him, significance is still immanent in nature" (22); this, arguably, is because of the medieval cast of his mind and his particular devotion to Duns Scotus. To Scotus and to Hopkins, the quiddity of a thing, or the essential character of its whatness, is unique to the individual. Nonetheless, individual essence chimes not the Being of Parmenides but the Transcendental Ideas of Plato. It is Plato, and this chiming (what Hopkins calls "instress"), that makes symbolism possible. In Lorsch's words, "[t]o locate a system of symbols or a representative meaning in nature is not to falsify the external world. . . . [E]ither nature is itself infused with a particular meaning, or the writer can with his imagination infuse it with true meaning. Without belying nature, the artist can use nature to convey meaning" (22). As part of creation, as a created being, the artist receives inspiration, grace, or glory from God who has created everything in the divine image. In this connection, Alexander of Hales considers the following thesis:

That the receptive power stems from the divine power. First, the argument is as follows:

Since all nature is from God, as all Scripture asserts, the passive or receptive power is in the nature of the matter: therefore it is from God.

. . . . It must be stated that the receptive power . . . is from God and has an image in Him, since it is characteristic of God Himself to contain all things, as it is the characteristic of matter and power to have forms. However, God is said by different disputants to contain everything and matter contains form; for God contains and keeps everything and lacks nothing: matter contains form, receiving from it, as it were, complete being and perfection. (Wedeck 253)

This 13th-century philosophical statement represents an attempt to escape the pantheistic notion of Being as set forth by Parmenides by moving instead in the direction of Christian theophany, that is, the view that all things reveal God but are not God. This is the direction that Tennyson takes in his poem "The Higher Pantheism" (1869), by way of a dialectics not of becoming and being but of "division" and "Vision." In lines 5-6, Tennyson asks:

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

But in the poem's opening stanza Tennyson has asked a slightly different question:

The sun, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,--
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

From one perspective, the stars are the "Vision" of God; from another, they are the "sign and symbol" of "division" from God. From the first perspective, Tennyson addresses what appears to be a pure entity unhindered by the senses, the "Soul"; from the second, he focuses on an implied "thou" ("thy division") "that has power to feel 'I am I[.]'" It is this "thou," erected on the foundation of self-consciousness, that reflexively regards things, such as the stars, as barriers to earthily accessible unity with God. At best, if this "thou" is a theist, he or she dilutes natural things into signs and symbols pointing toward God as the Other from which the "I" is ontically divided. As signs and symbols, the stars reveal only what the alienated "I" projects as the outer limits of natural theology. The stars are not divine, in the sundering reverie of the deracinated "I," but point toward the divine, deferring spiritual seeing in favor of psychological insight. Tennyson's "Soul" goes beyond this, seeing the medium as the message and hearing in the "thunder . . . [God's] voice" (14).

From this point of view, the chided "thou" is much too inclined to rely on intellectualized formulations and doctrinal constructs to benefit directly from divine grace and God's integral glory:

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams and a stifled splendor and gloom. (9-10)

Thus the "thou" makes God in his or her image. Tennyson, on the other hand, punning on the word "higher" in the poem's title, holds that all things, having been created by God, are radically "*hier-*" (Greek *hieros*, "holy"), that is, hierophantic, revealing the holiness of the Creator. This holiness translates to presence. What Tennyson is requiring from the "thou" is a conversion experience, a transfiguration of consciousness. The "thou" should not be conscious *of* the stars but simply conscious, knowing the world together with God not as sign and symbol but as the presence of God's glory and divine grace. Here the higher consciousness—that of faith—amounts to the higher pantheism: God and creation are not distinct when contemplated by an "I" fully empowered and transfigured by faith:

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye [pun on "I"] of man cannot see
But if we could see and hear, this vision—were it not he? (19-20)

To Tennyson, the "Soul" not only can see and hear but does so properly when it participates, in accord with its spiritual character, in the truly Given-grace, "Glory" (9).

Although there is nothing specifically Christian in the poem, apart from the echo in lines 19-20 of Jesus's reprimand, "Though you have eyes do you not see, and though you have ears do you not hear?" (Mk 8:18), its basic premise coincides with the belief that in Christ "all things hold together" (Col 1:15-20; John 1:1-3).

In our own day, Thomas Merton extended this idea by drawing an analogy between it and Nirvana:

Merton had argued that Western apophatic mysticism mirrored the Eastern distinction between "consciousness *of*" and "*consciousness*" itself. "Pure consciousness" was limited by no desire, no project, no finite aim. It "does not look at *things* . . . . It accepts them fully, in complete oneness with them." Nirvana, he wrote, is "a kind of super-consciousness in which one experiences reality not indirectly but directly." Meister Eckhart described the climax of detachment in similar terms—to be ignorant with knowing, loveless with loving, and dark with enlightenment. (Commins 70)

We find the same sentiment expressed in the *Carmina Burang*, in the song titled "Earthly Vanity":

All the world is just a madness.
Joys are false that offer gladness,
Passing, fading into air,
Like lilies of the field, I swear.

All is earthly, life is vain,
Offers nothing, shows no gain,
Drives the soul to deepest Hell,
Submerging us like watery well.

All I see upon this earth,
All I feel since primal birth,
I shall scorn or I shall be
Like the leaves on oaken tree.

All is carnal, laws shall die,
Vanishing like clouds on high,
Like shadows faint, funereal,
Like bodies not corporeal.

If we crush our fleshly lust
With the just and best we must
Enjoy the bliss of heaven in store
Through the ages evermore. (I3th century; trans. Harry
E. Wedeck)

In "Dover Beach," Matthew Arnold echoes "Earthly Vanity," connecting the idea of the soul's "primal birth" with medieval faith and understatedly reintroducing Dante's view of God as "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars" simply as "love":

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another; for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night. (21-37; 1851-2?;
1867)

To Arnold, in the modern world love conquers nothing. It is, instead, a refuge, a retreat into love's version of Parmenidean Being. This kind of love, it seems to me, is elitist in that it is based on ontology (Being) not morality (Becoming). If we are not to dismiss the frame (history) in favor of the light that the window only partially reveals (myth), we might do well to consider the religious import of Kürenberg's (fl 1160, Austria) brief allegory, "I brought up a falcon," in relation to Hopkins's "The Windover." Kürenberg writes:

I brought up a falcon for more than a year. When I had tamed it as I wanted it to be and had twined its feathers with gold, it soared up high and flew away to another country.
Later, I saw my falcon flying beautifully, on its feet it carried silken jesses and its feathers were all red-gold. God bring them together who would be loversl (Trask 86)

In Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem "The Windhover," dedicated to "Christ our Lord," Kürenberg's phrase "red-gold" appears revivified in the sonnet's two concluding words "gold-vermilion." The colors are interchangeable in

hypostatic fashion: at His "primal birth," Christ fused both kingship and His existentializing, redemptive martyrdom on the Cross:

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume,
here
      Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a
billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
      No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sil-
lion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
      Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.
(9-14)

To Hopkins, who wrote an essay on Parmenides when a student at Oxford, the Jesus of "The Windhover" is the "stem of stress" that bridges, or heals, Parmenides' breach between Being and Not-Being. Without Jesus, Parmenides' "feeling for instress, for the flush and foredrawn, and for inscape" would remain unsatisfying, although fascinating, as if a funhouse mirror could reflect itself. To Hopkins, without these qualities Parmenides' "undetermined Pantheist idealism" would be far less interesting: "There would be no bridge, no stem of stress between us and things to bear us out and carry the mind over: without stress we might not and could not say / Blood is red / but only / This blood is red / or / The last blood I saw was red / nor even that, for in later language not only universals would not be true but the copula [the "is"] would break down even in particular judgments." (House and Storey, 127).

With regard to paganism and its myriad modern offshoots, including Omar Khayyam's sending of his soul into the infinite to discover answers, Hopkins's falcon, like Kürenberg's, "flew away to another country," from which it returned with "its feathers . . . all red-gold. God bring them together who would be lovers!" Similarly, one leaves the myth of Being and returns to the reality of significant existential conduct.

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Books Received

Andres, Sophia. *Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel: Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2005. Pp. xxvii + 208. $89.95 (cloth); $29.95 (paper); $9.95 (CD). "During the last four decades, we have witnessed a great deal of work in the area of gender. The work has taken place on political, legal, social, and cultural fronts. Among the many questions raised during this period, is the question of definition. Many authors, scholars, activists and reformers have argued that gender should not be defined once and for all. Rather, it should be rethought and renegotiated. *The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel* joins this argument but substantiates it historically and aesthetically. It shows that a great deal of what we have witnessed in recent decades has significant antecedents in the art of the Victorian period, specifically in the paintings of several prominent Pre-Raphaelites and the fiction of renowned Victorian novelists" (xi).

Assael, Brenda. *The Circus and Victorian Society*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2005. Pp. xiii + 237. $35.00. "By appealing to the senses, the circus attracted a wide variety of spectators of both sexes and different classes, regions, and ages. As the acts struck the eye and stimulated the imagination, they triggered a system of meaning to be activated and released. This book is concerned with that process and what it tells us about Victorian culture" (1-2). Thirty-five b&w illustrations.

Faulk, Barry J. *Music Hall & Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture*. Athens: Ohio University P, 2004. Pp. xii + 244. $42.95. "This book studies the many literary and journalistic representations of Britain's first indigenous and fully capitalized mass culture form, the music hall. . . . The London music hall provides the central focus of my book, since the many descriptions of these halls by the London intelligentsia serve as the core texts for this study. My work addresses the discourse produced by the metropolitan intelligentsia at the moment when the music hall reached its commercial peak" (1-2).

Martineau, Harriet. *Harriet Martineau's Writing on the British Empire*. 5 vols. Ed. Deborah Logan. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004. Vol 1: *The Empire Question*. Pp. xlix + 248; vol. 2: *The Middle Eastern Question Part 1*. Pp. xxvii + 298; vol. 3: *The Middle Eastern Question, Part 2*. Pp. vi + 270; vol. 4: *The Irish Question*. Pp. xi + 236.; vol. 5: *The India Question*. Pp. xvi + 415 (includes appendices, epilogue, bibliography and index). £450; $750. "These five volumes bring together Harriet Martineau's most important writings on the British Empire. Ranging

from India to South Africa, and from Ireland to the Middle East, Martineau's fictions and analyses offer a global range of topics, viewed from the perspective of a major Victorian intellectual. As a utilitarian, feminist, abolitionist, ardent free=trader and world-traveller, Martineau is an astute observer of the 'morals and manners' of her own compatriots as well as those of the foreign cultures and societies they came to colonise and dominate" (1: xx). See inside back cover.

Pal-Lapinski, Piya. *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture*. Durham: U of New Hampshire P, 2005. Pp. xx + 156. $60.00 (cloth); $24.95 (paper). "Although this book does discuss the crucial motif of the veil—what analysis of exoticism cannot?—I move away from designating it as the primary marker of a feminized racial otherness, toward the concept of the exotic female body that, as it struggles with the limits of its own plurality, its own hybrid textures eludes ethnographic systems of classification and prefigures a movement toward radical modernity. By shifting the parameters of this trope as a category of analysis, I aim to 'unsettle' our understanding of the dialogue between race and sexuality in nineteenth-century literature and culture. To see the exotic woman as a figure that plays a crucial role in the emergence of certain formulations of modernity instead of as a product of a totalizing gaze, to decouple it from imperial hegemony, is to 'encounter the past as an anteriority that continually introduces an otherness or alterity within the present' and to recognize the revolutionary otherness of the past" (xx).

Phegley, Jennifer *Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2004. Pp. 233. $39.95; CD $9.95. "In *Educating the Proper Woman Reader* I reevaluate prevailing assumptions about the relationship between nineteenth-century woman readers and literary critics by examining how four important family literary magazines—the American *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and the British magazines the *Cornhill*, *Belgravia*, and *Victoria*—defended women from the highly publicized accusation that they were uncritical readers whose reading practices threatened the sanctity of the family and the cultural reputation of the nation. Contrary to most scholarly discussions of the condescending and even destructive attitude of critics toward women readers in the nineteenth century, I argue that family literary magazines empowered women to make their own decisions about what and how to read. Despite the dominant attitude toward women as dangerous readers, this genre of magazine led the way for women to participate in professional critical discourse as both consumers and

producers of literary culture. Family literary magazines attempted to change the landscape of the debate surrounding woman readers by combating the portrayal of improper reading as a particularly female malady and instead depicting women as intellectually competent readers" (2).

Rossetti, Christina. *The Letters of Christina Rossetti: Vol. 4, 1887-1894*. Ed. Antony Harrison. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2005. Pp. xl + 435. $70.00. "The letters appear in chronological order and are numbered. Each is preceded by the name of the recipient. The texts reproduce the originals as faithfully as possible except for spacing, lineation, and the positioning of inserted or marginal materials. Letters are transcribed from holograph manuscripts whenever these are extant and have been accessible to the editor. . . . When manuscripts cannot be found, letters are copied from typed transcripts, usually the work of William Michael Rossetti, or from published texts. Each letter is immediately followed by an unnumbered note of its source in manuscript, typescript, or published form . . . . With letters transcribed from manuscript, first publication is acknowledged if significant portions have been printed" (cvii). There are 2063 letters to 79+ recipients. ". . . . Rossetti was busily occupied with this-worldly activities during the last eight years of her life, the period spanned by letters in this volume" (ix).

Sutton-Ramspeck, Beth. *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2004. Pp. xii + 272. $55.00 (cloth); $24.95 (paper). "The domestic and the public spheres—variously defined—have traditionally been viewed as competing and mutually contradictory realms, both in fact and in fictional portrayals. My study uncovers an alternative paradigm: literature engaging the public realm through the housekeeping devices and perspectives of the domestic realm. I call this alternative paradigm 'literary housekeeping'" (1).

Thomas, Julia. *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Blackwell Annotated Anthologies. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. Pp. xxxviii + 697. $39.95 (paper) "'Victorian poetry' is, for the most part here, understood to be that published between 1830 and 1900. But it would be a falsification to be absolutely strict. . . . My selection includes work published in the first decade of the twentieth century" ([xxxvii]). Includes Matthew Arnold, Alfred Austin, Sabine Baring-Gould, Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Arthur Hugh Clough, John Davidson, Ernest Dowson, John Ellerton, Frederick William Faber, Michael Field (Katherine

Bradley and Edith Cooper), Thomas Hardy, Frances Ridley Havergal, William Ernest Henley, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Lionel Johnson, May Kendall, Rudyard Kipling, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Amy Levy, Thomas Macaulay, George Meredith, Charlotte Mew, William Morris, Adelaide Anne Procter, Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Arthur Symons, Alfred Tennyson, James Thomson, Augusta Webster, Oscar Wilde.

Voskuil, Lynn M. *Acting Naturally: Victorian Theatricality and Authenticity*. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2004. Pp. xi + 268. $35.00. "My title and central concept are derived from nineteenth-century performance theory, specifically from the concept of 'natural acting,' an idea that figured prominently in Romantic and Victorian acting and drama criticism but that has been largely neglected in twentieth-century criticism and theory" (3).

Zangen, Britta. *Our Daughters Must Be Wives: Marriageable Young Women in the Novels of Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy*. Feministische Forschungen: Herausgegeben von Marion Heinze und Friedrike Kuster. Frankfurt am Main: Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2004. Pp. 391. $62.95 (paper). "Although young women are the centre of this study, I begin the section on the discourse conducted in non-fictional texts with Victorian men. This is due to the fact that the ideology of what constituted the ideal marriageable Woman was a result, as I shall argue, of the great changes in men's lives brought about by the Industrial Revolution. I am acquainted with the debate which challenges this 'male-centered view of "history" and culture,' and which takes as a starting point the belief that women 'may have participated in the culture shaped by men while maintaining a culture of their own.' But my starting point is the conviction that a patriarchal society is precisely a society in which it is the men who have the power to confer status, to designate class boundaries, to define roles, to nominate values, to create images, and to ensure that all of these are respected. The changes that women's lives have undergone over the centuries resulted—up to very recent times—directly from the changes in men's situation in life and from related changes in their beliefs and assumptions. Accordingly, I shall start by drawing a brief picture of the enormous upheavals that the Industrial Revolution had brought to men's lives in the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain, the consequences of which still deeply affected Victorian males' lives. Throughout, it is essentially the middle-classes that I am concerned with because, generally speaking, '[t]he ruling thoughts of a time correspond with the way of thinking of the class that rules it.' . . . It was they 'the literate middle-class observers on whom we so depend' for information on the Victorian age" (18-19).

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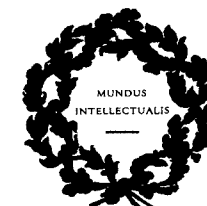
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