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The Thematic Evolution of "The Idylls of the King"

Nancy M. Engbretsen

BOTH TENNYSON'S LEGENDARY SOURCES for the *Idylls of the King* and the poem's seemingly spasmodic order of composition and publication have provided the subject-matter of more than one interminable esthetic debate over the past century. The most common issues have been these: to what degree is Tennyson original in the *Idylls*? Successful? And does the work have any unity? The first real critical challenge raised by Tennyson's odd evolution of the *Idylls*, however, is mainly thematic or conceptual. His form and presentative stance, once determined, served meritoriously throughout the poem and his revisions were minor, directed on the whole towards increasing the stylistically archaic flavor of the recast legends and knitting the separate legends together. In short, Tennyson's "epic" shows little of the progressive elucidation of meaning and refinement of nuance which characterize his extensive textual labor with the poems of 1842, *The Princess* (1847), and *Maud* (1855). Nor was his procedure in the *Idylls* comparable to the case of *In Memoriam*, principally a problem of establishing sequence among various parts; the poet had no concrete single frame of moral or emotional referability analogous to that supplied through the death of the friend in his elegy. In the *Idylls*, Tennyson had to discover his crucial theme and its narrative vehicles more gradually, with painstaking effort of an altogether different kind.

The process by which he hit upon it, as traceable in the canon, reflects a progressive and characteristic ideological development over a long, long period of time. Typically the poem was slow in gestation, not in the writing; Tennyson composed his first draft of "The Holy Grail" within one week, for example, after having delayed the project for ten years out of uncertainty as to whether and how he ought to treat it, whether indeed he should go on with the *Idylls* at all.¹ But before the poet finally arrived at this juncture of thematic crystallization he had

spent almost a lifetime in preparation for his Arthurian undertaking. The boy Tennyson had played games of knighthood with his brothers, Malory instilled his ambition to emulate the *Morte d'Arthur* when he was still a schoolchild, and he had an outline for the *Idylls* on paper as early as 1833.² Most important, though, Tennyson wrote a whole series of Arthurian-inspired pieces during his first creative period, a series stretching from "The Lady of Shalott" (1833, rev. 1842) to the epic fragment "Morte d'Arthur" of 1842 (written 1833, 1835; pub. 1842) that would actually be solicited much later, in 1869, for the terminal narrative and thematic pole of the work. We know where Tennyson's Arthurian immersion ended—with "Balin and Balan" (written 1872, pub. 1885) or, outside of the *Idylls* itself, with his autobiographical summation "Merlin and the Gleam" (1884)—but when, specifically, did it begin? The extraordinary background of the poem makes it impossible to fix a date. The dating which the pertinent extant manuscripts by Tennyson propose would be too arbitrary, omitting consideration of the precompositional inception of idea or the first tentative motions of the poet's imagination towards an Arthurian artifact of his own creation. Tennyson himself significantly commented, in reference to a remark on his rapid completion of the highly polished idylls "Guinevere" and "Lancelot and Elaine," that "Perfection in art is perhaps more sudden sometimes than we think; but then the long preparation for it, that unseen germination, that is what we ignore and forget."³ The thematic evolution of the *Idylls* is mirrored not only in his narrative-related earlier lyrics like "The Lady of Shalott" and "Sir Galahad" (1842) but also, perhaps more centrally, in the broad recurrent themes, attitudes, and situations of the Tennyson canon at large. The unhurried, unforced conceptual maturation of his masterwork took place while he was engaged on other poetic ventures entirely, often as their indirect con-

1. His first draft of "The Holy Grail," furthermore, was revised very little: see Jerome H. Buckley, *Tennyson: the Growth of a Poet* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 171; cf. Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (London, 1898), II, 126. ("Guinevere" also was first written out in an unusually short time and only slightly revised; see *Memoir*, I, 424 and II, 202; cf. I, 414.) Tennyson's hesitation about taking up the Sangraal legend was based

on the fear that it could not be handled with reverence by a modern writer: see *Memoir*, II, 126; cf. I, 459.

2. On Tennyson's boyhood games of the Round Table, see Ritchie, quoted in *The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson* (Cambridge, Mass., 1898), ed. W. J. Wolfe, p. x. His conception of Arthur derives from an early reading of Malory; see *Memoir*, II, 128. Tennyson's early outline for the *Idylls* is reproduced in the *Memoir*, II, 122-123.

3. See *Memoir*, I, 453n.

sequence. Tennyson's gradual realization of artistic and moral purpose in the *Idylls* was as much an organic growth as the corresponding search for adequate objective forms. How might the phases of this thematic process jigsaw together?

Among the most salient traits of the *Idylls*, exclusive for the time being of more technical matters, there may be discerned certain major Tennysonian motifs. The theme of the ideal society, which the poet had previously made so integral a component of *The Princess* and *Maud*, becomes possibly the most pervasive of these. The Round Table begins with concord and joy only to be dissolved at last through the rather Biblical or Miltonic corrupting agencies of Guinevere's "pride" (e.g., "Guinevere," 636-637), the impious and casuistical "wit" of the court (e.g., "Last Tournament," 340), and the malign "curiosity" of Vivien (e.g., "Merlin and Vivien," 355, 362), the lamia-woman who brings ruin to Camelot. In a poem enclosed on the one end by the advent of a kind of social savior, "The Coming of Arthur," and on the other by his death and the return of lawlessness, "The Passing of Arthur," this suggestive overall curve of action also implicates Tennyson's cyclical view of history. His interpretation of the eternal change observable in human affairs, like the correlative of a lost paradise which he often enlists to dramatize it, had ever been a marked feature of the canon since "Tombuctoo" (written 1827, pub. 1829) or the companion pieces "Nothing Will Die" and "All Things Will Die" (1830). It continues to fascinate him throughout his career, not only in the *Idylls*. Tennyson uses the seasonal cycles of *In Memoriam* as the poem's chief index of chronological, and psychological sequence, for example, and he reconsiders the motif of recurrence in "The Progress of Spring" (written 1839, pub. 1889) and, more darkly, in "Demeter and Persephone" (1889) near the close of his career. It even provides the crux of a significant poem of 1842 that has received all too scant attention, Tennyson's personally revealing, gently self-ironic verse portrait "Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue":

Let there be thistles, there are grapes;
If old things, there are new,
Ten thousand broken lights and shapes,
Yet glimpses of the true
We lack not rhymes and reasons,
As on this whirligig of Time
We circle with the seasons.
.
I hold it good, good things should pass;
With time I will not quarrel
(57-206)

In this poem, which curiously harbors a glimpse of Arthur's more austere acceptance of the mysterious inevitability of transition ("Coming of Arthur," 506-509; cf. "Passing of Arthur," 408-410), we can also detect what will bloom into another prominent theme of the *Idylls*: the discrepancy between appearance and reality. It con-

stitutes that work's most encompassing conceptual feature as well as perhaps the most fundamental Tennysonian field of investigation. Originally, after all, the *magnum opus* for which the poet devoted a lifetime of preparation (v. e.g., "Will Waterproof," 161-168) makes its debut under the sub-title *The True and the False*.⁴ Following the fashion of his other self-aware secondary titles—e.g., *A Medley (The Princess)*, *The Way of a Soul (In Memoriam)*, *A Monodrama (Maud)*,—this too proves to be no mere ornament but a vital thematic clue.

The poetic manifestation of the tensions of distinction or choice between truth and falsity in the *Idylls* frequently occurs through some form of inner debate. Briefly, Tennyson coaxes his older techniques of moral schizophrenia—those illustrated by "The Two Voices" (1833) or "The Vision of Sin" (1842)—onto the broader philosophical plane of personal and social defection from the ideal, or faith, or the life of the spirit. Another significant debate-poem, "De Profundis" (written 1852, pub. 1880), probably contains the most direct anticipation of the *Idylls*, especially of the first volume (1859), which Tennyson's preceding poetry affords:

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Thro' all this changing world of changeless law,
. . . thou comest
.
O dear Spirit, half-lost
In thine own shadow and this fleshy sign
And banish'd into mystery, and the pain
Of this divisible-indivisible world
.
—Live thou! and
. . . choose
(5-49)

In its cyclical stress, diction, and sober moral outlook "De Profundis" is clearly a prime antecedent of the *Idylls*. Tennyson's most conspicuous representational orientation in the later work, moreover, will also show the influence of this kind of inner debate; but there the 'debate' will be projected by his dynamic activated symbol of the divided self.

The motif of spiritual conflict in the *Idylls* assumes such varied shapes as, on the one hand, the qualified actual halving of personality in the *Doppelgänger* brothers *Balin* and *Balan* and the personified conflict of "Sense at war with Soul" in Tristram's ambivalence towards Queen Isolt and Isolt of the White Hands; or, on the other hand, it enters the more oblique dispositions of psychological division in Merlin's temptation by Vivien or Guinevere's uneasy oscillation between Arthur and Lancelot. Tennyson, of course, endorses the preferability of the more spiritual alternatives, the greater reality of the ideal which one can 'see' only through conscientious insight, never through impressions of keen visual pleasure or the distortions of life viewed with the eyes of convention. Thus, for example, Enid is true, although Geraint holds her

4. For the publishing background of the *Idylls*, see, e.g., Henry Van Dyke, *The Poetry of Tennyson*, 3rd ed. (London, 1907), pp. 246, 251. All dates of publication given are taken from the *Works*; they indicate the first publication of a poem in

book-form. Tennyson published some poems in periodicals before issuing them in a collection, e.g., "Tithonus" (written ca. 1842; pub. 1860; later included in *Enoch Arden, and Other Poems*, 1864).

guilty by association with Guinevere, and she radiates a spiritual beauty which both transcends the plainness of the dress he forces her to wear and far surpasses the sumptuous outer attire of Camelot's court. Guinevere's widely fabled beauty, meanwhile, pales before the purer glory of her protégée Enid and her rival for Lancelot's love, the child-like Elaine of Shalott. As Geraint painfully learns to trust beyond appearances ("Geraint and Enid," 734-744), Lancelot painfully comes to realize that his was the false choice, in love as well as in the predicament of duty conflicting with love. In the terms of "De Profundis," he selected the "husk" instead of the "grain" (48-49). Lancelot's anguish, further, presents an unforgettable poetic commentary on the recurrent opposition in the *Idylls* between appearance and reality, faith and doubt, moral and sensual choice, and the thousand related bifurcations of spirit which crosshatch the poem's thematic tissue.

The madness of Lancelot on the quest of "The Holy Grail," (1869) constitutes a kind of psychologized symbolic penalty for his unholy liaison and proud self-election to the mission that only a Galahad could fulfill. Not surprisingly, the nature of his affliction recalls the similar, though more esthetically framed spiritual convulsion suffered by the lady of "The Palace of Art" (1833; rev. 1842) for her own brand of escapist luxuriousness and self-delusive presumption (cf., e.g., "Palace of Art," 193-288; "Holy Grail," 763-848). By the time of "The Holy Grail," though, the social consequences of such blind and irresponsible assertion of ego have acquired a graver emphasis than that accorded the total crisis of personality which eventually follows a character's prolonged spiritual isolation. Tennyson ordinarily projects it throughout the canon by way of two innerconnected narrative situations: unsanctioned quest, as in "The Holy Grail," and unsanctioned esthetic withdrawal, as in "The Palace of Art." Suitably adjusted, these idiosyncratic narrative embodiments of theme continue to occur long after the poet's social engagement has deepened and his moral vision considerably darkened.

Tennyson first identifies the motivations to false quest, usually some sort of self-evasion at bottom, in several of his poems of 1842. In the seldom anthologized conversation-poem, "Walking to the Mail," for example, the character James anticipates the moral and psychological idiom of the *Idylls* as he explicates a titled local resident's desertion of his wife:

 Vext with a morbid devil in his blood,
 That veil'd the world with jaundice, he hid his face
 From all men, and commercing with himself
 He lost the sense that handles daily life—
 That keeps us all in order more or less—
 And sick of home went overseas for change. . . .
 (12-17)

The character described seems to be one of our familiars within the canon, another Tennysonian variation on the type of Dante's sullen. A particularly close relative of

Balin in the *Idylls* and the violent, passionate heroes of "Locksley Hall" (1842), *Maud* (1855), or "Lucretius" (1868); he exhibits little of the regressive languor of his more distant kin in Tennyson—of the lotus-eaters, say, or Princess Ida's suitor and the speaker of *In Memoriam*. His vision, further, is tilted off-balance more by having lost contact with the stabilizing practical responsibilities of everyday life than by romantic disappointment; and his reaction inclines to a Byronic cultivation of variety and adventure, not to the more Keatsian desire for numbed insensibility of Tennyson's own artist-types. The man's escapist travels therefore resemble the *Grail* questing of the presumptuous non-elect knights of the Round Table or Ulysses' peevish resentment at having had to administer his own domestic affairs for a short while and mingle with a people whom he considers beneath him, along with his own son Telemachus, precisely because of their uncomplaining execution of each day's ordinary duties. "Tithonus," the companionpiece to "Ulysses," then refutes that poem's seductive power of exhilaration from a moral position very close to the one represented by Telemachus and later authoritatively articulated by King Arthur upon his knights' disconsolate struggling back to Camelot after their quest (cf. "Holy Grail," 899-915):

 Why should a man desire in any way
 To vary from the kindly race of men,
 Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
 Where all should pause. . . ?

 ("Tithonus," written 1842; pub. 1864; 28-31)

It is largely through "Tithonus," a poetic tract of sorts against pride, and through his composition of certain other poems also published for the first time in the *Enoch Arden* collection of 1864 that Tennyson was enabled finally to realize the thematic core of the *Idylls* and produce the seminal volume of the work, the "Holy Grail" volume of 1869.⁵

Just as "De Profundis" may contain the most overt thematic adumbration of the first four idylls, so the *Enoch Arden* poems forecast Tennyson's long-postponed general crystallization of theme in the three cornerstone idylls of his 1869 issue: "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," and "The Passing of Arthur." ("Pelleas and Ettarre," though also published with this cluster, appears more a thematic review of the first volume, the provocative "women" of the *Idylls*.)⁶ A poem like "Sea Dreams" should of course be enrolled among the most relevant of these poetic precursors from the *Enoch Arden* volume, but "The Voyage" and "The Sailor Boy," which could complement each other handsomely as companion pieces, penetrate more to the heart of the dialectic of egotistical, illusory quest opposed to temporal domestic responsibility. The poet's voyagers compose a frenetic "ship of fools" (78), not having been destined for the saintly mystical vision of a Galahad. The sailor boy knows, though, that the doubting voice he hears can only be false. Like the lad's chivalric relative in an idyll published still later

5. Cf. George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody* (London, 1906), III, 213.

6. On these three as nearest the core of the *Idylls*, cf., e.g.,

Memoir, II, 63, 126-127. On the connection between the 1869 volume and *Enoch Arden*, cf. *Memoir*, I, 483; Tennyson was apparently conscious of some degree of relation.

(i.e., "Gareth and Lynette," 1872), he has a true dedication, a true calling; he cannot honorably remain in the "shameful" indolence entreated by his mother (cf. e.g. "Sailor Boy," 13-24; "Gareth and Lynette," 100-117). But closer yet to the *Idylls* theme of genuine versus spurious, self-indulgent activity lie the poems *Enoch Arden* and its reproduction in miniature, "The Islet." The conflict takes the form of a debate in the latter and the divided-self representation more characteristic of the *Idylls* as a whole in the former. However, the encompassing narrative context here recalls Tennyson's poetry of esthetic withdrawal more than his family of quest poems.

Enoch's madness on the voluptuous tropical paradise where he is shipwrecked, quite alone after the deaths of his companions, again hearkens back through the canon to "The Palace of Art" and, more immediately, forward to "The Holy Grail." The setting is that of the lotus-eaters, though, and their problem, deterioration in the moral will. Enoch lives within a world of sensuous luxury but, removed from ordinary human commerce, he must come to learn the stern Tennysonian lesson of the "abysmal deeps of personality" ("The Palace of Art," 223), and there he must suffer the spiritual cataclysm later to befall Lancelot on his own mad purgatorial voyage. Enoch's deviation from universal law is likewise a sin of willfulness or pride and deficient faith (v. e.g., 111-117, 162-167, 843-844). He leaves his wife to care for their two children and the sickly new-born baby unaided, to meet the practical demands of existence however she may, and sails jauntily off in the pursuit of vain material riches. Symbolically, Annie cannot sight him through the spy-glass as his ship recedes (241-242); he too has gone on a phantasmal and sterile quest.

It is left for Philip the miller, who has stayed at home, to rescue Enoch's family from the destitution which, ironically, he had sought to avert for them by shipping out on the ill-named vessel "Good Fortune." Appropriately, moreover, it is Philip who perceives the moral of Enoch's case:

... wherefore did he go this weary way,
And leave you lonely? not to see the world—
... —nay, but for the wherewithal
To give his babes a better bringing up. . .
And if he come again, vex will he be
To find the precious morning hours were lost.
And it would vex him even in his grave,
... to know his babes were running wild
Like colts about the waste.
(295-304)

In contrast to Enoch, Philip chooses the way of Tele-machus or Arthur.⁷ He acknowledges Enoch to be "the best among us" (291), as Lancelot is the "mightiest" of Arthur's knights, but he himself has wisely remained content with his ordained sphere of duty; he has not left "human wrongs to right themselves" ("Holy Grail," 894) in order to indulge his pride on expeditions after a will-o'-the-wisp glory. As a result of his steadfastness, Philip

also learns, in personal terms, the 'reward' of the truer "vision" of which Arthur speaks ("Holy Grail," 905-914):

Philip gain'd
As Enoch lost, for Enoch seem'd to his children
Uncertain as a vision or a dream,
Faint as a figure seen in early dawn. . .
Going we know not where. . .
(351-356)

Thus Enoch hears the wedding-bells ringing for Philip and Annie at home in the most excruciating moment of his madness (609-614) much as Lancelot hears, but cannot join, the hymn of the Grail in the enchanted tower at Carbonek ("Holy Grail," 829-849). Before all else, then, it was through the self-assigned project of writing *Enoch Arden* that Tennyson finally discovered the central thematic burden towards which he had been groping in his hesitant, artistically scrupulous evolution of the *Idylls of the King*.

In keeping with the uncanny consistency of his canon, it represents a dynamic spontaneous extension of earlier motifs and life-long ideological preoccupations. Tennyson, by the time of *Enoch Arden*, had moved far away from the recessive poetry of estheticism, frustrated passion, and morbidly ingrown subjectivity that dominated his early lyric period; he was now approaching mature narrative expression of the more urgent moral and social concerns announced in *The Princess* and *Maud*. With its resounding intimations of Arthurian stoic verve, the conclusion of *Maud* already prophesies this latter turning of the poet's career:

We have proved we have hearts in a cause,
We are noble still. . .
. . . It is better to fight for the good than to rail
at the ill:
. . . I am one with my kind,
I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom
assign'd.
(III, 57-60; cf. *In Memoriam*, CVIII)

Here, moreover, one catches an echo of the Prince's almost Shakespearean cadence in his warrior phase of *The Princess* as well as a note which already heralds the heroic dedication and candor of the opening idylls, particularly the stirring vitalism of the canon's radiant younger brother to the Prince in "Gareth and Lynette" (e.g., 113-118). But even the grotesquerie and animality of Tennyson's darkest idylls—of "Pelleas and Ettarre" (1869), "The Last Tournament" (1872), or "Balin and Balan" (1885)—may be found foreshadowed by his earlier poetic achievement.

Tennyson's poetry of the "vehement sublime,"⁸ embracing works like the "Lucretius" monologue (written 1865; pub. 1868), for example, certainly anticipates this obverse face of Arthur's Eden-Camelot. However, works dating still farther back prepared this kind of savage symbolic derangement. The initial rage and corrosive general disaffection from humanity of *Maud*'s hero predicts it, espe-

7. Cf. Tennyson's own comment on fidelity to one's "limited sphere" in the *Memoir*, II, 129. See also Buckley, *Tennyson*, pp. 188-189.

8. Oliver Elton, *A Survey of English Literature, 1830-1880* (London, 1920), I, 348.

cially in his more merciless self-flagellations (e.g., I, 362-365), and still earlier, "The Vision of Sin" (1842) emits a gripping daemonic nihilism all its own. In retrospect from the *Idylls*, though, perhaps the most directly pertinent antecedent of this nightmarish "nether" adjunct to stable reality may be Tennyson's investigation of the pathological in "St. Simeon Stylites" (1842). The 'saint' forecasts both Pelleas' "maddened" lust (e.g., 447-450) or Lucretius' "twy-natured" hallucinations of brute sensuality (e.g., 43-58, 154-163) and the queer spiritual competitiveness of King Pellam, the false descendant in "Balin and Balan" of the Crail-bringer Joseph of Arimathea (93-116). Simeon relates his repulsive hysterical 'temptation' to sin as follows:

... Pontius and Iscariot. . .
 Show'd like fair seraphs. On the coals I lay,
 . . . all hell beneath
 Made me boil over. Devils pluck'd my sleeve. . .
 In bed like monstrous apes they crush'd my chest;
 Their faces grow between me and my book;
 With coltlike whinny and with hoggish whine
 They burst my prayer. . . .

("St. Simeon Stylites," 165-176)

Aware of their own bestial kinship, Tristram and Isolt similarly regard the cuckold Mark as a petty Satanic emissary (e.g., 501-503, 610-620). But the real tonal difference between Simeon's pathological struggle against theimps of sin and such counterparts to it in the *Idylls* as, most obviously, Pellam's neurotic religiosity, lies once again within the great overriding theme of the later work. While Simeon remains just an objective mental freak, more or less, Pellam is a spiritual monster, a dangerous social and moral infection. Therefore, in the system of thematic oppositions on which the *Idylls* rests, Pellam belongs to the party of the false; he becomes implicitly aligned against Arthur's transcendental realities along with the other spokesmen of the poem's envious rival

creeds and self-serving moral rationalizations: with the faction of Gawain, of Vivien and Mark, of Tristram and the Red Knight. Pellam thus provides another dramatized instance of spiritual short-sightedness and ill-motivated choice or willful failure to curb the limitless anarchic demands of one's ego. This moral congruence in fact forms the heartwood of the Tennysonian theme of appearance versus reality in his boldest longer narrative; it is, essentially, that peculiarly Victorian matter which Browning formulates in his famous phrase as "Life's business being just that, the terrible choice." Or, to recall the adjuration of Tennyson's own "De Profundis," "Live thou! and . . . choose."

In the *Idylls*, Tennyson continually poses the primary recurrent alternatives of human experience by means of symbol, suggestive antagonisms among the characters, narrative situation, extra-rational states, personal or civil conflict, and so on. Such poetic choice-correlatives as these figure among Tennyson's oldest and most characteristic devices for objectifying a moral dilemma. Basically, they constitute the profound narrative amplification of so early a conflict-poem as "Oenone" (1833; rev. 1842). This youthful lyric monologue, spoken by the jilted fiancée of Paris of Troy, even contains a glimmer (i.e., 253-264) of the later theme of a realm's dissolution through the accretion of selfish, needless sensual indulgences and acts of self-arrogation on the part of its individual leaders and citizens. But what may be more significant yet, any of Tennyson's successful early poems from the same source of inspiration as "Oenone" also augur the formal affiliation which his major anatomy will finally demonstrate: that of mythic narrative. Tennyson solicits this particular strain of narrative art to contribute the basic projective conveyance for his themes in the *Idylls of the King*. There he transforms it, not surprisingly, into a vehicle of oblique, highly contemporary social and moral evaluation.

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Resolution of Identity in "Our Mutual Friend"

Masao Miyoshi

THE PUBLICATION of Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* was met for the most part with bad reviews. The young Henry James, among others felt that the author's imagination was "lifeless, forced, mechanical."¹ The next hundred years brought repeated assaults on the novel, and these were by no means all by Dickens' enemies. It was called

a poor work by several otherwise staunch defenders, such as Gissing, Chesterton, and Orwell. And nowadays, while an occasional critic has understood it and praised it, others have found it² incoherent, the characters inconsistent, or the ending offensively sentimental, in short, the product of "a great but worn genius."³

1. "Our Mutual Friend," *The Future of the Novel*, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1956), p. 76. The review originally appeared in *The Nation*, December 21, 1865.
2. To name a few, T. A. Jackson, Edmund Wilson, Jack Lindsay, Edgar Johnson, and J. Hillis Miller.
3. Monroe Engel, *The Maturity of Dickens* (Cambridge, Mass.,

1959), p. 132. Others include K. J. Fielding and Robert Barnard ("The Choral Symphony: 'Our Mutual Friend,'" *A Review of English Literature*, II [July, 1961], 89-99). Mr. Richard A. Lanham's recent article in *VNL* (Fall, 1963), though sympathetic in the main, supports the majority view of the novel as reflecting a "sentimental falsification of experience."

Converging on this view is another critical commonplace—the interpretation of the work as first and foremost a tract in social criticism. It is to this tradition, it seems to me, that much of the general failure to appreciate *Our Mutual Friend* is traceable. Certainly the dust piles are prominent in the work. But in their constant presence, their filthiness as impudent as the luxury of the many great estates is ostentatious, they point to other notions than class struggle and the myth of money. What is at issue here is nothing less than the whole problem of identity in a world where things—and men—are not always what they appear to be. Of course, dust must be self-identical with dust—anything is what it is and not another thing—but the very property of dust by which it produces wealth for its owners makes it also identical, finally, with that wealth. As for the men who exploit and manipulate filth and wealth in a money-corrupted society, they, too, must struggle toward self-definition. When a man finds what he wants in the junk-filled dust piles, the dust becomes gold; indeed, to ignore this golden aspect of dust completely is to exile oneself from society, become an outcast like Betty Higden. But if he disregards the essential identity of dust as mere dust, dust as gold becomes everything to him and, like the Podsnaps and the Veneerings, he loses touch with his own essential humanity. Only Mr. Boffin seems able to comprehend the ambivalent dust, just as capable of pricing “the Mounds to a fraction”⁴ as of renouncing all claim to the Harmon fortune, the Golden Dustman emerges as the champion of Dickensian humanism. He can live in this world, and keep his essential humanity.

The other important reference in a structure filled almost to overflow with people and events is the Thames. In fact, Swinburne called it “the real protagonist”⁵ of the novel. Like the dust piles, the river has a double identity, but in its roles as killer and as regenerator, its action is beyond human interference and its power almost supernatural. In the course of the story, the Thames drowns four men and nearly succeeds in carrying off two others, but it offers a new life to two and at least the possibility of renewal to a third. Significantly enough, Lizzie and Betty, remote as they are from the prevailing dust-as-gold values, are both drawn to the river: Lizzie “can’t get away from it” (II, i); and Betty, as she lies dying, hears the river whisper to her, “Come to me, come to me! . . . I am the Relieving Officer appointed by eternal ordinance to do my work” (III, viii). Almost as though to seal their common kinship with the river (their common name, Elizabeth, suggests they are closer than kin—i.e., doubles). Betty dies in Lizzie’s arms, and becomes thereby the younger woman’s guardian angel—Lizzie says later on, “What she did, I can do” (IV, vi).

Robert Morse has seen in this “principle of doubleness” a “unifying subtheme”⁶ for the novel’s panoramic plot. The pairing of the characters, the examples of duplicity,

disguise, false claims, hourglass reversals, and dual natures are all aspects of the principle. But this “doubleness”—more, to my mind, than an integrating device—bears the substantial weight of the novel: the crisis of identity by which every character exhibits some degree of duality, from duplicity and hypocrisy to a fully developed dual personality.

To begin with some of the lesser characters, Alfred Lammle and Sophronia Akershem marry for money, unaware that each is being deceived by the other. With the discovery of the brilliant double deception after the wedding, they savagely turn on each other, yet decide, after all, to stick it out and put up a front not only of wealth but of matrimonial bliss, as well. They succeed in this plan to the extent that their talk of their grand palace, never beyond the planning stage, manages to arouse widespread jealousy in society. But Sophronia, nasty as she is, feels compunction—if only for a moment—when she encounters an instance of real generosity. “Why, confound the woman,” her astonished husband exclaims, “she is sentimental!” (IV, ii). Then there is Charley Hexam, that “curious mixture . . . of uncompleted savagery, and uncompleted civilisation” (I, iii). He also struggles to raise himself in society, and to some extent succeeds. But to do it, he had to abandon his old self, and in the process of establishing his new identity he destroys himself. (Hexam’s case is much like that of Pip in *Great Expectations*, though more harshly drawn.) Charley’s teacher, Bradley Headstone, lives two lives like a Gothic villain: “Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks, encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal” (III, xi). Jenny Wren, the dolls’ dressmaker, constantly escapes into a private world where fairy birds sing more beautifully than ordinary birds and fairy flowers smell sweeter than ordinary flowers. But this mere child, whose back is bad and whose legs are queer, treats her abject father as though he were her small, spoilt son, as she empties his pockets to take his earnings away and scolds him, shaking her fist like a sadistic shrew. Further, this conjurer of fairy visions and menacing bully of a drunken father has still another side: she commutes regularly between life and death. It is this Jenny who, as an “interpreter between this sentient world and the insensible man” (IV, x), guides the half-dead Eugene Wrayburn back to life. The only titled character in the novel, Lady Tippins, belongs to the aristocracy only because her late husband had been “knighted in mistake for somebody else” (I, x). Fascination Fledgeby, the idle gentleman, is in fact a brutal and greedy moneylender. And the venerable and generous Jew, Mr. Riah, compelled as he is to play the role of cruel moneylender to cover for his master Fledgeby, comes to hate himself, and at the end must resolve the conflict by quitting his job. Again, as Silas Wegg plots

4. Book I, Chapter xv. For this discussion I used the Nonesuch Edition, ed. Arthur Waugh, Hugh Walpole, Walter Dexter, and Thomas Hutton (London, 1937-38).

5. “Charles Dickens,” *Quarterly Review*, CXCVI (July, 1902), 34.

6. “Our Mutual Friend,” *Partisan Review*, XVI (1949), reprinted in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca, 1961), p. 207.

darkly under his guise of humble "literary man," his partner Mr. Venus loyally helps Mr. Boffin, while pretending to Wegg that he is his accomplice. Mr. Boffin's playing the miser is as central to this reading of the novel as John Harmon's masquerading as John Rokesmith. Finally, foggy London itself, the hero of *Bleak House*, is here "divided in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither" (III, i)!

To proceed to the major characters, there are the two important pairs: John Rokesmith (John Harmon in disguise) and Bella Wilfer; and Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn. Up to the very end, when both couples marry, their relationships remain uncertain. This is not because of any external obstructions to their union—as is the case in so many romances of the time—but because the lovers themselves fail to resolve their own inner conflicts. Three of them (the exception is Lizzie) know their own minds no better than they know their lovers', and their first task is to discover some path out of their confusion.

John Harmon, for one, taking advantage of the erroneous identification of the drowned man Radfoot who had tried to kill him, assumes a new identity, first of Julius Handford, then of John Rokesmith. In the single most important chapter, "A Solo and a Duet"⁷ (placed at the middle of the novel), Rokesmith retraces his past in a long dialogue of the mind with itself: when he returned to England, he was, as he puts it, "divided in my mind, afraid of myself and everybody here, knowing of nothing but wretchedness that my father's wealth had ever brought about" (II, xiii). The "division" is resolved by the choice of a new identity. The old dust-as-gold values, inherited from his father, are left behind in the river with Radfoot, who is, of course, an altogether adequate double, looking exactly like Harmon and embodying his old money values. The whole experience by the river amounts to a kind of baptism for Harmon, who is then born again to a new life.

As Rokesmith, Harmon is immediately presented with a dilemma. He falls genuinely in love with Bella. And since Bella wants to marry money (the misanthropic and "self-hating" old Harmon had been convinced she would make a most wretched wife), there is no chance of her accepting a poor secretary like Rokesmith. On the other hand, he is afraid that if he tells her he is really Harmon she will marry him immediately, and he detests the idea of "buying" a wife in this way. Although he decides against telling her, the temptation is never completely put to rout. At this point in the story, Dickens again uses the device of the sacrificial double: the orphan, whom the Boffins had adopted and named "John Harmon" in memory of Harmon, is seriously ill, but just before passing away, he gives all the presents he has received to a sick boy in the next bed. With this young Johnny's

death, the old Harmon values die a second time, and when Rokesmith at last proposes to Bella and she takes it as some preposterous insult, he is only toughened in his resolve to bury forever his dust-as-gold Harmon identity:

[He] heaped mounds upon mounds of earth over John Harmon's grave. His walking did not bring him home until the dawn of day. And so busy had he been all night, piling and piling weights of earth above John Harmon's grave, that by that time John Harmon lay buried under a whole Alpine range; and still the Sexton Rokesmith accumulated mountains over him, lightening his labour with the dirge, "Cover him, crush him, keep him down!"

On the very next night the Boffins discover that Rokesmith is in fact John Harmon, their master's rightful heir, and from this point on Mr. Boffin presents himself as a fanatic miser in order to educate Bella, although the reader does not know this, nor does Bella, until close to the end of the book.⁸

Bella meanwhile undergoes her long, agonizing struggle to define her real self. As the daughter of a clerk of modest means, she regrets acutely having missed out on marrying into the Harmon money. Once, when asked by Rokesmith if it's a love story she is reading, she replies, "Oh dear no, or I shouldn't be reading it. It's more about money than anything else" (I, xvi). After her adoption by the Boffins, her resolution to marry money only intensifies, though she is never free of guilt feelings about it. Time and again she tells her "cherubic" father, "I am the most mercenary little wretch that ever lived in the world." A habitual mirror-gazer, she turns to her mirror after rejecting Rokesmith's proposal and despises the image she sees there. And when Mr. Boffin, with the idea of reforming Bella, begins to act out her mercenary theory by pretending himself to be a fanatic miser, hateful and suspicious, Bella interprets the change in him as due to his acquisition of a fortune, and her high respect for wealth gradually declines. She acknowledges his brutal treatment of Rokesmith, but still wonders to herself in the mirror why she should blame Boffin. "The looking-glass preserving a discreet ministerial silence when thus called upon for explanation, Bella went to bed with a weariness upon her spirit which was more than the weariness of want of sleep" (III, v). Mr. Boffin's moral education itself works as a mirror for Bella, and soon she is quite fairly divided between her dust-as-gold self and her gold-as-dust self: "Why," she asks herself, "am I always at war with myself?" At this point Mr. Boffin arranges to have her meet Lizzie, who inspires Bella by the genuine love she has for Eugene. And finally when a

7. The chapter title has a double significance, referring, of course, to Rokesmith's monologue and subsequent dialogue with Bella, but also to the selection in which they each talk to themselves, in a kind of *dialogue* of the mind with itself. The importance of the chapter is emphasized in another way: Rokesmith's identity is disclosed here for the first time.

8. Some critics, unconvinced that Mr. Boffin is just playing

a part for Bella's sake, feel that Dickens may have changed his plan for the novel while writing it. But they are ignoring the fact that the Golden Dustman's miserliness only begins (in III, iv) after his discovery of Rokesmith's true identity. His pretending to be a miser, therefore, cannot be interpreted as anything but a conscious move in a well-thought-out strategy for reforming Bella.

pretended outburst of fury at Rokesmith on the part of Mr. Boffin repels Bella completely, she decides to leave his house. Her mercenary self now banished ("Now I am complete," said Bella" III, xv), it is a new Bella who loves Rokesmith, the poor clerk, and the two, true to themselves and to each other, marry. We are given to understand that it is this new self-aware integrity of both Bella and Rokesmith that assures not only that they will inherit the Harmon fortune, but that they will, like the Golden Dustman and his wife, use it wisely and generously.

In the other important couple of the novel, Eugene and Lizzie, it is Lizzie, the poor river girl, who is the constant lodestar. As her brother described her, "What she is, she is, and shows herself to be" (II, i). Eugene, before he falls in love with her, is a bored and indolent dandy: "In susceptibility to boredom," he tells Mortimer, "I assure you I am the most consistent of mankind" (I, xii). He is a man for whom "everything is ridiculous." As Eugene comes to love Lizzie, however, there is a change in him: "earnestness" begins to concern him. The conflict between his developing love for Lizzie and the dictates of a society which he detests and yet which runs his life grows, and by the time he visits Lizzie in her place of exile, he is hopelessly torn apart. A Byronic figure of prose and passion, Eugene the real lover (the gold-as-dust Eugene) is engaged in total war with Eugene the seducer (the dust-as-gold Eugene):

"... I am wearily out of sorts with one Wrayburn who cuts a sorry figure, and I would far rather be out of sorts with somebody else. Eugene, Eugene, Eugene, this is a bad business. Ah! So go the Mortimer Lightwood bells, and they sound melancholy tonight. . . . Out of the question to marry her. . . . and out of the question to leave her. The crisis!" (IV, vi).

Precisely at this moment of "crisis," his insane rival Headstone assaults him, and he is dragged into the river. But the "Relieving Officer" that kills also resurrects; Lizzie comes to the rescue and Jenny takes care of him. Deep in a coma he keeps "wandering away I don't know where" and worries that he might "lose myself again" (IV, x). His struggle with death is a struggle between his warring selves, which are only restored to integrity by his deathbed marriage to Lizzie. "When you see me wandering away from this refuge that I have so ill deserved," he tells her, "speak to me by my name, and I think I shall come back" (IV, xi). His name has come to represent his restored identity, no longer bored, no longer embattled.

The happy ending of *Our Mutual Friend*—to the very last so death-concerned⁹—is often criticized as unbelievable or at least sentimental. But such views seem to me short-sighted. The two marriages are the inevitable outcome of the characters' final reconciliation of their own warring selves. Each of the four, released from the torments of inner division, is ready to come to terms with real otherness. And in the context of the novel, this means marriage. Mr. Miller's recent book made similar observations, but from a different perspective. Each character in the book has inherited an "inalterable identity," according to this view; "Only if he could be liberated from his situation could he be saved. But this, it seems, cannot happen."¹⁰ And again the role-playing in the novel "rests on nothing, and is a way of escaping from reality rather than of facing it."¹¹ It is hard to agree with this. The role-playing, as I have tried to show, is each character's way of testing the possibilities still open to him so as to choose what he ultimately will be. Rokesmith, Bella, and Eugene all find themselves by this means. Boffin's miserliness was originally put on in the interests of Rokesmith and Bella, but it served Boffin himself as well, as a way of obviating an unpleasant new self that could very well have emerged from his sudden condition of wealth. As for the supposed inalterability of the characters' situations in life, this view is harder, if anything, to support. Twemlow and Mortimer turn their backs on Society at the end; the Lammles are expelled from Society and eventually from England; the Veneerings are facing a "smash"; Mr. Venus and Pleasant Riderhood enter married life; Sloppy courts Jenny Wren, whose response is hardly cool (the visionary shrew becomes a housewife, with no altered identity?); and Wrayburn's M.R.F., who earlier tried to impose a respectable girl on him, comes to sanction his marriage with the water rat's daughter.¹²

Quite to the contrary of Mr. Miller's thesis, the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* are almost every one of them alienated from their parents, and may seek types of substitute parents elsewhere: Jenny sees a "god-mother" in Uriah; Rokesmith regards the Boffins as his parents; so does Bella, in a way; Georgiana looks for friendship in Mrs. Lammle; Charley depends on Headstone for guidance. The novel does not, therefore, depict a society structured to the extreme of immobility, but rather a world in very rapid transition and treacherous as the sea, in which everyone, parent and child alike, must locate for himself his own harbor, his own being.

True, Bella and Rokesmith find their way back at the end to the course charted originally by the old Harmon.

9. Innumerable deaths occur in the course of the novel, and there are careful descriptions of the corpses. Great attention is paid, too, to the semiconscious musings of the dying. Everyone in the book is obsessed one way or another by the very idea of death: Caffer lives on drowned bodies, though he is terribly afraid of death. Mortimer's "dismal windows" look out on a burial ground, and Headstone proposes to Lizzie in one, behaving there "as if Death itself" (II, xv). Bella's father feels life is a ceaseless march tuned, in his case, to the "Dead March in Saul" (II, viii). And Bella, having lost John Harmon, becomes "a kind of widow

who never was married" (I, iv). There are innumerable other such references to death or dying. Probably one of the most delightful is the description of Mr. Venus' shop, consisting of "Bones, various. Skulls, various. Preserved Indian baby. African ditto. . . . Mummied bird. Dried cuticles, various" (I, vii).

10. Charles Dickens: *The World of His Novels* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 282.

11. Miller, p. 303.

12. Miller, p. 308.

Yet they themselves are nonetheless different. By the free renunciation of the mere given, they have established, for themselves, a totally new relationship to the old life-pattern. "If Mr. John Harmon had lived," Bella's father once speculated to Rokesmith, "he mightn't have suited Bella, or Bella mightn't have suited him, or fifty things,

whereas now I hope she can choose for herself" (II, xiv). That the course they in fact come to follow turns out to be the one laid out for them should not confuse the issue. What Bella herself is, what she has chosen to make of herself, makes the difference between life and death in the dismal swamp.

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The Pattern of Self-Alienation in "Great Expectations"

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MUCH EXCELLENT CRITICISM of *Great Expectations* has been published in recent years, attesting to the richness and power of this novel, but this criticism has tended to emphasize the novel's web of symbolism at the expense of its psychological and moral significance. For example, Dorothy Van Ghent's impressive essay on the novel suggests that its characters are not psychologically complex, and that Dickens sometimes employs the relationships between characters to dramatize what are actually intrapsychic complexities.¹ On generally less sure grounds than Mrs. Van Ghent, Julian Moynahan uses a similar method of interpretation to claim that several characters are external symbols of Pip's aggressive feelings, and that various coincidental events symbolize the acting out of these feelings.²

Probably the most psychologically acute analysis of this novel is that by J. Hillis Miller. The Dickens hero, Miller maintains, is alienated from nature and the human community. He finds himself in a world where the only possible relationships to others are those of oppressor to oppressed, or oppressed to oppressor. Three modes of avoiding the position of the oppressed are available; to dominate those lower on the social scale; to manipulate another as the agent of revenge; or, by relying on great expectations, to be convinced that one is the secret self who is sure to achieve status.³ Miller's analysis properly reveals that though Dickens' characters may lack the complexity of Dostoyevsky's. Dickens vividly suggests their inner life. I believe that this kind of analysis can be deepened, and the organic unity of Dickens' themes further explored, by applying to *Great Expectations* the concept of self-alienation.

The concept of self-alienation assumes that all individuals bear within themselves the possibility of achieving a "true" self which is morally committed to furthering its own growth—its capacity for love and creativity—and that of others as well. Such a self is being contin-

ually created, avoided, or destroyed in a dialectical process which goes on within the individual and in his human relations. One classic, though diffuse and difficult, presentation of such an idea of self occurs in Soren Kierkegaard's great book *The Sickness unto Death*.⁴ Kierkegaard believes that all men are in varying conditions of despair (the sickness unto death) over their failure to achieve (or, better, to move toward) the authentic self. Kierkegaard sees three major types of despair: despair at not knowing one has a self, in which case one does not make his own decisions; despair at not willing to be oneself, which creates continual self-rejection; and despair at defiantly willing to be oneself, in which case the willed self is an inauthentic and assumed self. Kierkegaard's concept of despair is clearly a theory of self-alienation, for though he regards the authentic self as something always being created or avoided, it is a kind of center from which most individuals are more or less alienated.

I do not propose that Dickens consciously held a theory of self-alienation, nor that he was aware that many of the characters in *Great Expectations* illustrate such a theory, but I do suggest that his presentations and evaluations of people throughout this novel are based on an intuitively held, though often confused and inadequate, idea of self-alienation.

Most of the characters in *Great Expectations* lie along a continuum from complete integration of character through various degrees and modes of self-alienation. The wholly integrated characters are Biddy and Joe, who are content with their lot, warm and decent in their relationships, and able to accept unjust rejections without responding vindictively. Both their personal and social relationships are adequate, and so they have no need to dominate, to seek revenge, or to dream of being something they are not. Each of these positive traits is dramatized in Joe's morally unchanging relationship with Pip. The integration or wholeness of Biddy's character is attested to most vividly in a

1. *The English Novel* (New York, 1953), pp. 125-138.

2. "The Hero's Guilt: the Case of *Great Expectations*," *Essays in Criticism*, X (January, 1960), 60-79.

3. *Charles Dickens, the World of His Novels* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 249-278.

4. *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death* (New York, 1954). First published in 1849.

passage in which the narrator-protagonist declares: "Biddy was never insulting, or capricious, or Biddy to-day and somebody else tomorrow" (Chapter XVII). Very significantly, this observation occurs almost immediately after Pip confesses to Biddy that he desires to be a gentleman because Estella made him ashamed of his lot, which confession Pip admits is "lunatic" and illogical, and contradictory to his own good sense. This juxtaposition of analysis of Biddy and Pip seems designed to contrast the integration of one and the self-alienation of the other.

However, neither Biddy nor Joe has achieved integration at the expense of experience and suffering. Their integration seems to be the result of unthinking acceptance, and it is not accompanied by a conscious exploration of the self and its relations to others. In Kierkegaard's terms such characters would lack an achieved self, but the only limitation Dickens seems to postulate in them—especially in Joe—is a limited moral awareness. Within the world of *Great Expectations* they provide extremely ambiguous touchstones for the achievement of authentic selfhood.

The most clearly self-alienated characters can be classified according to the ways in which they reject the authentic self and affirm the alien self. Thus Pip and Magwitch are similar in their self-rejections. Both are, in Kierkegaard's terms, in despair over being themselves—the lowly blacksmith's boy and the hunted, starving, fugitive criminal—and they project visions of themselves as gentleman or creator of a gentleman. Both have based their self-rejection primarily on false social values or social oppression, and both are driven by shame to desire to be something other than what they are. Curiously enough, both pin their faith on something distant: Pip looks forward to the consummation of becoming a gentleman through the possession of Estella, and Magwitch looks forward to becoming a gentleman vicariously through his ownership of Pip.

Although Pip and Magwitch desire vindication, they do not want to achieve it by hurting others. Thus they are cruel only incidentally. Pip's cruelty consists of his rejection of Joe and his slight exploitation of Herbert Pocket by leading him into dissolute behavior. Magwitch is cruel only by accident, for he did not know what the effects of his patronage of Pip would be. Both Pip and Magwitch share the tendency of the self-alienated to treat others as things, but they permit themselves such behavior out of self-deception or blindness rather than from cruel pursuit of revenge.

Since Magwitch's aspiration is pursued through the devoted labor of honestly gaining a fortune and is at least partly motivated by gratitude towards Pip, it is not surprising that in certain essentials he is less self-alienated than Pip. Since Magwitch is the product of a ruthless, exploiting society, his desire for revenge is almost sympathetic, while his reformed life and affection for Pip seem indexes of positive energy and love which have never been corrupted. Pip, on the other hand, preserves only a shadowy capacity for love, which is shown by his sacrifices for Herbert Pocket and his grief for Miss Havisham and Estella. Magwitch's self-alienation also seems less blameworthy than Pip's because he has had less choice than Pip. Magwitch began in brutal social isolation and

rejection, and was later exploited by Compeyson. But Pip's initial social isolation—created by Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook and reinforced by Miss Havisham and Estella—was partly offset by the accepting attitudes of Joe and Biddy. This difference in situation, and Pip's recurring sense of the falsity of his aspirations, indicate that he had more choice of role than was available to Magwitch.

Unlike Pip and Magwitch, Miss Havisham and Estella do not suffer because they yearn to be something other than what they are. For them the alienated self is created not by dreams but by affirmation of what experience has created. They illustrate Kierkegaard's despair at defiantly willing to be oneself, though this self is clearly the alienated self. In Miss Havisham, Dickens has created a remarkable case of the wounded soul who undertakes to make himself and his condition a reproach to the cosmos which made him suffer. In willing to be only the self which was tortured by rejection and is emotionally crippled, Miss Havisham abandons all pursuit of authentic selfhood. The psychology of such despair is beautifully represented in a famous passage of Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*:

It is (to describe it figuratively) as if an author were to make a slip of the pen, and that this clerical error became conscious of being such. . . . It is then as if this clerical error would revolt against the author, out of hatred for him were to forbid him to correct it, and were to say, "No, I will not be erased, I will stand as a witness against thee, that thou art a very poor writer" (p. 207).

Dickens has found his most brilliant symbol of Miss Havisham's despair in her pretense that the anniversary of her betrayal is her "birthday," for indeed it is the birthday of the despairing self which she defiantly affirms. The existence of an authentic but submerged self in Miss Havisham is suggested chiefly by the remorse which she feels after she realizes fully what she has done to Pip and to Estella. Miss Havisham, of course, has been led by her self-alienation to make of others dehumanized instruments of revenge.

Estella's case is perhaps the strangest in the novel, and Dickens asks us to accept a great deal when he presents her as normally socialized and cheerful in her external behavior. Estella has not been directly wounded, but she has been taught to think of herself as an agent of destruction whose will is not her own. However little opportunity she had to develop feelings which would permit different behavior, Estella appears to choose the role Miss Havisham has assigned to her. She wills to be the despairing self. And her choice of Bentley Drummle as her husband suggests desire to suffer as well as to make others suffer. This choice may be intended to show such things as the influence of Miss Havisham's choice of suffering, a desire to experience some kind of intense emotion, or the expression of the desire not to hurt a partly admirable person—Pip. Estella's declaration to Pip that her rejection of him is a kindness supports this last alternative and further suggests that Estella has a submerged authentic self which has not been utterly destroyed.

Since Jiggers and Wemmick are so much more successful in their ways of life than most of the other important characters, their strange types of self-alienation may not be immediately noticeable. Jiggers' primary motive seems to be desire for power; and not surprisingly he tends to treat people as if they are things. However, his desire for power seems to be rooted in a need to protect himself in a world where almost all motivation is stupid, cruel, and vindictive. Perhaps this is why Jiggers is himself seldom cruel.

Evidence of an authentic self in Jiggers is very slight indeed, and is to be found only in two scenes. Early in the novel, Jiggers sits quietly at the Blue Boar and then launches into an attack on Wopsle for condemning a man to death (in a monologue) without proper legal defense. Much later Jiggers turns aside Pip's questions about Estella's parentage by passionately describing the manner in which society ruthlessly corrupts and destroys the children of criminals. These passages suggest that Jiggers possesses a compassionate core which interacts with his drive for power. Nevertheless, Jiggers' attitude towards people is chiefly that they are things to be manipulated and specimens to be studied. Dickens has suggested an additional ambivalence in Jiggers: the view that humans are to be pitied, but the two scenes which carry this suggestion are not sufficient to convey the sense of such pity as a continuously active agent in Jiggers' ambivalent view. Thus Dickens is guilty of a partial sentimentality and a failure to make convincing what would be a fascinating complexity in the otherwise brilliantly conceived character of Jiggers. There is, nevertheless, evidence that Dickens sensed elements of an authentic self in Jiggers.

At first glance Wemmick's self-alienation may appear to be simpler than Jiggers', for in the world of Little Britain he manipulates and exploits people, whereas at home in Walworth he is warm and gentle to the Aged Parent and to his visitors. There are, however, suggestions that Wemmick is somewhat self-alienated in his warmer relations. His playful treatment of the Aged Parent is somewhat patronizing, for only if he formalizes his behavior is Wemmick able to show affection. Perhaps more revealing is Wemmick's marriage. Wemmick's pretense that he is going fishing and that all of the details leading up to and following the marriage are the purest of accidents suggests his general secretiveness about his personal life, but it also suggests that he cannot go through marriage as a normal expression of the warm core of his character.

The most clearly self-alienated characters in *Great Expectations* manage to ruin their lives, unless—like Pip—experience starts them on the road to integration with the authentic self. But what of the massively evil characters, Compeyson, whose corrupting power underlies the main events, and his henchman, Orlick? Most critics have taken Compeyson and Orlick to be embodiments of pure atavistic evil, as is indeed suggested by the *Web*-like machinations of Compeyson and the slimy ubiquity of Orlick. Dickens, however, presents some evidence that Compeyson and Orlick fit a pattern extending from psychic integration, however poorly dramatized, as in Biddy and Joe, to psychic fragmentation—the extreme of self-alienation. When Orlick reveals to Pip his past criminal actions and his plan

to destroy Pip, he exclaims: "I've took up with new companions and new masters. Some of 'em writes my letters when I wants 'em wrote—do you mind?—Writes my letters, wolf! They writes fifty hands; they're not like sneaking you as writes but one" (Chapter LIII). And on the next page, Orlick reveals that it is Compeyson who writes fifty hands. At first glance Orlick's declaration presents an amusingly irrational reversal of values. Perhaps Dickens is merely suggesting the proud egotism of the criminal who rejects the non-criminal as hypocrites, but it seems distinctly possible that Dickens is suggesting complete psychic fragmentation or loss of self on the part of the criminal—especially Compeyson. Compeyson, usually masked as a gentleman, has been a forger and has engaged in many kinds of criminality, and this criminal versatility and social mask may suggest the possibilities for psychic fragmentation in a cruel, exploitative, and hypocritical society. One could hope for more evidence of psychic fragmentation in Compeyson and more evidence about its causes, but the fact that Dickens often proceeds through intuition rather than clearly formulated insight suggests that he may have unconsciously used Compeyson to demonstrate a possible final outcome of self-alienation, and as such a quite proper moving force for the creation of it in others.

Almost all of the other characters in the novel give at least traces of evidence that they are self-alienated. Various critics have called some attention to this fact by noting that many of the minor characters have their great expectations. It is not to be expected that Dickens would give systematic evidence for rejection of the authentic self in all of his corrupt characters, and we must be content with evidence of corrupting or wasteful pretension in Pumblechook, Mrs. Pocket, and Wopsle. However, there is evidence of self-alienation in Mrs. Joe and in Drummle. Mrs. Joe's obeisance to Orlick after his attack on her is enigmatic, but if Mrs. Van Ghent is right in believing that it "is a recognition of personal guilt in the guilt of others" (p. 138), it reinforces the evidence of Mrs. Joe's final words, in which, regaining speech before dying, she asks pardon of Joe and Pip. I believe that this scene is sentimental, for Dickens has presented nothing to convince us of a germ of decency in Mrs. Joe, but the scene is probably designed to suggest the existence of a decent authentic self in Mrs. Joe, a self which has been corrupted by forces about which we learn nothing.

Drummle, of course, tends to resemble the thoroughly evil characters, and not surprisingly there are hints of psychic fragmentation in him. The chief of these hints is Jiggers' assertion about Drummie: "He may cringe and growl, or cringe and not growl; but he either beats or cringes" (Chapter XLVIII). This statement suggests that Drummie is of the type who are lost between notions of what they are: weak and lowly, or strong and assertive. Thus they cringe because of insecurity and strike back vindictively when possible. They are alternately in despair about being their lowly selves or in despair at being their defiant selves.

The relationship between the psychology of the main character and the exploitative human relations in *Great Expectations* has been widely discussed, though in terms different from mine. My approach, I believe, casts addi-

tional light on the motivations of the major characters and suggests certain complexities in several minor characters. In addition to emphasizing how self-alienation leads people to treat others as things, it emphasizes the rejection of the authentic self, and the demonic affirmation of the alienated self, and their tragically paradoxical concomitant: the desire to live outside the self through others.

My approach also stresses the possibility of growth through suffering, as in Pip, whose final change is illuminated by Kierkegaard's concept of the dialectical movement of despair. Kierkegaard describes an intense dialectical relationship between despair at not willing to be oneself and despair at defiantly willing to be oneself (the inauthentic self). He knew how the first usually leads to the second. Pip reveals this dialectical process, and through brilliant symbolism Dickens shows how it can be arrested. Pip's despair at being himself leads to the greater despair of affirming himself as a "gentleman" destined to possess Estella, the symbol of all his false aspirations. Dickens' most brilliant stroke is his use of Magwitch as a symbol of all that Pip has rejected and must accept in order to end the process of self-rejection. When Pip comes to love the convict Magwitch, he embraces a symbol of all the things he had earlier fled from. This significant change profoundly reveals the interrelatedness of love and self-acceptance.

We see that Pip has arrested the process of self-alienation, but we must still ask what the authentic self is for him and whether or not he has achieved it. Dickens, I think, is only partially successful in affirming that Pip has achieved the authentic self. The chief evidence for the realization of the authentic self must be a capacity for selfless love and for creativity. We have seen Pip achieve such love for Magwitch, and we also see him return to the forge to express love for Joe and Biddy, and to ask

their forgiveness. We are also told that the memory of Estella remains only as a poor dream. But Pip can scarcely become a blacksmith again, and we sense upon Dickens' part an almost certainly unavoidable double dealing, for he has obviously maintained the desire to have Pip become a gentleman. The best that he can do is to assert a certain modesty, devotion, and quiet resignation in the remainder of Pip's life, and this he does by his portrait of Pip as a quiet, devoted partner of Clarriker and Herbert Pocket.

Pip's life with the young Pockets implies that he devotes himself to honest labor for only modest rewards and that he is content to live without romantic love. Pip's final comparison of himself with Herbert Pocket in Chapter LVIII is not without interest. Pip decides that his old idea of inaptitude in Herbert was a projection of a feeling about himself, thus suggesting that his own self-alienation led him to see it where it did not exist. But considering Herbert's history and peculiar ingenuousness one must wonder whether or not Dickens is not inserting this idea as an afterthought. Although this may be the case, it was probably Dickens' final intention to show in Pip the achievement of a quiet devotion which Herbert has arrived at without too much struggle.

All in all, one must feel that with the possible exception of Pip's love for Magwitch, Joe, and Biddy, and his quiet devotion to the young Pockets, Dickens has found no powerful symbol or dramatic demonstration of Pip's achievement of the authentic self. Nevertheless, within the context of the original and more authentic ending—in which Pip does not rejoin the impossibly self-alienated Estella—we are left with a quiet, contemplative aura which suggests that Pip will devote himself to honest self-searching, true regrets, and—no matter how limited—true love and labor.

Purdue University

Symbolic Characterization in "One of Our Conquerors"

Fred C. Thomson

IN *One of Our Conquerors*, it is clear that George Meredith was dealing with complex and delicate moral and social issues. For many readers, however, the novel leaves an impression of instability. Instead of a fusion of parts there appears to be an uneasy junction of often contradictory elements. One such unsatisfying or puzzling feature is the relationship of Victor Radnor and Mrs. Burman, the middle-aged widow he had married in his youth, purely out of social and financial opportunism. Victor subsequently meets and falls in love with the beautiful Nataly Dreighton, for whom he deserts his unattractive wife. Mrs. Burman refuses to seek a divorce and for some twenty years lives on to frustrate the lives

and ambitions of the pair.

The difficulty in this situation is to reconcile the calculating, basely motivated Victor who marries Mrs. Burman with the generous, impulsive Victor who risks all his social aspirations in order to possess Nataly. Not that these conflicting traits are incredible, but Meredith has somehow failed to make the mixture altogether convincing in his hero. Perhaps the explanation lies less in the inconsistency of his conception of the character than in the ambivalent levels of execution in the characterization. Meredith's declared intention was to present both "a broad and a close observation of the modern world,"¹ a challenging task, which involved him in certain knotty

1. To the Rev. Augustus Jessopp, 30 May 1890. ALS in the

Yale University Library.

problems of technique. Among them was how to show Victor as broadly representative of the contemporary spirit of aggressive middle-class enterprise and at the same time preserve the distinctive nature of his private quandary. The title suggests a solution; but the original one, *A Conqueror in Our Time*, is equally helpful, with fewer ironic overtones to complicate the matter.

To say that Victor is "a conqueror in our time" is not to imply that he is an obscure figure, conducting his conquests within some narrow, sequestered social area. Rather it implies that he is a figure of considerable public eminence, making his various conquests on a grand scale. As a man of mark, zealously bent upon increasing his prominence, his private conduct is bound to have greater significance than that of an ordinary person. Victor, by striving to become a leader of society, must assume responsibility for the quality of that society; he becomes a symbol as well as an individual. Beyond his function as a human being involved in a vexing personal dilemma, he represents certain forces at large that according to his exercise of them can be destructive or beneficent to conventional society. Mrs. Burman recognizes this truth. She will not molest Victor and Nataly so long as they live quietly; what she will not stand for is ostentation.

Mrs. Burman herself is quite obviously conceived as a symbol of Society, as Meredith saw it. She is "the foe of Nature: who, with her arts and gold lures, has now possession of the Law (the brass idol worshipped by the collective) to drive Nature into desolation" (I, 156-157).² She is a model of respectability, pious, philanthropic, and wealthy; but also old, diseased, saturated with drugs, physically repulsive, Puritanical, fatuously vain, and, to Victor's mind, vindictive—a "wrinkled Malignity." More importantly, except for the fleeting expiatory scene at the end, she is invisible, spreading her baneful influence by the aid of shadowy agents, like Jarniman the butler.³ In this respect, she wields the kind of power that even the conquering Victor had found invincible.

Eyeing the men, he felt his command of them. Glancing at congregated women, he had a chill. The Wives and Spinners in ghostly judicial assembly: that is, the phantom of the offended collective woman: that is, the regnant Queen Idea issuing from our concourse of civilized life to govern Society, and pronounce on the orderly, the tolerable, the legal, and banish the rebellious: these maintained an aspect of the stand against him.

Did Nataly read the case; namely, that the crowned collective woman is not to be subdued? And what are we to say of the indefinite but forcible Authority, when we see it upholding Mrs. Burman to crush a woman like Nataly! (I, 153-154)

She is "The Impalpable," physically absent, yet a constant, haunting presence in the minds of Victor and Nataly.

To reenforce this symbolic aspect, Meredith invests Mrs. Burman with an almost supernatural character. On one occasion, as Victor is about to enter a chemist's shop he receives an uncanny rap on the elbow. Because of it, or for some vague reason, he turns away without going in. Later he learns that Mrs. Burman has been frequenting that very shop. Three or four days a week she

"drives to her chemist's, and there she sits in the shop; round the corner, as you enter; and sees all Charing in the shop looking-glass at the back; herself a stranger spectacle, poor lady, . . . with her fashionable no-bonnet striding the contribution chignon on the crown, and a huge square green shade over her forehead. Sits hours long, and cocks her ears at orders of applicants for drugs across the counter, and sometimes catches wind of a prescription, and consults her chemist, and thinks she'll try it herself. It's a basket of medicine bottles driven to Regent's Park pretty well every day." (I, 148-149)

The description would fit a witch. Furthermore, Mrs. Burman has promised her butler to appear in spirit before him on the day she dies. "She informed Jarniman. . . that she had dreamed of making her appearance to him on the night of the 23rd August, and of setting the date on the calendar over his desk, when she entered his room: 'Sitting-room, not bedroom; she was always quite the lady,' Skepsey reported his Jarniman. Mrs. Burman, as a ghost, would respect herself; she would keep to her character." (I, 234)

That she does not die until after she has lost all power to injure Victor is another symbolic touch. Contrary to medical prognosis she lives on, barring the lawful entry of Victor and Nataly into society. "Her ascent, considering her inability to do further harm below, was most mysteriously delayed" (II, 226). She even seems to gather new strength at each attempt of Victor to flaunt his wealth. "Her intention is mischief," exclaims Victor when the success of Lakelands, his new country estate, is threatened by her whisper campaign. "I believe the woman keeps herself alive for it: we've given her another lease!—though it can only be for a very short time. . . ." (II, 32) The strain of waiting for her death gradually estranges Victor and Nataly. She is with them at night, "a dividing spirit. . . cold as a corpse. They both felt her there" (I, 224).

By the time she is ready to die, Mrs. Burman has so infected Nataly with her values that interference is no longer necessary. It is Nataly who informs Dudley Sowerby of her illicit situation, thereby making further secrecy useless. True, her motives are mixed. She is really hoping to save her daughter Nesta from a loveless marriage with Dudley and for a blissful one with Dartrey Fenellan. At the same time she sincerely shrinks from transmitting a "taint" to the family of Sowerby. When she hears of Nesta's association with Mrs. Marsett, all her long-endur-

reality. "The voice was articulate, thinner than the telephonic, trans-Atlantic by deep-sea cable" (II, 286).

2. Quotations are from the Constable edition of *The Works of George Meredith* (Westminster, 1897), Vols. XIX and XX.
3. Even in that remarkable scene she is hardly a palpable

ing effort to maintain her trust in Nature collapses and she becomes hysterical at the possibility of her girl being contaminated by a "fallen woman." The final expiation to society comes as she prays on her knees beside Mrs. Burman in the dim room where a gilt Cupid swings regularly on a clock that tells the wrong time. Victor finds the image symbolic. The clock was his gift; and it ticks on in a room where everything is the same as twenty years ago—and nothing is the same. Society on its death-bed has conquered through the long erosion of time upon youth and courage. It will outlive Nataly and the sanity of Victor, and the old problem remains:

But not till Nature's laws and man's are one
Can marriage of the man and woman be.⁴

Symbolically, the portrayal of Mrs. Burman is excellent. Where Meredith runs into trouble is with her actuality as an individual. As a living person she scarcely exists, but the moral issues she raises definitely extrude. It is one thing to concoct a hapless yoking of exuberant Nature to withered Society; it is quite another to have the charming Victor Radnor marry an ugly but decent old woman solely for profit and maintain his lustre as a hero. Victor is certainly not conceived as a spotless character, but his faults are supposed to be attributable to folly rather than meanness; and he cannot be exonerated from meanness in marrying Mrs. Burman. Meredith tries somewhat desperately, citing naivete, the temptation of a small boy with candy, a pardonable youthful error, compassion for the widow's loneliness, the fact that he left her no poorer, etc.; all of which has an empty, defensive ring. Though he can persuade us of the rightness of mating Victor and Nataly, and the impossibility of Victor as Mrs. Burman's husband, he cannot extenuate the marriage to her in the first place—

except on some hypothetical level.

Curiously, Meredith did not give Victor a more potent cause for desertion. Mrs. Burman has no vice, such as adultery, alcohol, or gambling. Her only real offense is her unattractiveness, and Victor's only excuse for the match is his calculating ambition. The reason, again, is Mrs. Burman's symbolic function as Society. Meredith does not conceive Society as deprived or besotted; rather as sick, senile, vain, and inflexible. It is as if he commenced with the abstract situation foremost in mind and neglected to flesh it out or prepare carefully enough for its ethical ramifications. At least in the case of Victor and Mrs. Burman he evades the deeper issues of the marriage question, simply asking, in effect, is it right for a good-natured, energetic, aspiring youth to be shackled for life to a hypochondriacal hag?⁵ The answer might be, perhaps not, but what business had he to get so shackled. Abstract justice collides with human.

Meredith, then, in attempting to create characters at once symbolic (or didactic) and individual, larger than life and life-size, was not uniformly successful in resolving the moral and social conflicts thus engendered. Though he could plead eloquently for general reform of the marriage laws, he faltered when it came to specific instances. He seems to have feared advocating for a still benighted populace liberal measures that ought to be invoked only under special circumstances by an intelligent, discriminating *élite*. Commentators have pointed out that such proposals as that for "leasehold" marriages of seven or ten years, so shocking to Victorian readers, were delivered more in jest than in earnest. As Sencourt notes, "his real attitude towards marriage is shown rather in his life than in his last three novels."⁶

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Caleb Garth of "Middlemarch"

Russell M. Goldfarb

TWO OF THE MOST celebrated studies of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* are Henry James' review of the novel which appeared in the *Galaxy* of March, 1873 and F. R. Leavis'

analysis in *The Great Tradition* (1948). For James, Caleb Garth is a "supremely genial" creation; for Leavis he exhibits "a peculiar quality of life which distinguishes

4. "The Sage Enamoured and the Honest Lady."

5. By placing the action of the novel so long after the desertion, Meredith spares himself the need of going minutely into Victor's psychology and conscience during the crucial period. Likewise, in dealing with the unhappy marriages of several subsidiary characters he facetiously dodges the issue. Dartrey Fenellan's wife has been unfaithful—a "dashing slut." Skepsey's wife is a drunkard. Lady Grace Halley is "married to a centaur; out of the saddle a man of wood." In each case

the undesirable partner is conveniently removed by death. The pretty Mrs. Blathenoy, married to an arid bill-broker, most closely approximates the situation of Victor and Mrs. Burman. She falls in love with Dartrey and begs him to rescue her. Dartrey feels sorry for her, but the best he can do is remind her of her duty and send her back to her husband.

6. R. E. Sencourt, *The Life of George Meredith* (New York, 1929), p. 251.

George Eliot's creativeness."¹ Neither critic pays more than these passing compliments to the character. Nor does Robert Speaight in *George Eliot* look closely at Caleb Garth, which is remarkable because Speaight says, "Caleb is perhaps the most completely sympathetic character George Eliot ever drew, and although he plays only a relatively minor part in *Middlemarch* he is the point of perfect balance to which the excesses and aspirations, the humours and disappointments, the failures and redemptions of the other characters are implicitly referred."² This view finds its opposite in Sumner J. Ferris' essay, "*Middlemarch*, George Eliot's Masterpiece." Ferris thinks that the Poysler household could be the symbolic center of *Adam Bede* but "its equivalent in *Middlemarch*, the Garth household, is, in terms both of action and of theme, far from the center of its novel."³ To miss the importance of the Garth family in general and of Caleb in particular is a serious oversight. Caleb Garth figures importantly in *Middlemarch* philosophy, plot, and character development; he has an integral part in the novel's structure and themes. For all this he has never been fully appreciated.

Within the land area surrounding the town of Middlemarch Garth is busily employed. He works at various times for Sir James Chettam, Mr. Brooke, Rector Cadwallader, Peter Featherstone, Mr. Bulstrode, and Dorothea Casaubon. The shrewdest commercially of these people, Mr. Bulstrode, "... had a strong wish to secure Mr. Garth's services on many scattered points of business at which he was sure to be a considerable loser, if they were under less conscientious management" (ch. 68).⁴ The aristocrat, Sir Chettam, praises the quality of Garth's work (ch. 38); a priest, the Vicar Farebrother, did heartily respect and was fond of his parishioners Caleb Garth, his wife Susan, and his daughter Mary (ch. 40). Had Farebrother more enthusiasm he might have anticipated George Henry Lewes' remark to the publisher John Blackwood: "Isn't the Garth Family a gem?"⁵

Enthusiasm for Caleb Garth is never lacking on George Eliot's part. She allows him "merciful grey eyes" (ch. 24) and calls him "at once the poorest and the kindest" (ch. 23) of Fred Vinoy's friends. "Whatever he did in the way of business," Eliot tells us, "he did well" (ch. 23). This portrayal of an Eliot favorite has stimulated biographical probing: "It is generally agreed that many of Caleb Garth's marked characteristics—his occupation as builder and land agent, his uncompromising uprightness, delight in his work, love of the soil, perhaps even his domestic submissiveness—were drawn from Robert Evans, George Eliot's father, although the character is not an exact portrait of the original."⁶ Whatever the resemblance between Evans and Garth, whatever the exactness of the portrait,

there is not the slightest ambiguity in George Eliot's feeling towards her fictional creation. After she describes an action at some length, the author in a moment of intimacy says, "Pardon these details for once—you would have learned to love them if you had known Caleb Garth" (ch. 23).

The character Eliot loves is a substantial figure in *Middlemarch*. His life can be easily recognized as shaped by the impressive nineteenth century philosophy of work, but since that philosophy was ubiquitous, found for example in Dickens, in Ruskin, in Morris, one cannot trace with assurance the specific derivatives of Caleb Garth. Possibly Eliot drew upon her memories of Robert Evans, possibly she imitated her earlier figure of a workman, Adam Bede. The make-up of Caleb Garth owes to the Victorian *Zeitgeist* and it owes as directly or indirectly to the Victorian prophet whose prose style echoes in the following passage:

Caleb Garth often shook his head in meditation on the value, the indispensable might of that myriad-headed, myriad-handed labour by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed. It had laid hold of his imagination in boyhood. The echoes of the great hammer where roof or keel were a-making, the signal-shouts of the workmen, the roar of the furnace, the thunder and plash of the engine, were a sublime music to him; the felling and lading of timber, and the huge trunk vibrating star-like in the distance along the highway, the crane at work on the wharf, the piled-up produce in warehouses, the precision and variety of muscular effort wherever exact work had to be turned out,—all these sights of his youth had acted on him as poetry without the aid of poets, had made a philosophy for him without the aid of philosophers, a religion without the aid of theology (ch. 24).

In form, the usage of hyphenated-words, alliteration, onomatopoeia, balanced constructions, and self-conscious yet effective rhythms, the passage suggests the rhetoric of Thomas Carlyle. In content, the passage suggests that George Eliot used Garth in order to write the gospel of work according to Carlyle.

Eliot knew Carlyle thoroughly. At the age of twenty-two she asked a former schoolmate, "Have you, dear Patty [Martha 'Patty' Jackson], read any of T. Carlyle's books? He is a grand favourite of mine. . . . His soul

1. James' review was reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, VIII (December 1953), 161-170; Leavis' remark appears in *The Great Tradition* (Garden City, New York, 1954), p. 93.
2. Robert Speaight, *George Eliot* (New York, 1954), p. 104; Newton P. Stallknecht also looks at Garth quickly though admiringly in "Resolution and Independence: A Reading of *Middlemarch*," *Twelve Original Essays on Great English Novels*, ed. Charles Shapiro (Detroit, 1960), pp. 139-141.
3. Sumner J. Ferris, "*Middlemarch*, George Eliot's Masterpiece," *From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad*, ed. R. C. Rathburn

and M. Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis, 1958), p. 196.

4. All quotations are from Gordon S. Haight's Riverside edition of *Middlemarch* (1956), but for convenient reference to other editions quotations are identified by chapter rather than by page.

5. See *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven, 1954-55), V, 291.

6. Isadore C. Mudge and M. E. Sears, *A George Eliot Dictionary* (London, 1924), p. 88.

is a shrine of the brightest and purest philanthropy, kindled by the live coal of gratitude and devotion to the Author of all things."⁷ At the age of thirty-eight Eliot quoted her "grand favourite" to Sara Hennell: "Dear Carlyle writes, apropos of his 'Frederic'—'I have had such a 14 [sic] months as was never appointed me before in this world,—sorrow, darkness and disgust, my daily companions; and no outlook visible except getting a detestable business turned off, or else being driven mad by it!' That is his exaggerated way of speaking, and writing is always painful to him; but he has been specially tormented by the short-comings of German commentators and book-makers, on whom he has depended as authorities. Do you know he is 62! I fear this will be his last book."⁸ Again in 1857 George Eliot referred to Carlyle when she quoted from "The Modern Worker" section in *Past and Present*.⁹ The actual reference is unimportant; of interest is Eliot's familiarity with Carlyle on the doctrine of work.

Caleb Garth can be profitably understood as an embodiment of the ideas in *Past and Present*. For example, whereas Carlyle says, "a life of ease is not for any man,"¹⁰ Garth reportedly feels, "an idle man ought not to exist" (ch. 14). In the same vein, Carlyle writes, "Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair" (III, xi). "One monster there is in the world: the idle man" (III, xii). And Eliot says of Garth, "I think his virtual divinities were good practical schemes, accurate work, and the faithful completion of undertakings: his prince of darkness was a slack workman" (ch. 24). In work, Carlyle saw "a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness" (III, xi). He goes further: "All Works, each in their degree, are a making of Madness sane;—truly enough a religious operation; which cannot be carried on without religion" (III, xii). In "business," which meant "the skillful application of labour," Caleb Garth also saw a "sacred calling" (ch. 40). He spoke on the subject "with the air of a man who felt himself to be saying something deeply religious" (ch. 56).

Caleb's sermon was simple: "You must be sure of two things: you must love your work, and not be always looking over the edge of it, wanting your play to begin. And the other is, you must not be ashamed of your work, and think it would be more honourable to you to be doing something else. . . . No matter what a man is—I wouldn't give two pence for him— . . . whether he was the prime minister or the rick-thatcher, if he didn't do well what he undertook to do" (ch. 56). Carlyle wrote the text: "The only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself with asking much about was, happiness enough to get his work done. Not 'I can't eat!' but 'I can't work!' that was the burden of all wise complaining among men. It is, after all, the one unhappiness of a man. That he cannot work; that he cannot get his destiny as a man fulfilled" (III, iv). The nobility, the blessedness, the

honor of work are core tenets in Carlyle's and Garth's philosophy. Explicitly rejected is the utilitarian cry that Cash-payment forms the primary bond between human beings. When Caleb is offered the management of the Freshitt estates and the agency of the Tipton property, he tells his wife,

"It's a fine bit of work, Susan! A man without a family would be glad to do it for nothing."

"Mind you don't, though," said his wife, lifting up her finger.

"No, no; but it's a fine thing to come to a man when he's seen into the nature of business: to have the chance of getting a bit of the country into good fettle, as they say, and putting men into the right way with their farming, and getting a bit of good contriving and solid building done—that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for. I'd sooner have it than a fortune. I hold it the most honourable work that is. . . . It's a great gift of God, Susan" (ch. 40).

In *Past and Present* Carlyle had said,

The "wages" of every noble Work do yet lie in Heaven or else Nowhere. . . . Was it thy aim and life-purpose to be filled with good things for thy heroism; to have a life of pomp and ease, and be what men call "happy" in this world, or in any other world? I answer for thee deliberately, No. The whole spiritual secret of the new epoch lies in this, that thou canst answer for thyself, with thy whole clearness of head and heart, deliberately, No!

My brother, the brave man has to give his Life away. Give it, I advise thee;—thou dost not expect to sell thy Life in an adequate manner? What price, for example, would content thee? (III, xii)

In practice, Garth had taken Carlyle too literally. He not only charged very little for his work, he "often declined to charge at all" (ch. 24). The result was Garth once failed in the building business and had to conduct himself "entirely for the benefit of his assignees" (ch. 23). Carlyle, however, had said "yes" to taking money to the extent that allows one to keep working (III, xii).

But Caleb Garth could not manage finance. Using a watchword of utilitarian economics, Eliot says, "he had no keenness of imagination for monetary results in the shape of profit and loss" (ch. 24). Like Carlyle's Garth, born thrall of Cedric the Saxon, Eliot's Garth, though born free, could have used at times a wiser man to lay hold of him when he was going wrong. Garth fared well under the feudal baron, Cedric (III, xiii); Garth might

7. *Letters*, I, 122.

8. *Letters*, II, 412.

9. *Letters*, II, 415, n. 5.

10. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, ed. G. K. Chesterton (London, 1935), Book III, chapter iv. Subsequent references to this work will appear in my text.

have enjoyed the benefits of a modernized paternalism. George Eliot suggests this when she has her enlightened aristocrat, Sir James Chettam, say, "I do think one is bound to do the best for one's land and tenants, especially in these hard times" (ch. 38). With Chettam acting the Victorian counterpart of Carlyle's feudal baron, Caleb Garth would not have "failed" in business. Eliot even allows Dorothea to talk of a Carlylean utopia: "I have delightful plans. I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well. I should know every one of the people and be their friend. I am going to have great consultations with Mr. Garth; he can tell me almost everything I want to know" (ch. 55). Both Chettam and Dorothea and indeed George Eliot herself would agree with Carlyle that despite the claims of a supply-and-demand, *laissez-faire* utilitarianism, there are among men "deeper ties than those of a temporary day's wages!" (IV, iv). Caleb Garth illustrates the worker who selflessly welcomes "the chance of getting a bit of the country into good fettle . . . that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for" (ch. 40).

Embodying the substance of Carlylean thought, Caleb Garth assumes impressive proportions in *Middlemarch*. There is weight to a figure who sees in work a poetry, a philosophy, a religion. He gives to the novel a social and economic point of view that adds depth to the Victorian scene. And yet Garth is more than a personification of the ideas found in *Past and Present*. He plays a useful role in his novel's complex plot.

The least important of Garth's contacts are with the "Miss Brooke" characters of Middlemarch. His plans for Sir James Chettam's new farm-buildings point out Mr. Brooke's indifferent handling of the Tipton estate; in the way of land reform, an outspoken "liberal" comes out second-best to a conservative Tory. Everything went wrong with Mr. Brooke's holdings since he got rid of Garth "twelve years ago" (ch. 38). Garth's dismissal and subsequent mismanagement of Tipton provides a subject for the *Trumpet*, a political paper which Eliot invents for social criticism: the paper can score Mr. Brooke as "a philanthropist who cannot bear one rogue to be hanged, but does not mind five honest tenants being half-starved: a man who shrieks at corruption, and keeps his farms at rack-rent: who roars himself red at rotten boroughs, and does not mind if every field on his farms has a rotten gate" (ch. 38). Caleb Garth's involvement with Mr. Brooke's niece, Dorothea, is more personal. She rode with Garth over Freshitt and Tipton; they visited "the worst backyards" (ch. 54). These experiences help to build the modern Saint Theresa: Garth tells his wife, "She [Dorothea] said a thing I often used to think myself when I was a lad:—'Mr. Garth, I should like to feel, if I lived to be old, that I had improved a great piece of land and built a great many good cottages, because the work is of a healthy kind while it is being done, and after it is done, men are the better for it.' Those were the very words: she sees into things that way" (ch. 56).

When George Eliot wants to turn her attention from Dorothea and Mr. Brooke to Joshua Rigg Featherstone and Bulstrode, from the "Miss Brooke" plot line to the

"Middlemarch" plot line, she uses Caleb Garth to link the stories. Chapter forty begins with Garth's receipt of letters asking him to manage the Freshitt and Tipton properties; it ends with Rigg's and Bulstrode's requests for Garth to evaluate the Stone Court property. The novel changes direction, and Rigg, an outsider to Middlemarch, is brought into contact with a local man, albeit as loosely as old Peter Featherstone had been connected with Garth. (Featherstone's first marriage to Garth's sister made Caleb his brother-in-law.) A third minor character in the novel, John Raffles, who exists primarily for its plot, is also tied to Garth. At Stone Court, where Garth has been working for Bulstrode, he sees his employer acknowledge the black-mailer, Raffles. Given plausible reasons for movement from estate to estate, Garth provides Eliot an easy access to different areas of her novel.

In the Bulstrode-Raffles area, Garth actively participates. His chance of hearing gossip about the banker's life enables Eliot to foreshadow events: "Caleb was peculiar: certain human tendencies which are commonly strong were almost absent from his mind; and one of these was curiosity about personal affairs. Especially if there was anything discreditable to be found out concerning another man, Caleb preferred not to know it; and if he had to tell anybody under him that his evil doings were discovered, he was more embarrassed than the culprit" (ch. 53). Much later in the novel it is Garth who tells Bulstrode his evil doings have been discovered.

Because Garth had earlier seen Raffles greet the banker, he takes the very ill Raffles to Stone Court when he chances to come upon the man in a lane. Acting upon the discrediting information he hears from Raffles about Bulstrode's past life, information about "a harmful life for gain" and keeping "others out of their rights by deceit" in order to get the more for himself, Caleb Garth gives up Bulstrode's business. "He spoke with a firmness which was very gentle, and yet he could see that Bulstrode seemed to cower under that gentleness, his face looking dried and his eyes swerving away from the glance which rested on him. Caleb felt a deep pity for him" (ch. 69). This sets the tone for Eliot's handling of Bulstrode and establishes contrasting moralities.

"I can't be happy in working with you, or profiting by you. It hurts my mind," says Garth to the man who has made himself rich at the expense of others. And as he says this the tone of his voice "had in it the merciful intention to spare this pitiable man" (ch. 69). Here is George Eliot's terrible mercy. Her pity for Bulstrode, Garth's pity, anticipates the famous scene wherein Bulstrode stands confessed, shamed, humiliated before his wife. When Caleb Garth speaks again, "still more gently," he says, "I don't judge you and say, he is wicked, and I am righteous. God forbid. . . I'm very sorry for you" (ch. 69). Crime in Eliot brings compassion for the criminal, never a merciless punishment. "As to speaking," Caleb says, "I hold it a crime to expose a man's sin unless I'm clear it must be done to save the innocent" (ch. 69). His freely determined silence, however, cannot prevent Garth's becoming an unwilling link in an inexorable chain of events. He merely admits that he has given up acting for Bulstrode and gossipers draw the inference that the deci-

sion was a consequence of his hearing Raffles' story. "The statement was passed on until it had quite lost the stamp of an inference, and was taken as information coming straight from Garth, so that even a diligent historian might have concluded Caleb to be the chief publisher of Bulstrode's misdemeanors" (ch. 71). Circumstances Garth cannot control place him in the position of illustrating a kind of determinism: how people can contribute involuntarily to another person's downfall.

On a lighter note, Garth's commendable ethics, his finding fulfillment in work, and particularly his very happy marriage help to relieve *Middlemarch* of the depressing aura arising from Bulstrode's moral weakness, Lydgate's or Casaubon's or Dorothea's incomplete fulfillment in work, and various unhappy marriages. If Lydgate is compromised by Bulstrode and Rosamond, Casaubon too self-centered to risk failure, Dorothea myopic, then Caleb Garth offers integrity, joy without success in the world's terms, and a clear-sighted view of his life. If in marriage the Vincys lacked an adult maturity, the Casaubons understanding, the Lydgates communication, the Bulstrodes honesty, the Chettams a fully requited love, Susan and Caleb Garth are deficient in none of the qualities necessary for the virtually perfect married life. As W. J. Harvey observes in *The Art of George Eliot*, "The Garths are the one solidly happy family in the book and as such provide a standard whereby the failings of the other marriages can be measured."¹¹ The Garths alleviate gloomy, melancholic aspects of *Middlemarch*, and especially does Caleb Garth lighten the novel through his successful treatment and training of Fred Vincy.

Before Garth undertakes his education, Fred Vincy's situation closely resembles Pip's situation in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Like Pip, Fred is one "who has no manly independence, and who goes on loitering away his time on the chance that others will provide for him" (ch. 25). While he awaits his fortune from an unknown benefactor, Pip spends his London days with idle men-about-town, the Finches of the Grove. Fred waits for Peter Featherstone's fortune while he rides around the country pleasure-seeking and bargaining in horse-flesh with the likes of Messieurs Bambridge and Horrook. The results of monetary differences cause Pip to snub Joe Gargery and Fred to embarrass Caleb Garth. Great expectations place Pip among the relatives who hope to feast upon Miss Havisham and enroll Fred among the lists of "Christian Carnivora" (ch. 35) who attend Peter Featherstone. Both Pip and Fred need to learn about self-respect, consideration of other people, and the value of work. Pip completes his education when he discovers the worth of Joe Gargery; Fred goes to school to Caleb Garth. Both workmen know thoroughly what their students have to learn.

George Eliot writes that Caleb Garth had "little expectation" of Mr. Featherstone (ch. 35). Garth's independence obviously contrasts with Fred's dependence, and until Fred becomes more like her father, Mary Garth has no intention of marrying him. Since Mary is never

out of Fred's mind, he harbors the nagging thought that to win her he must shape employment for himself. The chance comes when he accidentally has the opportunity to join Caleb Garth in a fight about a railroad. "The effective accident is but the touch of fire where there is oil and tow; and it always appeared to Fred that the railway brought the needed touch" (ch. 56). Fred commits himself to working for Caleb Garth and Garth declares, "that young man's soul is in my hand; and I'll do the best I can for him, so help me God" (ch. 56)! Thus Garth takes charge of a principal character in *Middlemarch* and at the same time Eliot uses him to vitalize the novel's historic background.

In *Middlemarch* "railways were as exciting a topic as the Reform Bill," and the infant struggles of the system gave hay-field working hands opportunities for talk and action (ch. 56). Six or seven men with hayforks in their hands were attacking four railway agents on the morning Caleb Garth and Fred Vincy joined forces. After Caleb and Fred rescue the surveyors, Fred wants to fight a hulky laborer who challenged him, but Caleb prefers to talk to the men. "It's all ignorance," he says. "Somebody has been telling them lies. The poor fools don't know any better" (ch. 56). And then he dismisses reactionary, *status quo* sentiments: "Now, my lads, you can't hinder the railroad . . . The railway's a good thing." All the while Garth speaks in the language of the worker. "Things may be bad for the poor man—bad they are; but I want the lads here not to do what will make things worse for themselves. The cattle may have a heavy load, but it won't help 'em to throw it over into the roadside pit, when it's partly their own fodder." The men eventually disperse, for this logic points out to them the possible consequences of their action. Garth finally turns his full attention to Fred Vincy, "determined to take him and make a man of him" (ch. 56).

Fred's apprenticeships displeases his father, who is less of a man than Garth. He tells his son, "you've thrown away your education, and gone down a step in life" (ch. 56). But although Mr. Vincy washes his hands of his son, Garth comes to think of Fred with a "fatherly delight" (ch. 68). He disciplines him, teaches him economy, farming, and desk work, how to do accounts and how to write legibly. When Garth manages to establish Fred at Stone Court, he feels ready to accept a son-in-law. "Marriage is a taming thing," Garth says, "Fred would want less of my bit and bridle" (ch. 68). Mary does indeed tame Fred, and the two "achieve a solid mutual happiness" (Finale). As a theoretic and practical farmer, as an unwaveringly steady husband, as the owner of the stock and furniture of Stone Court, Fred Vincy was a credit to Caleb Garth, who had once virtually assumed his parenthood.

In *Middlemarch*, Caleb Garth shows that people can personally care for and befriend others even in a time of political, social, and economic instability. Brooke and Chettam may battle liberalism and conservatism, the Vincys and the Ladislaws may battle social distinctions,

11. W. J. Harvey, *The Art of George Eliot* (New York, 1962),

pp. 146-147.

the Bulstrodes and the Lydgates might face moral and economic bankruptcy, but Caleb Garth weathers the railroad, class consciousness, corrupt businessmen, and almost overwhelming financial debt. Supported by a bed-

rock philosophy of work and by his own uncompromising integrity, Garth is truly a standard of the good life, a character with the substance and weight necessary to make him impossible to overlook in *Middlemarch*.

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Disraeli's Use of Shelley

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LIKE BROWNING, though not with equal abandonment, Benjamin Disraeli experienced an early enthusiasm for the ideas of the poet Shelley and evidenced a basic affinity with the forces of liberalism. However, the necessities of political life and official position eventually suppressed these youthful impulses. One literary evidence of Disraeli's regard for Shelley is *The Revolutionary Epick* (1834),¹ a long but fragmentary poem which presents numerous sociological views clearly taken from *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and the Preface to *Hellas*. Disraeli sensed Shelley's determination to set Liberty above all else and, as a young writer, responded by making the same emphasis in his poem. But the outstanding demonstration of Shelley's impact is the novel *Venetia* (1837), whose main character, Marmion Herbert, is modeled primarily after Shelley. My contention is that, unlike *The Revolutionary Epick*, *Venetia* contains an implied depreciation of Shelley's most valued principles, thus deceptively using the poet for the furthering of conservatism.

In no other novel does Disraeli use Shelley's character and ideas so extensively as in *Venetia*. Richard Garnett points out that Theodora of Disraeli's *Lothair* has all the traits which Shelley valued most highly in women and is, in effect, a more mature Cynthina than Shelley's.² In several other novels, especially in *Sybil*, Shelleyan traits may be detected in various characters who concern themselves with social betterment. But *Venetia* is the novel in which Disraeli's thinking about Shelley and the ideas he derived from him are most clearly and adequately presented. The plot of *Venetia*, though set in the late eighteenth century, is based partly on the life of Byron as well as on that of Shelley. The suggestion for such a combination is clearly discernible throughout Thomas Medwin's memoir of Shelley, which appeared first in *The Athenaeum* (1832) and the following year in *The Shelley Papers*, edited by Medwin. That Disraeli used Medwin's collection of Shelley's

writings as a source will be proved by excerpts from it later in this study; that he got the very idea of the novel from Medwin's accompanying memoir seems highly probable.

In short, the story of the novel is as follows: Lady Annabel Herbert has separated from her husband Marmion Herbert because of his subversive views on politics, religion, and morality. Their daughter Venetia is brought up in ignorance of her father who, being a man of ability and character, has joined the American revolutionary forces and has become a general. Subsequently he has settled in Italy. When Venetia discovers his protrait and some of his poetry, she develops an intense devotion to her absent father. Her close childhood associate is young Lord Cadurcis, a brilliant boy who, as he matures, adopts the same subversive views as Herbert. Because of his liberal ideas, Lady Annabel sets herself against his plans to marry Venetia. Soon the involvement of Cadurcis in a social scandal obliges him to leave England. Because of the ill health caused by her troubles, Venetia travels with her mother in Italy. There they accidentally encounter Herbert, and Venetia reconciles her parents. Cadurcis joins them, quickly wins Herbert's affection, and is restored to the esteem of Lady Annabel. The obstacles to the marriage of Venetia and Cadurcis having been removed, the happiness of all appears complete; but suddenly Herbert and Cadurcis are drowned in a squall in the bay of Spezzia. The sorrowing mother and daughter return to England, where Venetia later marries a cousin of Cadurcis—thus becoming Lady Cadurcis after all.

In the dedication Disraeli says that he has "attempted to shadow forth, though as 'in a glass darkly,' two of the most renowned and refined spirits that have adorned these our latter days."³ He makes a complex, and at times curious, division of parts between the two poets. Byron's genius and personality are seen in Cadurcis; but incidents

1. See Disraeli's 1864 edition of *The Revolutionary Epick*. The poem was never completed. In 1837, three years after the original publication, and the same year in which *Venetia* appeared, Disraeli revised it but did not republish it until 1864.

2. "Shelley and Lord Beaconsfield," in *Essays of an Ex-Librarian* (London, 1901), pp. 103-104. Garnett's paper was read to the Shelley Society in 1887.

3. The First Earl of Beaconsfield, Benjamin Disraeli, *Venetia*, in *Works*, Bradenham ed., in 12 vols. (New York, 1927), VII. Subsequent page references to this volume are bracketed in the text.

and circumstances of Byron's life are divided in almost equal proportion between Cadurcis and Herbert. The public image of Shelley is clearly and fairly commented on when Disraeli says of Marmion Herbert:

The general impression of the English public . . . was, that Herbert was an abandoned being, of profligate habits, opposed to all the institutions of society that kept his infamy in check, and an avowed atheist; and as scarcely any one but a sympathetic spirit ever read a line he wrote, for indeed the very sight of his works was pollution, it is not very wonderful that this opinion was so generally prevalent. A calm inquirer might perhaps have suspected that abandoned profligacy is not very compatible with severe study. . . . that a solitary sage may be the antagonist of a priesthood without denying the existence of a God. But there never are calm inquirers (pp. 229-230).

Like Shelley, young Herbert attends first Eton, then Oxford. At the latter he is ceaselessly in controversy with his tutor. Although he is not expelled as was Shelley, Herbert leaves Oxford, apparently without a degree, at the age of nineteen. Secluding himself in his castle for solitary study, he has what Disraeli calls "unfortunately a complete recurrence" to the heresies which his Oxford tutor supposed he had helped Herbert to overcome. He becomes "in politics a violent republican . . . and especially a strenuous antagonist of marriage, which he taught himself to esteem not only as an unnatural tie, but as eminently unjust toward that softer sex, who had been so long the victims of man." (pp. 223-224). Yet like Shelley, he does marry. Also as in Shelley's case, poetic expression wins over the impulse in him toward non-poetic philosophical speculation.

But by insisting that Shelley's spirit was basically esoteric, Disraeli finds an excuse for not following the poet's ideas to their necessary conclusions. Herbert, when reunited with his wife and daughter in Italy, appears as a mellowed elderly gentleman who holds to his beliefs in an ideal society in the remote future but has relaxed, given up his fervor for reform, and abandoned himself to the enjoyment of the present. He has found, as Shelley never did, that his poetic spirit is impractical and no longer worthy of his allegiance. Critics have emphasized Disraeli's achievement in presenting a relatively unbiased picture of Shelley but, in their comments on *Venetia*, have scarcely taken note of the novelist's love for the aristocracy, which repeatedly makes its impact, not only on *Venetia* but also on his other novels. An outstanding example is the conclusion of the novel *Sybil*, where the heroine, who has been—both symbolically and actually—of and for the people, turns out to belong rightfully to the aristocracy.

Sylva Norman has pointed out that the reviewer in *Fraser's Magazine* was delighted primarily with the manly and "truly English spirit" of *Venetia* and with its characters as models of aristocracy to be held up before the

provincials. The review, lauding as a "noble aspiration" the attempt to place Byron and Shelley "in a just light before their countrymen," was to serve as a "leg-up for the Tories." Miss Norman concludes, "We may smile again to think that Shelley the reformer has fallen, in this twisted way, into the conservative camp for vindication."⁴ What she does not point out is that Disraeli himself is more interested in defending English institutions than in reestablishing Shelley's aristocratic inheritance and that not only the *Fraser's* review but also the novel itself is intended as a Tory "leg-up." Miss Norman is correct in suggesting that in his misrepresentation of Shelley as a model gentleman Disraeli proves himself a capable technician of the novel. But it was the using of Shelley and remolding of him to fit the novelist's own purposes that made the *Fraser's* review possible. Disraeli has gone over to the conservative camp; one of his basic concerns is to demonstrate that although an element of youthful agitation may be desirable in a society, the old forms, traditions, and institutions must remain unshaken. The mature Marmion Herbert has learned to recognize his youthful hopes as little more than juvenile fancies, and he lives so that they will no longer interfere with his present society.

Disraeli, both directly and through Lady Annabel's views, comments critically on the effect Herbert's beliefs had upon himself and his family. He points out that Herbert not only professed but also acted: "A mere sceptic, he would have been perhaps merely pitted, a sceptic with a peculiar faith of his own, which he was resolved to promulgate, Herbert became odious. A solitary votary of obnoxious opinions, Herbert would have been looked upon only as a madman; but the moment he attempted to make proselytes he rose into a conspirator against society" (p. 222). After the separation between Herbert and Lady Annabel; the English public takes extreme views regarding Herbert's character and his beliefs. Disraeli's own judgment is quite clearly presented later in the novel: "Great as might have been the original errors of Herbert, awful as in [Lady Annabel's] estimation were the crimes to which they had led him, they might in the first instance be traced rather to a perverted view of society than of himself" (p. 280). This basis for Herbert's faults the author contrasts with the idolatry of self which was the flaw in Cadurcis. Disraeli, it seems, despite his basic affinity with Herbert's ideas, is not willing to declare him justified in the stand he took. Obviously, Disraeli himself, had he followed Herbert's course, could not have risen in politics as he did.

It is with his marriage and subsequent separation that Herbert becomes a fusion of the characters of Byron and Shelley—the Byronic element becoming dominant for a time. The Shelleyan character comes to the fore, however, when Herbert, because he wants to devote himself entirely to the cause of freedom, renounces all things dear to him in England—even his own family. Byron's reason for a similar renunciation was more ego-centered. Herbert goes to America, where he will most readily be able to apply his principles of freedom. Although Shelley never directly

4. Sylva Norman, *Flight of the Skylark* (London, 1954), p. 140.

See also *Fraser's Magazine*. XV (June, 1837), 774-777.

associated himself with America, the fiction thus far is true to the Shelleyan ideal. But Herbert's recruiting and commanding an American regiment is another Byronic element—an element diametrically opposed to Shelley's strong emphasis upon, at all costs, avoiding violence in the quest for social regeneration.

The Marmion Herbert who, years later, is suddenly reunited with his wife and daughter is a changed man indeed, as the following excerpts indicate:

Time had stilled [Herbert's] passions, and cooled the fervour of his soul. The age of his illusions had long passed. . . . He felt how dependent we are in this world on our natural ties, and how limited, with all his arrogance, is the sphere of man. Dreaming of philanthropy, he had broken his wife's heart, and bruised, perhaps irreparably, the spirit of his child. . . . He had sacrificed his fortune, he had forfeited his country, he had alienated his wife, and he had lost his child. . . . Profound Philosopher! (pp. 380-384).

Here Disraeli gives evidence that his own liberalism goes only so far as Herbert's youthful enthusiasm for liberty. For Disraeli the consequences to the individual weigh very heavily.

The common Victorian attitude that social evolution will work slowly of itself is voiced in Herbert's words to Cadurcis: "Mine were but crude dreams. I wished to see man noble and happy; but if he will persist in being vile and miserable, I must even be content. I can struggle for him no more. . . . I will not give up a jot of my conviction of a great and glorious future for human destinies; but its consummation will not be so rapid as I once thought, and in the meantime I die" (pp. 434-435). Disraeli is at fault in assuming that Shelley would have lost faith in the individual's effectiveness. He also misinterprets Shelley's social philosophy as one of immediate utopianism. Browning apparently made the same mistake. Had they both read *Prometheus Unbound* with a careful attention to the length of the hero's struggle and to the warning that the cycle might need to be repeated unless men remained alert, they might have concluded otherwise, even without accessibility to the *Philosophical View of Reform*.

Much closer to Shelley's views, up to a point, is another statement by Herbert in the same conversation (p. 435) in which he employs all the ideas of, and quotes whole phra-

ses and clauses from the opening sentences of Shelley's essay *On Life*. Shelley comes to the conclusion, as does Marmion Herbert after him, that the origin of being eludes even the true philosopher, who then must be content with what may be observed or perceived. But regarding the results of "unbiased observation," the two part company.⁵ Herbert expects the philosopher to establish institutions to guide the masses; Shelley is more concerned that the individual somehow find his own relationship to the universe. He seeks a unity which transcends institutionalism:

Whatever may be his true and final destination, there is a spirit within man at enmity with nothingness and dissolution. This is the character of all life and being. Each is at once the centre and the circumference; the point to which all things are referred, and the line in which all things are contained.

Shelley, viewing the individual as a segment of the universal mind, disdains the laws and customs upon which Disraeli's Herbert insists. Shelley remained, to the end, a foe of institutions and continued to insist upon perpetual, man-motivated change. His Demogorgon remains inactive until after the victory of Prometheus, champion of mankind.

Herbert's declaration that he will no longer strive for men seems inconsistent with the following speech, which Disraeli improvised for Herbert by fusing verbatim portions of two excerpts from Shelley which are found in Medwin's *Shelley Papers*.⁶

We exist because we sympathise. If we did not sympathise with the air, we should die. . . . It is sympathy that makes you a poet. It is your desire that the airy children of your brain should be born anew within another's, that makes you create. . . . Plato believed, and I believe with him, in the existence of a spiritual antitype of the soul, so that when we are born, there is something within us which, from the instant we live and move, thirsts after its likeness. . . . If men were properly educated, and their faculties fully developed, . . . the discovery of the antitype would be easy. (pp. 448-449)

The difficulty is that Herbert, as an old man, apparently no longer proposes to act upon these beliefs. Because of

5. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Works*, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols. (New York, 1926-30), VI, 194. See also Thomas Medwin, *The Shelley Papers* (London, 1833), pp. 38-39, where Medwin incorporates the passage in his Memoir of Shelley.

6. See *The Shelley Papers*, pp. 21-24 and 156-157. The former excerpt is Medwin's reprint of almost the entire essay *On Love*, and the latter is entered under the subtitle "Love" in a section entitled "Reflections." (See note by Ingpen and Peck, *Works*, VI, 361.) Disraeli's fusion of these two portions is conclusive proof that Medwin was his source.

Portions which Disraeli has adapted directly from *The Shelley Papers* are the following: "If we imagine, we would that the airy children of our brain were born anew within another's" (p. 22). "We are born into the world, and there

is something within us which, from the instant we live and move, thirsts after its likeness. This propensity develops itself with the development of our nature" (p. 23; note that Disraeli follows Medwin's wording and omits the same parts Medwin has omitted). "The gratification of the senses is no longer all that is desired. It soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment which we call love, which is rather the universal thirst for a communion not merely of the senses, but of our whole nature, intellectual, imaginative, and sensitive" (pp. 156-157). "The discovery of its antitype . . . is the invisible and unattainable point to which love tends" (p. 23).

The importance of sympathy is also stressed in Shelley's preface to *Alastor*.

the stubbornness of men, he does not intend to do anything more towards properly educating them or fully developing their faculties. One wonders how much of the author's opinion is implied in Herbert's declaration. "Once I sacrificed my happiness to my philosophy, and now I have sacrificed my philosophy to my happiness" (p. 438).

Greatly though Disraeli deserves to be appreciated for his insights into Shelley's character and for his daring to present the poet in a favorable light when public opinion was antagonistic toward him, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he finally distorts Shelley's philosophy. In the first place, Disraeli pictures the older Herbert as a kind of superior Shelley, a poet whose maturity has given him insights which Shelley lacked. Secondly, by presenting Herbert as still retaining certain basically Shelleyan views but suppressing them because of disillusionment, Disraeli is actually declaring the poet ineffectual. The reader is thus led to wonder whether Shelley has not been favorably set up in the novel only to make his overthrow all the more noticeable and effective.

Disraeli's own view on social or governmental reform is clearly presented in his tract *The Spirit of Whiggism*, published in 1836, the very year he was writing *Venetia*. To know that he was studying Shelley for the novel at about the time he wrote the tract adds meaning to certain portions:

There is no probability of ever establishing in England a more democratic form of government than the present English constitution. . . . The disposition of property in England throws the government of the country into the hands of its natural aristocracy. I do not believe that any scheme of the suffrage, or any method of election, could divert that power into other quarters. It is the necessary consequence of our present social state. . . .

Churches are plundered, long rebellions maintained, dynasties changed, Parliaments abolished; but when the storm is passed, the features of the social landscape remain unimpaired; there are no traces of the hurricane, the earthquake. . . ; it has been but a tumult of the atmosphere. . . . The English

nation ever recurs to its ancient institutions—the institutions that have alike secured freedom and order; and after all their ebullitions, we find them, when the sky is clear, again at work, and toiling on at their eternal task of accumulation.⁷

In the light of this declaration of complacency, it is apparent that Disraeli, confronting himself with the character of Shelley as material for a novel, found it necessary, if he were not to denounce the poet outright, to depict him as an eventual deserter from his actual position. Medwin's characterization of Shelley as being far superior to Byron in intellect, philosophy, and practical insights presented Disraeli, no doubt, with the idea of Shelley as an elderly man. And what better device than the process of aging to make the change from radical revolutionary fervor to deliberate abandonment of concern about man's future seem plausible?

That Disraeli himself, at least in his youth, felt a basic affinity with the liberal point of view may not readily be denied; but that he allowed the attractions of high office, aristocracy and institutionalism to suppress and overcome it seems equally clear. There is a gratuitous and partisan note in his biographers' comment: "To the end the revolutionary side was there; and it is just because Disraeli never lost his sympathy with the modern spirit, never felt any of that timorous shrinking from new political ideals which afflicts Conservatives of a narrower type, that his conservatism is so sane, so robust, and so fruitful."⁸ The equivocal use made in *Venetia* of Shelley's ideals may hardly be considered more commendable than would have been a "timorous shrinking" from them.

Insofar as the technique of the novel is concerned, Disraeli manipulates the Shelley material very well; but we may scarcely conclude, in view of his own political status in 1836 and 1837 and the ideas expressed in *The Spirit of Whiggism*, that he employed the Shelley theme in the novel for technical reasons alone. Indeed, it appears that he found the nucleus of the novel already formed for him in Medwin's joint treatment of Byron and Shelley. When once he realized that he could present Shelley in an ostensibly favorable light and yet disqualify his liberal ideas, Disraeli must have had little trouble getting his novel underway.

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7. Quoted by William Flaville Monypenny and George Earle Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*,

rev. ed. (London, 1929), I, 328-329.

8. Monypenny and Buckle, I, 249.

"The Bride of Literature": Ruskin, The Eastlakes, and Mid-Victorian Theories of Art

Wendell Stacy Johnson

THE FIRST ILLUSTRATED news magazine in English appeared in 1842. The first pages in its first volume, a self-congratulating introduction, not only predict the development of a picture press which new engraving processes and cheap photography were to make possible; they also sum up a mid-Victorian attitude toward pictorial art in relation to the written word. With the perfection of wood engraving, the new-born *Illustrated London News* declares, "Art . . . has, in fact, become the bride of literature." Although that analogy is not pursued, the term *bride* seems to suggest that in the wedding of arts the visual follows and depends on the verbal.

This casual declaration in the popular press can be compared with John Ruskin's subtler, more radical, and more serious words linking art and letters. The first volume of his *Modern Painters*, published in 1843, insists at the beginning of the second chapter that "Painting, or art generally . . . is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle for thought, but by itself nothing." *Language*, as Ruskin applies the word to Turner's land- and sea-scapes, means the Wordsworthian language of nature, speaking to the soul of divine life and joy. But it is often true of Ruskin that his fanciful words and arbitrary categories lead him to new assertions as much as they serve his original intentions. And, flourishing in a period when artists neglected landscape or subordinated it entirely to the human foreground, he was easily led from praising the noble language of Turner to praising the noble language of Holman Hunt. In his 1856 (third) volume, Ruskin writes, "Painting seems to me only just to be beginning . . . to take its proper place beside literature," and he cites Holman Hunt's "Awakening Conscience" as one of the "first fruits of its new effort."¹

"The Awakening Conscience," one of the most vivid of moralized *genre* pictures, replete with heavily symbolic detail, shows a kept woman who is inspired by an old song to leap up in virtuous resolution from her lover at the piano. The language of this narrative painting—"tragedical, if rightly read," Ruskin argues in the *Times* in 1854—expresses a sense of moral standards and is far from being the landscape language which expresses moral grandeur. The critic might insist, along with Wordsworth, on the close relation between natural glory and human action; but even Ruskin's contemporaries were surprised by his championing both old Turner and the Victorian painters whose "new effort" to place art beside literature

made art visually literal and substantially anecdotal.²

How much the early Ruskin reflected taste and how much he created it seems impossible to say. But his style and authority certainly supported and made culturally respectable the taste of those Victorians who had behind them no tradition of love for the arts. Their taste was likely to demand that pictures justify their existence by behaving like good books: by telling the truth, by telling a story, by telling a moral. With his fervent rhetoric, Ruskin can make these views appear as revelations, often but not always by showing a subtler truth in them. His parents might see the apparent moral tone while the bright young men of the mid-fifties were dazzled by the apparent originality.

1856, the year of *Modern Painters* III, was the year also of William Morris's *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, an effort to initiate and expand on *The Germ*. And it is significant that this literary venture by bright and very young men expresses no bold new views on life or art—or, rather, that what it takes to be bold and new would seem to us to have become quite commonplace by then. One review article asks, "When shall we learn to read a picture as we would a poem, to find some story from it, some human interest that may feed our hearts . . .?"³ Surely, in 1856, that lesson had been well enough learned, and Ruskin was not the only teacher of it.

This insistence upon "reading" art, which goes along with the popularity of obviously story-telling pictures, goes along as well with the loss to poetry of certain purely pictorial effects. When mid-Victorian art critics write about "poetry" in pictures, they are likely to mean narrative poetry; the works of Keats and Tennyson that inspire Holman Hunt, Millais, and their contemporaries are precisely narrative and not lyric poems. And the critics and public who like such "poetic" pictures as Pre-Raphaelitism produced did not apparently care for pictorial poems. So an earlier influence of landscape on literature was, by the sixties, nearly reversed—an influence which had produced what Jean Hagstrum describes as "iconic poetry."⁴ Now the writer's use of painting and sculpture becomes, like Tennyson's, allegorical, or, like Browning's, psychological and even moral, verbal scene-painting done for its own sake, in imitation of the landscape artist, is rare in Victorian poetry. Indeed, delight in images and scenes without a serious literary purpose might well seem trivial at best to the Tennyson whose muse cannot, for all his attraction to Keats, live long in "The Palace of Art." That poem, about the fear of isolation in aesthetic

1. *Modern Painters* III, VII, 18.

2. See, for instance, E. V. Rippingille's pamphlet *Obsolescence in Art* (London, 1852), and an *Athenaeum* review that contrasts Turner as a "poet" with the Pre-Raphaelites as literal-

ists, in No. 1243 (August 23, 1851), p. 908.

3. P. 59 (January).

4. In *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago, 1958).

pursuits, includes something of the Victorian strain that Jerome Buckley calls the "fear of art" itself.⁵

Along with Ruskin, other writers who cared for the fine arts, ancient and modern, were inclined to allay that fear by justifying pictures in more or less specifically literary terms. Most writers' ideas about art in the period from the mid-forties to the early seventies come under one or several of three headings: art as truth; art as parabolic or didactic inspiration; art as sincere self-expression. These are the theoretical categories, mimetic, pragmatic, and expressive, which M. H. Abrams lists as possible criteria for judgment of the arts, but especially for literary judgment.⁶ And the language used by Victorian writers often bears out this close parallel of the several arts by implying or, like Ruskin's, stating that visual art is nothing but a noble and expressive language.

Under the heading of truth, for instance, the demand may be for either a rendering of the ideal, the transcendent truth, or an honest telling of the facts. In spite of Ruskin's attacks on Sir Joshua Reynolds' generalized and ideal images, and in spite of the Pre-Raphaelites' insistence on precise fidelity to nature, Victorian uses of those words *nature* and *truth* often seem vaguely to suggest their "higher" meanings, making the artist a prophet as well as a reporter. Mrs. Browning, in *Aurora Leigh*, which Ruskin thought the greatest poem of the century, conceives of both poet and painter as "stretching past the known . . . to reach / The archetypal Beauty out of sight."⁷ Less sheerly idealistic, perhaps, than his wife, and more inclined to emphasize the visual appearances, Robert Browning also declares that, in several senses, "Art may tell a truth." In his poems about painting and painters, as well as in *The Ring and The Book*, Browning repeatedly has the visual arts not only show but *tell* and *speak* both larger and more literal truths.⁸ And the most realistic of those Victorian writers who were greatly interested in art, George Eliot, praises Dutch pictures as she would prose discourse, for being scrupulously honest. The doctrine which she most admires in Ruskin (the admiration was never mutual) is that of fidelity to fact.⁹ Not surprisingly, C. H. Lewes agrees; when his 1858 essay on "Realism in Art" compares novels with pictures, it prefers in both arts

the clear element of truth, literal and also psychological truth, rather than any kind of falsifying. In fact, Lewes declares, Realism in art should be opposed not to idealism but to what he would call *Falsism*. Truth-telling, evidently, is the main criterion for both poet and painter.¹⁰ All of these writers, in demanding that art tell truths ideal, literal, or psychological, compare the artist with the poet or the novelist, making little or no distinction between one art and the other.

As for the demand that works of art inspire or ennoble their viewers, this too can be made in such a way that the artist becomes a surrogate for, or auxiliary to, the speaker and writer. The Victorian assumption that all the arts should edify—by pointing morals, or by rousing aspiration, or by intensifying and enlarging sympathies—was very widespread and can be observed in various forms and degrees of clarity within the work of such clear-headed men as Thackeray, John Stuart Mill (in the 1867 Inaugural Address at St. Andrews),¹¹ and the aesthete Eneas Sweetland Dallas (whose 1866 treatise *The Gay Science* asks "Are the aims of art ennobling?" and implies that they are without explaining quite how). This assumption can easily be expressed by calling a painting a sermon, as art critics sometimes did, instead of a poem; even when pictures did not invite that honorific title, however, it could be assumed, as it is in Dickens' *Household Words*, that "between art and literature there is a very strong band of union," so that "the spread of taste for and appreciation of art" can, like the growing popular taste for literature, "exercise an especially good influence."¹² To this assumption that the "good influence" of fine arts upon a populace is related to its "band of union" with literature, and indeed to the implication that the purely visual element is the lesser within that "band," Charles Kingsley might well have agreed. As Parson Lot, writing of the arts in *Politics for the People*, he is concerned with the ideas that result from seeing pictures. The term *idea* in Ruskin's criticism often appears ambiguous, meaning either a Lockean idea, a perception, or an idea, presumably to be put into words, about something; for Kingsley the idea in pictures are of the latter kind. They are moral, practical, and even verbal notions of what the world is and ought

5. See Chapter IX (pp. 161-184) in *The Victorian Temper* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951); and, for a contrasting point of view about the early Tennyson, see H. M. McLuhan, "Tennyson and Picturesque Poetry," *Essays in Criticism*, I (1951), 262-282.
6. In *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York, 1953); see also, on the traditional and theoretical joining of visual and literary arts, Rensselaer W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," *Art Bulletin*, XXII (December, 1940), 197-269.
7. Ll. 405-406; *Aurora Leigh* was published in 1856.
8. But, as the Parleying with Gerard de Lairesse indicates, the truths must first of all be literal rather than ideal, and must include the "ugly actual."
9. See Chapter II of *Adam Bede*; and, on Ruskin, the *Westminster Review*, LXV (1856), 626, as well as *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon Haight (New Haven, 1954), II, 421-423. The extreme statement in praise of pictorial realism occurs in "How We Come to Give Ourselves False Testi-

- monials, and Believe in Them" (*The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, Boston, 1909, XX in the Warwickshire Edition).
10. The truths, to be sure, may be those of character: Sir Edwin Landseer, the painter of dogs and stags, is said to be a "poet" who "makes his animals express their inner life." See the *Westminster Review*, LXX, 488-518; especially pp. 493-495.
11. But John Robert Hains shows, in his 1939 Northwestern University dissertation, that Mill grew less sure about this function of art and came to believe, as Ruskin probably did, that in the present state of society an artist cannot reveal new moral truths or give more than some degree of pleasure to the mass of men.
12. XVI (1857), 352. Dickens' attack on Millais' "Christ in the House of His Parents" (in the first volume of *Household Words*, 1850) is well known, and seems to be echoed in his and George Thornbury's frequent criticism of the Pre-Raphaelites.

to be. Appropriately, Kingsley's chapter on gothic architecture in *Alton Locke* is entitled "Sermons in Stone."¹³

If the mimetic line of criticism urges that pictures tell the truth as a report or philosophical essay ought to, if the pragmatic line of criticism insists that they tell something edifying, as a sermon ought to, then the expressive line of criticism would have art function as both spiritual history and spiritual autobiography. The two key words in all of Ruskin's commentary on the arts are *nature* and *nobility*; and the second term refers both to the noble effect of art and to its noble source. With *The Stones of Venice*, in 1851, he announces a "great principle to which all that has hitherto been stated is subservient; that art is valuable or otherwise, only as it expresses the personality, activity, and living perception of a good and great human soul." The principle is often re-stated, repeating the idea of greatness: "greatness in art is . . . the expression of a mind of a God-made great man"; "Great art is nothing else than the type of the strong and noble life"; "Great art is the expression in form of the mind of a noble man."¹⁴ The general belief, echoing and simplifying Ruskin, that good art is produced only by good men can be discerned in Coventry Patmore, who declares that "Bad Morality is Bad Art," and even perhaps in Thackeray, who makes fun of vulgarians and pompous academic painters in *The Newcomes* but also shows that an artist such as John James Ridley, "J. J.," can attain success because of his "pure sweet thoughts."¹⁵ The extreme example of finding a man's character in his pictures might be the painter William Frith's autobiography: "If an artist have a vulgar mind, his work will be vulgar; if he be of a shifty and untruthful nature, his picture will faithfully reflect these facts. We know Vanduyke must have been a refined and courtly gentleman, as surely as we are convinced that Jan Steen was the jovial, often drunken, companion of the guests at kermess or ale-houses."¹⁶ But Browning has his own version of that belief, an original version which partly inverts Ruskin's values—in "Fra Lippo Lippi," especially, but also in "Andrea Del Sarto" and other poetic comments on painting—so as to show the great artist expressing not chaste nobility but energy and aspiration. All of this looking for the artist in the art is parallel with the seeking out of Shakespeare in his plays, or of Tennyson in his poems. An extension of this expressive theory, considering not so much the artist as his times, can more obviously be used to turn pictures

into documents: in effect, historical documents. Ruskin insists in *The Stones of Venice*, in his 1864 sermon "Traffic," and in his 1867 Rede lecture on "The Relation of National Ethics to National Art," that eras and nations record their inner histories in painting, sculpture, and architecture. And, foremost among Victorian "readings" of the past in the arts of the past, Mrs. Anna Jameson's series of volumes on *Sacred and Legendary Art* regards medieval works of art not only as the books of legend and doctrine from which medieval people learned but also as the books in which we can spell out characteristics of an earlier age.¹⁷

For much of the Victorian public and for some mid-Victorian writers on the fine arts, Ruskin's famous phrase apparently could be taken to mean that art consists of a language which tells tales and points true morals, which has an ennobling effect like that of a tract, which expresses the thoughts of a man and an age as a document would.

Although John Ruskin's criticism has more genius and more ambiguity than such responses to it indicate, he does very often suggest that a literary analysis, seeking out main ideas, is appropriate to the fine arts. Thus he articulated as much as he inspired an assumption that was widespread. Widespread, and still not universal. For, from the fifties to the seventies, that majority assumption about the literary nature of pictures was contradicted by a minority opinion. This minority reaction to the marriage of art and literature was expressed by writers who retained their pleasure in the image itself, a pleasure which could not easily be shared in an age of anxiety about the physical world of rocks, beasts, and human flesh. Beginning in Ruskin's hey-day, there was argument over the doctrine that art consists essentially not of the physical image but of language.

In fact, several other arguments are involved with this one about whether art and literature are truly married or not: the rather muddled disagreement of taste, for example, between those who loved all things medieval and gothic, and those who still preferred the art of the Renaissance.¹⁸ The influential partisans of medieval or "early Christian" art are likely to stress, as Mrs. Jameson does in the introduction to her work on iconography, that the sculpture, painting, even architecture of the middle ages made up the bible of the people, teaching as well as inspiring them. Ruskin and others "read" these medieval documents in

13. *Politics for the People* (London, 1848) defines the noblest visual art as "ideal" instead of "naturalist," even though the hero of Kingsley's *Yeast*, Lancelot, declares "your great law of protestant art, that 'the Ideal is best manifested in the Peculiar'" (Chapter 3, p. 59 in the 1851, London, edition; *Yeast* first appeared serially in Fraser's in 1848). The aesthetic principles of Kingsley are not, perhaps, very clear, but it is clear in his 1849 review of Mrs. Jameson's work and again in *Alton Locke* that protestant virtue and Carlylean ideas are more important to him than styles in painting or architecture.
14. See *The Stones of Venice*, III, iv: XI, 201, in the standard edition of Ruskin, by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1903-1912), where a note cites the several versions of this pronouncement.
15. See Patmore's *Principles in Art . . .* (London, 1889), a collection of fugitive pieces; Thackeray's view of the artist is by

no means always sentimental: his lighthearted criticism of painting written, for *Punch*, under the pseudonym Michael Angelo Titmarsh, includes a good deal of parody both of artists and of art critics.

16. *My Autobiography* (London, 1887), II, 330.
17. See, for instance, in the complete edition of these studies (London, 1905), I, 7; and II, xvii, on the "ever various aspects of character and sentiment . . . exhibited in Art."
18. Professor Wylie Sypher points out in an unpublished paper on "Gothic versus Renaissance: Morris and Browning," just how muddled this disagreement often was; Morris, for all his latter-day Pre-Raphaelitism, is not essentially a gothic artist, and Browning, with his love of the Renaissance, might very well be defined by Ruskin's list of Gothic traits: Savagery, Changefulness, Naturalism, Grotesqueness, and so on.

stone and pigment; and Ruskin, in his earlier works, finds them better reading—not simply and frivolously visual—than less documentary and more decorative, more fleshly, forms. Still, Kingsley, Browning, and connoisseurs in general either deplore the narrowness of this exclusive taste for the "ante-Raphaelic," or frankly continue to prefer the masters of the Renaissance.¹⁹ Browning, who asserts in his "Old Pictures in Florence" that "Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos," clearly accepts the age of Leonardo as the culmination and high point of Italian painting. And, almost inevitably, one of the most persuasive champions of aesthetic experience to lead the reaction against Ruskin in the very late sixties and the seventies, Walter Pater, does so in a series of essays that revive and defend the older interest in the Renaissance.²⁰

A closely related debate is that familiar one between the theory that all the arts are essentially moral and the theory that they should be aesthetically pure, of interest for their own sake.²¹ Again, the question often becomes whether pictures should have the literary qualities of telling truths, stating morals, and speaking sincerely. Aestheticians and art critics, especially Philip Hamerton and J. S. Blackie, object to Ruskin's excessive moralizing as the imposing of moral concerns, proper to literature, on purely aesthetic subject matter; and Digby Wyatt's first Slade lecture at Cambridge, delivered in 1870 as Ruskin inaugurated his own Slade professorship at Oxford, directly attacks the doctrine of *Modern Painters* that "perfection in art can come only from perfection in life and morals."²² Published almost four years earlier, Swinburne's *William Blake*, defending "art for art's sake," takes precisely this line while it insists that beauty alone—not moral "content" or indeed any communication of ideas at all—is the artist's aim. Art, for Swinburne, is a master and not a servant: not, he might have said, either a servant or a bride of literature.²³ For implicit in all these criticisms of the moral-expressive attitude toward the fine arts is the mid-Victorian undercurrent of uneasiness about the "mar-

riage" of the arts, predicting Whistler's outburst in 1885, when he describes his feud with Ruskin as a battle between pen and brush and insists that the writer's thinking about painting as "a method of bringing about a literary climax" has degraded the art.²⁴ Curiously enough, however, this uneasiness is not all limited to aestheticians and "aesthetes." On the other side of the fence, and yet also arguing at the beginning of the seventies against the confusion of art and literature, is Robert Buchanan. His diatribe against Rossetti and Swinburne, "The Fleshly School of Poetry," is usually cited as an example of mere prudishness, but his thesis is that sensuous verse too often fails to be more than a substitute for, or comment on, a picture. Indeed, he implies that paintings, unlike poems, can properly be fleshly and nothing more. From their quite different points of view, Whistler, and perhaps Swinburne himself, might have agreed with Buchanan's assertion, "The truth is that literature is in a bad way when one art gets hold of another, and imposes upon it its conditions and limitations"—although they would probably want to substitute the word *painting* for the word *literature*.²⁵

But the most sustained, the most telling early attack upon Ruskin's literary point of view and, thus, upon the generally received idea that the fine arts can be considered forms of language, appeared in 1856. It appeared, that is, in the year of *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, with its insistence that pictures are to be "read"; and in the year of *Modern Painters* III, where Ruskin declares unequivocally for Victorian *genre* painting and illustration, asserting that the "proper place" of the visual arts is "beside literature." It appeared in the conservative and very influential *Quarterly Review*. And it specifically denies that there can be a fruitful "marriage" of literature with any other art.

This attack came from the clever Lady Eastlake, who as Elizabeth Rigby had established her critical position in the *Quarterly* before marrying Sir Charles Eastlake,

19. See Kingsley's essay, deploring the excessive medievalism of Alexis Francois Rio and Pugin—if not of Ruskin—in *Fraser's*, XXXIX, 283-298. Ruskin praises Browning for both his picturing of the middle ages (in *Modern Painters* IV) and his insight into "The Renaissance Spirit" in "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," which, Ruskin declared, said nearly all he had tried to put in thirty pages of *The Stones of Venice*. But "The Bishop" does not at all reject Renaissance pride, love of art, and worldliness, as Ruskin has done; at times Ruskin seems almost willfully to have misread his poet friend.

20. Not that Pater attacks Ruskin directly; in fact, by the time his essays on Renaissance artists were being published, between 1869 and 1873, Ruskin's attitude toward the Renaissance and art in general had changed sharply from his earlier, more "literary," and more influential views. Pater's celebrated passage about burning with a "hard gem-like flame," concluding in a defense of "art for art's sake," first appeared, interestingly, in a highly favorable review of the poetry on classical and medieval themes by William Morris, Ruskin's staunch defender—in the *Westminster Review* for 1868. See, on the "Reaction against Ruskin in Art Criticism," from the fifties to the seventies, Charles Allen Yount's Chicago dissertation (1941).

21. Louise Rosenblatt observes that while 1870 marked the end of an aggressive "Art for Art's Sake" movement in France,

the period 1850-1870, which saw the culmination of mid-Victorian bourgeois attitudes toward art, was also the period when a reaction against these attitudes took form, especially among a younger generation of writers. See *L'Idée de L'Art Pour L'Art dans la Littérature Anglaise pendant la Période Victorienne* (Paris, 1931), p. 12, and pp. 22 and ff.

22. See Hamerton's "The Artistic Spirit," in *The Fortnightly*, I (1865), 342; Blackie's *On Beauty* (Edinburgh, 1858), pp. 5 and ff.; Wyatt's *Lectures on the Fine Arts* (London, 1870), p. 267.

23. See the *Bonchurch Complete Works* of Swinburne (London, 1926), XVI, 215-216. Swinburne's criticism is not theoretically consistent, perhaps, but his bias against moralism and his insistence upon the "worship of beauty" appear repeatedly. His concern is with clarity of form and detail—as the studies of Robert L. Peters indicate, especially "Algernon Charles Swinburne and the Use of Integral Detail," in *VS*, V (1962), 282-302.

24. See *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (London, 1890), p. 146.

25. "Poetry," Buchanan declares, "is something more than painting, and an idea will not become a poem because it is too smudgy for a picture." See the *Contemporary Review*, XVIII (1871), 344-350.

painter, president of the Royal Academy, and first Director of the National Gallery. Lady Eastlake was in several senses an imposing figure (six feet tall, she recalls in her memoirs being told by a *gendarme* to get down off the chair when she was standing on the ground); and her opinion must be taken seriously as representing the views of a cultivated minority. Apparently she considered her 1856 review of *Modern Painters* I through III a major expression of that opinion. Making little of the actual differences in emphasis from volume to volume, she stresses in this piece the central fallacy, as she believes it to be, which largely vitiates the work. She may be unfair in accusing Ruskin of caring to display his skills more than he cares for the truth, and her quite fair criticism of his arrogance is only incidental. But, most important, she insists on the absurdity of his defending art as "nothing but a noble and expressive language." It is useless, she argues, to compare the writer with the painter, who cannot rival language with pigment. Exposing the vagueness of what Ruskin means by *thought* or by ideas in pictures, she observes that he repeatedly treats painting as if it were poetry; she concludes that the critic's identification of art and literature is false, substituting an interest in anecdote for an interest in pictorial style, and that the influence on artists of that identification is harmful: "Whenever an art admits of marriage with another art. . . the union can only be effected by dividing the field between them; . . . the more of art the less of super-added thought will a picture be found capable of containing." Very specifically, Lady Eastlake denies each of the three main ways in which a picture might be said to have a literary function: she denies that visual art must tell the truth, have an edifying effect, or clearly express the character and attitudes of the artist. "Mr. Ruskin's ideas of truth and falsehood as applied to art (all traceable to his false start as to the nature and purposes of art) are utterly futile and nonsensical." An inaccuracy, she insists, is not a lie. Nor, for that matter, is it necessarily a serious flaw: Turner, who is full of misrepresentations, "once even painted the sun on the north side." As for edifying effect, "art was not given to man either to teach him religion or morality." "Art, not being a direct moral agent at all, can only do real harm in proportion as it can do real good—its debasement can only be the index of a frivolous or ignorant society—never in any way its cause." Even the expressiveness of pictures, which this last phrase suggests, is limited, and Ruskin is accused of showing less how men and times, ideas and values, are embodied in a work of art than how the work can "fur-

nish a text for his arbitrary interpretations and egotistical rhapsodies."

On subsidiary points, Lady Eastlake makes it clear, she also disagrees with the first three volumes of *Modern Painters*. She stands with the more conservative collectors—as she wrote, she was translating Dr. Waagen's *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*—against the enthusiasm of the fifties and sixties for almost all things medieval. Whereas Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites deplored the shift from a time where "art was employed for the display of religious facts" to that time when "religious facts were employed for the display of art," this shift to the art of the Renaissance, culminating in Raphael, is to be regarded as the true beginning of great painting. And although she can hardly be called an aesthete (her other reviews and articles make her seem as starchy protestant as the next mid-Victorian), Lady Eastlake goes far enough toward the doctrine of art for art's sake to deny the doctrine of art for the sake of literary purposes. Her main point, the one to which she repeatedly returns in this long essay, is that any "identification of poetry and painting" must be false: the two arts are not at all married but distinct and separate.²⁶

The Eastlakes agreed with each other, and Sir Charles' second series of *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts*, edited by his wife and published in 1870, after his death, echoes her views of 1856. Writing on the "Difference Between Language and Art," Sir Charles argues that the visual arts do not, like language, use arbitrary signs and that they try to capture the permanent or general, which is ideal beauty. The argument suggests Sir Joshua Reynolds and the neo-classical tradition. But the specific contrast made between the arts and literature reads very much like Lady Eastlake's: literature is least successful when it tries to imitate sounds or appearances, instead of informing, even though "it is one of the lowest offices of art to *inform*." This contrast is developed in a "Discourse on the Characteristic Differences Between the Formative Arts and Descriptive Poetry." Here Sir Charles disagrees with the tradition of *ut pictura poesis* and with Simonides' dictum that painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture. He disagrees, in effect, with even the most conventionally accepted versions of a parallel that Ruskin and a good many others have pushed to its extreme.

Sir Charles' discourse refers to examples of iconic poetry (to use Professor Hagstrum's term) in Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Gray, and Byron, but points out

26. See the *Quarterly Review*, XCVIII (1856), 384-433, especially pp. 392, 399, 404, 431, 433, for the passages cited here. This very long review-article can be regarded as Lady Eastlake's major theoretical work of art criticism, although her other labors—including the translation of Dr. Waagen's catalogue and the completing of Mrs. Jameson's volumes on medieval iconography—are also impressive. The only Victorian scholar to give this formidable woman due attention is John Steegman, in his valuable study *Consort of Taste*, which observes that she "sharply condemned . . . the fallacious identification of poetry and painting" (p. 45), while her husband mistrusted "the growing tendency towards a literary use of

painting" (p. 34).

Lady Eastlake's *Quarterly* attack in March, 1856, was serious enough to inspire a violent defence of Ruskin by the young William Morris in the June, 1856, *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. Morris asserts that according to the *Quarterly* review "the function of art is not to express thought, but to make pretty things and . . . herein lies the whole quarrel between Ruskin and the pedants in literature or art who have opposed him" (p. 353). This line of argument is interesting if curious in view of Morris' later career in the decorative arts.

that in these examples imagery is visual only in part, appealing as well to other senses. And it concludes, of painting and poetry, that "things being compared together, their character and relative excellency will consist chiefly in those qualities which are exclusively their own." The ideal truth of art, then, is not the propositional truth of literature. It may, after all this, come as a surprise to modern readers when Sir Charles adds that, even though the excessive influence of one art upon another can be harmful and "the influence of Poetry" on art in his day is apparent, that influence is not great enough to be a danger! Still, however cautious he appears to be in practical criticism, he agrees in theory with the earlier attack on Ruskin's wedding of the fine arts with the art of language.²⁷

By the early seventies, the age was passing when paint-

ers were often poets, when art and illustration were virtually synonymous. Many late Victorians believed that, in the words of a modern critic, a "fatal assimilation of pictures with books. . . was the bane of Victorian painting."²⁸ So they came to reject the earlier assumption about the literary function of painting. In fact, like virtually all assumptions in the middle of the Victorian age, this one had already been challenged—implicitly by Browning in his defence of fleshly Renaissance art and explicitly by the Eastlakes—even before the flourishing of Swinburne, Whistler, and Wilde, with their doctrine of art for its own sake. Some extreme reactions to Ruskin's extreme formulations were taking place in the fifties. At last, inevitably, like the new women of Meredith, Ibsen, and Shaw, art was to declare her independence, and even sue for divorce.

Hunter College, City University of New York

"Principle in Art" as Criticism in the Mainstream

Marvel Shmiefsky

THE RIVAL TRADITIONS in late-nineteenth-century poetics are represented in the friendly exchanges on poetic theory of two critics who practiced verse in the eighties. Certainly, for example, Coventry Patmore's letters to Gerard Manley Hopkins show to what extent typical early Victorian poetic values of the fifties persisted despite the current challenge of aestheticism. Patmore is disturbed when as an alert reader he cannot discover "the inner motive" of a given poem.¹ He cannot understand Bridges' indifference as to whether or not people read his poems because "every additional reader, to me, is an addition to the fulfillment of the purpose for which I write."² He cannot comply with Hopkins' demand for bulk because "I have written all that I had to say, and as well as I could; and I must rest content."³ He cannot force himself to finish a poem or, as Hopkins urges, to "strain" against "nature's way."⁴ He looks for the "depth of thought," "tenderness of feeling," the "gravity of manner," and the "many memorable lines and passages" in a poem.⁵ He is attracted to "all really poetic minds" by "a sort of sanctity of intellect, a power of perceiving an immense range of

things rightly and of believing his perceptions, because they are perceptions."⁶ Repeatedly, single phrases and sentences in the correspondence bear the trademark of the expressionistic critic.

One letter⁷ in particular provides a touchstone for Patmore's thoroughgoing expressionism and for the point of Hopkins' departure from that tradition. Here Patmore complains that the effort required to apprehend the thoughts and feelings of Hopkins' poems, aside from "any obscuring novelty of mode," will limit his audience. As for Hopkins' metrical and linguistical inflections, they, unlike that "continual *slight* novelty of manner"⁸ which Aristotle said was characteristic of poetic language, distract "from the poetic matter to be expressed." Conscious and deliberate art allows sound to prevail over sense, and Hopkins' system and learned theory about verse "often darken the thought and feeling which all arts and artifices of language should only illustrate. . . ." On the one hand, Patmore, whose favorite definition of verse is "thoughts that *voluntary* [*sic*] move harmonious numbers," cannot reconcile himself to the strangeness of

27. Sir Charles reveals that he is quite aware of going against ancient and traditional views in contradicting Simonides, and that he is opposing Lessing as well as Ruskin. His theoretical radicalism, then, seems strikingly at variance with his critical criteria. See, in the second series of *Contributions* . . . (London, 1870), pp. 304, 332, 342, 345.

28. Joan Evans, in *John Ruskin* (New York, 1954), p. 417. Compare the words of Hippolyte Taine, who describes English painting during the sixties and concludes that painters have substituted illustration, anecdote, and morality for art: they confuse literature with pictorial art and "demande du second art les effets du premier." See *Notes Sur L'Angleterre* (Paris, 1899), p. 359; and pp. 316-363.

1. Claude C. Abbott, ed., *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins* including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore (London, 1938), p. 171.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

8. Coventry Patmore, *Principle in Art* (London, 1912), p. 21. Subsequent references to page numbers in this edition (pp. 265) will appear in my text.

Hopkins' favorite poem, "The Wreck of the Deutschland"; on the other hand, Hopkins finds in several of Patmore's poems that "the acuteness of the intelligence is in excess of the instress or feeling and gives them a certain cold glitter."⁹

Claude C. Abbott claims that an appreciation of Patmore's work depends upon an understanding of his conception of woman as an inferior being whose purpose is to delight her lord and master.¹⁰ And J. C. Reid analyzes Patmore's use of the conception as the basis for his central critical analogy.¹¹ In *Religio Poetae* and *Principle in Art*, the sexual analogy manifests itself in Patmore's views on the subject of criticism itself when he insists that it be based on intellect, judgment, and principle—all masculine qualities. The antithesis to this approach is impressionism with its doctrine of emotion for emotion's sake and its origin in natural sensitiveness to beauty, a feminine trait. The analogy is also the basis for Patmore's division of poets into two categories: The masculine, led by Shakespeare, in whom intellect has the mastery, and the feminine, represented by Keats, in whose work sensitivity and external beauty are uppermost.

Again, the analogy has moral ramifications since principle in art is, like truth in morals, infallible, whereas sensitiveness is, like love without truth, fallible. Further, the relationship between the two aspects of poetry can be described in the religious terms of Aquinas: In masculine poets "the vision . . . is a virtue, the beatitude an accident"; in feminine poets "the 'beatitude,' the beauty and sweetness, is the essential, the truth and power of intellect and passion the accident" (p. 77). However superior he finds the masculine virtues to the feminine in his aesthetic battle of the sexes, Patmore realizes that, in art as in life, they complement each other and that true poetry depends on their reconciliation: "Masculine law is always, however obscurely, the theme of the true poet; the feeling, with the correspondent rhythm, is its feminine inflection, without which the law has no sensitive or poetic life" (p. 20). Elsewhere Patmore calls the ideal synthesis "classical." Consequently, he criticizes a volume of Alice Meynell's poems for falling short of this standard by being sweet, pathetic, and "negatively, almost faultless" but praises a volume of her essays for achieving it, "embodying, as it does, new thought of general and permanent significance in perfect language, and bearing, in every sentence, the hallmark of genius, namely, the marriage of masculine force of insight with feminine grace and tact of expression" (p. 151).

Yet, important as the principle of sexual duality is to Patmore's theory of poetry, it is its function as a vehicle for the tenor of expressionism that this article is concerned with. In fact, when the analogy purports to be more than a metaphor, it leads Patmore into errors of judgment, as it does in his analysis of Keats: "These poets of whom Keats is the example *par excellence* are without any figure of speech, justly described as feminine (not necessarily effeminate)" (p. 77). Hopkins, for one, quibbles with Pat-

more's term: "His [Keats'] poems, I know, are very sensual and indeed they are sensual. This sensuality is their fault, but I do not see that it makes them feminine."¹² One could construct a ledger for the thesis-antithesis relationship formed by qualities that Patmore designates as either masculine or feminine characteristics, or the results of such characteristics in art. Doing so, he would discover the naked babe of expressionism under the cloak of manliness. The alignment would look something like this:

Masculinity:	Femininity:
Shakespeare or Milton	Keats or Shelley
Classicism in Criticism	Impressionism in Criticism
Content, Matter, Insight, Essence, Utterance, or Formative Energy	Form, Manner, Expression, Accident
Intellect	Sensitiveness
Truth or "severe verity"	Beauty or Sentiment
Vision	Beatitude
Urania	Venus
Health and Morality	Decadence and Interior Corruption or Shallowness
Principle and Law	Feeling and Inflection (of Meter, Morals, and Rhythm)
Tenacity	Impressionableness
Affirmation, Joy, or Cheerfulness	Negation, Gloom and Pathos
Inward labour and true finish of Passion	Labour of Polish
Genius (Idea)	Imagination (the language of Genius: Expression)
Sincere Speech ('simple, sensuous and passionate')	Perfect or Faultless Speech
Ordinary laws of language	Novelty (except Aristotle's kind)
Facts and Phenomena of Humanity	Heartless Splendour of Language and Imagery
Character as Style	Mannerism as Style
The expression of pain and pleasure as a means to peace	The expression of pain or pleasure as an end

A comparison of Patmore's terms and principles with those of Arnold in his essay on Keats shows a fundamental similarity in the critical criteria and values employed by these theorists, despite Patmore's persistent analogy and despite the different conclusion each of them reaches about Keats. The essay is one to which Hopkins refers Patmore who had not read it at the time of his own article on Keats for the *St. James Gazette*. In it Arnold, too, insists that great poetry requires more than

9. Abbott, p. 173.

10. *Ibid.*, xxvii.

11. J. C. Reid, *The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore*. (London,

1957), pp. 182-202.

12. Abbott, p. 233.

sensuousness, that it requires character and virtue because it interprets life. Like Patmore he sees a correspondence between high and severe work in art and character in action. But, unlike Patmore, he finds the instinct for character to exist in Keats, who had "flint and iron in him."¹³ The nearest Arnold comes to Patmore's antithesis is his own contrast of the strong man who is capable of self-control and reticence with the "sensuous weakling."¹⁴ Arnold contends that Keats meant to "get learning, get understanding" and that ultimately he was concerned with "the arduous rather than the pleasures of song" — in spite, that is, "of his overpowering feeling for beauty, in spite of *sensuousness*, in spite of his *facility*, in spite of his *gift for expression*."¹⁵ All the italicized terms have approximately the same value for both Patmore and Arnold.

Arnold, too, refers to a master, though for him not peculiarly masculine, passion, which is intellectual and spiritual rather than sensuous or sentimental; moreover, he finds that Keats' "yearning passion for the beautiful" was an intellectual and spiritual passion, that he loved the *principle* of beauty, that he saw "the necessary relation of beauty with truth, and of both with joy."¹⁶ Again, while Arnold recognizes the fact that Keats had not developed the faculty of moral interpretation, he allows for another mode of poetic interpretation: the naturalistic, "natural magic," which Keats excels in. Although he does not claim "high architectonics" for Keats, he does, unlike Patmore, credit him with Shakespearean "gusto" of expression, a quality Arnold himself had minimized in 1853 when he deplored both Shakespeare's and Keats' fascination with imagery.

Even a brief comparison of the two critics reveals a difference in the contexts surrounding their mutual concern with the moral element in poetics. Arnold allows for more than one mode of poetic interpretation; there is "natural magic" and there is "moral interpretation." For Patmore art and ethics are inseparable, and both derive their first principles from religion. The tripartite nature of the relationship is discernible in his observation that "there is much that must for ever remain matter only of real apprehension to the best seers; that is to say, everything in which the infinite has a part, *i.e.*, all religion, all virtue, as distinguished from temporary expediency, the grounds of all true art, etc."¹⁷ Arnold is concerned with the religion of poetry, Patmore with the religion of the poet. When Patmore speaks of the "sanctity of art," inspiration as "the influence of divine grace," the poet's "pontifical privilege," or "heretical notions of what art should be," he does not speak analogously. His is a Christian frame of reference in a sense that Hopkins', let alone Arnold's, is not.

The nature of poetry is essentially religious in "that the true order of human life is the command, and in part revelation, of God . . ." (p. 22). Yet, what Patmore des-

cribes here is not religious poetry in the narrow sense: "The poet, as a rule, should avoid religion altogether as a direct subject" (p. 20). He finds "atheism in art" to exist where art is purely emotional, that is, where it is divorced from truth and order. There, he maintains, "the 'ideal,' in the absence of an idea or intellectual reality, becomes the 'realism' of the brothel and the shambles" (p. 27). He deplors the fact that modern poets do not understand art in the way that Aeschylus, Dante, Calderon, and Shakespeare did. In Shakespearean tragedy, for example, the predominance and victory of a single moral idea gives unity to the conflict of interests and passions in the play (p. 33-34). Again, in the "highest" poetry, like Milton's, the meter, the language, and the theme "all chime together in praise of the true order of human life, or moral law" (p. 21). Modern poets avoid the "one real theme of art," moral law, "the rectitude of humanity."

Obviously, the relationship between ethics and art is a causal one since the absence of moral law means the absence of art and since bad morality makes for bad art. Every aspect of poetics is approached from this point of view. By "poetical integrity" Patmore does not refer to the scrupulousity with which the poet records his vision in language or to the poet's conduct in life. Integrity here involves the interdependence of words and character; utterance is the touchstone by which the self is tried. For, ". . . in the case of the poet, the powers of language are so developed as to become the very glass of the soul, reflecting its purity and integrity, or its stains and insincerities, with a fidelity of which the writer himself is but imperfectly conscious" (p. 45).

What is true for language itself is also true for style. Individuality, *i.e.*, character, based as it is on a man's love and on what he is, partakes of "sanctity" or "innocence" and alone confers true style upon the poet (p. 138). The poet shows what Hopkins calls "the individualizing marks of his own genius"¹⁸ in the very act of observing the ordinary laws of language. In fact, "the true and natural expression of individuality" consists of small inflections of customary phrases (p. 65). Style is simultaneously the expressing of oneself and the elimination of self-consciousness; mannerism is both self-consciousness and self-assertion. It begins in lawlessness and ends in oddity instead of "distinction." And it occurs when the poet seeks to win "admiration for himself, instead of rendering his whole utterance a single true thing, which shall win your sympathy with the thought or feeling by which he declares himself to be dominated . . ." (p. 48). Mannerism or stylization must be purged from his work before the poet can achieve style, "the sanctity of art."

What does this mean when applied to specific cases? In Rossetti's work style is almost "suffocated" by mannerism. When Patmore berates Rossetti for his Pre-Raphaelite preferences for accurately detailed imagery, he states the kind of argument for blurry outlines that was to bring

13. Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism, Second Series* (London, 1888), p. 112.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

17. Coventry Patmore, *Religio Poetae* (London, 1907), pp. 78-79.

18. Claude C. Abbott, ed., *The Letters of Gerald Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges* (London, 1935), p. 83.

a later generation to Imagism: "... and to scatter broadcast, over a long poem, imagery with the sharpest outlines is to prove, not only that it has not been written from true passion, but that the poet has not even observed the phenomena of true passion" (p. 104). Here Patmore makes realism as manifested in concrete imagery or "accurate observation of nature" a kind of betrayal of utterance, of sincerity, in short, of the mystical act of creation. One cannot help recalling Verlaine's remark about another kind of violation of sincerity that he found in *In Memoriam*: "When he should have been broken-hearted he had many reminiscences."¹⁹

Walt Whitman is guilty of what amounts to a breach of aesthetic etiquette as well as ethics since he flouts "good and simple manners and language" (p. 64). Contemporary poets, including Whitman, encounter the greatest obstacle to distinction of style in their preoccupation with "the improvement of mankind" (p. 66) instead of with "the permanent facts of nature and humanity"; they exchange the role of "tranquil seer" for that of partisan or "excited" agent. Patmore severs himself from those late-century expressionists who, in his eyes, lower the poetic function by pragmatically mistaking the condition of society for the human condition.

To speak of Patmore's view of the imagination is to speak of his concept of nature: both fit into the moral and religious context of his poetics. The poet as "*par excellence, the perceiver*" not only apprehends spiritual realities but detects in external nature the correspondences by which they can be rendered credible to men of inferior vision. Nature serves Patmore's poet somewhat in the manner it does Blake's and Yeats' and Patmore sounds like a Symbolist insisting on the reality of his convention when he says "Such likenesses, when chosen by the imagination, not the fancy, of the true Poet, are *real words*—the only real words; for 'that which is unseen is known by that which is seen,' and natural similitudes often contain and are truly the visible *ultimates* of the unseen."²⁰ Thus, not only do spiritual realities gain a "*sensible credulity*" but natural objects acquire "a truly sacramental dignity"²¹ by participating in this mystical verbal ritual of making the unknown knowable. The poet imitates Nature's own method when he speaks in parables and symbols.

Patmore is not disturbed by Arnold's problem of how poetry can relate to man's instincts for conduct and for beauty: "Natural sciences are definite, because they deal with laws which are not realities but conditions of realities. The greatest and perhaps the only real use of natural science is to supply similes and parables for poets and theologians."²² Neither Newton nor his rainbow seem to pose a threat to Patmore's poet, who has "like Newton, a special *calculus*—a doctrine of infinite series, whereby

he attains to unveil the infinite and express it in credible terms of the finite . . ."²³

Although he may agree with Ruskin about the power of the imagination depending on the poet's moral fibre, Patmore challenges him about his strictures on the pathetic fallacy: "Nature has no beauty or pathos (using the term in its widest sense) but that with which the mind invests it" (p. 45). In art natural phenomena merely provide the terms through which the true subject of a work, the artist's state of mind, finds utterance. But Patmore is responsible for an inconsistency, if not a fallacy, of his own when he chides Shelley for crediting the imagination with the power of spiritual insight instead of limiting its power to that of expression. The manner in which he himself wavers between a conceptualist and an organic view of the relationship between "idea" and "expression" can be seen in the following passage: "*The Tempest*, like all very great works of art, is the shortest and simplest, and indeed the only possible expression of its 'idea.' The idea is the product of genius proper; the expression is the work of the imagination. There are cases, however, in which it is hard to distinguish at all between these inseparable qualities."²⁴ Here the practical limitations of Patmore's analysis of the imaginative faculty are partly suggested by his remark that the "noblest function of criticism is to declare its own helplessness before such works as *The Tempest* by directing attention to beauty beyond beauty which defies analysis."

Of another element in poetics, the topic of verse, which he could treat practically,²⁵ Patmore makes little mention in *Principle in Art*, his primary concern being the study of moral rather than metrical law. In the eighties the search for order usually meant the search for form; for Patmore order is the theme that art aspires to express. As it becomes in Eliot,²⁶ "order" here is orthodoxy and disorder, which is to be found in art for "the emotions and the emotions only," is heterodoxy or heresy. His philosophy of peace—a composite of affirmation, joy, repose, and purity—in art derives from Aquinas' concept of static art. Patmore blames the cynicism and the "corrupt" melancholy of modern life and art on the fact that men's desires are "set upon delights and pleasures in which there is not peace" (p. 34).

His criticism provides the sanction for the kind of verse which Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and William Barnes wrote rather than for the poetry written by Alice Maynell, Francis Thompson, and Gerard Hopkins. As for Patmore's own work, Hopkins could have paid him no higher compliment than he did when he praised the poems for their profound insight or when he called the *Angel in the House* "a book of morals." Answering those who find ethics and art inimical, he insists that the teaching of art is not didactic or assertive but sug-

19. W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (New York, 1961), p. 495.

20. Patmore, *Religio Poetae*, p. 3.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

25. W. B. Yeats, *Letters* (New York, 1955). Even Yeats calls him a great authority on the subject and refers Florence Farr to a passage in Patmore where he states "our theory of music and speech very clearly" (p. 526).

26. Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Armed Vision* (New York, 1955), p. 63.

gestive and that it deals with a higher morality than the one the amorality speak of. Yeats yearns for the advent of a time when "the arts would grow serious as the Ten Commandments" while for Patmore true art is intrinsic-

ly that serious: "The Decalogue is not art, but it is the guide-post which points direct to where the source of art springs . . ." (p. 27).

The City College, City University of New York

A Note on the Feveler Crest

Carl H. Ketcham

AT THE BEGINNING of the first edition of *The Ordeal of Richard Feveler* (1859), Meredith calls attention to the possibility that the Feveler crest—a Griffin between two Wheatsheaves—may be symbolic. "Several ladies detected symbolism in the aspect of the Griffin, which had a snarling hostile air to them, and seemed to mean that the author was a double-animal, and could do without them, being well fortified by Life's Wherewithal to right and left."¹ The phrase "double-animal," the ladies' interpretation of the dual nature of the Griffin, is probably explained by one of Sir Austin's aphorisms a little further on: "Man is the speculative animal: Woman the practical" (p. 23). Sir Austin, the ladies thought, was self-sufficient; he needed no woman.

However, Meredith by no means makes clear that the ladies' explanation of the crest is the right one, or the only right one. Their view of it is limited by their pique and the resulting desire to make a conquest, philosophical or personal, of the author of *The Pilgrim's Scrip*. Hence their interpretation is necessarily narrow. They see the Wheatsheaves simply as a token of independence, the Griffin as perverse hostility toward womankind. They are right as far as they go; but, quite understandably, they miss what seems to be the broader significance of the crest—the fact that it identifies Sir Austin as a typical "sentimentalist" in the Meredithian sense of the word.

The symbols which represent sentiment in the crest receive explicit identification and comment in *Sandra Belloni* (originally *Emilia in England*), which Meredith began not later than May, 1862.² The crest, as the ladies pointed out, shows a compound creature flanked by tokens of material wealth. In *Sandra Belloni*, Meredith associates both elements with the sentimentalist.

The leisure necessary to develop the misused sensitivity of the sentimentalist implies wealth. "Sentimentalists," says Meredith in chap. i of *Sandra Belloni*, "are a perfectly natural growth of a fat soil. Wealthy communities must engender them. . . . My vulgar meaning might almost be twisted to convey that our sentimentalists are a variety

owing their existence to a certain prolonged term of comfortable feeding" (I, 6). In a later chapter he adds, "Those 'fine feelers,' or antennae of the senses, come of sweet ease; that is synonymous with gold in our island-latitude" (I, 214).

This accounts for the Wheatsheaves. As a symbol of the sentimentalist, the Griffin appears self-explanatory, whether considered generally as an unnatural monster or specifically as a compound of lion body and eagle head—disguised egoistic desires winged to soar beyond nature and reason. In any case, another such composite beast is associated with Sentiment in *Sandra Belloni*, when Wilfrid Pole, in his pursuit of Emilia, mounts upon Hippogriff. This animal borrowed from *Orlando Furioso*,³ part griffin, part horse, is defined by the Philosopher of *Sandra Belloni* as "Sur-excited Sentiment," "the foal of Fiery Circumstances out of Sentiment" (II, 229). Thus the Griffin is the head and wings of a creature representing Sentiment agitated by exciting conditions. True, the identification would break down if it were assumed that Meredith was following Ariosto in full detail, since in Ariosto the griffin is the father of Ippogrifo⁴ and hence equivalent, in Meredith's scheme, to Fiery Circumstance. But there is no indication that Meredith was thus scrupulously technical in adapting a romantic legend. His Hippogriff is the embodiment of the sentimentalist's accumulated sensations (II, 185), subjected to "strong sentimental friction" (II, 229) until it is borne aloft on its Griffin's wings. If a distinction is to be made between Meredith's two monsters, it is that Hippogriff is merely a fool's mount, though a blind and undependable one; the Griffin, springing from Sir Austin's hurt pride, is a bird of prey. Richard and Lucy are, in the end, its victims. The ladies in *Feveler* read better than they knew when they detected its "snarling hostile air" (p. 21).

Sir Austin, then, unwittingly as always, provided us with an insight both into his character and into its material origins when he printed his own symbol at the head of his book.

University of Arizona

1. Pp. 21-22. References to Meredith's works are from the Memorial Edition (New York, 1909-1911). Passages from *Feveler* are from the Various Readings and Bibliography included in this edition.
2. *Letters of George Meredith, Collected and Edited by His*

Son (New York, 1912), I, 25.

3. For Meredith's debt to Ariosto, see Guy B. Pettey, *George Meredith and His German Critics* (London, 1939), chap. xii.
4. *Orlando Furioso*, ed. Adriano Salani (Florence, 1922), canto IV, st. 18.

English X News

A. THE NEW YORK MEETING

Chairman, John T. Fain, *University of Florida*;
Secretary, J. Hillis Miller, *Johns Hopkins University*.

I. Business.

II. Papers and Discussion.

1. "Dickens and Scott: Realist and Romanticist," Edgar Johnson, *City College of the City University of New York*.
2. "The Prose of Newman's *Apologia*," George Levine, *Indiana University*.
3. "Methods in the Study of Victorian Style," Richard M. Ohmann, *Wesleyan University*.

Advisory and Nominating Committee: Chairman, Donald Smalley, *University of Illinois* (1964); Robert Langbaum, William A. Madden (1963-1964); W. Stacy Johnson, Robert Preyer (1964-1965); Martin J. Svaglic, Robert A. Greenberg (1965-1966); John T. Fain, (ex officio).

1964 Program Chairman: William A. Madden, *Indiana University*; Julian Moynahan, Clyde de L. Ryals.

Bibliography Committee: Chairman, Robert C. Slack, *Carnegie Institute of Technology*; R. A. Donovan; C. T. Dougherty; R. F. Freeman; Donald J. Gray; Oscar Maurer; R. C. Tobias; Michael Timko.

Editor, *Victorian Newsletter*: William E. Buckler, *New York University*.

1965 Officers: Chairman, J. Hillis Miller, *Johns Hopkins University*; Secretary, Robert Langbaum, *University of Virginia*.

(Nominations to be voted on.)

B. THE VICTORIAN LUNCHEON

The Victorian Luncheon will be held in the Cornell and Dartmouth Rooms of the Statler Hilton on 28 December with cocktails at 12 noon and lunch at 12:45. To make reservations, send check or money order for \$5.00 to Professor Wendell Stacy Johnson, 355 East 72nd Street, New York City 10021, before 15 December.

C. SYMPOSIUM ON NEWMAN'S IDEA OF
A UNIVERSITY AS RELATED TO
CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS IN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The Center of Newman Studies, an activity of the English Department of Fordham University, held a symposium on Newman's *Apologia*, Oct. 12, 1963. The papers delivered at the Symposium were edited and are now published as *Newman's 'Apologia': A Classic Re-Considered*, Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc.

The Center has been urged to bring to bear on contemporary problems of universities the principles of liberal education enunciated in Newman's *Idea of a University*. Educators are deploring the loss of integration between the various branches of learning and the breakdown in co-operation between departments. There is a clear need for universities, especially in metropolitan areas, to pool resources and to work out long-range objectives for inter-university coordination and cooperation.

The Center will hold a symposium on February 14, 1965, 2 to 4:30 P.M. in the Campus Center, Fordham University, to explore these questions. The symposium will take the form of a round-table discussion. Panelists are:

Chairman: Joseph Mulligan, Dean of Graduate School, *Fordham University*
Members: William E. Buckler, Dean of Washington Square College, *New York University*
John Donahue, Dean of Thomas More College, *Fordham University*
Francis S. Connolly and Vincent Ferrer Blehl, Co-Directors of Center of Newman Studies.

There will be a coffee break at 3:15, followed by open discussion from the floor.

D. LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor, *The Victorian Newsletter*

Dear Professor Buckler:

I would like to add only a brief explanatory note to Professor Ryan's letter in the Spring VNL. In letters to you and Professor Ryan I acknowledged my debt to three of his essays, and the complete, correct documentation for my article in the Fall, 1963 VNL is now available to your readers.

My apologies for what was, in fact, gross carelessness have been extended to Professor Ryan, and I extend them here to all other readers of my article. I hope I have been able to convince Professor Ryan that the error was entirely inadvertent; in any case, I tried objectively to show how it came about. I also made clear, as I do now, that it is my view that the central ideas of my article were my own. What is regrettable is that in expanding and embellishing them I relied too heavily (though I was not at the time aware of it) on Professor Ryan's essays.

Sincerely,

Edward F. Jost

E. INFORMATION AND REQUESTS FOR HELP

- Warren D. Anderson's study of Matthew Arnold and the classical tradition—the first full-length treatment—will be published in the spring by the University of Michigan Press.
- Allan R. Bishop, University of Wisconsin, requests information regarding the location of John Campbell Shairp (1819-85) material and especially the private journal used by William A. Knight in preparing the biography *Principal Shairp and his Friends* (1888). Professor Bishop is preparing a biographical and critical study of the Scottish poet and critic.
- Frederick M. Link, University of Nebraska, is doing a paperback reprint of Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life* for the Nebraska Press.
- Lawrence Poston, University of Nebraska, requests material relating to Anthony Trollope's brother Thomas, a prolific writer of the Anglo-Florentine circle in the 1850's and 1860's.
- Hardy scholars are asked to contribute offprints and copies of books since 1958 to the Hardy collection in the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, England. Contributions should be sent to Mr. R. N. R. Peters, Curator.