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Metrical Prose in Dickens

Park Honan

FOR GEORGE GISSING his "habit of writing metrically" was "the gravest of his faults."¹ Gissing spoke for critics who resented the mixing of genres. In 1885, Saintsbury had found English prose "somewhat disarranged" owing to confusion between the "distinct aims and methods of the prose-writer and the poet,"² and Stevenson had offered a strong supporting principle. Prose, he wrote in his essay "On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature,"

must be rhythmical, and it may be as much so as you will; but it must not be metrical. . . . A single heroic line may very well pass and not disturb the somewhat larger stride of the prose style; but one following another will produce an instant impression of poverty, flatness, disenchantment.³

The complaint was not new in 1885; Greek and Roman rhetoricians from Aristotle to Cicero and Quintilian had voiced it. And recent critics have echoed it. No one has objected to Orwell's listing of "paragraphs in blank verse" among "all that is bad and silly" in Dickens' novels.

But there are reasons for regretting such a judgment. Dickens worked harder over his patently metrical passages than he did over many others, we find: his failure seems the more uncanny. We question the "artistic sincerity" of Little Nell's creator,⁴ but, as Gissing said, he never "overcame" the metrical practice. Are we to question sincerity as late as *Our Mutual Friend*? And—if we deplore such prose altogether—are we apt to understand a style that is never quite free from metrical elements, or to see Dickens' true position in the history of style in the novel? My aim in this essay is to outline certain uses he made of the prose traditions that led him to write metrically.

I

We need to examine briefly three traditions that helped to foster evenly cadenced prose in novels of the eighteenth-thirties such as *Eugene Aram*, *The Young Duke*, or *Oliver Twist*. The first is the central tradition of English literary prose form—the schematic. Originating in the Greek rhetoric of Gorgias and Isocrates, and informing English prose by way of Christian Latin literature and the sixteenth-

century English rhetoricians, the "schemes" are a system of devices employed to give point and form, precision as well as distinction, to prose. Schematic prose easily becomes "metrical"—it is never far from being so. In novels Dickens read as a boy—in Smollett's, for example—two schemes of rhythm, namely isocolon (like-length in successive clauses or phrases) and parison (like-form and like-length in clauses), and one of point, antithesis, are all exhibited.⁵

He looked and languished; she flushed and faltered. All was doubt and delirium, fondness and flutter.

So Sir Launcelot with his Aurelia—and Smollett with tongue in cheek (*Greaves*, Chapter 15). Like-length and like-form in the first sentence foster duplicate clausal rhythms (and reinforce the antithesis or a parallelism tinged with it), and the resulting cadenced effect is made to echo in the second sentence. Scott, it is true, does not write metrically cadenced prose (as Smollett obtrusively may) but a rhythmically patterned antithetic, as in his first novel:

The conflicting passions/and exhausted feelings of Waverly had resigned him to late/but sound repose (Chapter 44).

The importance to our subject of such prose—with the exemplar of Dr. Johnson just behind it—is that it made repeated phrasal rhythms seem perfectly natural to Scott's contemporaries and immediate successors in the novel.

Thus Peacock and Disraeli tend even more to antithesis and the schemes of rhythm.

The novelist was silent, for he was studying a scene—and the poet was absent, for he was *mus- ing* a sonnet (*Vivian Grey*, Book II, Chapter 1).

Like-length, like-form, and traces of like-sound were not often to combine again in Disraeli's prose with the precision of Lyly (whom he imitates here); but the styles gaily aped in 1826 are only variants of what was to be Disraeli's mature schematic manner, set by the time of Young

1. Charles Dickens: A Critical Study (London, 1898), p. 185.
2. *Specimens of English Prose Style* (London, 1885), p. xvi.
3. R. L. Stevenson, *Essays in the Art of Writing* (London, 1905), p. 26. The essays first appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for April, 1885.
4. See George H. Ford's useful *Dickens and His Readers* (Princeton, 1955), p. 70. I take issue not with Professor Ford's opinion of

"blank verse" in *Old Curiosity Shop* but with his questioning of Dickens' "artistic sincerity" on the basis of isochronism in this and other novels—as will be seen.

5. See George Williamson's *The Senecan Amble: A Study in Prose Form from Bacon to Collier* (Chicago and London, 1951) for the survival of the schematic tradition through the seventeenth century.

England. And the schemes of rhythm already lead him to explore metrical effects:

The eyes of the Marquess sparkled—and the mouth of the Marquess was closed (II, 1).

A SMILE FOR A FRIEND, AND A SNEER FOR THE WORLD, is the way to govern mankind, and such was the motto of Vivian Grey (II, 3).

With Dickens, too, "meter" occurs early.

The sky was dark and gloomy, the air was damp and raw, the streets were wet and sloppy. The smoke hung sluggishly above the chimney-tops as if it lacked the courage to rise, and the rain came slowly and doggedly down, as if it had not even the spirit to pour (*Pickwick*, Chapter 51).

This is a flawed schematic; yet it moves within a syllable of parison (like-form, like-length) in the first sentence, where the resulting rhythm is iambic. In his earliest work Dickens did what most new novelists do: he accepted the main elements of prose form prevailing at his time and modified them slightly for his own (comic and buoyant) ends. The schematic tradition supplied him with patterns that at once sanctioned iambic cadences and offered a base for metrical experiments to come.

Oliver Twist is involved in a second style tradition to which Smollett contributed. Its roots are as old as the seventeenth-century "sensitivity cult" in sentimental romance. By the time of Beckford's *Modern Novel Writing* (1796) and Jane Austen, conventions of excessive sensibility in fiction were under sharp satirical attack—but by then they had left a mark on prose form in novels. Smollett's early comic figures are so under the influence of feeling in sentimental encounters that ordinary language fails them at the moment of bliss. The narrator finds it "impossible to convey to the reader a just idea" of the delirium felt; either it is "unutterable" (*Pickle*, Chapter 106), the hero speechless, or it is rendered in metrical speech:

"O miracle of beauty, love and truth! . . . I at last can call thee mine! . . . By this ambrosial kiss, a thousand times more fragrant than the breeze that sweeps the orange grove, I never more will leave thee!" (*Random*, Chapter 67)

Disraeli touches this tradition early. The prose of *Vivian Grey*—a novel in which "sensitivity" is so acute that Vivian's tender confession of love causes Violet to expire—

becomes iambic at a climactic instant: "Her hand was stiff—her heart had ceased to beat" (Book V, Chapter 15). From *The Young Duke* to the mature *Sybil* (1845) he is to make more of it. Dickens first employs iambs in a context of pathos in *Oliver Twist*. After terror, agony, fever-inducing heat, and Mr. Fang, the frail child lies unconscious at Mr. Brownlow's:

The sun rose and sank, and rose and sank again. . . ; and still the boy lay stretched on his uneasy bed. . . The worm does not his work more surely on the dead body, than does this slow creeping fire upon the living frame (Chapter 12).

"If in going over the proofs," he wrote jocularly to Foster in 1846 about *The Battle of Life* into which he had put "all the passion" he could, "you find the tendency to blank verse (I cannot help it, when I am very much in earnest) too strong, knock out a word's brains here and there."⁶ After *Twist*, he was to overindulge his "tendency" in scenes of death and tender reunion and in the pursuit of supernatural effects contingent on pathos (as in *A Christmas Carol* or *Our Mutual Friend*, I, 14); but in carrying the metrical practice of the sensibility cult to such extremes as these he explored its potential.

Dickens also shares in Disraeli's and Bulwer's emulation of poetic discourse. The bad blank-verse soliloquies in *The Young Duke* (1831) or *Eugene Aram* (1832) owe partly to the contemporary ranking of genres—poetry is held to be superior to prose because it can express "the grander passions" and general truths whereas prose can render only what is particular and transitory.⁷ The novelist's "language," Disraeli insists in his Preface to *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy* (1833), "must rise gradually with the rising passions of the speakers. . . ." In *Alroy* portions of narrative and dialogue "rise" in rhymed tetrameter, trimeter, and dimeter phrases—as in, "Without the gate, my maidens wait, to offer you a robe of state" (Part I, Chapter 1). Dickens may or may not have read it; what is certain is that novelists and critics of the 1830's in advocating poetic language for "passion" created a climate that was congenial to the writing of lengthy metrical sections in novels.

2

Yet tradition and precedent do not fully account for even cadences in Dickens. As his sensibility matured he learned to use "meter" with restraint. But he also found it functional.

Mr. Gradgrind—with his "Facts!"—developed "the art and mystery of educating the reason without stooping to

6. *Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Walter Dexter (London, 1938), I, 808; 7 and 13 November 1846.

7. See Richard Stang, *The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870* (London, 1959), p. 4.

the cultivation of the sentiments and affections" (*Hard Times*, Chapter 8). But it was Dickens' anti-Gradgrindian purpose to educate and cultivate the "sentiments and affections" of his readers. Hence in *Old Curiosity Shop* or in *Dombey* metrical prose signals the presence of deep and genuine feeling; it is an educative device—with a purpose similar to that of authorial commentary. When Little Paul dies prose "rises" to poetic cadences to underline the truth of the sentiment we are expected to feel—and to set that sentiment apart. For the sentiment is crucial. Only if we feel shall we judge properly Victorian callousness, brutality, and hypocrisy—the failures in feeling of Mr. Dombey, Carker, or Mrs. Chick who possess *Dombey's* depicted world. Dickens believed with Mrs. Boffin that most matters "are matters of feeling" and held that society if educated in compassion would correct its abuses. Hence in the late novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, Betty Higden the pauper dies with iambs on her lips—and Dickens, having pointed out metrically a case for our compassion, proceeds to rate "my lords and gentlemen and honourable boards" for a failure in "sentiment" that has permitted paupers' graves to go unticketed (Chapter 42).

But the metrical signal—the educative use of isochronic style—is severely restrained in novels that follow *Dombey and Son*. Dickens finds other uses for cadenced prose. As early as *Old Curiosity Shop* he had tested its comic possibilities in Swiveller's jingling speeches. In *Dombey* itself, iambic cadences may heighten comic irony:

The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light (Chapter 1).

Here style "rises" to show off the absurdity of the meaning given—and to help convey Dombey's intense obsession with enterprise. Cadences in the late novels may point up the burlesque quality of a scene:

"At Snigsworthy Park?" Veneering inquires. "At Snigsworthy," Twemlow rejoins (*Our Mutual Friend*, Chapter 2).

(De dum de de dum? De dum de de dum.
De dum de de dum de de dum.)

Rhythm makes a jingle of this exchange—supporting the Dickensian comedy of proper names.

In novels from *Copperfield* to *Drood* metrical rhythms have the more important function of heightening key imagistic effects. The "blank-verse fragments" that Saintsbury found in *Copperfield's* storm scene are not obtrusive.

I italicize what seems to scan in the final paragraph of Chapter 55:

But he led me to the shore. And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children—on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind—I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

Some of this is evenly cadenced. But the effect is to suggest well the indelible impressions that the images surrounding Steerforth's death make on David's mind.⁸

Similarly Pip is not to forget Magwitch's prison-ship:

Cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains, the prison-ship seemed in my young eyes to be ironed like the prisoners. We saw the boat go alongside, and we saw him taken up the side and disappear. Then, the ends of the torches were flung hissing into the water, and went out, as if it were all over with him (Chapter 6).

Neither Pip nor the reader is to forget what is here. Metrical cadences do not call attention to themselves but to images: "Cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains"—"we saw him taken up the side and disappear." Lodging now in his memory, these pictures are the seeds of Pip's moral regeneration later in *Great Expectations*. Their heightening is subtle. Metrical cadences seem to have become absorbed in the paragraph rhythms of Dickens' style—and in so doing, to have achieved their greatest psychological pertinence. Jasper's vivid opium dream in the first chapter of *Edwin Drood* yields similarly heightened images, as in: "Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and twice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers."

The effect is related to that of iambic prose in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), where again key images (sun, tree, waves, or wind) are deliberately emphasized through metrical cadences: "The sun laid broader blades upon the house"; "The sun had now sunk lower in the sky"; or, "The tree alone resisted our eternal flux." Dickens is not so conscious a stylist as Mrs. Woolf is to be. Yet "meter" becomes an integral element of his style. From its self-defeating excesses in *Oliver Twist* or *Old Curiosity Shop* to its refinements in *Copperfield* or *Great Expectations* what we finally see in it is the pattern of his maturing sensibility.

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8. "No scene in the book was given such careful preparation as the storm scene. The number plan shows the outline of events being sketched on the left-hand side, with a separate memorandum for the detail so frequently anticipated: 'TO REMEMBER—the last parting

—"he was lying easily with his head upon his arm." "John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, *Dickens at Work* (London, 1957), p. 170; see also pp. 168-169.

The Concept of the Infinite Moment in *The House of Life*

J. L. Kendall

SOME MODERN READERS have felt that most of Rossetti's poetry, aside from the ballads, is lacking in the unity that is the result of thorough commitment to a controlling ideal. "It is this weakness of meaning," says a recent commentator, "this lack of faith in the reality of his material, which is responsible for many of our current objections to his work." He continues:

His surfaces seem overwrought, not because they are, comparatively speaking, exceedingly ornate but because there is often no solid fabric beneath them; and his love poetry seems unhealthily sensuous because the physical fact is not always redeemed by the idea.¹

It is true, I think, that even Rossetti's love poems seem hollow if we take their center to be "Dantesque Christian Platonism" or "romantic mysticism."² But if we can assume, as it seems to me the poems give us ample warrant for doing, that the poet's faith in any transcendent reality was at best highly tentative,³ that a sense of mystery rather than of certainty chiefly characterizes his religious and metaphysical speculation, that he was indeed almost obsessed with the manifest limitations of thought and the flimsiness of the structures of faith—then we can find in the love poems of *The House of Life* at least a solid center of conviction that is given fairly uniform and quite effective expression in the work as a whole.

The best key to the unifying imaginative concept is Rossetti's pre-occupation with time. Especially important is the frequent recurrence of an idea which I shall call, borrowing a term from Browning and from R. O. Raymond, the "infinite moment."⁴ The poet of *The House of Life* abhors the movement of events in time. To him time means only the frustration of desire, the dilution of pleasure, and the undermining of order. On the other hand, the fact that he can conceive of no good that does not involve resistance to time is a dark mystery to him. He can not contemptuously dismiss time as an illusory limitation, as Carlyle

did; he can not see in the necessity of the struggle against temporal restrictions a sure promise of immortality, as did Browning. And unlike these two he does not find virtue in constant activity or expanding horizons. He is a lover of essence, in rebellion against the basic conditions of existence. Yet he is a lover of life, too, wholly unwilling to make a virtue of negation and denial of things earthly. His aspiration, therefore, leads characteristically to one end, the salvaging of the sense of life's beauty from the wreck of time, the sheltering of desire from the winds of contingency; it leads, in other words, to the concept of the infinite moment, that moment when the imagination breaks down the barriers of time to bring together all of the fragmented loveliness of existence and, to use his own figure, lets life touch lips with immortality.⁵ Although I have no doubt that most readers have been well aware of the presence of this idea,⁶ its importance, I think, has not been sufficiently stressed, nor has the imaginative definition of it been scrutinized with the care it deserves.

In his effort to focus and purify desire Rossetti draws first and last upon the experience of love. But love is only a means; whatever may have been the case in his life, the manifold interests of actual romantic involvement yield in the poetry, as everyone knows, to a kind of love-worship. Of this "religion" beauty-worship is an integral part. So, surely, is art-worship; for the act of worship and the object seem hardly distinguishable. Thus Rossetti seeks to embody the essential reality underlying the various aspects of value-experience—gratification of the senses, the love of order, the urge for expression, the desire for sympathy. Idealized love answers for all. The theme of *The House of Life*, therefore, can be defined simply as "Love" versus "Time." It is the mystery of time that places love in ambivalent relationship with life and death. Ultimately, only death and art remain. Art is "love's last gift,"⁷ and death is love's last hope. Hence it is that in *The House of Life* a sonnet is "a moment's monument," a "Memorial from the Soul's eternity/To one dead deathless hour."⁸ If my under-

1. Harold L. Weatherby, "Problems of Form and Content in the Poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *VP*, II (Winter, 1964), 15.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3. I call attention below to Oswald Doughty's support of this point. See p. 8.
4. See *The Infinite Moment and Other Essays in Robert Browning* (Toronto, 1950), pp. 3-18.
5. See "For a Venetian Pastoral."
6. John Lindberg, for example, in an article on Sonnet 101, refers to

the sequence as "one hundred sonnets on the theme of one lover's fight against time." See "Rossetti's Cumaean Oracle," *VNL*, Number 22 (Fall, 1962), 20.

7. See Sonnet 59. More specifically, the gift is the satisfaction and glory of artistic achievement.

8. Introductory Sonnet, ll. 1-2. For all quotations from the poetry I have used *The House of Life: A Sonnet Sequence*, ed. Paul Franklin Baum (Cambridge, 1928).

standing of the unity of the sequence is correct, it is significant that Rossetti says "one" and not "some" (being infinite, it is ever the same) and equally significant that he adds the defiance "let Time see / Its flowering crest imperaled and orient" (ll. 7-8).

Numerous phrases can be culled from the sonnets to illustrate the almost constant dominance of the idea of the infinite moment. Aside from the introductory poem, Sonnet 5 suggests as well as any the central place of the concept:

For lo! in some poor rhythmic period,
 Lady, I fain would tell how evermore
 Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
 Thee from myself, neither our love from God.
 Yea, in God's name, and Love's, and thine, would I
 Draw from one loving heart such evidence
 As to all hearts all thing shall signify;
 Tender as dawn's first hill-fire, and *intense*
 As *instantaneous penetrating sense*,
 In *Spring's birth-hour*, of other Springs gone by.
 (ll. 5-14; italics mine)

The lines that I have italicized perfectly characterize Rossetti's treatment of the theme of time in his more exalted moods. The sacred hour of liberation either encompasses all significant experience of the past and the future or excludes the sense of time altogether. In "The Portrait," for example, he depicts his love with shadowed eyes that "remember and foresee"; and in "Mid-Rapture," a song of fulfillment, his first thought is that the loved one's kiss seems "still the first" and that her eyes "Even now, as for our love-world's new sunrise, / Shed very dawn" (26). In "True Woman—Her Heaven" (58), again, love's creation of earthly beatitude is a matter of negating the effects of time:

If to grow old in Heaven is to grow young,
 (As the Seer saw and said,) then blest were he
 With youth for evermore, whose heaven should be
 True Woman, she whom these weak notes have sung.
 Here and hereafter,—choir-strains of her tongue,—
 Sky-spaces of her eyes,—sweet signs that flee
 About her soul's immediate sanctuary,—
 Were Paradise all uttermost worlds among.

The sunrise blooms and withers on the hill
 Like any hillflower; and the noblest troth
 Dies here to dust. Yet shall Heaven's promise clothe
 Even yet those lovers who have cherished still
 This test for love:—*in every kiss sealed fast*

To feel the first kiss and forbode the last.
 (Italics mine)

Thus the idea of time compressed appears again and again. Each hour until the lovers meet, the poet says in Sonnet 25, is as a bird

That wings from far his gradual way along
 The rustling covert of my soul,—his song
 Still louder trilled through leaves more deeply
 stirr'd:
 But at the hour of meeting, a clear word
 Is every note he sings, in Love's own tongue;
 (ll. 2-6)

It is very characteristic that the birds representing the hours here should somehow become one bird, the various hours one hour. The infinite moment may encompass a variety of states, yet still negate the sense of time. In "Soul-Light," for example, the soul of the beloved is said to move the lover's soul "with changeful light of infinite love" (28, ll. 13-14), and presumably this is accomplished without any alteration in circumstances, since none is mentioned. A more striking instance appears in "The Kiss," where we are told that in the course of one embrace,

I was a child beneath her touch,—a man
 When breast to breast we clung, even I and she,—
 A spirit when her spirit looked through me,—
 A god when all our life-breath met to fan
 Our life-blood, till love's emulous ardours ran,
 Fire within fire, desire in deity. (6, ll. 9-14)

And in "Beauty's Pageant" the poet asks,

What glory of change by nature's hand amass'd
 Can vie with all those moods of varying grace
 Which o'er one loveliest woman's form and face
 Within this hour, within this room, have pass'd?
 (6, ll. 5-8)

Elaborate imaginative representation of the idea of the infinite moment requires, of course, some kind of visible setting. Rossetti's handling of this aspect of the concept is remarkably consistent. It is, if not strikingly original, at least distinctive, and it is wholly appropriate. Some of the sonnets, to be sure, are nondramatic and so require no settings; and in some others that deal only in a general way with remembered experience there is a notable lack of background detail. Nevertheless, a distinct general impression of significant setting is created by certain of the earlier poems and is maintained throughout by landscape metaphors. The general intent is to suggest the capturing in

one scene of all of the beauty of life—the glimpsing of the ever-existing final cause, so to speak, of all phenomena. The “love-world” of Rossetti’s infinite moment is very small, very exclusive. But what it includes is all that matters anywhere; what is excluded is the imperfect, the incomplete, the irrelevant, and, hopefully, the illusory. Imagery is used symbolically for this purpose, of course, but there is, to my mind, no clear separation of symbol and reality, the visible and the invisible. Rossetti celebrates neither mystical nor metaphysical transcendence, though he introduces these notions for the sake of analogy, but rather a kind of artistic transcendence achieved by selection, compression, and distillation—in a word, by epitomizing.

The general character of Rossetti’s ideal setting is first established in Sonnet 12, “The Lovers’ Walk”:

Sweet twining hedgeflowers wind-stirred in no
wise
On this June day; and hand that clings in hand:—
Still glades; and meeting faces scarcely fann’d:—
An osier-odoured stream that draws the skies
Deep to its heart; and mirrored eyes in eyes:—
Fresh hourly wonder o’er the Summer land
Of light and cloud; and two souls softly spann’d
With one o’erarching heaven of smiles and sighs:—
Even such their path, whose bodies lean unto
Each other’s visible sweetness amorously,—
Whose passionate hearts lean by Love’s high
deceit
Together on his heart for ever true,
As the cloud-foaming firmamental blue
Rests on the blue line of a foamless sea.

Every detail here, as I shall briefly demonstrate, is meaningfully characteristic. Trees, flowers, a clear, flowing stream, soft light, the broad expanse of sky (here almost indistinguishable from the sea)—these, in the first place, are the images that in rather loose association regularly create the atmosphere of fulfillment in *The House of Life*. This typical picture is summoned up repeatedly by the use of the terms “bower” (Sonnets 1, 8, 27, 100), “grove” (2, 9, 34, 46) “glades” (12, 14, 64), “glen” (84) “nest” (19) and “lonely” (16), as well as by casual references to summer, sunlight (and moonlight), springs, forest shadows, and flowers such as water-daisies, cowslips, and the wild rose. Characteristic also is the almost perfect stillness emphasized in the first lines of “The Lovers’ Walk.” This motif appears in the phrase “breathless bowers” of Sonnet 1, is stressed in “Silent Noon,” and recalled in “Some heavenly solstice, hushed and halcyon,” in “Heart’s Compass”; and it is in effect introduced several times elsewhere by the use of wind imagery of unpleasant import. Equally typical

is the suggestion of a correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm, world imagery and body imagery (“Sweet twining hedgeflowers” and “hand that clings in hand,” “Still glades” and “meeting faces scarcely fanned,” and so on). In “Youth’s Spring-Tribute” the “newborn wood-flowers” look through the golden tresses of the loved one’s hair; in “Silent Noon” her hands lie open in the long, fresh grass so that “the finger-points look through like rosy blooms”; in “Mid-Rapture” her eyes “shed very dawn” and her voice suggests the “modulation of the deep-bowered dove”; her glance is like water brimming with the sky (31); and Love’s golden head is, hopefully, “Sole sunshine of the imperishable land” (43; see also 2).

Still another note in “The Lovers’ Walk” is echoed elsewhere, the use of images involving reflection (“An osier-odoured stream that draws the skies / Deep to its heart; and mirrored eyes in eyes); indeed, this symbol appears again and again in *The House of Life*—ten times in the fifty-nine sonnets of Part I. Primarily, mirroring is associated with the concepts of harmony and essential unity: the waters of earth mirror the heavens—as well as the countenance of the loved one; the lover is mirrored in the eyes of the beloved; body’s beauty reflects the soul’s, and both are captured even by the portrait, “the shadowed contour on the wall” (18, ll. 7-8). This concept is Platonic with a difference: it is difficult to say what is the essential reality and what the pale reflection; and indeed some fear persists that the cherished reflections may be mocking illusions.

It is worth noting, finally, that the setting in this thoroughly characteristic sonnet is linked to the idea of the infinite moment by the phrases “this June day” and “Fresh hourly wonder.”

“The Lovers’ Walk” is incomplete in only one way. Often the transcendent moment is marked by music. As one might expect, it is music that sounds for both sense and soul; the song of birds, the murmur of lovers’ voices, and the song of love personified blend in one quiet, unchanging harmony. Thus in Sonnet 16 “the hours of Love fill full the echoing Space / With sweet confederate music favorable” (ll. 7-8), and in Sonnet 25 also each hour is like a bird which at the hour of meeting sings “in Love’s own tongue.” There is mystic music even in a kiss:

For lo! even now my lady’s lips did play
With these my lips such consonant interlude
As laurelled Orpheus longed for when he
wood
The half-drawn hungering face with that last
lay. (6, ll. 5-8)

And in Sonnet 19, silence itself sings:

Oh, clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
 This close-companioned inarticulate hour
 When twofold silence was the song of love.
 (ll. 12-14)

Both the central importance of the ideal of the infinite moment and the definiteness of the imaginative embodiment of the idea are established in great part by the use of contrasting symbolic imagery in passages expressive of fear and depression. "Fate," "change" and "time" are virtually equivalent terms in *The House of Life*, and the force they refer to usually presents itself to the imagination as disturbing or disturbed movement of some kind. As a result, there emerges along with the vision of the quiet bower of the transcendent moment an image-complex that is its antithesis. It appears first in the sestet of the well-known and beautifully fashioned "Lovesight":

O love, my love! if I no more should see
 Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
 Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
 How then should sound upon Life's darkening
 slope
 The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
 The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

Wind, cloudy darkness or stark light, and laborious, futile movement become familiar symbols of "malign vicissitude" (6), as the following metaphors, culled from various sonnets, testify:

Like labour-laden moonclouds faint to flee
 From winds that sweep the winter-bitten wold,
 — (41)

Full many a withered year
 Whirled past us, eddying to its chill doomsday;
 And clasped together where the blown leaves
 lay,
 We long have knelt and wept full many a year.
 (43)

As every sense to which she dealt delight
 Now labours lonely o'er the stark noon-height
 To reach the sunser's desolate disarray? (46)

and when flown
 All joys, and through dark forest-boughs in
 flight
 The wind swoops onward brandishing the light,
 (64)

Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown
 floor

Thee and thy years and these my words and me.
 (81)

The whole complex is magnificently presented in Sonnet 53:

What of her glass without her? The blank grey
 There where the pool is blind of the moon's
 face.
 Her dress without her? The tossed empty space
 Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.
 Her paths without her? Day's appointed sway
 Usurped by desolate night. Her pillowed place
 Without her? Tears, ah me! for love's good
 grace,
 And cold forgetfulness of night or day.
 What of the heart without her? Nay, poor heart,
 Of thee what word remains ere speech be still?
 A wayfarer by barren ways and chill,
 Steep ways and weary, without her thou art,
 Where the long cloud, the long wood's counter-
 part,
 Sheds doubled darkness up the labouring hill.
 (Italics mine)

Although Rossetti's use of images from nature is clearly Romantic, there are some noteworthy departures that contribute much to the uniqueness of his vision. As we have already seen, he almost never uses wind to symbolize inspiration; for him the wind is "destroyer" but not "preserver." He never thinks of sublime mountain heights, and the idea of climbing ordinarily depresses him or stirs feelings of guilt. Broad vistas are likely to be bleak or in some way discouraging. The sea, though twice or thrice seen as the heaven's counterpart, is more firmly associated with the confusion of life and the fearful mystery of death. Even the handling of light imagery is distinctive. Harshly revealing light and encroaching darkness are alike unpleasant, moonlight and softly suffusing sunlight both grateful to the spirit. In the infinite moment night and day are alike; as the poet himself explains, in the heart's haven Love is "light at night and shade at noon" (22, l. 9).

At those times when the pressure of contingency is great, it must be added, the familiar haven of the imagination where past and future mingle in the arrested present takes on a nightmarish aspect.⁹ This note is first heard clearly in Sonnet 39, "Sleepless Dreams":

Nay, night deep-leaved! And would Love feign in
 thee
 Some shadowy palpitating grove that bears
 Rest for man's eyes and music for his ears?

9. The development of the concept of the infinite moment can, of course, be related to such a pattern of events in the sequence as that recently elucidated by Douglas J. Robillard. See "Rossetti's

'Willowwood' Sonnets and the Structure of *The House of Life*," *VNL*, Number 22 (Fall 1962), 5-9.

O lonely night! art thou not known to me,
A thicket hung with masks of mockery
And watered with the wasteful warmth of
tears? (ll. 9-14)

In the next sonnet the poet laments the power of time and circumstance to stifle the inspiration of the infinite moment:

Ah! may our hope forecast
Indeed one hour again, when on this stream
Of darkened love once more the light shall
gleam?—
An hour how slow to come, how quickly past,—
Which blooms and fades, and only leaves at last,
Faint as shed flowers, the attenuated dream.
(ll. 9-14)

Death itself is the theme of the next four sonnets, which together establish the agnostic "eschatology" that underlies the central ideal. Sonnet 43 provides the definitive statement:

Bless love and hope, true soul; for we are here.
Cling heart to heart; nor of this hour demand
Whether in very truth, when we are dead,
Our hearts shall wake to know Love's golden
head
Sole sunshine of the imperishable land;
Or but discern, through night's unfeatured
scope,
Scorn-fired at length the illusive eyes of Hope.
(ll. 8-14)

Sonnet 45, "Secret Parting" though it is unusually circumstantial, conveys as well as any, I think, the poignancy of the unequal struggle between the ideal of the infinite moment and the inexorable pressure of change, "the cloud-control / And moon-track of the journeying face of Fate" (ll. 1-2). The spell of the bower fails here:

Thence in what ways we wandered, and how
strove
To build with fire-tried vows the piteous home
Which memory haunts and whither sleep may
roam,—
They only know for whom the roof of Love
Is the still-seated secret of the grove,
Nor spire may rise nor bell be heard therefrom.
(ll. 9-14)

There follows soon the famous Willowwood series, in which the magic bower unaffected by the flow of time be-

comes the scene of lonely, haunted life-in-death, a "thicket hung with masks of mockery" indeed. The image of Love appears in the well of water spiritual, assumes the form of the most cherished earthly beauty—only to fade:

And her face fell back drowned, and was as
grey
As its grey eyes; and if it ever may
Meet mine again I know not if Love knows.
(52, ll. 6-8)

"Love" sings, but it is a song "meshed with half-remembrance hard to free." A dumb throng of mournful forms appears; each is "I or she, / The shades of those our days that had no tongue" (50, ll. 5-8).

It will be evident that despite the change in mood the central concept remains sharply defined. I have indicated that this center of conviction is to be found especially in the love poems of *The House of Life*; I have worded the matter so because certain sonnets in Part II do not, I think, answer well to the promise of the introductory sonnet. Consequently, the image I have described fades somewhat there. The perspective is larger, vision less sharply focused. Yet as a whole Part II supports well what has been said here about the philosophical basis of the structure of the sequence. As the penultimate sonnet witnesses, the relationship of the great powers, Life, Love, Beauty, Art, Time, and Death remains unchanged.

Although it has for some time been recognized that what used to be regarded as religious or mystical qualities in Rossetti's poetry were in fact, as Oswald Doughty puts it, "really aspects of his innate romanticism,"¹⁰ evidently the feeling has persisted that, as a romantic, Rossetti was not very firmly oriented—that the attraction of the practical, rational objective approach to life on the one hand and of the "peace, calm, and beauty of the church"¹¹ on the other prevented him from adopting a romantic world-view of sufficient steadiness and clarity to be a unifying force in his poetry. Certainly the treatment of the theme of the timeless moment in *The House of Life* does not support such an impression. The concept appears again and again; it is evidently the product in part of modern metaphysical doubts; and most important, it is given clear and consistent imaginative formulation. No discussion of incident and imagery in *The House of Life*, I am convinced, can ignore it. And I think it largely accounts for the considerable power each sonnet in the sequence gains from being read in the context of the whole.

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10. "Introduction," *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Poems* (London, 1957), p. xi.

11. *Ibid.*, p. xii.

Browning and Neoplatonism

Jack Matthews

Where, amid what strifes and storms
 May wait the adventurous quest,
 Power is Love—transports, transforms
 Who aspired from worst to best,
 Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.
 "Reverie"

Yet my poor spark had for its source, the sun;
 Thither I sent the great looks which compel
 Light from its fount: all that I do and am
 Comes from the truth, or seen or else surmised,
 Remembered or divined, as mere man may:
 I know just so, nor otherwise.
 "The Pope"

ONE OF THE QUALITIES of Browning's poetry which seems, at first sight, least mystical—perhaps even antithetical to Mysticism—is its exuberant stress on action. Nothing could be less germane to this love of action than the quietistic doctrine of the Eastern mystic or the ecstatic vision of God experienced by many of the long tradition of Christian mystics. Browning was temperamentally opposed to both of these; for one, he was too practical, for the other, too intellectual and too "Victorian" (in the sense of the optimistic stereotype).

In contrast to other kinds, however, Neoplatonism is above all a *philosophical* mysticism, and as such it lays great stress on the dynamic element of the soul's progress toward God. There is nothing passive in Neoplatonism; there is only Being and non-Being with an infinite series of gradations—table-like shadow-lands—separating the two.¹ The Way is intellectual as well as spiritual, and it is so intense an activity that the whole personality is called upon to focus itself steadily upon the never-ending task of unification. "Eternal life is not knowledge as a possession . . . but the state of acquiring knowledge."² Marsilio Ficino maintained, in his analysis of Plotinus' thought, that unity with God was a perpetual process.³ This would not seem to be precisely true, in an objective sense, since whenever perfect unification is achieved, there can be no more striving; but subjectively, it is so, for as long as there is a psyche conscious of its own divorcement from God, there will be "perpetual"—constant stages of—unification with the One.

Browning's belief in progress and his belief in the spiritual perfectibility of Man stem from his conviction that

man's soul—the "real" part of man—is of the same nature as God. If this is so, it follows logically (and Neoplatonically) that morally significant human effort must be a glorious thing. Instinct that arises from the soul must be a true guide to truth and goodness, since it is literally motivated by God. For Browning, all activity must have been the dramatic unfolding of the divine purpose in man, ineluctably finding his tortuous way back to the Godhead. What other belief could make him glorify failure in a great undertaking above a meager success? A magnificent failure means that a man realizes that he is of God—that it is his nature to accomplish great things. That he fails is simply a repetition and symbol of the great human drama of Man impatient to be reunited with his Source, and failing again and again only to continue striving for the truth that all men dimly perceive.

God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
 And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
 As midway help till he reach fact indeed.

("A Death in the Desert," 605-607)

Progress, viewed Neoplatonically, is invested with the most profound meaning possible, for the *terminus ad quem* is nothing less than unification with God. Being a poet, with a unique sense of the dramatic, it is no wonder Browning embodied in so many poems the idea of the soul's striving to progress. Browning's optimism was not so facile and blind as his popular reputation would lead one to believe. His accent upon courage and his preoccupation with moral ugliness and evil are enough to show us that his view of life was not characterized by shallow, ignorant optimism. Courage would not need emphasizing in a world devoid of peril and sorrow. Perhaps his whole thought can be called optimistic by virtue of only one profound belief: that all men are striving for God insofar as they partake of his nature (in their souls), no matter how depraved they may appear to the world. Evil slips away from the *real* in man, as the flesh slips away from the soul at death.

For every soul is striving towards the Good,
 even the soul that is mingled (with matter) and
 that of particular beings; for each follows upon¹
 the Soul divine and is its offspring.⁴

1. This aspect of Neoplatonism strongly suggests "the great chain of Being," with which tradition it is unquestionably blended.
 2. William Ralph Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London, 1918), p. 52.

3. Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists* (Cambridge, 1928), p. 195.
 4. *The Essence of Plotinus*, compiled by Grace H. Turnbull and based on the Stephen Mackenna Translation (New York, 1948), p. 95.

Could this passage from Plotinus help explain the strange habit Browning had of revealing the small glint of truth in the greatest of fools and the small grain of good in the ugliest of villains? In every man, Plotinus says, there is an element of soul that seeks God. In heaven, Guido says, he will be

Unmanned, remade: I hold it probable—
With something changeless at the heart of me
To know me by, some nucleus that's myself:
Accretions did it wrong? Away with them:
You soon shall see the use of Fire!⁵

In the *scala perfectionis* of the mystics, the stage that Guido is describing here is that of purgation. In that amalgam of nothing and soul which is every human being, Guido is largely the former: evil, negation—intent upon diversity and matter, which in the Plotinian cosmos are in the realm of non-Being. Guido represents a man who is actively evil, tending toward non-Being, whereas Caliban represents a creature whose spark of soul is at the very first beginning of its strife for God. Guido, therefore, is a soul in the emanative phase; Caliban is a soul in the progressive phase. Guido renounces life insofar as he renounces love and understanding. Caliban is at the very point of confusion when a being who is still largely material, turns positively toward the Godhead and begins to learn love and longing; his love and longing are for power, it is true, but also for the beauty, the reality of divinity. His love is rudimentary, but real, insofar as he is *sympathetic*; puts himself in place of a god—tries to understand another being, no matter how clumsily. That part of Guido which is true (the "something changeless at the heart of me"), however, having emanated must return; the other, being of a contrary nature to Being, will continue to hover about the realm of matter, next to nothingness.⁶ In this way Guido's soul will be both "unmanned" and "remade," in a literal sense. It must always be remembered that in Plotinus the soul is prior to the body; therefore, it is more proper to say that the soul possesses a body, rather than the other way around.⁷ Matter is a condition which the soul may find itself in.

This Neoplatonic conception of evil gives a philosophic substructure to the typical Browning situation of a basically unsympathetic character uttering the profoundest truths. In many cases, this phenomenon is meant as irony, but there are many others (and I view Guido's as one of these) where irony would be next to meaningless.

"A Death in the Desert" is full of the spirit of Neoplatonism. The Plotinian idea of man, as a something in the twilight between God and nothingness, is unambiguously set forth in the following lines. Man struggles upward

And in this striving, this converting air
Into a solid he may grasp and use,
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be. (584-88)

In the same poem we find another basic idea of Browning's, which is Neoplatonic:

If I live yet, it is for good, more love
Through me to men. (126-27)

Like begets like, and love begets love. Love is a self-generating principle. This is the theme of *Pippa Passes*, and, most profoundly, Pompilia embodies it in *The Ring and the Book*. Compare this passage from Plotinus:

It is of the essence of things that each gives of its being to another; else the Good would not be Good, nor Divine Mind be Divine Mind, nor Soul be what it is; the law is, some life after the Primal Life, a second where there is a first; all linked in an unbroken chain, all eternal.⁸

II

It is ironic that the word progress has acquired an almost specialized meaning through the industrialization of society. To Browning there was probably nothing "social" involved in his idea of progress. It applied to Mankind, it is true, but to Mankind as it actually exists—as a large number of individual human beings, each with a strong sense of identity, and not as a mass of sociological integers. Technological progress probably meant very little to him, since the only real progress was the increment of understanding and love in men's souls. In the language of the mystics, a man discovers the Eternal by turning in upon himself, by intuition. Although the truth is universal, it is found in this intensely personal mode. Plotinus calls salvation, "The flight of the alone to the Alone."⁹

What characterizes, informs, and makes possible the progress of the soul? What is the "Way"? Plotinus says,

Everyone recognizes that the emotional state for which we make love responsible rises in souls

5. See lines 2129-30 of "The Pope" for another statement of the same idea.

6. *The Essence of Plotinus*, p. 95.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 27. Also cf. *Theaetetus*.

8. *The Essence of Plotinus*, p. 64. A footnote on the same page says that Dean Inge regards this passage as "of supreme importance for the right understanding of Plotinus."

9. *The Essence of Plotinus*, p. 222.

aspiring to be knit in the closest union with some beautiful object; and it is sound, I think, to find the primal source of love in a tendency of the soul towards pure beauty, in a recognition of it and a kinship with it.¹⁰

It almost goes without saying that pure beauty is identical with the One, or God. The deep emphasis upon love in Browning's poetry needs no mentioning. Love perfects the lover, as it made Caponsacchi, the Pope, and, ultimately, even Guido, more perfect. It came about through their recognition of the saintliness (divinity) in a fellow human being, Pompilia. Love is the soul's reaction to beauty, which is divine.

It should be pointed out that this idea is not common to Mysticism in general. It is Neoplatonic, and through it, Christian, but it does not agree with the Eastern mystical systems where the denial of personality as an ideal makes love less meaningful; the nearest approach to it in most of the Oriental systems would be the simple denial of hate—a kind of indifference, to Western eyes.

A mystic is of necessity inarticulate about his vision of God. Browning could not be expected to dwell on symbolic attempts to define the Godhead, however, for another, very obvious reason: there is neither drama nor poetry in absolute perfection. So the individual soul, longing to return, and floundering in a seemingly hopeless spiritual muddle provided quite enough drama for one lifetime; indeed, to a Neoplatonist, this drama would be the only drama conceivable—for all efforts—right or mistaken—are directed ultimately to the embracing of the Good.

Language, which is a tool we have developed to handle phenomena with, can only convey mystical reality in a tangential way. Obviously, Browning is called upon to define his God many times, whether he wants to or not, since he is so preoccupied with the soul progressing toward it. It is here that Browning shows that peculiar, inarticulate quality that has worried so many of his students. His language fails him, as it fails all mystics, and he becomes a "semantic stutterer,"¹¹ at this point, as do all mystics. In a philosophical milieu that has just fostered Transcendentalism (something very near Neoplatonism, in some respects, but which allows for very little stuttering) this is a serious, incomprehensible affair.

Plotinus does not stutter in his description of the One, but neither does he adequately define it, which would be impossible. If we regard Browning as a mystic when he is confronted by a problem such as this defining or describing of the Deity, perhaps he will appear slightly less con-

fused. The greatest characteristic of mystical language is not vagueness, but paradox, which does not set well with a literal mind.

Certainly, Browning is not consistent in the nature-Mysticism, or Pantheistic-Mystical view of God as an immanence.

... God is seen God

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul
and the clod. ("Saul," 249-50)

In contrast to this frequently encountered idea of God, we find God appealed to as a transcendent, yet almost personal entity. The two contrary ideas occur with approximately the same frequency, and we find that the same character, the Pope (who is himself integrated and not confused) describes God in both the transcendent, personal form and in the Mystical, abstract mode. For instance, the "sun" symbol is used frequently¹² (which Plotinus, also, used frequently; in fact, it is the only concrete symbol he applied to the Godhead); along with "light" and "purity" which are in the oldest, mystical traditions. At other times, the anthropomorphic idea appears, especially in the notion of God's judgment upon Man:

For I am ware it is the seed of act,
God holds appraising in His hollow palm.

("The Pope," 271-72)

This kind of confusion is not Browning's private muddle; it is the simple difficulty of our language which was never meant to handle such concepts denotatively. Abstract language is always figurative. Therefore, "light" and "Good" are every bit as figurative as the more obvious metaphor involving "His hollow palm." It is simply fruitful to look upon God as being imaged forth at one time as a fluid immanence in nature and, at another, as a great, personified moral judge. Our mystical knowledge of His Reality is prior to, and greater than, the various linguistic symbols in which we at different times try to embody Him.

Abt Vogler calls God by a word which conveys the idea of incomprehensibility:

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name? (65)

It seems probable that, here, "Name" corresponds very closely to the "word." Perhaps the idea behind it is similar to the dark sense that resides in the "Quiet" of Caliban;

10. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

11. The phrase is from the title of an article by Stewart Holmes, "Browning: Semantic Stutterer," *PMLA*, LX (1945), 231-255.

12. See the second epigraph of this paper.

something so great and so incomprehensible—in linguistic terms—that it is best not even talked about. The only difference would seem to be that with Caliban the solution is fear-inspired (taboo), whereas with Abt Vogler it arises from an unwillingness to distort the idea of His Being.

The idea of God, not as having love, but as *being* love in some mystical way, runs throughout Browning's poetry. Love is not only the basic, necessary relationship between man and man, but it is part of the *modus operandi* for understanding man and God. Love is almost an organ of understanding; as Goethe said, "To understand something you must first love it." Besides being sound Christian doctrine, this is of the essence of Neoplatonism. Plotinus says of the Good, "It is love, and the object of love, and love itself."¹³ It follows that love is the very principle of unity that raises the soul nearer and nearer to unitive life with the One.

In Neoplatonism, love is an aesthetic longing; it is only beauty that elicits love, and beauty is ultimately an attribute of the Deity (or Deity itself). The power of "Abt Vogler" consists in the longing and love for the particle of beauty that he has seemingly brought out of nothingness. He wants this beauty to be eternal, as well as that part of his being which apprehends it and is enamored of it. His wish will be fulfilled, because the harmony he has played belongs to some archetypal pattern, in a platonic sense, and it must necessarily partake of the eternity of this pattern. The following passage from Plotinus could serve as a philosophical prose basis for the poem:

Harmonies unheard create the harmonies we hear and wake the soul to the consciousness of beauty, showing it the one essence in another kind; for the measures of our music are not arbitrary but are determined by the Principle whose labor is to dominate matter and bring pattern into being.

The idea is not originally Neoplatonic, of course, but Platonic, and it has been a common notion in the history of Western Civilization. And yet the mode of expression that it finds in Plotinus is so close to the idea behind "Abt Vogler" that one wonders if perhaps Browning, at some time or other, did not read this very passage.

III

✓ I have tried to show, not that Browning was a Neoplatonist, but that Neoplatonic ideas are central to much of his

thinking, and that reading his poetry, with Neoplatonism as a background, puts it in a focus that is somewhat different. The most pronounced Neoplatonic idea is found in Browning's unique belief in progress, certainly one of his most characteristic and most profound beliefs. The idea of progress afforded by nineteenth-century science is a barren, and ultimately meaningless, thing, since the ultimate psychic reality—the human being—is believed to be in itself meaningless. In Browning, this idea of progress was subsumed (insofar as it was utilized—as in "Caliban") by the Neoplatonic doctrine of history that represents the striving of all men as directed toward God, and, further, construes this striving as something that is destined to succeed in the end.

It would be impossible to determine how much of this Neoplatonic influence was direct and how much of it was filtered through other thinkers and writers. The significant thing is that Browning selected, consciously and unconsciously, this interpretation of life to the exclusion of so many ideas that were in flux during his early years; it reveals a great deal about his inner self.

I think that reading much of his poetry with Neoplatonism as a background is an enlightening experience. It gives a coherence to his poetry and ties together poems that otherwise seem to have nothing in common. Furthermore, such a poem as, say, "Abt Vogler" is enhanced and altered when we regard the language, not as vague metaphor, but as an attempt at conveying a literal truth—which is what the poem describes, Neoplatonically. *The Ring and the Book* read as a study, not only of the psychological variations on a theme of fact, but as a study of various human beings—each equipped with a different proportion of soul/matter (Reality—non-Being), which Neoplatonically describes their balance of good and evil—striving in manifold and contradictory ways for salvation, is an illuminating experience. As Heraclitus (who was in many ways the first "Neoplatonist") said, "The way up and the way down are one and the same." But the "way" applies only to the soul; the phenomenon of Guido is mostly matter, or nothing; something static, without motion, which Plotinus says is the quality of soul. The "nucleus" of Guido's soul has responded to the beauty in Pompilia, and this "something at the heart" is destined to rise with it, as it has experienced love and understanding. As for the vast predominance of evil in him: "The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound" ("Abt Vogler," 70).

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13. *The Neoplatonists*, p. 60. I have abandoned the Mackenna translation for this passage since the Whittaker book gives an exact

rendering of the original Greek (included at the bottom of p. 60) which the Mackenna does not.

Ruskin on Slavery: A Semantic Examination

John O. Waller

IN HIS BIOGRAPHY of John Ruskin, Derrick Leon wrote that Ruskin's "ideas upon slavery . . . have been usually insufficiently understood," and blamed the incomprehension upon imperfect understanding of Ruskin's idea of caste.¹ Leon might better have written that one or more of Ruskin's uses of the word "slavery" have been thus misunderstood; for Ruskin used the word in a wide variety of senses, depending upon what he wanted to say in a given place.

This topic may have some renewed interest just now during the centennial decade of most of Ruskin's references to slavery, which were made in the context of the widespread English debate over the American Civil War.² But there is at least equal interest in the critical problem of how Ruskin used words. We may recall that he made a great point of using them impeccably. "The study of words had great fascination for him," Sir Edward T. Cook writes. One of his favorite writing practices was to track down the "true meaning" of an English word from its classical forerunners and assert that this meaning was right and currently accepted meanings were wrong. As he perused the classics, he would enter etymological notes into a battery of notebooks which he kept beside him.³ Moreover, his metaphorical jugglings with the word "slavery" become harder to excuse on plea of poetic license since Ruskin was the sworn enemy of all kinds of license.

I believe that if Ruskin on slavery has been "insufficiently understood," it has been so for two reasons: first, because he used the word "slavery" in so many different senses as to deprive it of all practical meaning, and second, because in the matter of actual contemporary Negro slavery, Ruskin never made up his own mind. A close friend of Charles Eliot Norton and Harriet Beecher Stowe, he could not long

convince himself that the Negroes were being on the whole well treated. He had a deep-seated humanitarian hostility to all exploitation of man by man. Yet he was an avowed disciple of Carlyle, who for reasons of his own, boldly defended slavery;⁴ he detested all talk of liberty, including the libertarian arguments usually employed by abolitionists; and he was, with Carlyle, committed to paternalistic regulation of labor which, however unsatisfactorily, the Southern system seemed to represent. Finding no ready practical escape from the dilemma, he concealed indecision behind an array of symbolical ambiguities and other plays on the word "slavery."

I seem to find in Ruskin's writings at least seven different significances for the word "slavery," and I am by no means certain that I have exhausted the possibilities.

First, we may consider the generally understood literal meaning of "slavery," holding of men in lifelong bondage in order to receive the advantage of their labor. When Ruskin used the word thus literally, it was generally to make one of two points: either that such slavery could under proper conditions be beneficial to the slave, to society, or to both; or that whereas he disliked this form of slavery, he disliked other (metaphorical) forms still more. He points out that "the highest conditions of human society reached hitherto" have relegated their uncreative menial labor to slaves (*Works*, XVII, 234). Or he taunts his evangelical readers on their rejection of Solomon's writings and St. Paul's epistle to Philemon as applied to slavery; or he points to the beloved poet Horace "supping with his merry slaves on beans and bacon" (XVII, 521-22). Or in talking to Moncure Conway he sounds like his master, Carlyle, in supposing that "the negro in a kindly Southern home must

1. *Ruskin: the Great Victorian* (London, 1949), p. 327.

2. To discuss Ruskin's position in the Civil War debate would take us rather far from this limited study. We may note that the war years, the 1860's, were the time when Ruskin threw himself as never before into discussing political science. American events were accessible as illustrative material. But with Ruskin the whole matter is complicated by his psychological poor health which afflicted him for much of this time. His letters for these years in *Works*, Library Ed. (Sir E. T. Cook and A. D. O. Wedderburn, eds.; London, 1902-1912), contain frequent reference to his depression. See for 1861, *Works*, XXXVI, 401; for 1862, *Works*, XXXVI, 413, 423; for 1863, *Works*, XXXVI, 454; for 1864, *Works*, XXXVI, 474. Certain passages show that Ruskin intimately associated American troubles with his personal griefs: *Works*, XXXVI, 425; Sir E. T. Cook, *The Life of John Ruskin* (New York, 1911), II, 68-69. Years afterward, in 1882, he wrote: "I was quite furious at the American war, and

have been so ever since, whenever I thought of it." (*Works*, XXXVII, 427.)

3. Cook, *Life*, II, 41.

4. In one passage written in 1863, Ruskin sweepingly refers the reader to all that Carlyle had said about slavery, especially in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* and in *Past and Present*, and declares that Carlyle had already said all that he himself would say about slavery, and apparently said it in vain (*Works*, XVII, 260). Yet Ruskin does not say that he would have said all that Carlyle said. He implies as much, but such a blanket endorsement may be more a broad gesture of discipleship than a deliberate setting forth of the disciple's own creed. Cook (*Works*, XVII, 254n.) asserts that Ruskin was "no defender of negro slavery in the common sense of that term," and then refers to certain of his metaphorical uses of the word "slavery." This returns us to our present topic.

be happier by the life-contract that made him a member of the family."⁵

When, however, Ruskin writes, "I much dislike the slavery, to man, of an African labourer with a spade on his shoulder; but I more dislike the slavery, to the devil, of a Calabrian robber with a gun on his shoulder," the ostensible intent is to make the Calabrian's moral slavery seem more reprehensible, but the contrast seems also to take some of the stigma off the African's being enslaved. When Ruskin goes on in the same passage to write "I dislike the American serf-economy, which separates, occasionally, man and wife, but . . ." and "I dislike the slavery which obliges women (if it does) to carry their children over frozen rivers; but . . ." (XVIII, 551), there can be no doubt of the palliating effect of his parenthetical phrases.

The strongest words Ruskin wrote against practices of contemporary slavery were his condemnation in *Time and Tide of trading* in slaves. But even this passage is more striking in its juggling with meanings than in its attack on the trade. Ruskin wished to declare "parenthetically" that though he was "a fearless defender of some forms of slavery," he was no "defender of the slave trade." He was "prepared" if necessary, and if he had the power, "to throw men into prison, or any other captivity—to bind them or to beat them," to force them to do irksome labor, and if they desperately resisted, "to hand or shoot them." But he would never sell them. Bodies of men, and much more their souls, "must not be bought and sold." But neither should land, water, or air be sold; yet all of these might "on certain terms, be bound, or secured in possession, to particular persons under certain conditions." Herein, declared Ruskin, have lain "most of the great errors in action . . . among the emancipation men": in their "blundering confusion of ideas between governing men, and trading in men, and by consequent interference with the restraint, instead of only with the sale" (XVII, 438). Somehow in all this discussion the Negro slave becomes lost, unless we assume either that slavery, short of trading in men, was the proper sort of government for all Negroes and that there was thus no significant difference between the Negro's proper condition and that of an imprisoned convicted criminal, or else that Negro slavery was not one of the "forms of slavery" that Ruskin would so fearlessly defend. One more forthright sentence might have dispelled the ambiguity.

The foregoing passage has introduced us to Ruskin's second use of the word "slavery": his extending it to all conditions in which men are held in restraint of will and

forced to give service. Such conditions, which included military service and imprisonment for lawbreaking, were, according to Ruskin, approvable or not according to circumstances. Ruskin had never been able, he professed to his readers in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1863, "to ascertain in definite terms, from the declaimers against slavery, what they understand by it." If they mean "only the imprisonment or compulsion of one person by another," that is a state that is often "highly expedient." It is evil "only in its abuse": "when men are slaves who should not be or masters who should not be, or under conditions which should not be."⁶ It was neither a necessary nor a desirable condition of slavery "that parents should be separated from their children or husbands from wives"; but both these things were frequently accomplished very permanently by the institution of war, "against which people declaim with less violence" (XVII, 254). Ruskin developed this idea at greater length:

To press a sailor, seize a white youth by conscription for a soldier, or carry off a black one for a labourer, may be all right, or all wrong, according to needs and circumstances. It is wrong to scourge a man unnecessarily. So it is to shoot him. Both must be done on occasion; and it is better and kinder to flog a man to his work, than to leave him idle till he robs, and flog him afterwards (XVII, 254-55).

Although a war was being fought in America and great antislavery mass meetings were being held in England at the time Ruskin wrote this, he apparently preferred not to write the single phrase which might have made it clear whether he felt that Southern American "needs and circumstances" were such as to make enslaving the black youth "all right." The reference to conscription would not have escaped many English readers at the time when the papers were roundly denouncing the North for conscripting soldiers for the Union Army.

Ruskin went on. If, however, "slavery" is used to mean only the "purchase, by money, of the right of compulsion," such a purchase takes place when one monarch transfers territory to another monarch for money. Here again, he said, "the dispute seems to be about the fashion of the thing, rather than the fact of it." A parable might illustrate his meaning:

There are two rocks in mid-sea, on each of which, neglected equally by instructive and commercial

Pulveris (1872), Ruskin altered this last phrase to read: "or even the fittest characters for each state placed in it under conditions which should not be." (*Works*, XVII, 254.)

5. Conway, *Autobiography, Memory and Experiences* (Boston, 1904), II, 117.
6. Originally in "Essays on Political Economy" in *Fraser's*, LXVII (April, 1863), 441-462; before reprinting this passage in *Munera*

powers, a handful of inhabitants live as they may. Two merchants bid for the two properties, but not in the same terms. One bids for the people, buys *them*, and sets them to work, under pain of scourge; the other bids for the rock, buys *it*, and throws the inhabitants into the sea. The former is the American, the latter the English method, of slavery; much is to be said for, and something against, both, which I hope to say in due time and place (XVII, 255-56).

Cook's footnote here explains that Ruskin's sally at the "English method of slavery" was aimed at English and Scotch landlords who had driven their tenants off the land.

Finally, Ruskin wrote, if by "slavery" is meant "*the purchase of the body and soul of the creature itself for money*," he believed that it was not "among the black races that purchases of this kind are most extensively made, or that separate souls of a fine make fetch the highest price" (XVII, 256). This moves into another of Ruskin's uses of the word, his employing it as ammunition in his fight for industrial reforms. The phrase "for money" has a double meaning; a small amount of money paid to the laborer himself in exchange for his body and soul, and a greater amount of money made by the employer as profit.

This, then, we shall call Ruskin's *third* use of the word, as a term of opprobrium against exploitation of white workers. In an article first written in 1863 he referred to a *Times* item reporting the average weekly earnings of one Betty Taylor, who worked from Monday morning at 8 a.m. to Friday night at 5:30 p.m. for 1s. 5½ d.; a footnote (1872) added, "This kind of slavery finds no Abolitionists that I hear of" (XVII, 246n). He had such oppression of white workers in mind when he wrote that although he did not object to "the emancipation of any kind or number of blacks in due place and time," he believed that "white emancipation not only ought to precede, but must by law of all fate precede, black emancipation" (XVIII, 551). The assumption of the black's inferiority seems obvious. All this, of course, is most Carlylean.

Akin to this third sense of the word but not identical (for the third kind of slavery might be abolished or alleviated but the fourth kind not) is a *fourth* sense, what Ruskin called "one world-wide and everlasting form of slavery, wholesome in use as deadly in abuse—the service of the rich by the poor" (XVII, 261). This introduced an aspect of Ruskin's conception of caste, that with some allowance for individual exceptions the wage-earning class was innately inferior to the employing class. The employees represented improvidence, the unwise spending of their means as soon as they received it; the employers represented providence, the prudent saving of a portion of their means. Inevitably the improvident came under the power

of the provident in order to live. Such "slavery" was good or bad according to the relative enlightenment or generosity of the employers (XVII, 262 ff).

A *fifth*, more figurative, use is as a term of moral reprobation against persons who accept dishonorable employment in return for gain. These are slaves, Ruskin would say, having sold themselves. He wrote in *A Crown of Wild Olives* (1866): "The distinguishing sign of slavery is to have a price, and be bought for it" (XVIII, 482). In 1865 he illustrated this conception by the hypothetical case of a gentleman captured by a Barbary pirate, chained, set to field work, and flogged from dawn to evening. He is still no slave, only a badly treated prisoner. As a Christian gentleman he will refuse to do dishonorable work, even though he be slain for his refusal. But if he take the pirate's pay and thus further the piracy, if "for fitting price he betray his fellow prisoners, and take up the scourge instead of enduring it—become the smiter instead of the smitten, at the African's bidding—how then?" "Of all the sheepish notions" in what passed for the English public "mind" (Ruskin's quotation marks), Ruskin thought the "simplest" was that slavery became "neutralised" by the giving and taking of pay. It was "precisely that fact of its being paid for which makes it complete." The most "sorrowful" instance of this broader slavery was "that of an artist doing, consciously, bad work for pay" (XIX, 104).

Perhaps such verbal gymnastics as these are respectable enough when they merely transfer the discreditableness carried by a word like "slavery" to another discreditableness situation; but to me they seem objectionable when, after the transference, they lift the discreditableness from the literal situation, as here when they "demonstrate" that "slavery" (*first* sense) is really not "slavery" (*fifth* sense) at all—when the *fifth* sense is as a metaphor entirely dependent upon the *first*.

A *sixth* use is even more figurative: to describe the brutish, uncreative, destructive element in human nature. Ruskin ingeniously illustrated this point by invoking the examples of Ariel and Caliban. Both were bound to Prospero, but Ariel allegorically represented "true, and therefore spiritual Liberty," while Caliban represented "true and therefore carnal and brutal Slavery" (XVII, 453). Ariel represented "faithful and imaginative labour," Caliban "rebellious, hurtful, and slavish labour." Caliban showed his true slavishness by the gods he worshiped (especially Stephano, whose deity consisted, for Caliban, in bearing good liquor); further, Caliban showed true slavishness by reflecting always on the physical aspects of his nature, on "cramps" and "side stitches." "The whole nature of slavery," Ruskin writes, "being one cramp and cretinous contraction." Fancy Ariel with cramps and contractions, Ruskin exclaimed. "You may fetter him, but you set no

mark on him; you may put him to hard work and far journey, but you cannot give him a cramp" (XVII, 256-60). The fact was that "slavery is not a political institution at all, but an inherent, natural, and eternal inheritance of a large portion of the human race—to whom the more you give of their own free will, the more slaves they will make themselves" (XVII, 256).

But by this time a Ruskin disciple, faced with a practical necessity for speaking of the actual political institution of Southern Negro slavery, would be obliged to coin a new word, his master having instructed him that "slavery is not a political institution at all." And the ambiguity still lingers whether the statement implies that the majority of enslaved Negroes were irredeemable Calibans, and were therefore (as Carlyle would have peremptorily asserted) in their divinely ordained position.

A seventh, also figurative, use is to describe the devotion of human energies to a less creative level than that of one's potentialities. I find this use only once, in Ruskin's autobiography, *Praeterita*, when, in speaking of his old friend, Charles Eliot Norton, Ruskin writes:

... now he is as hopelessly out of gear and place, over in the States there, as a runaway star dropped into Purgatory; and twenty times more a slave

than the blackest nigger he ever set his white scholars to fight the South for; because all the faculties a black has may be fully developed by a good master (see Miss Edgeworth's story of the Grateful Negro),—while only about the thirtieth or fortieth part of Charles Norton's effective contents and capacity are beneficially spent in the dilution of the hot lava, and fructification of the hot ashes, of American character (XXV, 523-24).

The sum of the seven uses suggests an interesting ambivalence. The closer Ruskin approaches to a literal use of the word, the more likely he is to palliate the institution. The more figurative he becomes, the more unfavorable the connotation. If figurative language indicates a man's deep feelings, Ruskin in his deepest consciousness had an intense dislike for slavery. But a second look at the metaphors shows that most of the dislike was concentrated on the slave himself. The real slave was Caliban, or the man who sold his talents, or the one who had frittered them away. As to any accidental slaves, the idea of slavery tended to lose its force, for they were "really" not slaves at all. With such unconscious feeling, Ruskin was not likely to have very much efficacious sympathy for the enslaved Southern Negro.

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Hopkins's "The Shepherd's Brow"

Robert Boykin Clark, S. J.

ALTHOUGH CRITICS have almost incessantly analyzed many of G. M. Hopkins's poems, they have slighted one of the most striking of his sonnets, "The shepherd's brow." Bridges believed that it "must have been thrown off one day in a cynical mood"; therefore, he placed it not in the main canon but among the "Unfinished Poems." Gardner correctly observed that "this sonnet is the last of five full drafts, so it is obvious that G.M.H. took it seriously."¹ Indeed, one version would establish Hopkins's sincerity; a poet with his dedication to form may trifle with the triolet, but never with the sonnet. Because of its tone, nevertheless, Gardner left "this important poem" among the fragments as the unique exemplar of Hopkins's personal dejection creating a "work of the most downright Swiftian cyni-

cism"² which describes "modern man threatened only with a prolongation of puerilities."³

The received interpretation, that this poem belongs with the fragments, should not be too readily canonized; the critic must examine the poem more carefully. Perhaps the poem has failed to receive careful attention because its structure seems quite simple. It is an Italian sonnet whose octave presents a contrast between ordinary man (ll. 5-8) and two figures of tragedy, "the shepherd" (ll. 1-3) and the falling angels (ll. 3-4), and whose sestet portrays the situation of ordinary man. But this apparently simple poem conceals a number of problems.

A group of problems center around the question "Who is the shepherd?" Gardner presumes that Hopkins portrayed

1. *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner (New York, 1948, 3d ed.), p. 262.
2. W. H. Gardner, *Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889): A Study in*

Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition (London, 1949), I, 155. Cf. *Poems*, loc. cit.
3. Gardner, *GMH*, II, 331.

a typical shepherd reacting to the merely natural phenomenon of a lightning bolt. A little attention to Hopkins's general poetic practice makes this identification difficult. A concise poet such as Hopkins chooses terms with a certain precision. But in the poem there is no reason why lightning should be not merely frightening, but forked, horrifying, and glorious. Again, the human brow does not register emotion particularly well; yet, if Hopkins meant "face," he would have written "face." "Fronting" seems too strong a term since the shepherd is a merely passive spectator. The rhetoric of typical characters, such as "the shepherd," is quite foreign to Hopkins; he generally refers to an individual or gives a name to a representative person, such as "Jack," "Felix Randal," or "Harry Ploughman." Indeed, if the shepherd is an ordinary human, the evident contrast between him and Jack has little point. Finally, lightning in Hopkins generally is not a merely natural phenomenon, but represents a theophany.⁴

The received interpretation implies that Hopkins rewrote a sonnet four times in a style for which he showed little love. But if "the shepherd" is not a neoclassic type, but an individual, these difficulties vanish. He then appears to be Moses, "That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed."⁵

In *Paradise Lost*, Michael prophesied to the fallen Adam the *mysterium tremendum* of the Sinai theophany.

This also shall they gain by thir delay
 In the wide Wilderness, there they shall found
 Thir government, and thir great Senate choose
 Through the twelve Tribes, to rule by Laws ordain'd:
 God from Mount of *Sinai*, whose grey top
 Shall tremble, he descending, will himself
 In Thunder, Lightning and loud Trumpet's sound
 Ordain them Laws; part such as appertain
 To civil Justice, part religious Rites
 Of sacrifice, informing them, by types
 And shadows, of that destin'd Seed to bruise
 The Serpent by what means he shall achieve
 Mankind's deliverance. But the voice of God
 To mortal ear is dreadful; they beseech
 That *Moses* might report to them his will,
 And terror cease. (XII, 223-238)

Milton eliminated a few important elements of the *Exodus* narrative. The establishment of the Jewish nation under the law balances the Lord's preceding threat to destroy the people because they worshipped the Golden Calf (Ex. 32, 9-10). Again, when Moses descended from Mount

Sinai, "the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him the Lord." Following the Vulgate, the Douay-Challoner version reads "And when Moses came down from the mount Sinai, he held the two tablets of the testimony: and he knew not that his face was horned from the conversation of the Lord." In a note Challoner explained his version: "Horned: That is, shining, and sending forth rays of light like horns." The Hebrew people were terrified at the sight and asked Moses to veil his face.

Moses's brow fronted forked lightning in two senses: he confronted the lightning of the glory of the Lord, and he confronted the Hebrews with a reflected lightning in the shape of forked beams. Sinai's two forms of lightning, when the Lord threatened to destroy his people, was surely a *mysterium tremendum* including not only horror and glory, but even havoc.

Having established the reference of the opening lines, we can reexamine the general structure of the sonnet. The octave loads every rift with biblical and Miltonic ore. Hopkins compresses history into the present in the octave. First he shows as a tragic hero Moses, overpowered by the radiance of the Lord; then the tragic heroes, the angels, led by Lucifer the Bearer of Light. Whereas Moses was granted the grace of seeing the glory of the Lord (Ex. 33, 17-23), Lucifer fell because he desired his own glory.

Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Is. 14, 11-15)

Even after he fell, Lucifer was a figure of grandeur and tragedy:

Thus far these beyond
 Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
 Thir dread commander: he above the rest
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent
 Stood like a Tower: his form had yet not lost
 All her original brightness, nor yet appear'd

4. *Poems*, pp. 57-66: No. 28, "The Wreck of The *Deutschland*," stanzas 6, 9, 10, 34; No. 31, "God's Grandeur," 11, 1-3.

5. *Paradise Lost*, I, 8; ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1962). Cf. Ex. 3; Ps. 76-77, 20.

Less the Arch-Angel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of Glory obscur'd. . . . (P. L. I, 587-594)⁶

Unlike Moses and the devils, modern man has little glory, whether true or delusive, from God or from himself; he cannot aspire to tragedy. Essentially he is his twenty pounds of skeleton;⁷ even his breath, the biblical symbol of the life-giving power of the Lord,⁸ has become, like a medieval skull, a continual reminder that he must die. The scripture punishes fallen man with death and promises a brow glistening not with the glory of the Lord but with sweat (*Gen. 3, 19*).

The sestet develops Hopkins's picture of the condition of man in three stages. First he shows the essential man beneath the apparent fame of a bold name—human glory—as a common laborer characterized neither by tragedy nor even moral decision but only common decency.⁹ In the contemporary world "Man Jack, the man is just," i.e., man is essentially Jack, a common worker.

Secondly, the poet contrasts with this exteriorized life of common man his own many interior deaths in spirit. Hopkins writes in another poem that "all / Life death does end, and each day dies with Sleep" (No. 65, ll. 13-14).

Reviewing such interior tragedies, the poet breaks off and advances to a third stage in the human situation. The man's interior tragedies, viewed objectively at the civilized but plain setting of a dinner-table, and set within the framework of the history of the greatest Old Testa-

ment figure and of the angels, appear as a brightly colored, fantastic and rather trivial show, but no tragedy.

Gardner contrasted "God's Grandeur," which balances the objective sordidness of life and a subjective relief from sordidness and triviality through Christian dogma, with "The shepherd's brow," in which "the sordidness is intensified and the doctrinal corrective is in abeyance."¹⁰ But there is much more to the poem than a simple contrast with "God's Grandeur." Hopkins built this poem on a series of contrasts between four types of characters and the worlds they inhabit. He collapses time to make all the action of the poem simultaneous. He frames the essential human situation with two realms of tragedy—i.e., action with a truly religious value. Man then splits up into two: "Jack" and his wife, the objects of comedy and light satire, and the "I", the "person" of the poet who is the observer and subject of comedy.

The "person" of the poet advances from the self pity of apparent tragedy to an awareness of the triviality of his suffering seen in its frame. Whereas Gardner believed that the poem presents the objective triviality of life without the subjective corrective of belief in the Incarnation, the poem rather implies that awareness of the triviality of modern life comes from religious meditation. If cynicism implies doubt and contempt for humanity, the theologically grounded wit of Hopkins is far from cynical.¹¹

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Imagery in the *Scenes of Clerical Life*

Daniel P. Deneau

PUBLISHED SERIALLY in *Blackwood's Magazine* from January to November, 1857, the *Scenes of Clerical Life* brought George Eliot an amount of fame seldom allotted to first works of fiction. But today, especially as we consider the stories in relationship to the novels which were soon to follow, the *Scenes* are generally (but not uniformly) disappointing: sometimes sentimental, melodramatic, unbalanced, starkly simple, and marred by the particular-

ly intrusive voice of the author. Nonetheless, as faulty and disappointing as the *Scenes* sometimes may be, they stand, in virtue of the absence or presence of imagery, as an important and revealing introduction to George Eliot's succeeding achievements. Between "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton," the first of the series, and "Janet's Repentance," the last, there is a distinct difference in the frequency and quality of the imagery; and partially be-

6. The use of Satan as a tragic figure is well covered in Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (London, 1937), Ch. II, "The Metamorphoses of Satan."

7. *The New English Dictionary* identifies "score" as the weight of twenty or twenty-one pounds, particularly with reference to cattle.

8. *Gen. 2:7*.

9. Hopkins here seems to combine a reference to *Gen. 3:19* "dust to

dust" with the common nineteenth-century use of "dust" as an euphemism for "excrement."

10. Gardner, *GMH*, II, 22-23.

11. The argument does not entirely depend on the identification of the shepherd as Moses, which is not possible to prove beyond reasonable doubt. However, the rhetoric clearly demands that he be regarded not as an ordinary shepherd, but, at the very least, as a "Moses figure" or a man who gains in poetic significance and power from the biblical echoes.

cause of this, there is a greater difference in the relative value of the stories than perhaps has been realized.¹

"Amos Barton," the most simple of the three stories, contains no meaningful image patterns or even truly rewarding incidental images; the relatively few images that do appear are at their worst awkward and overly ingenious figures and at their best colorful little decorations.² Unlike "Amos Barton," "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story," the second of the *Scenes*, contains an array of images, most of which are associated with Caterina Sarti. Eliot attempts a fuller explanation of Caterina than of any character in "Amos Barton" and in the process calls up a number of images to assist in the character drawing. More important than the number, however, is the fact that the images fall into several distinct groups. There is advance here in frequency and in the attempt to gain strength and complexity through incremental repetition. But some of the principal images function in a very unfortunate way. The fairly numerous flower, plant, and bird images, which are more decorative than illuminating (decorations that suggest smallness, fragility, and naturalness), tend to carry the story into bathetic depths; and the melodramatic tone of the story is intensified by images of poisoning, as the following quotations should illustrate. Caterina finds Miss Assher's kind words "like poison stings inflaming her to madness" (I, 227).³ Anthony "had given her the poison that seemed so sweet while she was drinking it, and now it was in her blood, and she was helpless" (I, 228); Caterina becomes like a victim clothed in a "poisoned garment" who "writhes under the torture" and "has no thought of the coming death" (I, 244). The imagery vividly, too vividly, suggests the passionate, love-death struggle in which Caterina is involved. If the story itself were somewhat less melodramatic, such imagery might have served as an extremely vivid way of crystallizing the passion surging beneath; but the imagery is far from alien to the tone of the story; melodrama simply supports melodrama.

Caterina Sarti, like many Eliot heroines, must awake from a dream to the reality of life. The dream-reality theme is not developed to any great extent in Caterina's case, but her situation is sometimes described through imagery which appears throughout George Eliot's fiction. When Caterina first meets the impressive Miss Assher, fiancée to Caterina's one-time lover, she seems to feel "for the first time, all the folly of her former dream" (I, 191). However, when Anthony, though engaged, once again pays lover-like attention to Caterina, the typical images of the haze or veil and the cold light describe Caterina's feelings; she feels "as if a miracle had happened in her little world of feeling, and made the future all vague—a dim morning haze of possibilities, instead of the sombre wintry daylight and clear rigid outline of painful certainty" (I, 207). Shortly later, when Caterina is reminded of Miss Assher's beauty and of the approaching wedding, the words of reminder "come upon her like the pressure of a cold hand, rousing her from confused dozing to a perception of hard, familiar realities" (I, [213]). The dream, the future bound about with a distorting veil, the cold awakening—all are to appear (sometimes, of course, in slightly different form) with striking frequency through the course of Eliot's fiction. In this particular case, the images never obtrude; and perhaps even because they are not insistent, we appreciate them all the more: the images link Caterina to the heroines who are to follow and add a new dimension to the story much more successfully than the principal image groups.

With "Janet's Repentance" George Eliot loses sight of the credo set forth in "Amos Barton"⁴ and quite clearly, I believe, moves away from the short story form towards the larger expanse of the novel. Apart from its merits and defects as a piece of fiction and apart from its content of imagery, the story, therefore, represents a minor but significant step in George Eliot's "development." The larger scope which George Eliot here achieves results from the

1. Barbara Hardy, as far as I know, is the only critic who has focused closely on the stories, which she discusses in several chapters of *The Novels of George Eliot* (London, 1959). See especially Chap. X, "The Pathetic Image," where Mrs. Hardy discusses "three prominent pathetic images which are repeated [in Eliot's fiction]: the image of the wounded animal, the image of the plant, and the image of the child" (p. 202). Mrs. Hardy does not point out the changes from story to story in Eliot's imaging technique.
2. One of the most interesting scenes occurs when Amos returns home after the burial of his wife, at a time of crisis and change: "... Amos turned with his children to reenter the house—the house where, an hour ago, Milly's dear body lay, where the windows were half-darkened, and sorrow seemed to have a hallowed precinct for itself, shut out from the world. But now she was gone; the broad snow-reflected daylight was in all the rooms; the vicarage again seemed part of the common working-day world, and Amos, for the first time, felt that he was alone . . ." (I, 104). I suggest that the scene here, illuminated by the symbolic light of realization or

reality that reduces the world—symbolically pictured as rooms—to its harsh, natural outline, should be included in the large daylight room pattern that Barbara Hardy first discussed in detail in "The Moment of Disenchantment in George Eliot's Novels" (*RES*, n.s., V [July 1954], 256-264; reprinted with additions in *The Novels of George Eliot*, pp. 185-200). Mrs. Hardy has noted that the first appearance of the symbolic day-lit room scene in Eliot's fiction occurs in "Janet's Repentance." I add that unlike as Amos may be from the more famous and complex Eliot heroes and heroines, he still undergoes a disenchantment, one portrayed in typical Eliot terms.

3. Citations from *Scenes of Clerical Life* in my text are to *The Writings of George Eliot*, Warwickshire ed., I and II (Boston, 1907).
4. "I wish to stir your sympathy with commonplace troubles—to win your tears for real sorrow: sorrow such as may live next door to you—such as walks neither in rags nor in velvet, but in very ordinary decent apparel" (I, 85-86). Also see I, 62.

joining of several interests: there is an attempt to treat both a public and a private question—the rise of Evangelicalism in its religious, social, and economic aspects; and the personal problems and relationships of the major characters. The division of interests falls approximately mid-way in the story. Even though connecting links are established in much the same way as in several later novels where diverse interests are yoked together, the two parts of the story never satisfactorily amplify one another or merge into any sort of solid unity. Amidst the variety, our interest centers almost exclusively on a single character, Janet Dempster, around whom, as we might expect, most of the images themselves are centered.

"Janet's Repentance" is less melodramatic than "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story"; and the images, though sometimes tinged with melodramatic overtones, hardly have the same effect as in the preceding story because they operate in a differently toned medium. Moreover, the members of the principal image groups of "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story" are essentially incidental images with a common base. There is, for instance, first a caged bird, then a bird with nest "torn and empty"; there is a poisoned drink and then a poisoned garment—both really nonfunctional, even capricious modifications. Individual images of "Janet's Repentance" sometimes are more closely related to one another than those in the preceding story; and although the principal images of "Janet's Repentance" have several different bases, they seem to grow out of a more complex and unified metaphorical view of the situation. They converge in order to add one well-developed dimension to the story; they intensify the surface drama and externalize the escape that Janet seeks: sometimes this escape is from an abyss, a prison, a desert, or a raging sea.

The story of escape which the varied images relate is not a simple one. The escape which Janet seeks is from a life of isolation and aridity, of turbulence and mental and physical torture. It is an escape both from the unhappiness of her marriage and from her own self. For Janet the sweetness of young love has turned into the bitterness and pain of mature dread, perhaps even hatred. Childless, isolated from the ever-important sympathy, persecuted by an animalistic husband, Janet sometime in her past learned to seek escape from the bitterness of the moment in a habit—alcoholism—which itself has turned on her as perhaps her greatest tormentor. It is the climax and its immediate aftermath of this life with which George Eliot concerns herself in the actual story.

The initial images appear very early in the story, at a moment of comparative peace and happiness for Janet. Her mother, however, sees this moment for what it is and understands that "the curtain of cloud seems parted an instant only that we may measure all its horror as it hangs

low, black, and imminent, in contrast with the transient brightness; the water-drops that visit the parched lips in the desert bear with them only the keen imagination of thirst" (II, 66-67). She hopes the "eternal love" in which she believes will not "leave her child to wander farther and farther into the wilderness till there was no turning . . ." (II, 67). Before alterations begin to take effect in Janet's anguished life, her soul is imaged as "a vexed sea, tossed by a new storm before the old waves have fallen" (II, 135).

But it is as the change in Janet's condition develops that image piles on image to describe her situation. As she is cast on the street by her drunken husband, she feels that "Her troubles had been sinking her lower from year to year, pressing upon her like heavy, fever-laden vapours, and perverting the very plenitude of her nature into a deeper source of disease. Her wretchedness had been a perpetually tightening instrument of torture, which had gradually absorbed all the other sensibilities of her nature into the sense of pain and the maddened craving for relief. Oh, if some ray of hope, of pity, of consolation, would pierce through the horrible gloom . . ." (II, 148). She feels that she must clutch at life, "though with bleeding fingers; her feet must cling to the firm earth that the sunlight would revisit, not slip into the untried abyss, where she might long even for familiar pains" (II, 150). Her life at this point is as a "sun-dried, barren tract, where there was no shadow, and where all the waters were bitter" (II, 157). As she wanders in this arid spiritual desert, she thinks of Mr. Tryan, whom she had met before only with a single glance; he seems to promise her "an untried spring, where the waters might be sweet" (II, 157). Mr. Tryan answers Janet's call for help, and during their first interview Janet looks on him as "one clinging to a slippery summit of a rock, while the waves are rising higher and higher, watches the boat that has put from shore to his rescue" (II, 172). Even as Mr. Tryan tries to console Janet, he sees the situation of man, Janet in particular, in terms of "enclosure." The self-willed man in rebellion against God, one who is devoted only to self-gratification in the world, shuts himself up in a "crowded stifling room," where there is only "poisoned air" to breathe; but "as soon as we submit ourselves to his will . . . it is as if the walls had fallen down that shut us out from God . . ." (II, 174). On the day after this interview with Mr. Tryan, the image of the prison is applied to the situation: "A door had been opened in Janet's cold dark prison of self-despair, and the golden light of morning was pouring in its slanting beams through the blessed opening" (II, 189). Janet herself describes Mr. Tryan's words as being "like rain on the parched ground" (II, 182).

At this point Janet simply has discovered an opening

into a new way of life; freedom and sure-footed progress are yet in store for her. During her husband's illness she realizes her insecurity and trusts to her new-found guide: "If she felt herself failing, she would confess it to him at once; if her feet began to slip, there was that stay for her to cling to. Oh, she could never be drawn back into that cold damp vault of sin and despair again; she had felt the morning sun, she had tasted the sweet pure air of trust and penitence and submission" (II, 210). As Janet's rescue is taking place, in the surface story and in the sub-surface imagery, Eliot even applies the images of the prison and of the turbulent sea to represent Janet's feelings for her dying and unrescued husband. Janet feels that her husband is "imprisoned in misery . . . deaf for ever to the sounds of love and forgiveness. His sins had made a hard crust round his soul . . ." (II, 205). "She only felt that the husband of her youth was dying; far, far out of her reach, as if she were standing helpless on the shore, while he was sinking in the black storm-waves . . ." (II, 213). If Janet herself is to attain victory, it must be like the sea's: though the advance of human beings may be sure, "they will often, after a mightier wave than usual, seem to roll back so far as to lose all the ground they had made" (II, 221). A temptation (a desire for brandy) does sweep over Janet, but she overcomes the temptation, feeling, however, that it "would come again—that rush of desire might overmaster her the next time—she would slip back again into that deep slimy pit from which she had been once rescued, and there might be no deliverance for her more" (II, 226). Faced with this new terror, Janet rushes again to her rescuer, whose words of consolation and encouragement again change the picture: ". . . the water-floods that had threatened to overwhelm her rolled back again, and life once more spread its heaven-covered space before her" (II, 227-228). As Janet leaves Mr. Tryan, the image of the abyss reappears; he hopes that his fragile life will last long enough "to see Janet's restoration thoroughly established—to see her no longer fleeing, struggling, clinging up the steep sides of a precipice whence she might be any moment hurled back into the depths of despair, but walking firmly on the level ground of habit" (II, 229). At the same time Janet herself feels "like a little child whose hand is firmly grasped by its father, as its frail limbs make their way over the rough ground; if it should stumble, the father will not let it go" (II, 229). Through Mr. Tryan's guidance, Janet eventually finds herself reestablished in the good graces of the community; all Milby recognizes

that she is "a changed woman,—changed as the dusty, bruised, and sun-withered plant is changed when the soft rains of heaven have fallen on it . . ." (II, 233). Janet's constitution, once disordered by her non-conquered habit of alcoholism, begins to "recover its equipoise"; to this George Eliot adds: "The prisoner feels where the iron has galled him, long after his fetters have been loosed" (II, 233). Retrospectively, Janet's relationship to Mr. Tryan is seen once again in terms of the prison; Mr. Tryan "had come to her like the angel in the prison, and loosed her bonds, and led her by the hand till she could look back on the dreadful doors that had once closed her in" (II, 245). As the story concludes, Janet is able to see the years stretching evenly "before her like an autumn afternoon . . ." (II, 249).⁵

Thus, there is an imaged drama of great intensity which moves forward with the actual surface drama, intensifying moments of Janet's struggle, even assuming a sort of existence of its own apart from the story. If, however, the numerous images are separated into sub-groups—abyss, prison, desert, sea—we notice that the images at times do not have a relationship so close that image directly modifies image. The images of the sea, for instance, in the way they stand in relationship to one another, are quite like the groups in "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story"; the images of the prison, on the other hand, show a more direct modification. Considered in separate groups or considered in a mass, the images nonetheless do enrich the story in an important way. Each subgroup contributes a certain quality to Janet's predicament: her life, for instance, is as barren as the scorched sands—barren of children, of love, even of contact with the world of Milby; she is locked out from communion with the world, from the ever-important sympathy because of her habit and her husband's personality. Although each series expands the story in certain directions, the whole group merges together again to form a common tale of escape. For Janet to be imaged alike on a barren desert and in a raging sea is not image clashing against image, is not metaphorical confusion and chaos; for a common element links subgroup with subgroup to give an artistic unity amid variety; simply, the images separate and converge, and finally form a complex, interwoven system. And the very number of the images suggests that George Eliot struggled to make the story, on its personal level, something more than a sordid drama of wife-beating and a neat story of conversion. She seems to have striven to give an elemental force to the personal

5. The story also contains several images that speak of Janet's conflict with reality; the most notable of these, a day-lit room image (II, 155-156), has been cited by Mrs. Hardy in her "Disenchantment" article and in her book; for that reason I have not treated

the subject here. "Janet's Repentance," in fact, contains many images other than those which I have enumerated; my intention has been simply to point out the major images that belong to the central pattern.

story of Janet Dempster: the "way" which Janet travels is from the torturing enclosure, from the raging sea and burning sand.

But the approval must be qualified. By occurring so heavily in the second "part" of the story, the images tend to make the unbalance seem even greater than the actual story lines suggest; and one may feel, perhaps intuitively more than logically, that the actual narrative does not bear such a heavy load of imagery. To understand the images as the outgrowth of a painful past and as suitable to the climax of Janet's life story is not quite enough. If Janet Dempster's story had been treated at greater length, with more fullness of dramatic detail, we might have felt the image bulk more justifiable. If George Eliot had actually turned to the novel form with "Janet's Repentance" and had worked her way leisurely through Janet's story, then we might have met the images with somewhat greater satisfaction. As they stand, the images perhaps call too

much attention to themselves, because of their number and because they are derived from areas so foreign to the actual surface life of the story.

From "Amos Barton" to "Janet's Repentance" there is, I suggest, a movement from nearly imageless prose to a prose that contains a moderately complex and moderately successful system of images. Considered generally, the three stories which comprise the *Scenes of Clerical Life* are apprentice work, but work which gives evidence of progress, especially evidence of a growing desire to employ the figurative in order to make the literal chain of events "alive with meaning." Undoubtedly George Eliot's major novels contain more complex, subtle, and consequently more interesting images than those of the *Scenes*; but, at the same time, Eliot's interest in imagery is manifest at the earliest moments of her career as a writer of fiction.

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Art, Death, and the Composition of *Shirley*

Earl A. Knies

IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT that the composition of Charlotte Brontë's third novel, *Shirley*, was interrupted by the successive deaths of Branwell, Emily, and Anne Brontë; and writers—notably Janet Spens and J.M.S. Tompkins—have argued plausibly that as a result Charlotte altered her original plan while she was writing the novel. Thus, many of the readily acknowledged weaknesses of the novel can be attributed to personal rather than artistic problems. But these theories, as well as the statement in Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* upon which they are based, appear in view of the available evidence to be erroneous.

To review briefly, Mrs. Gaskell states that Charlotte "had nearly finished the second volume of her tale when Branwell died,—after him Emily,—after Anne;—the pen, laid down when there were three sisters living and loving, was taken up when one alone remained. Well might she call the first chapter that she wrote after this, 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death.'"¹

Partly on the basis of this comment, Janet Spens constructs her theory that Charlotte's original intention in the novel was "to give Shirley to Robert Moore and to let Caroline die of a broken heart," but that Anne's death in May changed her mind: "Mrs. Gaskell tells us that the first chapter written after Anne's death was the 24th . . . in which Caroline goes down to the gates of death, but returns. Now Louis [Moore] makes his first appearance in the preceding chapter, and up to that point the way has been prepared for the gradual decline of Caroline. It would, I think, have been a greater book, if the author had hardened her heart and gone on." But Charlotte changed her plan because she could not bear "to use in a work of art the clear impression imprinted by the agony of the death of the prototype" and because "it might suggest to the world, should the identity of the Bells ever be discovered, that Anne had died of unrequited love."²

J. M. S. Tompkins accepts the idea that Anne's death

1. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Temple Scott and B. W. Willett (Edinburgh, 1907), p. 365.

2. "Charlotte Brontë," in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, XIV (1929) 63-64. Anne Brontë is not usually held to be the prototype of Caroline Helstone. The more common view is that Caroline is really a combination of Ellen Nussey and Charlotte herself. For a review of the opinions on this subject, see Herbert E. Wroot, *Sources of the Brontë Novels: Persons and Places*, Supplementary Part No. 4, *Brontë Society Transactions*, VIII (1935), 99-101; see also J. M. S. Tompkins, "Caroline Helstone's Eyes," *BST*, XIV (1961), 21-22. There is also Charlotte's own comment, usually ignored, in a letter to George Smith: "[I] regret exceedingly that it is not in my power to give any assurance of the substantial existence of Miss Helstone. . . she is a native of Dreamland, and as such can have neither voice nor presence except for the fancy, neither being nor dwelling except in thought" (*Letters*, III, 68).

caused a change in Charlotte's original plan, but he sees that plan differently. Reading carefully the chapters preceding the one entitled "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," he decides: "Only by a selective and exclusive use of certain features in the book can we believe that Caroline was death doomed at the beginning. . . . We need not, however, believe that her stony path originally led to the altar. There is an alternative. Caroline may have been designed for single life."³ Tompkins notes that Caroline's recovery is in no way dependent upon Robert Moore; rather it is the discovery of her mother that saves her, and this fact suggests that her future was bound up with her mother rather than with Moore. The plot as Charlotte originally conceived it must then have been something like the following:

. . . of the two charming, womanly creatures [Caroline and Shirley] who stand at the beginning of life, one, already more favoured by fortune, was to be blessed by love . . . and the other was to do without. She was not to go uncomfited, but the prize in reserve for her was the prize for which she consciously struggled, not the unanticipated bonus of marriage with Robert Moore, but a retrieved serenity and useful activity, and what was to the Brontës the absolute solace of family love.

Tompkins rightly concludes: "If this was to have been Caroline's lot, much that now hangs loosely on the story . . . would have been very much to the purpose."⁴

This theory is surely an attractive one, removing as it does the burden for *Shirley's* failure from Charlotte Brontë the artist and putting it on Charlotte Brontë the bereaved sister. Unfortunately, the evidence of the manuscript,⁵ of Charlotte's letters during the period of *Shirley's* composition, and of *Shirley* itself makes the theories of both Spens and Tompkins questionable. First of all, Mrs. Gaskell's account of the composition of *Shirley* is most likely inaccurate: Charlotte had actually completed only one volume of the novel before Branwell died. The end of the first volume is dated in manuscript September 1848, the month of Branwell's death. Furthermore, in a letter to Smith Williams written the following February, Charlotte expresses her regret that she has no completed novel to send him. But in reading Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, Charlotte was "dismayed" to find herself "in some measure anticipated both in subject and incident," and there-

fore she offers to send Williams her first volume, which she has copied, in order to get his opinion on the matter.⁶ That little of the novel beyond this point was completed at the time is made clear by a letter written to Smith Williams on March 2, 1849: "I am glad that you and Mr. Smith like the commencement of my present work. I wish it were more than a commencement; for how it will be reunited after the long break, or how it can gather force of flow when the current has been checked or rather drawn off so long, I know not" (II, 313).

The manuscript contains no dates other than the one given above, and therefore we cannot be sure exactly when any particular chapter was written. But if the comments in Charlotte's letters at this time are at all reliable, we can get a fairly good idea of her progress. As late as March 2, judging from the letter above, little more than the first volume of *Shirley* was completed; in other words, Charlotte was not working on the book at all during the period between Branwell's and Emily's death. Anne's sickness evidently prevented her from doing much more before Anne's death in May. On April 2 she writes Smith Williams that she has refused an offer to be a contributor to an American periodical: "When I can write—the book I have in mind must claim all my attention. —Oh if Anne were well—if the void Death has left were a little closed up—if the dreary word 'nevermore' would cease sounding in my ears—I think I could yet do something!" (II, 320) At some time in this period, however, she must have resumed composition, for in a letter dated April 16 she tells Williams that she tries to write now and then: "The effort was a hard one at first. It renewed the terrible loss of last December strangely. Worse than useless did it seem to attempt to write what there no longer lived an 'Ellis Bell' to read; the whole book, with every hope founded on it, faded to vanity and vexation of spirit." Her only inducement to continue is her desire to please her friends at Cornhill, and she feels that her powers will return "if it would please Providence to restore" Anne (II, 327). The final letter indicating the progress of the book during this period was written about three weeks before Anne's death. Charlotte tells Williams that she can make no promise when another novel will be ready, for neither her time nor her efforts are her own: "That absorption in my employment to which I gave myself up without fear of doing wrong when I wrote 'Jane Eyre,' would now be alike impossible and blamable; but I do what I can, and have made some little progress" (II, 329).

3. Tompkins, p. 25.

4. Tompkins, pp. 27-28.

5. British Museum Add. MSS 43477-43479.

6. *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence in Four Volumes*, ed. T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington (Oxford, 1932), II, 305. Future quotations from Charlotte's letters are identified by volume and page in the text.

"Some little progress"—a tantalizingly vague statement. But judging from the tone of the comments above, it is certainly hard to believe that Charlotte wrote her whole second volume in a period of two months, months during which she was a constant nurse to Anne, during which she could not give herself up to "absorption in her employment." It seems hardly likely that "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," the opening chapter of the third volume, was the first chapter Charlotte wrote after Anne's death. The remaining portion of the novel, however, was written quite rapidly, in an attempt to avoid reality by immersion in the fictional world. "Labour must be the cure, not sympathy," Charlotte writes Smith Williams near the end of June; "Labour is the only radical cure for rooted sorrow. . . . Total change might do much—where that cannot be obtained—work is the best substitute" (II, 349). Three months after Anne's death the novel was finished.

While this information about the actual course of the composition of *Shirley* does not absolutely disprove the theories of Spens and Tompkins, it certainly weakens a conjecture based on the inaccurate information given by Mrs. Gaskell. Anne's death may have changed the plan of the novel, for surely Tompkins is correct when he says that Charlotte is really describing Anne's illness when she describes Caroline's;⁷ yet there is one last bit of evidence overlooked by both Tompkins and Spens in constructing their theories: Louis Moore is first mentioned in the novel not in Chapter XXIII, but as early as Chapter V. He does not appear in person, of course, but it is hard to understand why Charlotte would go to the trouble to describe him in some detail (even down to the fact that he was a tutor in a private family) if she had no intention of using

him later.⁸ And this description also occurs in the manuscript, the part dated September, 1848, which Charlotte sent to Smith Williams in February, 1849; Charlotte did not go back and write the passage in after Anne's death, nor does the manuscript give any evidence that she rewrote Chapter XXIII to get Louis into the story, as Tompkins conjectures.⁹ Charlotte may have planned to use him in some way other than she did, but he was obviously a part of her design from the beginning.

Ultimately, then, we are thrown back upon subject matter and point of view when we try to determine the novel's merits. There can be no doubt that the loss of three members of her family, the consequent mental anguish, and the long break in the composition helped to determine the quality of the writing. But it is apparent from the very beginning of the novel that she could achieve at best a moderate success, no matter what personal considerations were involved. For *Shirley* is Charlotte Brontë's attempt to write a typical Victorian novel, one such as her literary idol Thackeray might write, and her peculiar talent was not suited for such an undertaking. In retrospect, Charlotte herself realized that fact. "You will see that 'Villette' touches on no matter of public interest," she wrote her publisher, George Smith. "I cannot write books handling the topics of the day; it is of no use trying" (IV, 14).¹⁰ *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* give ample evidence that her vision was primarily private rather than social and that her point of view was more successfully first person than omniscient. Charlotte's failure in *Shirley* must, in the final analysis, be assessed in artistic, not personal, terms.

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7. Tompkins, p. 22.

8. Cf. Charlotte's introduction of Michael Hartley in the first chapter of the book and subsequent inconspicuous references to him. At the end of the novel we learn that he is the one who shot Robert Moore.

9. Tompkins, p. 23.

10. The statement is reminiscent of an earlier one made while Char-

lotte was anticipating with some discomfort the reviews of *Jane Eyre*: "It has no learning, no research, it discusses no subject of public interest. A mere domestic novel will, I fear, seem trivial to men of large views, and solid attainments" (*Letters*, II, 151). *Shirley* has taught her that she cannot write a book calculated to please the critics.

"My Last Duchess": A Possible Source

L. Robert Stevens

In an article entitled "Ferrara and 'My Last Duchess'"¹ Louis S. Friedland convincingly identifies the duke of Browning's famous monologue as Alfonso Este II. Friedland, however, is unaware of the poet's "immediate sources"² and finds "no record of a portrait . . . of Lucrezia de' Medici,"³ who would have been Alfonso's "last duchess"; he further identifies Nikolaus Madruz of Innsbruck, whose name Browning appropriates for his fictitious sculptor of the "Neptune taming a sea-horse," as the emissary to whom the duke is speaking.

A possible source, Nathaniel Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World* (1806 ed.), with which Browning was certainly familiar,⁴ and which, I believe, has been hitherto unnoticed in regard to this poem, makes it possible: (1) to verify Friedland's identification of the duke; (2) to discover, perhaps, one of those elusive "immediate sources" which tells of a portrait that may have occasioned the poem; (3) to discover a possible source for the Neptune-sea-horse image; (4) to make some evaluation of the role of Browning's imagination, in at least one important case, as it fermented upon his reading matter.

It is virtually inconceivable that Browning, given his interest in painting, had not read the following anecdote, registered as it is in Wanley's chapter "Of Painters." I am here quoting it in its entirety:

Caesare Arethusi was invited by the duke of Ferrara to visit his court, and was received there with extraordinary respect. The prince sat to him for his portrait, admired the performance highly, gave him evident proofs, not only of his favour but of his friendship and esteem; and having at last concluded that his generous treatment must inevitably have secured his gratitude, if not his affection, he freely acquainted him with his real inducement for inviting him to Ferrara. Confiding in the integrity of the painter, he told him that there was a lady in that city whose portrait he wished to possess; but it must be procured in so secret a manner, as neither to be suspected by the lady herself, nor by any of her friends. He promised an immense reward to

Arethusi if he should be successful and secret; but threatened him with the utmost severity of his resentment if he ever suffered the secret to transpire.

The artist watched a proper opportunity to sketch the likeness of the lady unnoticed by anyone, and having shewn it to the duke, he seemed exceedingly struck with the resemblance, as well as the graceful air of the figure, and ordered Arethusi to paint a portrait from that sketch as delicately as he possibly could; but above all things recommended to him to preserve it from every eye except his own. When this picture was finished, the painter himself beheld it with admiration, and thought it would be injurious to his fame to conceal from the world a performance which he accounted perfect. Through an excess of pride and vanity, he privately showed it to several of his friends, who could not avoid commending the work while they detested the folly and ingratitude of the artist.

The secret thus divulged, circulated expeditiously, and soon reached the ears of the lady and her family, who were exceedingly irritated; and the duke appeared so highly enraged at the treachery of Arethusi that he was almost provoked to put him to death, but he only banished him for ever from his dominions.⁵

Although the dissimilarities between the anecdote and the poem are many and obvious, there is a suggestive similarity that clutches at one's attention. If the Wanley story is indeed a source for the poem, it suggests that Browning was, perhaps but remotely conscious of its influence and hence demonstrates the great degree of the freedom of the poet's imagination as it grasped at familiar fragments here and there from history and anecdote and fused them into a new synthesis that was neither history nor anecdote—but poetry.

The duke in this curious little story is, like Browning's, unidentified except as being "of Ferrara." Caesare Arethusi, whose birth date is uncertain, died, however, in 1612;

1. *Studies in Philology*, XXXIII (1936), 656-684.

2. *Ibid.* p. 684.

3. *Ibid.* p. 677.

4. W. Hall Griffin and Harry Christopher Minchin, *The Life of Robert Browning* (London, 1938), p. 20.

5. Nathaniel Wanley, *The Wonders of the Little World* (London, 1806), II, 242.

Alfonso Este II had become Duke of Ferrara in 1555; Arethusi, then, could not have been attached to the court of any previous duke unless he had achieved repute in portraiture at a quite unlikely youthfulness; he could not have been attached to the court of a subsequent duke for there was none, Alfonso being the last before Ferrara reverted to papal dominions in 1598. If Browning has used this story he has somewhat altered the details wherein it is the artist, not the lady, who is banished for showing off the portrait of which the duke has said, in effect, "none puts by / The curtain . . . but I." The duke of Wanley's tale, then, is the same as the one that Friedland has identified as Browning's.

Browning's wish in the poem, however, is to capture the essence both of a culture and of a certain kind of individual mind in a single representative character. He therefore transforms the story, either consciously or subconsciously, to suit his own needs. Whether or not he actually did realize, as he well might have, who the duke in Wanley's story was, he at least had access in it to the germ of an idea for a poem which would reveal the glittering decadence of a renaissance aristocrat such as he knew Alfonso to be. He knew from history of Alfonso's scandalous behavior toward his first wife, Lucrezia, around whose death history's rumors have embroidered a mystery. The Wanley story gave him access to the idea of a duke of Ferrara's interest in a secret portrait of a lovely lady; Browning related this exquisite taste for the beautiful to Alfonso's known misbehavior and provides us with a uniquely interesting psychological study.

Curiously, as one turns but a single page after reading the Arethusi anecdote in the 1806 edition of the Wanley book his eyes fall almost casually upon a paragraph under the chapter heading "Of Sculptors":

Scopas deserveth praise for his worthy workmanship, in which most account is made of those images in the chapel of Cn. Domitius in the cirque of Flaminius; viz., Neptune, Thetis, and her son Achilles; the Sea-nymphs, or Nereids, mounted upon dolphins, whales, and mighty sea-horses. . . .⁶

This observation, of course, is reminiscent of Browning's "Neptune, though, / Taming a sea-horse." But Scopas belongs to classical antiquity and can by no means be historically related to the events in question. I propose, however, that Browning was thoroughly familiar with these pages in the book for which he avows a fondness, and that the two incidents—one of the duke of Ferrara's skillful portrait painter, the other of the skillful sculptor of marine-myth figures—being placed in close proximity to one another, were subconsciously related in the poet's mind, and that they provide the germ for the observations with which Browning gets us into and then out of his famous monologue. Fra Pandolf and Claus of Innsbruck have hitherto been considered pure fictions; they are perhaps more accurately seen as the imaginative germinations of historical seeds. The degree of change that the stories undergo suggests that they merely prompt the two pertinent allusions and then give way to the vigorous imagination of the poet. It was perhaps this freedom of imagination that enabled Browning to rearrange these little fragments from Wanley into a new, dramatic whole and hence to achieve the sort of independence from his sources that was ultimately to give *The Ring and the Book* its unique tension between history and the imagination.

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The Victorian Woman

Joseph Moscinski, S. J.

FEW IDEAS are more congenial to the temper of our age than the notion of evolutionary change. Stemming from the seedbed of the nineteenth century, it has flowered in our times. At the risk of making a simplistic synthesis, we can say that what Darwin discovered in biology, and what Newman discussed in theology, Chardin has perceived in the cosmos. The concept of process may be traced back to the scientific and religious thought of the Victorian era; it

may also be traced back to the literature of that period. Victorian letters could not have remained inert while its environment was radically changing.

Jerome H. Buckley has attested to the dynamic growth of Victorian prose: "The Victorian period achieved little of the stability we have learned to associate with a semi-mythological neoclassic culture. It moved from form to form, and nothing stood. Almost every Victorian thesis

6. *Ibid.* p. 244.

produced its own antithesis, as a ceaseless dialectic worked out its designs."¹ By focusing our Darwinian microscope on one element of Victorian literature, we may examine this dialectic in detail. And what more delightful element can be chosen than the development of women in Victorian novels? The consideration of selective examples of Victorian femininity will reveal the underlying dialectical process in the fiction of the nineteenth century.

The initial thesis is fittingly projected by a vital and energetic personality, Becky Sharpe. Thackeray's Sharpe belongs to the world of events, of historical occurrences, of plots and contrivances. Although she had no lineage to boast of, this wily schemer managed to claw her way into the high society circles of London, Paris, and Brussels. Even the "little comfortable ducal town of Pumpnickerl"² came to know the meanderings of this feline temptress. Her familiarity with the English nobility, her proximity to the Battle of Waterloo, and her presentation at the British court were milestones in her history. Even Becky's withdrawals from the spotlight into less spectacular roles exemplify the wide range of her activity. Whether she is playing charades with the Countess of Firz-Willis or selling knickknacks at Fancy Fairs for charity, Becky Sharpe remains the Victorian virago par excellence.

A sharp antithesis to Becky is provided by Jane Eyre. In the novel of that name, Charlotte Brontë introduces us to the private consciousness. Rather than travelling across the face of Europe, as we did with Becky, we are here occupied in retracing the wayward neuroses of a labyrinthine subconscious. Jane is not portrayed as an individual against the background of history or in the milieu of society. According to Charlotte Brontë's conception, Jane is the individual precisely as individual, intensely preoccupied with her own psychic activities. She is restricted by the limits of her environment, whether that be Gateshead, Lowood, or Thornfield Hall. And yet, there is enough of Becky in Jane Eyre to motivate in her a desire of passing beyond those limits. From her window at Lowood School, her "eye passed all other objects to rest on those remote, the blue peaks . . ."³ At Thornfield Hall, Jane confesses that she longed for a power of vision "which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life . . ."⁴ She desired the practical experience of a Becky Sharpe, for the lack of which her situation is all the more poignant.

A possible synthesis of Becky and Jane may be found in George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke. It is not here suggested, of course, that Miss Brooke is merely a composite of all

the qualities that constitute the respective personalities of Becky and Jane. The autonomous nature of Dorothea's character is certainly not questioned. However, we may observe similarities and differences which would buttress our contention of a ceaseless dialectic in Victorian literature. Dorothea belongs to two worlds: both to Becky's world of events and to Jane's world of the mind. She possesses Becky's practical experience and temperamental robustness to act with facility in the affairs of men. It is her share in Jane's psychological self-awareness that reveals to her the impossibility of her ever becoming another Theresa. Compromise is the result of an interior conflict in which, recalling the sight of her lover with another woman, she realizes that she was not alone in that scene, that it was not her event only. Because of the basic soundness of her inner life, Dorothea Brooke succeeds in accepting her limitations and adapting herself to reality.

The direct antithesis to Dorothea is Eustacia Vye. Both may have possessed Becky's potentialities for world-activity; both, like Becky, suffered a head-on collision with insurmountable obstacles. Their differences from one another and from Becky lie in the respective states of their psychic lives. Dorothea was sufficiently well-balanced to enable her to acknowledge, and live with, the limitations imposed by reality. Eustacia, however, could never accept the restrictions of Egdon Heath. She was incapable of compromise, for, as Hardy tells us, "There was no middle distance in her perspective . . ."⁵ Her hatred of the Heath and consequent ambition to escape it at any cost resulted in disaster. In her final appearance alive in the novel, she is overwhelmed by the force to which she refused to submit. Rejecting Rainbarrow to the last, she is "drawn into the Barrow by a hand from beneath."⁶ Eustacia's death is the outcome of her inability to accept the exigencies of life.

This brief survey of the stories of four remarkable women may help to support a critical theory of dialectical change in Victorian literature. Although it is beyond the scope of this article thoroughly to defend such a theory, the dynamic and evolutionary character of Victorian fiction may well be perceived in the continual unfolding of its female characters. The Victorian woman moved from form to form, as each thesis produced its own antithesis. Her changing complexions may be epitomized in Virgil's celebrated dictum on the mutability of all things feminine: *varium et mutabile semper femina*.

Loyola Seminary
Shrub Oak, New York

1. Jerome H. Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 6.
2. William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, Modern Library Paperback (New York, 1950), p. 655.
3. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Modern Library Paperback (New York, 1950), p. 89.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
5. Thomas Hardy, *Return of the Native*, Rinehart Paperback (New York, 1959), p. 78.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 418.

Recent Publications: A Selected List

Arthur F. Minerof

March, 1965—August, 1965

I

GENERAL

- ARTS. Clifford, Derek. *Watercolours of the Norwich School*. Cory, Adams and Mackay. Deals with the work of the School's practitioners, 1790-1878. Rev. *TLS*, 8 July, p. 572.
- Peillex, Georges. *Nineteenth-Century Painting*. Trans. Angus Malcolm. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. Rev. *TLS*, 1 April, p. 262.
- Peter, Mary. *Collecting Victoriana*. Arco. Treats furniture and furnishings.
- Thompson, Paul, ed. "The High Victorian Cultural Achievement." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 213-228. High Victorian architectural sculpture was a "bold, exciting experiment," not to be identified with debased late Victorian and Edwardian work. With photographs.
- BIBLIOGRAPHY. Colby, Elbridge. "More Facts about the Publishing of Theodore Winthrop's Novels." *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, May, pp. 314-316. Statistical information of printings concerning the novels.
- Gordan, John D. "Novels in Manuscript: An Exhibition from the Berg Collection." *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, May, pp. 317-329; June, pp. 396-413. Includes description of exhibited manuscripts, in part or in whole, of writers including Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Pater, Hardy, Stevenson, Wilde, Gissing, Doyle, and Bennett.
- Harvey, W. J. "Some Notes on the Study of Nineteenth-Century Literature." *Modern Language Quarterly*, March, pp. 93-110. A survey of scholarship covering the last 25 years.
- Stevenson, Lionel, ed. *Victorian Fiction; A Guide to Research*. Essays on individual authors surveying recent scholarship. Rev. *TLS*, 15 April, p. 289.
- Tobias, R. C. "The Year's Work in Victorian Poetry: 1964." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 119-135. Review of specific articles published during 1964.
- CRITICISM AND LITERARY HISTORY. Campos, Christopher. *The View of France*. Oxford. The picture of France given to readers through the eyes of various writers including Arnold, Thackeray, Swinburne, and Meredith. Rev. *TLS*, 8 April, p. 270.
- Chandler, Alice. "Sir Walter Scott and the Medieval Revival." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 315-332. The widespread medievalism of the Nineteenth Century would have been impossible without Scott's creative efforts.
- Charlesworth, Barbara. *Dark Passages; The Decadent Conscience in Victorian Literature*. University of Wisconsin. Discussion of the Decadent movement with special reference to Rossetti, Swinburne, Pater, Wilde, and Symonds.
- Clarke, I. F. "The Battle of Dorking, 1871-1914." *Victorian Studies*, June, pp. 309-328. The short story "The Battle of Dorking" (about an imaginary invasion of England) established the war-to-come story as the favorite way of presenting arguments for or against military or political arrangements of a country from 1871 to 1914.
- Duncan, Robert W. "The London Literary Gazette and American Writers." *Papers on English Language and Literature*, Spring pp. 153-166. The Gazette was quite fair in its judgments of American Writers.
- Hardy, Barbara. *The Appropriate Form: An Essay on the Novel*. Oxford. Includes material on Charlotte Brontë, Eliot, Hardy, and Meredith.
- Hayter, Alethea. *A Sultry Month*. Faber and Faber. Scenes of London Literary life in 1846 that include the Carlyles, Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, Monckton Milnes, and Dickens. Rev. *TLS*, 20 May, p. 392.
- Knoepfmacher, U. C. *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel*; George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler. Princeton. Rev. *TLS*, 2 September, p. 756.
- Merivale, Patricia. "The Pan Figure in Victorian Poetry: Landor to Meredith." *Philological Quarterly*, April, pp. 258-277. The Pan motif in Landor, Tennyson, Arnold, the Brownings, Swinburne, and Meredith.
- Riley, Anthony W. "Notes on Thomas Mann and English and American Literature." *Comparative Literature*, Winter, pp. 57-72. Describes Mann's appreciation of several writers including Dickens and Thackeray.
- ECONOMICS AND POLITICS. Anderson, Olive. "The Janus Face of Mid-Nineteenth-Century English Radicalism: The Administrative Reform Association of 1855." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 231-242. The Association wanted general governmental reform but looked to the past as well as to the present and the future.
- Cooke, Raymond M. "British Evangelicals and the Issue of Colonial Self-Government." *Pacific Historical Review*, May, pp. 127-140. The evangelical humanitarians were cool toward self-government.
- Cowling, Maurice. "Disraeli, Derby and Fusion, October 1865 to July 1866." *Historical Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, pp. 31-71. Explains why there was no fusion or reconstruction of parties on the formation of Derby's cabinet in July 1866.
- Dreyer, F. A. "The Whigs and the Political Crisis of 1845." *English Historical Review*, July, pp. 514-537. The crisis served "to foreshadow and to facilitate" the evolution of the Whigs.
- Harrison, Brian. "The Sunday Trading Riots of 1855." *Historical Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 219-245. The riots show that many Victorians in power failed to take into account working-class opinion; in addition, the riots demonstrate the political power of the voteless.

- Jordan, H. Donaldson. "Richard Cobden and Penny Postage: A Note on the Processes of Reform." *Victorian Studies*, June, pp. 355-360. Traces the development of the movement leading to penny postage.
- Kitson Clark, George. *Peel and the Conservative Party*. Frank Cass. A study in party politics, 1832-1841. Rev. *TLS*, 10 June, p. 473.
- Lloyd, Trevor. "Uncontested Seats in British General Elections, 1852-1910." *Historical Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 260-265. Gives statistics and suggests reasons for the lack of contest.
- Maehl, William. "The Liberal Party and the Newcastle Elections of 1874." *Durham University Journal*, June, pp. 148-158. A study of factionalism in the Liberal party as evidenced in the Newcastle Elections.
- Stearns, Peter. "British Industry Through the Eyes of French Industrialists (1820-1848)." *Journal of Modern History*, March, pp. 50-61. Most French industrialists found British superiority frightening.
- HISTORY. Bond, Brian. "The Disaster at Majuba Hill." *History Today*, July, pp. 486-495. The rout of the British force in South Africa had important military and political consequences.
- Collieu, E. G. *Queen Victoria*. Oxford. Rev. *TLS*, 12 August, p. 701.
- Fifoot, C. H. S., ed. *The Letters of Frederic William Maitland*. Cambridge. Rev. *TLS*, 1 April, p. 253.
- Foskett, R. *The Zambesi Doctors*. Edinburgh University. David Livingstone's letters to John Kirk. Rev. *TLS*, 18 March, p. 218.
- Harrison, John F. C. "Recent Writing on the History of Victorian England." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 263-270. A review-article covering recently-published histories.
- RELIGION. Grant, A. Cameron. "Combe on Phrenology and Free Will: A note on XIXth-Century Secularism." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, January-March, pp. 141-147. Combe's system denied religion.
- Green, V. H. H. *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge*. SCM. Rev. *TLS*, 1 April, p. 258.
- Hinchliff, Peter. *John William Coleenso*. Nelson. Rev. *TLS*, 4 March, p. 177.
- Norman, E. R. *The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1859-1873*. Longmans. Rev. *TLS*, 4 March, p. 164.
- Reynolds, Michael. *Martyr of Ritualism*. Faber and Faber. A study of the Ritualist movement with Father Macknochie as the central figure. Rev. *TLS*, 8 July, p. 584.
- Ward, W. R. "The Tithe Question in England in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, April, pp. 67-81. Tithe was a factor in the great religious displacements of the time.
- SCIENCE. Evans, Mary Alice. "Mimicry and the Darwinian Heritage." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, April-June, pp. 211-220. Bates proved that mimicry was an excellent example of adaptation through natural selection.
- Freeman, R. B. *The Works of Charles Darwin*. Dawsons. An annotated bibliographical handlist. Rev. *TLS*, 15 July, p. 604.
- Huxley, Julian and H. B. D. Kettlewell. *Charles Darwin and his World*. Thames and Hudson. Rev. *TLS*, 17 June, p. 492.
- Kargon, Robert. "William Rowan Hamilton and Bosconvichean Atomism." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, January-March, pp. 137-140. The philosophical achievements of Hamilton's work.
- SOCIAL. Armstrong, Richard. "Grace Darling: The Fate of a Victorian Heroine." *History Today*, May, pp. 328-335. She became a legend in her own lifetime.
- Ferris, Norman B. "An American Diplomatist Confronts Victorian Society." *History Today*, August, pp. 550-558. As United States Minister to Great Britain, Charles Francis Adams worked diligently to adapt to London society.
- Maclure, J. Stuart. *Educational Documents: England and Wales, 1816-1963*. Chapman and Hall. Rev. *TLS*, 26 August, p. 737.
- Olney, Clarke. "Caroline Norton to Lord Melbourne." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 255-262. Unpublished letters suggest that the relationship between Lord Melbourne and Mrs. Norton has not been based solely on compatible interests and temperaments.
- Olsen, Donald J. *Town Planning in London*. Yale. Survey of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Rev. *TLS*, 3 June, p. 451.

II

INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS

- ARNOLD. Allott, Kenneth, ed. *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*. Longmans. Rev. *TLS*, 1 July, p. 560.
- Boo, Sister Mary Richard. "Arnold's Stanzas from the *Grande Chartreuse*, 169-210." *Explicator*, May, No. 69. The children are a tragic parallel of Arnold's own dilemma.
- Burwick, Fred L. "Hölderlin and Arnold: 'Empedocles on Etna.'" *Comparative Literature*, Winter, pp. 24-42. Examines the similarities between the two treatments of Empedocles and suggests the influence of Hölderlin on Arnold.
- Giannone, Richard. "The Quest Motif in 'Thyrsis.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 71-80. Arnold accommodates the pastoral elegy to his own vision. The poem records the need for questing.
- Huebenthal, John. "'Growing Old,' 'Rabbi Ben Ezra,' and 'Tears, Idle Tears.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 61-63. More than just a denial of the optimism of "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "Growing Old" is also an attack on Tennyson's passion for the past in "Tears, Idle Tears."
- WILFRED SCAWEN BLUNT. Scott, Kenneth W. "Blunt's Sonnets and Another Poem of Skittles." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 141-143. The novel *Skittles* and the poem it contains are interesting predecessors of Blunt's sonnets and provide another glance at Catherine Walters, the beautiful Victorian courtesan.
- BRONTES. Jordan, John E. "The Ironic Vision of Emily Brontë." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, June, pp. 1-18. Far from being innocent of irony, Miss Brontë had a "complicated double vision," and *Wuthering Heights* is filled with ironic contrasts.

- Langman, F. H. "Wuthering Heights." *Essays in Criticism*, July, pp. 294-312. The novel has been subjected to criticism that is poorly written, evasive and at times inaccurate, especially when dealing with the story's prose style and narrative method, the love between Catherine and Heathcliff, and the persistent violence and cruelty.
- Leavis, Q. D. "Dating Jane Eyre." *TLS*, 27 May, p. 436. Comments on the general confusion of "dates, eras, fashions, and facts" in the novel.
- Lock, John and W. T. Dixon. *A Man of Sorrows*. Nelson. Life, letters, and times of the Rev. Patrick Brontë. Rev. *TLS*, 5 August, p. 680.
- BROWNING. Altick, Richard D. "The Symbolism of Browning's 'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 1-7. Using a combination of musical and architectural imagery, Browning sets forth one of his favorite themes: the superiority of intuition over intellect as a way of attaining religious truth.
- Hudson, Gertrude Reese, ed. *Browning to his American Friends*. Bowes and Bowes. Letters between the Brownings, the Storks, and James Russell Lowell, 1841-1890. Rev. *TLS*, 20 May, p. 392.
- Kroeber, Karl. "Touchstones for Browning's Victorian Complexity." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 101-107. "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning" are touchstones for Browning's purposes and methods.
- Maxwell, J. C. "A Horatian Echo in Browning's 'Saul.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, p. 144. Suggests a Horatian influence on "Saul."
- Preyer, Robert. "Two Styles in the Verse of Robert Browning." *ELH*, March, pp. 62-84. An examination of the poet's "simple" and "difficult" styles and the content each associates with.
- Ricks, Christopher. "Two Letters by Browning." *TLS*, 3 June, p. 464. Prints two unpublished letters. The one to Tennyson is a gloss on "A Grammarian's Funeral"; the other to Lady Tennyson relates to Edward FitzGerald's disparagement of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
- Smalley, Donald. "Joseph Ar mould and Robert Browning: New Letters (1842-50) and a Verse Epistle." *PMLA*, March, pp. 90-101. The seven letters Ar mould wrote to Browning as well as the former's verse epistle (mainly about *Dramatic Lyrics*) reveal the relationship between the two men and add to our knowledge of Browning during his formative years as a poet.
- Stevens, L. Robert. "Aestheticism in Browning's Early Renaissance Monologues." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 19-24. The poems show Browning's concern with the problem of art for art's sake and anticipate his final statement in *The Ring and the Book*.
- Timko, Michael. "Browning upon Butler; or, Natural Theology in the English Isle." *Criticism*, Spring, pp. 141-150. Sees "Caliban upon Setebos" as a satiric thrust at natural theology and its practitioners, including Caliban as well as Bishop Butler.
- BULWER-LYTTON. Wagner, Geoffrey. "A Forgotten Satire: Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 379-385. The novel deserves reevaluation because it treats problems of our contemporary society which are themselves the subject matter of modern fiction.
- CARLYLE. Holme, Thea. *The Carlyles at Home*. Oxford. Rev. *TLS*, 15 April, p. 295.
- Slater, Joseph, ed. *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*. Columbia. Rev. *TLS*, 1 April, p. 256.
- COLLINS. Grosskurth, Phyllis. "Churton Collins: Scourge of the Late Victorians." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, April, pp. 254-268. An estimate of the man and an examination of his critical attacks on Tennyson, Swinburne, Gosse, and Symonds.
- DICKENS. Blount, Trevor. "Dickens's Slum Satire in *Bleak House*." *Modern Language Review*, July, pp. 340-351. The picture of slum conditions is rooted in documentary fact.
- Gard, Roger. "David Copperfield." *Essays in Criticism*, July, pp. 313-325. Dickens achieved a certain clarity of vision and detachment when he observed through the eyes of a child.
- Gregory, Michael. "Old Bailey Speech in 'A Tale of Two Cities.'" *Review of English Literature*, April, pp. 42-55. An examination of Book II, Chapter 3, "A Disappointment," with reference to four categories of speech.
- Harwick, Michael and Mollie. *The Charles Dickens Companion*. John Murray. Summaries of plots and subplots, Who's Who of characters in the major works, selection of quotations, etc. Rev. *TLS*, 8 July, p. 580.
- House, Madeline and Graham Storey, eds. *The Letters of Charles Dickens*. Vol. I, 1820-1839. Oxford.
- Johnson, Edgar. "A Tremendous Drama." *Kenyon Review*, Summer, pp. 503-510. A review-article examining the major editions of Dickens' letters, especially *The Pilgrim Edition*, Vol. I.
- Marcus, Steven. *Dickens; From Pickwick to Dombey*. Basic Books.
- Meisel, Martin. "The Ending of *Great Expectations*." *Essays in Criticism*, July, pp. 326-331. The true ending of the novel is the return to Joe's and the finding of little Pip; therefore, Dickens did not compromise his artistic integrity by changing the last details.
- Stoehr, Taylor W. *Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance*. Cornell.
- Tillotson, Kathleen. "A Letter from Dickens on Capital Punishment." *TLS*, 12 August, p. 704. Background and reprint of a letter published February 23, 1846, in the *Daily News*.
- DISRAELI. Merritt, James D. "Disraeli as a Byronic Poet." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 138-139. Disraeli was "deeply" influenced by Byron.
- DOYLE. Nordon, Pierre. *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. Didier. A biocritical study. Rev. *TLS*, 18 March, p. 216.
- ELIOT. Colby, Robert A. "Miss Evans, Miss Mulock, and Hetty Sorrel." *English Language Notes*, March, pp. 206-211. George Eliot may have been influenced by Miss Mulock in the development of Hetty Sorrel.
- Fisch, Harold. "Daniel Deronda or Gwendolen Harleth." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 345-356. In order to achieve a realization of the Jewish experience, George Eliot placed the Mordecai-Mirah-Daniel story in the Victorian environment she knew and could handle well—the tale of Gwendolen Harleth.
- Haight, Gordon S. *A Century of George Eliot Criticism*. Houghton Mifflin.

- Mansell, Darrel, Jr. "Ruskin and George Eliot's 'Realism.'" *Criticism*, Summer, pp. 203-216. Eliot realized Ruskin was not advocating an exact imitation of nature in *Modern Painters*, and her novels show this "subsistence of facts to artistic purposes. . ."
- Noble, Thomas A. *George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life*. Yale. Rev. TLS, 2 September, p. 756.
- Thomson, Fred C. "The Theme of Alienation in *Silas Marner*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, June, pp. 69-84. Rather than being outside the mainstream of George Eliot's fiction, the novel anticipates *Middlemarch* in the development of her vision of tragic life, combining the theme of alienation with the double plot.
- GASKELL. Pollard, Arthur. "Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, March, pp. 453-477. A "great biography" that depicts Charlotte Brontë with sympathy and understanding.
- Pollard, Arthur. "Mrs. Gaskell's Short Stories." *Cambridge Review*, 8 May, pp. 374-379. Mrs. Gaskell practiced short story writing with mixed success.
- Preston, Albert H. "Mrs. Gaskell's Letters to John Greenwood Regarding the Brontës." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, March, pp. 477-488. Reprints the letters.
- Sharps, John Geoffrey. "Articles by Mrs. Gaskell in 'The Pall Mall Gazette' (1865)." *Notes and Queries*, August, pp. 301-302. Two sets of contributions can be attributed to her.
- GILBERT. Jones, John B. "In Search of Archibald Grosvenor: A New Look at Gilbert's *Patience*." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 45-53. Grosvenor was modeled on the poetry and person of William Morris and Coventry Patmore, especially the latter.
- GOSSE. Mattheisen, Paul F. "Gosse's Candid 'Snapshots.'" *Victorian Studies*, June, pp. 329-354. Selections from Gosse's notes, including sketches of Swinburne, Tennyson, Browning, Frederick Locker, Fitzgerald, Richard Horne, and George Moore.
- HARDY. Carpenter, Richard C. *Thomas Hardy*. Twayne. Critical study.
- Cox, J. Stevens, ed. *Thomas Hardy through the Camera's Eye*. Toucan. Includes photographs of Hardy by Hermann Lea as well as the latter's narrative, "Notes for a Biography of Thomas Hardy." Rev. TLS, 1 April, p. 259.
- Jones, Lawrence O. "Desperate Remedies and the Victorian Sensation Novel." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, June, pp. 35-50. The novel illustrates the conflict between Hardy's own personal, tragic vision and the conventions mandated by the sensation novel.
- Kramer, Dale. "Unity of Time in 'The Return of the Native.'" *Notes and Queries*, August, pp. 304-305. Hardy used unity of time to clarify his presentation of man's "lonely transience."
- McCullen, J. T., Jr. "Henchard's Sale of Susan in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*." *English Language Notes*, March, pp. 217-218. Suggests a possible source for the episode.
- Sankey, Benjamin. "Hardy's Plotting." *Twentieth Century Literature*, July, pp. 82-97. An analysis of Hardy's method with specific reference to particular scenes from the novels.
- Sankey, Benjamin. "Hardy's Prose Style." *Twentieth Century Literature*, April, pp. 3-15. An analysis of general qualities as well as specific passages from the novels.
- HOPKINS. Chard, Leslie F. "Once More Into *The Windhover*." *English Language Notes*, June, pp. 282-285. The poem's tension or conflict culminates in the sestet, affirming, for Hopkins, the evidence of Christ's power and glory.
- Montag, George E. "'The Windhover': Crucifixion and Redemption." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 109-118. The poem depicts both the Crucifixion and its result, man's salvation.
- Ochshorn, Myron. "Hopkins the Critic." *Yale Review*, Spring, pp. 346-367. Hopkins and Arnold were the two eminent Victorian literary critics.
- Pace, George B. "The Octave Rhymes of *The Windhover*." *English Language Notes*, June, pp. 285-286. Hopkins exploited the "permissive possibilities of poetic stress" in the octave rhymes.
- Schneider, Elizabeth W. "Sprung Rhythm: A Chapter in the Evolution of Nineteenth-Century Verse." *PMLA*, June, pp. 237-253. The sources and nature of sprung rhythm and its use in *The Wreck of the Deutschland*.
- HOUSMAN. Pitts, Gordon. "'Housman's 'Be Still, My Soul.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 137-138. The poem ironically contrasts Christian stoicism and Housman's stoical pessimism.
- HUXLEY. Jensen, J. Vernon. "The Rhetorical Strategy of Thomas H. Huxley and Robert G. Ingersoll: Agnostics and Roadblock Removers." *Speech Monographs*, March, pp. 59-68. An analysis of the rhetorical devices used by Huxley and Ingersoll in their conflict with orthodox theology.
- KINGSLEY. Beer, Gillian. "Charles Kingsley and the Literary Image of the Countryside." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 243-254. Kingsley's love of natural beauty and his talent for descriptive writing were his most artistically potent means of attack on the condition of England.
- KIPLING. Gollin, R. and R. "'Exiles' in India: An Early Kipling Variant." *Notes and Queries*, pp. 306-307. Prints the variant of "The Song of the Exiles" and gives information concerning its composition.
- Henn, T. R. "Critics of Kipling." *Review of English Literature*, July, pp. 9-21. A review-article assessing Kipling.
- Husain, Syed Sajjad. *Kipling and India*. University of Dacca. Kipling's attitude toward the Indian people as revealed in his writing. Rev. TLS, 18 March, p. 221.
- Sandison, Alan. "To Harden and Make Whole." *Cambridge Review*, 5 June, pp. 462-470. Kipling was not glorifying the idea of Empire; rather, he was describing a world of chaos and suggesting how to cope with it.
- Sankey, Benjamin. "Kipling's *The Gardener*." *Explicator*, March, No. 58. Helen has fostered a legend about the child to preserve her own respectability.
- MEREDITH. Lees, F. N. "George Meredith and 'Othello.'" *Notes and Queries*, March, p. 96. Meredith linked Othello with Willoughby Patterne of *The Egoist*.
- MILL. Randall, John Herman, Jr. "John Stuart Mill and the Working Out of Empiricism." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, January-March, pp. 59-88. Mill began with his father's observational theory but emerged with experimentalism.
- NEWMAN, F. W. Bennett, James D. "F. W. Newman and Re-

- ligious Freedom." *Hibbert Journal*, Spring, pp. 106-109. The importance of his life and thought and their significance to the Twentieth Century.
- NEWMAN, J. H., Dessain, Charles Stephen and Vincent Ferrer Blehl, eds. *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*. Vol. XVI. Nelson. Rev. *TLS*, 12 August, p. 700.
- Holmes, J. Derek. "Controversy: Newman." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 271-277. Although Newman tried to be fair to both history and theology, he nevertheless viewed the former as inherently limited.
- PATER. Roellinger, Francis X. "Intimations of Winckelmann in Pater's Diaphaneité." *English Language Notes*, June, pp. 277-282. The two essays reveal a similarity of key ideas and phrases.
- ROSSETTI. Fredeman, William E. "Rossetti's 'In Memoriam': An Elegiac Reading of *The House of Life*." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, March, pp. 298-341. Detailed study that sees *The House of Life* as an "elegiac poem in which Rossetti surveys the crises of his life from youth to death."
- Johnson, Wendell Stacy. "D. G. Rossetti as Painter and Poet." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 9-18. Parallels between Rossetti's paintings and poetry.
- Weathers, Winston. "Christina Rossetti: The Sisterhood of Self." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 81-89. One of the main themes of her mythic fabric is the struggle for psychological integration.
- RUSKIN. Lutyens, Mary. *Effie in Venice*. John Murray. Unpublished letters of Mrs. Ruskin written from Venice between 1849-1852. Rev. *TLS*, 10 June, p. 473.
- SHAW. Hogan, Robert. "The Novels of Bernard Shaw." *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 63-114. A detailed examination of the five novels Shaw wrote between 1879 and 1883; concludes that they are more than jejune work.
- SWINBURNE. Dahl, Curtis. "Autobiographical Elements in Swinburne's Trilogy on Mary Stuart." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 91-99. Seen as containing autobiographical elements, the trilogy is more meaningful while providing insight into Swinburne's self image.
- Dahl, Curtis. "Swinburne's Mary Stuart: A Reading of Ronsard." *Papers on English Language and Literature*, Winter, pp. 39-49. Swinburne's misreading of Ronsard helped inspire the trilogy.
- Peters, Robert L. *The Crowns of Apollo; Swinburne's Principles of Literature and Art*. Wayne State.
- Seronsy, Cecil C. "An Autograph Letter by Swinburne on Daniel and Drummond of Hawthornden." *Notes and Queries*, August, pp. 303-304. Background information and the letter itself.
- SYMONS. Baugh, Edward. "Arthur Symons, Poet: A Centenary Tribute." *Review of English Literature*, July, pp. 70-80. An appreciation.
- TENNYSON. Elliott, Philip L. "In Memoriam, II and CXXVIII." *English Language Notes*, June, pp. 275-277. A so-called error in the First Edition (CXXVIII, 19-20) was really not one.
- Fass, I. Leonard. "Green as a Motif of Alfred Tennyson." *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 139-141. Tennyson uses green to paint an idyllic setting.
- Fulweiler, Howard W. "Tennyson and the 'Summons from the Sea.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 25-44. Tennyson's shifting use of sea symbolism throws light on his inner development and the public themes of his poetry.
- Gray, J. M. "The Lady of Shalott' and Tennyson's Readings in the Supernatural." *Notes and Queries*, August, pp. 298-300. Tennyson's knowledge of Irish fairy lore helped determine his picture of Elaine.
- Kincaid, James R. "Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar': A Poem of Frustration." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 57-61. The poem illustrates "egocentricity in stress, skill in craftsmanship and frustration-doubt in tone."
- Kissane, James. "Tennyson: The Passion of the Past and the Curse of Time." *ELH*, March, pp. 85-109. Tennyson's handling of the past shows he had "more imaginative subtlety and intensity" than is commonly supposed.
- Ricks, Christopher. "Locksley Hall, and the 'Moallakát.'" *Notes and Queries*, August, pp. 300-302. The translation of these seven poems gave Tennyson the idea for his poem.
- Ricks, Christopher. "Two Early Poems by Tennyson." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter, pp. 55-57. Prints both poems and gives background information.
- THACKERAY. Worth, George J. "More on the German Sections of *Vanity Fair*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 402-404. These chapters suggest that Thackeray was satirizing defects of any society and not just those of the English.
- WELLS. Poston, Laurence. "*Tono-Bungay*; Wells' Unconstructed Tale." *College English*, March, pp. 433-438. The novel is a consciously ordered tale depicting a society moving from the established order to an uncertain future.
- YEATS. Robinson, Lennox. "Yeats: The Early Poems." *Review of English Literature*, July, pp. 22-33. The poems of Yeats's early period have been unfairly neglected.

PROJECTS—REQUESTS FOR AID

- ELIZABETH GASKELL. John Geoffrey Sharps desires knowledge of Mrs. Gaskell's letters or rare material relating to her. *Notes and Queries*, August, pp. 301-302.
- GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS. Norman H. MacKenzie asks for news of any new autographs or of unrecorded contemporary transcripts of Hopkins' poems. *TLS*, 18 March, p. 220.
- JOHN STUART MILL. J. M. Robson is attempting to locate all of Mill's manuscripts for a collected edition. *TLS*, 19 August, p. 722.
- MUDIES. R. E. Watson is searching for original records. *TLS*, 15 July, p. 602.
- ARTHUR SYMONS. Karl Beckson is looking for Symons' letters for an edition. *TLS*, 1 July, p. 566.
- FRANCIS THOMPSON. G. Krishnamurti is interested in any translations, foreign editions, criticisms of—or commentaries on "The Hound of Heaven." *TLS*, 1 April, p. 260.
- OSCAR WILDE. Terence de Vere White asks for any letters by or unpublished information relating to Wilde's parents. *TLS*, 2 September, p. 761.

Staten Island Community College

English X News

A. THE CHICAGO MEETING

Chairman, Robert Langbaum, *University of Virginia*;
Secretary, Wendell Stacy Johnson, *Hunter College*.

I. Business

II. Papers and Discussion

1. "Vivacity and the Philistines," R. H. Super, *Rice University*.
2. "Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*," Charles Berryman, *University of Southern California*.
3. "No Arnold could ever write a novel," A. Dwight Culler, *Yale University*.

Advisory and Nominating Committee: Chairman, John T. Fain, *University of Florida* (1965); W. Stacy Johnson, Robert Preyer (1964-1965); Martin J. Svaglic, Robert A. Greenberg (1965-1966); Kenneth L. Knickerbocker, Michael Wolff (1966-1967).

1965 *Program Chairman*: Martin J. Svaglic, *Loyola University*; John L. Bradley, Robert B. Martin.

Bibliography Committee: Chairman, Ronald E. Freeman, *University of Southern California*; Robert A. Colby; Charles Dougherty; Edward S. Lauterbach; Oscar Maurer; Stanton Millet; Robert C. Slack; Richard C. Tobias.

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

1966 *Officers*: Chairman, J. Hillis Miller, *Johns Hopkins University*;
Secretary, Robert Langbaum, *University of Virginia*.

(Nominations to be voted on.)

Meeting of Advisory and Nominating Committee 10-10:30 A.M. (Tuesday, December 28) PDR 3. Bibliography Committee will assemble immediately following the luncheon in the Crystal Room.

B. THE VICTORIAN LUNCHEON

The Victorian Luncheon will be held at the Palmer House Crystal Room, Tuesday, December 28. Cocktails at 12:15 P.M. followed by Luncheon promptly at 1:00 P.M. For reservation, please send check for \$5.00 to Professor Joseph Wolff, 722 Elmgate Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025, by December 15.

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