

# THE VICTORIAN NEWSLETTER

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## Dickens' Portrait of the Artist

Edward Hurley

DAVID COPPERFIELD is, among other things, the portrait of an artist. When David begins writing the autobiography, he is the mature,<sup>1</sup> successful, and accomplished author of several novels, famous as far away as the remote settlement in Australia where the Micawbers live. Moreover, in writing this book he is an artist at work in his art, recreating himself in words. According to the fictional supposition given late in the book, David the author should be known to the reader before he begins, and the reader would reasonably want to know about this man as a writer, as he would for instance expect to meet William Faulkner the writer in an autobiography of Faulkner. The role of artist constitutes his public personality, and if, as David says, he pours his whole energy into his writing (ch. 61), it also constitutes an important part of his private personality. Yet on this topic, David is so reticent that in the opening sentence he will not say for certain whether he is the principal character in the book he is writing about himself: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (ch. 1). Throughout the book he demonstrates his narrative skill, but he reveals very late and almost incidentally his achievements as a novelist. The composition of his first novel is buried in a description of his chaotic household life with Dora. Its success is a surprise to the reader, and David immediately removes the history of his writings from the autobiography: "It is not my purpose, in this record, though in all other essentials it is my written memory, to pursue the history of my own fictions. They express themselves, and I leave them to themselves. When I refer to them, incidentally, it is only as a part of my progress" (ch. 48). Later he tells us if his books be of any worth, they will speak for themselves. "I shall otherwise have written to poor purpose, and the rest will be of interest to no one" (ch. 61).

These are statements apparently unexceptionable even to a new critic: the work of art should stand on its own merit without reference to the author's biography. Yet the statements are full of contradictions. David is throughout the writer writing about and commenting on his own and others' experiences. Why can't they stand on their own? Why the first person narrator at all: let action and character present themselves objectively or

through an omniscient narrator as had been the case in all previous Dickens fiction. And suppose the reader accepts David at his word. Then where is he to find these other fictions and see whether they stand on their own? They don't exist except in terms of this autobiography. It seems David is giving us a diversion instead of furnishing the reader the history of his development as an artist, a legitimate interest in a written history of a writer. The complexities of this contradiction lie in the novel itself and the extensive examination it makes of the use and abuse of verbal communication, of which this novel is an instance.

All of David's activities exist in a matrix of parallel events worked out in other characters. David's two marriages, for instance, are part of a context of broken marriages among his parents, relatives, and friends. His marriages attain their meaning for himself and the reader in this context. In similar fashion David the writer exists in the matrix of verbal concerns demonstrated in other characters and events.

Several characters are distinguished by their verbal signatures, usually manifesting the core of the character. Quantitatively at one extreme stands Barkis and at the other, Micawber. Barkis, the miser, treasures his words and stores them up inside himself. He "is willin'" but because of his verbal reticence he never emerges. The will is not followed by the deed or by an explanation, and Barkis' personality, if he has one, remains sealed in the box beneath his bed. Micawber scatters his words as he scatters his money and his responsibility. His long speeches are conventionally closed with the encapsulated "in short," which condenses the verbosity to a phrase usually no longer than Barkis'. Thus Micawber emerges as a great smiling caricature, but beneath is not much more actual character than Barkis. His words do not perform their essential service: the communication of substantial content. At least while Micawber remains in England there is little behind the grand facade. Thus Mrs. Micawber complains, "'Indeed, I may be superstitious, but it appears to me that Mr. Micawber is destined never to receive any answers whatever to the great majority of the communications he writes'" (ch. 36). His is speech without contact because it is speech without substance, except under the special hazardous circumstances where

1. David is 21 when he marries Dora (ch. 53). She dies about two years later; David is overseas for three years, and marries Agnes some months after he returns. Thus in the penultimate chapter

(ten years later), he is 36 or 37 (Dickens was 37 when he began the novel).



society's cripples find the kinship of outcasts, as when Micawber exposes Heep. But not only are Micawber's words generally useless, they can be harmful, for David uses Micawber as an analogy to describe the ills of English society and even of mankind.

Mr. Micawber had a relish in this formal piling up of words, which, however ludicrously displayed in his case, was, I must say, not at all peculiar to him. I have observed it, in the course of my life, in numbers of men. It seems to me to be a general rule. . . . We talk about the tyranny of words, but we like to tyrannize over them too; we are fond of having a large superfluous establishment of words to wait upon us on great occasions; we think it looks important, and sounds well. As we are not particular about the meaning of our liveries on state occasions, if they be but fine and numerous enough, so the meaning or necessity of our words is a secondary consideration, if there be but a great parade of them. And as individuals get into trouble by making too great a show of liveries, or as slaves when they are too numerous rise against their masters, so I think I could mention a nation that has got into many great difficulties, and will get into many greater, from maintaining too large a retinue of words. (ch. 52)

Thus verbal abuse is at the core of individual and social malaise in the novel. You are the words you use or abuse.

This passage of linguistic analysis occurs during the climax of Micawber's single triumphant use of words, his exposition of Uriah Heep as the novel's verbal villain. While Micawber's words may give empty echoes, Heep's deceive. He is the opposite of what he says and once again the verbal signature designates the character, this time by reversing the "umble." Thus one must develop a set of linguistic criteria to interpret the verbal signs: Barkis' "willingness" must be read restrictively. Micawber's prodigality must be translated through the transformation beginning "in short. . . ." Heep's statements must be reversed.

There are a number of characters who might be selected as verbal heroes to balance Heep: Agnes, always serious; Aunt Betsey, always forthright; Daniel Peggotty, always genuine; or David, always earnest. But none of these is quite satisfactory. Agnes seldom speaks out on either good or evil; Aunt Betsey conceals her husband; Daniel Peggotty is naïve; and David, as we have seen, is peculiarly reserved about his artistry. To examine the flaws in those who should presumably be the "verbal champions" to counter Heep, let us examine the verbal short-

comings of Mr. Dick Babley, the most obviously disturbed of the honest characters.

Mr. Dick is strikingly similar to David.<sup>2</sup> He suffers seriously from abuse by his family when his beloved sister marries a Murdstone-like husband, who abuses her. Mr. Dick finds refuge, like David, with Aunt Betsey. He is as childlike in mentality as David is in fact. And he too, like the later David, is writing an autobiography, the Memorial. The autobiography, however, has serious troubles. It is intended as a representation to the authorities of his plight. But it "never would be finished" (ch. 15), and is displayed to the world only in the pieces of the abortive manuscript with which Mr. Dick constructs his kite. The trouble is that he can't keep the decapitated King Charles the First out of it. As Aunt Betsey explains, "That's his allegorical way of expressing it. He connects his illness with great disturbance and agitation, naturally, and that's the figure, or the simile, or whatever it's called, which he chooses to use. And why shouldn't he, if he thinks proper?" (ch. 14). Aunt Betsey is describing very accurately what a modern psychologist would call a case of free association. Dickens chose the metaphor very deliberately after John Forster had complained that his original metaphor, the bull in the china shop, was inappropriately farcical.<sup>3</sup>

Dickens makes it clear elsewhere that the real victim in the case of King Charles was the English people. In his chapter on Charles I in *A Child's History of England* (begun in *Household Words* in 1851) he compares him to "His Sowship," James I, depicts him as an habitual liar, and above all as an oppressor of the people's rights: "Now, you are to understand that King Charles the First—of his own determination to be a high and mighty King not to be called to account by anybody, and urged on by his Queen besides—deliberately set himself to put his Parliament down and to put himself up" (ch. 33). In an aside, he demurs at the regicide ("There were ambassadors from Holland that day, to intercede for the unhappy King, whom you and I both wish the Parliament had spared") but is very glad to be rid of him and concludes: "With all my sorrow for him, I cannot agree with him that he died 'the martyr of the people;' for the people had been martyrs to him, and to his ideas of a King's rights, long before." As with Mr. Dick, the beheading kept coming back to Dickens. In 1864, he published in *All the Year Round* a flippant account of the background of Charles's death under the title "How King Charles's

2. Leonard F. Manheim calls attention to Mr. Dick's disturbance, but analyzes him predominantly as a father-figure instead of as a parallel to David. See "The Personal History of David Copperfield," *American Imago*, IX (1952), 26-28.

3. John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (London, 1873), II, 404.

Head Was Loosened."<sup>4</sup> A visitor at the Gadshill household recounts how Dickens himself played the role of Charles's executioner in pantomime with a black handkerchief on his head and using a fire shovel for an ax.<sup>5</sup> In summary, then, the regicide is the expected retribution on the king for the abuse of his most faithful subjects. Finally, a psychologist would note that it is the social form of parricide, the companion to the other primal sin, incest. It is, indeed, as we shall see later, the appropriate analogy to describe Mr. Dick's verbal and mental block.

It is within this context of verbal use and abuse that David himself uses words and especially now as a writer of his autobiography. He is surrounded by those who use too few words and too many, who use words to deceive and to enlighten. If David is to be the hero of the book, he should also be the verbal hero: the man who tackles problems of communication others cannot solve.

He certainly seems to have all the problems. Like Micawber he is verbose. And paradoxically, like Barkis he is taciturn. The fourth paragraph of the novel illustrates the paradox. It is a long digression about the history of the caul David was born with. The motto of the lady who won the caul in a later raffle was "let us have no meandering." And David adds in his own voice, "Not to meander myself, at present, I will go back to my birth." This is one of the passages generally expurgated in those popular shortened revisions of the novel. Yet the digression has its point, like all free associations. David remarks when the caul is raffled, "I was present myself and I remember to have felt quite uncomfortable and confused, at a part of myself being disposed of in that way." A part of himself has become public property, callously made a game of, detached without compensation or emotion and given away. He is ten years old, the year in which he is abandoned at Murdstone and Grinby's, cut off from his mother, and sold to the world unfeelingly as a bit of public property. Thus the meandering image of a neurosis surfaces on the opening page, verbose and apparently insignificant, but ultimately revealing.

David tries to counter this Micawber-like openness

with Barkis-like hoarding of experience. He will not describe his writing to us even though he "bestowed upon it every energy of . . . soul" (ch. 61). But even more peculiar is the obvious self-deception that the MS is private, meant for no eyes but his. He begins Chapter 42, "I feel as if it were not for me to record, even though this manuscript is intended for no eyes but mine, how hard I worked at that tremendous shorthand, and all improvement appertaining to it, in my sense of responsibility to Dora and her aunts." Yet he does go on to tell us how hard he worked. The full title of the book reads, "The Personal History, Adventures, Experience, & Observation of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery. (Which He never meant to be Published on any Account.)" Not meant to be published, yet was published.<sup>6</sup> Not meant for other eyes, yet David addresses himself directly to the reader: "The reader now understands, as well as I do, what I was when I came to that point of my youthful history to which I am now coming again" (ch. 4). David seems pulled by a compulsion to reveal himself (thus the verbosity) and a compulsion to conceal (thus the reticence). This reluctant exhibitionist has qualities in common with Uriah Heep as well. He says what he does not mean, by using words that must be transposed to obtain their real significance.

This transposition with Heep is simple; find the antonym for "'umble" and you have the real meaning of Heep's utterance. David's language is more complex and yields to no simple, conscious formula. In fact, Dickens himself does not seem aware of the obvious contradiction of addressing the reader in a MS meant for no eyes but the author's. Thus the meaning behind David's use of language is not analogous to Heep's, but to Mr. Dick's. It is not conscious but unconscious. Mr. Dick, like David, is writing a seemingly endless autobiography, with something always getting in the way to distract him. His metaphor is King Charles's head. Since Mr. Dick is so closely parallel to David, it furnishes a useful metaphor for David's difficulty.<sup>7</sup>

Mark Spilka, following Leonard Manheim and Jack

4. Vol. XI, 253-58. Frederick G. Kitton does not list this article in his bibliography of Dickens' contributions to *All the Year Round* (*The Minor Writings of Charles Dickens*, London, 1900), but the style and particularly the irony are very close to Dickens'.

5. Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens* (New York, 1952), II, 1058.

6. Part of this paradox could have been explained by an early version of the title: "*The Last Will and Testament of Mr. David Copperfield*. Being his personal history left as a legacy" (Forsster, II, 433). His legatees, not himself, then would be responsible for the publication.

7. As an introduction to an analysis of metaphors revealing psychophysical problems, Ella Freeman Sharpe has written: "In psycho-analytical treatment our task is often that of getting through barrages of words to the sense experience and associated thoughts. But words too can reveal the union of these, and we are greatly helped if we . . . recognize the revealing phrase. Metaphor fuses sense experience and thought in language" ("*Psycho-physical Problems Revealed in Language: an Examination of Metaphor*," *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, XXI [1940], 201).



Lindsay, has demonstrated that David Copperfield is an oedipal novel.<sup>8</sup> The second chapter furnishes more than enough evidence. David is concerned that his father may rise from the grave and later identifies the interfering Murdstone as his dead father (ch. 3). The first of his conversations that he records deals with either his mother or Peggotty (a surrogate mother) marrying. He instinctively and immediately dislikes Murdstone before he has any conscious reason to (an "uneasy jealousy" and "a child's instinctive dislike," David calls it). He says of his mother, "She can't live by herself." David is living "like the boy in the fairy tale" with his mother all to himself, jealous of the competition from resurrected or murdering fathers. Described as the unconsciously motivated, instinctive reaction of a young boy, this sounds innocent enough, particularly when one paints the father as black as Murdstone. But as the boy enters puberty or looks back as a mature man with the responsibilities of adult sexuality, the perspective changes. That innocent young child ceases to exist (David identifies himself with the child buried in his mother's arms) and the oedipal conflict is transposed to other terms or acted out in masked situations. Thus the inordinantly violent and lasting reaction to the wine (blacking) warehouse incident becomes intelligible as a replay of the oedipal conflict.<sup>9</sup> The boy is shut out from his mother and home by his cruel, heartless father; he is forced prematurely to abandon the "fairy tale" world of the boy's monopoly on his mother. Likewise, once the actual mother is gone, his other loves become surrogates for that lost love, and no matter how old he is, they are described in the child's ideal terms. Dora is another version of his mother, his "child-wife," and in fantasy David returns to the world of his childhood.

As long as David maintains this oedipal conflict unresolved, his sphere of action remains severely limited. At the age of ten (ch. 15), David disappears as an active participant in almost all the public, adult events. His exclusive problem is to come to understand his relationship to his mother in the person of Dora. He reconstructs the childhood romance and then is forced to act it out in a real marriage. Here he discovers "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart." The first impulse is, of course, the childhood impulse and the heart is the child's heart, directed towards its mother. The later "discipline" is the recognition of reality, the adult limitations that the real world imposes on this fantasy. Meanwhile, all

other adult concerns and actions are relegated to other characters. Heep, Steerforth, and Jack Maldon experience adult sexual adventures. Heep carries out adult economic adventures. David, preoccupied with his private romance, almost disappears for whole chapters, and the solution to the adult evils in this real world is left to an idiot, Mr. Dick, and an incompetent, Mr. Micawber. However, David's supposed maturity in recognizing the mistake of his marriage with Dora is incomplete. Dora dies in childhood's old age after bearing a child. Shaken by his lack of discipline, David then totally sublimates his romance by marrying a sexless "sister," a church window, an angel, a heavenly bride instead of a child bride. The very word "discipline" is so redolent of Murdstone's word, "firmness," that it indicates only a new form of an old repression.

Since David never effectively opens up his potential for full adult life, the final viewpoint remains correspondingly restricted by the residual conflict. To use Dickens' original metaphor, David feels himself the masculine bull in the feminine china shop. Or to use the revised metaphor, David's conflict is his King Charles's head that intrudes itself into the manuscript. Part of the great fear is his hatred for the father, who will oppress (murder) the child as King Charles, the social father, oppressed and murdered his people. The child hopes to keep the father in the grave, but like King Charles he keeps reappearing. As the oppressive king and subsequent regicide produce chaos in the civil wars surrounding Charles I, so David's wishes for his father's death and his attack on Murdstone produce conflict in his life. Another of the abandoned titles hints that Dickens might very early have conceived of David as a possible criminal: "*The Last Living Speech and Confession of David Copperfield Junior*, of Blunderstone Lodge, who was never executed at the Old Bailey. Being his personal history found among his papers."<sup>10</sup> David (or Dickens) finds the release of this childhood energy impossible in Victorian society. He can describe it, but only indirectly, in metaphor. As Dr. Ella Sharpe has analyzed the psychology of metaphors, they both conceal "through barrages of words" and reveal, as fusion of "sense experience and thought in language." In artistic terms, the adult metaphor-maker here is the verbal artist, the novelist. But Dickens declines to let David analyze his own nature as the metaphor-maker or bring it to consciousness. He is the writer writing about himself, who yet excludes the writer as such

8. Mark Spilka, *Dickens and Kafka* (Bloomington, 1963), pp. 176-95; Manheim, pp. 21-43; Jack Lindsay, *Charles Dickens* (London, 1930), pp. 288-92.

9. Cf. Lindsay, pp. 59-64, and Spilka, p. 33.

10. Forster, II, 433.

from the narrative. Thus the viewpoint, instead of being that of the mature artist, takes refuge alternately in a child narrator or a detached, almost omniscient narrator, uninvolved in the action. David will not admit to himself or to the reader who he is, and most important of all for

this novel, he won't admit who the artist is: the metaphor-maker, whose very obstructions, like King Charles's head, reveal unwittingly the inner boy-man, the bull in the china shop.

University of Colorado

## Black and White Characters in *Hard Times*

Mary Rose Sullivan

HARD TIMES is, by all accounts, a colorless book. At least so we might conclude from the recurrence of words such as "arid," "harsh," and "cold" in the critical discussion of what has been called the least Dickensian and the least enjoyable of all Dickens novels.<sup>1</sup> What the critics have in mind, it would seem, is less the specific absence of color imagery than the lack of poetic and dramatic imagination in a work dedicated to upholding the primacy of fancy over fact. Missing the complex, pervasive symbols—the fog, the river, the prison—that so successfully convey the peculiar atmosphere of many of his other novels, they find the rather labored irony of the fairy-tale images, ogres, giants, and castles in *Hard Times* a meager substitute.<sup>2</sup> In point of fact, however, Dickens does use color imagery extensively in this work, but because he limits it almost exclusively to the extremes of black and white, its presence has been generally unnoticed and only its effect—of intensifying the bleakness of mood and setting—has been felt and commented upon.

Although he does not concern himself specifically with the black-white imagery in *Hard Times*, F. R. Leavis, in his provocative assessment of the novel as a "moral fable," probably comes closer to appreciating the real aim and accomplishment of Dickens' unwanted austerity here than do those critics who attribute it to uncongenial subject matter or uncertain focus. Leavis' idea that "the intention is peculiarly insistent, so that the representative significance of everything in the fable—character, episode, and so on—is immediately apparent as we read"<sup>3</sup>

is borne out by evidence within and without the novel that Dickens was intent on showing the conflict between fact and fancy as one with universal moral implications. His letters, at the time of its composition and after, attest to the unusual sense of urgency he felt in getting across his message (he wrote that he had not meant to write a new story for a year when the idea laid hold of him "by the throat in a very violent manner"<sup>4</sup>); he dedicated the work to that preacher of vitalism, Thomas Carlyle (writing him that "it contains nothing in which you do not think with me"<sup>5</sup>); and in the writing, he determinedly subdued his natural tendency toward expansiveness in favor of a rigorous economy in plot and style.<sup>6</sup> More specifically, his notebooks reveal that when he first considered titles to suggest the grimness of the struggle between sterile mechanization and the natural life force, he thought of using, among other paired oppositions (like "Rust and Dust" or "Heads and Tales"), the simpler phrase "Black and White." Although he ultimately rejected it as a title, he retained the black-white contrast as a basic pattern of characterization in the novel, putting all his characters into one of two groups, depending on whether their response to life was affirmative and creative or negative and destructive. This all-inclusive pattern of polarities is what gives the novel its almost allegorical severity, suggesting as it does the opposition between nature and antinature in terms of a life-and-death struggle of good and evil in which there is no middle ground and no possibility of compromise.

1. See, for example, Edward Wagenknecht, *The Cavalcade of the English Novel* (New York, 1954), p. 218; G. K. Chesterton, ed. *Hard Times* (London, 1907), p. vi; and Sylvère Monod, *Dickens the Novelist* (Norman, 1968), pp. 470-71.

2. The most recent extended treatment of imagery in *Hard Times*: David Sonstroem, "Fettered Fancy in *Hard Times*," *PMLA*, LXXXIV (1969), 520-29, refutes the charge of a lack of poetic imagination, but nevertheless concludes that the novel fails artistically because of contradictory roles allotted to the imagination.

3. "'Hard Times': An Analytic Note," *The Great Tradition* (New York, 1954), pp. 273-74.

4. *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Walter Dexter (London, 1938), II, 602.

5. *Letters*, II, 567.

6. See Monod, p. 463.



What is most striking in Dickens' use of this pattern of characterization is that he reverses the traditional symbolic values to make the black group represent the positive life force and the white the negative, antilife force. The resultant configuration is remarkably like that later used by D. H. Lawrence in *Women in Love*, where the network of allusions to Black Africa and the White Arctic serves the same purpose of contrasting the natural, instinctual life with the sterility of the overly intellectualized existence.<sup>7</sup> For Dickens, human "blackness" goes beyond the physical manifestation of vitality and growth to the realization of this energy in some kind of moral commitment, whereas whiteness indicates in the unhealthy pallor of bloodlessness a retreat from commitment, whether it be induced by temperament, ideology, or deliberate choice. He sets up the framework immediately in the famous opening scene in the Gradgrind schoolroom showing Sissy Jupe, the untutored daughter of a circus stroller, and Bitzer, the apt pupil of Utilitarianism, caught and illuminated by the same ray of sunlight: whereas "the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun, when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. . . . His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white."<sup>8</sup> All the characters in the novel follow one or the other of these two courses: the dark ones receive and in some degree return the life-giving warmth of the sun, and the light turn away, like unnatural growths, from the source of life to deformity or decay.

Despite the sharp opposition of types, however, it should be noted that what we have here is something more than the simplistic method of characterization so often attributed to Dickens, that all his creations belong to two classes (people who have feelings and emotions, and those who don't), reflecting his view that all the world requires to turn it into a garden on earth is an abundance of simple, loving hearts. Stephen Blackpool and Rachael are two simple, loving hearts—and they are ground down and destroyed by the forces of mechanism. Just as energy itself is not enough, in Dickens' view, neither is love; both must flower into effective action, by being directed toward the appropriate moral choice.

Rachael loves Stephen selflessly, but at the moment of crisis, when he lies in the pit of the Old Hell Shaft, she gives in to despair and hysteria and it falls to Sissy to calm her and direct the rescue. Sissy, in fact, clearly represents the ideal of creative love: of all the black group, only she survives intact and victorious. But she survives because hers is not simply the instinctive response of the untutored heart. She never yields to the pernicious Gradgrind atmosphere, even though her first impulse is to run away, and only faith in her father's return keeps her at Stone Lodge. For awhile even she seems to lose her vitality and color, growing "pale as wax, and as heavy" (p. 39) as the Gradgrind children, but her natural spirit triumphs, as Gradgrind himself acknowledges when he withdraws her from school for failing to grasp Benthamite principles ("You are altogether backward, and below the mark"), but keeps her in his home nevertheless ("You are an affectionate, earnest, good young woman—and—and we must make that do" [p. 70]). In effect, Sissy wins, and the Gradgrinds' acceptance of her on her own terms leaves her free to perform a redemptive role for others less capable of resisting the antilife forces.

All the members of the white group reflect the refusal to make Sissy's affirmative response to the life-struggle. In describing them, Dickens makes their whiteness less a positive quality than an absence, of color, of light, of life itself. Bitzer, who would "bleed white," is "the colourless boy" (p. 19), "fit colourless servitor at Death's door" (p. 150). The bloodlessness and etiolation of those other two most dedicated Utilitarians, Gradgrind and Bounderby, are conveyed by constant comparisons to abstract geometrical shapes and petrified ores—Gradgrind is all squareness and flinty stone, Bounderby circles and brassiness. Although the former grows perpetually paler and grayer under the weight of the discovery of his errors, Dickens' final picturing of him simply as a "white-haired decrepit man" (p. 225) indicates that Gradgrind's latent feelings have surfaced in time to salvage some remnant of humanity amid the wreckage of his life. Not so with Bounderby: he remains always a thin veneer of bluster barely concealing the emptiness within, inflated like a balloon to the collapsing point, or "swelling like an immense soap-bubble, without its beauty" (p. 209), until he dies "of a fit in the Coketown street" (p. 225).

Mrs. Gradgrind, no apt pupil of her husband's teachings,

7. Leavis notes an "essentially Laurentian suggestion" in the opening scene's "opposing the life that is lived freely and richly from the deep instinctive and emotional springs to the thin-blooded, quasi-mechanical product of Gradgrindery" (*The Great Tradition*, p. 278).

8. *Hard Times*, eds. George Ford and Sylvère Monod, Norton Critical Edition (New York, 1966), p. 3. Subsequent references are to this edition.

nevertheless turns her back on life quite as effectively as the most ardent Benthamite. She looks "like an indifferently executed transparency of a small female figure, without enough light behind it" (p. 12). "A little, thin, white, pink-eyed bundle of shawls, of surpassing feebleness, mental and bodily," she is continually stunned by "some weighty piece of fact tumbling on her" (p. 12). Repetition of phrases such as "she once more died away, and nobody minded her" (p. 14) or she "departed this life for the time being" (p. 79), link her with the antilife forces and make her actual death seem hardly worthy of note—except that, in Sissy's beneficent presence, she comes to some faint agitated realization, in her last moments, of what has been missing in her lifeless existence. Louisa's would-be seducer, the languid Harthouse, represents still another form of life denial: he deliberately stifles a natural liveliness and shrewdness of mind to affect an air of ennui and a studiedly noncommittal attitude. His motto, "What will be, will," far from indicating anything like resignation or stoicism, is a sophisticated version of Louisa's repeated question, "What does it matter?" by which she convinces herself that she too can evade the imperatives of moral choice. This shrugging refusal to see the individual moral act as meaningful is what draws these two, otherwise so dissimilar, into a potentially disastrous relationship.

Louisa's is in fact the clearest case for Dickens' argument that withdrawal from life is basically an act with the most serious moral implications. By nature she belongs to the black group: we first see her with "an air of jaded sullenness," but, significantly, struggling through the dissatisfaction of her face is a light "with nothing to rest upon, a fire with nothing to burn, a starved imagination keeping life in itself somehow" (p. 10). That Gradgrindism has succeeded only in suppressing, not in extinguishing the fire within, we know from the signs of her struggle before submitting to Bounderby's proposal. But we also know that acceptance of the loveless marriage is not the act of self-sacrifice it appears on the surface; Louisa's rejection of Sissy's friendship indicates that she understands that what she is doing is wrong. From the moment when she announced her decision, we are told, "she was impassive, proud and cold—held Sissy at a distance—changed to her altogether" (p. 79). In this deliberate turning away from a source of redemption, Louisa rejects her natural potential for creative life and surrenders herself to the deadening forces of Gradgrindism.

Her brother Tom, on the other hand, accepts his identification with the white group without a struggle. His downfall is complete. Almost as receptive as Bitzer to the

Utilitarian appeal to self interest, he is guilty not only of theft but of implicating an innocent man in the crime, and has to flee the country in disgrace. As the first scene in which we see them shows, the difference between brother and sister is less in their training than in their natural strength of will. Caught by Gradgrind in the act of peeking at the circus, Louisa responds with spirit: "I brought *him*, father," she says quickly of Tom, "I asked him to come"—but Tom remains silent and gives himself up "to be taken home like a machine" (p. 10). The implication is that Tom's natural passivity makes him more vulnerable to Gradgrindism; while in the end, Louisa's natural spirit surfaces in time to save her from the worst effects of her wrong choice.

Another example of the strong will perverted into destructive channels is Louisa's rival for Bounderby's attentions, the redoubtable Mrs. Sparsit. With her skill in manipulating others and in advancing her own interests with consummate shrewdness and patience—qualities conveyed to the reader by frequent references to her "dense black eyebrows," her "unwinking black eyes," and her "hawk-like" intensity—she seems to belong with the stronger black group. But her case illustrates how a powerful capacity for control, divorced from any motivation but self-interest, can still, without infection of Gradgrindism, degenerate into disastrous rigidity. Mrs. Sparsit's formidable will, with no object beyond itself, simply petrifies, and the effect is strikingly dramatized in the obsessive mental image on which she feeds so avidly for so long. Out of her limited imagination, she conjures up a chilling picture of Louisa descending a great staircase, brought step by step, onward and downward, to the "dark pit of shame and ruin at the bottom. . . . Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, sometimes several steps at one bout, sometimes stopping, never turning back" (p. 154). It is as if she is able to draw Louisa on to disaster by the sheer strength of her concentrated will, and for all the comic aspects of her portrait, she emerges as a menacing example of power and control gone awry.

In Dickens' design, the ineffectuality of the white characters, whether attributable to natural weakness or to malice, throws into sharp relief Sissy's genuinely effective vitalism; in another way, the failures of the black group, no other one of whom is strong enough to survive undefeated, illuminate the real source of her strength. They all lack her capacity for endurance and constructive action. The patient and long-suffering Stephen Blackpool (whose very name suggests a natural tendency to life affirmation) is nevertheless overwhelmed by forces he can neither cope with nor comprehend, as his repeated phrase, "all is a muddle," indicates. His feeble attempts



to free himself from the strangling grip of an inhumane industrial-legal system—seeking to divorce his drunken wife, refusing to join the union, returning to Coketown to clear his name—are all thwarted, because they are too little or come too late. He lacks both the resolve and the intelligence to break out of the net; years of mindless labor, of days at the “crashing, smashing, tearing” (p. 53) power loom in the mill, followed by nights when the loom in the shape of a gallows haunts his dreams, have crippled the will and capacity to survive. And as his mind and spirit are worn down, so his body must be mangled by the ominous symbol of the all-powerful system, the Old Hell Shaft.

Whatever limited consolation Rachael can offer him—she is his dark-haired “angel” and represents, in the religious overtones with which Dickens surrounds her, the spiritual dimension of the urge toward life-affirmation—dissolves in the rescue scene, where Sissy has to take over the direction of Stephen’s recovery. The point is that Rachael’s submissive resignation is not enough to combat evil; such a struggle requires the active hero who is Sissy Jupe. Quiet, unaggressive, with no head for logic or abstractions, Sissy yet sees and undertakes what has to be done; she becomes the one effective agency for creative good in Dickens’ scheme of things in *Hard Times*, because her response to life is invariably directed by concern for others. Her faith in her father’s eventual return is the clue to the source of her strength; out of it grows the courage to drive off Harthouse, find Stephen, and engineer Tom’s escape. By her fruits we know her: the rescue of the Gradgrinds’ youngest daughter Jane from the crippling effects of life at Stone Lodge; Mrs. Gradgrind’s final groping recognition of some meaning in the life slipping away from her; Louisa’s slow and painful journey to understanding and acceptance.

But even accepting the evidence that Dickens is thus quite deliberately and literally portraying all the characters in *Hard Times* in black and white terms to intensify the effect of his moral fable, it can still be asked whether he is not guilty of inconsistency in using the color black elsewhere in the novel in its more traditional sense, to imply the ugly, the sinister, or the evil. He uses it in this way, in fact, in almost every descriptive passage that does not deal directly with character portrayal. Coketown, for example, is a “black mist” (p. 201) on the horizon, lost in the “distant smoke, very black and heavy” (p. 74) from the factories. Once entered, it is a town of “red-brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it,” but instead is “unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage” (p. 17). Through it runs a “black canal” (p. 17), and the river carrying poisonous wastes from the mills

through the heart of town is “black and thick with dye” (p. 85). Even Harthouse reacts to the sight, asking of “this extraordinarily black town” whether “it’s *always* as black as this?” (pp. 91-92). The sun itself, usually blotted out, can only fitfully pierce the pall over the smokestacks (p. 126). The desolation spreads even beyond the city to the once rustic retreat now “undermined by deserted coal shafts, and spotted at night by fires and black shapes of stationary engines at pits’ mouths” (p. 128).

Clearly, black in these passages symbolizes the havoc wrought on nature by members of the white group, their individually unrealized potential for energy emerging in distorted shapes of defilement and pollution. But concerned as always to show that the human capacity for turning good to evil is not restricted to the disciples of Bentham, Dickens introduces a whole range of lesser man-made objects in which the blackness assumes sinister overtones from the perverted use each is put to. Some are figurative only, as in Stephen’s decrying of the “black impassable world” (p. 116) the mill owners have set up between themselves and the workers, or in Mrs. Sparsit’s “black gulf” (p. 157) awaiting Louisa at the foot of the staircase. Most are literal, from the undertaker’s “black ladder” (p. 51), kept for removing the bodies of the poor, to the pitch black hallway in which Tom entraps Stephen (“Never mind a light, man! . . . It don’t want a light” [p. 123]), and finally to the “black ragged chasm (p. 202) of the Old Hell Shaft lying in wait for its next victim.

In this context, with black given its traditional association with evil, one might look to the white allusions for some countering value of good, but the opposite occurs; somehow, when juxtaposed with its antithesis in the artificial and unnatural Coketown world, whiteness seems to contract the same infection. The first object the children in the Gradgrind schoolroom meet, for example, is “a large blackboard with a dry ogre chalking ghastly white figures on it” (p. 17); in keeping with the monotonous uniformity of Coketown life, all the public inscriptions are “painted alike, in severe characters of black and white” (p. 17). But by far the most meaningful combination of black and white imagery in *Hard Times*, one that brings together both the descriptive and characterizing functions that Dickens had been developing on different levels, comes in the last view he gives us of Tom Gradgrind in blackface disguise, hiding from justice in Sleary’s circus:

In a preposterous coat, like a beadle’s, with cuffs and flaps exaggerated to an unspeakable extent; in an immense waistcoat, knee-breeches, buckled shoes, and a mad cocked hat; with nothing fitting him, and everything of coarse material, moth-eaten and full of holes; with seams in his black face, where fear and heat had started through

the greasy composition daubed all over it; anything so grimly, detestably, ridiculously shameful as the whelp in his comic livery, Mr. Gradgrind never could by any other means have believed in . . . (p. 215)

Here Dickens realizes dramatically, and with trenchant irony, his thesis that uncontrolled self-interest is a form of life-denial which can only result in the grotesque distortion of the human personality. The "white" Tom sullenly takes on the protective black coloration of the vital circus people he despises, in order to escape the consequences of his own criminal behavior, but the telltale signs of fear and guilt break through the absurd disguise to reveal the whiteness within. And fittingly Gradgrind himself, that determinedly unimaginative preacher of hard fact, has to come face to face with the fantastic evidence of his ruined hopes; "not by any other means" could he be made to see the extent of his own folly.

Further proof that Dickens' main concern in structuring the characterization of *Hard Times* on the black-white pattern is to show the perversity of the antinature forces can be found in the heavy emphasis he puts on the word "unnatural" to describe certain acts of the white characters. He uses it ironically in Tom's assessment of Louisa's behavior ("I call it unnatural conduct" [p. 135]), and in Gradgrind's of the faithful Mrs. Pegler (whom he chides for her "unnatural and inhuman treatment" [p. 198] of her son Bounderby); figuratively in the description of the "unnatural red and black face" (p. 17) of Coketown and its "unnatural family" (p. 48) of streets, engendered by the greedy mill owners; and didactically in Stephen's condemnation of an industrial system in which one side is "unnat'rally awlous and for ever right" and the other "unnat'rally awlous and for ever wrong" (p. 115). Less frequently, and without irony, he applies the word "natural" to the black group—in the family relationships of the circus people (they gather about Sissy in "very natural attitudes" [p. 31]; it is "very natural" [p. 213] in Sissy to be moved to tears), in Sissy's inability to grasp the rudiments of Gradgrindism (mistakes in her lessons "come natural" to her, she says, as in her substituting "Natural Prosperity" for the schoolmaster's "National Prosperity" [pp. 43-44]). He intends in this way to remind us that the corrosive effects of anti-natural forces extend not only to external nature and man-made objects but even into the most significant human relationships. A major concern in all his novels, the familiar Dickensian curses of loveless marriages, irresponsible parents, and ungrateful children here form verbal and dramatic parallels between members of the white group. The two whitest or most life-denying characters, for instance Bitzer and Mrs. Gradgrind, are linked by

their rejection of domestic responsibilities, although for entirely different reasons. Bitzer, the zealous Utilitarian, complains of hearing "till it becomes quite nauseous" of the workingmen's concern with their wives and children. Having had his own mother shut up in a workhouse, he boasts to Mrs. Sparsit, "Why look at me, ma'am! I don't want a wife and family" (p. 90). Mrs. Gradgrind, from the depths of her decidedly un-Utilitarian mental muddle, echoes much the same sentiment: "Yes, I really *do* wish that I had never had a family, and then you would have known what it was to do without me!" (p. 42). When proposing the Bounderby alliance to Louisa, Gradgrind unconsciously exposes its bleak unsuitability by comparing it to his own marriage: "I have stated it," he announces complacently, "as the case of your mother and myself was stated in its time" (p. 76). Bounderby rebuffs Stephen's plea for a divorce from his wife with the reminder that "You took her for better for worse" (p. 56), only to hear the words repeated by Louisa's father, asking him to take her back again: "You have accepted a great charge of her; for better for worse . . ." (p. 185).

Similarly, as Louisa is irreparably injured by her father and brother, so Bitzer turns on father and son, putting into effect on the Gradgrinds the lessons he learned in their school. Bounderby tries to draw a parallel between himself and the orphaned Sissy; "Let her take it from me, if you like, who have been run away from, myself" (p. 28)—only to be unmasked as an ungrateful hypocrite, willing to slander a devoted mother to inflate his own ego. To each of these Sissy stands opposed: strengthened by memories of loving parents, she is faithful to her missing father, grateful to her benefactors despite Gradgrind's obtuseness and Louisa's coldness, a staunch friend to Rachael and Stephen in their troubles, and the only one of all the characters in *Hard Times* destined for domestic happiness (as we learn from Louisa's vision of "happy Sissy's happy children" [p. 226]).

What all this adds up to is a persuasive argument for reading *Hard Times* in Leavis' terms of a "moral fable," whose intention is made "peculiarly insistent" by a highly elaborated pattern of contrasting black and white imagery. With this in mind, the common complaints about the novel's lack of color, its being "arid," "harsh," and "cold," lose their validity: as well complain that the imagery of "Dover Beach" or *The Wasteland* is bleak and dispiriting. In each case, we must emotionally experience the barrenness to realize its significance. Humphry House touches on this point when he sees that although the book "is ultimately unsatisfying and oddly uncomfortable to nearly all its readers," this very fact is the main one to be considered in assessing its value as a novel: "unanswerable disquiet was normal among the



very few who were not misled into the easy optimism" of the fifties.<sup>9</sup> By using such broad, uncompromising strokes to portray good and evil, Dickens gives a universal and allegorical quality to his message that ensures against its being read in its narrowest application of anti-Utilitarianism. Gradgrindism, dangerously infectious though it may be, is a symptom, not a cause, of anti-vitalism; hence, his introduction of characters who are quite outside its philosophical reaches: Mrs. Gradgrind, incapable of even the rudiments of her husband's beliefs; Harthouse, governed by no rule but self-interest; the devious Mrs. Sparsit and the demagogic Slackbridge, both of whose capacity for self-aggrandizement is untouched by any higher concern. What these characters have in common with the Gradgrinds and the Bounderbys is a determination to reject any kind of productive involvement with life on the emotional or spiritual level; they

all represent varying kinds and degrees of life-denying tendencies, in which talent or strength or principle is turned from creativity to destructiveness. They debase and pervert whatever they touch, and the black stain that spreads in their wake is the incontrovertible proof of their alliance with the antilife forces. One image, of the many Dickens elaborates to show that man holds in his own hands the power to thwart the very source of life, sums up his message:

But the sun itself, however beneficent, generally, was less kind to Coketown than hard frost, and rarely looked intently into any of its closer regions without engendering more death than life. So does the eye of Heaven itself become an evil eye, when incapable or sordid hands are interposed between it and the things it looks upon to bless. (p. 85)

University of Colorado, Denver Center

## "All Her Perfections Tarnished": The Thematic Function of Esther Summerson

Mary Daehler Smith

IN THE CHORUS of critical praise lavished upon *Bleak House*, few voices have been raised in defense of Esther Summerson. G. H. Ford<sup>1</sup> points out that Dickens' contemporaries had some difficulty in liking her, even though she may be assumed to embody those virtues popularly thought of as distinctly "Victorian." Most readers tend to think of her as oversweet and vaguely hypocritical; she has lately, however, found one defender in William Axton, who provides an excellent summary of unfavorable criticism, opinions which he proceeds, at least partially, to repudiate.<sup>2</sup> But in spite of Axton, critical opinion has not greatly changed; Ross Dabney, for example, repeats the charge that Esther is too perfect, and hence a failure, inadequate to her role in the novel.<sup>3</sup>

Axton does not think that Esther is perfect; on the contrary, she is flawed, "an objective study of a character divided against itself by contending forces clearly dis-

cerned in her early history." Her excessive humility, the necessity of seeing her own value only as the result of kindness in others, her "morbid self-consciousness" all result from her loveless childhood and the sense of guilt instilled in her by her aunt godmother.<sup>4</sup> She is a perceptive psychological study whose faults and limitations are clearly discerned by Dickens. Though Axton is not primarily concerned with Esther's function in the novel, this has been brilliantly discussed by Hillis Miller.<sup>5</sup> Both Axton and Miller, however, think of Esther as a moral norm in the novel; Axton credits her with "keen moral insight" and Miller asks what is certainly one of the central moral questions in the novel—whether or not we are to take "Esther's sense of an intimate contact between her life and Providence" as a fiction—and concludes that we are not, at least so far as Esther's own experience is concerned.<sup>6</sup> One other critic, W. J. Harvey, repeats the

9. *The Dickens World* (London, 1942), p. 211.

1. G. H. Ford, *Dickens and His Readers* (Princeton, 1955), p. 60.

2. William Axton, "The Trouble with Esther," *MLQ*, XXV (1965), 545-57.

3. Ross Dabney, *Love and Property in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (California, 1967), p. 90.

4. Axton, p. 546.

5. J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 209-19.

6. Axton, p. 557; Miller, p. 215.

charge that Esther is an insipid, flat character, "more a moral sign-post than a person," but concludes that the flatness is the result of Dickens' deliberate design, to balance the rich and complex omniscient narration with the calm, if limited, viewpoint of the first person narrator. Structurally, Esther is "a point of rest in a flickering and bewildering world" and, as well, "a moral touchstone; her judgments are rarely emphatic but we accept them. She can see Richard more clearly than Ada; through her, Skimpole is revealed in his true colours and the Growlery becomes a sign of Jarndyce's obtuseness. She is also the known constant by which we judge all the other variables of character."<sup>7</sup>

But it seems to me that the reader's difficulty in accepting Esther as a believable, fully rounded, or likeable character arises from the assumption that he is to take her as a kind of moral guide to the interpretation of the events laid before him. Her excessive humility, her irritating emphasis on her own lack of value, her insistent harping on duty—all these are genuinely annoying only so long as the reader thinks of Esther as a fully responsible moral being, and an example. If we think of her as a "moral touchstone" we must almost necessarily conclude that she is flat, insipid, oversweet, and we do a grave injustice to the brilliance of Dickens' achievement. We may be deceived by the sheer skill of Dickens' narrative technique into believing that we accept Esther's judgments; in fact, it is not her judgment but her observation that we trust. We have formed our own opinions of the Jellyby ménage and of Skimpole's real character long before Esther makes any tentative conclusions about them. Indeed, when Bucket reveals the full extent of Skimpole's treachery, Esther mildly states only that his conduct had passed "the usual bounds of his childish innocence."<sup>8</sup> It is left to Bucket to sum up Skimpole for us, and to assert that the keystone of his character is irresponsibility, not innocence. We form our opinions of Mrs. Jellyby largely from our agreement with Caddy's statements, and of Mrs. Pardiggle not so much from the interchanged glances between Esther and Ada as from Esther's report of the behavior of the dreadful Pardiggle brats, especially the Infant Band of Joy.

When Dickens wishes the reader to accept a moral judgment from Esther, he has Esther herself agree with the opinion of another. When she ventures into an opinion of her own, it is likely to be an oversimplification, as when she persists in attributing Richard's unsteadiness to his public school education, or a confession of failure

to understand what ought to be obvious, as when she fails to see through the transparent maneuvers of old Mrs. Woodcourt and cannot decide whether the old lady is a barefaced liar or a monument of truth and frankness. Esther is so sharp an observer that sometimes a passage of description will imply a moral judgment, as when she characterizes Mrs. Pardiggle's "rapacious benevolence" (p. 100) or when she describes Vholes' shadow "chilling the seed in the ground as it glided along" (p. 617). We can trust Esther's observation, and to a certain extent her emotional impressions, but her interpretation of what she observes is often faulty; the news of Ada's marriage, for example, comes as a surprise, even though Esther has been aware for some time that Ada is concealing a secret.

Viewed as a moral example or a moral norm, Esther fails as a character; but it is my thesis that Esther Summerson, far from being a failure, is a brilliant success, and that her limitations are essential to her thematic function—more than Dickens' attempt to show the psychological effects of a childhood deprived of love and instinct with a sense of guilt.

Esther, the bringer of order, the narrator who imposes at least a chronological sequence on the chaotic events reported in the present tense by the alternate narrator, is herself obsessed with the orderly and developmental progress of time. She marks off periods in her life by ceremonial observance; when she leaves for school she buries her doll, companion of that portion of her life, under a tree in the garden; just as later, to mark what she believes to be the end of her hopes of romance, she burns the withered flowers Woodcourt has given her before she accepts Jarndyce's proposal. During her six years at school, she reports "seeing in those around me, as it might be in a looking-glass, every stage of my own growth and change there" (p. 26). Twice in the brief paragraphs allotted to her life at school she mentions the time spent there, and the difference between her former life and her school life is marked by the differing observances of her birthday. Upon leaving school, she allows what seems to her a proper time for mourning and tears before turning to a new phase in her life. Moreover, once a period of time has served its developmental purpose, she returns to it in memory unwillingly, if at all. Only a few times in the course of her retrospective narrative does a physical reminder, as Lady Dedlock's resemblance to her aunt Barbary, bring Esther's childhood to her conscious mind, and there is no indication that she corresponds with or remembers any of her affectionate school friends. Her ob-

7. W. J. Harvey, *Character and The Novel* (Ithaca, 1965), pp. 91, 97.

8. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Oxford, 1942), p. 775. Subsequent references are to this edition.



session with orderly periods of time is ironically underlined as she describes the furnishings of Bleak House:

In my room there were oval engravings of the months—ladies haymaking, in short waists, and large hats tied under the chin, for June—smooth-legged noblemen, pointing, with cocked hats, to village steeples, for October. (p. 66)

For Esther, then, time has a developmental function in direct contrast to the function of time in the passages related by the alternate narrator. For this impersonal narrator time is repetitive rather than developmental: Sir Leicester is a reproduction of his ancestors, Volumnia exerts her best efforts to imitate her lost youth, Lady Dedlock engages in an endless round of social duties, varying with the seasons of the year, but unchanging from year to year; the political and legal rounds *are* rounds, circular, repetitive, meaningless. Time may bring decay and dissolution, but not growth or healthy change. The two views of time meet and tragically converge in Richard, whose decay begins when his calendar becomes that of the Court of Chancery, from session to vacation and back again, and whose face takes on a look of premature age as he engages ever more deeply in the case of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce.

Esther's preoccupation with time is not unacceptable in a narrator whose function it is to recall events in an orderly sequence, but Esther also imposes another kind of order upon external reality, the order of a benevolent Providence. Her ultimate expression of this faith comes, quite spontaneously, when she discovers her mother's identity and thanks God for the disease which has destroyed any resemblance between herself and Lady Dedlock:

... I felt, through all my tumult of emotion, a burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness; as that nobody could ever now look at me, and look at her, and remotely think of any near tie between us. (p. 509)

Her spontaneous acknowledgement of gratitude to a benevolent Providence is coupled with an equally spontaneous failure in sensitive perception; it is not discovery that Lady Dedlock really fears, but the deadening effort of maintaining the false and frozen facade which she has heretofore presented to society. But all Esther's efforts, emotional and practical, are directed to aiding her mother keep the secret of her birth; to this end she interviews Guppy and tells the full truth to Jarndyce, in order to avoid further contact with Sir Leicester; to this end also she permits herself few glimpses of her mother, passing the door of the Dedlock town house at a distance.

Esther's gratitude to Providence is later tempered by a

momentary doubt, but that doubt is quickly resolved with the reflection that some benevolent, meaningful force influences her life and destiny:

... I was so confused and shaken, as to be possessed by a belief that it was right, and had been intended, that I should die in my birth; and that it was wrong, and not intended, that I should then be alive. ... For I saw very well that I could not have been intended to die, or I should never have lived; not to say should never have been reserved for such a happy life. I saw very well how many things had worked together, for my welfare. ... (pp. 514-16)

Axton remarks that this passage indicates a change in Esther's attitude of self-doubt, a final resolution of the conflicts of her childhood. But in fact it is not a change, but a reaffirmation of attitudes and opinions held earlier by Esther. Her more hopeful view of her own purpose and destiny is brought about not by an inner recognition of her own value, but by expressions of affection and regard in one of Ada's letters; moreover, in the remainder of the novel she does not show any increased sense of her own value, but remains dependent on the opinions and reactions of others. It is significant that even in the depths of doubt she retains an instinctive belief in some kind of ordering ("it was right, and had been intended, that I should die in my birth").

Esther, who imposes upon objective reality a vision of creative growth and change benevolently directed by a higher power, succeeds at this ordering only at enormous psychological cost, a cost of which she is consciously unaware. But Dickens is aware of it, and clearly indicates that the limitations of Esther's personality are part of the cost. As bringer of order to Bleak House, she gives up her own name to become Dame Trot, Dame Durden, little woman, and so forth. To impose order on time and the universe, she must give up more than her name; she must give up a sense of personal worth and freedom of moral choice. She can find a sense of personal value only in fulfilling the role she assumes Providence has designed for her; because she has no clear sense of her individual worth, she must rely on the opinions of others. That she is subconsciously, at least, aware of the personal cost of her interpretation of reality is clearly indicated by her visions in delirium. Time itself ceases to be neatly segmented, and she is made aware of a crushing burden of memory: "I had never known before how short life really was, and into how small a space the mind could put it" (p. 488). As time becomes meaningless to her, duty also assumes a new and terrifying aspect; it becomes crushing, burdensome, endless. Order itself becomes a prison; she is part of a cosmic round whose purpose she does not know, and her only prayer is for the freedom which as a

conscious and reasoning being she struggles to surrender. Esther's dream images of the flaming necklace, the endless staircase, and the worm in the garden path (the latter with Calvinist overtones) indicate deep subconscious doubt of the nature and value of man in general and her own ordered existence in particular. It is no wonder that she confesses to reluctance in writing these visions down.

As Esther's belief in a benevolent guiding Providence accompanies her lack of confidence in her own value, so that same belief denies her the privilege of free moral choice. The one decision that she does make for herself—to reject Woodcourt and marry Jarndyce—is deprived of meaning when Jarndyce himself, acting as a kind of surrogate providence, takes it upon himself to negate her decision and to provide her with a home and husband selected by himself, allowing Esther no option but humble gratitude at thus having her real wishes fulfilled. The fulfillment is so complete that even the furniture of her house and the arrangement of her garden are chosen for her, chosen, it is true, with due and loving regard for her known tastes, but in a way which deprives her of dignity and renders her own choice meaningless. Moreover, Jarndyce's desire to act as an all-powerful father figure results for some time in Esther's increased doubts about herself and her actions, since she repeatedly wonders if Jarndyce's delay in marrying her is caused by failures on her part to live up to the standards of cheerful and willing duty which she has set for herself.

It is significant that Esther, who throughout the novel has subordinated her own sense of worth to belief in developmental time and beneficent Providence, should at the end arrive at a state in which time is circular, repetitive, nondevelopmental. "So far as my small maid is concerned, I might suppose Time to have stood for seven years as still as the mill did half an hour ago; since little Emma, Charley's sister, is exactly what Charley used to be" (p. 878). "I have never lost the old names, nor he lost his; nor do I ever, when he is with us, sit in any other place than in my old chair at his side. Dame Trot, Dame Durden, Little Woman!—all just the same as ever; and I answer, Yes, dear Guardian! just the same" (p. 879). Physically, Esther has returned to what she was before her illness; psychologically also she is what she was in the beginning—unable to appreciate her own value, unable even to perceive that the scars have faded.

That the reader is not to take Esther Summerson's expressions of faith as the moral truth of the novel is indicated not only by Esther's limitations, but also by her effect on Caddy Jellyby. Caddy is the one character in the novel to be influenced by Esther to any great extent; neither Ada nor Richard is altered by Esther's influence, and Jarndyce only becomes more genial. It is true that

Caddy, by following Esther's example and availing herself of Esther's help, does escape from her hopelessly unhappy home. It is also true that Esther repeatedly informs us of Caddy's happiness in her new life as Mrs. Prince Turveydrop. But we are not allowed fully to accept Esther's estimate of Caddy's situation; instead, we are forced to see that Caddy's life is a new sort of slavery, made bearable only by Caddy's own delusions: first, that old Turveydrop is worth the sacrifice of time, attention, and money he demands; second, that Prince is worthy of her love and devotion. The relationship between Prince and Caddy is itself somewhat unnatural; she refers to him as her darling child, and Esther coyly insists that Caddy use the epithet whenever she talks of her husband. Caddy's life is often itself described as a round; the image of the circle appears in the description of the little apprentice sadly waltzing by himself in the back kitchen and is continued when Caddy arrives at the dignity of a carriage of her own in which she can pursue her busy round of tasks. Moreover, Caddy and Prince dedicate themselves not only to the nourishment and support of a hollow and useless emblem of a past age, but also to the perpetuation of the kind of social system which relentlessly divides one human being from another. The serio-comic description of the dancing lesson in which apprentice and paying pupil engage in an activity which should be graceful, joyous, and unifying, but which instead is mechanical and divisive, is enough indication of this. The round of the dance becomes symbolic of the worst abuses of the social system when Caddy remarks that the little apprentices with their dancing shoes under their arms remind her of the sweeps. Caddy's child, named Esther, proves to be deaf and dumb, a fact emblematic not only of Caddy's life, but also of the psychological limitations of the baby's godmother.

In *Bleak House*, then, happiness is achieved only through self-delusion and a deliberate limitation of human possibilities. (Woodcourt, for instance, the one character who has shown any capacity for effectively changing society, is in the end limited to a remote Welsh village as his sphere of influence). The possibility of the existence of God, an ultimate order, is not denied; what is denied is that the possibility has any relevance to the situation of the individual characters in *Bleak House*. Jo the crossing sweeper may be taught at the moment of death to appeal to his father in heaven, but the attention of the reader is drawn rather to the hideous manner of his life than to the possibility of his continued existence after death. Richard does at last see his mistakes, but is given no opportunity to redeem them, even though he dies happy in the delusion that he will have such a chance. The universe, as Jarndyce remarks to Skimpole, makes a



rather indifferent parent, and happiness can be created only if one is willing to pay the price of self-limitation or self-delusion, or both. It is possible, like Ada, to make an informed moral choice, but such a choice does not always result in happiness. Esther as narrator imposes her own order on the chaotic universe of *Bleak House*, but the reader should not forget that her order is imposed on reality and need not exist in reality. Coincidence can be seen as the operation of blind chance rather than as an indication of any purposeful controlling force; events are not necessarily logical because they are coincidental. Edmund Wilson remarks that in *Bleak House* Dickens found a new form—a detective story which is also a moral fable.<sup>9</sup> Whatever *Bleak House* is, it is not a detective story, for this is a form which relies on the assumption that there is in external reality a discernable logical order. However cleverly the true order may be concealed from the reader, he should at the end be forced to admit that events could have happened in this way and no other. But in *Bleak House*, Bucket does what no protagonist in a detective

story should do; he arrives at the truth not by logic, but by an inspired instinctive leap which he himself is unable to explain. Logically, either Mr. George or Lady Dedlock should be the murderer, but Bucket arrives at the truth—and the truth is not logical. The source of Bucket's power is that he does refuse to impose his own interpretation on events, that he does not assume that there is any inherent logical order in surrounding reality. His lantern illuminates the dark corners of Tom All Alone's; it does not change or interpret the reality it illumines.

*Bleak House* does not allow the reader the comforting assumption that events are ordered, logical, Providential. Any such comfort is purchased at the cost of personal freedom or self-delusion. Esther should arouse the reader's sympathy rather than raise his hackles; she is flawed by her own urgent desire to find meaning in existence. *Bleak House* is in some ways a profoundly pessimistic novel, but it retains a quality better than optimism. Like *Lear*, it can invigorate without comforting the reader.

Nebraska Wesleyan University

## Another Look at Hardy's "Afterwards"

David S. Thatcher

### I

THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT that Hardy's much anthologized "Afterwards" is one of the most beautiful and memorable of his poems, yet in recent years opinion as to its meaning has been sharply divided. C. Day Lewis has placed "Afterwards" among those poems of Hardy which offer us images of value, "not because he moralizes, but because they breathe out the truth and goodness that were in him, inclining our hearts towards what is lovable in humanity";<sup>1</sup> and for John Wain it is a poem of thanksgiving, "a benediction on the things that have brought happiness during life."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Samuel Hynes and Charles Mitchell have found in it a strong vein of personal gloom and philosophical pessimism.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, a poem would have to be fairly complex for such opposed readings to find equal textual support, and "Afterwards" does not seem to possess this degree of hospitable complexity. What follows is an attempt to demonstrate that the pessimistic readings are untenable.

Noting Hardy's "fastidious withdrawal from direct physical contact with life," Hynes comments that the principal images in "Afterwards" are characteristically seen from a distance, and concludes, somewhat erratically, that "there is no interaction between observer and observed." Furthermore, "this passive observation of experience is a direct reflection of Hardy's view of the world, as a place in which there is much to be endured, and little that can be changed." Though Hardy often made this world view explicit in his work, Hynes argues, in "After-

9. Edmund Wilson, "Dickens: the Two Scrooges," *The Wound and the Bow* (Oxford, 1947).  
1. *The Lyrical Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, Warton Lecture on English Poetry (London, 1951), p. 174. Day Lewis ends his lecture by quoting "Afterwards" in full.

2. *Selected Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London, 1966), p. xiv.  
3. Samuel Hynes, *The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry* (Chapel Hill, 1961), pp. 124-26; Charles Mitchell, "Hardy's 'Afterwards,'" *Victorian Poetry*, I (1963), 68-70. Subsequent quotations from Hynes and Mitchell are from these sources.

wards" he was content to leave it implicit in the imagery:

The actions are themselves momentary—new leaves move, a hawk glides down, a hedgehog scurries past. Nothing that the observer can do can fix these brief moments, or preserve the creatures that act in them; he can seem to fix them in his memory, but, since he shares their mortality, this fixity is only apparent. Because he alone of mortal creatures is conscious of his mortality, he cherishes his observations of the world he loves, but because he has no defense against change and death, his love is touched with melancholy. Only the stars remain after he has been stilled, and they remain as mysteries.

This is basically Hynes' case.

We may accept, for the sake of argument and with a cool disregard for Hardy's repeated disclaimers, that some such view of the world was his. We find it, for example, in the third "In Tenebris" poem which, like "Afterwards," portrays the poet brooding on the worth of existence and the appropriate setting for his death; but that poem has a stylized, psalmic melancholy almost absent from "Afterwards." This is not surprising, for "Afterwards" deals not with what must be endured but with what has been enjoyed, not with what cannot be changed but with what is unchangeable. The speaker's passivity is rhetorical only, a device of understatement: behind the diffident exterior, behind the guarded reticence pulsates Hardy's deep sympathy with the brute creation, even with inanimate things, which he looked upon as "pensive mutes." This fellow-feeling with the rest of creation helps Hardy to avoid any suggestion of morbidity in the repeated references to his own death; it is a fellow-feeling based on a sense of shared life, not, as Hynes contends, on a sense of shared mortality. It is true that the movements of the new leaves, the hawk, the hedgehog are momentary, but so are all movements of living things poised as they are between past and future. Hardy is not in a melancholy frame of mind, lamenting his inability to preserve his fellow creatures and himself from change and death. Though transience is his constant theme, here he is being commemorative as well as elegiac: the particular creatures he sees in the poem are, as individuals, doomed to die; but he envisages them, as Keats saw the

nightingale, not as mortal individuals but as eternal species: *the dewfall hawk, the hedgehog*. As part of nature's diurnal and seasonal routine, their activities as a species are as recurrent and dependable as the return of spring, when "*the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings.*" Not only do the stars remain—everything remains. Hardy is trusting that his memory will be linked to the eternally repeating processes of nature.

Misreading can also result from too rigid an application of critical method. In the cause of intellectual tidiness, Mitchell conducts us on a rigorous search for consistency of theme and interconnection of image. He fails to recognize, however, that the poem is impressionistic rather than expressionistic, imagistic rather than symbolic. In his analysis the poem suffers loss, since its sharply realized details are converted into pallid and amorphous abstractions. Hardy's night images, for example, are automatically linked with the central abstraction, the idea of death; "an eyelid's soundless blink" is thought to reinforce this idea since it suggests sleep, and sleep, in turn, suggests death once more. Moreover: "The central image in each of the five stanzas—green leaves, hawk, hedgehog, starry heavens, and breeze—retain a constant relevance to death." We are being persuaded that death is Hardy's preoccupation, whereas it is really something quite different: his survival *after* death in the minds of others. It is true that the prevailing atmosphere in "Afterwards," as so often in Hardy, is one of darkness, gloom and fading light—all but one of the stanzas are nocturnes.<sup>4</sup> Yet darkness here is not the substance of the poem; Hardy, an inveterate night prowler, makes it the backcloth against which the moments of vision can be illumined more brightly.

Once pessimism is accepted as the premise of the poem (with death the central subject and gloom the prevailing emotion), no obstacle remains to bar the onrush of misconceptions, verbal, symbolic, and even allegorical. Take the word "tremulous." Mitchell argues that this word (by which he clearly understands "timid" or "apprehensive") is later echoed by "furtively," which is predicated of the movement of the hedgehog; both words, he says, express the peril of life. Is it not equally possible that by "tremulous" Hardy means "tremblingly sensitive," "acutely re-

4. In the MS version *all* the stanzas were nocturnes, since the stately majesty of "When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay" was, in its first drafting, the much weaker "When night has closed its shutters on my dismantled day"; Hardy wisely decided to amend this, possibly to avoid the night-day-May month clash. (Are not shutters, also, closed *against* rather than *by* the night?) Other significant revisions, some of which Hardy made after the corrected MS went to the

printer, are: "neighbours" for "people"; "wind-warped" for "nibbled"; "one may say" for "will they say"; "come to no harm" for "not come to harm"; "my bell of quittance" for "my parting bell"; and "cuts a pause in its outrollings" for "makes a blank in its utterings." I am grateful to the Master and Fellows of Magdelene College, Cambridge, for permission to quote from the original MS of *Moments of Vision*.



sponsive to pleasure and pain," "palpitatingly alive"?<sup>5</sup> Thus interpreted, "tremulous" defines a quality of response to life, not a fearfulness in face of its dangers. Again, "the full-starred heavens" that remain "mysteries" express, according to Mitchell's symbolic account, "the inexplicability of the human condition, for divine reality, which according to orthodoxy determines the events of finite reality, apparently in no acceptable way impinges on finite reality." Yet does not the poem state this simple truth: all created things, hedgehogs as much as stars, are mysteries which produce, in the contemplative mind, a sense not of existential bewilderment but of profound awe? Mitchell allegorizes Hardy's natural images out of existence: the tree image of Stanza I becomes emblematic of "the happiness which life contains for unthinking [why "unthinking"?] youth when man is in the 'May month' of his life"; similarly, the season of winter in Stanza IV symbolizes the change from youthful optimism to the "pessimistic, questioning consciousness" of old age. Hardy's distinctive power of giving us the edgy angularity of what he describes is sacrificed for the sake of a banal philosophical formula.

Historically, it is noteworthy that "Afterwards" was read at a memorial service for Hardy shortly after his death. Those charged with choosing a poem suited to the occasion could not conceivably have thought that "Afterwards" was an expression of pessimism and gloom. This fact by itself does not, of course, constitute evidence for anything: one may, however, be forgiven for hoping they were not playing an ironic joke on Hardy, however much he himself may have relished it.

## II

In the foregoing attempt to expose the flaws of the pessimistic interpretation, the foundations for a positive evaluation of "Afterwards" have already been laid: the task now is to build upon them. This can best be done, perhaps, by comparing "Afterwards" with poems of similar type. Brooke's "The Soldier" and Yeats's "Under Ben Bulbin" come to mind, but the most rewarding is Gray's *Elegy*, which Hardy knew almost by heart.<sup>6</sup> There is some evidence that "Afterwards" is patterned, though probably not consciously, on its final nine stanzas.

Most striking, if least important, are the verbal parallels. "Upland" and "thorn" occur in both pieces, and Gray's "a swain may think," "crossed," "dews," "aged

thorn," and "trembling" are echoed in Hardy's "a gazer may think," "crossing," "dewfall," "wind-warped thorn," and "tremulous." Both pieces contain death knells, Gray's "dirges due in sad array" finding a counterpart in Hardy's "bell of quittance," and both have epitaphs. The differences are more instructive: they concern the degree to which each poet succeeds in avoiding the besetting sin of this form, self-dramatization, and what is closely related, the use he makes of landscape. Let us look at the *Elegy* first.

In the very first stanza of the poem, Gray, or a dramatic persona, is bodily present: "And leaves the world to darkness and to me." But in the section under discussion there is an abrupt switch to the third person: "For thee, who mindful of the unhonoured dead, / Dost in these lines their artless tale relate." Gray's problem at this point was how, in face of the poem's growing externality, he could reintroduce the personal and intimate note of the first stanza without jeopardizing the detachment he had so carefully built up. His rather desperate expedient was to supply a self-elegy at two removes: a "hoary-headed swain" is called upon to relate the poet's history to "some kindred spirit" who might chance to inquire about it. The swain, using the collective "we," is the spokesman of all who have known the poet, and in this capacity he speaks authoritatively. In his account, the poet appears as a man whom melancholy did, indeed, mark for her own: he is "listless" and "woeful wan," seeking in the beautiful and joyful aspects of nature an anodyne for his personal distress. His dawn march to meet the sun is really a march away from the self, the empty ritual of one who vainly hopes that such oblations will reanimate his soul. The poet's contact with nature, though active, deliberate, and habitual, is the contact of a parasite upon its host; his vacant self-absorption is such that even this contact is more debilitating than nourishing. The real world hardly impinges. Natural things, like brook and wood, are seen through rather than looked at. His poetic utterances, his "wayward fancies," seem to have nothing to do with them, and poetic skill is not one of the merits disclosed in the "Epitaph."

This is a singularly disheartening and unflattering picture of a poet, and one can understand Gray's concern to distance it as much as possible by changing the original lines of the passage, an intentional attempt at self-portraiture, into something more anonymous. But some-

5. Cf. the "tremulous being" of "My Spirit Will not Haunt the Mound," and the conversation between Angel and Tess in ch. xxix of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: "Our tremulous lives are so different from theirs, are they not?" "There are very few women's lives that are not tremulous," Tess replies, "pausing over the new word as if it impressed her."

6. F. E. Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928* (London, 1962), p. 303. Hardy drew on the poem, not only for the epigraph to ch. iv of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and a passing reference in ch. xviii of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, but also for the title of his novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

thing less transparent than pronoun changes is necessary for impersonality in art. The swain's pity is badly concealed self-pity. Gray, though he avoided sentimentalizing "the rude forefathers of the hamlet" in their lowly graves, could not avoid sentimentalizing his *alter ego* in the shape of the highly romanticized village poet.

How does Hardy fare in a like situation? In "Afterwards," he speaks directly in the first person, leaving no doubt in our minds that it is his voice, not that of a dramatic persona, we hear. Yet, as Douglas Brown points out, the "I" in Hardy is "rather a function of poetic impersonality than an assertion of the poet's self,"<sup>7</sup> so that one senses less self-commiseration in Hardy's "I" than in Gray's "he." One reason may be that Hardy's sympathy with the animal world (there is no sign of animal life in the last part of the *Elegy*) makes his pity outer rather than inner directed. Gray's attitude to nature is, it has been suggested, parasitic; Hardy's is detached, his power of concentration being so intense that he is almost absorbed by the things he sees, seeking no dividend for emotional outlay. Detachment is directly a consequence of an attitude to landscape, and helps the poet avoid the expression of personal pessimism.

The epitaph Hardy imaginatively assigns to himself differs from Gray's in a number of respects. Instead of being placed with self-assertive prominence at the end of the poem, it grows organically out of the descriptive part of each stanza, serving structurally as a varied refrain. It is not a formal carved inscription on a stone which may or may not be at some time read by a "kindred spirit"; it is the simple, slightly awed, colloquial utterance of those who pay homage by associating his name with certain natural happenings of which he was a faithful observer: "He was a man who used to notice such things." This epitaph, which takes the form of a measured possibility or a quietly confident, rather than aggressively rhetorical question, is spoken by Hardy's mourners, variously described as "neighbours," "those," "a gazer," "one(s)"; these people are as anonymous as their counterpart in the *Elegy*, the "hoary-headed swain," but are more real because the bond they share with the poet—a reverential and delighted attachment to the earth—is strongly felt. They, and possibly their descendants, will keep the poet's name alive through a mode which he greatly respected: oral tradition. It is the simple modesty of such an epitaph, as opposed to the rather unctuous solemnity of Gray's, that makes it more acceptable. A man who asks so little, we readily concede, will certainly get it—and perhaps more.

Hardy's hopes were not misplaced. Report of his death travelled through the Dorset countryside from village to village: "The cottagers stood at their doors in the early morning ere the stars had time to pale in the red sky, discussing his passing. To many of them he was in former years little known, but his fame had at last penetrated to the most isolated hamlet of the Wessex he had created, and aroused an interest that was indeed widespread."<sup>8</sup> Hardy's self-obituary, it seems, was as accurate in its prophecy as it was modest in its claims.

### III

"Afterwards," it is worth repeating, is not a complex poem, much less complex in some ways than Gray's *Elegy*. Unlike the *Elegy*, however, it does possess, in spite of its deceptively simple surface, an element that we might call "numinous." Both Hynes and Mitchell, it is only right to add, feel that Hardy is making, through his images of death, some definition of life, but they err in assuming that this definition is pessimistic. Mitchell, as a counterbalance to his general negativism, suggests that Hardy believes that "experience itself may be unimportant, but knowledge of it is significant and perhaps makes the experience important." Vague and abstract as this sounds, it is nearer the positives of the poem than the tight, more confident analysis which it clearly contradicts. What, we must now ask ourselves, are these positives?

A note of Hardy's, though made in reference to painting, helps to define where his visionary attitude to nature departs from Gray's aestheticism:

I feel that Nature is played out as a Beauty, but not as a Mystery. I don't want to see landscapes, i.e., Scenic paintings of them, because I don't want to see the original realities—as optical effects, that is. I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings.<sup>9</sup>

The "deeper reality" of "Afterwards" is not the melancholy fact of death but the ineluctable mystery of life. In the intensity of looking at a natural phenomenon, Hardy also looks beyond it, capturing an "abstract imagining" of its supreme value: "He was one who had an eye for such mysteries." "Afterwards," in fact, is a sacramental poem. In the terms which Auden used in his Inaugural Address as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, Gray regards nature as "profane," as something that can be exploited for its useful qualities, whereas Hardy regards it as "sacred," as something that possesses "an overwhelming

7. *Thomas Hardy* (London, 1954), p. 173.

8. Clive Holland, *Thomas Hardy, O.M.* (London, 1933), p. 249.

9. F. E. Hardy, p. 185.



but undefinable significance." As an epilogue to his lecture, and as an illustration of it, Auden (who sees Hardy as his "first Master" in poetry) chose to recite "Afterwards," and gave his reasons for so doing: "I have chosen it because I like it, because I approve of it, because it is so plainly a rite of homage to sacred objects which are neither gods nor objects of desire, and because, but for the man who wrote it, I should not now be here."<sup>10</sup> "A rite of homage to sacred objects"—what better brief description of the poem could there be? "Afterwards" amply demonstrates Hardy's capacity to discover value in (and confer value on) natural things, to transform the ordinary into the unique, the mundane into the sacramental; what is more, the poem tells us that Hardy cher-

ishes this capacity as his distinctive artistic gift, and looks to it for any immortality he might achieve. Things captured in an act of a pure attention are inviolate: they constitute, in the world of change and death, an inalienable part of "sick Life's antidote." They are, in the phrase already used, "moments of vision." Hardy entitled one of his volumes of poetry *Moments of Vision*, and it is indicative of the importance he attached to "Afterwards" that it appears as the valedictory poem in that volume. The affirmations of "Afterwards" are a reply to the nihilism of "The Coming of the End," its companion piece in the section headed "Finale": the vision of impending doom must take its measure against one man's concept of personal survival.

University of Victoria

## Meredith's Experiments with Ideas

J. Raban Bilder

DESPITE MEREDITH'S major revisions of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* between 1859 and 1896, there remains a wrong shift in emphasis towards the end of the story. The ordeals of Richard and Sir Austin are comic throughout in tone, event, and spirit, and the reader is justifiably puzzled at having to switch to the tragic reality of Richard's self-discovery and Lucy's death. The reason for the error is, I believe, that Meredith had not yet learned, by 1859, to fuse the "comic imps" with the "cerebral"—and the critics rather hindered than helped him to purify the form that was to reach its perfection in *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways*. Meredith knew that the reviewers had misread his book when they accused him of preaching against Sir Austin's "System," which, as Norman Kelvin notes, was not, up to a point, "such a terrible thing."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Meredith did not so fully realize that he relied not only on Richardsonian character portrayal but more importantly, on the tradition of combining intellect and wit that is found in Lyly and Carlyle, among others. Meredith encouraged novelists to inject more "philosophy" into their novels, but this entreaty is set forth most urgently in the "Essay on Comedy." When comedy and philosophy combine in fiction in a particular way, the result is what I shall call a novel of ideas.

The term "novel of ideas" has never been clearly defined, and has frequently been misapplied to include works better described as didactic novels: if *The Ordeal* really preached against Sir Austin's "System," then it would be a didactic novel. But it is much more complex than that. Sir Austin is too proud to recognize that Richard's choice of Lucy is an appropriate climax to his tutelage under "scientific humanism"—too proud because it was not he, Sir Austin, who had made the choice: "Had she stood before Sir Austin among rival damsels, that Scientific Humanist, for the consummation of his System, would have thrown her the handkerchief for his son."<sup>12</sup> Thus the central idea of the 1859 version is not a didactic condemnation of the System and, by implication, of science in general, but rather a study of egoism, one of Meredith's favorite topics. The famous comic imps are looking down on Richard and Sir Austin: they enable Meredith to assume multi-faceted angles of vision so that, during a given passage, he may speak at one time in the role of protagonist, at another as a second character commenting on the actions of the protagonist, at a third as narrator-commentator, at a fourth as Meredith, philosopher and theorist. But the imps forsake Richard and his father at a crucial point. If one thinks of Meredith territory

10. "Making, Knowing and Judging," *Literature: An Introduction*, ed. Hollis Summers and Edgar Whan (New York, 1960), p. 436.

11. *A Troubled Eden: Nature and Society in the Works of George Meredith* (Stanford, 1961), p. 7.

12. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, introd. Lionel Stevenson (New York, 1950), p. 150.

as being divided between conflicting theories of Fielding and James,<sup>3</sup> then this is the point at which James takes over and Fielding disappears. That the tragic denouement is an error of Meredith the experimenter becomes steadily more apparent as the reader understands the openly acknowledged masters of Meredith, like Molière and Smollett, and some less mentioned ones, like Meredith's father-in-law, Thomas Love Peacock.

The novel of ideas is not didactic; it does not teach, and therefore it cannot end in death, that final lesson for us all. It more resembles Keats's "negative capability," or Northrop Frye's Menippean satire,<sup>4</sup> another combination of the comic with the cerebral that, unlike much satire, does not try to instruct. The novel of ideas has to do with unsolvable problems like egoism and generation gaps, and Meredith's comic imps pictured the absurd long before that term had the status of a literary genre. Meredith brought the novel of ideas to a perfection in the late nineteenth century that earlier novelists of ideas such as Laurence Sterne would have admired, and that contemporary novelists who have occasionally written novels of ideas—John Barth, Günter Grass, and Julio Cortazar, to mention a few—would envy. The best way to show the subtlety of Meredith as a novelist of ideas is to examine *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways*.

In *The Egoist* Meredith gives Sir Willoughby Patterne a character tag, and applies it to him more than a dozen times: he is "anything but obtuse." Of course Sir Willoughby is obtuseness itself, but the tag is true on the superficial level, since Sir Willoughby is really a very intelligent gentleman (as gentlemen go) except where the matter to be dealt with concerns his Self. Each repetition of the phrase heralds not only a more refined version of Sir Willoughby's obtuseness, but a further instance of his gentlemanly intelligence. Thus Meredith explores the idea of egoism with an irony that escalates and expands. The philosophic background of irony comes from the "Book of Egoism," from which Meredith liberally quotes. Behind the "Book of Egoism" are the comic imps, ready to pounce on self-deluding Sir Willoughby. Other comments abound to vary and refine the idea of egoism: they come from Sir Willoughby's supporting cast and from Meredith's own authorial role. This complicated technique allows the multifaceted angle of vision I mentioned, and transmits to the reader the experience of a "felt idea"—the idea itself may be a cliché, but the reader's unique experi-

ence of the idea, through the characters and situations, is not.

Meredith then enlarges upon this groundwork. In *The Egoist* Sir Willoughby is only the epitome of egoism, the "pattern" that may be observed successfully by all; but the irony of the book begins with the title, which is in the singular. All of the characters are egoists in one way or another, and actually admit it about themselves in cases of the slightest doubt. In 1964, Irving Buchan commented that only he and V. S. Pritchett had explicitly noted the plurality of egoists,<sup>5</sup> but few careful readers could fail to observe Clara Middleton's egoism. Meredith supplies "good" egoists like Clara and Vernon Whitford, and "bad" egoists like Sir Willoughby; and between them there is a continuum of egoists who are neither wholly good nor bad, existing so that the more subtle refinements of the "Book of Egoism" may be explored.

Meredith's technique merits even closer examination. Clara Middleton's egoism, revealed in Chapter 6 when Sir Willoughby courts her, is illustrative. Clara resists his desire to absorb her, to make her a decorative appendage of his own personality. Such devotion would entail her exclusion of the rest of the world, which Sir Willoughby pretends to hate as he slavishly caters to it for attention and approval. But Clara "would not burn the world for him" and "preferred to be herself, with the egoism of women."<sup>6</sup> Hers is not the all-devouring egoism of Sir Willoughby, yet the imperfection exists and draws her closer to Sir Willoughby's mania than one might at first think. The consciousness of her egoism, and the more open and innocent level on which it operates, put Clara into the class of "good" egoists. Sir Willoughby defines the perfect Egoist as a man "utterly unconscious of giving vent to the grossest selfishness" (p. 99), unaware that he is describing himself. Clara and the comic imps see; Willoughby does not. She can be moved by "the silliest of human desires," and she knows it. She hesitates to ask her father to take her out of Sir Willoughby's house, and attributes her hesitation to the high-minded motive of sparing her father's feelings. But not for long; "the dainty rogue in porcelain" realizes that her father has referred to women many times as "veering weather-vanes," and understands that the real reason for hesitating is "to preserve her reputation for consistency" (p. 182).

Meredith is not content to show the differences between

3. Jean Sudrann, "'The Linked Eye and Mind': A Concept of Action in the Novels of George Meredith," *SEL*, IV (1964), 617-35.

4. *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 309-12.

5. Irving H. Buchan, "The Egoists in *The Egoist*: the Sensualists and the Ascetics," *NCF*, XIX (1964), 255.

6. *The Egoist*, introd. E. Aubert Mooney, Jr. (New York, 1951), p. 47.



Clara's and Sir Willoughby's egoism without at least once showing an amazing and dangerous similarity. Sir Willoughby is terrified that his tag of "anything but obtuse" might be replaced with "twice jilted." He would like something dreadful to happen to Clara so that he might "ease his heart of its charitable love" and "lead the limping thing to the altar, if she insisted" (p. 304). In this way his reputation would be unimpugned before the eyes of the world. Clara, on the other hand, feels abandoned because she has been unable to persuade her father to leave Patterne Hall. She too lapses into self-pity, "and she echoed Willoughby consciously, doubling her horror with the consciousness." If she cannot convince her father to leave Patterne Hall, "Those years would soon be outlived; after which, he and she would be of a pattern." The pun draws attention to the echoing of egos in the novel, but now Meredith lets the reader see Clara echoing Sir Willoughby *unconsciously*: she too would like something dreadful to happen to him so that she might ease her heart of its charitable love. She thinks that the marriage "would not have been so difficult with an ill-favored man. With one horribly ugly, it would have been a horrible exultation to cast off her youth and take the fiendish leap" (p. 432). Just once, the egos of Clara and Sir Willoughby are joined in tears of self-pity, and Meredith has expanded his study of egoism with another "felt idea."

If Meredith's whole canon has been called a vast study in egoism, one may justly raise the question of whether he is writing a novel of ideas, or rather, a novel of one idea. Novelists of one idea *tend* to be didactic, like Mary Wollstonecraft on women's suffrage or Harriet Beecher Stowe on slavery. But the exploration of one idea in depth does not, I think, preclude treating that idea in a manner appropriate to the novel of ideas. If all the characters of *The Egoist* are egoists in one form or another, then the continuum of egoism from Clara to Sir Willoughby produces in itself a kind of objectivity towards the idea. Besides, Meredith emphasizes Sir Willoughby as a *comic* character and in this way takes the edge off whatever expression of horror or disgust the reader is supposed to feel for the villain (Fagin is a good example). Then too, Meredith examined many other ideas: education in *The Ordeal*, freedom and equality for women in *Diana*, and so on.

At the age of twenty-three, Richard Le Gallienne wrote, "For me—maybe for you, reader—Sandra and Diana belong to Art's own dream of great women." He added in a postscript dated 1899 that he was not in a po-

sition to understand irony at the time he originally wrote.<sup>7</sup> Writing some sixty years later, Norman Kelvin does partly understand the irony, and says that "only a few accentuating touches seem needed to reveal [Diana] as sister to Sir Willoughby Patterne, the archetypal egoist." Kelvin says that if those few touches were given to Diana's spendthrift habits, exaggerated concern with wit, and sale of political secrets, "they would seem absurd or grimly comic, the result of a diminished character having artificially and unstably enlarged itself."<sup>8</sup> Kelvin talks of Diana as a transitional figure, but I find her a quite independently valid study of egoism on a more penetrating level than in *The Egoist*. Almost as reprehensible as Sir Willoughby, she still has something of her mind open to the possibilities and persuasions of change; and she is still a sympathetic character, though the reader understands her as being on a different level from Clara Middleton.

Even though Meredith sometimes presents Diana as distasteful, by this time he has refined his technique: the "good" characters always view Diana sympathetically, even when she is arousing the reader's amusement or distaste. Diana's misjudgment of Redworth causes the reader to smile at her aspirations towards sheer intellectuality and overpowering wit. Redworth, the more perceptive of the two, never wavers in his love and devotion, and sees that the femininity Diana tries to reject as really the most charming essential of her character: "The girl at the Dublin ball, the woman at the fire-grate of The Crossways, both in one were his Diana."<sup>9</sup> Redworth is on the side of rationality, where Diana should be; to his mind, "the lack of perfect sanity in his conduct at any period of manhood was so entirely past belief that he flew at the circumstances confirming the charge" (p. 303). But the comic imps point out his imperfections, too: in the passage just quoted he is thinking of his folly in refusing to ask for Diana's hand until he can amass a fortune, thus losing her to Warwick. Meredith allows the reader to see through Diana with the eyes of Redworth, and then to see through Redworth, a "good" egoist who is not even as vain as Clara Middleton. Diana refers to him as "this excellent automaton factotum," but later says, more charitably, "I am always at Crossways, and he rescues me" (p. 278). Meredith makes it clear that Diana's one possibility of outgrowing her vanity is that she can be led—sometimes by the right person. But she can scarcely be said to have much of a mind of her own. The comic climax of the novel is that she is led into marriage with Redworth. Walter F. Wright thinks that the novel should

7. George Meredith (London, 1900), p. 171.

8. Kelvin, p. 167.

9. *Diana of the Crossways*, introd. Arthur Symons (New York, Modern Library, n.d.), p. 302.

have a tragic ending coming very soon after the catastrophe of her treachery.<sup>10</sup> But *The Ordeal* must have taught Meredith not to build to a simple tragic climax in a novel of ideas. Diana is (as Wright agrees) a comic figure, not a tragic one. She has been artificially and unstably enlarged, and as she is being led reluctantly into marriage with Redworth, the closing pages show her regressing from womanhood to maidenhood: Chapter 40 is entitled "In Which We See Nature Making of a Woman a Maid Again, and a Thrice Whimsical."

I would say that, flawed as *The Ordeal* is, Richard Feverel belongs in the same family as Sir Willoughby and Diana. *The Ordeal* is also really about egoism. Sir Austin, Richard himself, Ripton, Adrian Harley, Bella Mount and all egoists, smiled upon by the comic imps and scrutinized through a book of aphorisms known as *The Pilgrim's Scrip*. The epicure Adrian Harley ironically observes and comments upon the characters around him, and the superior imps do not regard him as being above a comic twist or two.

The tragedy of *The Ordeal* derives from Richard's egoism in clinging to the concept of Hero and cherishing it a little foolishly when other more reasonable concepts would have better suited him. Richard's character tag is Hero, associated with ideas of medieval knights and chivalry, and the word "Ordeal" in the title. When his cousin Austin informs Richard, who has stayed overlong in Germany "purifying" himself, that Lucy has had a baby and that it is time Richard began acting like a father, Richard cannot do so: he is still busy playing Hero. Like Diana, he is a character somewhat artificially and unstably enlarged. The ironic reversal that results in Lucy's death occurs because Richard, egoistically thinking he has been able to conquer his delusions about the role of Hero, still acts on the assumption that he shares a margin with divinity. When Ripton comes to give Richard news of Lucy, the narrator remarks that Richard "had cast aside the Hero" (p. 562). But then Richard receives the letter from Bella informing him of Mountfalcon's designs on Lucy and he

quickly begins acting like a Hero again, treating his old friend Ripton curtly, as before, and neither asking advice nor giving information. He goes to Mountfalcon and insults him, leaving no alternative but a duel. Ironically, Mountfalcon has not injured Richard, and pleads with Ripton to set the young madman straight, assuring him that the most perfunctory of apologies will be enough to call off the duel.

Meanwhile, Richard goes to Raynham to see Lucy at last. Again he does the heroic thing, telling Lucy he has been unfaithful, and receiving unconditional forgiveness from her. Lucy rejoices and asks, "We never shall be parted again?" Richard answers nothing, holding Lucy to him and thinking "of the sweet wonders of life she had made real to him." The narrator remarks, "Had he not absolved his conscience? At least the pangs to come made him think so" (p. 583). The irony is very good: on the surface it is true that Richard has absolved his conscience—but that is the heroic surface. It is the difference between his own attitude towards the duel that is to come, and the attitudes of Lord Mountfalcon, or Ripton, or Lucy, had she known about it. The last actions swiftly take place. Ripton's message from Mountfalcon about foregoing the duel never reaches Richard. The duel occurs, Richard is wounded, Lucy rushes to his side, contracts brain fever, and dies. Richard more or less recovers from the wound, which was not serious. He lies silent in his bed, like a blind man, striving to image Lucy on his brain. Richard's blindness makes his ordeal end in tragedy, even though he and his supporting cast are essentially comic, and therein lies the uneasiness of the book. It is as if Meredith, happily exploring aspects of egoism, education, and scientific humanism, had suddenly become too serious for his material and too interested in his characters as such. He was to learn that tragedy does not mix with the pleasant combination of the comic and the cerebral.

University of Puerto Rico

10. *Art and Substance in George Meredith* (Lincoln, Neb., 1953), p. 145.



## Huxley, Holmes, and the Scientist as Aesthete

Phyllis Rose

IN 1880, T. H. HUXLEY delivered a lecture at the Working Men's College on the method of Voltaire's *Zadig*. The method which Huxley explained and applauded was precisely the method which Sherlock Holmes was to follow when his fictional adventures began in 1886:

The grand huntsman asked *Zadig* if he had not seen the King's horse go that way.

"A first-rate galloper, small-hoofed, five feet high; tail three feet and a half long; cheek pieces of the bit of twenty-three carat gold; shoes silver?" said *Zadig*.

"Which way did he go? Where is he?" cried the grand huntsman.

"I have not seen anything of the horse, and I never heard of him before," replied *Zadig*.

Arrested for having stolen the horse, *Zadig* explains how he knew what it looked like:

Wandering through the paths which traverse the wood, I noticed the marks of horse-shoes. They were all equidistant. "Ah!" said I, "this is a famous galloper." In a narrow valley, only seven feet wide, the dust upon the trunks of the trees was a little disturbed at three and a half feet from the middle of the path. "This horse," said I to myself, "had a tail three and a half feet long, and, lashing it from one side to the other, he has swept away the dust." Branches of the trees met overhead at the height of five feet, and under them I saw newly fallen leaves; so I knew that the horse had brushed some of the branches and was therefore five feet high.<sup>1</sup>

And so on, reasoning from effects to causes. Huxley uses this episode to illustrate the simplicity of the scientific method. "Nothing can be more hopelessly vulgar. . . . *Zadig's* method was nothing but the method of all mankind." Even savages, in following trails of animals by broken twigs and unsettled pebbles, are able to equal *Zadig* in such feats of retrospective prophecy. "They are able to do this because, like *Zadig*, they perceive endless minute differences where untrained eyes perceive nothing; and because the unconscious logic of common sense compels them to account for these effects by the causes which they know to be competent to produce them" (p. 8). The point is that the scientific method is no more than common sense scrupulously applied and that scientific thought is within the reach of all men.

Similarly, Huxley's purpose in another typical essay,

"The Method by which the Causes of the Present and Past Conditions of Organic Nature are to be Discovered," is to convince his readers that they are all capable of thinking scientifically, that they have been acting on deductive and inductive principles all their lives without knowing it. The difference between common sense and scientific thought is not of method, but of degree. "The method of scientific investigation is nothing but the expression of the necessary mode of working of the human mind. It is simply the mode at which all phenomena are reasoned about, rendered precise and exact." Two examples of scientific reasoning follow. The first shows how an average man might discover by induction that all hard and green apples are sour and then might deduce that a particular apple is sour because it is hard and green. The second shows how by similar reasoning a man might conclude that someone had stolen his teapot and spoons from the facts that his teapot and spoons are gone, that the window before which they had stood is open, and that there is a smudge on the sill and a footprint on the ground outside. As illustrations of the scientific method, these cases are simple to the point of distortion. Yet Huxley is of course no simple-minded man. If he oversimplifies science, he does so because he believes that science must be popularized, and that the only way it can be popularized is by making it seem easy and accessible. Furthermore, it *must* be popularized because to Huxley it is a total approach to life, almost a religion. Popularizing, in fact, may be the wrong word for Huxley's effort. It is closer to proselytizing. His tone in discussing the scientific method is that of a missionary speaking to prospective converts: "Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing." Huxley reduces science to its lowest common denominator in order to give it what, as a kind of religion, it must have—the widest possible appeal.

The adventures of Sherlock Holmes may be read as a corrective commentary on, perhaps, a parody of Huxley's oversimplification of science. Holmes' prescription for the ideal detective goes far beyond the possession of common sense. In addition to a power of observation and a large store of knowledge, he must possess a subtle quality which Holmes calls variously "the power of deduction," "intui-

1. "On the Method of *Zadig*," *Collected Essays*, 8 vols. (New York, 1894), IV, 3-5.

tion," and "imagination." In all the stories, no one but Holmes himself, with the possible exception of his brother Mycroft, possesses all these qualities. Conan Doyle plays off against Holmes a small army of other detectives, but all of them are in one way or other deficient. François le Villard "has all the Celtic power of quick intuition, but he is deficient in the wide range of exact knowledge which is essential to the higher developments of his art."<sup>2</sup> "Inspector Gregory . . . is an extremely competent officer. Were he but gifted with imagination he might ride to great heights in his profession"<sup>3</sup> Inspector Hopkins tries diligently to apply Holmes' methods, but is simply unable to see enough and to see the right things:

"I know your methods, sir, and I applied them. Before I permitted anything to be moved, I examined most carefully the ground outside, and also the floor of the room. There were no footmarks."

"Meaning that you saw none?"

"I assure you, sir, that there were none."

"My good Hopkins, I have investigated many crimes, but I have never yet seen one which was committed by a flying creature. As long as the criminal remains upon two legs so long must there be some indentation, some trifling displacement which can be detected by the scientific searcher."<sup>4</sup>

The worst of the detectives are Gregson, Lestrade, and Athelney Jones. These men consider themselves followers of common sense and reject Holmes' methods as woolly-headed theory. "Stern facts here—no room for theories," says Athelney Jones in *The Sign of Four* and then proceeds to give a wholly ridiculous, and, ironically, a wholly theoretical account of the death of Jonathan Sholto.

"What do you think of this, Holmes? Sholto, was, on his own confession, with his brother last night. The brother died in a fit, on which Sholto walked off with the treasure? How's that?"

"On which the dead man very considerably got up and locked the door on the inside."

"Hum! There's a flaw there. Let us apply common sense to the matter. This Thaddeus Sholto *was* with his brother; there *was* a quarrel: so much we know. The brother is dead and the jewels are gone. No one saw the brother from the time Thaddeus left him. His bed had not been slept in. Thaddeus is evidently in a most disturbed state of mind. His appearance is—well, not attractive. You see I am weaving my web around Thaddeus. The net begins to close upon him." (p. 120)

To which Holmes mildly replies, "You are not quite in

possession of the facts yet," and proves by footprints that the murderers had to be a one-legged man and a pygmy. Jones and his like can make only conventional associations and call it common sense. Holmes, on the other hand, follows fact wherever it leads him. But whereas Huxley tries to convince us that anyone who wants to can "follow fact," Holmes indicates that it is possible only to a gifted few. That Conan Doyle can make of a scientist figure a fictional superman proves that the scientific method is not as "hopelessly vulgar" as Huxley would have us believe. If many of his readers felt able to solve the problems Holmes solves, he would cease to be a hero. While Huxley in his essay on *Zadig* is trying to show that science is not magical or extraordinary, Doyle's success with Sherlock Holmes depends on convincing his readers that the reverse is true.

In transferring the figure of the scientist to fiction, Doyle also converts the scientific method into art. Holmes himself views logic as an aesthetic process, and he speaks of it in the terms used by Flaubert and the French writers of the *l'art pour l'art* movement. "If I claim full justice for my art," he says to Watson, "it is because it is an impersonal thing—a thing beyond myself. Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell."<sup>5</sup> He is fond of quoting to Watson Flaubert's pronouncement, "L'homme n'est rien; l'oeuvre, c'est tout." Watson, having learned his lesson well, describes Holmes as an artist who, "like all great artists, lived for his art's sake."<sup>6</sup> "So unworldly," Watson continues, or "so capricious" was Holmes that he would often refuse help to wealthy and powerful people, "where the problem made no appeal to his sympathies," and yet spend weeks working for "some humble client whose case presented those strange and dramatic qualities which appealed to his imagination or challenged his ingenuity." Only incidentally does Holmes use his art to serve the forces of law. Frequently, as in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" and in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," he solves a crime and yet refuses to prosecute the criminal. In "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton," Holmes and Watson witness a murder and then refuse to help Lestrade find the murderess. She, after all, is a beautiful woman in distress, whereas the victim had been a repulsive blackmailer. Their moral judgment borders on the aesthetic. "No, it's no use arguing," says Holmes. "My sympathies are with the criminals rather than with the victim, and I will not handle the case" (p. 679).

Sherlock Holmes, then, is an artist, and like other art-

2. *The Sign of Four*, in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Garden City, 1930), p. 32. All quotations from the Holmes stories are from this edition.

3. "Silver Blaze," p. 387.

4. "The Adventure of Black Peter," p. 655.

5. "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," p. 362.

6. "The Adventure of Black Peter," p. 651.



## Stanza Form in Meredith's *Modern Love*

Willie D. Reader

IN EARLY COMMENTARIES, it was customary to speak of the individual stanzas of *Modern Love* as sonnets, although there was also much discussion as to whether that term was correctly applied to a sixteen-line form.<sup>1</sup> More recent critics, such as Norman Kelvin in *A Troubled Eden* (1961), have chosen to refer to the individual sections simply as stanzas—technically a less controversial designation, and one that is adopted here. It remains true, however, that the *Modern Love* stanzas, with their iambic pentameter lines and quatrain units, do have some structural similarity to the sonnet form, as well as an internal unity of thought and conceit which is reminiscent of the sonnet; and it is also true that Meredith himself referred to the stanzas as sonnets, both in a letter to his friend Maxse<sup>2</sup> and in Stanza XXX of the poem itself. We might ask then why Meredith, who elsewhere showed himself adept at the traditional sonnet forms,<sup>3</sup> should have chosen the sixteen-line form that he did for *Modern Love*, or, to put the question in more answerable form, we might ask what advantages, in terms of ease of handling and of artistic effectiveness, accrue to the sixteen-line form as opposed to the fourteen-line forms.

One advantage of the sixteen-line stanza is of course that the addition of the two extra lines allows a slightly greater extension of thought and narrative development within the individual stanza. It is also readily apparent that the Meredith rhyme scheme—*abbacddceffeghhg*—is less demanding in terms of the difficulty of finding rhymes (and is thereby more flexible in diction) than is the Italian sonnet form which it otherwise partly resembles in its use of an enclosed-couplet quatrain form (*abba*), as opposed to the alternating rhyme scheme (*abab*) of the Shakespearean quatrain. It should be noted, moreover, that the enclosed-couplet quatrain does offer some slight element of surprise not found in the merely alternating rhymes of the Shakespearean quatrain, in that its last line rhymes somewhat unexpectedly with the partly forgotten first line across the bridge of the enclosed couplet. Other than this, the Meredith stanza, in its use of quatrain units rather than the larger octet and sestet

units of the Italian sonnet, does more closely resemble the Shakespearean sonnet.

The great advantage of the sixteen-line form is that it allows Meredith to avoid the sense of completion which is inherent in the rhyme schemes of both of the orthodox fourteen-line forms, and would indeed be difficult to avoid in any fourteen-line form more complex than a series of rhymed couplets. This "advantage" of the sixteen-line form is of course an advantage only as concerns the needs of a more or less continuous narrative, such as we find in *Modern Love*. Very frequently, indeed, in the *Modern Love* stanzas, Meredith employs what might be called a one-line comment, a final line which does not so much sum up the preceding matter as offer a glancing and usually ironic insight into its meaning. The final line in the Meredith form is of course structurally set off by the preceding couplet and is given emphasis by the slight surprise of its rhyming with the third line above. But such a one-line comment, however pointed it may be, lacks the weight to balance the rest of the stanza, and one consequently expects a continuation of the poem. Two examples typifying something of the range of this effect may be seen in Stanzas XVI and XXXIV:

Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay  
 With us, and of it was our talk. 'Ah, yes!  
 Love dies! I said: I never thought it less.  
 She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.  
 Then when the fire domed blackening, I found  
 Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift  
 Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift:—  
 Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound! (ll. 9-16)

By stealth

Our eyes dart scrutinizing snakes. She's glad  
 I'm happy, says her quivering under-lip.  
 'And are not you?' 'How can I be?' 'Take ship!  
 For happiness is somewhere to be had,  
 'Nowhere for me!' Her voice is barely heard.  
 I am not melted, and make no pretence.  
 With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense.  
 Niagara or Vesuvius is deferred. (ll. 8-16)

1. See, for example, Richard Le Gallienne, *George Meredith* (London, 1890), pp. 128-31; and M. Sturge Henderson (Gretton), *George Meredith* (London, 1907), pp. 60-62.  
 2. *Letters of George Meredith: Collected and Edited by His Son*, 2 vols. (New York, 1912), I, 60.  
 3. Scattered throughout *The Poetical Works of George Meredith*,

*With Some Notes* by G. M. Trevelyan (London, 1912), are 48 fourteen-line sonnets, 33 in the Italian form (pp. 181-90, 368, 369, 421, 432-34, 456, 568, and 570); three, including, appropriately, two called "The Spirit of Shakespeare," in the Shakespearean form (pp. 184 and 571); and 12 in various combinations of the two (pp. 10, 81-83, 133, 170, and 410).





## Recent Publications: A Selected List

Arthur F. Minerof

FEBRUARY 1970—JULY 1970

### I

#### GENERAL

- CRITICISM AND LITERARY THEORY. Altick, Richard D. "Nineteenth-Century English Best-Sellers: A Further List." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia*, Vol. XXII, pp. 197-206. Supplemental entries to Appendixes in Altick's *The English Common Reader* (Chicago, 1957).
- Best, Geoffrey. "'My Secret Life': Theme and Variations." *Victorian Studies*, December 1969, pp. 204-15. Several points of view by individuals concerning the book legally deemed obscene in 1969.
- Coulling, Sidney M. B. "Swinburne and Arnold." *Philological Quarterly*, April, pp. 211-33. Swinburne's learning and generosity of praise complemented and sometimes corrected Arnold's judgment and restraint.
- Hudson, Derek. "Lewis Carroll and G. M. Hopkins: Clergymen on a Victorian See-saw." *Dalhousie Review*, Spring, pp. 83-87. Similarities and differences.
- Rittenhouse, David. "A Victorian 'Winter's Tale.'" *Queens Quarterly*, Spring, pp. 41-55. By cuts and substitutions in the Texts, Charles Dean, the actor-manager, presented Shakespeare's plays as spectacles.
- Smith, Sheila M. "Blue Books and Victorian Novelists." *Review of English Studies*, February, pp. 23-40. Some Victorian novelists, especially Kingsley and Disraeli, found inspiration in apparently unpromising material—blue books or government reports.
- Stoll, John E. "Psychological Dissociation in the Victorian Novel." *Literature and Psychology*, Vol. XX, No. 2, pp. 63-73. Unresolved tensions in the English novel have been grossly underestimated.
- Stottlar, James F. "A Victorian Stage Censor: The Theory and Practice of William Bodham Donne." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 253-82. As censor, Donne ruled out the possibility of a serious treatment of life on the British stage of his day.
- ECONOMICS AND POLITICS. Adelman, Paul. "Gladstone and Education." *History Today*, July, pp. 496-503. The Education Act of 1870 was a landmark in Liberal policy, but it failed to satisfy the Nonconformist conscience of many Liberal supporters.
- Andrews, James R. "The Rhetoric of Coercion and Persuasion: The Reform Bill of 1832." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, April, pp. 187-95. The passage of the bill depended on its persuaders' abilities to exploit the fruits of coercion.
- Boyle, John W. "Irish Protestant Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century." *Dalhousie Review*, Winter 1969-1970, pp. 526-39. Protestant nationalism had a *raison d'être* only during the struggle for self-government.
- Coltham, Stephen. "English Working-Class Newspapers in 1867." *Victorian Studies*, December 1969, pp. 159-80.
- These papers are indispensable for an understanding of the mid-Victorian labor movement.
- Conacher, J. B. *The Aberdeen Coalition 1852-1855*. Cambridge. Rev. *TLS*, 23 April, p. 448.
- Harrison, Brian. "'A World of Which We Had No Conception.' Liberalism and the Temperance Press: 1830-1872." *Victorian Studies*, December 1969, pp. 125-58. The temperance press helped create Gladstonian Liberalism.
- Hoppen, K. Theodore. "Tories, Catholics, and the General Election of 1859." *Historical Journal*, March, pp. 48-67. The Tories took advantage of a favorable opportunity to win the Catholic vote.
- Lovett, William, and John Collins. *Chartism: A New Organization of the People*. Intro. Asa Briggs. Leicester University. Reprint of original edition. Rev. *TLS*, 25 June, p. 693.
- Morris, R. J. "Leeds and the Crystal Palace." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 283-300. The Exhibition was a success because it gained the support of the provinces.
- Pierson, Stanley. "Edward Carpenter, Prophet of a Socialist Millennium." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 301-18. Carpenter's *Towards Democracy* was a portent of a profound change of values in late Victorian society.
- Spring, David. "Lord Chandos and the Farmers, 1818-1846." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, May, pp. 257-81. Chandos helped make the Corn Laws a symbol for the rural community.
- HISTORY. Bartlett, C. J. *Britain Pre-eminent*. Macmillan. Essays on aspects of British overseas power or influence. Rev. *TLS*, 12 February, p. 154.
- Morrell, W. P. *British Colonial Policy in the Mid-Victorian Age*. Oxford. Rev. *TLS*, 12 February, p. 154.
- Rolt, L. T. C. *Victorian Engineering*. Penguin Press. Rev. *TLS*, 7 May, p. 516.
- Smith, Norman A. F. *Victorian Technology and its Preservation in Modern Britain*. Leicester University. Rev. *TLS*, 18 June, p. 664.
- RELIGION. Bell, P. M. H. *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales*. S. P. C. K. for the Church Historical Society. Rev. *TLS*, 26 March, p. 333.
- Chadwick, Owen. *The Victorian Church*. Part II. A. and C. Black. Rev. *TLS*, 19 March, p. 318.
- Kent, Christopher. "Higher Journalism and the Mid-Victorian Clerisy." *Victorian Studies*, December 1969, pp. 181-98. Higher journalism became an organ of the clerisy.
- Schiefel, R. J. "Some Aspects of the Controversy between Cardinal Wiseman and the Westminster Chapter." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, April, pp. 125-48. Jurisdictional struggle.

- Scott, Patrick. "'Zion's Trumpet': Evangelical Enterprise and Rivalry, 1833-1835." *Victorian Studies*, December 1969, pp. 199-203. The magazine was an example of adapting a secular success for the religious public.
- SCIENCE. Young, Robert M. *Mind, Brain and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford. Rev. *TLS*, 7 May, p. 517.
- SOCIAL. Chesney, Kellow. *The Victorian Underworld*. Temple Smith. Rev. *TLS*, 16 July, p. 775.
- Hyde, Ralph. "Mr. Wylde's Monster Globe." *History Today*, February, pp. 118-23. In the year of the Great Exhibition a skilled geographical publisher catered to the national taste for dioramas.
- Kauver, Gerald B., and Gerald C. Sorensen, eds. *The Victorian Mind*. Cassell. Anthology. Rev. *TLS*, 5 February, p. 136.
- Porter, Enid. *Victorian Cambridge*. Dennis Dobson. Illustrated. Rev. *TLS*, 5 March, p. 265.
- II  
INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS
- ARNOLD. Farrell, John P. "Matthew Arnold and the Middle Ages: The Uses of the Past." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 319-38. Arnold was able to surmount or control the ambivalences of his thought through his uses of the past.
- Racin, John. "'Dover Beach' and the Structure of Meditation." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 49-54. The poem uses the tripartite structure employed in the meditative poems of the devotional poets of the seventeenth century.
- Ray, Linda Lee. "Callicles on Etna: The Other Mask." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 309-20. The songs of Callicles seek to warn Empedocles of his fate if he continues to defy the cosmic order.
- Reed, John R. "Matthew Arnold and the Soul's Horizons." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 15-24. In Arnold's poetry, clarity of vision indicates a free soul while obscurity of vision suggests chaos engendered by man's blind impulses.
- BRONTËS. Knies, Earl A. *The Art of Charlotte Brontë*. Ohio University, Rev. *TLS*, 18 June, p. 652.
- Sherry, Norman. *Charlotte and Emily Brontë*. Evans Brothers. Rev. *TLS*, 18 June, p. 652.
- Stephens, Fran Carlock. "Hartley Coleridge and the Brontës." Rev. *TLS*, 14 May, p. 544. Details about their relationship using previously unpublished material.
- BROWNING. Burrows, Leonard. *Browning the Poet*. C. Hurst. Rev. *TLS*, 28 May, pp. 573-75.
- Chambers, Leland H. "Gide, Santayana, Chesterton, and Browning." *Comparative Literature Studies*, June, pp. 216-28. Chesterton's monograph on Browning helped Gide see that poet's work in relation to his own creative process.
- Eggenschwiler, David. "Psychological Complexity in 'Porphyria's Lover.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 39-48. The poem is primarily a psychologically complex dramatic monologue.
- Fleck, Richard. "Browning's 'Up at a Villa—Down in the City' as Satire." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 345-49. Certain satirical qualities of the poem have been overlooked.
- Johnson, Alan P. "Sordello: Appollo, Bacchus, and the Pattern of Italian History." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 321-38. *Sordello* is the earliest example of Browning's interest in the pattern of Italian history.
- King, Roma A., Jr., ed. *The Complete Works of Robert Browning*. Vol. I. Ohio University. Rev. *TLS*, 28 May, pp. 573-75.
- . *The Focusing Artifice: The Poetry of Robert Browning*. Ohio University. Rev. *TLS*, 28 May, pp. 573-75.
- Litzinger, Boyd, and Donald Smalley, eds. *Browning: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. Rev. *TLS*, 28 May, pp. 573-75.
- MacEachen, Dougald B. "Browning's Use of his Sources in 'Andrea Del Sarto.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 61-64. The del Sarto of the poem is partly based on Vasari and is partly Browning's invention.
- Perrine, Laurence. "Browning's 'Too Late': A Re-Interpretation." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 339-45. The speaker commits suicide in order to be with the woman he loved.
- Shaw, W. David. *The Dialectical Temper*. Cornell. Rev. *TLS*, 28 May, pp. 573-75.
- . "Recent Browning Studies." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, April, pp. 289-91. Review-article.
- Sullivan, Mary Rose. *Browning's Voices in The Ring and the Book*. Oxford. Rev. *TLS*, 28 May, pp. 573-75.
- Szladits, Lola. "The Life, Character and Opinions of Flush the Spaniel." *Bulletin of The New York Public Library*, April, pp. 211-18. The appropriateness of Virginia Woolf's choice of Flush as a subject in relation to Elizabeth Barrett's own life.
- Viswanathan, S. "'Ay, Note that Potter's Wheel': Browning and 'That Metaphor.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 349-52. Browning's earlier use of the image.
- Ward, Maisie. *Robert Browning and his World*. Vol. II. Cassell. Rev. *TLS*, 28 May, pp. 573-75.
- CARROLL. Matthews, Charles. "Satire in the Alice Books." *Criticism*, Spring, pp. 105-19. The Alice books are closer to *Gulliver's Travels* than to the works of Lear.
- DICKENS. Anikst, Alexander. "Dickens in Russia." *TLS*, 4 June, p. 617. Survey of criticism.
- Bennett, Joseph T. "A Note on Lord Acton's View of Charles Dickens." *English Language Notes*, June, pp. 282-85. Acton's negative comment was a public statement printed in the pages of the *Rambler*.
- Carr, Lucile, ed. *A Catalogue of The VanderPoel Dickens Collection at the University of Texas*. University of Texas Press. Rev. *TLS*, 26 February, p. 232.
- Collins, Philip. "Dickens in 1870." *TLS*, 4 June, pp. 605-6. Dickens was active to the last.
- . "The Texts of Dickens' Readings." *Bulletin of The New York Public Library*, June, pp. 360-80. Background and general description of the 21 texts Dickens delivered publicly.
- Cox, C. B. "Realism and Fantasy in *David Copperfield*." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Spring, pp. 267-



83. The mixture of realism and fantasy is a major characteristic of Dickens' style and adult vision of life.
- Donoghue, Denis. "The English Dickens and *Dombey and Son*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 383-403. Dickens' theatre is animated by feeling rather than by intelligence.
- Dyson, A. E. *The Inimitable Dickens: A Reading of the Novels*. Macmillan. Rev. *TLS*, 4 June, pp. 597-98.
- Easson, Angus. "Dickens's Marchioness Again." *Modern Language Review*, July, pp. 517-18. The changes Dickens made suggest his desire to hint at the answer to the riddle of the Marchioness' true parentage without ever coming into the open about it.
- Fielding, K. J., and Anne Smith. "Hard Times and the Factory Controversy: Dickens vs. Harriet Martineau." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 404-27. The dispute had a direct effect on the novel and may even have helped to form and alter Dickens' opinion about industrialism.
- Fletcher, Geoffrey. *The London Dickens Knew*. Hutchinson. Includes over 40 drawings associated with Dickens and his characters.
- Ford, George H. "Dickens and the Voices of Time." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 428-48. Dickens' prose moves between the poles of public and private, each with its own wavelength.
- Greenberg, Robert A. "On Ending *Great Expectations*." *Papers on Language and Literature*, Spring, pp. 152-62. Dickens' main concern in the second ending was to establish the connection between past and present.
- Hall, William F. "Caricature in Dickens and James." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, April, pp. 242-57. Similarities in use of caricature.
- Hardwick, Michael, and Mollie. *Dickens's England*. Dent. Rev. *TLS*, 4 June, p. 618.
- Hardy, Barbara. "Dickens and the Passions." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 449-66. Dickens' serious treatment of the tender passions is never his strong point.
- Harvey, William R. "Charles Dickens and the Byronic Hero." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, December 1969, pp. 305-16. Dickens made use of the Byronic type in his novels.
- Hauck, Richard. "The Dickens Controversy in the *Spirit of the Times*." *PMLA*, March, pp. 278-83. Dickens helped to shape early comic realism in America.
- Miller, J. Hillis. "The Sources of Dicken's Comic Art." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, pp. 467-76. Martin Chuzzlewit is the culmination of the metamorphosis of people into mechanically animated objects which can be seen in *American Notes*.
- Milner, Jan. "The Dickens Drama: Mr. Dombey." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 477-87. The dramatic potential is in Dombey's inner conflict.
- Monod, Sylvère. "Dickens's Attitudes in *A Tale of Two Cities*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 488-505. The reader is addressed by Dickens through a complex of relationships involving the author, the narrators, the characters, and the readers.
- Nowell-Smith, Simon. "Editing Dickens: For which Reader? From which Text?" *TLS*, 4 June, pp. 615-16.
- Robison, Roselee. "Dickens and the Sentimental Tradition: Mr. Pickwick and My Uncle Toby." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, April, pp. 258-73. Similarities between the *Pickwick Papers* and *Tristram Shandy*.
- Slater, Michael. "Carlyle and Jerrold into Dickens: A Study of *The Chimes*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 506-26. Carlyle's influence may be found in the general outlook of *The Chimes*; Jerrold's in the tone.
- , ed. *Dickens 1970: Centenary Essays*. Chapman and Hall. Rev. *TLS*, 4 June, pp. 597-98.
- Steig, Michael. "Dickens' Excremental Vision." *Victorian Studies*, March, pp. 339-54. The anal substratum in Dickens' work is important to the positive element of his vision.
- Stone, Harry. "Dickens Rediscovered: Some Lost Writings Retrieved." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, pp. 526-48. The importance of the extra Christmas numbers of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.
- Sucksmith, Harvey Peter. "Dickens and Mayhew: A Further Note." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, December 1969, pp. 345-49. Conclusive external evidence that Dickens was familiar with Mayhew's work.
- Wilson, Angus. *The World of Charles Dickens*. Secker and Warburg. Rev. *TLS*, 4 June, pp. 597-98.
- DISRAELI, Blake, Robert. *Disraeli and Gladstone*. Cambridge. Rev. *TLS*, 7 May, p. 521.
- ELIOT, Adam, Ian. *George Eliot*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. Biographical sketch and excerpts from novels. Rev. *TLS*, 5 February, p. 136.
- Hardy, Barbara, ed. *Critical Essays on George Eliot*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. Rev. *TLS*, 5 February, p. 136.
- Levenson, Shirley Frank. "The Use of Music in *Daniel Deronda*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, December 1969, pp. 317-34. The theme of music is one of the unifying threads of the novel.
- Milner, Ian. *The Structure of Values in George Eliot*. Charles University. Critical study. Rev. *TLS*, 5 February, p. 136.
- Moldstad, David. "The Mill on the Floss and *Antigone*." *PMLA*, May, pp. 527-31. Both illustrate Eliot's belief in the recurring conflict between moral vision and social convention.
- Wilson, Jack H. "Eggleston's Indebtedness to George Eliot in *Roxy*." *American Literature*, March, pp. 38-49. Eliot's influence on Eggleston and upon American realists in general in the seventies and eighties.
- GASKELL, McVeagh, John. "The Making of 'Sylvia's Lovers.'" *Modern Language Review*, April, pp. 272-81. The breakdown in Part Three is the result of the way Mrs. Gaskell constructed and composed the story.
- HARDY, Herbert, Lucille. "Hardy's Views in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." *ELH*, March, pp. 77-94. The correspondence between views of landscape and views of life, and between these and the fateful incidents of the plot.
- HOPKINS, Bremer R. "Hopkins' Use of the Word 'Combs' in 'To R. B.'" *English Studies*, April, pp. 144-48. The word fits the sound and sense pattern of the poem.
- Jordan, Frank, Jr. "Hopkins' *The Caged Skylark*." *Explica-*

- tor, May, No. 80. The meadow-down is a cage metaphor through which Hopkins sustains the analogy between the skylark and the soul.
- Troddyn, P. M. "Gerard Manley Hopkins: Two Unpublished Letters on Anglo-Irish Relations." *Studies*, Spring, pp. 19-25. Dated 1887 and addressed to Dr. Michael Cox, a university colleague of Hopkins.
- MEREDITH. McCullen, Maurice L. "A Matter of 'Principle': Treatment of the Poor in George Meredith's Fiction." *English Language Notes*, March, pp. 203-9. Meredith used lower-class characters to develop key themes.
- Simpson, Arthur L., Jr. "Meredith's Pessimistic Humanism: A New Reading of *Modern Love*." *Modern Philology*, May, pp. 341-56. The poem reflects a stage in the development of Meredith's poetic world view preceding that of optimistic naturalism.
- MILL. Steele, E. D. "J. S. Mill and the Irish Question: The Principles of Political Economy, 1848-1865." *Historical Journal*, June, pp. 216-36. Mill's reforming zeal was directed by his brand of patriotism.
- MOORE. Jernigan, E. Jay, "The Bibliographical and Textual Complexities of George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife*." *Bulletin of The New York Public Library*, June, pp. 396-410. Background and comparison of four textually distinct versions.
- MORRIS. Hollow, John. "William Morris' 'The Haystack in the Floods.'" *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 353-55. Morris used the trial by water as an example of men pretending to know the judgment of God.
- Lougy, Robert E. "William Morris' *News from Nowhere*." *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, pp. 1-8. The novel is not so much a work of art about a utopian society as an artistic creation describing the artistic process.
- Tompkins, J. M. S. "The Work of William Morris: A Cord of Triple Strand." *Dalhousie Review*, Spring, pp. 97-111. The interwoven nature of his artistry, writing, and socialism.
- NEWMAN. Dessain, Charles Stephen, ed. *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*. Vols. XVIII and XIX. Nelson. Rev. *TLS*, 19 March, p. 317.
- Murray, Placid, ed. *Newman the Oratorian*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. Unpublished papers. Rev. *TLS*, 5 February, p. 136.
- White, W. D. "John Henry Newman's Critique of Popular Preaching." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Winter 1970, pp. 108-17. Even while he himself was a powerful preacher, Newman sought to mitigate the widespread enthusiasm attached to popular preaching.
- PATER. Goff, Penrith. "Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Walter Pater." *Comparative Literature Studies*, March, pp. 1-11. Pater's influence on Hofmannsthal is manifest.
- ROSSETTI. Baker, Houston A., Jr. "The Poet's Progress: Rossetti's *The House of Life*." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 1-14. The sonnet sequence traces the progress of the poet-speaker from narrow, sensuous ideals of life and art to broad ideals.
- de L. Ryals, Clyde. "The Narrative Unity of *The House of Life*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, April, pp. 241-57. The order and meaning of the work are discernible without recourse to the poet's biography.
- Harris, Wendell V. "A Reading of Rossetti's Lyrics." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 299-308. In the lyrics are two different modes: one tending toward the objectification and generalization of emotion; the other toward presenting it more subjectively and in greater detail.
- RUSKIN. Landow, George P. "J. D. Harding and John Ruskin on Nature's Infinite Variety." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Spring, pp. 369-80. Harding contributed importantly to Ruskin's valuations of art and theories of painting.
- STEVENSON. Egan, Joseph J. "Grave Sites and Moral Death: A Reëxamination of Stevenson's 'The Body Snatcher.'" *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, pp. 9-15. The story dramatizes concepts peculiar to the serious romance.
- Warner, Fred B., Jr. "Stevenson's First Scottish Story." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, December 1969, pp. 335-44. *Thrawn Janet* is the first mature evidence of Stevenson's principal concern in all his best fiction: man's struggle against a palpable malevolence.
- SWINBURNE. Greenberg, Robert A. "Swinburne's *Heptalogia* Improved." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia*, Vol. XXII, pp. 258-66. Background and details of revisions.
- SYMONDS. Going, William T. "John Addington Symonds and the Victorian Sonnet Sequence." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 25-38. Symonds' contributions to the sonnet sequence genre.
- Schuessler, Herbert M., and Robert L. Peters, eds. *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*. Vols. II and III. Wayne State. Rev. *TLS*, 16 April, p. 431.
- TENNYSON. Elliott, Philips L. "Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, XLI, 9-12." *Explicator*, April, No. 66. The speaker is asking for the will to commit suicide.
- Kaplan, Fred. "Woven Paces and Waving Hands: Tennyson's Merlin as Fallen Artist." *Victorian Poetry*, Winter 1969, pp. 285-98. Merlin and Vivien represent aspects of the artist and his imagination.
- Motter, T. H. Vail. "Tennyson's Lines to Adelaide Kemble." *TLS*, 16 July, p. 780. An early unpublished poem.
- Sonstroem, David. "'Crossing the Bar' as Last Word." *Victorian Poetry*, Spring, pp. 55-60. Besides being a unity unto itself, the poem also represents a summary and resolution of a pervasive poetic concern—the drama of a divided poet's struggle to compose himself.
- WILLIAM HALE WHITE. Rayson, R. J. "Is *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* Broken-backed?" *Essays in Criticism*, January 1970, pp. 71-80. The discontinuity in the novel is a sophisticated piece of structural daring.
- WILDE. Baker, Houston A., Jr. "A Tragedy of the Artist: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, December 1969, pp. 349-55. Wilde calls to account the overly self-conscious artist who projects his own personality too severely upon the public.

Staten Island Community College





# English X News

## A. THE NEW YORK MEETING

Chairman, Ronald E. Freeman, *University of California (Los Angeles)*  
Secretary, David J. DeLaura, *University of Texas*

- I. Business
- II. Papers and Discussion. Topic: Victorian Poetry and Poetics: Revaluation
  1. "Victorian Poetics: An Approach Through Genre," W. David Shaw, *Victoria College, University of Toronto*. (18 minutes)
  2. "Spiritual Confusion and Artistic Form in Victorian Poetry," M. G. Sundell, *Case-Western Reserve University*. (18 minutes)
  3. "Tennyson's Painted Shell," Richard C. Tobias, *University of Pittsburgh*. (18 minutes)

*Program Chairman:* Thomas J. Collins, *University of Western Ontario*.

*Executive Committee:* Chairman, John D. Rosenberg, *Columbia University (1970-1971)*; Martin Svaglic (1970); George Levine, John Stasny (1968-1970); U. C. Knoepfmacher, Michael Timko (1969-1971); G. B. Tennyson, Richard C. Tobias (1970-1972).

*Bibliography Committee:* Chairman, Ronald E. Freeman, *University of California (Los Angeles)*; Allan C. Christensen, *University of California (Los Angeles)*; Lawrence G. Evans, *Northwestern University*; Ward Hellstrom, *University of Florida*; Edward S. Lauterbach, *Purdue University*; David Paroissien, *University of Massachusetts*; Robert C. Schweik, *State University of New York (Fredonia)*; Robert C. Slack, *Carnegie-Mellon University*; Richard C. Tobias, *University of Pittsburgh*.

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

*1971 Officers:* Chairman, David J. DeLaura, *University of Texas*; Secretary, John Stasny, *University of West Virginia*.

## B. THE VICTORIAN LUNCHEON

The Group Luncheon will be held 29 December in the New York Hilton (Rotunda), with cocktails at noon and luncheon at 1:00 p.m. For reservations, please send a check for \$9.50 to Professor Allan Danzig, English Department, City College of the City University of New York, New York, N.Y. 10031, by 20 December.

## C. AUTOBIOGRAPHY REAL AND FICTIONAL, 1830-1900

This year's meeting—scheduled for 30 December, 8:45-10:00 a.m., New York Hilton (Gibson B)—will be devoted to the novels of Dickens, particularly *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, and *Bleak House*, the specific approach dealing with autobiography as individual and collective experience. Professors Vineta and Robert Colby, Queens College, and George D. Wing, University of Calgary, will offer brief introductory remarks. Members wishing to attend should communicate with Professor Michael Timko, English Department, Queens College, Flushing, New York 11367.