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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shelley’s <em>The Cenci</em>: Corruption and the Calculating Faculty</td>
<td>1-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John F. Schell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington Harris’s Newspaper Grotesques</td>
<td>15-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Rickels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Kingship in William Dunbar’s <em>Thrissil and the Rois</em></td>
<td>25-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. C. Nitsche</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Twain and the Magazine World</td>
<td>35-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis J. Budd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rejection and Redefinition of Romance in Byron’s <em>The Excursion</em></td>
<td>98-108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte H. Beck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NOTES

Another Reprint of Poe’s “The Oblong Box” .................................. 109-110
David K. Jackson

### REVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Other Fiction of Wilkie Collins: the Dover Editions</td>
<td>111-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk H. Beetz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Authors and Their Critics</td>
<td>121-129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budd, Cady, and Anderson, *Toward a New American Literary History:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays in Honor of Arlin Turner</td>
<td>130-131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James E. Rocks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron, <em>The Complete Poetical Works</em></td>
<td>132-134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald A. Schroeder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steig, <em>Dickens and Phiz; Stone, Dickens and the Invisible World:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel Making</em></td>
<td>135-138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alton P. Latimer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson and Lokke, Ruined Eden of the Present: *Hawthorne, Melville,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Poe — <em>Critical Essays in Honor of Darrel Abel</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Ljungquist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thorne*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollin, <em>Poe, Creator of Words</em></td>
<td>141-142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormack, <em>Sheridan LeFanu and Victorian Ireland</em></td>
<td>143-144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary William Crawford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: *Sensation Novels of the 1860’s</td>
<td>145-146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Schroeder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fussett, <em>Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars</em></td>
<td>147-148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Sanders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludington, <em>John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey</em></td>
<td>149-150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Werner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollarhide and Abadie, <em>Eudora Welty: A Form of Thanks</em></td>
<td>151-152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis J. Budd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minter, <em>William Faulkner: His Life and Work</em></td>
<td>153-156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans Harrington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilkinson, <em>The Heart of Yoknapatawpha</em></td>
<td>157-159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollarhide, <em>Of Art and Artists</em></td>
<td>160-161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey T. Gross</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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SHELLEY'S THE CENCI: CORRUPTION
AND THE CALCULATING FACULTY

JOHN F. SCHELL

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

Shelley believed drama to have a greater potential for influencing
man's moral improvement than any other art form. In A Defense of
Poetry he notes: "the connexion of scenic exhibitions with the
improvement or corruption of the manners of men, has been univer-
sally recognized,"¹ and he then remarks that "the connexion of poetry
and social good is more observable in the drama than in any other
form" (p. 492). In light of such statements, one would expect to find an
unequivocal social message in the one drama that Shelley wrote for a
mass audience. But the failure of critics to agree on an interpretation
of The Cenci proves that this is not the case. Some commentators read
the play as pure allegory, and others find it to be unrelieved realism; it
has been construed to be either politically or philosophically moti-
vated; even the theme of the play has been variously identified as
religious, epistemological, historical, or moral. It is not surprising,
therefore, that the character of the drama's protagonist, Beatrice
Cenci, remains in dispute.

Understanding Beatrice is certainly crucial to any interpretation
of The Cenci. An early commentator, Mary Shelley, helped establish a
critical tradition when she interpreted Beatrice as an ideal figure:
"The character of Beatrice, proceeding from vehement struggle to
horror, to deadly resolution, and Lastly to the elevated dignity of calm
suffering joined to passionate tenderness and pathos, is touched with
hues so vivid and so beautiful, that the poet seems to have read
intimately the secrets of the noble heart imagined in the lovely coun-
tenance of the unfortunate girl."² To this ennobled picture, Leigh Hunt
added a rationalization for her crime of parricide: "The reader refuses
to think that a daughter has slain a father," Hunt observes, "precisely
because a dreadful sense of what a father ought not to have done has
driven her to it ...."³ Subsequent critics have arrived at similar conclu-
sions. John Flagg writes that "Shelley conceives of her as a morally
superior being," and in a recent essay, Erika Gottlieb claims that
Beatrice's "behaviour requires our recognition of her allegorical func-
tion as a personification of Innocence, or of man's potential for purity,
perfection, and immortality."⁴ A lesser critic is even persuaded to
hazard a most un-Shelleyan thought, praising the "inversion of moral
values implied by this most right of all murders."⁵
SHELLEY'S THE CENCI: CORRUPTION

Many critics, however, can not attribute to Shelley the defense of murder. Rather, they discover in Beatrice's crime the flaw that defines her tragic essence. This flaw is sometimes described as a desire for revenge, a “crack in the armour of her righteousness,” her “failure to persevere in ‘passive resistance,’ ” “hybris,” or “her tragic faith in a God who sanctions and even enjoins revenge and murder.”\(^6\) By this reasoning, her crime is the means for her transformation into a tragic heroine deserving our sympathy, not our contempt. In recent years, a reaction against this idolization of Beatrice has begun thanks to the careful readings of the drama by James Rieger, Donald Reiman, and Earl Wasserman.\(^7\) A more negative construction of her character is taking shape. Examples of this are Walter Evert's suggestion that the tragedy of the drama might be the demise of Beatrice's moral nature and Ronald Lemoncelli's idea that “Cenci ... simultaneously reveals Beatrice's evil and creates an evil Beatrice...”\(^8\)

There apparently is no resolution to this Babel of interpretations. Yet an accurate assessment of Beatrice's character is necessary if we are to decipher the lessons for the human heart that Shelley claims are inherent in drama of the highest species. Since the play, alone, offers no indisputable reading of Beatrice's character, there remain two options: to be contented with the existing uncertainty (professional suicide for a critic!), or to go outside the drama for help. The second task has been tried by several critics who have read The Cenci and Prometheus Unbound as companion pieces. Unfortunately, an even better heuristic method has been largely (and surprisingly) ignored —less than nineteen months after completing The Cenci, Shelley set down his aesthetic principles in A Defence of Poetry. Shelley's Defence, with its lengthy analysis of the dramatic genre, might clarify (or at least help to explain) the play.

Shelley’s theoretical statement was written to refute Peacock’s assertion in “The Four Ages of Poetry” that verse is irrelevant to an advanced society. Peacock argues that reason, not poetry, is modern man's need. Shelley avoids attacking Peacock's premise of utility and posits that poetry is more utilitarian than reason. He opens his defense by discriminating between two classes of mental action, “reason and imagination.” According to Shelley's analysis, the imagination is the synthetic agent, reason the analytical: “Reason is to Imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit,
as the shadow to the substance” (p. 480). Although the two are not opposites, they are not quite complementary, either. Imagination is clearly preferable. When he then states that the “expression of the imagination” is poetry, he has established the prestige of poetry relative to the like productions of reason. The remainder of the Defence is the working out of this duality. Shelley declares that “the great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause” (p. 488). Having arrived at this conclusion, it is impossible for Shelley to “resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists” or to agree that “reason is more useful” (p. 500). “Poetry differs from logic,” Shelley asserts. “Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will” (p. 503). Instead, the “calculating faculty” (a frequent synonym for reason in the Defence) is both the product of poetry and dependent upon it: “Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred” (p. 503).

Shelley applies this distinction between the imagination and reason to the dramatic genre as well. He identifies two types of drama, the poetic and the non-poetic, and it is this discussion which sheds light upon his own dramatic practice. Poetic drama he defines in imaginative terms: “The drama, so long as it continues to express poetry, is as a prismatic and many-sided mirror, which collects the brightest rays of human nature and divides and reproduces them from the simplicity of these elementary forms, and touches them with majesty and beauty ...” (p. 491). Non-poetic drama, on the other hand, is corrupt, “cold,” and obscene. It need not induce immorality; it is enough that the drama itself lacks imagination: “the corruption which has been imputed to the drama as an effect, begins, when the poetry employed in its constitution, ends” (p. 490). The poetic drama is splendid with poetry; in the “unimaginative” drama, “the calculating principle pervades all forms of dramatic exhibition, and poetry ceases to be expressed upon them” (p. 491).

The two types of drama Shelley identifies in his Defence find reflection in the two dramas he composed in 1819, Prometheus Unbound and The Cenci. There can be little disagreement that Prometheus Unbound is a drama imbued with imagination. In his preface to the lyrical drama, he observes that the mind of the poet who composes such a work is “the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe.”
SHELLEY'S THE CENCI

He expands this image in terms that echo his discussion of poetic drama in his Defence: "A Poet, is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers .... Every man's mind ... is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form" (p. 135).

Furthermore, Shelley states that Prometheus Unbound is not a "reasoned system" (emphasis added) or a "didactic work," and thus he anticipates his comment in A Defence that "in periods of the decay of social life, the drama ... becomes a weak attempt to teach certain doctrines ..." (p. 491). It is as if Shelley had formed his thoughts concerning drama in his Defence with one eye upon the "Preface" to his mythic masterpiece. Although his lyrical drama is suffused with poetry and operates on the imaginative level, Shelley himself declared that The Cenci was a "composition of totally different character."^9

Shelley is not alone in comparing the two dramas. Donald Reiman and Earl Wasserman anchor much of their explication of The Cenci upon Prometheus Unbound. Though both critics compare and contrast the two plays, neither views the dramas as antipodal. Nor do they connect Shelley's practice and his theory in A Defence of Poetry, a connection that might produce valuable results. If Prometheus Unbound represents imaginative drama as defined in A Defence, The Cenci may be its unimaginative counterpart. This popular drama would then be Shelley's attempt to dramatize the consequences of faith in reason, to portray the error of trusting in the calculating faculty, and to demonstrate — through the example of Beatrice — the corrupting power of failed imagination upon virtue. And support for such an hypothesis may be found in The Cenci.

Before attempting such a reading, one qualification is needed. Shelley's discussion of "unimaginative" drama in A Defence occurs within his historical survey of corrupt dramatists and corrupt times. Because much of his discussion refers to existing works, he never specifically states that a poet might purposely compose a work that reflects an "unimaginative" world for a moral end. Simultaneously, he fails to preclude such a possibility. While his focus is upon corrupt drama as the product of corruption, his theories concerning reason and imagination may be applied to The Cenci without suggesting that Shelley is a corrupt artist. At the beginning of his historical survey of drama, in fact, Shelley notes: "the presence or absence of poetry in
its most perfect and universal form has been found to be connected with good and evil conduct and habit” (p. 490). This principle pertains, whether within the dramatic world of The Cenci or the historical world of Shelley’s study. In The Cenci, Shelley creates a world whose inhabitants are divorced from imagination and proud of their calculating facility; they embody Shelley’s theoretical speculation concerning reason, corruption, and obscenity. Having established such a world, Shelley studies the inevitable results, and the corruption that occurs remains within the dramatic framework for the edification of the audience.

From the opening scene, Count Cenci appears to be a man of the most subtle analyzing ability. Conversing with Camillo, the Pope’s representative, the Count brags about his ability to discern human motivation, and he reminds the legate: “you gave out that you have half reformed me, / Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent / If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt” (I. i. 74-76). Likewise, Cenci comprehends his own personality and discloses that “I am what your theologians call / Hardened” (I. i. 93-94). The Cenci we see on stage is fully aware of his strengths and weaknesses. He admits that in youth he “was happier,” but also realizes that there is little he can do but go on. He understands that his own pride compels him to “act the thing thought” (I. i. 97), although old age makes that compulsion increasingly difficult to carry out. He also couples his self-knowledge with his insight into the motivation of others when he states: “I have no remorse and little fear, / Which are, I think, the checks of other men” (I. i. 84-85).

This penchant for self-anatomizing that characterizes Cenci is complemented by a calculating nature; both depend upon reason for their existence. During the drama, consequently, we witness Cenci plotting and intriguing. He is driven to action and surrounds himself with conspiracies. Never is he without a scheme. When his ultimate strategy is confounded by Beatrice, he is both prophetic and perceptive as he states: “’tis her stubborn will / Which by its own consent shall stoop as low / As that which drags it down” (IV. i. 10-12). The lengthy speech that follows, where Cenci first threatens his absent daughter and then curses her, is a model of reason, deranged. Cenci initiates his harangue with faulty inductive logic that permits him to posit a special relationship to God. From this semi-divine position, he hopes his daughter might “Die in despair, blaspheming” (IV. i. 50). As
his anger mounts, he comes to see himself as a divine “scourge” charged with the punishment of Beatrice. And by the close of his speech, Cenci casuistically fuses the temporal “father” and the spiritual “father.” He assumes the authority of God, and “like a fiend” calls curses upon Beatrice.

Cenci’s reliance upon his own mental ability does not bring him happiness; one of the ironies of the drama is that this same mental ability discloses to him his failure. At one point in the planning of his revenge, Cenci laments: “'Tis an awful thing / To touch such mischief as I now conceive” (II. i. 124-125). Alone on stage, he admits to himself his weakness: “I said / I would not drink this evening; but I must” (I. iii. 169-170). Fortified with alcohol, he vows his revenge upon Beatrice, but hesitates: “I feel my spirits fail / With thinking what I have decreed to do” (I. iii. 171-172). He drinks more wine, clouds his reason, and then says: “the charm works well.” But before his resolution again fails, he vows to himself, “It must be done; it shall be done, I swear” (I. iii. 178). With characteristic insight, Cenci comes to realize that he is the victim of his own pride and compulsion. As forthright as he is discerning, just prior to his own murder, Cenci, addressing Beatrice, calls her “my bane and my disease, / Whose sight infects and poisons me” (IV. i. 118-119). In Kenneth Neill Cameron’s words, Count Cenci is “no stock villain.”

Giacomo (Cenci’s weak but well-intentioned son), acting as a foil to his father, helps to illustrate the Count’s weakness. When goaded by Orsino to revenge against Cenci, Giacomo demurs and remarks that the mind is a fallible instrument. He says to Orsino: “Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain / Feigns often what it would not” (II. ii. 82-83). Rather than chance the mind’s trickery, rather than court the possibility of being compelled to act upon what is thought, Giacomo relies upon his heart. He spurns Orsino and says: “My heart denies itself / To think what you demand” (emphasis added; II. ii. 86-87). Unfortunately for the entire Cenci family, his father knows no such deference.

As the play progresses, Count Cenci is seen to be a man trapped by his own intellect and scornful of his feelings. For him, the will takes precedence over all else. He is dimly aware of the compulsive, self-destructive nature of his own personality, yet pride in his own mental ability drives him on. Early in the play, Orsino (with unusual sensitivity) reflects on Cenci’s character:
'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets: for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes:
So Cenci fell into the pit (II. ii. 108-114).

The calculating principle, the analytical power, tempts pride and will. This leads to corruption.

Orsino's indictment includes the entire Cenci family; he charges them all with the potential for pride, willfulness, and a misplaced trust in their intellectual prowess. Reasonably, we may infer from Orsino's statement the fall of any person who participates in this family "trick," including Beatrice. This does not mean that Beatrice must be a corrupt figure either at the beginning of the drama or its end. But the possibility exists. Furthermore, if (as some critics recognize) Count Cenci contaminates Beatrice during the drama, she may just as easily have been corrupted by him prior to the play's opening. Beatrice's corruption at the start of the drama must remain a moot question. What is certain is that, from the beginning of the play, she (like Count Cenci) analyzes her own and other minds, she is proud and willful, and she excels at oratory. From the first, indeed, Shelley is careful to parallel the two protagonists. The play opens with Cenci negotiating his freedom from a priest whom he controls; in the subsequent scene, Beatrice does the same with a priest whom she controls. When the two first meet on stage, the clash of their personalities implies a similarity that is borne out by later events. At the Count's heinous banquet, for instance, Beatrice is a match for her father's arrogance when she commands him: "Retire thou, impious man! Aye hide thyself / Where never eye can look upon thee more" (I. iii. 146-147). As the play proceeds, the virtuous Beatrice comes to resemble her father more and more, until they both blaspheme, assume the prerogatives of God, and die in despair. In fact, the innocent Beatrice is little more than a memory within the play. On stage, her actions are selfish and her speeches are models of dissemblance. Even her own frequent references to her goodness become suspect when, a murderess before the Pope's court, she tries to conceal her guilt by touting that same reputation for virtue. When The Cenci draws to a close, qualities that A Defence of Poetry attributed to "unimaginative" and "corrupt" char-
acters are equally applicable to Count Cenci and Beatrice. Both are “cold, cruel, and sensual”; the two are “insensible and selfish”; they are motivated by “lust, fear, avarice, cruelty, and fraud.” In his “Preface” to the drama, Shelley faults Beatrice when he says: “Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes” (p. 240).

The Beatrice who is her father’s daughter begins to appear from her first words. She commands the priest, Orsino: “Pervert not the truth” (I. iii. 1). The remainder of her speech, ironically, is a rhetorical strategem designed to effect exactly the twisting of truth that she warns against. To gain his sympathy while maintaining her own independence, she introduces amatory diction, and when Orsino responds in kind, she retorts: “speak to me not of love” (I. ii. 14). Exemplifying that Cenci knack for analyzing other minds, she remarks that Orsino’s “equivocating vein” does not please her. By this tactic, she subtly encourages a greater commitment by him to disprove the charge. Lest he be offended and abandon her, though, she immediately blames the criticism upon her “misery.” In this way, she manages to turn an insult into the means for increasing his sympathy for her plight. Throughout this speech, Beatrice presents herself as a weak and vulnerable girl, easy game for the aggressive Orsino. But she seduces the would-be seducer and ensnares Orsino in the net he has woven for her. When she swears to him a “cold fidelity,” her true nature appears. And after she leaves him, Orsino is justifiably troubled and ponders aloud: “I fear / Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze, / Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve / And lay me bare, and make me blush to see / My hidden thoughts” (I. ii. 83-87). No sooner has he expressed these doubts than he recants, proving the power of Beatrice’s rhetoric. He chooses to accept her construction of reality and to deny his intuition: “Ah, no! A friendless girl / Who clings to me, as to her only hope” (I. ii. 87-88).

The next scene offers Beatrice another chance to display her deliberative oratorical skills. While her presence before the assembled guests is occasioned by the death of her brothers, she is not overcome with grief. She seizes, instead, upon the opportunity to argue her case against her father. Her opening appeal establishes the affected tone of
John F. Schell

the total performance: “I do entreat you, go not, noble guests ...” (I. iii. 99). This obsequiousness is followed by a condemnation of her father that advances her own innocence at the same time. In a brilliant maneuver, she asks her audience: “Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out / First love, then reverence in a child’s prone mind / Till it thus vanquish shame and fear” (I. iii. 108-110). Throughout this scene, her hortatory skills are on full display, and near the close of her appearance, she again flatters her audience and says: “Father, never dream / That thou mayest overbear this company” (II. i. 149-150). But this time her insincerity is apparent to everyone because Count Cenci’s control of those assembled is well-known. Southerland Bates recognizes the falseness of Beatrice’s speeches to the banquet guests, and he terms them “unnatural and artificial.”12 While Bates charges Shelley with a stylistic slip, the remaining speeches of Beatrice will indicate that this artificiality is fully appropriate to her character.

Beatrice’s mad speech that follows is spoken “wildly” and “frantically,” yet it is a masterpiece of dissimulation. Never was madness so designing. Indeed, her suffering is so great that she can not bear to speak its cause, and so the audience must conclude the worst that it might imagine.13 As her performance continues, her self-pity becomes too much for even her patient stepmother to bear, and Lucretia finally scolds: “Hide not in proud impenetrable grief / Thy sufferings from my fear” (III. i. 105-106). But Beatrice chooses not to hear. Instead, in the midst of her ravings — while she can not recognize herself or Lucretia, she claims — she utters the word “parricide.” Accidental or cunningly planned, once the idea is in her mind, Beatrice (like her father) is compelled to act the thing, thought. After Orsino appears and is also moved by her grief, Beatrice begins her revenge. Having gained sympathy for her plight, she now seeks collaborators for her plot. This “friendless girl” whom Orsino purportedly manipulates, tells him: “put off, as garments overworn, / Forbearance and respect ... / And all the fit restraints of daily life ...” (III. i. 208-212). With these words, she enlists the aid of family and friends to accomplish her personal retribution against her father.

By the close of this third act, Beatrice has come to usurp divine prerogatives. She refers to her revenge as a “holier plea” and an “atonement.” Then she proves that her revenge is not one of passion, but a crime of calculated premeditation; she says: “I have talked with my heart, / And have unravelled my entangled will, / And have at
SHELLEY'S THE CENCI

length determined what is right" (III. i. 219-221). Next she commands her confederates to be "brief and bold." The identification between herself and her father becomes more complete, however, when she uses the same words that the Count had used to describe himself, and she tells the conspirators to "put off ... remorse and fear" (III. i. 208-209).

Just as the opening scenes parallel the two protagonists, so do the closing scenes in which they both appear. In the Count's last scene, he controls the action but is deterred by first Lucretia and then Beatrice. He calls Lucretia a "Vile palterer" and then speaks his famous imprecations against his daughter. Following these curses, Cenci contemplates revenge and becomes excited by the thought. He notes that "My blood is running up and down my veins" (IV. i. 163), yet he says he will sleep a "deep and calm" rest, undisturbed by conscience, before he commits his ultimate retribution. In the subsequent scene, Beatrice similarly controls the action as she directs the parricide she has planned. When the hired assassins first loose their nerve, she refers to them as "Base palterers" and goes on to curse them and her father. She proposes to murder Cenci herself and is excited by the prospect: "the jellied blood / Runs freely through my veins" (IV. iii. 43-44). After a short delay, the assassins return and report that the Count is dead, and Beatrice, undisturbed by conscience, remarks that "I could even sleep / Fearless and calm" (IV. iii. 64-65).

Beatrice's murder of Cenci eliminates one source of evil only to create another. Her corruption now supplants her father's, and her hubris rivals his when she announces: "I am as universal as the light; / Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm / As the world's centre. Consequence, to me, / Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock / But shakes it not" (IV. iv. 48-52). With the arrival of the papal legate and the possibility of the murder's detection, Beatrice advises Lucretia: "Be bold," and then counsels her how to proceed: "We can blind / Suspicion with such cheap astonishment / Or overbear it with such guiltless pride ..." (IV. iv. 43-45). This radical dissociation of sensibility recommended by Beatrice is precisely the antithesis of poetry as defined by Shelley in A Defence of Poetry. There he explains that language and thought are harmoniously synthesized when the imagination is at work, but when language is divorced from thought, only malignancy and obscenity result.14 From this point forward, Beatrice's speeches reflect this dissociation of sensibility. They are models
of rhetorical dissimulation, twisted truth, specious reasoning, and blatant lies that equal the cunning strategems of Iago or Dryden’s Achitophel. She manipulates ethos, logos, and pathos to persuade the tribunal of her innocence. Perjuring herself, she says: “Hear me, great God! I swear, most innocent” (V. ii. 152). Then she tricks Camillo into condemning himself, provokes the death of Marzio, and even berates her mother and brother by calling them “ignoble hearts.” In the midst of all these self-serving ploys, Beatrice unwittingly describes her own situation when she warns her judges: “Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart” (V. ii. 133). And she has, undoubtedly, become hard-hearted and resourceful. So adroit is she at feigning innocence and wielding spurious logic, indeed, that she almost eludes conviction. Only the more human weakness of her confederates gives her away, and they confess their part in the scheme. Good Giacomo then urges Beatrice: “For pity’s sake say thou are guilty now” (V. iii. 54), to which Lucretia adds, “Speak the truth.” Beatrice, nevertheless, remains unmoved.

By the close of the drama, the relationship between Beatrice and Count Cenci is remarkably similar to the relationship between God and Satan that Shelley described in his essay “On the Devil and Devils,” probably written in the same year. Cenci’s actions seem to be analogous to those Shelley attributes to God, and Beatrice’s actions to those of Satan: “He [God] turned his [Satan’s] good to evil, and, by virtue of his [God’s] omnipotence, inspired him [Satan] with such impulses as, in spite of his better nature, irresistibly determined him to act what he most abhorred and to be a minister to those designs and schemes of which he was the chief and the original victim.”15 That Shelley conceived of Beatrice as an equivalent to Satan finds corroboration in two of hisprefaces. In the forward to Prometheus Unbound, he warns that “the character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry” (p. 133), in the “Preface” to The Cenci, he applies the same words to describe the reaction of men to Beatrice: “It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice” (p. 240). Although Cenci instigates the evil, Beatrice falls into the pit because she is unable to imagine an alternative.

Beatrice’s final identification with Satan helps to explain the one revision Shelley made to the original Cenci manuscript source that did not “increase the ideal, and diminish the horror of the events” (p. 239). The historical account of the Cenci family tragedy ends on an uncom
promisingly high moral note. It records how Beatrice repented her crime before her execution: "Lucretia ... with gentle exhortations induced her daughter-in-law to enter the chapel with her." Together, the account goes on to relate, they spent their last days "reciting psalms and litanies and other prayers, with so much fervour that it will appear that they were assisted by the peculiar grace of God." But Shelley's version contains no such penitence. Beatrice, instead, dies fulfilling the Count's final curse, that "Beatrice shall ... Die in despair, blaspheming" (IV. i. 49-50). Therefore, when Lucretia anticipates Paradise and entreats her daughter-in-law to "trust in God's sweet love, / The tender promises of Christ" (V. iv. 25-26), Beatrice retorts: "your words strike chill: / How tedious, false and cold seem all things" (V. iv. 80-81).

The Satanic identification of Beatrice is one explanation for her failure to repent her parricide. But there is another explanation which more fully substantiates the thesis of this analysis. Beatrice, from this point of view, is unable to attain salvation because such a response depends upon faith, and faith is an imaginative act unavailable to such an unimaginative character. At the close of the drama, therefore, it is fitting that Beatrice views the world in starkly realistic terms. She laments: "So young to go / Under the obscure, rotting, wormy ground" (V. iv. 49-50). When she considers man, it is not his spiritual essence that comes to mind, but "cold, cruel, and formal man" (V. iv. 108). Beatrice is captive to her senses; faith is beyond her ability. And when faced with death, she perceives it only in terms of the material world and exclaims: "How fearfull! to be nothing" (V. iv. 55). Worse than death is "hope," she concludes, and denies herself an imaginative escape. Her final observation concerning death proves her failure to accept the possibility of an afterlife and her ultimate despair: "rock me to the sleep from which none wake" (V. iv. 115-118). Beatrice admits "my heart is cold"; she then dispassionately binds back her hair for the beheading. Even at the final moment, she is preoccupied with material rather than spiritual concerns.

The critical disagreement over Beatrice's true identity, though important, is overshadowed by a more disconcerting problem: Why does Shelley permit such confusion to occur when he repeatedly notes that drama is supposed to instruct the human heart? One possibility is that the potential for misinterpretation is intentional and exists to advance the play's instruction. In short, Shelley hopes that the reader
will first try to justify Beatrice's actions, realize the error of his logic, and transfer his trust, instead, to his more reliable emotional responses. Should the reader fail to reevaluate his first, reasoned response, Shelley adds a warning in the "Preface" about the "anatomizing" casuistry of those readers who would defend the actions of Beatrice. The final interpretation of The Cenci, therefore, depends upon the same duality of reason and imagination as that which controls the play's plot and characters. Just as within the dramatic situation, the participants are duped by their reason and consequently destroyed, likewise a reader will also be duped if he acquiesces to Beatrice's faulty logic or the self-serving observations of her confederates. Reason is fallible; only the heart rings true. Parricide and despair are not exculpatory. The wholesale destruction of a family is beyond defense.

In his recent study The Unacknowledged Legislator, P. M. S. Dawson calls attention to this participatory drama and notes: "The Cenci poses the story of Beatrice as a problem, and impels the audience to an examination of their own reactions to work out its solution, rather than imposing authorial design." In his "Preface" to the play, Shelley implies much the same thing when he observes that "the highest moral purpose" of drama is the "teaching of the human heart, through its own sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself ..." (p. 240). The larger world of The Cenci includes its audience, and only when the reader realizes that he is rationalizing that which is beyond rationalization is the dramatic experience completed. It is this action which Shelley refers to in A Defence of Poetry when he writes that "tragedies ... are as mirrors in which the spectator beholds himself" (p. 490). The reader undergoes a similar deception by his calculating faculty as does Beatrice. On the stage and in the audience, by example and through experience, Shelley teaches the error of faith in reason.
SHELLEY'S THE CENCI

NOTES

1 Shelley's Poetry and Prose, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York, 1977), p. 491. All future references to Shelley's poetry and prose are from this source unless noted otherwise.


10 Lemoncelli, in his excellent article, uses the discussion of drama in A Defence of Poetry to establish Count Cenci as a possible analogue of the corrupt poet figure.


13 So successful is Beatrice in hiding the cause of her grief that some critics doubt she was ravished. Milton Wilson in Shelley's Later Poetry (New York, 1959), for instance, suggests that Shelley "has left it ambiguous whether the Count's plot was successful or not" (p. 85).

14 See A Defence of Poetry, passim.


They gladly handle ambulance calls, but a person who has access to the ambulance phone number will find it faster to call direct just because the location and directions have to be relayed twice.

No one expects an emergency, but it certainly is comforting to know these things are available in case of an accident or illness at night.
GEORGE WASHINGTON HARRIS'S NEWSPAPER GROTESQUES

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The Southwestern humorist, George Washington Harris (1814-1869), published only one book, Sut Lovingood (1867). Most of his writing was done for New York and Tennessee newspapers. By studying the revisions he made in his newspaper sketches when preparing them for book publication, and, more importantly, by comparing the work in the book with those sketches which appeared only in newspapers, it is possible to make some observations about what these two kinds of publication meant to his creative life.

Broadly speaking, newspapers afforded Harris more freedom of subject matter and technique than he was allowed or allowed himself in his book. And the more local the journal, the greater the freedom. William Trotter Porter and subsequent editors would not reprint in the nationally circulated New York Spirit of the Times material obviously political or partisan. Harris's satires on Abraham Lincoln, written for the Nashville Union and American in early 1858, did not appear in the Spirit of the Times and naturally enough were excluded from his 1867 book. Harris's post-war anti-Republican Party satires were all printed in Southern newspapers.

Apart from such political functions, Harris exercised other freedoms of subject matter and technique in his newspaper work. Although an apparently avid newspaper reader, and a bookish man (borrowing creatively from Shakespeare, Burns, Dickens, and others), Harris drew much of his subject matter and his esthetic techniques from the culture of folk humor. The esthetics of folk humor is to a degree separable from the esthetics of the high culture in classical Greece, and clearly and elaborately separable in Medieval and Renaissance Europe. By Harris's mid-nineteenth-century time, the esthetic systems of humor in the high culture, the developing popular culture, and the folk cultures are embarrassingly tangled for critics who wish artists would stay neatly in their categories. Although perimeters of these esthetic systems overlap, their centers can be roughly defined. Newspapers were a central force in developing the techniques and value systems of popular American culture, and were often hospitable to literary experiments with the esthetics of folk culture.
NEWSPAPER GROTESQUES

One of Harris’s sketches, written before his book was published but excluded from it, illustrates dramatically the distance between standard nineteenth-century humorous literary culture and the culture of folk humor. “Sut Lovingood at Bull’s Gap” appeared first in the New York Atlas, and was quickly reprinted in the Nashville Union and American. Thus, at least two editors thought their readers would enjoy it, but it seems equally likely to arouse loathing and disgust in both the nineteenth- and twentieth-century reader whose taste is formed on more standard literary fare.

The sketch itself is a plotless account which, improbably, has Sut spending the night in a tavern at Bull’s Gap, Tennessee, where nineteenth-century passengers had to leave one train, ride twenty miles on a stage to board another line to go north through Virginia. After the opening description of Bull’s Gap as a cold, wreckage-strewn mud hole, the sketch is divided into three sections: the first an impressionistic description of the cursing that erupted from the passengers as they entered the inn, the second an hallucinatory account of a bullfrog’s appearance from under the stove at the inn, while the third, the longest section, presents a monstrous Dutchman, pictures his gluttonous eating, his nightmare in a room where Sut sleeps on the floor, his bursting his belly from his gross feeding, and Sut’s sewing up his paunch. This plotless narration in Sut’s voice does not develop character or conflict, but rather presents three broadly conceived creatures: the cheating, greedy landlord, the fool Sut, and the coarse Dutchman — the latter two engaged in eating, drinking, sleeping, and suffering grotesque discomforts in the disquietingly alien microcosm of the inn. Within the area of literate culture, perhaps only some newspapers of the age would present so estranged a comic world.

As is usual in Harris’s better work, meaning lies less in plot or character than in the language, particularly in the system of images. The imagery is drawn not so much from the high literary culture nor from popular culture, as from the culture of folk humor. The main source of these images is the grotesque human body, the animal world, and the world of material objects, ugly, ineffectively serviceable, often broken. This system of images is unlike the images of classical esthetics, which emphasize the completeness of the human body, often seen as microcosm, so that by extension, the world’s harmony, balance, and beauty appear. Instead, this characteristic set of images in the culture of folk humor works to bring down to the material level, to de-idealize, to degrade, to emphasize a world in process, constantly growing, changing and decaying.
The opening episode of cursing could not be presented directly in the nineteenth century, even in newspapers, but rather is described impressionistically. The shadowy crowd around the ineffectual little stove at the inn was, according to the narrator Sut, both united and divided: “sum a cussin hit, sum a cussin tharsefs, sum a cussin Bull’s Gap, sum a cussin wun another, sum a cussin the lake they stood in, sum a cussin that are shanty tavrin, sum a cussin fur supper, sum a cussin the strike nine snake whisky, an all a cussin their levil best. One monsous clever little fellow from Nashville endorsed all the cussin, and then set in an cussed the world.”

Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian analyst of folk humor, points out that one of the formal categories of this verbal culture is made up of various genres of billingsgate such as curses, insults, and oaths. As Sut sees it, cursing is one of the communal human arts in his world, and he turns to the tavern keeper for praise of the performance: “I axed the tavrinkeeper how he liked that cussin es a specimint ove the gift in perfecshun. Oh, he sed, hit were ornary, not third rate in quality, an wantin powful in quantity; hardly listened tu hit; in fac, hit didn’t even warm him up; wouldn’t do as a sampil ove the art at all ...”(145). The innkeeper then offers a comparative assessment of cursing which moves to a tall tale fantasy in praise of the previous night’s performance to illustrate the shortcoming of the present achievement: “Sed he hed a crowd the nite afore what understanded the business — sixty-seven ove em; an they wer so well trained that hit sounded like one man only sixty-seven times louder. Sed they cussed him pssonely, till his jackit buttons flew off an the ainds ove his har cotched fire; then they turned in ontu a stage agent an cussed him into a three week’s spell ove fits an diarrear, but he hadn’t much ove a constitushun no how; an then finished off by cussin wun ove the stage waggins ontill hit run off inter the woods without eny bosses tu hit”(146).

This strange fantasy of the power of curses first to injure, then to animate the inanimate is swiftly followed by the tavern-keeper’s account of how he himself was regenerated by the preceding night’s powerful cursing: “‘Laigs,’ sez he, ‘I got the best nites sleep arter they got throu, what I’ve had in six months; never felt the fust durned bug, an would gin a duller if your crowd could jist cuss half es perfecly. Hits a monsous holesum quietin thing fur a man tu get a tip top cussin jist afore he goes tu bed, particullerly if the wimmin ove the crowd jines in with that ar “nasty hog,” and “aint you shamed ove hersef, you
stinkin brute you!” chorus ove theirn. I tell you, mister, hits all I keeps tavrin fur’ ”(146). Sut sees the tavern-keeper as a con-man, willing to be cursed for bad food and lodging in order to make money out of his wretched victims. The reader enters a world of diarrhea, bed bugs, nasty hogs, and stinking brutes. The host’s fantasy can also be seen, following the analysis of tall tale function in Constance Rourke, as a psychological defense mechanism, to exaggerate threats and danger in order to reduce and ridicule them. Finally, to move out of the rational and the psychological, one of the ancient religious functions of cursing was to destroy so that a new life could magically replace the old. In this comic inversion, the scapegoat himself is renewed and strengthened. This opening tribute to the power of curses and abusive language, this exalting of the forbidden language of oaths signals us that we have left the official, accepted world for one where men speak freely and with magic power.

The frog of the second episode, a battered iron spoon crosswise in his mouth, paddling Indian fashion across the lake covering the floor of the inn, rises as one of those disquieting, phantasmagoric images, like the animals in fairy tales that leave their categories as animals to undermine our faith in the stability of the world. Fear and flight are Sut’s responses. The next day he is told he was drunk and only imagined the rowing, croaking frog, but later he sees its enormous skin and is confirmed in his vision.

The third episode, an account of the Dutchman at dinner, centers on his gluttonous eating and the subsequent bursting of his belly. In Sut’s words: “Well, he planted hissef at the tabil forninst a two year old chicken cock biled whole, an a big tin pan ove sourcrout what smelt sorter like a pile ove raw hides in August, an a bullit ladil wer socked inter hit. He jist focht a snort an socked his fork up tu the hilt in the rump bone ove that misfortinate ole cock an started him down his throat head fast, and then begun tu hump hissef an grunt. Every yerk he gin the chicken went an inch, an he’d crook his neck sorter side-wise like a hen does with a lump ove dough stuck in her throat. When he swallowed hit apast the rump, the laigs stuck out at each corner ove his mouf es wide apart as the prongs ove a pitchfork, an then he sot intu ladlin in the crout atween em. At last the toes ove the rooster went outen site, an he sent the ballance ove the crout arter him, now an then pitchin in, lef handed, a chunk ove bull-steak es sorter mile stones tu separate the ladles ove crout. He rubbed his belly an pronounced hit ‘tam goot’ ”(148).
Eating, to the "sensitive" is often seen as bordering on the indelicate; the anorexy of extreme civilization regards eating and all its signs as repellent. In this episode, the "thundering" (i.e., farting) Dutchman, in his great size, in his reptilian swallowing, in his explosive digestive transformations presents play with the concept of the loathsome. Instead of shrinking away from eating and digesting, Harris details the process to image its bestial vigor.

Sut's own eating is equally grotesque. When he fears the disgusting beef he has swallowed whole may rise again, he calls for something to drink: "Then I drunk a bowl ove coffee made outen an ole chopped wool hat, an a stage driver's ole boot laig. The grease, sweat, glue, leather, blackin, an wool in ole hats an boots, makes a fust rate biled drink, when hit am sweetened with a mixtry of Orleans sugar, pissants an cock roaches ..."(152). The items in the series reveal that what Sut takes into his body is even more astonishing than the Dutchman's food: insects, used clothing (hats and boots are traditionally comic food referents), and even human sweat. This, together with the prefixed pun in "pissants," are both forms of scatophagy and both traditionally comic in the ancient culture of folk humor.10

The set of images, and the ritual act of eating this kind of food, do not belong to standard literature, and even Harris's readers do not much comment on such passages as this. Ordinarily, we dismiss such fictional actions as coarse, grotesque (in the general sense), or, more perceptively, "Rabelaisian."11 And perhaps one function of such passages is to allow the reader to express his dismay and thus to affirm his participation in the civilized world, to declare his cultural identity. But there is more here than an opportunity for self-gratulation. In Sut's world, eating is invested with rich meaning.

Harris's work abounds in images of hunger, threats of starvation. The present episode is interrupted by one of the narrator's characteristic digressions, in which Sut recalls an episode from his childhood. His father once brought home a dog, he says: "a durnd, wuthless, mangy flea-bitten grey old fox houn, good fur nuthin but tu swaller up what orter lined the bowels ove us brats"(149). In competition with the dog for food, Sut revenges (and thus protects) himself by stuffing a pig's bladder with gun powder, getting the dog to swallow it, and blowing the animal to bits.12 Scarcity of food and precariousness of supply are central conditions of Sut’s world. Sut's cruelty, his cowardice, his gluttony all have a rational dimension. In Sut's environment, life itself may depend on indifference to the concept of the loathsome.
NEWSPAPER GROTESQUES

But Sut’s eating goes beyond the Dutchman’s gluttony. Sut’s symbolic consumption (we remember he is drinking coffee) of sweat and grease, pissant and cockroaches, is not only satire on innkeepers’ food; it is a kind of triumphant dismissal of the significance, the reality, of loathing and disgust. In western culture, Stephen Greenblatt writes: “Since the onset of the early modern period, the archetypal rules, the earliest and most systematic to which the child is exposed and in which he is trained, are those governing the definition and control of filth; it is these rules that determine the experience of disgust and, to a certain extent, the experience of personal identity.”

In Sut’s world, it may be maintained, the concept of the filthy is not only a traditional comic way of facing reality, but is intensified then dismissed as a response appropriate to those little creatures reduced by civilization to the experience of frequent shrinking away or rejection. Sut is not a mere belated scatophagus as implied by the image of sweat and the two prefixed puns, but a literary creation of mythy grandeur. This system of images is drawn, as Bakhtin says, from the grotesque body created in the culture of folk humor. This body is ever unfinished, always exceeding its limits, being born and dying, being dismembered, copulating, eating, drinking, and defecating. This body devours everything in its world. Again, we remind ourselves, the passage is not material filth, but words. Harris is creating a literature that moves toward unaccustomed symbolic transcendences.

In the concluding episode, Sut asleep (on the floor) in the Dutchman’s room, dreams of the beef he has eaten as a living, sick, mutilated bull; but is awakened from this vision by the Dutchman, also asleep, crowing like a cock, then bellowing like a bull, both images of male assertiveness. Sut claps a chamber pot over his head, and the blinded man-animal runs across the room on his all-fours and butts his head into the wall with such violence that he splits his belly open. Sut repairs the wound: “I jist laid him ontu his back, tuck a nife fur a neeild, an a ole bridil reid fur a thread, an sowed him up adzactly like ye sows up the mouf ove a par ove saddil bags with the strap, an then tied a knot on bof ainds ove the reind. While I wer makin the holes in the aidges ove the tare, he axed me to look inside fur the spurs of ‘tat tam schicken cock an gut tem off,’ but all I could see were his paunch, an hit looked adzackly like the flesh side ove a raw hide” (154). Although his rude surgery is, on the surface, a comically incongruous humanitarian act, Sut’s report of it is detached and cold. There is no satiric move toward teaching, warning, or arousing compassion. Instead, Sut
simply reports a glimpse into the secret interior of the human body. The scene, to the humanistically trained sensibility, is revolting, impossible, incomprehensible.\textsuperscript{14}

After he finishes, Sut asks his patient how he feels, and the Dutchman replies, "Tam good"; his only fear is that he will leak lager beer. Later Sut learns that the Dutchman has recovered and, at Bristol, Virginia, has won a bet that he could drink beer faster than a muley cow could eat salted meal slop. He won, implying perhaps, that the Dutchman is leaking, but living with great gusto, unsubdued. Sut's last sentence exults that his bridle rein sewing has held the great indestructible belly together.

The cultural problem is to account for the sketch's relative popularity. It was reprinted half a dozen times in whole or in part, in different regions of the United States. Clearly, of all the print media, newspapers were most hospitable to this material. Here lay the greatest freedom to publish such traditional but sub-literary creations. Its popular appeal, its comic energy, must rest, to some degree, on its incongruous action, its defiance of manners, order, decency, even, as we have suggested, its indifference toward the very concept of the repellent, the loathsome, the filthy. In this it asserts freedom from deep esthetic and cultural concepts. In Sut's microcosm, all is debased, dismembered, rendered carnal, materialized, made familiar so that even the most awful catastrophes of nature and the human body are not endured so much as enjoyed. The tone is triumphant. Out of this filthy food, this muddy world of Bull's Gap, these accidents to the flesh, the curses of others and one's own excesses, the landlord, Sut, and the Dutchman rise enlarged and regenerated.

"Sut Lovingood Reports What Bob Dawson Said, After Marrying a Substitute" may serve as an example of the freedom newspapers offered Harris in creating the erotic grotesque. Published in the Chattanooga, Tennessee \textit{Daily Union} in 1867, late in Harris's career, the attitude toward human sexuality is noticeably different from that expressed in the tales written a decade earlier. While Sut's response to women was always complex, combining fear and desire, the dominant tone of the imagery associated with Harris's earlier creation, Sicily Burns, expresses her vitality, her fleshly beauty, and her overwhelming desirability.

Bob Dawson's experience extends into the repellent. He does not transcend the disgusting in the erotic. On his wedding night Bob Dawson goes first to bed, where he eagerly awaits his bride. When she
appears, he later reported: “She glode into the room like the embodiment of a Haleluigah, or a vision of unspeakable joy”(179). Saying that delicacy has no place between two who are one in marriage, she undresses by candlelight, divesting herself of layers of hoops and starched muslin, of padding for her legs, a false bosom, false teeth, a glass eye, and a wig. In horrified recapitulation, Bob says: ‘False calves, false breasts, false teeth, false eye, false hair,’ what next? The most horrible idear that ever burnt an’ blazed in the brain of man, was now fast resolving itself into its dreadful shape in mine, an’ her remark, ‘Don’t be impatient, Robert love; I is most through,’ flashed it into its fiendish maturity. Without darin’ even a glance at her, I was up out-gone; I went down them stair steps six at a bounce in my shirt tail through that festival throng in my shirt tail out of that house, out of that lot, out of that town, in my shirt tail”(181).

Now the “horrible idear,” which must remain unprinted, is, of course, Dawson’s fear that his bride’s vagina, too, is false. This implication is not present in Hawthorne’s “Mrs. Bullfrog,” and surely only certain newspapers in 1867 would have allowed it to be hinted at so openly. It is, however, traditional. In the last decade my own students have collected two versions of it in the oral lore. Gershon Legman prints a version of the false vagina story in his Rationale of the Dirty Joke (1: 376), where he argues that the motif is older than his first printed version and probably reached the height of its popularity in the mid-nineteenth century.

The sketch concludes with Sut’s returning to his own experience by way of an account of his sister Sal’s homemade false breasts, constructed out of dry gourd halves with white oak acorns for nipples. The whole contraption Sut calls “palpititytators” and the wearers “palpititytator toters.” This may not be a digression from the central motif. Legman argues that male interest in the female breasts is merely a psychological technique of displacement anyway.

It is possible to read the sketch simply as satire on women’s wiles, as protest against cosmetic deceits and affectations in appearance and manners. Thus the story could be seen as a moral and social attack on falsity. But comic misogyny and satire on women is a very old tradition, and what is interesting in Harris is the particular set of images and actions he selects and what special meaning we can find in his esthetic.

However one responds to this type of traditional erotic grotesque, it expresses fear and hatred of the female. The anecdote has nothing to
do with erotic pleasure. Instead, marriage, sexual activity, the female herself are sources of fear and anxiety. The comic function here is very narrow, very specific. Indeed, the whole anecdote is told in response to George’s question of why Sut never married. Thus Bob Dawson’s experience is exemplary. Sut concludes by connecting the false female with the experience of diminishing sexual desire. He tells George he will never again put his hand into the front of a woman’s dress, concluding mournfully: “No, by giminy hoss, that appetite’s dead, an’ the ballance of ’em scept for sperrits ara sinkin fas’....” The female (as in “Sut Lovingood’s Chest Story”) is feared as the destroyer of male virility. As Vivian Mercier observes of Irish humor, the grotesque esthetic expresses, in this instance, “fear and hatred of sex.”

The tone of the bedroom scene between Dawson and his bride is very much in the tradition of the Romantic grotesque as defined by Wolfgang Kayser in The Grotesque in Art and Literature. The microcosm seems alien, the tone gloomy, the woman inhuman, the world has become false. Dawson feels that his body floats between mattress and ceiling, like Mahomet’s coffin. This grotesque contrasts significantly with the folk grotesque of “Sut Lovingood at Bull’s Gap.” The Dawson sketch instills, as Kayser says, “fear of life, rather than fear of death.”

From such a limited survey as this, it seems clear that some mid-nineteenth century newspapers gave Harris much more freedom than book publishers allowed. Harris used these freedoms to expand significantly his system of images and his themes. Within these broader latitudes he gave expression not to individual neuroses or to an eccentric vision but rather to some traditional cultural responses. Particularly with “Sut Lovingood at Bull’s Gap” Harris preserved in print a full traditional esthetic system of grotesque bodily images from the culture of folk humor, presenting responses and celebrating values generally excluded from the values of the high culture.
NEWSPAPER GROTESQUES

NOTES


2 By 1858 William Trotter Porter was no longer making editorial selections for the *Spirit*. Indeed he died 15 August 1858. See Norris W. Yates, *William T. Porter and the SPIRIT OF THE TIMES* (Baton Rouge, 1959), pp. 190-195 and *passim*.


5 *High Times and Hard Times*, p. 145. Subsequent quotations will be from this source, with page references included in the text.


7 For a well-known nineteenth-century example of the art of abusive language, see Vance Randolph, *Pissing in the Snow and Other Ozark Folktales* (Urbana, 1976), pp. 103-105.

8 *American Humor, A Study of the National Character* (New York, 1931), presents illuminating analyses of the large patterns of humor in our culture.


10 Bakhtin, p. 330.


12 M. Thomas Inge locates five reprintings of this episode between 1859 and 1869. See his essay on Harris in *High Times and Hard Times*, pp. 110-111, and n. pp. 150-151. For an example of the humor of dismemberment, see Blair and Hill, p. 94. For dismemberment in the culture of folk humor, see Bakhtin, p. 318, and elsewhere.


14 Kayser, p. 35.


16 Kayser, p. 185. See also Bakhtin, p. 50. It is illuminating to compare these two works with Fedor Dostoyevsky's comic evocations of the "darker" side of human experience in the Marmeladov and the Svidrigailov episodes in *Crime and Punishment*. For variants with other meanings see Randolph, *Pissing in the Snow*, pp. 60-61.
THE ROLE OF KINGSHIP IN WILLIAM DUNBAR'S
THRISSIL AND THE ROIS

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Dunbar's poems have received little critical attention, but what has been published thus far centers either on the literary aspects of *The Goldyn Targe*,¹ one of his two major poems, or on his language and style,² or, given his membership in a group loosely described as Scottish or Scots Chaucerian, on his use of Chaucer.³ His other major poem, *The Thrissil and the Rois*, has not yet received extended critical analysis, perhaps because it is generally regarded as "light-weight compared to 'The Goldyn Targe'."⁴ It seems insubstantial apparently because it is a topical poem of the kind Dunbar termed a "celebration," written as a prothalamion for the political marriage of King James IV of Scotland and Margaret Tudor on 8 August 1503. Its topical character is underscored by heraldic representations of a lion, an eagle, a thistle and by an apostrophe to a rose, in that the thistle stands for Scotland and the rose for England, and hence even these symbols are conventional, political — and unoriginal: Dunbar's editor James Kinsley notes that "the new windows of Holyrood Palace carried the arms of Scotland and England with a thistle and a rose interlaced through a crown, and James's marriage contract was bordered in intertwined roses, thistles, and marguerites" (p. 109).⁵ The other images, of the lion and eagle, are also used to honor James IV: the poem's coronations of the king of beasts and the king of birds, along with that of the king of herbs, the thistle, celebrate the King's tripartite role as government-leader, law-giver, and war-chief.⁶

In addition the poem may be seen to contain thinly-veiled advice to King James IV in the form of Dame Nature's admonitions to the three kings. Nature asks the lion, as king of beasts and "cheif protector in woddis and schawis"(l. 104), to "keip the lawis"(l. 105) by tempering justice with mercy and conscience, specifically by treating apes and unicorns alike and by refusing to allow the wild ox to oppress the plough ox. She asks the eagle as "king of fowlis" to protect the weak from the strong, to treat all birds equally, and to "mak a law for wycht [strong] fowlis and for wrennis"(l. 124) so that the strong do not overpower the others. Finally, she asks the bold thistle with his "bush of spears" — "sen thow art a king"(l. 134) — not to treat virtueless herbs the same as virtued and sweet herbs, and to keep the nettles
away from the flowers. Keeping the laws, making the laws, enforcing the laws: all three functions, when combined, portray the role of the ideal king depicted by St. Thomas Aquinas as the directive principle of society in his treatise on kingship, De Regno, Ad Regem Cypri. For Aquinas, the king who understands divine law will promote three goals: “first of all, to establish a virtuous life in the multitude subject to him; second, to preserve it once established; and third, having preserved it, to promote its greater perfection.” The eagle seems to establish the virtuous life by making the laws, the lion preserves it by keeping the laws, and the thistle attempts “to promote its greater perfection” not only by enforcing the laws but by following a curious injunction of Nature: to hold in highest esteem the Rose, most perfect of flowers, which on one level represents the bride of James, Margaret Tudor, and on another, as we shall see, the Virgin Mary. Dunbar here echoes Aquinas in believing that human law should be informed and inspired by divine law. The reason for this interrelationship stems from the king’s understanding of his position in the universe, analogous to that of just and responsible God and to a soul merciful to its body, or so Aquinas believes:

Therefore let the king recognize that such is the office which he undertakes, namely, that he is to be in the kingdom what the soul is in the body, and what God is in the world. If he reflect seriously upon this, a zeal for justice will be enkindled in him when he contemplates that he has been appointed to this position in place of God, to exercise judgment in his kingdom; further, he will acquire the gentleness of clemency and mildness when he considers as his own members those individuals who are subject to his rule (p. 54, my italics).

The major problem with this interpretation of the poem as political philosophy and topical allegory is that it ignores the beginning and end of the work, a dream-vision envelope in which a dreamer is persuaded by the personification of May to leave his room for a chilly if enameled garden and, after the dream vision (ll. 43-182) wherein he sees Dame Nature crowning the three kings, he awakens determined to write it all down. There seems to be no connection between the dreamer reluctant to leave his warm bed on a cold spring morning and the king crowned and married in the celebratory vision, or between the dream-vision envelope and the dream vision, or between the dreary complaint by the slothful dreamer and the joyous celebration of the king by industrious Nature.

One possible connection is supplied, once again, by Aquinas in On
Kingship, when he explores the relationship between human and natural law. Dunbar’s dreamer is a man alone and intentionally isolated in that he sleeps, but the three kings are very much a part of a parliament intentionally summoned by Nature. Dunbar seems to point to the unnatural situation of the former and the natural and harmonious situation of the latter, especially through the images of lion, eagle, and thistle who represent the “kings” of beasts, birds, and herbs, and the figure of Nature who presides over this Chain of Being, this Parliament. Aquinas proclaims that,

if man were intended to live alone, as many animals do, he would require no other guide [than reason] to his end. Each man would be a king unto himself, under God, the highest King, inasmuch as he would direct himself in his acts by the light of reason given him on high. Yet it is natural for man, more than for any other animal, to be a social and political animal, to live in a group... If, then, it is natural for man to live in the society of many, it is necessary that there exist among men some means by which the group may be governed. For where there are many men together and each one is looking after his own interest, the multitude would be broken up and scattered unless there were also an agency to take care of what appertains to the commonweal (pp. 3-4, 5-6).

What the dreamer learns in the subsequent vision of the parliament of Nature is that the king is appointed to care about the whole kingdom — the lion about all beasts, the eagle about all birds, the thistle about all herbs, and Nature herself about all species. Thus the figure of the king, which Aquinas defined as the directive principle of society equivalent to reason in the microcosm and God himself in the macrocosm of the universe, links three kinds of law, natural, human, and divine:

Wherefore also in all things that are ordained towards one end, one thing is found to rule the rest. Thus in the corporeal universe, by the first body, i.e. the celestial body, the other bodies are regulated according to the order of Divine Providence; and all bodies are ruled by a rational creature. So, too, in the individual man, the soul rules the body; and among the parts of the soul, the irascible and the concupiscible parts are ruled by reason ... Therefore in every multitude there must be some governing power (p. 6, my italics).

The dreamer himself as a slugird signifies a lazy “king” who refuses to take care of himself because he fails to understand that rational behavior (i.e., getting out of bed) is natural, or, in a larger sense, because he fails to understand Nature. If Dunbar, like Aquinas, believes that “the light of reason is placed by nature in every man, to
guide him in his acts towards his end” (p. 3), then this dreamer suffers from an immobilizing malaise because he is without reason. Asleep at a time when March has passed and May has inspired the singing of the lark, he dreams that Aurora invites him, along with other lovers, to “Awalk, luvaris, out of your slomering” (l. 13) and that May, garbed like Alain de Lille’s Nature in the twelfth-century De planctu Naturae (l. 16 ff.), asks him to “awalk annone for schame,/ And in my honour sum thing thow go wryt” (ll. 22-23). The human mind’s natural function is busy and rational — as in writing a poem — and not dormant and irrational like the dreamer’s. This physical and spiritual malaise is symbolized by his “paill and grene” color and by his supine position, a posture which suggests sleep, certainly, but also weakness, illness, defeat — or death. Spiritually he is dead, and thus resembles the cold, unfeeling world May wants him to describe and to honor. Why should he “uprys at morrow” only to feel the cold and unhealthy air as it blasts through the boughs of the trees, when even the birds refuse to sing (“Thai haif moir caus to weip and plane thair sorrow,” he complains in l. 31)? Why should he sing of May when the birds do not?

The answer to his question is contained in May’s demand that he “Uprys and do thy observance” (l. 3), exactly the same advice given by May to Emelye in l. 1045 of Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale because May “wole have no slogardie a-nyght.” In Chaucer’s poem, however, this appeal works: it “maked Emelye have remembraunc/ To doon honour to May, and for to ryse” (ll. 1046-1047). In rising on this day to do her ‘observance’ to May, Emelye is actually observed by Palamon and Arcite, who consequently fall in love with her. But her duty to May transcends the role of courtly lover offered by Palamon or of creature lover offered by Arcite, as we discover later in the poem. Her rising up and doing ‘observance’ to May means marriage, both to perpetuate the species and also to fit harmoniously into the natural scheme of things: “Bitwixen hem Palamon and Emelye was maad anon the bond/ That highte matrimoigne or marriage” (ll. 3094-3095). This bond provides one link in “that faire cheyne of love” with which the Firste Moevere “bond/ The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond/ In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee” (ll. 2991-2993). So man and woman, as unlike as the four elements, are joined in harmony and so of Palamon and Emelye Chaucer says “nevere was ther no word hem bitwene/ Ofjalousie or any oother teenee” (ll. 3105-3106). Marriage then reflects in little that cosmic love structuring the universe and identical to the Chain of Being.
May in Dunbar's poem does not demand that the slugird dreamer rise up to be observed and later married like Emelye, but that he observe May, that he understand nature and man's place within it. He actually learns to do this not from May's injunction but from his dream vision of Nature in the garden. The goddess Nature herself epitomizes Reason in the universe through the fair chain of love, described by Theseus in the *Knight's Tale* as a marriage of the elements of earth, air, fire and water, and represented in *The Thrissil and the Rose* by the regions of the universe through which she descends to earth. Each region offers her obeisance in the form of song and harmonious sound as she passes. That is, before she appears in the poem the birds' song, with its "blisfull soune of cherarchy"(l. 57), mimicks the music of the legion orders of heavenly hosts. As she nears earth, the god of the sea (Neptunus) and the god of air (Aeolus) are instructed not to "perturb the wattr nor the air"(l. 66). Finally, once she has reached earth, the birds, beasts, and flowers as the three major types of terrestrial inhabitants are summoned by Nature "To hir thair makar to mak obediens"(l. 76). They must make their observance to Nature like Emelye who marries and like the dreamer who awakens to become himself a makar of song. Indeed, Nature's advice to the three kings, lion, eagle, and thistle, although explicitly advice about kingship, also reveals an understanding about the natural role of man as a "king" of himself. Because he is a rational animal he must naturally behave like a king (of beasts, of birds, of herbs) and govern his kingdom with justice and mercy. Because this particular man has been slothful, he must also awaken and write down what he has seen in his dream: recording such sense-perceptions is rational activity and making poetry involves the melodic articulation of thought and praise — the actual "observaunce" of May demanded of him earlier.

Such rational behavior is also virtuous behavior, in that writing down what he has seen will help others as he himself has been helped. In a sense the makar has a specific obligation to guide the 'common-weal' of his audience through the proper governance of himself and his craft. In short, the creation of his 'word' constitutes an act of charity and is anticipated by the Word of God. This virtuous concern for the spiritual welfare of others leads man to the eternal Kingdom which is governed, in Aquinas's words, by "that king who is not only a man, but also God, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who by making men sons of God brought them to the glory of Heaven. This then is the
government which has been delivered to Him and which ‘shall not be destroyed,’ on account of which He is called, in Holy Writ, not Priest only, but King” (p. 61). Because human law is motivated by divine law, the dream vision in The Thrissil and the Rois ends with a paean to the Virgin Mary through the figure of the rose — and begins with a tribute to the “purple sun” — or Son of God — beaming upon the garden in which Nature convokes her parliament. Indeed, the sluggish narrator has finally arisen to enter the garden behind May only because reminded of his promise to her to describe the “Ros of most plesance” (l. 38), the best that this fallen world has to offer. He “uprises” to do his “observance” — to Nature — because of the promise to man implied by divine law through the example set by the Son of God. While the crystal eyes of Aurora do not comfort the grieving narrator, the fresh face of the sun/ son offers true salvation and comfort to the sinner: “all the world tuke confort, fer and neir,/ To luke upone his freshche and blisfull face/ Doing all sable fro the hevynnis chace” (ll. 54-56). Redemption images abound: the light of the sun’s face removes the dark of the heavens, an image directly parallel to the birds’ apostrophe to May, Flora, and Aurora: “O luvaris fo, away, thou dully nyght,/ And welcum day that confortis every wight” (ll. 60-61). As the day overthrows “dark night” through the rising of the sun in the natural world, so Christ ascendant overcomes the powers of Satan. The “purple sun,” purple suggesting the passion of Christ plus regal majesty, truly represents man’s spiritual redeemer and comfort, as Aurora and May act as the sleeper’s physical redeemer and comfort. So The Thrissil and the Rois echoes the rondel of the birds at the end of the Parlement when they welcome Summer “with thy sonne softe,/ That hast this wintres wedres overshake,/ And driven away the longe nyghtes blake’. “(ll. 680-682, my italics). Natural and supernatural regeneration seem analogous through the symbol of the purple sun: man’s uprising to do his “observance” (to observe or see a purple sun) parallels and is inspire by Christ’s uprising as the sun/son to do his “observance.” Thus all the consequences of the Fall — on the natural level of the poem, the black night, the harsh winter, mutability — are overcome. Death has died. And if the purple sun reaffirms and crowns the slugird’s uprising, it is the promise to describe the Rose that initiates it — the Rose here representing the Mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary described in Dunbar’s divine poem “Rorate celis desuper” as “the ros Mary, flour of flouris.”

For Dunbar, like Aquinas, intimates that divine law not only
inspires human law but is reflected in natural law. The introduction of
the single rose — Margaret Tudor — implies perfection beyond the
natural. When she is summoned to be crowned as queen, in l. 153-154,
the lines echo the description of the bride or Sponsa in the Song of
Songs 4:8 [Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. Come with
me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon.]:

Fro the stok ryell rysing fresche and ying,
But ony spot or macull doing spring;
Cum, blowme of joy, with jemis to be crownd,
For our the laif thy bewty is renownd (ll. 151-154).

The rose here “rises” from the royal stock to make her observance like
Emelye: her marriage to James invites comparison with that of
Palamon and Emelye. Also the idea of marriage in the Song of Songs
symbolically underscores the wedding of Christ to his Church or
man’s soul to God. As a symbol, marriage, then, signifies not only the
realization of cosmic love on the microcosmic level but also the fulfil-
ment of natural law (the perpetuation of the species and the joining of
diverse elements, or the two sexes, in a discordia concors). Marriage
creates that unit of human society which necessitates human law and
anticipates symbolically that spiritual joining of man to God promised
by divine law.

This rose is also a type of Mary as the purple sun was a type of
Christ. Note that the singing of the birds after her coronation emphasizes explicitly the idea of Christian regeneration merely hinted at
elliptically before: “‘Chryst the conserf frome all adversite,’” they
sing in l. 182. Margaret Tudor as an embodiment of natural virtue is
modeled upon Mary, flower of flowers, for she is “Naturis suffragene/
In bewty, nourtour, and every nobilnes,/ In riche array, renown, and
gentilnes” (ll. 173-175). That is, Margaret is to the Virgin as Beatrice is
to Mary in the Paradiso. The salute to the blossom at the end (“‘Haill
blosome breiking out of the blud royall,’ ”: l. 167), according to editor
James Kinsley’s note on this line, refers to Mary giving birth to the
fleur-de-lis, presumably the Christ child. The promise of future genera-
tions springing from this earthly marriage in fulfilment of natural
law reminds the poet of the past fulfilment of divine law in a more
supernal marriage that resulted in offspring.

The poem does not end with the apostrophe to the Rose, however,
The dreaming slugird now awakens refreshed by his visionary expe-
rience and arises to become a poet. Because this poem has functioned
primarily as an answer to his question concerning the value of fallen nature, it appropriately ends when he finally performs both of the requests of Aurora and May made at the beginning of the poem, as if fully convinced of the efficacy of this answer. First, he “annonne awoilk quhair that I lay” upon hearing the birds’ harmony, which he could neither discern nor accept earlier, and second, he writes: “And thus I wret, as ye haif hard to forrow, / Off lusty May upone the nynt morrow” (ll. 188-189). To awaken from sleep parallels the awakening of spring from the sleep of winter, a ritual act experienced earlier in the vision; to write of May in this enameled and ornate language of Dunbar resembles the enameling of earth by a loftier artist or Makar. So April has “silver schouris,” and an “orient blast”; so Aurora has “cristall ene”; so May “In brycht atteir of flouris forgit new ... / Balmit in dew, and gilt with Phebus bemys/ Quhill all the hous illumynit of hir lemys” (ll. 18-21). The slugird has been transformed into the poet Dunbar as Nature has been regenerated from a wintry waste to an enameled spring garden. Indeed, he obeys Nature or natural law when he arises from bed to write — to exhibit a trait naturally characteristic, according to Aquinas, of man, who has only speech and neither sharp teeth or claws to help preserve his life. By serving as a “king” of himself, the poet resembles King James IV making and keeping human law with justice and mercy and Christ the King exemplifying divine law. Now that the narrator recognizes the analogy between his internal kingdom and the external political and spiritual kingdoms—or between natural, human, and divine law — he can perform his “observance” to Nature at the very end of the poem. Like Emelye he does arise: “up I lenyt, halflingis in affrey,/ And thus I wret ... / Off lusty May” (ll. 188-189, my italics). Law is love — the king does marry — and, uplifted, the swain becomes a makar who will uplift others through the medium of his courtly art.

When, then, this fifteenth-century courtly poem is placed within the appropriate philosophic literary tradition, it becomes more than a “light-weight” topical and political “celebration.” As the combined celebration of a marriage and complaint about fallen nature it finds literary antecedents in Alain’s De planctu Naturae and Chaucer’s Parlement of Foules: the former complains about the adultery of Venus with Antigamus (or Anti-marriage) against Hymen (or Marriage), and the latter celebrates the “marriage” of birds on Valentine’s Day. There is also a thematic resemblance among these three works. In both the De planctu Naturae and the Parlement of Foules natural
law is abrogated when various "kings" no longer govern wisely. In Alain's *prosimetrum*, man behaves irrationally and unnaturally when he unmans himself by succumbing to homosexuality (a physical unmanning) and then to deadly sin (a spiritual unmanning). After Nature complains because the reproduction of human kind has ceased and because man's soul no longer governs his body, sinful man is excommunicated from the realm of Nature by her regal priest Genius, the god of human nature. In addition to such infractions of natural law, the *Parlement* also displays infractions of human law through the explicit failure of a "king" — of birds — to govern effectively. The tercel eagle, as the highest-ranking member of the four orders of fowl (the birds of prey, the water fowl, the worm fowl, and the seed fowl) representing the four estates of human society, should set an example for the lower orders when he selects a mate by choosing wisely and quickly. Instead he defers to the judgment of the formel eagle in a gesture more mindful of courtly love dictates (and debate poems) than the political obligations of an aristocracy to the lower classes. Because of the noble bird's failure in judgment, chaos ensues: the lower classes do not have enough time to select mates, and the eagle himself must await for yet another year the formel's decision. The tercel eagle has thus abrogated natural law by delaying the annual mating of the species and, more figuratively, human law by failing to consider the interests of the commonweal. This "unnatural" practice of courtly love by the eagles parallels the unnatural homosexuality and deadly sin by man in Alain's *De planctu Naturae*.

In *The Thrissil and the Rois* the situation differs, for it is man and not Nature who complains that nature is fallen, and also man who finally attempts to obey both natural and human law in spite of this fact. Dunbar seeks to justify to man the ways of Nature — and, because Nature is God's vicar, of God. Thus although the poem begins with a complaint like that of Alain's *prosimetrum* but delivered by the narrator instead of Nature, it ends with a celebration like that of Chaucer's poem, but of the harmony of Nature symbolized by the marriage of James IV and Margaret Tudor. Man must govern himself and also others because the world is fallen and spring is often wintry; there is need for wise kings, and wise *makars*. The dream vision accordingly reveals to the slothful *makar* exactly how human law derives from natural law, and how, in addition, man is counseled by divine law. Dunbar's originality, given his affinity for Chaucerian themes and genres, and the specific place of this poem within the
THRISSIL AND THE ROIS

philosophic literary tradition of Nature represented by these two earlier works, stems from his combination of literary forms and his synthesis of themes of nature and human nature, here optimistically unified by Aquinas’s concept of law and kingship in De Regno, Ad Regem Cypri.

NOTES


5 Dunbar describes the lion in this way, for example:

Reid of his cullour as is the ruby glance:  
On feild of gold he stude full mychtely,  
With flour delycis sirculit lustely.


6 Scott, p. 50.


8 The syntax in line eleven is confusing. The “paill and grene” visage may refer to Aurora peering in through the window with her crystal eyes, a reference to the wintry spring day, but more probably it refers to the narrator, for the full line reads that she “halsit me, with visage paill and grene.”

MARK TWAIN AND THE MAGAZINE WORLD

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We literary scholars have our opportunistic streak. For the Anglo-Saxon period we study any scrap of writing on any subject; if carbon dating gets more precise we will explicate the rocks. For the eighteenth century we revel in political or religious pamphlets and welcome any sort of newspaper or magazine that we can dredge up. For the nineteenth century, though, we can find enough "serious," that is, esthetically self-conscious, literature so that we take only minor interest in popular fiction and then only if published or reprinted in hard covers. For Mark Twain we generally stick to his books written once he achieved that stage in his career, and we keep trying to minimize the fact that he was incorrigibly a humorist.

Many a literary scholar underestimates the unique cultural function that current magazines serve, even for himself or herself today. All but the sternly specialized magazines cross-section the enveloping culture; through them an intellectualized reader reaches far down the range of subject matter while assuming or even insisting that he or she consumes only high culture; for instance our typical colleague picks up Playboy for a short story by or an interview with an established author but, while at it, browses most of the other contents. In Twain's day the choice among magazines that a respectable citizen could read openly was much skimpier near the raunchy extreme; in the main, middle range, the parlor table magazines, more diligently than today, tried hard to function as an educative digest for readers who had graduated above the tabloid newspapers. For Twain the magazine world had three lines of importance that nobody has looked at intensively. One of those lines, the development of his critical reputation, has been examined unimaginatively and therefore misleadingly. Second, nobody has paid close attention to Twain's reading in periodicals; again, we primarily focus on his reading of books though, as Alan Gribben's recent, massive study Mark Twain's Library (1980) proves, he was a steady, rapt consumer of the leading magazines. Third, Twain wrote regularly and painstakingly for the magazines. Yet, revealingly, we don't even have a finding list of his contributions, a list that would pose few problems for anybody who thought it worth the trouble of compiling it. Though I don't predict any startling discoveries, there are sound reasons for looking closely into
Twain's relationship with the magazine world of his time.

He explicitly distinguished that world as occupying the middle steps of a status ladder between newspapers and the realm of books, which held the upside of course. In the early stage of his career he had been highly conscious of his first step above the bottom rungs. With a relaxed self-irony validated by success he recalled in 1899 his eagerness to break into Harper's Monthly: "In my view, a person who published things in a mere newspaper could not properly claim recognition as a Literary Person: he must rise away above that; he must appear in a magazine. He would then be a Literary Person; also, he would be famous — right away." Earlier in the 1890's, undeniably famous but desperate for ready cash, Twain decided that he would rather appear in magazines though the press syndicates were offering him twice as much pay. In one instance he was willing to take less even from the awkwardly named Ladies' Home Journal than from a newspaper.

Unsurprisingly he also made qualitative distinctions among magazines. In the postbellum decades the question of relative status among them not only had sharper cultural import than today but involved a much greater variety of general-interest monthlies. Available studies of Twain's critical reputation have not tried to determine who read what magazines for what purposes — essentially an intractable problem, I must admit. In 1864 Twain was gleeful that, from a San Francisco magazine that wasn't "high-toned enough," he had moved up to the Californian, which circulated "among the highest class in the community" and had an "exalted reputation in the east." In 1867 he regretted the need to earn publicity through the New York Weekly Review, which dealt in pulp fiction: "Like all other papers that pay one splendidly it circulates among stupid people and the canaille." This arrogance was soon matched with a humility toward the "awful respectability" of the Atlantic Monthly, which "goes to only ... the select high few." Throughout Twain's career he never ridiculed either the quality or the cultural mission of the triumvirate that dominated literate households — the Atlantic, Harper's Monthly, and the Century. In 1884 he assured an interviewer: "The literary productions which fill the pages of the magazines now-a-days are greatly superior to those of former years."

Twain took seriously the challenge to sustain the "wonderful advance" in quality. Having negotiated a contract in 1870 to contribute to the then respected Galaxy, he explained: "I just came to the
conclusion that I would quit turning my attention to making money especially & go to writing for enjoyment as well as profit. I needed a Magazine wherein to shovel any fine-spun stuff that might accumulate in my head, & which isn’t entirely suited to either a daily, weekly, or any kind of newspaper.” The Galaxy, it turned out, insisted on billing him on its front cover as the Great Humorist, although he was determined to establish a wider scale of notes. In spite of a tug of war with the editor’s plans for him he bumbled a few months later that he “would rather write for a magazine for $2 a page than for a newspaper at $10.” He insisted: “I would. One takes more pains, the ‘truck’ looks nicer in print, & one has a pleasanter audience.” A reverse case of taking pains is exhibited in a letter of 1873 explaining why a projected piece could not appear as a magazine article: “I wanted to seem deeply in earnest & greatly concerned, & one can’t pretend all that with grace in a magazine when it is plain a writer has a month in which to chaw over,”

That last figure leads to a letter of March 1895 in which Twain, still hard up for money after his recent bankruptcy, refused a commission from the North American Review, protesting he “couldn’t undertake an article at ten day’s limit. That’s for [Max] O’Reli’s kind — the kind that puke an article & think it’s literature.” Slapdash Twain may have been, but he didn’t think he was, once he liberated himself from the revolving deadline of a daily newspaper. Nor did he take so portentous a view as we do of the pile of manuscripts he left behind. In 1902 he advised a beginner that in writing for periodicals it is necessary to reject four out of five of one’s own articles, and he went on: “... there is a ton of ms. in my study, to show how many times I got ahead of the magazine editors without their knowing it.” Twain’s insistence on quality in his magazine writings strengthens the still disputed case for the craftsmanship of his books.

Yet, as elsewhere with Twain, his standards had to make peace with his practical sense. In 1898 he lectured Edward Bok of the Ladies’ Home Journal on why the part of his autobiography completed so far “would not answer for your Magazine. Indeed a good deal of it is written in too independent a fashion for a magazine. One may publish a book & print whatever his family shall approve & allow to pass, but it is the Public that edit a Magazine, & so by the sheer necessities of the case a magazine’s liberties are rather limited.” The distinction here probably distorted and certainly oversimplified the realities of marketing his own books, but at least it restated his ponderous regard for
the world of periodicals. His practice indicates that he thought broad humor more suitable for either newspapers or hard covers. Determined to have his article "Mental Telegraphy" received solemnly he tried to persuade the sober North American Review to accept it; next he offered it to the Century signed simply by S. Langhorne, with pay no object. At a lower level of practicality, during his whole career but especially during the 1870's and the 1890's he followed the principle of, as he put it, not appearing in the "full glare of the big magazines too often." He suggested this principle to Joel Chandler Harris in 1881: "My idea would be to print one yarn in the magazine every 3 months & thus keep before the public & at the same time keep the public unsatisfied; but I wouldn't let them have such generous meals as you have been giving them. — For the ficklest people in the world are the public."9

The mildest surprise I can spring is that, on the most practical level, Twain bargained hard for his pay, measuring himself competitively against Bret Harte in the 1870's and Charles Dudley Warner in the 1890's. Feeling flush in 1882, he could brag casually that James Osgood "sells my occasional magazine rubbish at figures which make me blush, they are so atrocious."10 Actually Twain was a far less embarrassed haggler than Osgood. Of course he got paid so well because he was a star, proclaimed as such by the response of readers. John Brisben Walker, owner of the Cosmopolitan, so appreciated the two such rounds of response as to add hefty bonuses to the contracted price. By the 1890's the big magazines considered Henry James a sort of loss leader — to use department store or supermarket language — but perhaps the phrase is misleading because he made the circulation department nervous; though James recognized that his highbrow prestige was the key item being bought, he awkwardly tried to adjust his stories to a changing market. During the same years Twain did much of his finest writing for the magazines while also conducting his hardest bargaining — a connection that felt natural to him.

In 1893 he maneuvered against the editor of the Century: "You do not suggest a price. I do not venture to suggest prices any more, because on the three occasions when I made the attempt the editors were shocked. They gave me to understand that I was degrading my art to a trade."11 The business manager of the Century undoubtedly encouraged paying premium rates for the right pieces. Not only did a Twain story or essay boom any issue, but he enthusiastically accepted the imperatives of promotion, the ads loaded with superlatives and
as was the practice then — the striking posters. Accepted is an understatement. To encourage still lustier publicity, in January 1893 he wrote to the Century about its posters for “The £1,000,000 Bank-Note”: “It is the most variegated and extraordinary explosion of advertising I have encountered in my lifetime. Yes, and the most ingenious and seductive and beguiling, too — for it made me go and get that article and read it myself, it so inflamed my curiosity to know what it was all about.” After he had negotiated hefty prices, his notebooks kept track of payment received, and an editor’s cashflow problems simply moved Twain to dun for his money.

It was inevitable that some magazine would want to pay him well as a figurehead. After all, in 1898 he was offered ten thousand dollars to endorse a tobacco. Given his success it was also reasonable to assume he had a great editorial touch. Between 1885 and 1893, that is, up until his bankruptcy, he looked like a genius as a publisher of books sold by subscription. As early as 1886 (details are vague) he may have been offered some connection with a projected British magazine that would publish here also — the transatlantic angle seemed a natural to several entrepreneurs between 1880 and World War I. In 1892 the two journalists starting up the Idler magazine approached him, but “his idea of the proper division of the profits left absolutely nothing for anyone else.”

By the late 1890’s he had such eminence that nobody with common sense expected to put him in harness. The American comic weekly Puck made an offer of $10,000 a year for not more than an hour of work each week. There is more comedy than we have time to elicit in the fact that the erratic, self-assured, and impulsive S. S. McClure opened negotiations in 1899 about editing a monthly to be named first The Universal and then, more modestly, The American. After McClure aroused Twain by talking big money, the deal was slowly defused by skeptical advisers on both sides until McClure, who had dangled an accelerating salary from the profits for practically no work, set down a dismaying list of duties of editing a bigtime monthly. Twain had gone so far as to send McClure his editorial philosophy in a statement which sounds as if he intended it to serve as a press release. Its operative message was, “This is not to be a comic magazine. It is to be simply a good, clean, wholesome collection of well-written & enticing literary products ... not setting itself to please but one of man’s moods, but all of them.” Though going on to reach for the levity just renounced, Twain also probably spoke from the heart in declaring
that in the course of being “edited by all kinds of people for more than thirty-eight years” he had “often longed to move up from the dock to the bench.”

Only unintended comedy enters Twain’s single attempt to found a periodical on his own. His special angle seems so dull that I can’t comprehend why he was positive it would sell. To penetrate his reasons we would have to discuss him as a lifelong devotee of newspapers and as a homegrown intellectual who insisted that he enjoyed books on history of any period. Right now we have to settle for registering that in 1899 he observed: “by some subtle law all tragic human experiences gain in pathos by the perspective of time.”

Astonishingly, while his publishing firm was collapsing in 1893 he confided to his assistant that just as soon as its income improved, “we will start a magazine — inexpensive,” and he added the favorite note of founders of periodicals, namely, that it would be “of an entirely unique sort.” He may have been right this time. The J. Pierpont Morgan Library holds the holograph manuscript of his prospectus, with a formal covering page, for The Back Number. A monthly, it would gamble on his conviction that “news is news, and that dates have little or nothing to do with its interest.” Therefore The Back Number would commit itself entirely to “news of irresistible interest and vitality” culled from the “immemorial yesterdays of all time,” though the Chicago fire of 1873 served as his example. He had in mind such catastrophes, battles, and other gripping events. He claimed to have been nursing the idea impatiently for twenty-five years. Experience has taught me to mistrust my sense of which new magazine will flourish, but so far as I know, nobody has even tried out Twain’s idea, much less made it work.

Somewhat guiltily he waited for an auspicious moment to spring it on H. H. Rogers, his financial adviser who was struggling to stave off his bankruptcy. But he actively tried to find a backer. Also, after first intending to serve as editor, he decided to line up his nephew Samuel E. Moffett. Financial pressure soon canceled his plans, but not for good. In January 1902, his solvency and self-confidence restored, he informed Moffett that after a “searching meditation” he had “absolutely decided to start the magazine” and that he wanted Moffett, by then a topflight New York City journalist, to keep himself available. He closed, “I have perfected my scheme now, & I shan’t have to put up any capital myself.” Yet nobody else put it up either, and by August he wrote to Moffett much more meekly, “No, I don’t think I shall ever give
up the ‘Stale News’ till I’m obliged to.” That Twain should invent or repeat the sound parody of his original title is defiant but intriguing. We have to wonder why Twain, a modernist go-getter and a seismograph for public ridicule, had stuck to the title of Back Number, a colloquial slur. Still it soon truly fitted a dead idea, which he memorialized in his autobiographical dictations of January 1906. Once more he insisted (with a somewhat new focus) on the fascination of eyewitness accounts, which can a century later engross the reader as much as “any news he will find in the newspapers of his day.”

As an investor, Twain was a notorious optimist, a both dangerous and necessary posture for anybody in the publishing business. The strength of the human instinct to hope is regularly demonstrated by a decision to found still another magazine. Is the fact that Twain never proposed to start up a humorous magazine surprising or is it proof that even his optimism as entrepreneur had more balance than we commonly recognize? In 1903 Twain and a British humorist drolled about a magazine to be called The Obituary — the scheme was to show dignitaries how their final sendoff would read and blackmail them into paying for a kinder one. This angle was more practical than The Back Number at least.

Nevertheless, ridicule of Twain as a publisher can easily go too far. Overall he made a triumphant career of gauging public taste. He was typically early to encourage the idea of a digest or, in this case, a “review of reviews,” observing in 1890 that with so many new periodicals “some swift way of getting at their nuggets without having to pan out their whole mass has become a kind of necessity.” The Reader’s Digest, if not its predecessors, validates that judgment financially. Twain’s spirit might also draw consolation from the fact that today a bimonthly and a quarterly newsletter and a small quarterly journal are devoted to him. The bad news, he might add, is that none of them looks like a moneymaker.

NOTES

1 “My Debut as a Literary Person,” Century Magazine, 59(1899), 76.


4 Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks, ed. Dixon Wecter (San Marino, 1949), pp. 128, 132.

5 Letter of 12 June 1873 to G. Fitzgibbon, in Mark Twain Papers. Previously unpublished materials by Mark Twain are © 1981 by Edward J. Willi and Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company as trustees of the Mark Twain Foundation, and are published with the permission of the University of California Press and Robert H. Hirst, General Editor of the Mark Twain Project in Berkeley, California. All citations of such material are identified by the following symbol: (†).

6 Letter of 9 March (1895) to (Lloyd) Brice, in MTP (†).

7 Letter of 14 November 1902 to Emily G. Hutchings, in MTP (†).

8 Letter of 10 October 1898 to Edward Bok, in MTP (†).

9 Mark Twain to Uncle Remus, ed. Thomas H. English (Atlanta, [1935]), p. 11.

10 Greville MacDonald, George MacDonald and His Wife (New York, 1924), p. 458.

11 Letter of 6 November 1893 to Richard Watson Gilder, PH in MTP (†).

12 Quoted in William W. Ellsworth, A Golden Age of Authors (Boston, 1919), pp. 229-230.

13 Quoted in A. B. Paine, Mark Twain: A Biography (New York 1912), II, 1100-1101.


15 Letters of 31 January and 26 August 1902 to Samuel E. Moffett, in MTP (†).

16 Letter of 17 March 1890 to William T. Stead, in MTP (†).
THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE IN BYRON'S EARLY POETRY

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In spite of his extraordinary popular success in and his lifelong attraction to the form, Byron never felt thoroughly comfortable about his involvement with romance. In 1817 he wrote to John Murray: "With regard to poetry in general I am convinced the more I think of it — that ... all of us — Scott — Southey — Wordsworth — Moore — Campbell — I — are all in the wrong — one as much as another ... I am the more confirmed in this — by having lately gone over some of our Classics — particularly Pope — ... and if I had to begin again — I would model myself accordingly [i.e. after Pope]."1 In many of the poems written before the years of his romantic popularity, Byron is openly suspicious of romance and its implications — so much so, that occasionally his skepticism erupts in outright hostility. His successes with romance and romantic narratives, then, could only have resulted from his having made some accommodation with the form and with his own generally antagonistic attitude toward the kind of world that romance implied.

In his "Preface" to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I-II (the "Romaunt" that began it all), Byron hinted broadly at what that accommodation was: "The following poem was written, for the most part, amidst the scenes which it attempts to describe. It was begun in Albania; and the parts relative to Spain and Portugal were composed from the author's observations in those countries. Thus much it may be necessary to state for the correctness of the descriptions." Then he added almost casually: "these two cantos are merely experimental."2 Because these two remarks come so close together, it is tempting to infer that Byron saw his efforts in Childe Harold as a self-conscious attempt to introduce real landscapes, realistically and faithfully described, into the structures and materials of romance; that is, he conceived of the poem, at least in part, as a formal experiment.

When George Ellis reviewed Childe Harold's Pilgrimage for the Quarterly Review, he noted the importance of Byron's suggestion. Because travel books are always much admired and since "the materials offered by a traveller's journal" are perfectly appropriate for heroic poetry, Ellis wondered: "by what accident has it happened that no English poet before Lord Byron has thought fit to employ his
talents on a subject so obviously well suited to their display?"  In his subsequent narratives, Byron capitalized on this successful combination of romance and realism, and time after time (from 1812 to the present) critics have observed how skillfully Byron managed his scenic descriptions. When Walter Scott, for example, reviewed the third canto of Childe Harold for the Quarterly Review, he observed that the powerful impression which Byron's tales (1813-1816) had produced confirmed him in a principle: "that every author should, like Lord Byron, form to himself, and communicate to the reader, a precise, defined and distinct view of the landscape, sentiment, or action which he intends to describe to the reader." Scott specifically praised the descriptions in Childe Harold III for their "original tone and colouring." The association of landscape with romance, then, which Byron first made explicit in his "Preface" to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I-II, clearly figured importantly in the warm reception that greeted his most popular narratives.

Although Byron obviously implied "newness" by calling Childe Harold "experimental," the pose he adopted in the "Preface" is misleading. During the period before 1810, romance evidently figured often in his thoughts. Shortly before the publication of Hours of Idleness (1807), for example, he wrote in a tantalizingly fragmentary letter to his friend Edward Noel Long: "my Stanzas, have a Colouring of Romance." In comparison with his later poetry, among his juvenilia the words "romance" and "romantic" appear in what seems like a disproportionately high number of separate works. Byron even tried his hand at two short romantic narratives in Hours of Idleness: "Oscar of Alva" and "The Death of Calmar and Orla."

All this evidence of Byron's interest in romance before 1809 suggests that the grounds of his experiment in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage had been well prepared before he began to compose his first "Romaut." Indeed, the "experimental" Childe Harold I-II can just as well be seen as the culmination of a series of experiments that Byron had started to conduct at least as early as 1806. In his youth he evidently did not hold the form very highly in his esteem, yet his early concern for romance and romantic fictions explicitly anticipated the mature formal experimentation of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Even as Byron explored in his early works the reasons for his dissatisfaction with romance, he prepared the way to create new alternatives that overcame what he believed were the inherent deficiencies of the form as it was traditionally defined.
To be sure, in his early poetry Byron did not generate anything close to a systematic argument about romance. Nor was a definition of the form his only (or even his principal) preoccupation in his *juvenilia*. In a few clusters of poems, though, Byron does seem to carry on something resembling an indirect discussion about the meaning and appeal of romance. Together, his few direct comments about romance and the relations between various select poems suggest some important possible reasons that the experiment of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I-II took the form that it did.

Unfortunately, Byron has nowhere left us an exact and comprehensive statement that defines what he meant when he used the words "romance" and "romantic" in his early works. In that regard, though, he more or less reflected the critical uncertainty of the whole period, for, as Ellis remarked when he reviewed *Childe Harold* I-II, romance "has been always used with a considerable latitude of meaning, and may be considered as applicable to all the anomalous and nondescriptive classes of poetical composition." Nonetheless, from his usage in a few specific instances, we can infer much about what Byron seems to have understood "romance" to imply.

In a letter to his sister Augusta, dated 9 April 1804, Byron playfully described his plans for a party his mother was to give that night:

> I intend to fall violently in love, it will serve as an amusement pour passer le temps and it will at least have the charm of novelty to recommend it, then you know in the course of a few weeks I shall be quite au desespoir, shoot myself and Go out of the world with eclat, and my History will furnish materials for a pretty little Romance which shall be entitled and denominated the loves of Lord B. and the cruel and Inconstant Sigismunda Cunegunda Bridgetina &c&c princess of Terra Incognita. — Don’t you think that I have a very Good Knack for novel writing?^8^

Two points about Byron’s idea of romance emerge clearly here. First, he associates it with love, particularly the variety with turbulent emotional excesses and tragic consequences. Second, he considers it artificial, a mere collection of empty literary cliches that have no concrete or meaningful relation to real human life. Scornfully ironic, he satirizes the implicit idealism of the form by representing it as stereotyped sentimentality, extravagant posturing, and predictable affectation.

In another letter (25 October 1804), Byron tried to console Augusta, who was then distraught about obstacles (principally finan-
46 THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE

cial) in the path of her engagement to Col. George Leigh:

I sympathize in your distress, and hope that things will turn out better than you yourself expect. But really after all (pardon me my dear Sister,) I feel a little inclined to laugh at you, for love in my humble opinion, is utter nonsense, a mere jargon of compliments, romance, and deceit; now for my part had I fifty mistresses, I should in the course of a fortnight, forget them all, and if by any chance I ever recollected one, should laugh at it as a dream, and bless my stars, for delivering me from the hands of the little mischievous Blind God.⁹

This linking of romance with love, nonsense, jargon, and dreams continues the same track of the earlier letter. He still implies that romance involves affected posing and verbal conventions empty of genuine feeling, and he further adds the edge of an implied moral judgment when he includes “deceit” in that series of associations. Derisive laughter, indicative of responsible disillusionment, is the appropriate response to the fraudulent artifice and dishonest illusion into which romance would convert human experience.

One other comment, from a third letter to his sister (30 January 1805), makes more explicit some of these general notions. Byron first tells Augusta that he has heard a remarkable story about her riding skill; then he adds: “I hope you recollect the circumstance, and know what I allude to, else, you may think that I am soaring into the Regions of Romance.”¹⁰ With the metaphor of flight, which anticipates later statements in the poetry, he finally and unequivocally identifies romance as an airy, illusory nothing — different in kind from the material reality which we customarily consider truth. The spatial distinction and separation of those vaporous regions from solid earth utterly disconnect romance from real experience. Such fictions are pure fabrications of imagination and artifice, unrelated to substantial fact. Byron’s self-conscious irony in this reference indicates what little sympathy he entertains for this ideal.

For the most part, Byron is consistent about his conception of romance in these letters (i.e. referring it regularly to ideas of illusion, unreality, affectation); moreover, his usage conforms generally to prevailing critical ideas about the nature of romantic fictions. In 1750 Samuel Johnson observed that “heroic” romances were characterized by a “wild strain of imagination”; “every transaction and sentiment was ... remote from all that passes among men.” His definition of “romance” in the Dictionary (1755) held to the same line: “a tale of wild adventures in war and love ... A lie; a fiction.”¹¹ Through the end
of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, this same general idea or some near variation of it predominated in most critical discussions of the form. In the “Preface” to the second edition of The Castle of Otranto (1765), for example, Horace Walpole argued that in the “ancient” romance: “all was imagination and improbability: ... The actions, sentiments, conversations, of the heroes and heroines of ancient days were as unnatural as the machines employed to put them in motion.” Similarly, James Beattie (On Fable and Romance, 1783) maintained that romantic poetry so formalized love that the passion became nothing but “a verbal parade of admiration and attachment, in which the heart had little concern”; he concluded that in medieval romances: “nature, probability, and even possibility, were not much attended to.” In The Progress of Romance (1785), Clara Reeve’s Euphraphasia precedes her own precise definition of “romance” by soliciting these views from Hortensius and Sophrania: “By Romance I understand a wild, extravagant, fabulous Story”; and: “I understand it to mean all those kind[sic] of stories that are built upon fiction, and have no foundation in truth.”12

During his youth, then, Byron’s conception of romance echoed critical commonplaces. The precedents for his association of the form with imagination, love, excessive affectation, and unreality were solidly established in tradition. So far Byron’s attitude toward this constellation of characteristics has appeared to be one of irony and mockery. In his early poetry he retains the same general definition of romance, but his responses to its significance and its appeal cover a larger range.

In Fugitive Pieces, Byron’s first collection of juvenilia (1806), two poems specifically draw upon the idea of romance that Byron implied in his letters:

These locks, which fondly thus entwine,
In firmer chains our hearts confine,
Than all th’ unmeaning protestations
Which swell with nonsense, love orations.
Our love is fix’d, I think we’ve proved it;
Nor time, nor place, nor art have mov’d it;
Then wherefore should we sigh and whine,
With groundless jealousy repine;
With silly whims, and fancies frantic,
Merely to make our love romantic?

(“To a Lady Who Presented to the Author a Lock of Hair Braided
With His Own, and Appointed a Night in December to Meet Him in the
48 THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE

Garden,” ll. 1-10)
I will not advance,
By the rules of romance,
To humour a whimsical fair;
Though a smile may delight,
Yet a frown won’t affright.
Or drive me to dreadful despair.
(“To the Sighing Strephon,” ll. 31-36)

Although the objects of his mockery differ, the satirical tone remains constant. In the first poem, Byron ridicules his lover for her foolish and selfish expectations of him; in the second, he ridicules a friend for his ludicrous posturing. In both, Byron’s targets are false sentimental-ity and affection; the ideals of that romantic world upon which lover and friend have modeled their values and behavior are wholly artificial and fictional. By attaching themselves to those stereotypes, they merely indulge themselves in a self-flattering illusion.

As before, Byron is here especially conscious of the material differences that separate romance from reality. Applied to real life, the “rules of romance” are foolishly arbitrary: romantic cliches demand a midnight meeting in a garden, regardless of the temperature; unrequited love must express itself in extravagantly excessive protestations of despair. Neither response, of course, faithfully represents the feelings of a breathing mortal, no matter how much it might mimic the imaginary passion of a literary character. As Byron objects to the Strephon: “Such love as you plead,/Is pure love, indeed,/For it only consists in the word” (ll. 52-54). Byron understands clearly that fictions are not life, and to the fraudulent illusions of romantic affectation, he contrasts the real gratifications (emotional and physical) that he expects from love: “Think on our chilly situation,/And curb this rage for imitation./Then let us meet, as oft we’ve done,/Beneath the influence of the sun;/Or, if at midnight I must meet you,/Oh! let me in your chamber greet you” (“To a Lady...,” ll. 31-36); “Though the kisses are sweet,/Which voluptuously meet,/Of kissing I ne’er was so fond,/As to make me forget,/Though our lips oft have met,/That still there was something beyond” (“To the Sighing Strephon,” Stanza 8).13 In each of these passages, Byron apparently emphasizes that he has not surrendered the reality of his human passion to illusory idealism. At least he is honest about his feelings and has not deceitfully disguised his physical desire. Such sincerity led to the erotic candor of the poem “To Mary”14 — and subsequently to the self-righteous outrage of some Southwell matrons and to Byron’s suppres-
No doubt at least partly in response to that criticism of *Fugitive Pieces*, Byron included "The First Kiss of Love" in *Poems on Various Occasions* (1807), his second and chaster edition of *juvenilia*. In his first volume he had not obliged his audience with romantic illusions to flatter their distorted notions of love, but had dared to offer them uncompromised expressions of real feelings. Now he answered the objections of their outraged sensibilities: "Away with your fictions of flimsy romance,/Those tissues of fancy Moriah has wove;/Give me the mild beam of the soul-breathing glance,/Or the rapture which dwells on the first kiss of love" (ll.1-4). This outright rejection of romance carries Byron a step beyond the good-humored satire of his earlier statements, but the grounds for this more hostile attitude are the same. He continues to associate romance with fiction, imagination (fancy), and folly — a series of associations that he made more emphatic in a later version of the poem. After *Poems on Various Occasions*, Byron altered the second line to read: "Those tissues of falsehood which Folly has wove." He thus clarified the obscure reference to "Moriah," the goddess of Folly, and strengthened his point by substituting an effect (falsehood, hence deceit) for a cause. Although his antagonism seems to be growing sharper, his general characterization of romance is consistent. Romance involves hackneyed illusions that have no material counterpart in what we know as truth. The alternative to which Byron turns is again a tangible reality — the tactile experience of a kiss, that combines both emotional intensity and physical gratification. Mere art is frigidly indifferent to the warmth of such delight: "Your shepherds, your pipes, those fantastical themes,/Perhaps may amuse, yet they never can move:/Arcadia displays but a region of dreams;/What are visions like these, to the first kiss of love?" (ll. 25-28). In his letter to Augusta more than a year and a half earlier, Byron had indicated that within the limits of idleness, amusement could be satisfactory enough; now it is clearly an insufficient reason for absorption into a romantic delusion.

In "The First Kiss of Love," the metaphors for romance not only extend the imagery suggested in the first letter to Augusta; they also look forward to an even more explicit statement of hostility and rejection. Byron represents romantic fictions as "tissues" and "dreams," which are "flimsy" — necessarily so — in form and substance. Such disembodied visions prove elusive and ultimately deceitful. The specific vehicle of his spatial metaphor emphasizes his point: romance
differs in kind from reality.

The same sense of disjunction between the illusions of romantic fiction and the palpable realities of human experience informs his use of the word in "Egotism. A letter to J. T. Becher": "At School I thought like other Children; / Instead of Brains, a fine Ingredient, / Romance, my youthful Head bewildering, / To Sense had made me disobedient" (ll. 37-40). In the light of Byron's other comments about romance, it seems likely here that by "Sense" he intends us to understand both sensation (as in his contrasts between fiction and touch) and good sense or common sense, that is, level-headed disillusionment, or the kind of pragmatism that sees through deceitful illusions. Thus, romance diverted him from his responsibilities to the real world; the substitution of fictions for brains confused and deluded him. Although Byron has resumed a more playful, ironic tone in this poem, he has also left intact a hint that some danger may be the consequence of capitulating to romance — especially since the young are the most vulnerable to romantic fraud.

Byron's most explicit statement about romance appears in a poem first published in Hours of Idleness (1807). I think it is fair to read "To Romance" as a continuation of his answer to the self-righteous critics of Fugitive Pieces:

Parent of golden dreams, Romance!
   Auspicious Queen of childish joys,
Who lead'st along, in airy dance,
   Thy votive train of girls and boys;
At length, in spells no longer bound,
   I break the fetters of my youth;
No more I tread thy mystic round,
   But leave thy realms for those of Truth (ll. 1-8).

Romance! disgusted with deceit,
   Far from thy motley court I fly,
Where Affectation holds her seat,
   And sickly Sensibility;
Whose silly tears can never flow
   For any pangs excepting thine;
Who turns aside from real woe,
   To steep in dew thy gaudy shrine (ll. 33-40).

The same characteristics that Byron elsewhere associates with romance — affectation, dreams, deceit — here appear more decidedly undesirable. The consistent spatial metaphor again emphasizes the
irreconcilable differences between illusion and reality. Romance's court lies in a "hall of clouds" (l. 18) in "realms of air" (l. 21): it is therefore a kingdom as unsubstantial and inconstant as the "airy" fictions created under the "boundless reign" of the "Fancy" (l. 13). Spatial distance (underscored by the necessity of willfully active movement to escape the bondage of Romance) and differences in kind thoroughly dissociate romance from actual human experience. That false queen rejects real woe in favor of self-flattering delusion as surely as the speaker denounces her deceipts.

As in "Egotism," Byron again associates romance with youth and immaturity (e.g. ll. 2, 6, 15), and he uses his spatial metaphors to imply this temporal dimension. With the advent of age comes the responsibility necessary to abandon romantic illusion and accept truth. The closing stanza illustrates how time yields to space in the relations between metaphors:

Adieu, fond race! a long adieu!
The hour of fate is hovering nigh;        
E'en now the gulf appears in view,
Where unlamented you must lie:  
Oblivion's blackening lake is seen,
Convuls'd by gales you cannot weather,   
Where you, and eke your gentle queen,
Alas! must perish altogether (ll. 57-64).

Time ("the hour of fate") is the first motive and cause for his rejection of romance, but Byron shifts attention quickly to spatial representations of that time. The perilous gulf and blackening lake that occupy the intervening space between the cloudy realms of romance and the more solidly material realms of truth suggest two things: first, the illusions of romance simply cannot survive the severe exigencies of real life in an adult world but must "perish altogether"; second, once lost, the world of romance (and all the "golden dreams" it contains) cannot be recovered or resurrected. The realms of Truth are evidently not easy, like the indolent and self-indulgent fantasies of romance.

It is perhaps this element of finality in romance's "fate" that summons the unmistakable note of nostalgia in Byron's farewell to romance — that and the very nature of romantic ideals, even though they be illusory. By moral and material necessity, romance is doomed to destruction, and he is fated to the encroachment of age. He lingers over his last "fond" goodbye to romance, and once he even questions the necessity of disillusionment that he elsewhere accepts with appar-
ent magnanimity: "And must we own thee, but a name, / And from thy hall of clouds descend?" (ll. 17-18). The illusions of romance are, after all, "golden dreams," which one leaves with the utmost reluctance (l. 1, emphasis mine); and the deceitful ideals of romance — faithful love and undying friendship — are compellingly attractive regardless of one's age or experience. Byron already knows that beyond the kingdom of romance, "woman's false as fair, / And friends have feeling for — themselves!" (ll. 23-24);¹⁹ and at the extreme, disillusionment looks foreboding and sinister (e.g. "blackening lake").²⁰ Byron certainly does not deny the need to abandon romance; nor does he resist the moral imperative of maturity that demands he reject illusion for reality. But ambivalence replaces his unequivocal antagonism to that illusory world. Given the realizations that the abandonment of romance means the relinquishment of youth, that the loss of youth means the loss of even the illusion of a better world, that departure from the kingdom of romance means entry into a material reality of tempest and storm, and finally that the journey from youth and romance can never be retraced — given all that, who would not linger fondly and nostalgically over a last "adieu"?

A similar conception of the romance-world and a like ambivalence regarding it appear in two poems about Byron's youth. The first is "On a Distant View of the Village and School of Harrow on the Hill, 1806": "Ye scenes of my childhood, whose lov'd recollection/Embitters the present, compar'd with the past;/Where science first dawn'd on the powers of reflection,/And friendships were form'd, too romantic to last" (ll. 1-4). Two characteristics typical of the way Byron treats his childhood emerge in these lines. First is his consistent association of time with setting: when he recalls the former days of his youth, he refers his readers (and his own memory) to relevant scenes.²¹ The second is his compulsive habit of idealizing the past. The sort of Friendship that he called illusory in "To Romance" (l. 20), he celebrates here as a (personally experienced) historical reality.²² Although his memory draws him back to that once-real attachment, Byron still suggests a fatality inherent in the romantic world. Because his childhood friendship was romantically ideal, it must inevitably have failed; a lesser affection, he intimates, might have survived longer.

Although Byron incorporates his preoccupation with scene and locale directly into his recollections, the world he recalls actually no longer exists in material space and time. The time is past; the place is
internalized in his memory; and the experience itself survives only by its recollection. Byron’s relation to physical location, therefore, becomes equivocal. Those beloved memories of scenes from his Romantic youth are disembodied visions, as airy and insubstantial as the kingdom of Romance in “To Romance” or Arcadia’s “region of dreams” in “The First Kiss of Love.”

In “Childish Recollections” Byron repeats the same two tendencies that led him to this uncertain relation with material place; he refers time to locale, and he idealizes his youth. When he recalls the past, scenes rise up like enchanted images: “Remembrance sheds around her genial power,/ Calls back the vanish’d days to rapture given,/ When Love was bliss, and Beauty form’d our heaven;/ Or, dear to youth, pourtrays each childish scene,/ Those fairy bowers, where all in turn have been” (ll. 12-16). This “fairy realm” (l.184) of his own childhood is none other than the timeless world of romance, which Byron has at last located internally — that is, in the exclusively interior world of his memory. Consistency of metaphor confirms the identification. The power of mind that provides his consciousness access to the “fairy” world is the Fancy, also one of the principal ruling powers in the kingdom of Romance (“To Romance,” l. 13). The landscapes of his interior reality are as vapid and unsubstantial as the “realms of air” in “To Romance.” In the introductory section of “Childish Recollections,” Byron adumbrates the process by which his mind actively creates a romantic reality within:

Oft does my heart indulge the rising thought,
Which still recurs, unlook’d for and unsought;
My soul to Fancy’s fond suggestion yields,
And roams romantic o’er her airy fields.
Scenes of my youth, develop’d crowd to view,
To which I long have bade a last adieu!
Seats of delight, inspiring youthful themes;
Friends lost to me, for aye, except in dreams;

These, with a thousand visions, now unite,
To dazzle, though they please, my aching sight (ll. 27-34, 41-42).

Byron’s actual apostrophe to the location that supposedly evokes these recollections — “Ida! blest spot”(l. 43) — does not come until the next line. In fact, Byron has described a process of disengagement
THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE

from tangible reality rather than significant interaction with it. Once stimulated, the mind recovers the materials contained within the memory, but the stimulus need not originate in any perception of external scene. In the instance he has described here, it begins with an interior motion: a “thought” — and at that, one which is not even brought to consciousness through an act of will, but surfaces “unsought” — initiates the activity of his “Fancy.” That power in turn recreates the landscapes in which the soul temporarily delights.24

On another occasion in the same poem, Byron indicates once more that the reality which his memory can restore is wholly internalized and effectively owes nothing of its immediate existence to the presence of a corresponding scene in external nature. His visions, therefore, become independent of the time and space in which their materials originated. Accordingly, Byron observes that even in the splendid world of fashionable society, far away from the Harrow that is the subject of these reminiscences, the chance meeting of an old friend can transport him to another existence: “My thoughts bewilderd’ in the fond surprise,/The woods of Ida danc’d before my eyes” (ll. 203-204). Here the mind recovers the scene internally, even though the landscape is far distant in time and space. So complete is the mind’s independence of the material settings of reality that any semblance of mutual interaction or connection between interior and exterior worlds functionally disappears.

Thus, whether romance be mere literary cliché and affectation or a fond metaphor for childhood, Byron inevitably finds something unsatisfactory about it. The interior world of memory and the illusory realms of fiction are both insubstantial and airy, and thus ultimately inaccessible in the material reality of time and space. On moral grounds, maturity demands the unequivocal rejection of irresponsible escapist fantasies, but it cannot correspondingly eliminate nostalgia. Byron is no less wistful about the loss of his childhood than he is sorrowful about the necessity of giving up romantic illusions. Since both are without material embodiment in physical nature (real landscape), however, he cannot realistically pursue the full implications of the spatial metaphors any farther. The unequivocal distinction between romance and reality that he insists upon denies him the possibility of return to the world that fate required him to abandon. His ambivalence is deeply imbedded in the poetry: for persuasive reasons, he recognizes the need to reject romance; for other compelling reasons, he cannot relinquish his profound emotional and even intel-

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/studies_eng_new/vol2/iss1/1
lectual attachment to it. In another cluster of poems about his romantic childhood, Byron finds an alternative to this frustrating dilemma: he embodies a romantic reality in material landscapes.

In three important poems — "Lachin y Gair," "When I Roved a Young Highlander," and "I Would I Were a Careless Child" — all from his later collections of juvenilia (Hours of Idleness, 1807; Poems Original and Translated, 1808), Byron remembers fondly and nostalgically his childhood in Scotland. As in other accounts of his earlier days, in these too he compulsively idealizes his past and represents this particular world of his childhood as "romantic." In the rugged northern country of the Highlands, the days of his youth were distinguished by uncompromised joy. The scenery of the Scottish mountains resembles clearly the romantic setting in "The Death of Calmar and Orla"; that is, it had a literary referent in his own mind, however tenuous the connection might be. The Highland landscapes that he depicts also embody the pre-eminently romantic ideals of faithful love, sacred fidelity, truth, legend, and heroic tradition (e.g. "Lachin y Gair," ll. 3-4; "I Would I Were a Careless Child," ll. 5-8; "When I Roved a Young Highlander," ll. 7-8, 21-24). And in a letter of 1805 to Charles David Gordon, Byron even referred to certain aspects of the Highland scenery that found their way into these poems as explicitly "romantic."

In his other poetic treatments of romance, Byron created a particular kind of landscape to serve as metaphor for the romantic world that he associated with youth generally, and with his own life specifically. Yet he found it necessary to reject these settings, regardless of his fondness for them or attraction to them, because of their inherent inadequacies — that is, their lack of substantial reality and their corresponding disjunction from real human life. Byron also associates the Scottish Highlands with an idealized childhood. By virtue of that association and the physical nature of the countryside itself, Scotland becomes for him a newly realized or newly discovered landscape of romance, suitable to replace the others that he repudiated. In substituting material nature for insubstantial landscape (i.e. airy fictions and interior visions), Byron opens the way to resolve his earlier dilemma of being simultaneously attracted to romantic idealism and obliged to reject it as irresponsible illusion. When the landscape of romance is defined as real nature, the most objectionable characteristics of romance, as it is traditionally understood, disappear; more specifically, they are transformed into aesthetically, morally, and psychologically desirable objects.
56  THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE

The Scottish landscapes for which Byron voices so much profoundly felt attachment are solidly physical natural forms that exist in the continuum of time by which we measure human experience. Conversely, the romance worlds of fiction and memory for which Byron has otherwise longed have been tantalizingly incorporeal. Illusory fictions and disembodied memories are creations of the fancy, not discoveries of sensation. What Byron describes of the Highlands, on the other hand, are not diaphanous settings constructed of clouds or air, but palpable rocks and torrential cataracts. Those rugged mountains of the north are not exclusively contained within the limitations of his mind, but are rather parts of a visible nature which he cannot dismiss absently as vaguely realized “fairy bowers” (“Childish Recollections,” 1.16).

In each of these three poems about the Highlands, Byron casts himself in the pose of a displaced Scot. No longer a child, he now lives amidst scenery far distant and far different from the landscapes he admired and enjoyed as a boy. By departing from Scotland, he lost or relinquished the romantic world of his youth. With this configuration of ideas, Byron repeats the pattern of the other poems, like “To Romance.” His spatial separation from his mountainous home signals here, as elsewhere, both temporal change and moral-psychological dislocation (see “When I Roved a Young Highlander,” ll. 25-26; and “I Would I Were a Careless Child,” ll. 21-24).

Because the landscapes of Scotland are palpably real, Byron’s continuing relation to them differs quite remarkably from his equivocal relation to those other disembodied visions. One method by which Byron insists on the tangible reality of these Scottish landscapes is to identify them uniformly as sublime. And to them he juxtaposes the milder, domestic and cultivated beauty of England (see, for example, “I Would I Were A Careless Child,” ll. 1-8; “When I Roved a Young Highlander,” ll. 1-4; and especially “Lachin y Gair,” ll. 1-8, 35-38).27 The rocks and mountains of Scotland imply difficulty, austerity, and danger; the domesticated gardens of England, indolent luxury. Accordingly, the Scots are hardy and independent; the English, servile and slavish. Scotland is a land of tempest and storm (see “Lachin y Gair,” ll. 21-24), and these metaphors Byron variously uses for maturity and responsibility.28 Indeed, the sublime Highlands are the landscapes of “Nature’s wild luxuriance,” where, Byron explains in “The Cornelian,” the “flowers of truth” bloom (ll. 19-24).

Perhaps most importantly, sublimity belongs in some way to the
Scottish landscape itself: the sublime is not something within Byron's mind, but rather a quality of the scenery that operates on his mind. It implies thereby a power that allows the landscape a presence and a force all its own, independent of the mind of the observer. Whether or not the poet consciously remembers them or (more directly) actually sees them, these settings exist, and the other landscapes of romance could not make the same claim. In "To Romance," the romantic world perished when the poet descended from her kingdom of clouds; in "Childish Recollections," the romantic scenes of childhood were the functional creations of the memory and the fancy. Because of their independent status, the Highland landscapes provide the poet with opportunities to recover the romantic world that were not available in his regressively solipsistic relation to the other settings of romance.

Although the landscapes of the Scottish Highlands exist temporally, they nonetheless have a permanence that cannot be found in human experiences. As a maturely disillusioned adult (i.e. that is the pose in which he casts himself), Byron recognizes that in mortal time, life proves to be inconstant; for love fades, friends betray, and human sympathies prove mercurial. But Byron is confident that were he to return to Scotland, he would discover it "unchang'd as before" ("When I Roved a Young Highlander," l. 43). Superficial appearances are vulnerable of course to the ravages of time (see "Lachin y Gair," l. 35), but what makes those landscapes sublime in the first place — their forms and their solidly material masses — are not. Here, too, the romantic Scottish landscapes differ from their insubstantial counterparts in disembodied vision. As long as they endure unchanged in their material sublimity, these landscapes of romance may await the return of a hero — that is, the poet who recalls his past in these poems. By contrast, when the fictions of romantic illusion dissolve, as in "To Romance," they cannot be recovered; and those memories of romantic attachments that failed in mortal time ("Childish Recollections" and "On a Distant View of... Harrow") cannot be re-embodied in material existence. The Scottish Highlands offer a potential alternative to the inaccessible world of traditional romance and romantic idealism. The Highlands are "out there," available for recovery in human life.

In "When I Roved a Young Highlander," Byron rejects the possibility of returning to Scotland: "Yet the day may arrive, when the mountains once more/Shall rise to my sight, in their mantles of snow;/But while these soar above me, unchang'd as before,/Will Mary be there to receive me? — ah, no!/Adieu, then, ye hills, where my
58 THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE

childhood was bred!/Thou sweet flowing Dee, to thy waters adieu” (ll. 41-46)! He declines to return to Scotland, therefore, not because of some deficiency in the landscape or because of some undesirable characteristic inherent in the setting, but because the girl he loved as a youth no longer lives there. In other words, the landscape has not failed him. Reliably and constantly, it is still the sublime rugged terrain of his past. But typically the inconstancy of human affections has left him disconsolate.

When Byron does express an unequivocal wish to return to Scotland, he explains it in terms of his attraction to the landscape, especially inasmuch as it may be a viable alternative to human society:

Fain would I fly the haunts of men —
I seek to shun, not hate mankind;
My Breast requires the sullen glen,
Whose gloom may suit a darken’d mind.
Oh! that to me the wings were given,
Which bear the turtle to her nest!
Then would I cleave the vault of Heaven,
To flee away, and be at rest.
(“I Would I Were a Careless Child,” ll. 49-56)

The flight metaphor here may recall the image from his earlier letter to Augusta, in which he spoke of “soaring into the Regions of Romance.” Yet because of its place in the context of his treatment of romance in this and other poems and letters, the call for solitude and freedom from human entanglement that he here voices does not strike us as regressive or escapist. After all, he has made landscape — real nature, not some false illusion fabricated by an overstimulated imagination that is vainly attached to empty cliches, and not some irresponsible idealistic fiction or mournfully impossible memory of faithful love or undying friendship — the object of his wish and the end of his quest.

Obviously “I Would I Were a Careless Child” anticipates Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage I-II in some important ways. In the tone and language of the closing stanza surely sounds the voice that matured in the later “Romaunt,” and the whole complaint of the early lyric appears again in the opening stanzas of Childe Harold, Canto One.31 More important, a quest for nature has become the answer to the speaker’s dilemma, and this brings us back to the formula that Byron so successfully exploited, not only in Childe Harold I-II, but also in the romantic narratives that followed. Sublime landscapes, like those for which he missed the early lyric, remain prominent in his affections for
scenery in the tales and afterwards, and the appeal of self-exile in "I Would I Were a Careless Child" also points toward later variations of the Byronic romance. In hero after hero Byron presents more sophisticated types of this alienated sensibility, whose relation to landscape becomes more complex, partly because the character fails to discover in nature the consciousness-easing solace for which the early lyric voice pleads. In "I Would I Were a Careless Child," Byron sets himself a distinctive aesthetic and psychological problem, which subsequent narratives vary: the landscape toward which he inclines is not idealized as an especially appropriate setting for heroic action or magnificent enterprise; rather, it is a setting or a context for the hero himself. The relation between hero and scene, then, is not defined by externalized activity but by aesthetic and psychological suitability. Apparently Byron is moving towards a change in the very premises of romance; heroic action matters less than heroic consciousness and the organic integration of interior and exterior realities — the reconciliation of the mind and nature through self-participation in the romantic reality. The ends of romantic quest, therefore, become pre-eminently ego-centric, in keeping with the disposition towards self-exile. Byron has consequently suggested an important redefinition of romance, one that accommodates his other objections to the illusory world that romance traditionally implied.

In the drift of thought that informs his early poetry (it is too indirect to call it an explicit pattern), Byron implies that nature is the appropriate object of the romantic quest; therefore, real landscapes become part of the necessary materials of romance. This new formal requirement perhaps accounts for the relative failure of the two short romances in Hours of Idleness. Both "Oscar of Alva" and "The Death of Calmar and Orla" trade on the popularity of medieval romance imitations, but neither is memorable. In particular, neither evidences the attention to setting that marked Byron's later, successful romances — in part, I should think, because in those two works Byron was not describing a palpable nature that he knew from his experience but was primarily imitating literary sources. Indeed, Byron suggests in some letters that without the materials of real landscape, his imagination was handicapped. Even before Childe Harold I-II was published, he wrote to Robert Charles Dallas that he was "honoured" by those who urged him to continue the poem; "but to do that," he went on: "I must return to Greece and Asia; I must have a warm sun and a blue sky; I cannot describe scenes so dear to me by a sea-coal fire. I had
THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE

projected an additional canto when I was in the Troad and Constantinople, and if I saw them again it would go on; but under existing circumstances and sensations, I have neither harp, 'heart nor voice' to proceed."\textsuperscript{32} Later in his life he referred to the East as "the greenest island of my imagination,"\textsuperscript{33} and until the very end of his life and career, he seems to have kept intact this inseparable association of romance and place. Trelawney reported that on his last voyage to Greece in 1823, Byron watched on deck throughout the night as their ship lay off Stromboli; in the morning he told his fellow travelers: "If I live another year, you will see this scene in a fifth canto of \textit{Childe Harold}."\textsuperscript{34} Even then Byron referred the scene to a poem which he had begun fourteen years earlier as a "Romaunt."

Now we are in a position to assess more certainly the genuine importance of the experiment that Byron said he was making with \textit{Childe Harold's Pilgrimage}; and we are also in a position to see why that "Romaunt" may be regarded as the product of a series of earlier experiments with the relation between romance and place. In \textit{Childe Harold} Byron created a fictional self, Harold, who enacts the quest that is partially defined in "I Would I Were a Careless Child." Harold, that is, fulfills the longings of the speaker in the earlier lyric; he goes forth, not in eager search of adventure, but in quest of landscape and reintegration with the romantic vision. This quest, furthermore, aligns Byron's poetry in a very general way with one of the chief aesthetic concerns of his age. Whether it appears as Wordsworth's "high argument" in his "Prospectus" to \textit{The Recluse}, as Coleridge's "beauty-making power" in "Dejection: An Ode," or as Blake's Proverb of Hell: "Where man is not, nature is barren" — however it appears, the integration of the mind and nature is one of the characteristic preoccupations of Romanticism. Finally, it does not really matter that Harold, who pursues the quest outlined in the early poems, goes to Portugal and beyond rather than to Scotland, as the earlier speaker had hoped to — in one sense the route of Harold's quest was mapped out for him in Byron's early poems. The formal requirement of landscape in romance was the principle that motivated his venturing forth at all.

Notes

\textsuperscript{1} Letter to Murray, 15 September 1817 — \textit{Byron's Letters and Journals}, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 5:265. Hereafter I shall cite this edition as \textit{BL\&J}.
Ronald A. Schroeder


4 Review of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage III, Quarterly Review, 16 (1816), 180-181, 189. See also, Francis Jeffrey, review of The Corsair and The Bride of Abydos, Edinburgh Review, 23 (1814), 198; anonymous review of The Bride of Abydos and The Corsair, Antijacobin Review, 46 (1814), 234; and reviews of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage I-II, by Francis Jeffrey in the Edinburgh Review, 19 (1812), 468; and by George Ellis in the Quarterly Review, 7 (1812), 191.

5 To Long, 23 February 1807 — BL&J, 1:110.

6 See the entries for ROMANCE and ROMANTIC in Ione Dodson Young, ed. A Concordance to the Poetry of Byron (Austin, Texas, 1965), 3:1222-1223. Neither of the short romances in Hours of Idleness could be considered new or “experimental” in any meaningful way; in a note Byron acknowledged that part of “Oscar of Alva” was taken from Schiller (his unacknowledged model was certainly Walter Scott), and “The Death of Calmar and Orla” was frankly subtitled “An Imitation of Macpherson’s ‘Ossian’” — Poetry, 1:131n and 177. Although “Oscar of Alva” and “The Death of Calmar and Orla” received mixed reviews from the periodical critics, Byron must have realized quickly that neither form was particularly congenial to the kind of romance toward which his experimentation was leading him; he turned to neither type a second time in any of his serious experiments with romance.

7 Review of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage I-II, Quarterly Review, 7 (1812), 180.

8 BL&J, 1:48.

9 BL&J, 1:52.

10 BL&J, 1:61.


13 This stanza was suppressed in editions that followed Fugitive Pieces.

THE REJECTION AND REDEFINITION OF ROMANCE

15 See letter to John M. B. Pigot, 13 January 1807 — BL&J, 1:103.

16 Poetry, 1:82 and n.

17 On the importance of the "Fancy’s" role in creating false illusions, see also "To Romance," l. 28 and ll. 51-52.

18 Compare, for example, "Youth has flown on rosy pinion,/And Manhood claims his stern dominion" ("To Edward Noel Long, Esq.," ll. 23-24; also, I.26); and "the stern voice of truth" ("To the Duke of Dorset," ll. 30). In his actual practice as a romancer in Hours of Idleness, Byron did not always create a world of "golden dreams" such as he described in "To Romance." The theme of "Oscar of Alva" is deceit, betrayal (by lover and brother), and murder. Yet even in this poem Byron managed to include an indirect statement of opposition to romance. At the very end, the narrator declares with consummate irony that no minstrel or bard will ever "dare" to sing the story of Allan’s treachery, which he has just recited (see stanzas 77, 78, and 79).

19 See also "Lines, Addressed to the Rev. J. T. Becher, on his Advising the Author to Mix More with Society," ll. 25-28.

20 See also "I Would I Were a Careless Child," ll. 21-24. In this passage, too, spatial metaphors carry the burden of Byron’s complaint.

21 The number of early poems in which Byron uses the phrase "scene of my youth" or some near variation of it is noteworthy; for example, "Lines Written Beneath an Elm in the Churchyard of Harrow," "To Caroline (When I Hear)," "On a Distant View of the Village and School of Harrow on the Hill, 1806," "The Tear," "Childish Recollections," "L’Amour est l’Amour sans Ailes," "I Would I Were a Careless Child," and "To George, Earl Delawarr."

22 See also "Childish Recollections," ll. 57-66; "The Tear," ll. 37-39; "To the Duke of Dorset," l.85; "To George, Earl Delawarr," ll. 1-4; "To the Earl of Clare," ll. 1-8; and "To Edward Noel Long, Esq.," ll. 11-18.

23 Elsewhere in the poem Byron calls Harrow "A home, a world, a paradise" (l. 218).

24 Compare the process that Byron describes in "To Edward Noel Long, Esq.," (ll. 1-4) and "L’Amour est l’Amour sans Ailes" (ll. 41-44). Although the initial stimulus is external scenery actually present, the result is the same: disengagement and estrangement from material setting, withdrawal into an interior world.

25 Compare the description of Calmar, rolling "his form in the whirlwind" (Poetry, 1:77), with "Lachin y Gair," ll. 15-24.

26 To Gordon, 14 August 1805 — BL&J, 1:74-75.

27 Byron applies this distinction consistently. In a note to "Lachin y Gair" in Hours of Idleness, he explicitly describes the mountain as "sublime and picturesque"; in the poem itself he reserves the word "beauties" for England alone (l.37) — Poetry, 1:171n. In "The Adieu," he speaks of Loch na Garr’s "snows sublime" (l.23).
See, for example, "To Romance," ll. 61-64; "Love's Last Adieu," ll. 13-16 and ll. 33-36; and "To George, Earl Delawarr," ll. 9-12.

See "I Would I Were a Careless Child," ll. 25-26; also, "To Romance," ll. 17-24; and "Love's Last Adieu," ll. 33-34.

In this matter, Byron perhaps anticipates later statements in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. See, for example, Childe Harold II. lxxx; III. xc; IV. iii.

Compare "I Would I Were a Careless Child," ll. 25-48, with Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I. v-vi, ix, xi. See also Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I. xxvii, lxxiv; II. xxv-xxvii; III. lxix, cxiv; IV. clxxviii.

To Dallas, 7 September 1811 — BL&J, 2:92. See also Ernest J. Lovell, Jr., Byron: The Record of a Quest (Austin, Texas, 1949), p. 97n.

Letter to Thomas Moore, 17 November 1816 — BL&J, 5:129.

The Last Days of Shelley and Byron, ed. J. E. Morpurgo (Garden City, N.Y., 1960), p. 158.
"SONG OF MYSELF":
THE TOUCH OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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Critics who have studied the Eastern elements in "Song of Myself" have noted that even though Walt Whitman may have been influenced by the mysticism of the American Transcendentalists, he must also have had his own mystical experiences from which to draw. James E. Miller describes "Song of Myself" as "the dramatic representation of an inverted mystical experience," and divides the fifty-two sections of the poem into seven groups corresponding to his seven stages of the mystic way. Miller calls Whitman's experience inverted because it deviates from Indian philosophy (as commonly construed) by ennobling instead of mortifying the body, and by cultivating to their highest potential instead of renouncing the senses. On the other hand, Malcolm Cowley says that Whitman reinvents Indian the philosophy for himself after an experience of samadhi, or absorption, in which the body and soul, or matter and consciousness, are united, a unity indeed predicted by the nondualistic Vedanta. Yet the poet's mystical state, in which the body is experienced as one of the expressions of consciousness, is not exclusively Eastern — nor inverted — but universal in a truly modern sense, for the representation of the mystic way in "Song of Myself" is confirmed not only by Vedantic literature, but also by our scientific understanding of nature — as of the interchange between matter and energy, which seem to be different but in fact are two sides of the same coin. In other words, Whitman shows that the mystic unity of body and soul (matter and energy) is universally open to experience at any time and place by all men regardless of race or creed, and regardless of whether or not they have read the Bhagavad Gita, as Whitman himself had not.

A situation in nature analogous to the mystic unity of matter and consciousness, two apparently distinct phenomena, is defined by thermodynamics as the critical point in the boiling of water, that state where the pure vapor phase has identical properties with a pure liquid at the same pressure and temperature. That is, at the molecular boundary between water and vapor, before the water actually become vapor, the liquid phase and the vapor phase have identical properties. Thus, water and vapor seem to be different when observed under some conditions of pressure and temperature but in fact share identical
properties under the conditions of the critical point, a sort of transcenden
tal state in which all differences dissolve. Likewise, whereas to an
individual in the ordinary state of mind, consciousness and the body
seem to be separate, in the transcendental state of mind they become
the same. Moreover, because transcending can occur at any time and
any place and still reveal the same underlying oneness, the fundamen
tal and true reality of the cosmos must be that of the critical point, the
unity of the transcendent of which all difference is but a phase of
manifestation, just as changing matter is but a phase of constant
energy. Following Miller’s scheme of the seven stages of the mystic
way in “Song of Myself,” I shall try to show the importance of the
integration between soul and body in Whitman’s experience of cosmic
consciousness. Diane Kepner notes that matter and spirit for Whit
man are inseparably fused.3 I would add more explicitly that not only
are they inseparably fused, but they are also one and the same, that in
the poet’s experience of the transcendent all differences dissolve.

James Miller designates sections 1-5 as the “entry into the mysti
cal state.”4 Whitman opens with his central theme of unity: “I cele
brate myself, and sing myself, / And what I assume you shall assume,
/ For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.”5 The Self
that Whitman refers to belongs to everyone; it is the oversoul or
Atman, the simplest form of awareness, or pure consciousness, the
source of all manifestation just as water is the source of vapor. It is the
large Self as opposed to the small self — or transcendental conscious
ness as opposed to ego consciousness. Whitman invites his soul to loaf,
leaving “creeds and schools in abeyance,” because only by transcend
ing the dividing intellect can one attain unbounded awareness. In
section 2, he emphasizes the role of the body in such an experience: “I
will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked, / I
am mad for it to be in contact with me.” He celebrates each of the five
senses as being important, for they all lead to pure awareness just as
the five fingers lead to the palm. The natural innocence of Whitman’s
experience can be seen from his refusal to be like the “talkers” and the
“trippers and askers” in sections 3 and 4. Although these sceptics
identify with the finite and doubting intellect, Whitman, expanding
beyond finite identification toward nonchanging and eternal Being,
becomes the witness of all activity: “Apart from the pulling and
hauling stands what I am .... I witness and wait.” Even as witness
though he never renounces the body, the reflector of Being. On the
contrary, section 5 brings the symbolic marriage between body and
SONG OF MYSELF

soul, the critical point of Whitman's entry into the mystical state of pure consciousness, a union consummated by sexual imagery. Through this union, the mystic achieves intuition, or the immediacy of divine knowledge: "Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth." Although the mystical vision occurs through contact with the Self, the complete knowledge of the mystic, the knowledge of the Absolute, can come only through the perfection of the physical body, because only when perfected can the nervous system reflect the Self, or the Atman-Brahman, to its fullest extent. Whitman apparently knew from direct experience that to renounce any one of the senses would be to render the capacity for pure knowledge incomplete.

The second stage of the mystic way, sections 6-16, is the "awakening of the Self." In section 6, Whitman employs grass imagery as a key to divine reality by relating the grass to Self, God, life, and death. Just as for the "smallest sprout ... there is really no death, " so for the Self, once it begins to exist, there is no death but only evolution or metempsychosis: "All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses." Whitman, therefore, experiences the Self as infinite: "I pass death with the dying and birth with the new wash'd babe .... / I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and (fathomless) as myself" (sect. 7). From sections 8-10 Whitman observes the cycle of life, focusing on the Self in all of its varied aspects of manifestation. The universal unity of the soul expresses itself in the poet's sympathetic reaching out to all of creation, to lowly and humble men as well as to animals: "What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me" (sect. 14). Thus, the Self is universal not only subjectively but also objectively: "And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them" (sect. 15). As Whitman discovers, when the Self is infinite, then the body is also infinite, unbounded like the symbolic grass, or the critical point of water and vapor. Being awake in the Self, Whitman dramatically represents the universal expression of consciousness in the world of matter through his symbolic identification with all existence: "I see in them and myself the same old law" (sect. 14).

The "purification of self," the next stage of the mystic way, covers sections 17-32. As seen from their overlapping values, these stages chartered by the critics do not necessarily correspond to the actual sequences of a mystical experience. No two experiences will be the same, and even Whitman, in writing his poem, may not have duplicated the exact sequence of his own experience, which in the post-mystical state would have become a hazy memory.
Miller believes that Whitman’s purification of the self by ennobling and accepting instead of mortifying and reviling the body reverses the traditional values of mysticism, and he says that in Whitman “the degraded and rejected are ennobled and accepted through a reconciliation of opposites usually considered irreconcilable.” Whitman’s experience, however, is inverted only in relation to the Vedanta misunderstood, which in India has its own tradition, for the Vedanta professes nothing if not the reconciliation of opposites. To think that in the mystic way the body must be renounced for the Self is to confuse the end with the means. Nonattachment to the body is not the means for transcending duality; rather it is the end of the integration between body and soul. The poet realizes this when he reinvents non-dualistic Vedanta in section 21:

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are
with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate
into a new tongue.

“Translate in a new tongue” means that the stress and pain of the body, which are usually oppressive, are rendered innocuous by the man who, established in the absolute fulfillment of Being, is able to witness experience as Whitman does beginning in section 4. Throughout this stage, Whitman, by contact with the Self, can reconcile opposites such as body and soul, vice and virtue, past and present, spirit and science, self and others, seen and unseen, inflow and outflow, and the miraculous and common. This fusion of opposites occurs through the purifying or spiritualizing of the physical self, the senses of which then become divine: “I believe in the flesh and the appetites, / Seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle” (sect. 24). For the Self to be a living reality, therefore, the physical and the spiritual must be reconciled: “(What is less or more than a touch?) / Logic and sermons never convince”(sect. 30). In section 32, Whitman acknowledges that only animals seem to possess the attributes of the purified Self, as though man left them behind negligently in the course of evolution.

In the fourth stage of the mystic path, the “illumination and the Dark Night of the Soul” of sections 33-37, Whitman revels in the living reality of the infinite Self, the truth of which he has always intuited,
SONG OF MYSELF

andcatalogesthediversityandrangeofhisSelfinitslifebeyondthe
boundariesoftimeandspace.Thisexperience,however,issfollowedby
thedarknightofthesoul,thesensencethegoddivinethatresultsinthe
tragedyofdefeat,liketheTexasmassacrersection34,asswellasthe
tragedyofvictory,likethe"old-timesea-fight"ofsection35.Withoutabasis
inBeing,eventhepositiveaspectsoflifearemeaningless.As
Whitman'sexperienceofthedarknightofthesoulindicates,hisco
cosmicconsciousnessisnotcompleteorpermanent.Onthecontrary,
thislapseprefigurestheendingof"SongofMyself"inwhichthepoetr
returnsfromhiscosmicjourney.

Fromthisabasement,however,thepoetascendstothefirststage
ofunioninsections38-43,thenunderstandingoffaithandlove.
Thisunionoccursasthpoet'sidentificationwiththetranscendentas
symbolizedbythefigureofChrist:

ThatIcouldlookwithaseparatelookonmyowntrucifixion
andbloodycrowning.

Iremembernow,
Iresumethoverstaidfraction(sect.38).

Whitman's"separatelook"againimpliesthequalityofwitnessing
thatresultsfromhavingrememberedandresumedthe"overstaid
fraction"oftheSelfhehadforgotteninthedarknightofthesoul.In
section39,thetchristfiguremergeswith"thefriendlyandflowing
savage,"againymbolizingtheintegrationbetweenbodyandsoul.
The savage represents a manifestation of the natural law inherent in
consciousness,his"Behaviorlawlessassnow-flakes,wordssimpleas
grass."Thepoet,identifyinghimselfwiththeChrist-savage,freely
givesofhisboundlessSelfinsections40-42.Theabilityforhelping
othersstemsnотfromadogmaticfaithinthe"sermons,creeds,thology"
asrelatedtoJehovah,Isis,orBuddha;ratheritstemsfroma
directcognitionoftheharmonyandorderoftheuniversebythe
"fathomlesshumanbrain."AlthoughWhitmanacceptsthereligion
ofallages—"Myfaithisthegreatestoffaithsandtheleastoffaiths,
/Enclosingworshipandancientandmodernandalbetweenancient
andmodern"(sect.43)—hesubstantiateshisfaiththroughtheexpe
rienceofunion,thewakeningoftheSelfthroughtheperfectionofthe
body.

The second stage of union, sections 44-49, is that of perception.
The poet begins by explaining himself:

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/studies_eng_new/vol2/iss1/1
It is time to explain myself — let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,
I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown.

Theoretically, the Unknown is that which cannot be experienced by the senses. Whitman, however, translates his perception of the Unknown into the most refined sense experience, such as the apprehension of the Self in terms of infinite time and space. Just as through divine perception the grass is seen as a key to the Absolute, so, in section 47, “The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves a key.” As Diane Kepner says, “the poet sees a unity in the universe that reveals itself in every particular object at every instant of time. He sees in every object both change and changelessness.” In section 48, the poet reiterates the essence of union that makes his divine perception possible: “I have said that the soul is not more than the body, / And I have said that the body is not more than the soul.” Thus, if the Self is not more than the body, and if in cosmic consciousness the Self is infinite, then the body must also be infinite, which is why the poet can see the greatness of God through the senses: “I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then.” And in section 49, “I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven, / O sun — O grass of graves — O perpetual transfers and promotions.” To acquire this perception of the truth, this knowledge of the soul’s immortality, each man must travel upon the mystic way for himself because the culturing of his own body is indispensible: “Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you, / You must travel it for yourself” (sect. 46).

In the three final sections of “Song of Myself” the poet returns from cosmic consciousness with the message of eternal life and happiness. Although his mind has difficulty putting the Absolute into words, and his body, exhausted from being out of union with the Self, must sleep, he still remembers his cosmic nature:

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

While the Self waits to be reawakened within the body of the poet, it also waits to be discovered by the reader’s senses in the grass under his soles. And as Kepner explains, a leaf of grass is body and soul inseparable. As “Song of Myself” illustrates, therefore, once unity is established on the level of consciousness through the integration of
SONG OF MYSELF

body and soul, a commensurate unity is perceived everywhere because knowledge is structured in consciousness and changes with the level of consciousness.

NOTES

1 *A Critical Guide to "Leaves of Grass"* (Chicago, 1957), p. 7. Though many other scholars have studied "Song of Myself," I shall limit my essay to revaluating the mystical elements in the poem as misinterpreted by Miller. Like Miller, I use the 1881/1892 text, although Malcolm Cowley, to whom I refer, uses the first edition.


3 "From Spheres to Leaves: Walt Whitman's Theory of Nature in 'Song of Myself'," *AL*, 51(1979), 192.

4 Miller, p.8.

5 Whitman, "Song of Myself," p.28.

6 Miller, p.13.

7 Kepner, p.197.

8 Kepner, p.196.
DR. JOHNSON’S TREATMENT OF ENGLISH PARTICLES IN THE DICTIONARY

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I. The Problem and The Audience

In writing the Dictionary Johnson learned that the most difficult words for a lexicographer to explain are not those “philosophic” words for which the Dictionary is so famous, but the simple words of ordinary discourse. In the “Preface” to the Dictionary Johnson reveals an acute awareness of a treacherous group of simple words which are fundamental to the English language but which are impossible to define: “The particles are among all nations applied with so great latitude, that they are not easily reducible under any regular scheme and explication: this difficulty is not less, nor perhaps greater, in English, than in other languages. I have laboured them with diligence, I hope with success; such at least as can be expected in a task, which no man, however learned or sagacious has yet been able to perform” (Par. 46). Johnson defines particle as “a word unvaried by inflection,” a term Johnson and other eighteenth-century grammarians roughly comprehend as a group of words which fall into the traditional grammatical categories of articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. Closely related is the small group of auxiliary verbs (may, can, etc.) and quasi-auxiliaries (forms of have, be, and do). Such “function words” provide the glue which holds together a language. From a lexicographer’s point of view, such words must be discussed primarily in terms of their appearance and functions in the structure of English sentences, and therefore they belong more properly to the study of grammar than of semantics. Yet the lexicographer must deal with these function words. Johnson’s Dictionary makes the first coherent attempt to do so in English, and it comes as close to success as did the Dictionary of the French Academy in its analogous task.

In deciding on how to deal with function words, Johnson had to keep his reading audience in mind. Obviously the use of “the” and “but,” and the formation of questions and negatives with “do,” is so obvious and unconscious in the native speaker that he would have no need at all to look these words up in order to learn how to use them. A foreigner would need more help than even a relatively complete dictionary could supply. That Johnson and his publishers were quite
DR. JOHNSON’S TREATMENT

aware of the audience for whom the Dictionary was to be written has often been remarked, but Johnson discusses the nature of his audience directly only in the Plan, and then he is concerned with the problems of selecting words, especially foreign words and terms of science, business, and law. Johnson bases his methods on what will be of use to the widest possible range of readers. Johnson could not afford to direct himself too specifically to the needs and desires of lexicographers and grammarians: “But in lexicography, as in other arts, naked science is too delicate for the purposes of life” (Works, 5:3). Throughout the Plan, and indeed throughout the Dictionary itself, Johnson seems aware of at least four different audiences, all of whom he must appease in some manner. First there were the social dilettantes of language, especially Lord Chesterfield, who knew little of the nature of language and who saw English and English usage, particularly pronunciation, as an instrument of social class distinction. After all the Dictionary was itself to be a status symbol proclaiming England’s equality with France in elegance of language and thoroughness of philological research.

Second, some professional linguists demanded rigid method and strict inquiry beyond Johnson’s interests, but if the Dictionary were to become the English standard and the rival of the Dictionary of the French Academy the scholars must be satisfied. Consequently, Johnson aimed to surpass his fellow lexicographers and to match eighteenth-century grammarians, at least by including the results of their work if not by adding much of his own. Third, Johnson considered foreigners who must look to dictionaries and grammars to understand the English language, and for them an adequate discussion of function words was essential. This is especially true of prepositions and verb-adverbial combinations, as anyone who has studied a foreign language knows too well. Johnson was brilliant in meeting the needs of this audience in the area of prepositions and verb-adverbial combinations, but his treatment of auxiliary verbs and their uses is inadequate. Johnson, however, cannot be faulted as a lexicographer for not doing what even the best grammarians of the twentieth century do not. A standard college textbook introducing students to the current approaches to English grammar and syntax gives up any real attempt to discuss the semantic qualities of auxiliary verbs. Instead the author says simply, “on the whole, the meanings are many and subtly shaded, and you are lucky that, as a native speaker, you already have a command of them.”
Jeffrey T. Gross

Finally there is the mass audience for whom Johnson was writing the Dictionary. He notes that they are not really concerned with the structure or etymology of the language, but they are very much interested in the definitions of hard words. Johnson writes primarily for the new reading public which developed steadily throughout the eighteenth century. I think that the main concern of this group was not how to use words correctly but how to understand accurately what they read. Initially, Johnson’s work on conjunctions and prepositions might seem useless to them, but much of the confusion in reading older writers stems from the gradual changes in the meanings and connotations of these basic words in English. For instance the average reader might have trouble in understanding the following passage from Paradise Lost quoted by Johnson: “He err’d not; for by this, the heav’lynly bands/Down from a sky of jasper lighted now/In Paradise.” Johnson explains this use of “by” as “as soon as; not later than; noting time.” Prepositions are the most treacherous part of Western languages, and in taking such care with them Johnson was showing concern not just for the scholars and critics but for the utility of a Dictionary to a people who wished to understand and preserve their literary heritage.

The Preface to the Dictionary is interesting because it gives the first real statement recognizing the problem of defining function words. Johnson’s sensitivity would seem to be the result of painful experience. His Plan takes note of the problems of selection of words and ordering of definitions, but it is the “Preface” which gives us the first discussion of those areas which gave Johnson the most difficulty in definition. The French Academy mentions in its Preface the problem of simple words but never the issue of particles. Johnson emphasizes his awareness of the difficulties he faced and his determination that he “laboured with diligence, I hope with success.”

Johnson’s degree of success is directly related to the particular category of function words with which he was dealing. For instance he adds relatively little to Bailey’s Dictionarium Britannicum in dealing with articles and auxiliary verbs, but he is thoughtful and incisive in discriminating the various uses, occurrences and functions of conjunctions and prepositions. Indeed Johnson’s treatment of prepositions, and especially of their occurrence with verbs (e.g., to fall on, to get out, to bring in), rivals that of the OED itself.

II. Articles and Auxiliary Verbs

The reason for Johnson’s difficulties with certain classes of words
DR. JOHNSON’S TREATMENT

is fairly obvious. Conjunctions and prepositions manifest relatively more semantic content than either articles or auxiliary verbs. Bailey defines “the” as “the demonstrative article in both Numbers and every Case.” 3 Johnson’s definition is perhaps a little more useful for the ordinary man, especially a person still learning English — “The article denoting a particular thing.” Johnson also notes poetic forms in which the “t” or “he” is omitted, and he quotes without disapproval a passage from Addison in which “the is used according to the French idiom.” 4 It would be more proper to look for a discussion of “the” in the Grammar of the Dictionary, and there we find that Johnson devotes about a column to a discussion of the article. In specific reference to “the” he notes that it is used before both the singular and plural forms, and finally Johnson discriminates three classes of nouns with which articles may not or cannot be used — 1) proper names; 2) abstract words such as blackness, anger (though Johnson does not state that articles can be used before these nouns in certain cases); and 3) “Words in which nothing but the mere being of anything is implied: This is not beer but water; this is not brass but steel.”

Johnson’s third category is significant because it reveals his method in dealing with both grammar and lexis, a method perhaps best labeled as eclectic empiricism. He has chosen to analyze the given illustration on the assumption that “brass” and “steel” are nouns and equivalent to “water” and “beer.” Simply given the sentence, “This is not brass, but steel,” we could not tell whether “brass” and “steel” are nominals or adjectivals, but by analogy to “water” and “beer” Johnson establishes them as nominals. Where possible Johnson sets up parallel constructions and analogues. He also argues clearly from the basis of observed usage in English. Every native speaker recognizes differences between the utterances, “This is not the beer” and “This is not beer,” but it took Johnson to give the first succinct statement of the semantic difference.

Attempting to deal with auxiliary verbs Johnson is at least more sensible than his predecessors. Of “should” he says: “This is a kind of auxiliary verb used in the conjunctive mood, of which the signification is not easily fixed.” Unable to deal with the impossible task of the meaning of “should,” Johnson has recourse to a structural description. Such approach is of limited use because the reader consults “Grammar” in vain to see the appearance of “should” in the conjunctive paradigm of his scheme of the English verb. After this initial description of “should” come four examples of its use with the verb
“go” in order to give some sense of its semantic range. ("I should go. It is my business to go. If I should go. If it happens that I go. Thou should’st go. Thou oughtest to go. If thou should’st go. If it happens that thou goest. The same significations are found in all persons singular and plural.") Johnson demonstrates thereby the difference between the function of “should” in main clauses and conditional clauses. Further he notes colloquial and obsolete uses of “should,” and is particularly helpful in noting the obsolete usage:

There is another signification now little in use, in which should has scarcely any distinct or explicable meaning. It should be differs in this sense very little from it is.

There is a fabulous narration, that in the northern countries there should be an herb that growtheth in the likeness of a lamb, and feedeth upon the grass. Bacon’s Nat. History

Johnson did not wish to fix the language; he wished to record its usage within a given age so that future generations could read the authors of that age with understanding. This discussion of an obsolete usage is aimed at preserving authors and their works and not at embalming the language itself. Bailey’s entry under “should” simply refers the reader back to “shall” where “should” is listed as the preterite form. (Some transformational grammarians, by the way, do likewise.) This approach is not particularly helpful in light of the fact that the only explanation Bailey gives for “shall” is “The sign of the future tense.” — making sense only if “I should go” had the force of the future perfect “I shall have gone.” Johnson’s confusions generally result from his application of Latin grammatical categories to English — a fault he shared with almost every other grammarian of English well into the nineteenth century. Bailey’s confusions, on the other hand, result from his inattention to the structure of English verbs and to his failure to consider the implications of his own definitions.

The difference between Johnson and his predecessors becomes even more evident if we look at Bailey’s entry under “may” as an auxiliary verb. Bailey’s entry reads: “to MAY Irr. V. or can [ma an, Du. magan, Sax. moegen, G].” He does not even attempt a definition. He also allows himself to give the infinitive form of a verb that has no infinitive form. This entry is of no use to the linguist, grammarian, historian of the language, or foreigner. Only the etymologist would find enlightenment, and even here Bailey fleshes out the etymology with an unnecessary parallel form in German. As Joseph Wood Krutch observes: “Bailey’s purpose in including all English words,
even the most familiar, was merely to give etymologies on the indisputable assumption that his readers would be ignorant of the origin of many words whose meaning would present no difficulty.”

Johnson deals manfully enough with “may,” noting that its preterite form is “might” and giving five separate definitions (In the “Grammar” Johnson cites various uses of “may” and “might” in the conjugation of the “Potential” forms of the verb in English. “The potential form of speaking is expressed by may, can in the present; and might, could or should in the preterite, joined with the infinitive mood of the verb.” Because Bailey omitted any attempt at a grammar he should not be compared to Johnson on this point.):

1. To be at liberty; to be permitted; to be allowed; as you may do for me [per me licet] all you can.
2. To be possible; with the words may be.
3. To be by chance.
4. To have power.
5. A word expressing desire.

There is a rational order here of different senses moving from permission to power to desire. This ordering is particularly useful in distinguishing “may” from “can.” In defining “can” Johnson begins with the notion of power — “To be able; to have power.” And in entries three and four under “can” Johnson distinguishes “may” and “can” semantically and structurally:

3. It is distinguished from may, as power from permission;
   I can do it; it is in my power: I may do it; it is allowed me;
but, in poetry, they are confounded.
4. Can is used of the person with the verb active, where may is used; of the thing, with the verb passive; as, I can do it; it may be done.

As he noted in the Plan, Johnson intended distinguishing synonyms (Works, 5:16). Here he seems to follow a prescriptive rather than a descriptive approach to the distinctions between “may” and “can.” He notes that already they are confounded poetically. Schoolmarms still continue the battle, but neither etymology nor usage supports the attempt. In fact the connotation of permission rather than of power for “may” is relatively late. The OED notes the first usage of it in this particular way as occurring around 1200. In this instance a better knowledge of Old English would have served Johnson well, but it is to his credit that he does list without censure “to have power” as one of the possible meanings of “may.” One can argue that in distinguishing
Jeffrey T. Gross

between “may” and “can” Johnson simply described a developing literary convention, but he does not insist on the distinction in the face of authoritative usage to the contrary.

Johnson’s supporting definitions are particularly apt. Under entry four for “may” he cites:

This also tendeth to no more but what the king may do: for what he may do is of two kinds; what he may do as just, and what he may do as possible. Bacon.

Make the most of life you may. Bourne.

One represents complex, abstract usage and the second a proverbial statement. The quotation from Bacon is particularly important because it demonstrates within itself the difference between power and permission and requires that the reader make fine but fundamental distinctions in order to understand the passage. Johnson also manages to give his reader a lesson in the semantics of power under constitutional monarchs.

Before leaving the area of auxiliary verbs we might investigate Bailey’s and Johnson’s discussions of one of the quasi-auxiliaries (have, be, do). They are interesting because they function both as main verbs and as auxiliary verbs in the complex verb structures of English. As main verbs they may carry a good deal of semantic value, but it is much harder to define their roles as auxiliary verbs. “Do” is a convenient example because it functions as an auxiliary in a number of limited and clearly defined ways. As an auxiliary “do” is essential in the formation of questions and negatives from statements in which there is no auxiliary already present. For example — I kicked the ball; I did not kick the ball; Did I kick the ball?; but, I can kick the ball; I cannot kick the ball; Can’t I kick the ball? “Do” under the same conditions is also the main component in providing “tags” which indicate that the speaker expects agreement from the listener. For example — I kicked the ball, didn’t I? Finally “do” functions emphatically (I did kick the ball.) and as a verb substitute (I finished the book, and so did he. Who ate the apple? I did.). Bailey gives only a brief definition of “do” as a main verb — “to make or perform, also to finish.” He follows this with the usual assortment of proverbial sayings (e.g., “Do and undo, the Day is long enough.”) and moral commentaries on them, but then Bailey adds a very succinct note on the syntactical uses of “do” in English: “The Pres. and Imp. Tenses of the verb To Do are us’d as auxiliaries to conjugate the same tenses of other
verbs with their infinitives, (1.) in questions, (2.) in negatives, (3.) to give an emphasis.” This is hardly an adequate discussion, but at least it recognizes the major functions of “do” as an auxiliary verb — something that Johnson never does in the body of the Dictionary.

Johnson cites sixteen definitions of “do” as a transitive verb and nine as an intransitive verb. Of these nine citations, four concern its function as a quasi-auxiliary:

6. To Do is used for any verb to save the repetition of the word; as, I shall come, but if I do not, go away; that is, if I come not.
8. To Do is put before verbs sometimes expletively; as I do love, or, I love; I did love, or I loved.
9. Sometimes emphatically; as I do hate him, but will not wrong him.
10. Sometimes by way of opposition; as, I did love him, but scorn him now.

There is no mention in the Dictionary proper of the fundamental function of “do” in the formation of questions and negatives, but this is handled briefly at least in the “Grammar”. There Johnson contents himself with such vague observations as: “It is frequently joined with a negative. ...” and “Its chief use is in interrogative forms of speech, in which it is used through all the persons ...”. Johnson nowhere observes that when auxiliaries are used in a verb phrase it is always the auxiliary, or the first auxiliary if there is more than one, which carries the tense signal. Johnson apparently shared his age’s disapproval of the use of “do” as a meaningless auxiliary. In his life of Cowley Johnson observes:

The words do and did, which so much degrade in the present estimation the line that admits them were in the time of Cowley little censured or avoided; how often he used them and with how bad an effect, at least to our ears, will appear by a passage in which every reader will lament to see just and noble thoughts defrauded of their praise by inelegance of language:

Where honour or where conscience does not bind,
No other law shall shackle me;
Slave to myself I will not be;
Nor shall my future actions be confin’d
By my own present mind.
Who by resolves and vows engag’d does stand
For days, that yet belong to fate,
Does like an unthrift mortgage his estate,
Before it falls into his hand.
Jeffrey T. Gross

The bondman of the cloister so,
All that he does receive does always owe.
And still as Time come in, it goes away,
      Not to enjoy, but debts to pay!
Unhappy slave, and pupil to a bell!
Which his hour's work as well as hours does tell:
Unhappy till the last, the kind releasing knell.

Cowley; Ode: Of Liberty. 6

Interestingly enough the first does italicized in the passage above is not a redundant auxiliary but part of the normal way of forming negatives in English. Apparently Johnson and his age would prefer the more “poetic” binds not to the normal prose formation of the negative. Johnson considered this, however, an issue of versification and not of general usage. Given a total of twenty-six definitions of “do,” it is clear that Johnson is primarily interested in dealing with the various significations of “do” as a main verb and is interested in its function in the structure of English only to the extent of giving hints without providing a thorough investigation. Johnson wants his reader to be aware that “do” has many grammatical functions, but he does not take the time to explicate them.

Explicating articles and auxiliary verbs, Johnson manages to surpass his predecessors by squeezing out as much semantic content as these words possess. In addition he shows an awareness of the structure, history, and usage of English, and his method is essentially descriptive in an area of language which belongs more properly to the grammarian than to the lexicographer. As always, Johnson’s criterion is usefulness, and his discussions of articles and auxiliary verbs are more useful than those of the other dictionary makers to foreigners and to students of the English language.

III. Conjunctions

If Johnson met only moderate success in discussing articles and auxiliary verbs, he excelled the standards of his age in dealing with conjunctions and prepositions. The words belonging to these groups have more semantic content than those previously discussed, but this in fact serves to make Johnson’s task even more difficult simply because of the multiplicity of meanings which cannot be limited without being arbitrary and which cannot be explained without recourse to involved circumlocutions and circular definitions. In many cases Johnson must rely on his quotations to suggest the actual significa-
DR. JOHNSON'S TREATMENT

tions he wants to bring out. By taking a close look at Johnson's approach to conjunctions and prepositions we can see the most significant contribution he made to lexicography of the eighteenth century. “But” is an interesting conjunction because it occurs in so many different structural situations and has so many different shades of meaning. A number of its meanings have become obsolete or unusual, and therefore part of Johnson’s task was to recover some of its less obvious meanings in order to keep the best writers alive for his contemporaries and for succeeding generations. There are two main issues in dealing with the conjunction which display the limitations within which Johnson had to work. First, one can get a better overall impression of the meanings and uses of “but” only if he is aware of its etymology. “But” seems to have begun its life not as a conjunction but as a preposition and adverb with the general meaning of “without, on the outside.” The OED states that “in some of these [prepositional] uses, the conjunction is, even in modern English, not distinctly separated from the preposition ... In other words ‘Nobody else went but me (or I) is variously analyzed as = ‘Nobody else went except me’ and ‘nobody else went except (that) I (went)’, and as these mean precisely the same thing, both are pronounced grammatically correct.” Given the core of literature with which Johnson has chosen to deal, it is proper for him not to focus on “but” as a preposition since it seems to have become primarily a conjunction by the late Middle English period, but it is unfortunate that Johnson was not able to take its earlier history into account in his etymology. Instead he simply gives the two Anglo-Saxon forms, “bute” and “butan.” Bailey’s etymology notes that “bute” means “none besides or except him.” This is slightly inaccurate, but it does make the prepositional nature of the early form a little clearer.

The second problem in analyzing “but” arises because its significations change as a function of its structural position. That is, “but” tends to mean different things depending on whether it occurs before words, phrases, or in compound sentences. The OED takes this approach to grouping its definitions, abandoning for the most part its attempt to arrange meanings historically. Bailey, as usual, avoids the whole problem of organizing definitions by giving only two — “except, besides” — both of which are prepositions and therefore not even equivalent parts of speech. Johnson, on the other hand, cites eighteen different meanings for the word. As set forth in his Plan and Preface, Johnson was committed to a logical, rational organization which
starts with fundamental, literal meanings. Such an organization is simply inapplicable in dealing with the "function words" of a language. Instead Johnson groups the more general meanings of the conjunction at the beginning and then delves into various consequential uses. Johnson, then, is limited in discussing "but" by his etymology and approach to grouping definitions, but within these limits his performance is first-rate.

Whenever we consider Johnson's explanations and their relationship to the illustrative quotations he selected, we must keep in mind the following statement from the Preface: "The rigour of interpretative lexicography requires that the explanation, and the word explained, should be always reciprocal; this I have always endeavoured, but could not always attain" (Par. 48). This very goal or requirement seems uniquely Johnsonian. It is certainly not proposed in any earlier English dictionary and is not mentioned in the Preface to the Dictionary of the French Academy, nor is it attempted in the practice of the Academy as far as I can see. The OED itself makes no such attempt, nor does it consider the worth of such a criterion for its explanations. It is certainly an interesting and rigorous test for any explanation, but more importantly it reveals that Johnson understood that words must be understood in particular contexts and not simply in themselves. There is no way to test if a word and its explanation are truly reciprocal short of substituting one for the other in a given passage. If the reader considers Johnson's explanations and quotations in the section of "but," he will see that Johnson has indeed made his explanations and the word reciprocal in almost every instance in the illustrative quotations. For instance, consider entry nine — "Not otherwise than." The quotation from Dryden makes equally good sense written: "A genius so elevated and unconfined as Mr. Cowley's, was [not otherwise than] necessary than to make Pindar speak English." The only instances where there is no chance of reciprocity occur in such cases as entries three and sixteen in which Johnson deals with the structural or syntactical function of "but" rather than with its semantic content.

The emphasis on reciprocity between word and explanation reveals two major points about Johnson's methodology and practice. First, it supports the assertions of Wimsatt, Fussell, and others that Johnson did in fact write the dictionary and that he began with the quotations and then constructed his dictionary from them. Johnson seems to have taken his quotations and then to have asked himself...
DR. JOHNSON'S TREATMENT

how he could rewrite them in such a way as to keep the same sense while changing the key word in question. There is a sense in which many of Johnson's definitions are not so much abstract considerations of meaning as they are the results of empirical attempts at rewriting. One wonders why Johnson gives as two separate entries "Otherwise than that" and "Otherwise than" for "but". The reason becomes evident when one looks at the supporting quotations. One could not say in standard English: "I should sin to think [otherwise than that] nobly of my grandmother," and Johnson would not have allowed "It cannot be [otherwise than] nature hath some director of infinite power, to guide her in all her ways." Johnson clearly had the quotations in mind before the explanations.

It is also evident from the two entries that "but" has a somewhat different meaning and structural function in each of the illustrations. These differences are not sufficiently clarified by Johnson's explanations alone. This leads to my second point. Because of this emphasis on reciprocity, Johnson's explanations can never be considered apart from his quotations. In entry seven the real issue seems to be that "but" is functioning as part of a double negative construction with the "not" of "cannot." In entry fourteen "but" seems to be functioning in an adverbial capacity modifying "nobly." Particularly in dealing with function words, Johnson displays a very acute eye for recording quotations which demonstrate a very wide and subtle range of meanings and structural functions, but because of his emphasis on the reciprocity of explanations and the words explained, his individual explanations have to be considered in the light of the quotations which follow them.

If one considers the entries with their illustrations, Johnson is revealed as a man with a fine instinct for the subtleties of English usage. For Johnson the purpose of conjunctions is really to conjoin ideas, not just to link together various grammatical categories such as nouns, clauses, phrases, etc. Therefore his attention focuses on the effect of "but" on the ideas, whatever their syntactical configuration, which are linked by that conjunction. Johnson seems to group his entries accordingly. For instance, entries seven to ten deal in related ways with the relationship of causality between one idea and another. Entries twelve and thirteen demonstrate Johnson's occasional prescriptiveness as well as his ability to deal with "but" in particular verbal contexts. He says of "but" as substituting for "that," "this seems no proper sense in this place." By relating this explanation to
at in entry twelve, Johnson shows how the usage may have arisen, and his stricture against the use of "but" in this sense is not so much an attempt to rectify the language as to identify one of the areas where language is purely conventional and not logical. If "that" expresses the exact meaning intended, why use "but" with all its connotations of exception or contrariety?

The third entry is typical in that here the explanation is based on the study of logic. Johnson is much more at ease in writing about the structure of logic than of language. Furthermore, he places this as one of the basic entries, whereas it is relegated to entry twenty-five in the OED (That entry itself seems to derive from Johnson's Dictionary.).

Because Johnson's principle of order is meaning and not structure, it is important to note that where possible Johnson gives illustrative quotations under each entry which show "but" functioning in different verbal environments with the same meaning. For instance, consider the fourth entry. Each of the quotations presents "but" in a different structural context. In the first quotation it serves to introduce an inverted independent clause. In the second illustration it conjoins an infinitive phrase with an adjective. In the third quotation "but" serves as a subordinating conjunction, and so on. Johnson began his Dictionary by collecting quotations, but he reveals his genius in knowing how to group these quotations in such a way as to reveal semantic similarities in the midst of differing structures. The OED reverses the process and gives us more information about the structural function of "but" without giving us much more information about its meanings than is contained in the Dictionary.

In an absolutely splendid review of the Dictionary in the Edinburgh Review, Adam Smith makes a general acknowledgment of the magnitude of Johnson’s achievement, but he then takes notice of a few defects. One of them is that "different significations of a word are indeed collected; but they are seldom digested into general classes, or ranged under the meaning which the word principally expresses." To illustrate his point Smith quotes Johnson's entry on "but," and then proposes his own arrangement. Indeed Smith’s ordering is much more rigorous than Johnson’s. As I have pointed out, Johnson grouped explanations generally around the nature of the way the term "but" links together ideas or propositions. The actual wording of his explanations, however, seems to be derived from the quotations cited, and so the nature of the relationships of the entries is not always clear. Smith, on the other hand, is much more systematic in his approach.
DR. JOHNSON'S TREATMENT

He notes that "'but' serves as a conjunction of four different species, as an adverstitve, as an alternative, as a conductive, and as a transitive conjunction." After a mistaken statement that "in its original and most proper meaning, however, it seems to be an adverstitve conjunction," Smith provides a separate entry for each of the uses of "but" as a conjunction. Then he provides entries noting that "but" is also used as an adverb of quantity ("I saw but three plants."), a preposition ("They are all dead but three."), and as an interjection ("Good God, but she is handsome!") Smith had the advantage of Johnson in being able to think out a system after examining Johnson's work. He was also free to approach the task with general specuulations rather than with a pile of unorganized quotations. Nevertheless it must be admitted that Adam Smith has suggested a much clearer and more systematic explication for "but" than that provided by Johnson.

IV. Prepositions and Verb-adverbial Combinations

Conjunctions constitute a complex category of words, but they are simple creatures in comparison with prepositions. They have the characteristics of function words, and yet they carry a significant amount of lexical meaning in themselves. H. A. Gleason makes the sensible observation that "there are not two types of words [function and content] so much as two functions, semantic and grammatical, which are present together in most words, but in different proportions." Gleason then demonstrates his point by reference to two sentences — "The man is at the corner" and "The man is near the corner." "These seem grammatically equivalent. The only difference is in the specific identity of the two contrasting function words, at and near. The sentences are grammatically identical because at and near in these sentences belong to the same class of function words. The two sentences mean different things."

Two other problems arise immediately in trying to define or explain given prepositions. In the first place it is necessary to distinguish certain prepositions from their adverbial and adjectival homonyms. For instance "Near" is a preposition, an adjective, and an adverbial depending on its position in a given sentence. (That was a near miss. The Indians are near.) The final problem in dealing with prepositions can be illustrated by citing two sentences. (1) He turned down the street. (2) He turned down the offer. At first blush these two
sentences might seem to be structurally identical, the predicate consisting of a verb and prepositional phrase. Yet every native speaker of English knows that these two sentences are not structurally alike. The fact that they are not can be demonstrated by easy transformations. It is possible to say: “He turned the offer down,” but not “He turned the road down.” In example (2) “turn down” functions as a single semantic unit, and “the offer” is really the direct object of “turn down,” not the object of the preposition “down.” English abounds in these two-word verbal constructions. They are analogous to the separable prefix verbs in German, and they are often termed verb-adverbial composites (VACs). In handling both the semantic and structural problems of those words generally labeled prepositions, Johnson demonstrates a keen awareness of what words mean in different contexts, and though he did not have the grammatical vocabulary or technique to deal with them directly, he shows extraordinary skill in identifying and explaining many of the VAC combinations in English.

It may be helpful to begin the investigation with one of the most common prepositions in English, “for.” The magnitude of Johnson’s undertaking becomes evident when his discussion is compared with that found in Bailey. Bailey identifies “for” only as “a causal particle.” He also notes that it occurs in the “composition of English words, as a Praef. or inseparable preposition, [which] signifies negation or privation.” Then Bailey appendix a graceful admission of defeat: “For as a separable preposition, has such a great number of significations that to enumerate them without giving examples would be to little purpose. It denotes chiefly for what Purpose, End or Use, or for whose Benefit or damage any thing is done.” Perhaps this admission of human limitation spurred Johnson on to one of his strongest efforts. In the course of over five folio columns Johnson gives forty-two major entries to “for” as a preposition and four entries to it as a conjunction. The OED itself provides only thirty numbered entries under “for” as a preposition, although there are many subcategories under the numbered headings. The question of order and accuracy immediately arises in trying to cope with Johnson’s discussion of this preposition. There seems to be no detailed overall plan of order for Johnson’s forty-two entries. But there is the attempt to give the most general significations first and then to group the consequential meanings in units. Thus the first definition given is “because of” and the second is “with respect to; with regard to.” Causality and relationship are proposed as the basic areas of semantic function for “for.” Indeed the
second definition comes very close to suggesting that "for" is the ultimate, all-purpose preposition because it comes close to covering the statement by Clarke that "A preposition signifies some relation, which the thing signified by the word following it, has to something going before in the discourse." One could use a very crude structural diagram — A for B — and say that the semantic component of the preposition "for" expresses some relationship between A and B. It therefore becomes Johnson's obligation to explore all of the possible relationships that can be signified by "for." As an example Johnson devotes entries four through six to an investigation of the various shades of meaning in which the relationship between A and B is one of similarity or substitution. The distinction between "In the character of" and "With resemblance to" is not immediately obvious, and if one looks at the illustrations it would seem that the real shift is not so much one of semantics as of structure. In the first case B is a nominal and in the second series B is an adjectival. That Johnson could put the illustrative quotations in different entries reveals that he was aware of some distinction in the use of "for," but the explanation he gives is not as adequate as it might be because he focuses on meaning rather than structure.

Entries twenty-eight through thirty-two show Johnson demonstrating the range of meanings of "for" within the general area of B as the general goal or beneficiary of A. The distinctions seem just and well thought out, particularly when one remembers the process by which Johnson wrote the Dictionary. He collected a vast series of quotations transcribed by amanuenses onto slips of paper headed with the key word. He then had to arrange these quotations in some fashion and provide appropriate explanations for each grouping. Consider the quotations cited in entry twenty-nine:

It were more for his honour to raise his siege, than to spend so many good men in the winning of it by force. Knolles.

The kettle to the top was hoist;
But with the upside down, to show
Its inclination for below. Swift.

It is not immediately apparent that the quotation from Knolles is more properly glossed "Of tendency towards" rather than "In hope of; for the sake of; noting the final cause." The crucial point here is Johnson's sensitivity to the technical meaning of Aristotle's category of the final cause. Therefore he grouped the elevated sentiment from Knolles with a
humorous verse from Swift rather than with the more elegant selections from Shakespeare, Bacon, Benham, Boyle, which appear in entry twenty-eight.

Johnson’s passion for exact discrimination reveals itself also in entries nineteen and twenty. The first impulse of a reader might be to take the whole group of statements about the treatment of diseases (for a toothache, for a cold, for the gout) and put them under such a vague gloss as “for the sake of,” since such a phrase can be substituted for the preposition “for” (e.g., for the sake of the gout). Instead Johnson notes the logical and specialized use of “for” in the context in which A is a remedy or treatment and B a disease.

As must happen in making such fine and complex distinctions, the wording of Johnson’s explanations is sometimes vague, requiring the study of illustrative quotations. For instance the difference between entries seven and twenty-eight (both of which use the gloss, “for the sake of”) appears to lie in Johnson’s insistence, noted above, of distinguishing final causes from other types of causes. The preposition “for” does not contain in itself, or in its usage, such a fine distinction, but the Dictionary tries to provide for this failure of the language. This issue of final causes lies at the heart of Johnson’s discussion of the construction “for to” (entry forty-two) which was obsolete in Johnson’s time. He asserts that “in the language used two centuries ago, for was commonly used before to the sign of the infinitive mood, to note the final cause. ... Thus it was used in the Bible. But this distinction was by the best writers sometimes forgotten; and for, by wrong use, appearing superfluous, is not always omitted.” It would be nice indeed if “for” were ever used with any consistency before the infinitives of verbs to indicate final cause, but the OED does not find any pattern of such usage, and therefore we must charge the distinction more to Johnson’s quest for order than to the philosophic subtlety of the language of “two centuries ago.” If nothing else, this entry shows Johnson’s awareness of change in historical usage and his attempt to account for it semantically.

In only one area does Johnson’s explanation seem to be wrongheaded. In entry twenty-two he deals with the quotation, “To make him copious is to alter his character; and to translate him line for line is impossible.” Johnson glosses “for” here as “In the place of; instead of.” The OED, by taking note of the structural situation, handles this usage more successfully: “Preceded and followed by the same sb. (without article or defining word), in idiomatic expressions indicating
equality in number or quantity between objects compared or contrasted. Bulk for bulk: taking equal bulk of each ...."

One of Johnson’s goals in writing the Dictionary was to preserve the sense of what the great writers of English said, as we can see in entry twenty-seven: “Noting a state of fitness or readiness.” This usage is now obsolete when not preceded by the word “ready” or “readiness.” The quotation from Shakespeare — “Nay, if you be an undertaker, I am for you” — is difficult to understand until it is juxtaposed to the statement from Dryden: “If he be brave, he’s ready for the stroke.” The naive reader of Shakespeare’s line might be tempted to think he meant “for” as the opposite of “against,” as “He who is not for me is against me.” By considering all the possible connotations of “for” Johnson could make sense out of a line in Shakespeare rendered obscure by time and the requirements of meter.¹³

To anyone but a lexicographer or linguist, the word “for” might seem very insignificant indeed. After all, every native speaker of English “knows” what it means and can use it in an incredible variety of contexts. Johnson, on the other hand, was acutely aware that he was responsible for explaining those words which are basic to the language but whose usage is so complex that it has yet to be fully explored. Johnson’s treatment of “for” is typical in that it is thorough, his explanations are as clear as possible within the limits of his bias toward semantics rather than structure, and his discussions are founded on specific examples of usage. Johnson clarifies both the word “for” and the meanings of the passages in which it occurs.

“On” provides Johnson with a different but no less challenging problem, the issue of its usage with particular verbs to form verb-adverbial composites (VACs). But first let us examine Johnson’s general approach to “on.” A comparison with Bailey is again helpful. His explanation of “on” states: “a preposition, relation both to time and place, and signifying chiefly a superiority of position, of persons, or things, with regard to one another; it is synonymous to, upon.” Johnson, on the other hand carefully distinguishes between “on” as a preposition and adverb, citing nineteen entries for the prepositional use of “on” alone. Further, thirteen of Johnson’s explanations are not even comprehended by Bailey’s attempt, however vague, to suggest the general area of semantic meaning covered by the preposition. As in the organization of “for,” there is no overall, neat scheme of progression of explanations, and none is really possible. There is the usual ability to make important but subtle distinctions as in entries thirteen and fourteen.
Jeffrey T. Gross

Sorrow on thee, and all the pack of you,
That triumph thus upon my misery. Shakespeare.

On thee, dear wife, in deserts all alone
He call'd. Dryden.

There is also the occasional slip. In entry ten ("It denotes the time at which anything happens; as, this happened on the first day.")}, Johnson asserts, "On is used, I think, only before day or hour." On first reading this I suspected that Johnson's assertion would not stand up on many occasions.

The real strength of Johnson's approach to "on," however, lies in his treatment of its combinations with many verbs such as to "take on," "throw out," "pun on," etc. These constructions still give trouble to certain schoolmarmis and college biology teachers who refuse to let their students write, "He turned the culprit in" on the basis that the sentence ends in a preposition and that this is not acceptable English style. Unfortunately they do not realize that "in" in this instance is not a preposition but an adverbial. These combinations of verbs and adverbials were obvious to Johnson, even if he had not worked out the structural details of their operation. He takes specific notice of them in his Preface:

There is another kind of composition more frequent in our language than perhaps in any other, from which arises to foreigners the greatest difficulty. We modify the signification of many verbs by a particle subjoined; as to come off, to escape by a fetch; to fall on, to attack; to fall off, to apostatize; to break off, to stop abruptly; to set off, to embellish; to set in, to begin a continual tenour; to set out, to begin a course or journey; to take off, to copy; with innumerable expressions of the same kind, of which some appear wildly irregular, being so far distant from the sense of the simple words, that no sagacity will be able to trace the steps by which they arrived at the present use. These I have noted with great care; and though I cannot flatter myself that the collection is complete, I believe I have so far assisted the students of our language, that this kind of phraseology will be no longer insuperable; and the combinations of verbs and particles,
DR. JOHNSON'S TREATMENT

by chance omitted, will be easily explained by comparison with those that may be found.

(Par. 40)

To appreciate the magnitude of the undertaking and the care with which Johnson worked, it is useful to consider his treatment of the VAC combination beginning with "put" and to take a particularly close look at his treatment of the combination "to put on." Under "put" as a transitive verb Johnson lists sixty-six separate entries of which forty-five deal with the various verb-adverbial forms. Under "put" as an intransitive verb Johnson cites sixteen entries of which thirteen are concerned with verb-adverbial combinations. For many of the verb-adverbial combinations he gives more than one explanation (e.g., see put forth, put in, put out). There are five entries (forty to forty-four) concerned entirely with the meanings of the combination "to put on." Johnson gives illustrative quotations to support each of his entries except the first (To impute; to charge), and the quotations he chooses are interesting particularly because they demonstrate in practice the variable structure of these verb-adverbial combinations in which the adverbial often may either precede or follow the direct object. In entry forty-four ("To assume; to take") Johnson first cites a passage from Shakespeare in which the adverbial precedes the direct object and may give the impression of consisting of a verb followed by a prepositional phrase: "The duke hath put on a religious life...." Johnson follows this with a selection from Dryden in which the adverbial follows the object: Wise men love you, in their own despight, / And, finding in their native wit no ease, / Are forc'd to put your folly on to please." Although Johnson nowhere specifically discusses the behavior of these verb-adverbial combinations, his choice of illustrations is sufficient to show the student of English how in fact they function.

Entry forty-two ("To forward; to promote; to incite") contains another example of Johnson's skillful use of quotations to make both a semantic and syntactical point. Johnson here deals with one of the meanings of "put on" as a transitive verb, and so one would normally expect to find quotations in which "put on" has a direct object. The first quotation is regular enough: "I grow fearful, / By what yourself too late have spoke and done, / That you protect this course, and put it on. Shakespeare. King Lear." The quotation further serves to illustrate and reenforce the explanation of "put on." But the second and
third illustrations have no direct object expressed and are the result of elliptical constructions: "Say, you ne'er had don't / But by our putting on. Shakespeare. Coriolanus."; Others envy to the state draws, and puts on / For contumelies receiv'd. Jonson. Cataline." Both passages might strike the reader as obscure without the aid of Johnson's skill in recognizing the rather unusual syntactical situation and in assigning the passages to the appropriate entry. If one were to give either of these passages to a graduate student in English for explication without benefit of footnotes, I suspect most would make a hash of the job precisely through not being able to understand the signification of "put on."

One could go on almost indefinitely citing examples of the detailed way in which Johnson went about handling verb-adverbial combinations, but I think the point has been made. Johnson, as demonstrated in the Preface and in his performance in the Dictionary proper, regarded this area as of major importance in the correct understanding of colloquial and literary English. He is the first man to deal with these combinations in either an English dictionary or grammar, and his work was to remain unequalled until the advent of Murray and the OED.

Those who have studied Johnson's Dictionary most closely seem to have concerned themselves almost exclusively with the Great Cham's ability to handle difficult technical words and to give scientific definitions to common words (Everyone seems to feel obligated to comment on Johnson's definitions of such words as "cough" and "network"). Excepting Fernand Mosse in a brief comment, no one seems to have examined the area which gives the lexicographers and linguists the most trouble — the range of function words or particles. That Johnson himself became aware of the problems in the course of writing the Dictionary is evident from the fact that he dwells on them at length in the Preface, although he had not mentioned them in the Plan. Johnson might have learned something from the practice of the French Academy, but it was his willingness not to take the obvious for granted and his willingness to devote incredible trouble to the explication of shades of meaning which are almost inexpressible which lie at the heart of the greatness of the Dictionary.
NOTES

1 The Works of Samuel Johnson (Oxford [England], 1825), 5:3-4. All subsequent references to and quotations from the Plan are taken from this edition and are cited in the text by volume and page.


4 "So it is a constitution the most adapted of any to the poverty of these countries. Addison."


8 Smith, p. 6.

9 Smith, p. 9.

10 Smith, pp. 10-12.


12 Gleason, p. 188.

13 Even the most careful projects reveal occasional slips, and Johnson and his amanuenses can be forgiven for the duplication involved in entries eleven and thirty-nine — "In proportion to." Not only is the gloss identical, there is no difference in the meaning of "for" as it occurs in the two passages cited. This is probably just a case of not juxtaposing the two entries.

14 Esquisse d'une histoire de la langue anglaise, Collection des langues du monde. [Serie grammaire, philologie, litterature] (Lyon, 1947), 2: 163.
A MODERN MEPHISTOPHELES: *McTEAGUE* AND THE FAUST LEGEND

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In his book on the aesthetic aspects of Frank Norris's fiction, Don Graham emphasizes the influence of Gounod's *Faust* on two of Norris's best known novels, *Vandover and the Brute* (1914) and *The Pit* (1903).\(^1\) Graham does not, however, mention the Faustian characteristics implicit in another of Norris's controversial works: the brutal, bleak, Zolaesque "story of San Francisco," *McTeague* (1899). I believe that many variations of the Faust theme intertwine and interlock throughout the intricate plots and subplots of *McTeague*, ultimately producing a precise, cohesive statement about the vulnerability of human nature.

In 1887 the Norris family attended a showing of Gounod's operatic version of the Faust legend at the Grand Opera House in Paris.\(^2\) Later, when he was studying art in Paris, Frank would join in with his fellow students in singing the opening lines of the famous opera. Familiarity with Gounod's work may have been his first exposure to the Faust legend, but possibly, considering his wide reading, he was also acquainted with the celebrated Goethe rendering of the Faust saga. Indeed, he prefaced his long poetic work, *Yvernelle*, with a quotation (in the original German) from Goethe. By the time he began *McTeague*, about 1891, therefore, the tale of Dr. Faust, in at least one version, must have been an integral part of his literary consciousness. Thus, only four years after the Paris performance of *Faust*, Norris was inspired with the idea for a novel conspicuously based on the merciless and gory murder of a San Francisco woman "slaughtered by her husband because she would not give him money."\(^3\) Before completing *McTeague* he started to write *Vandover and the Brute*, an action indicating that the "satanic brute" motif was gaining an important place in his writing at that time.

*McTeague* metamorphoses from a harmless, domesticated brute, like Marcus's dogs, into a grotesque, diabolical animal, like the dogs who fight savagely in the streets in front of the McTeague home. Goethe's Mephistopheles was frequently accompanied by a dog, much in the same manner that the dogs are prominently present during the moments of tension between Marcus and McTeague. The presence of these dogs suggests that Norris intended for Marcus to be interpreted as a Mephistophelean figure.
Regardless, as pointed out by Richard Chase’s astute criticism of *McTeague*: “In the naturalistic novel the beast shows through the human exterior as in the older fiction the devil did; the modern Mephistopheles is a werewolf, or, more likely, an ape-man.” McTeague is described in terms of animal imagery within numerous passages through the novel. He is termed a carnivora (p. 2), a draught horse (p. 2), and a wounded elephant (p. 133), to mention only a few of many examples. When McTeague becomes angry at Trina, he bites her fingers and, later, when he comes to her begging for money, protesting that he “wouldn’t let a dog starve,” she replies bitterly: “Not even if he’s bitten you, perhaps.” (p. 203). Trina was unaware that she was provoking the wrath of an atavistic “demon” inside her husband’s body who would inevitably seal her doom and jeopardize her soul.

The brute in *McTeague*, like Dr. Faust, is a malcontent. His melancholy “lugubrious airs,” “No one to love, none to caress,/ Left all alone in this world’s wilderness.” (p. 35), remind us significantly of the dismal speech in the opening of Goethe’s play in which Dr. Faust bemoans: “Ah, am I still imprisoned here alone?/ Damnable dungeon wall of stone .../ That is your world!” Also, like the historical Faust, McTeague is a self-made doctor, having acquired the title over the years through his illegal dental practice. From the beginning of the narrative, McTeague is presented as a mythical figure. Like some dark devil, he has migrated to the city from a dubious and mysterious background. His father had worked in the depths of the earth as a miner, and McTeague eventually returns to the “underworld” when he is searching for gold in the mines at the end of the novel.

McTeague’s physique is so extraordinary that many of his acquaintances attribute it to supernatural powers:

Polk Street called him the “Doctor” and spoke of his enormous strength. For McTeague was a young giant, carrying his huge shock of blond hair six feet three inches from the ground; moving his immense limbs, heavy with ropes of muscle, slowly, ponderously. His hands were enormous, red, and covered with a fell of stiff yellow hair; they were hard as wooden mallets, strong as vises, the hands of the old-time car-boy. Often he dispensed with forceps and extracted a refractory tooth with his thumb and finger.

The dreadful strength of this powerful body appears to acquire demonic proportions when provoked. Trina is helpless when under his
influence, fearing that he has cast a spell on her: "McTeague had awakened the woman and, whether she would or no, she was now his irrevocably; struggle against it as she would, she belonged to him, body and soul, for life or death. She had not sought it or desired it. The spell was laid upon her. Was it a blessing? Was it a curse? It was all one; she was his, indissolubly for evil or for good" (p. 51, italics mine).

Trina, too, becomes entangled in a Faustian pattern that leads her to an inescapable annihilation: physical devastation by McTeague, and moral damnation by her own neurotic rapacity for gold. Her husband virtually gains possession of her body and soul. McTeague's process of implanting a bit of gold in Trina's tooth is symbolically prophetic of Trina's impending doom. The role of gold was incorporated into the Faust legends in the eighteenth century as a result of the puppet plays popular in Germany at that time. The theme of lust for gold began to take precedence over that of the desire for knowledge in the plays. Indeed, the ruination of almost every major character in McTeague can be attributed either directly or indirectly to greed, especially greed for gold and money. Erich von Stroheim, in fact, chose the word "greed" as the title for his classic silent film version of McTeague. The gold motif as a symbol of unbridled rapacity is literally magnified by McTeague's acquisition of a gigantic meretricious gilt tooth that he places outside his "parlors". Furthermore, as a result of uncontrolled rapacity, Zerkov murders his poor, demented wife, Maria, and is later discovered floating in the river clutching a large sack of junk, which must have forced him to sink.

Another common characteristic of the Faust myth is the transaction of the fatal bargain in which immediate gratification of a desire is granted to an individual at the expense of eternal damnation. Such a bargain transpires when Marcus valiantly concedes his girl friend to his pal, McTeague. Soon afterwards, however, McTeague finds himself in a position in which he is indebted to Marcus, and at enmity with him. Marcus's "sacrifice," then, finally results in a diabolic struggle between the two men in the "hell" of Death Valley, where Marcus handcuffs McTeague to himself and thus forces the fallen brute to follow him toward eternal damnation. The final epithet in Stroheim's Greed illustrates well the fate of the central characters of McTeague: "Oh cursed lust of gold: / When for thy sake/ the fool throws up his interest in both worlds. / First, starved in this, then damned in that/to come."9

The Faustian motifs and patterns in McTeague serve as a medium
for Norris to communicate to the reader the possible consequences of obsession and unrestrained cupidty. Unlike the temptors of the old German legends, the modern Mephistopheles resides within the human body, which is used by the "satanic forces" as an instrument to destroy other human beings by preying on their desires. Probably McTeague is unaware of this catastrophic power that dwells within him. Norris instead presents him as a victim — a big, dumb brute; the hairy ape; the steppenwolf. McTeague's impotence and susceptibility can best be illustrated by the moving lines of the last paragraph of the novel, describing the aftermath of the struggle between McTeague and Marcus in Death Valley, in which Marcus, just before dying, succeeds in handcuffing himself to his adversary, thus making the other's doom inevitable: "McTeague remained stupidly looking around him, now at the distant horizon, now at the ground, now at the half-dead canary chittering feebly in its little gilt prison" (p. 249). McTeague is, clearly, more than a mere tale of a young dentist who goes astray; likewise, it is more than a sensational, melodramatic retelling of a San Francisco homicide. It is, on the contrary, a prime example of the Faust metaphor, brilliantly adapted to naturalistic literature. Like all other good artists, Norris, in McTeague, transcends the medium of his art. McTeague is a vicious, hard-hitting diatribe against the human condition, or, perhaps more appropriately, the bête humaine. Norris suggests in this disturbing novel that a large share of the human race exists superficially "chittering feebly in its little gilt prison" (p. 249), victimized by its own destructive passions.

The Faust motif in McTeague thus provides an effective means of conveying Norris's themes and ethical speculations. Moreover, as a result of the Faustian effects in the novel, the power of McTeague is accentuated by a diabolical irony that underlies the action of the story and intensifies the impact of the themes and the tragedy of the characters. The Faust myth is normally considered chiefly a romantic theme, yet in McTeague we find the same theme employed equally effectively in a product of the Age of Realism. Perhaps Norris wished to prove that the two literary movements were not necessarily incompatible.

NOTES


Bill Stewart


8 Norris, p. 2. Variations of the phrase "enormous, mallet-like hands" appear throughout *McTeague*, e.g., pp. 2, 49, 133, 152, 169, 209, & 210. The German word "Faust" is translated into English as "hand" or "fist." Norris's pronounced repetition of the words "fist" and "hand", therefore, may be more than incidental.

“SOMETHING OF A DRAMATIC FORM”: “THE RUINED COTTAGE” AND THE EXCURSION

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I

When near the end of the 1805 Prelude Wordsworth projected his intention, at some future time, to “probe/ The living body of society/ Even to the heart,” he also vowed to choose for his anatomy of man, nature, and society a mode at once more concrete and more impersonal than that which he presently employed:

Time may come
When some dramatic story may afford
Shapes livelier to convey to thee, my Friend
What then I learned, or think I learned of truth,
And the errors into which I was betrayed
By present objects, and by reasoning false
From the beginning, inasmuch as drawn
Out of a heart which had been turned aside
From Nature by external accidents.¹

Wordsworth’s desire for a “dramatic story,” the natural outgrowth of the soul-searching which had occupied him in The Prelude, eventually resulted in that “interesting failure,”² that “ruined cathedral,”³ The Excursion. The manner in which Wordsworth drafted his epic structure is well known: The first and third sections of The Recluse were to be “meditations in the author’s own person,” to be balanced by a medial section distinguished by “the intervention of characters speaking in “something of a dramatic form.”⁴ This impetus toward dramatic portrayal apparently renewed Wordsworth’s interest in a poem that had intermittently occupied him since his explosive 1797-98 period, namely “The Ruined Cottage.” The seven-year process by which the earlier poem evolved into the first book of The Excursion is carefully traced by James Butler. Briefly, the story of Margaret, composed in 1797, was augmented in 1798 to include the life-story of the pedlar who serves as narrator in the original tale. This lengthy version was in 1799 divided into two poems, “The Ruined Cottage” and “The Pedlar.” By 1804 Wordsworth had rejoined the two poems into that version initially published as “The Pedlar” and later, after some additional revision, incorporated into his “moral and Philosophical
Charlotte H. Beck

Poem." As Butler states, "The reintroduction of passages about the Pedlar into The Ruined Cottage thus helps set the narrative-philosophic-dramatic mode of The Excursion; ..."

Although critics from Coleridge on have insisted that the story of Margaret ought never to have been included in Wordsworth's mammoth failure, "The Ruined Cottage" proved to be more than a beginning for the longer poem. Rather it furnished a paradigm for The Excursion, the embryo whence it grew into an ungainly offspring. With epic dimensions in mind, Wordsworth expanded a single encounter of Poet and Pedlar into an odyssey both physical and metaphysical in search of evidence that hope is viable, despite life's "accidents," if only the individual remain actively involved in the human community. Through augmentation, "The Ruined Cottage," story of one forsaken woman, is expanded to encompass an entire spectrum of mankind in the social framework and a sermon on the dangers of withdrawal and impotent despair.

Drawing from conflicting forces within himself, Wordsworth created four principal characters to embody divergent states of mind that may approximately be labelled Naieté, the Poet; Optimism, the Wanderer; Skepticism, the Solitary; and Experience, the Pastor. The first two were already available from "The Ruined Cottage"; Wordsworth needed only to expand his characterization of Margaret in that of the Solitary and to provide, in the Pastor, a symbol of his philosophy realized in experience. Also available for expansion was the narrative-dramatic strategy earlier employed, not only in "The Ruined Cottage," but in several poems wherein the Poet as observer-persona introduces a second character who proceeds to tell his or her own story, the real focus of the poem. In The Excursion, the Wanderer (formerly the pedlar) has been introduced by the Poet's narrative history before he himself becomes the narrator of Margaret's story. When the Wanderer becomes the speaker, he affords the reader a second perspective on his character that complements the Poet's by providing what Reeve Parker calls "a basis for a dramatic interplay between him and the narrator which is as integral to the nature and the success of the published poem as the tale itself." Beyond Book I, The Excursion continues this pattern of dramatically framed narratives, each producing an interplay of perspectives. What drama there is in The Excursion results, as Judson Stanley Lyon observes, from the conflict of these characters. There is, in fact, considerable tension
developed in these progressively unfolding frames and narratives, as the characters, representing divergent points of view, often clash as they question the necessity of human contact to individual survival, usefulness, and happiness. Through the dramatic mode of "The Ruined Cottage," Wordsworth hoped that his poetic argument would achieve something on the concrete level which had been inherent in its initial form and conception.

II

Parallel characters, events, and setting unite to make "The Ruined Cottage," like the first scene of a Shakespearean play, the microcosm of all that is to come in the slowly unfolding Excursion. The crucial element in Wordsworth's pattern of framed narratives is the observer-persona, the surrogate for the actual poet. As Stephen Parrish demonstrates concerning the persona in certain of the Lyrical Ballads, this speaker, the Poet of The Excursion, is at once different from and closely identified with the author who produced him out of incidents in his own experience. In such a "projected lyric," as Ben W. Fuson has termed it, the speaker is both within and without the poet's subjectivity in the context of the poem which is his only sphere of identity. As he becomes listener, and the reader's surrogate, he does not merely retreat into the background but provides a special kind of sounding board for other personae. His naïveté and mild skepticism chime with that of the poet and his reader, as all three stand apart from the central narrator of the moment, some person met on a country stroll who is moved to open his or her heart to a sympathetic stranger. The pattern which operates in "The Ruined Cottage," first with the Wanderer and then with the Solitary and Pastor, is the source of three-dimensional characterization in a poem wherein points of view and experience must be multiplied, Wordsworth thought, in order to provide a plausible anatomy of society.

Before the Wanderer takes his leading role in this didactic journey, the Poet must describe him at length. He emerges from this introduction as one qualified to expound wisdom gained from considerable, though rather specialized, experience among persons whose sorrow has given rise to apathetic solipsism and ultimate decay. The protagonist of The Excursion is an extension of Armytage, the frail pedlar of "The Ruined Cottage." He has become a robust, energetic rural philosopher, to Wordsworth "chiefly an idea of what I fancied
my own character might have become in his circumstances.” The Wanderer’s optimism has developed from a balance of such beneficial influences as communion with nature, pious parents, sparse but select reading (the “divine Milton”), and a combined detachment and sympathy for the rural folk who purchase his wares. The pedlar’s calling provides contacts with man and nature which are free from bereavement, lost ideals, and disappointment: experiences which have been the sources of the Solitary’s (and Wordsworth’s) despair. Because the Wanderer does represent the lighter side of Wordsworth’s consciousness, he is, like Milton’s God, a forbidding presence to many readers. His stoicism has a callous edge to it, his moralizing an arrogant ring. Wordsworth has, however, attempted to ground the Wanderer’s character in “The Ruined Cottage,” Book I, wherein there is justification for his detachment. His sad relationship with Margaret has taught him to avoid empathizing with those suffering persons whom he contacts in his daily rounds. To share their problems well might have reduced his usefulness to such persons as Margaret and, by extension, the Solitary. A residue of bitterness marks his astonishing exclamation to the Poet, “Oh, Sir, the good die first. And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust/ Burn to the sockets.” (I, 500-502). Margaret’s slow, irreversible decline has taught him the danger of false hope and empty pity; and, as he tells her story to the Poet, he is quick to warn him against “the impotence of grief (I, 929). It is his first important lesson to the poet — that while there are beneficial effects in heartfelt sympathy, those benefits must quickly be translated into action. “My Friend!” he admonishes, “enough to sorrow you have given,/ The purposes of wisdom ask no more: ...” (I, 932-933). From Margaret’s tragedy, largely a result of false hope, the Wanderer has evolved his activism and his dedicated desire to rescue those who might recapitulate her needless dissolution. Growing out of the experience of “The Ruined Cottage” comes, then, the rest of The Excursion, which focusses on the rescue of the Solitary. The cottage itself is an emblem of corrosive despair and the point of departure for a journey that will take the Poet and his mentor to the Solitary’s seductively beautiful “recess” and finally to the Pastor’s cottage, the antithesis of both loci of retreat. Before that point of culmination can occur, there is for the Wanderer and the Poet an arduous struggle to move the resistant Solitary out of his seclusion and toward the point of encounter which will demonstrate to him the value of social involvement. The Poet is, however, the real beneficiary of the completed quest, because he has
the opportunity to learn the lesson of each circle into which his Virgil leads him.\(^{13}\)

Continuing the narrative strategy begun in Book I, Wordsworth makes the Wanderer a second narrator who recounts to the Poet the story of the Solitary. Wordsworth builds into this narrative the dark hours which led him almost to "yield up moral questions in despair": unhappy foreign entanglements, the deaths of his children, and the disappointing outcome of the French Revolution. His story prepares the Poet for an actual meeting with the Solitary, which takes place after the two travellers come alone into a mountain retreat where the Poet, not yet fully convinced that nature is an insufficient companion, is moved to extravagant exclamations at the beauty of the setting:

Ah! what a sweet Recess, thought I, is here!
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease
Upon a bed of heath; — full many a spot
Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy
Among the mountains; never one like this;
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure;
Not melancholy — no, for it is green,
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself
With the few needful things that life requires. (II, 349-357)

Like the "green recess" in Shelley's "Alastor" which it inspired, the Solitary's retreat is but another locus of self-willed decay. Its random properties attest to aimless eclecticism: scattered pottery, half-built children's dollhouses, and, most dangerous in the Wanderer's eyes, a novel "in the French tongue" by the arch-cynic Voltaire. In the Solitary's apartment there is a similar jumble of scattered books, unarranged natural specimens, scraps of unfinished poetry, a broken fishing rod, and several half-completed musical instruments — all evidence of unharnessed energy and ineffectual effort. That the Solitary has substituted such activity for human contact is evident in his language, which personifies the two mountain peaks visible from his window as "lusty twins" and "prized companions." An even more telling revelation is the Solitary's story, told to the Wanderer and to the Poet, concerning his part in the rescue of an old man who had wandered into the mountains and failed to return at the expected hour. The aged truant (a further example of what the Solitary risks by his lonely habits) is found by the party, but, as they bear the old man to safety, the Solitary is distracted by the sight of a cloud-covered valley. His task forgotten, he experiences a moment of ecstatic vision in
which the valley seems transformed into a mighty city of “alabaster domes and silver spires.” This “Mt. Snowden experience” is intended to demonstrate ironically a dangerous excess of love for nature rather than for one’s fellow creatures. The Solitary’s own narrative connects him with Margaret, another recluse who should have been persuaded to rejoin the human community.

III

When the reader labors with the Wanderer, Poet, and Solitary as far as Book IV of The Excursion, he has arrived at what Russell Noyes sees as the philosophical center of the poem. This crucial but static section contains in sermon form a full expression of the Wanderer’s belief in a universe designed and controlled by a “Being/ Of infinite benevolence and power.” As one who has completed the Wordsworthian progression from sensate childhood, to passionate youth, and finally to “the years which bring the philosophic mind,” the Wanderer feels empowered to sound out not only the “sad music of humanity,” but also its logical extension: one’s duty to serve one’s fellow man, a new note in the progression. Gone is the sadly cynical tone of the old pedlar who offered consolation to Margaret only to find that “She thanked me for my wish; — but for my hope/ It seemed she did not thank me” (I, 811-813). His lecture to the Poet and the Solitary preaches human involvement as the only permanent remedy against despair:

“And what are things eternal? — powers depart,”
The grey-haired Wanderer stedfastly replied,

Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat:
But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists; — immutably survives,
For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not (IV, 66-76).

It is significant that the Wanderer makes a religious rather than a Christian statement, leaving the Pastor to voice what Wordsworth was himself unwilling to state in propría persona even as late as 1814: an orthodox religiosity.
“SOMETHING OF A DRAMATIC FORM”

In *The Excursion*, as in the best of Wordsworth’s early poetry, Nature is more expressive than man. The Wanderer concludes what the Poet calls his “eloquent harangue” as the sunset provides a fitting commentary. To the Poet, Nature’s approval of the Sage’s words seems thereby manifest:

The Sun, before his place of rest were reached
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,
He had become invisible, — a pomp
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread
Over the mountain-sides, in contrast bold
With ample shadows, seemingly, no less
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest;
A dispensation of his evening power (IV, 1299-1307).

For this pattern of imagery “The Ruined Cottage” has earlier provided the model. The pedlar’s hortatory remarks (closing the story of Margaret in all but the earliest version) reprove the Poet’s “impotent” grief and turn his attention toward the setting sun, bathing the cottage in a “slant and mellow radiance.” Symbol of Nature’s power to assimilate all aspects of existence, even life’s “accidents,” the sunset becomes thereafter a validation for those didactic sections which are most crucial to the message of *The Excursion*. It is not a surprise, then, to find that the entire poem ends with the sunset, providing a natural benediction for the Pastor’s sermon in Book IX, and leaving the reader with more literal and figurative indication that optimism is valid, even in a world where shadows often seem to dominate.

Although the message of the poem has been articulated fully at its midpoint, the characters have yet to see any concrete evidence to support the Wanderer’s doctrine. The Solitary arouses the Wanderer’s “moral anger” as he doubts that salvation can come in “the narrow avenue of daily toil.” Therefore the Wanderer, apparently prepared for such skepticism, is ready to lead his party to another circle of instruction, wherein the Pastor will provide “for our abstractions solid facts.” The backdrop for this last speaker is a country churchyard, much like Gray’s, were grave markers and silent mounds of earth testify that all are victims of life’s transience. Here the dramatic mode of presentation gives a new focus and tone to the poem. The Pastor is prompted to tell his stories as the visitors ask about certain graves or groupings of graves which attract their attention. The graceful and elegiac tone of
the narrator sheds a mellow glow over all of his tales, giving them a homogeneity which the ever-irritating Solitary does not fail to notice. Where, he asks, are “tales of poor humanity’s afflicted will/ Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny?” “These,” states the Pastor, “be terms which a divine philosophy rejects.” He has chosen to omit those examples which, telling only of unrelieved evil and sorrow, are without edifying effect, and to chose only those which do support through positive and negative example the Wanderer’s optimism. The dramatic presentation of the Pastor’s stories is in their favor, since the distance thus provided partially corrects their rather obvious selectivity. The pattern of framed narratives which has been drawn from the paradigmatic “Ruined Cottage” once again serves as character-creating device, for one comes to know the Pastor through the stories he tells. He is a unique blend of simplicity and wisdom, without a counterpart I believe, among Wordsworth’s characters. Justly compared with Chaucer’s Parson, he is a prince among common folk, doing God’s work as well as preaching it. Because his pragmatic evidence corrects the abstraction and over-idealization of the Wanderer’s statement, he is a welcomed fourth character to the latter part of The Excursion. Not only does he complement the Wanderer, but he provides a sharp contrast to Margaret and the Solitary, an example of domestic happiness seen nowhere else in the poem and its most convincing image of man interacting with man.

The Pastor’s fourteen stories reiterate the theme of hope, both salutary and misguided. All have their counterparts in aspects of “The Ruined Cottage”: prodigals like Robert, some who do and some who do not return; wise and foolish parents, like Robert and Margaret, who experience the loss of children (there is a distressing number of children’s deaths in these tales); and, of course, the forsaken women. The story of Ellen, one of the most extensive and interesting of the tales, combines the type of the bereaved mother with that of the forsaken woman. Essentially the same story that is told in “The Ruined Cottage,” it serves to unify The Excursion through its very clear connection with the work’s first narrative. The Poet, who realizes the similarity, serves as connector, reacting “with emotion scarcely ... less strong” than when

Under those shady elms, from him I heard
The story that retraced the slow decline
Of Margaret, sinking on the lonely heath
With the neglected house to which she clung (VI, 1053-61).
“SOMETHING OF A DRAMATIC FORM”

Through this instinctive response from the Poet, Wordsworth underscores both his method and his message — that although no character is free from sorrow, some turn it into spiritual victory. Ellen’s simple faith is a reproof to those like Margaret who allow despair to destroy their faith. She insists, to her false comforters, that “He who afflicts me knows what I can bear.” Hers is, however, not a position which either the Solitary or the Poet can accept fully at this point in their odyssey.

The perambulation that begins at the ruined cottage ends at the thriving home of the Pastor and his family. Like an umbilical cord, its well-kept path binds the parsonage to the Churchyard, symbol of the Pastor’s involvement with the world. Near the path there is luxuriant vegetation which contrasts sharply with the “lank slips” and “leafless stems” near Margaret’s cottage. The pastor’s wife, an Eve-vision of “feminine allurements soft and fair,” is flanked by her well-kept home and healthy children. So poignantly does she contrast with her less fortunate counterparts that one senses an ominous suggestion that in the context of this poem, such good fortune may be short-lived. Perhaps for this reason the Solitary is, though softened by his enjoyable evening at the Pastor’s home, not prepared to rejoin society. He merely promises a future meeting before making his way alone to his mountain cottage. All of the personages must, in fact, descend from the elevated spot where the Pastor delivers his vesper sermon to the plain of common life. The sunset benediction of The Excursion is not, therefore, without its ambiguity, since it can offer no real assurance that the message of optimism is entirely valid on more than a particular level. The remaining portions of The Recluse that might have removed this open-endedness were unfortunately among those “future labors” never to be completed.

The Excursion must therefore stand as evidence of Wordsworth’s not entirely successful attempt to augment “The Ruined Cottage” into an epic of gigantic portions, the final state of which is difficult to evaluate. On one hand, moralizing intrusions and characters which threatened to fade into abstraction clash with the realism which the dramatic structure attempts. On the other, there is a tenable and often effective structure, suggested by “The Ruined Cottage,” which brings many of the virtues, except economy, of the shorter work into the service of the larger. What The Excursion demonstrates, in essence, is that excepting The Prelude, Wordsworth’s genius was largely dra-
matic; and that in this his most elaborate experiment in the dramatic mode he not only returns to his best poetic medium but also foreshadows the direction that his successors, the Victorians, were destined to take. Like them, he was moved by a fascination with multiple perspectives on reality to embody a range of attitudes in impersonative masks, avoiding thereby the blatant subjectivity of typical Romanticism. It is more than a desire to hide behind personae, though, that impelled Wordsworth and the later Victorians to employ the dramatic mode; rather, it was a drive toward the kind of truth-telling that acknowledges the multiplicity and ambiguity of existence: the truth-telling of Maud, The Ring and the Book, and Empedocles. Wordsworth’s climactic dramatic poem, The Excursion, may leave the reader hopelessly lost amidst commentary and oration stretching from a sound structure to the limits of credibility. Thus The Excursion, conceived of as an objectivized contrast to The Prelude’s subjectivity, both achieves and baffles its purpose.

NOTES


4 Preface to the edition of 1814, Wordsworth’s Poetical Works, ed. E. De Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford [England], 1949), 5:21. All quotations from The Excursion will be taken from this volume and edition, and the more extensive ones designated by book and line numbers in parentheses following the passages.


6 See Bernard Groom, The Unity of Wordsworth’s Poetry (New York, 1966), p. 105; and, for a contrasting view, see also Reeve Parker, “‘Finer Distance’: The Narrative Art of Wordsworth’s ‘The Wanderer,’” ELH, 39 (1972), 87.

7 Parker, p. 90.


“SOMETHING OF A DRAMATIC FORM”:

10 The Poet and His Mask, The Park College Faculty Lectures (Parkville, Mo., 1954), p. 4.

11 Notes to The Excursion in Wordsworth’s Poetical Works, p. 373.


13 Montgomery, p. 219.


15 Montgomery, p. 92.
ANOTHER REPRINT OF POE’S "THE OBLONG BOX"

DAVID K. JACKSON

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To the one reprint of Poe’s “The Oblong Box” appearing in the Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper for 28 August 1844, which was recorded by Thomas Ollive Mabbott, may now be added another, in the Western Literary Messenger: A Family Journal, Devoted to Literature, Science, Art, Morality and General Intelligence (1841-1857) for Saturday, 7 September 1844 (4: 57-59). One of the Messenger’s editors and proprietors, Jesse Clement, reported that the circulation of this Buffalo, New York, weekly was about three thousand copies a week in February 1845. In 1849, a year after its conversion to a monthly, subscribers were to be found as far away as Ohio and Michigan and “other Western states.” In the interests of “the highest economy” J. S. Chadbourne, the founder, in 1845 desired to dispose “of one-half of the establishment [the Messenger] to some enterprising and worthy young man — a practical printer — with a few hundred dollars capital, either in cash or in printing materials.” Both Chadbourne and fellow poet Jesse Clement edited the weekly in 1845 and both contributed to the Southern Literary Messenger, published monthly in Richmond, Virginia. Chadbourne left Buffalo for Cincinnati, Ohio, about June 1845, and Clement became sole editor and part owner. Poe’s “The Oblong Box,” the lead story in the Western Literary Messenger for 7 September 1844, had this heading:

From the Lady’s Book for September.
THE OBLONG BOX.
BY EDGAR A. POE.
ANOTHER REPRINT OF POE'S "THE OBLONG BOX"

NOTES


2 I am indebted to my niece, Mrs. Amos B. Taggart, of Buffalo, N. Y., for locating a file of the Western Literary Messenger and to Mr. W. H. Loos, Curator, Rare Book Room, Buffalo and Erie County Library, Buffalo, N. Y., for finding this reprint and directing my attention to a brief sketch of the Messenger in W. A. Ferris, Life in the Rocky Mountains: A Diary of Wanderings on the Sources of the Rivers Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado from February 1830 to November 1835, ed. Paul C. Phillips (Denver, Col., 1940), pp. xxiv-xxix, and to Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, 1850-1865 (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), p. 116.

3 In a brief notice of the January 1849 Southern Literary Messenger Poe is described as a "northern" contributor to that magazine (Western Literary Messenger for February 1849, 11: 299).


Recently Dwight Thomas has found a reprint of "The Raven" in the 22 February 1845 issue (4: 237-238) and Jesse Clement's review of The Raven and Other Poems in the 10 January 1846 issue (5: 360).
The Other Fiction of Wilkie Collins: the Dover Editions

Kirk H. Beetz

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Published by eGrove, 1981
Perhaps the most pervasive impression left after reading the Dover editions of Wilkie Collins's fiction is that here is an author who defies labelling. His themes surprise; his ideas cover a vast landscape of thought; he is an author of ideas who speaks eloquently about law, religion, society, and history. Even though he is a writer of profound didactic purpose, his first objective always seems to be to entertain — his stories delight and surprise, his characters amuse and confound. The combination of didacticism and entertainment make his fiction subversive, dangerous, and challenging. An artist of alienation, his attempts to describe and understand it make his best work unsettling and special.

Dover has thus far published four of Collins's novels, two collections of his stories, and two other works that in modern parlance might best be called novellas. Notably absent are Collins's most famous and popular novels, *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. These two works are the most frequent objects of scholarly investigation and are readily available in several editions; Dover does scholars and non-scholars the favor of presenting other worthy works which have been undeservedly neglected.

The best of these, most scholars agree, are *No Name* and *Armadale*, novels written in the 1860's, between *The Woman in White* (1859) and *The Moonstone* (1868). Both are fine, featuring extraordinary plots, careful and lively characterizations, and enough substance to keep critics occupied for the next century. Of these, *Armadale* is the better. Its great length, unusual even for a Victorian novel, is intimidating, the small type in which Dover printed it is daunting, but it has rewards for its readers. As ever, Collins takes care to give his audience a good story, one filled with supernatural sensations, prophetic dreams, events seemingly fated before any of the central characters are born, mysteries, and fiendishly evil conspiracies. His purposes include more than entertainment, however; the novel is an exploration into evil and its relationship to the creative spirit.

Lydia Gwilt is a character of great vitality and beauty, is gifted with a clever and creative mind, and is *Armadale*'s villainess. Collins does more than move her through the plot — he studies her and digs into her soul. He thus reveals a woman driven to crime; society allows her too few outlets for her creativity, and she turns to villainy because it is more than antisocial; in fact it allows her to step outside of society and act as she pleases. Collins notes: "In the miserable monotony of the lives led by a large section of the middle classes of England, anything
is welcome to the women which offers them any sort of harmless refuge from the established tyranny of the principle that all human happiness begins and ends at home ” (p. 562). For the Victorian woman, home could be a prison: for dynamic Lydia Gwilt society did not provide a “harmless refuge” for her restless spirit. She is driven to villainy, and the conflict between her nefarious behavior and her desire to love and be loved, and to be at peace, eventually destroys her. From her birth, her destruction is assured by a society which does not let her constructively exercise her imagination.

Although Lydia Gwilt is the focus for much of Collins’s ideas, especially about women, she is not the only creative spirit frustrated by a social order which cannot accept her nature. The second Allan Armadale, who goes by the name of Midwinter for most of the novel, suffers terribly as he acts under his own impression of reality — acting while no one understands his motivations. In him Collins explores other ideas besides criminality and the alienation of the creative woman; he delves into a mind which has difficulty separating accepted reality from possible fantasy. Midwinter believes in prophetic dreams, he believes in intuition, he believes in friendship as an object to be desired for itself, and he believes in fate. He is frightening, therefore, to some of the characters who meet him, and they mock him or try to ignore him. In some ways, his spiritual energy is more subversive than Lydia Gwilt’s: He believes that there are forces acting on people which are greater than the forces society can marshal, and he behaves as if he were more subservient to the former that to custom and social morality.

In Armadale one can find many of the symptoms of the influences that shaped Collins’s ideas and his concept of the novel. He was trained as a painter, and painterly scenes abound. He was a socialist while a young man, and, even though his narrative moves comfortably through the homes of the upper-classes, the novel does not escape a faint tone of disgust when he describes the excesses of the privileged of England. He was deeply influenced by French drama and fiction; consequently, his dialogue often has dramatic flair, and some sections are reminiscent of French naturalism. Throughout Armadale the word fate seems to be used in part because it is a term that can make concepts from French naturalism palatable for his Victorian audience — that is, that one’s past determines one’s future. Armadale also displays many of Collins’s favorite themes, such as the notion that society acts to deny happiness, that women are at best misunderstood
THE OTHER FICTION OF WILKIE COLLINS

— even by other women — and that alienation is almost inevitable for anyone who acts on what he believes is good for himself without first measuring what he wants against what society says is good for him.

In this context *No Name* is also illuminating. A fine story in its own right, it contrasts with *Armadale* is important, revealing ways. In *No Name*, for instance, the woman who resorts to villainy to get her way is the protagonist and is portrayed with much sympathy. Denied legal and moral recourse when she loses her inheritance because her parents never married, Magdalen Vanstone becomes a conniving temptress whose looks can never be trusted, and yet one whose strength of character is manifest. She differs significantly from Lydia Gwilt in that she knows how society has wronged her — she knows that she pursues a very personal kind of justice. Collins’s didacticism is undeniable — he uses Magdalen Vanstone’s plight to assault England’s marriage laws, another favorite theme of his — but Magdalen’s character is of greater interest. She is passionate, determined, ingenious, daring, and intelligent; she is also fearful, insecure, as well as desperately in need of love. She stands out in the novel as a full woman. Collins numbers among the few men capable of creating women who are complete characters, shaped more by observation of life than by idealizations or Freudian hatreds. The variety of women characters Collins depicts is remarkable: His fiction has simpering coquettes, mindless naggars, weak women — such as Magdalen’s sister — who are nonetheless sympathetic, women too intelligent and ambitious for the stupid men around them, and powerful and brilliant women.

Characterization is obviously important to Collins. Most of his characters are developed slowly and are measured against the events comprising the plots of his stories. Their creation seems artless, their development more accidental than intended. Yet scholars know from Collins’s notes and the observations of his contemporaries that even his longest novels were worked out in detail before they were begun, with entire passages written and with characters described. It is the least Collinsian of his characters, Captain Wragge, the ever affable scoundrel of *No Name*, who can illustrate Collins’s genuine skill. He is the most Dickensian of Collins’s characters (perhaps furnishing the most graphic evidence of Charles Dickens’s influence on Collins) and by contrast to Collins’s other characters illustrates Collins’s style of characterization.

To modern sensibilities, Collins’s characters seldom seem very
unusual. This view may result in part because Collins's characters have been imitated so often that they now seem like stereotypes; it certainly comes in part from the modern writer's adoption of Collins's realistic approach to the novel. His characters are like real people; they are shaped by events, by their families, and by their latent personalities. Collins seems pre-Freudian in his use of hidden desires (one could anachronistically refer to the unconscious mind). Wragge, by contrast, seems self-created, as if he sprung full-blown from his own forehead. T.S. Eliot was on the right track when he remarked that Dickens's characters were good because each was unique — and thus, perhaps, capturing the uniqueness in each human being — and Collins's were good because they were like many people, like the multitudes one might meet on a city street.

Characterization is important in nearly all of Collins's works, even though his extraordinary plots are often what attract a reader's attention. Nothing is ever wasted in a Collins plot — a doctor's sign will appear early in Armadale, then reappear hundreds of pages later to tell the reader something important; or a vial of a drug will be lost and forgotten in one part of No Name, only to reappear much later as a crucial motivation for characters. Such is the great interest of Collins's plotting that it seems to overwhelm his other achievements in No Name and Armadale. The earliest work thus far reprinted by Dover is, however, an exception. Basil is a study in character, delving into darkness in the human spirit; it is a portrait of the banality of evil, and, more than any other of Collins's fiction, it shows the influence of the French writers he professed to admire.

"I have founded the main event out of which this story springs, on a fact within my own knowledge," Collins asserts in his 1862 dedication of Basil. At least one biographer, Kenneth Robinson, errs in assuming that the "fact" meant Basil was none other than Collins himself; Collins could also have drawn the "fact" of the novel from one of his friends, several of whom had unhappy lives. Whatever the source, the story is commonplace and sad — one of a lover betrayed callously and one of lust and revenge. Naive and sensitive, Basil falls in love with a worldly and insensitive woman who is socially and intellectually beneath him. Her betrayal of him is almost forced by his foolish attentions. Basil seeks vengeance, then her real lover seeks revenge on him. The plot is unusually simple for Collins, although perhaps complex enough for most other authors; the characters stand out in high relief against the plot and against the dark background of
THE OTHER FICTION OF WILKIE COLLINS

Victorian England. In spite of the greater worldliness of the modern reader (one familiar with The Great Gatsby and Lady Chatterley's Lover), Basil retains its poignancy and its power to hold a reader's attention. It also remains entertaining. Basil is interesting for students of Collins because of its special tone and style. The later novels are more clearly English in style and subject, but this one has an ambivalent style and is much more open about its sexual themes than are subsequent works, which weave themes of sex and infidelity more subtly into other motifs — such as theft and the use of drugs.

Less important, perhaps, to students of Collins, but more fun to read is The Dead Secret. In 1857 it did not excite the critical interest that Basil had, nor that which No Name and Armadale would occasion. The Dead Secret is part romance and part mystery, a novel easily categorized a mystery story, but one that ultimately defies labels. The story seems Gothic in its theme of an old deed come back to haunt Rosamond, it seems melodramatic in its atmosphere and events, but its plot seems typical of a modern mystery. Some critics place Collins as a mystery writer or a detective-story writer. Such labelling makes him interesting to fans of mysteries, but it also makes him easy for supposedly serious writers to dismiss. In The Dead Secret, as in most of his other works, Collins defies simple categorization. He probably was the creator of many of the techniques now standard in mystery fiction, and he may well have set the standards for accuracy and detail that mark the modern mystery novel, but one should understand that he was inventing when he wrote. He uses themes and techniques and then throws them away once they have served his purposes; thus although a novelist might thrive by creating the adventures of a single detective through a series of novels, Collins creates Old Sharon (in "My Lady's Money") and uses him only once. Collins's work is inconsistent, in manner and quality, and is his in defiance of modern genres.

Dover has reprinted at least two stories that on their surfaces seem to fall neatly into sub-genres, one a mystery and the other a ghost story. In "My Lady's Money" the plot moves as its characters seek the solution to a theft — of the Dover reprints this best fits into the mystery genre. Yet, the thrust of Collins's narrative does not seem to be directed at the mystery itself, but at the characters and what they represent. Once the villain is unmasked, one discovers a subversive theme running through the story, a theme which invites the reader to accept surface images (even advocates such acceptance), then tears
off those images as if they were masks. Gentlemen are brutes, sophisticated people are fools, intelligent ones are misled, and rogues are dedicated workers. Collins is much more heavy-handed in this story from 1877 than in his work from the 1860's and the story features some bad writing ("He finished the sentence by snapping his fingers with a grin of contempt," p. 148), but this ambitions remain high.

"The Haunted Hotel" is better stuff. Like much of Collins's other later work it lacks the structural tightness of his best writing, but it provides enough surprises to satisfy most readers and it shows some of his skills in description and characterization. "The Haunted Hotel" chronicles premonitions and supernatural revenge, and as such is not extraordinary. Its primary interest is its good entertainment; for scholars it has more historical value than anything else. As with much of Collins's other fiction, this is a seemingly odd mixture of themes and techniques which were more fully explored in the work of later writers, and of motifs which remain undeveloped. Therein may lie a problem in studying Collins: his experimentation means that his fiction rarely fits into a genre, and thus themes often seem out of place. In "The Haunted Hotel" he uses a ghostly (and ghastly) odor to help build suspense; the technique seems in the light of the modern ghost story to be peculiar, even awkward — what might have been unusual and surprising in 1879 now seems a bit silly.

Both "My Lady's Money" and "The Haunted Hotel" also illustrate an unfelicitous feature of Collins's later work. He was afflicted with a progressively debilitating disease, one which caused intense pain and periodically blinded him. It prematurely aged him, making him shockingly bent. Laudanum eased his pain, and he became hopelessly addicted. In his last two decades he suffered chronically sleepless nights, often writing in the early hours of the morning, and suffered from nighttime delusions of figures seeking to hurt him — one frighteningly manifested itself in a post on his staircase which sought to bite him when he climbed the stairs to bed. Collins's concentration on his writing was almost certainly affected, which weakness may account for the awkwardness of his later plots and the production of stories which entertain but fall short of the high ambitions realized in the novels of Collins's middle years.

*Tales of Terror and the Supernatural* contains short stories which span their author's career, from "A Terribly Strange Bed" (1852) to selections from *Little Novels* (1887), just two years before the writer's death. Herbert van Thal's selections are good, and can give a reader a
THE OTHER FICTION OF WILKIE COLLINS

fair, though limited, view of Collins’s achievement. The early stories, such as “A Terribly Strange Bed” and “The Dead Hand,” are better than the later ones, and are examples of the Victorian manner of short stories. They employ understatement and rely heavily on atmospherics, of which Collins was a master:

The darkness forced his mind back upon itself, and set his memory at work, reviving with a painfully-vivid distinctness the momentary impression it had received from his first sight of the corpse. Before long the face seemed to be hovering out in the middle of the darkness, confronting him through the window, with the paleness whiter — with the dreadful dull line of light between the imperfectly-closed eyelids broader than he had seen it — with the parted lips slowly dropping farther and farther away from each other — with the features growing larger and moving closer, till they seemed to fill the window, and to silence the rain, and to shut out the night. (“The Dead Hand,” p. 49) The unfortunate protagonist must spend the night in the same room with the corpse that inspired his morbid imagination. The atmospherics elsewhere are just as gripping and make the early stories rewarding.

The same cannot be said for the titles from Little Novels, three of which appear in Tales of Terror and the Supernatural, and all of which, of course, appear in Dover’s recent reprinting of the 1887 edition. The stories might be called novellas rather than little novels, and in that sense they represent Collins’s experiments with literary forms, blending the qualities of the short story and those of the novel. The results are haphazard in quality, from the just plain stupid “Mr. Lismore and the Widow” to the sophisticated “Miss Bertha and the Yankee.” Throughout the stories characters and plots are colored by heavy-handed didacticism, which is nonetheless strongly indicative that Collins retained his subversive outlook late in his life: “There is surely something mean in an assertion of superiority which depends on nothing better than the accident of birth” (“Mr. Medhurst and the Princess,” p. 66) and “the hateful and anti-Christian pride of rank” (“Miss Mina and the Groom,” p. 106). Collins’s attacks on hypocrisy and cant are as pointed in Little Novels as in No Name, and his strictures on uncharitable behavior and his persistently Christian outlook make one wonder how anyone ever thought of him as other than Christian.
Kirk H. Beetz

The occasional confusion of themes and techniques in *Little Novels* can be attributed to Collins's experimentation, as well as his bad health, which circumstances engender the possibility for speculation about inconsistent quality of his later works. In his efforts to experiment, might he have worked his way through those genres he could best work with and into ones which were unsuited to his talents? There is something admirable in his effort to experiment, and something sad in how often he failed, even if in interesting ways. Much in *Little Novels* is interesting and entertaining, and evaluations of a few of the stories might provide insights into the development of modern forms of this genre, and perhaps even into the difference between a successful and unsuccessful story.

Dover performs a great service to students of Collins, and benefits readers in general, by reprinting in inexpensive editions some of the works of a fine and often underrated author. Undoubtedly, critics will use the new editions for study, and for the most part these reprints will be satisfactory for use in criticism. The Chatto and Windus editions of *Armadale, No Name, The Dead Secret*, and *Basil*, are usually considered to be the most textually reliable, but they have long been out of print and are hard to find. Few scholars have consulted them for criticism, thus making the Dover versions as good as any other in general use. *Armadale* has special problems because Dover uses the original *Cornhill Magazine* text. Collins distinguished between periodical and book publication, and made minor revisions in *Armadale* after its serial appearance was completed. Both *No Name* and *The Dead Secret* are taken from versions published by Harper and Brothers of New York. Collins took great care that Harper and Brothers received fully edited and revised page proofs from his London book publishers, thus making the Harper editions reliable. The Dover texts of these novels are superior to the Collier versions, which are now commonly in use. *Basil* is taken from the 1862 Sampson Low edition, the standard version even though it varies in minor revisions from the 1852 Richard Bentley first edition. “The Haunted Hotel” and “My Lady’s Money” appear in volumes edited by E. F. Bleiler. In his introduction to “The Haunted Hotel” Bleiler mentions having examined the manuscript of the story at the Huntington Library. My own examination of the manuscript indicates that the Dover version is reliable. My examination of the version of “My Lady’s Money” in *The Illustrated London News* also indicates that the Dover text is reliable. *Little Novels* is taken from the Chatto and Windus edition, and as
such is as sound as that of any other edition. This book is particularly hard to find and is therefore specially welcome. As for *Tales of Terror and the Supernatural*, the book would be useful as school text, but the serious scholar will want to consult the Chatto and Windus versions, where possible, or the original book versions in *After Dark* (1856) and *The Queen of Hearts* (1859). These earlier versions of the stories are difficult to locate, and if a critic has a choice of the Dover texts, the Collier texts, or not writing an article, the Dover texts are best.

Dover has helped to broaden Wilkie Collins studies with its recent selection of his novels and stories. With these editions may come a better understanding of Collins’s achievements. I, for one, look forward to more.
AMERICAN AUTHORS AND THEIR CRITICS

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Literary researchers and students of greener years increasingly comprehend declining library funds when they search vainly for runs of periodicals — nay, for current subscriptions that may no longer be solvent. These first eleven titles in “Critical Essays on American Writers” series (under the general editorship of James Nagel, in progress from the G. K. Hall Company) ought to go far in assisting and revitalizing the cause of American literature, as well as in illuminating the reputations of individual authors who have contributed to our national letters. Spanning colonial days to recent years, their appearance will be welcomed by all with interests in American literature and in broader dimensions of our culture. In a way, the “Critical Essays” will complement, and perhaps supersede, the “Critical Heritage” series that now seems to be defunct. Certainly, with the concentration on the literary figures of a single nation, Nagel’s shelf of volumes should provide adequate coverage of major and minor writing.

“Critical Essays” parallels the Twayne series of biographies for American authors in presenting introductory materials. From these foundations, users can go on to build their own knowledge of a particular writer or, in the case of Pilkington’s volume, school of writing. Advanced students will value the conveniently collected contents as time-savers.

No rigid format is imposed upon the compilers. Each volume opens with an introductory critical survey of the subject’s reputation. Some of the makers of these books, like the late Arlin Turner, are names long familiar in the world of American literature; others are newer to the field. Turner’s comments devolve from lengthy acquaintance; the standard biography of Cable, editions, and a host of articles flowed from his pen. Graham’s overview embodies a deep knowledge of Norris demonstrated previously, and that ease with his material probably accounts for the grace throughout his screed. Reading his introduction, one wishes to go to the Norris shelf and read more. Although one is not surprised to encounter the name of Joel Myerson attached to a book about an American Transcendentalist or that of William T. Pilkington with western topics, other compilers are not so ordinarily bracketed with their subjects.

Let us now examine more closely the differing techniques. Martine, for example, interviewed Miller, and that record gives us information not found uniformly in the volumes on living authors or at least those on authors who were living when such interviews might have occurred. Usually the editor first provides contemporaneous
reviews, and then marshals lengthier, later critiques, although materials conform to no Procrustean norm. The Oates book contains a preface by Joyce Carol herself. Scheick divides his selections into “Biography,” “Thought,” “Lineage,” and “Literary Criticism.” This last category may mislead; it includes writing about, not by, Edwards. Trachtenberg separates “Reviews” from “Essays.” Kribbs follows no strict chronology. Pilkington creates a section of essays establishing the nature of western novels. Martin and Waldmeir categorize essays under their subjects’ individual titles. Turner proceeds chronologically. Myerson lists “Contents,” then sets out pieces from contemporaneous reviews of Fuller’s writings to critical comment through the early 1970’s. It is refreshing to see a series wherein individual contributors are allowed freedom within reasonable limits.

Most of these collections impart a strong sense of chronology. The changing fortunes of an author’s reputation come clearer through such linear progression, particularly in the Cable, Norris, Fuller, and Barth books. Such methodology is also valuable in the overview of the western novel. For writers whose work was completed before 1920, we gain a sharp profile of the increase in critical estimates and in the acumen in such analyses, Whittier, Cable, and Norris furnishing prime examples. Edwards accumulates popularity as additional interpretations of his writings appear, and so do Fuller and Stowe. If “Critical Essays” are accurate barometers, the twentieth-century authors, at least those included here (even if the interpretive essays do not bear Ruskin’s “golden stain of time”), also wax in popularity and critical esteem. Such volumes do carry the imprint of golden wits at criticism. For instance, Martine remarks that the information on Miller also highlights only O’Neill and Williams as “serious dramatists” in American literature. Considering the dates for these playwrights’ lives, such theories may initiate reassessment of American dramatists and their productions — at the expense of some who are much touted because they are younger than the three named here. Those who dismiss Cable as one more local colorist may take their lumps after perusing Turner’s assemblage, wherein occurs, time and again, evidence of this literary descendant from Poe and Hawthorne. Norris, too, moves from the ranks of “sole” and “mere” Naturalist by means of Graham’s book. Although Norris’s stature has altered considerably during the past twenty years, Graham’s placement of contents gives succinct, convenient charting of newer, changing views toward the “boy Zola.”
Here it is proper to note a feature in the “Critical Essays” series that must occur to any surveyor. Most of the writers included to date remain rather “minor.” Some twentieth-century names, like Bellow, will doubtless prove to be “major,” although the quality of writing about them so far does not attain the excellence of that devoted to many earlier writers. Should such a series as this zero in on minor authors or should it cover mightier artists? Major or minor, those represented still figure in courses and anthologies; with the American spirit of frontier and discovery, such allowance is no doubt appropriate. Each of Melville’s titles will have an individual “Critical Essays” volume, we hear, and if sales continue solid for what Nagel has already gotten into print there will be no worry about the continuance of a valuable, useful group of reference works.

A problem facing most of the compilers is the amount and substantial value of available writing about their subjects. Those concentrating on Miller, Barth, Bellow, and Oates, for example, confront far less quantity than those dealing with Edwards, Stowe, Fuller, or Cable. Just so with a topical awareness about the “western American novel”; such consciousness moves us toward popular culture. There is as yet no similarity of bulk in secondary writing about popular arts to that, say, about Faulkner, James, or Melville, so far as American writers go. For those compilers encountering sheer mass concerning their authors, burdensome decisions arise. Although Perry Miller’s essay on Edwards and Emerson is a leading warhorse, it is also oft-reprinted. We may therefore find fresh the appearance of Miller’s “Edwards, Locke, and the Rhetoric of Sensation,” from Errand into the Wilderness. We might wonder at the inclusion of Leslie Stephen’s screed on Edwards from Hours in a Library, wherein Stephen, himself a fallen-away Christian, lines up Edwards’s thought with nineteenth-century pantheism. Another oddity of Scheick’s Edwards is the omission of much material, Edwin H. Cady’s essay excepted, from between the first and fifth decades of the twentieth century. Although the names of Clarence H. Faust and Theodore Hornberger appear in the introduction, it is strange to find no essay by either in the contents proper. A comparable omission is that of J. Frank Dobie from Pilking- ton’s collection.

There are not so many surprises in the books about Fuller, Whittier, Stowe, and Cable. Joel Myerson brings out Poe, Brownson, Hedge, and Lowell from among Fuller’s contemporaries; he gives space to her interesting relationships with Hawthorne and Emerson; and
he delineates her significance in German-American cross-currents—and presents good recent criticism by Urbanski, Stern, and Allen. One might object to exclusion of anything by Mason Wade, an earlier champion of Fuller's importance, but Myerson furnishes good implicit reasons for this exclusion. Akin to Myerson's methods, Waldmeir's practice is to exclude excerpts from previously published books.

Jayne Kribbs does not follow chronology as regards the secondary materials in her book, preferring to plot a chronological course for Whittier's works themselves. Although contradictory opinions are offered, for example, Griswold's perceptions of passion as opposed to J. G. Forman's view that passion was Whittier's least concern, we leave this anthology with a greater understanding of why Whittier remains behind the door of greatness in American writing. His techniques are, generally, clumsy and mechanical; his themes are abolition, history, and folklore. Most critics deplore Whittier's shift from folklore substance, in which he showed signs of greater development, to religion and social criticism. *Snowbound* alone makes for remembrance of Whittier, and the essays centering upon it are the highlights among Kribb's items. That this minor poet attracted the attention of luminaries is interesting: Parrington, Foerster, Clark, Ringe, Warren can not be ignored among circles of Americanists, nor can the name of the late Howard Mumford Jones. His statements about Whittier's suspicions of symbolism are worth remembering in this era of "getting into" reality and returning to basics. Kribbs's introduction is excellent, but other essays in her book do not convey so vital a Whittier as she does.

Elizabeth Ammons's book divides into four large sections. In the first (containing materials on the anti-slavery novels) and in the last (containing reminiscences), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* predictably receives greatest attention. The section titled "New England Matter and Novels of Manners" includes fewer essays than do the other portions treating Stowe's imaginative writing. The six essays making up part two, "The Byron Furor," disclose a side of Stowe often forgotten in modern times, but her defenses of Lady Byron against what she supposed were outrageous calumnies created sensations in her day. This volume gives a sense of Victorian critical perceptions, as does part of that on Norris.

Turner's book presents positive and negative attitudes toward Cable, second only to Lafcadio Hearn during his time in establishing simultaneously a sense of the verisimilar and the weird. Turner is
particularly skillful in ordering his materials to show the progression from the first faint notes of sourness toward Cable’s portraiture of Creoles to the later outspoken hostility toward that treatment and to his view of Negroes. Considering her own wish to right what she discerned as Cable’s distortions of Creole character, the lone mention of Grace Elizabeth King may strike some as strange. This is Cable’s, not King’s book, however, and it is a testimony to his continuing vitality and to Arlin Turner’s scholarly soundness.

The Frank Norris, as noted earlier, reveals a many-sidedness about that writer hitherto often overlooked. Naturalistic tendencies are evident in his work, to be sure, although he might deserve an essay in Pilkington’s collection, where he is mentioned as a novelist of the west. Romance, realism, domestic fiction, social criticism, narrative technique: all these, and much more, receive their due a la Norris. Indeed Graham reminds us of his subject’s stature as a transitional figure, chronologically and otherwise, between Edwards and the twentieth-century writers surveyed here. The matter of chronology will cause no surprise, although the question of Norris’s place in terms of myth and technique might. But, after all, there is a clear line from the imagery and allegory in Edwards through subsequent figures of the nineteenth century and on into Bellow, Oates, and Barth. Norris’s comic impulse may also align him more centrally with twentieth-century satire and parody than has previously been demonstrated. Authoritative representation — that is, inclusion of established students of Norris — imparts the air of excitement to be found within Graham’s book, in my estimation the best of the series to date.

The volumes on the twentieth-century writers are the shortest in the series, perhaps implying that meager amounts of criticism, or sound criticism, are available here. The Bellow collection contains twelve reviews and ten essays. Does this division reveal the state of academic, or other, writing about him? A glance at the 1979 MLA International Bibliography shows fifty-one items devoted to Bellow proper and nine tangential pieces. Are we to assume that the essays gathered by Trachtenberg are the best to be offered? I wonder why some of the material cited in his introduction and notes to it is not reprinted afterward. Nonetheless, we do gain a sense of Bellow’s work and American literary tradition in essays like Warren’s on Augie March and Cohen’s on Bellow’s treatment of sex. Questions about balance arise as well. A reader expects secondary items from the 1940’s as samples of Bellow’s early reputation. Instead, most of the
AMERICAN AUTHORS AND THEIR CRITICS

contents date from the 1970's. Three critiques were specially prepared for this volume (by Fuchs, Rodrigues, and Stevick); another is an interview with Bellow, a feature aligning Trachtenberg's book with Martine’s. Although the first three items were penned by distinguished scholar-critics, and the fourth attains value because it provides information from the horse’s mouth, the distribution suggests that there is no great body of consequent criticism about Bellow.

The Miller book also reveals that much of what has been published on his work does not meet high critical standards. With the 252 pages of John Ferre's Arthur Miller: A Reference Guide (1979) to place in near proximity to the 217 of Martine’s work, we wonder again whether reviewers have been more acute than others in considering the playwright. I am reminded of a link between Martine’s gathering and that by Oscar Cargill and others, O’Neill and His Plays — Four Decades of Criticism (1961), where reviews furnish an ample portion of selections. Here I observe on format: why did not Daniel Walden's essay, which could introduce admirably an anthology of Miller’s plays, not come nearer the front of Martine’s book — where it would give uninitiates a handy run-through for Miller’s life and early work? I ask with no intention of diminishing the excellence of Martine’s own introduction, one of the best among those in the “Critical Essays.”

Looking briefly at the series entire to date, we notice that fiction seems to be in the lead. Whittier is the sole poet qua poet, Edwards and Fuller the only essayists, and Miller the single dramatist. True, during much of America’s literary history, pace the shades of Montrose J. Moses and Arthur Hobson Quinn, drama has been no shining generic light. Potentially significant, nonetheless, is Miller’s appearing among the initial artists in the “Critical Essays” series. Maybe Martine’s book and any future titles on American dramatists will spur revaluation of our national playwrights individually and of native drama in general. One such topic within the large framework which, so far as I am aware, no one has assessed (although it cries out for study), is American Gothic Drama. Even students of that pioneer Gothicist of the boards, William Dunlap, have shied from his plays in the supernatural or horrific vein — a carry-over, doubtless, from Quinn’s History of American Drama wherein the Gothic is passed over in favor of nationalistic themes — and that aversion despite Dunlap’s enthusiasm for Kotzebue. Among individual playwrights ripe for treatment from the Gothic angle, O’Neill stands out.

We need not move far in approaching Oates, whose verse and
plays give way to her fiction. She is far from Edwards and his notions of order, though, in her depictions of fear and violence. She commented perceptively about these matters in The Edge of Impossibility: Tragic Forms in Literature (1972). Oates is a personage of the 1960's and 1970's, her writing as yet not finished, and these essays provide as much of a survey of recent literary currents as they give insights about Oates herself. She has attracted some outstanding critics — Kazin, Friedman, and DeMott among them (one wonders why Helen Vendler is not represented since her name appears prominently in the introduction, index, and selections) — and their attitudes by no means afford us a consensus.

Like the Miller volume, this one on Oates features more reviews than essays of length, an interesting apportioning because of the fifteen entries under “Oates” in the 1979 MLA International Bibliography five are essays first published in Wagner’s book, as is the section from the Twayne Series volume by Joanne Creighton. Somewhat misleading is the placement of Irving Malin’s “Possessive Material” among reviews. Altogether, one might well suppose that the current state of Oates criticism is uncertain. If not, why are so many of the items in Wagner’s collection new?

Waldmeir’s harvest of Barth material also draws many reviews into the barn. Curiously, perhaps, I was reminded of Kribbs’s book on Whittier as I proceeded through Waldmeir’s chronological-by-title format. Furthermore, the wealth of comment about Barth’s playfulness and deft handling otherwise in matters of language recalls J. R. Lowell’s remarks about Whittier’s handling of words and customs in his review of Snowbound. In such an unlikely pair we detect a continuity within our national letters!

With Pilkington’s book on western American fiction we come full circle, insofar as “Critical Essays” represents American literary tradition. The Puritan conception of the American wilderness as symbolic of dark forces is mirrored in such western fiction as that by Larry McMurtry, although there is decidedly more blatant sexuality in his output. The East and West meet more than once in Pilkington’s pages, be those hostile meetings, as exemplified in Barrett Wendell’s dismissal of the West for not having attained high seriousness in its culture, or positive meetings, implied by the overall contents. All of the ideals and hopes, as well as the grotesqueries and nightmares, of the American tradition are embodied within the borders of the western American literary milieu examined by Pilkington and his contributors.
AMERICAN AUTHORS AND THEIR CRITICS 129

Many users of this book will register surprise when they realize just how far from dime-store sleaziness western novels can go.

To conclude. If the titles reviewed here represent the work going into the “Critical Essays,” let us have more of them. Apart from diminishing bibliographical lacunae in libraries, the series makes us think about other aspects of American literature. First, although fifty and more years have passed since Jay B. Hubbell and Duke University launched American Literature, there is evidently still uncertainty over just who does read an American book, if the volumes in the Hall gallery are representative. There is no reason to suppose that they are not, even with variations noted here, or that forthcoming titles will depart widely from the overall quality established by these first eleven. With a large body of secondary sources now convenient for the study of our native literary art — as there was not in the early days of Jay B. Hubbell, Killis Campbell, W. B. Cairns, Thomas Ollive Mabott, and Gregory Paine — that very corpus serves just as often as a reminder of what remains to be done as it does to tell us what has been accomplished. Although certain selections within the “Critical Essays” are now quite old, such writing continues to stimulate additional research and publication. For the avid scholar in remote libraries, these volumes will facilitate researches that could otherwise easily occupy much time. Second, these books are convenient bellwethers for the state of their subjects’ reputations, and they make readily accessible bibliographical survey information supplementary to titles like Eight American Authors, Fifteen American Authors before 1900, or the continuing ALS annuals. All this and much more for a reasonable price, considering today’s book trade.

The “Critical Essays” volumes might gain value, and sales, if a brief list of worthwhile readings not numbered among the selections within were appended. Thus undergraduates, for example, could continue beyond the covers of which book they consult, without the lengthy poring over another bibliographical compilation. Annotating such checklists would also add usefulness. Meanwhile, these eleven titles are respectable guides toward the future. If the laborers in Professor Nagel’s vineyards continue vigorous, the services to American literature, to academic communities, and to general libraries will be inestimable. In an age of “instant,” “quick,” and “convenience” products, the “Critical Essays on American Writers” offer us far more than a grease-burger could.
Reviews


Arlin Turner's career as scholar and teacher was devoted to the study of American literature in the context of its history, and so, fittingly, the essays gathered in his honor are concerned with explorations into American literary history, which, as the editors of this *Festschrift* tell us, is ready for a new and major reassessment in this generation. The seventeen essays of this collection approach, for the most part, large historical and critical questions in a learned, articulate and gracious manner — qualities, it should be noted, that marked Arlin Turner's style as a writer, teacher and colleague. Moreover, the varied interests represented in this group of essays reflect the many concerns of his own long scholarly career. They honor our late colleague, one of the most warmly respected individuals in the profession of American literary studies.

Essays worthy of special mention are these: Robert E. Spiller's "The Cycle and the Roots: National Identity in American Literature" ranges widely over colonial and early national literature to draw some principles of our cultural development. Lewis P. Simpson's essay, "The Southern Literary Vocation," characterizes the effect of history upon the artistic vocation of Southern writers. Richard Beale Davis focuses more specifically on the South of Jamestown under the Virginia company from 1607 to 1624 and argues that the early Tidewater culture was far more literate, varied and erudite than is generally realized. Among the best essays in the collection is Sacvan Bercovitch's "Rhetoric and History in Early New England: The Puritan Errand Reassessed." He contends that Perry Miller's definition of the ambiguity of the Puritan concept of errand was incorrect, for the sermon writers, in their jeremiads, were celebrating a culture whose faith was in the future. Walter Sullivan contrasts the Puritan and Enlightenment conceptions of history in the epic visions of Mather.
and Barlow. In a fine piece of folklore research John Seelye discusses the Davy Crockett almanacs, and Gay Wilson Allen looks again at the frontier as viewed by Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. Bernard Duffey argues convincingly that Ezra Pound’s Imagism can be discerned in his early critical writings and Terence Martin, in “The Negative Character in American Fiction,” writes and illustrates an excellent definition and characterization of the negative character, “whose function it is to measure the world in which we live by the worlds in which they are unable to live” (p. 232). Russel B. Nye discusses the history of photography in America from 1839 to 1890 and how it influenced America’s image of itself.

In addition, there are good essays on Franklin (by Walter Blair), Hawthorne (Richard Harter Fogle), William Vaughn Moody (George Arms), Ellen Glasgow (C. Hugh Holman), Upton Sinclair (L. S. Dembo), Carl Van Vechten (Donald Pizer) and the Harlem Renaissance (Darwin Turner). The book concludes with the vita and bibliography of Arlin Turner; both are impressive listings of a distinguished professional life. Toward a New American Literary History memorializes that life with a fine harvest of the scholar’s vocation.

James E. Rocks
Loyola University of Chicago

This first volume of the new edition of Byron's verse is unassuming in size and external appearance. Almost nothing else about the book is so modest — certainly not the scholarship of the editor. Jerome J. McGann's work on this project is impressive. If Volume One (which covers Byron's poetry from 1798 through 1811) indicates fairly what we can expect from successive numbers in the series, then when The Complete Poetical Works is finally finished, scholars will have ready to hand a wealth of information and poetry, systematically organized and edited. This edition marks a significant contribution to Byron studies — in its own right and in what it makes possible for other scholars. It is a worthy companion to the new edition of Byron's Letters and Journals, recently edited by Leslie A. Marchand.

To improve upon other complete collections of Byron's poetry, McGann has gone to great lengths to establish definitive texts for all the poems in the Byron canon. As he points out in his "Editorial Introduction," every other collected edition — including the Oxford Standard Authors edition, edited by Frederick Page (1904) and revised by John Jump (1970); the Cambridge Edition (Houghton Mifflin), edited by Paul E. More (1905) and revised by Robert Gleckner (1975); and even the standard edition in seven volumes, edited by E. H. Coleridge (1898-1904) — is inadequate, either because it is incomplete or because the texts on which it is based were corrupt. To establish reliable and accurate texts, McGann has collated no fewer than sixteen different collected editions of Byron's poems, other "early editions" of separately printed works when they were authorized by the poet, manuscripts, copy texts, and letters. In his commentaries on each poem, McGann gives a brief account of extant manuscripts, the date of the work, and its publishing history. His guiding principles for determining a correct text are accuracy of the copy text, "textual relevance," and strict fidelity to Byron's intent wherever it can be discovered. This last is no small consideration because even some of the best of Byron's other editors have seen fit to omit parts of poems that Byron at one time wanted to publish. McGann's procedures have led him "to alter the received texts of a large number of poems." Moreover, McGann has done much to correct the canon itself. Volume
REVIEWS

One alone, for example, contains more than thirty new poems which have not appeared in any previous standard collected edition. A comprehensive and reliable edition such as this is certainly welcome. The paper is sturdy; the type is large and readable; and, in spite of its five hundred plus total pages, the book is not at all cumbersome. In short, this is a volume that can be studied without discomfort. It is an edition that was apparently conceived and composed with the interests of the "serious scholar" in mind.

As far as quality and originality go, many of Byron's juvenilia (the poet's own term for them) do not bear up well under close scrutiny. They are sometimes avowedly imitative, sometimes pompous, often sentimental, and frequently just adolescent. As a result, up until now the "serious scholar" may have been the only one with any interest in most of the poems in this volume. McGann's edition will likely rescue many of these poems from the neglect they have suffered, because this editor has given us a more complete picture of the young poet than we have ever had. Byron's first volume of verse, Fugitive Pieces, was privately printed, and it brought him sharp criticism when the erotic frankness of a few poems offended some readers. In deference to friendly advice, Byron tried to have all the copies of the little book destroyed, and he issued a revised, "miraculously chaste" second edition called Poems on Various Occasions. In it Byron deleted select stanzas from one or two poems (such as "To the Sighing Strephon") and omitted entirely the poem that caused him the most trouble, "To Mary." Sadly, some of what Byron suppressed for the sake of chastity makes the most interesting reading. McGann restores these texts to their original forms and is the first editor to include "To Mary" in a collected edition (it does not even appear in Coleridge's). Along with the several new poems, these restorations make possible a more accurate and comprehensive reassessment of this period in Byron's career and its relation to his later works.

For all the book's important accomplishments, there are a few inconveniences. His system of chronological ordering causes some minor problems; for example, McGann puts all the poems related to the publishing of Hours of Idleness (1807) together in 1806 (the date of Fugitive Pieces), even though some poems were written perhaps as early as 1802 and others not until as late as 1808. The editorial apparatus, especially the form of the textual notes, is complicated enough to warrant a substantial explanation in the "Editorial Introduction." McGann is by necessity obliged to use many short titles, but the short
The title list at the beginning of the volume is incomplete; consequently, it may take a little searching to find the full title for which the abbreviation substitutes. Still, these are only inconveniences, and someone using the volume regularly will not long be annoyed by them.

More seriously, the commentaries on the poetry have not been edited as meticulously as the poems themselves. McGann’s notes are plentiful (over one hundred pages to accompany three-hundred-fifty pages of poems) and generally very useful on textual matters and publication; but his manner of cross-referencing is sometimes bothersome. The omission of critical or interpretative comment is understandable (albeit unfortunate), but translations of the Greek and Latin epigraphs would be helpful additions to the notes. Finally, some errors just seem to have escaped his attention; no reader, for example, should try to reconstruct the contents of *Fugitive Pieces* or *Hours of Idleness* from the list of poems that McGann gives. This inconsistency in McGann’s work is most troublesome. Although the texts of the poems are definitive, the volume must be used with care. In the end, the book may not be very well suited to the casual or occasional reader of Byron’s poetry, the sort who wants to use the edition as a quick reference source for information about a particular poem.

In spite of these weaknesses, *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, Volume One, is a major piece of scholarship, for which many of us are — and will long continue to be — very thankful. There is one other regrettable “inconvenience” about the work. For such an ordinary-looking book, it carries an extraordinary price. Although libraries will (or should) certainly purchase this edition, the cost may keep it out of many personal collections. That is a pity; it is one thing for an edition to be designed primarily for the “serious scholar”; it is quite another when only the affluent can afford to be “serious.”

Ronald A. Schroeder
The University of Mississippi


An inherent problem in the analysis of past literary works is the possibility of overlooking critical factors that no longer exist — the case when analyzing Dickens and the illustrated novel. One often neglects to consider that Dickens’s novels, and those of other nineteenth-century writers, were commonly published in serial form with accompanying illustrations. Any consideration of these works in “modern novel versions” is inherently incomplete, because a viable interpretation must consider the illustrations as complements to the printed text.

Michael Steig does much to eliminate this associative error from examinations of Charles Dickens’s works by producing a solid analysis of Hablot K. Browne who illustrated ten of Dickens’s novels under the pen-name “Phiz.” Although Steig’s book is no unique treatment of Dickens and his illustrators, it is singular in its depth of treatment and its concentration on the illustrator rather than the author. Most engagingly, Steig examines Browne’s developing artistry as it parallels Dickens’s growth as a writer. Browne was not only a capable artist, but also a man of imagination; thus, the association between Dickens and Browne was more commingling of minds than a working relationship of supervisor and subordinate. Their partnership produced printed texts in which spirit, essence, and vitality were heightened by the imagination of the illustrator.

Steig’s work must also be applauded for its contribution to the study of the art of illustration. Throughout his analysis, he takes care to include an examination of the changing methods of printing and illustration and the impact of these changes on Browne’s stylistically innovative efforts. Thus, Steig not only produces a study of Browne and Dickens; he also produces a study of Browne and the art of illustration.

Possibly the most critical element in the shared imagination, or fancy, of Browne and Dickens is their use of emblematic detail. Dickens’s incorporation of folklore, fantasy, and superstition into his works apparently influenced Browne’s use of symbolic details to key
subconscious associations. This intentional psychological assault on
the mind of the reader is especially evident in the frontispieces that
provided emblematic representations as rich as those found in age-old
sorcerers' manuals and in the first editions of The Mystic Rose,
Yeats's attempt to revitalize the Irish folklore heritage and promul-
gate mysticism.

The identification of the sources of emblematic detail in Brown's
work is one of two shortcomings in Steig's book that must be
addressed. He alludes to these symbols and details as being Browne's
creation and fails to realize their common folklore roots. These same
sources were used by Dickens to create a world where reality and
fantasy are inseparably joined. To neglect consideration of these
sources is to err in realizing part of the literary revolution of the
Victorian Period, which saw renewed interest in fantasy and the
fantastic at the hands of Dickens, Carroll, Stevenson, and the broth-
ers Grimm. This falling short is not a crippling handicap; Steig's
expert handling of his subject matter makes this particular weakness
a point for extended scholarly research rather than a major considera-
tion that limits the worth of his efforts.

The other shortcoming is not so minor. Steig's work will be an
invaluable aid to research, but he fails to provide a bibliography. As a
primary source for further research, Dickens and Phiz suffers from
this omission. One hopes that a second edition will correct this flaw.

Despite the drawbacks to scholarly research, Steig's work cannot
help but have a positive impact on the study of Dickens. Steig knows
his subject matter well and his book adds significantly to the knowl-
edge of Charles Dickens, his illustrators, and the artistry of the illus-
trated novel.

Since G. K. Chesterton's acknowledgment that Dickens's world
lay somewhere on the road to elfland, numerous articles and books
have dealt with the presence of fantasy elements in the great Victori-
an's works. These examinations are superficial at best and limited in
scope, but the compound effect creates a growing awareness about the
importance of viewing Dickens relevant to a renewed interest in folk-
lore. In Dickens and the Invisible World, Harry Stone offers a treat-
ment of Dickens's use of fantasy and folklore that is fresh and
provoking.

The freshness of Stone's examination derives from his treatment
of the existence of fairy-tale elements not as a common matter of
general knowledge, but as an integral part of Dickens's style. Stone
identifies the beginnings of Dickens's life-long association with fairy tales and traces the evolution by which traditions, superstitions, and myths introduced to Dickens as a child found expression in his works. Stone calls this evolution of style the "fairy tale method." Although this description of Dickens's style is dangerously simplistic, it does serve to highlight the often neglected element of folklore. In Dickens's early novels, Stone identifies traces of fairy tale elements in plot, character, setting, and action, but finds no prevalent pattern. The presence of enchantment and magical effects increases with each novel, and patterns become more defined. In the later novels there is a total integration of reality and fantasy that presents life "in its density, its solid reality, but at the same time ... its shimmering strangeness and wonder." If considered piecemeal, none of this information is new, but Stone's careful reconstruction of growth patterns, identification of sources, and analysis of contributing factors combine to give new relevance to the presence of fairy-tale elements in Dickens's fiction.

One vital ingredient of Stone's research is his care in considering the outside factors contributing to Dickens's accumulation of folklore knowledge. The introduction of fairy tales into the realm of adult literature by Dickens, Carroll, Stevenson, and Brothers Grimm, and others; the influence of toy theaters; the rural introduction of Dickens to English customs, traditions and stories; and the lack of a vibrant folklore heritage in the Blakean world of London are all substance that Stone analyzes in the growth of Dickens's "Fairy tale method."

Another fresh ingredient is Stone's expansion of the boundaries of fairy tales. Previous works have dealt with either fairy-tale motifs, elements of enchantment, traditional name associations, or any of a number of other specific topics in assessing Dickens's use of fantasy. Stone broadens to define fairy tale as "fairy stories ... folklore, myths, legends, enchantment, dreams, signs, recurrences, correspondences, indeed all of the mysterious murmurings of the invisible world." The key word in this expanded definition is "folklore"; attention is correctly focused on the element in Dickens's writing that Chesterton and Forster took for granted and that with the passage of years has been lost to readers. Dickens drew from every facet of his folklore heritage in his writings, and only through consideration of all areas of superstition, tradition and myth can the importance of Dickens's mixture of reality and fantasy be perceived.

Dickens and the Invisible World is provoking in that it demands a
reassessment of the writer against the backdrop of forgotten folklore. Stone has provided a groundwork for such an analysis by centering our intellectual sights on forgotten facets of folklore that have become so obvious as to be overlooked. Harry Stone has rediscovered the aspect of Dickens's writing that produced its universal appeal: "the fairy-tale quality of his imagination, and the undercurrent of myth, magic and ritual to which it gave birth, link his writings with the works of other great masters of the written word."

Capt. Alton P. Latimer
United States Military Academy
REVIEWS


This handsomely printed festschrift divides neatly into three discrete sections: a brace of essays on general critical concerns; a constellation of six essays on Hawthorne; and a final group of essays on Melville and Poe, four of which focus on "The Fall of the House of Usher." Some contributors exploit Abel's work as a starting point for further investigation, while others either take issue with points in his scholarship or range more widely over central issues of the American Renaissance.

Virgil Lokke begins Section I by discussing Abel's skepticism about New Criticism. According to Lokke, Abel can best be understood as an eclectic critic whose scholarship evinced a keen interest in authorial moral stances although it acknowledged the competing claims of mythic, linguistic, and textual approaches. Lokke having dubbed Abel an exemplary academic critic of his time, Brian Higgins and Hershel Parker argue, in their subsequent polemical essay, for a "New Scholarship" that seeks out the aesthetic implications of historical, biographical, bibliographical, and textual evidence. Many reputable academics take their lumps from Parker and Higgins, especially the New Critics, whose ignorance of textual changes and inattention to the complexity of authorial revision and excision are unflaggingly scored.

Old Manse” round out the Hawthorne section.

A more subtle biographical study introduces Section III: Buford Jones’s essay should silence those who suppose that the last word had been said about the Hawthorne-Melville relationship. Linking for comparative purposes “Hawthorne and His Mosses” and “The Old Manse,” Jones finds a rich thematic and verbal interlocking. These convincing connections enhance the significance of his bibliographical census of Hawthorne-Melville reviews in the *Literary World* (1847-1853). Taking a different juncture in Melville’s life as his subject, Robert Milder argues that Goethe’s comments on daemonology in his *Autobiography* asserted a crucial influence on *Moby-Dick*. Milder’s argument might have been strengthened by acknowledging the wide exposure the concept of the classical daemon received among American Romantics like Poe and Emerson. A complement to this discussion of Goethe’s and Melville’s “Demonic,” Barton Levi St. Armand’s essay attends to Poe’s “angelism” by putting “Israfel” in the context of Gnostic and apocalyptic lore. With the claim that “Israfel” is a secret allegory, St. Armand’s interpretation is similar to Richard Boyd Hauck’s reading of *The Confidence-Man*, a nine-part overview of Melville’s protean figure which suggests that the reader may be the ultimate victim in this fictional con-game. Taking a cue from Abel’s seminal essay on Poe’s classic tale, essays on “The Fall of the House of Usher” complete this section. In point-counterpoint fashion, G. R. Thompson and Patrick Quinn debate the narrator’s reliability, and Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV finds a comic perspective in “Usher,” a possible result of Poe’s tendency to exploit and attack his Gothic legacy.

The editors include a personal memoir of Darrel Abel by Chester E. Eisinger and a selected bibliography of Abel’s writings. In sum, this fitting tribute to a respected scholar addresses many general and specific concerns that occupied Professor Abel’s generation and that continue to engage students of the American Renaissance.

Kent Ljungquist
Worcester Polytechnic Institute


These handbooks will interest students of the American Renaissance, as well as those with more strict concentrations on Hawthorne and Poe. In fact, because Pollin’s subject has in part already seen print, Newman's book might be said to complement *Poe, Creator of Words*, with references to Poe’s critiques of Hawthorne’s tales and her placement of both writers within greater contexts of nineteenth-century literary currents. Pollin and Newman seek to provide keys with which others may gain entrance to their subjects’ creative aims and methods.

As to aims and methods, in *A Reader’s Guide* we encounter fourfold structure in the considerations of Hawthorne’s fifty-four tales. First comes publication history, second the circumstances of composition, next the relationship of the individual story to other Hawthorne works, and, finally, a “review of all significant interpretations ... and profile of critical status.” Newman ultimately furnishes an encyclopedia of many facets: bibliographical, biographical, and analytical. Although some may cavil at her classifications — which exclude, for example “Sights from a Steeple,” “The Hall of Fantasy,” and “P’s. Correspondence”—her book will mightily assist Hawthorne studies for years to come. A more careful proofreading of the bibliography, plus an index would enhance the utility of this book.

Pollin’s book expands his work of the early 1970’s, prepared for the fifty-first annual lecture to the Edgar Allan Poe Society. He wishes to list words originated by Poe, depending primarily on the *OED* for assistance. His aim is laudable: to reveal of untapped depths in Poe’s creative impulse. Motley features crop up, however, in the practical mechanics of Pollin’s method. For example, words derivative from “demon,” “fancy,” “fantasy,” or “vampire” illuminate Poe’s artistic regions, but how much does “anti-Romantic?” The syllabification in words, called up by this last, should prompt us to recall, too, that in hyphenation publishers’ house styles during the nineteenth century
accounted for much. In line with this observation, we note Mudford for *Mudfog* (p. 89). Pollin might also comment upon the confusion of “hare” with “nare” in Harrison’s printing of the Folio-Club prologue (2: xxxvi), an error repeated, although long since rectified by Richard, Mabbott, and Hammond. Curiosities also appear in the list of Pollin’s own publications. Overall, though, this book leads us to a significant portal into Poe studies, that of the writer’s inventiveness with language. From such a book as this, we hope, will ultimately come more extensive studies of Poe’s wordplay — still a much untrodden path.

To conclude: Newman and Pollin give us research tools. Their books will assist the plowing and cultivating of fertile fields in Hawthorne and Poe scholarship. There is value in contemplating the field in prospect. There is also, perhaps greater, worth in the eventual harvests in their uses away from the field, long after the sowing is past.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV The University of Mississippi

For over a hundred years, Sheridan LeFanu (1814-1873) has remained an obscure and enigmatic figure in Anglo-Irish Victorian literature. He is known exclusively as a novelist and short-story writer among the “sensational school” of Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade. Curiously, most writing about LeFanu’s life and works appears in unpublished dissertations and theses. Only William Clinton Loughheed’s 1961 Harvard dissertation, “Joseph Thomas Sheridan LeFanu: A Critical Biography,” provides a thorough and solid account of his life in relation to his works. Now, however, W. J. McCormack offers the first published critical biography of the “Invisible Prince,” as LeFanu came to be known in his last years.

McCormack’s book, possessing some great merits, has some great flaws. His work, like that of Loughheed before him, relies on all of the known manuscript sources — letters, notebooks, and diaries — bearing on LeFanu’s life. McCormack’s book is thus very strong on LeFanu’s life, but his analysis of the works in relation to that life leaves much to be desired. McCormack’s central biographical statement is that LeFanu’s life “might be seen as a tension between two poles — family identity and continuity, and personal isolation and self-questioning” (p. 5). McCormack is undoubtedly right here, but when he attempts to interpret LeFanu’s works as an outgrowth of his experience in the ascendancy class of Victorian Ireland, he fails adequately to ascribe meaning to the literature. McCormack describes LeFanu’s fiction thus: “Essentially the common feature of his experience and of his fictional world is the idea of a society based on non-social assumptions, an experience outwardly social but really isolated and dangerously interior.” Such a biographical reading of LeFanu’s works is filled with peril; and McCormack’s reading of *Uncle Silas* (1864), for all of its complexity, fails to be informative about the novel’s ultimate meaning.

McCormack also fails to provide significant analyses of the five stories comprising the collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), which he rates as second in importance to *Uncle Silas*. Curious, too, is the manner in which McCormack treats LeFanu’s indebtedness to the Gothic tradition — surely the major influence on his writing. In McCormack’s reading of LeFanu’s major works, this aspect is superficially treated.
There are, nevertheless, merits to McCormack’s presentation of LeFanu’s life. He has filled in many gaps in what has been known of LeFanu’s life, and his remarks about the influence of Swedenborg on LeFanu’s major works are cogent and satisfying. McCormack’s bibliographical labors over the LeFanu canon deserve some attention, as he ascribes two items, the short story “Spalatro” and the novella “Loved and Lost,” to LeFanu on the basis of both internal and external evidence.

Taken as a whole, McCormack’s book is a step forward in LeFanu studies and deserves serious attention. The book is beautifully produced with reproductions of portraits and photographs of LeFanu and his family and serves a starting point for lengthy studies of his fiction.

Gary William Crawford
Editor, Gothic Press

“What distinguishes the true sensation genre, as it appeared in its prime during the 1860s, is the violent yoking of romance and realism, traditionally the two contradictory modes of literary perception” (p. 16). Winifred Hughes illustrates this “sensation paradox” by isolating the ingredients of this neglected class of fiction and by noting the negative contemporary critical reactions to the genre.

But why devote an entire book to second-rate novelists — to only one decade? Hughes convincingly affirms the importance of sensation fiction as a phenomenon of the Victorian age — which preached morality but practiced immorality: “the sensation novel was almost entirely restricted to one particular decade in literary history ... because it represents a transitional model, at once anachronistic and prophetic” (p. 70).

In the three chapters devoted to novelists Charles Reade, M. E. Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, and Wilkie Collins, Hughes traces the Victorian movement from moral certainty, characteristic of earlier romances and melodramas, to moral ambiguity, characteristic of late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century fiction. In her final chapter, Hughes emphasizes the significance of the sensation genre by discussing its influences on realistic novels of the 60’s, and finally, on Thomas Hardy’s works. Hardy’s fiction, she says, “offers a fascinating illustration of the ways in which the imagination of a major novelist can work upon and transform the materials of a popular tradition” (p. 187).

A minor weakness in this otherwise useful study is the often unnecessary redundancy. In Chapter 2, for example, the critical objections to various ingredients of sensation fiction tend to repeat the characteristics of the genre isolated in Chapter 1. When Hughes concludes that the major theoretical objection to sensation fiction was “its implausible mixture of the contrary modes of perception: romance and realism” (p. 66), she does not reinforce her earlier thesis so much as she repeats herself. Similarly, in Chapter 6, in the midst of a discussion about Hardy’s revolt against realism, Hughes again describes Victorian melodrama and the change in the “melodramatic vision” accompanying the rise of sensation fiction. Although her point is that Hardy completed the process of transition begun by the
sensation novelists, the section seems digressive and repetitious.

Hughes's intelligent critiques of the individual novels, on the other hand, are perhaps the most outstanding features of *The Maniac in the Cellar*, especially her emphasis on the unconventional and irrational — sexuality (particularly female), repression, violence, masochism, and criminality — until, "'respectability' becomes the closest thing to evil" (p. 150). The author's scholarship is also impressive, providing the reader with a wide spectrum of contemporary reactions to sensation fiction.

That still does not answer the question: why read *Griffith Gaunt, Lady Audley’s Secret, Armadale*, or a work about them. "The final import of the sensation novel is that things are not what they seem, even — in fact, especially — in the respectable classes and their respectable institutions. At the climax of the Victorian era, the sensation novels portray a society in which secrets are the rule rather than the exception, in which passion and crime fester beneath the surface of the official ideal" (p. 190). Because they provide many truths about the Victorian age that contemporary "realistic" fiction attempted to disguise (or refused to acknowledge), sensation novels are, indeed, significant today. For that reason *The Maniac in the Cellar* is an important book, a valuable tool for the Victorian student and critic in an area needing even more exploration.

Natalie Schroeder

The University of Mississippi
Paul Fussell. *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars.*

"Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience." But this familiar sentence issued on the riptide of Renaissance exploration that rendered travel and its differing benefits to young and old both possible and distinctive. Now, according to Paul Fussell, in the rip-off of post-World War II tourism, Lord Verulam's words have become a veritable elegy mocking the impossibility either of education or of experience through the Seven Sheratons from China to Peru, in the hands of the Universal Mickey Mouse, on United look-, feel-, and smell-alikes to destinations in what we call — with an irony of which we may not be wholly aware — *terminals.*

If travel is now defunct, no less so, unfortunately, would appear to be its historical descriptive mode of record stemming from Goldsmith, Boswell-Johnson, and Sterne, through Hazlitt and Stevenson, to Robert Byron, Norman Douglas, Graham Greene, D. H. Lawrence, and Evelyn Waugh. That mode, of course, is the familiar essay, spuriously judged to be only a black sheep against generically- 'purer' poetry and fiction, but which, in its disguise of the travel book of *l'entre deux guerres,* expanded into a (short-) living species of modern literature. Congruent with and essential to the purposes of its creators, the essay (or travel book) is, rather, our repository of displaced forms and myths — amorphous, detached, interlarded; free of preordained, preconceived patterns to develop and alter at its shapers' wills; now terse, now lavish; with or without a precise beginning, middle, and end; lyrical, epic, or dramatic; as fable, lecture, letter, monologue, dialogue, "happening," or cinematic stream-of-consciousness script.

To travel (and the essay-travel book) it is that Fussell says goodbye, paradoxically, in the twenty-one "essays" of *Abroad.* Like a Cubistic collage or montage, the book's pieces may be viewed discreetly or in any order one wishes (and one hopes that more than a few of them will appear alongside their eloquent kin by Eiseley, Forster, Mailer, and Orwell in future composition anthologies); but, of course, grasped in the order in which Fussell has compellingly arranged them — from the initial "Frozen Oranges" to the ominously-titled "The End" — the total effect is more than that of any of its separate parts. With Randall Jarrell, Fussell shares those talents that Helen Vendler has described of writing, "in almost every account, an implicit sus-
pense story” and of seeing “books constantly as stories about human beings.” In addition, Fussell conceives naturally in metaphor so that a figure at the book’s beginning explodes into full, if eerie, flower at the end. Just so, for example, the innocent “sun” and “oranges” of Wilfred Owen — “His head was golden like the oranges / That catch their brightness from Las Palmas sun” — prefigure the all-too-real oranges that freeze in the sunless, rat-ridden, excremental sloughs of World War I trenches; then sprout into the voluptuous heliophily of D. H. Lawrence; and finally flourish as the “emblem of alarm, the Rising Sun of the expanding Japanese empire” of the 1930s when peace gave way to war — after which event travel would degenerate into tourism (and travel books into guides), fruity concentrates wouldn’t be “just for breakfast anymore” but would taste better than the “real thing,” Ports of Call would become our Glubbdubdribs, and “clipping” upon the high seas would not even be a souvenir to those who now jet cabined in air or toss on contemporary Oasis waterbeds.

Fussell recalls Jarrell in one final respect: so comprehensively has his “soul memorized world after world,” so elegantly has he lamented our plummet from elegance, that one is dubious even as one murmurs, “Even so!” For, so long as one scholar-artist can continue to extrapolate the realer than real significance of passports, of our desperately clutching our “Made in Taiwan”’s, or of one’s sticking his arm down an Asiatic toilet to retrieve a wallet; so long as he can reveal literature for the jack-in-the-box world it shockingly is; so long as he can illustrate the cross-fertilization between the seemingly disparate disciplines of the arts and sciences; so long as he can — as Bacon admonished — “prick in some flowers of that he hath learned abroad into the customs of his own country”; so long as he can ‘narrate’ with breathtaking, graceful gusto — in impetuous ellipses; dashes of sentence fragments; suspended clauses; tongue-in-cheek, paragraph-length parenthetical asides — we may indeed believe in a “memory yarn,” and in the velocities of the moment, scan far out a kind of landscape and “Go a Journey,” in more senses than one.

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John Dos Passos occupies a problematic position in the history of twentieth-century American literature. No consensus exists on many basic issues. Should he be considered a "lost generation" writer along with his friends Hemingway and Fitzgerald, or a political precursor of proletarian writers such as John Steinbeck and Richard Wright? Is *USA* a modernist classic worthy of comparison with *Ulysses* and *The Sound and the Fury*, or a curiosity of interest only to literary specialists? What accounts for the decline in quality of Dos Passos's post-*USA* fiction? For his political metamorphosis from socialist investigator of the Harlan County mine conditions to Goldwater Republican?

Townsend Ludington's *John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey* provides a valuable biographical approach to these issues. Working with the cooperation of the Dos Passos estate, Ludington has thoroughly researched his subject. Avoiding the excesses of the "what-Faulkner-had-for-dinner" school of biography, Ludington has written a lucid account of the events of Dos Passos's life. Ludington emphasizes external events — on occasion his descriptions of places Dos Passos visited seem over-long — and rarely speculates on his subject's state of mind or his personal relationships, particularly those involving his two marriages. In light of Hemingway's claim that Dos Passos's marriage to his first wife Katy accounted for the decline in Dos Passos's fiction, more probing might have been appropriate. Still, Ludington's external emphasis seems appropriate to a writer who considered himself in large part a chronicler of the American scene.

Ludington's success as a biographer, however, is frequently overshadowed by his limitations as a critic. Inevitably, the volume raises the dilemmas concerning Dos Passos's political and literary development. Unfortunately, Ludington attempts to explain the myriad seeming inconsistencies by invoking the overly simple principles of individualism in politics and satire in literature.

Ludington's political case is by and large more convincing than his literary position. He argues that Dos Passos's political stances were consistently predicated on opposition to institutions he saw threatening individual liberty. Thus he could enthuse in the 1920s
over a Soviet Union that had replaced a Czarist regime, and in the
1950s and 60s support the Republican right in opposition to what he
saw as a stultifying New Deal Bureaucracy. Ludington notes the
inconsistency of Dos Passos's support for Joseph McCarthy's witch-
hunts, attributing it to a fear of communist domination. One of the
book's best realized sequences centers on Dos Passos's painful with-
drawal from the left during and after the Spanish Civil War, a with-
drawal which alienated him both from friends such as Hemingway
and from many of the most influential critics of the time.

At times Ludington seems to imply that this political situation
undermined Dos Passos's literary reputation. More frequently he
attributes the decline in standing to a failure on the part of critics to
perceive Dos Passos as a writer of satire. The best that can be said for
this thesis is that it explains second-rate works such as the DC trilogy
better than Dos Passos's masterpieces. At times it seems as if Luding-
ton's desire to minimize the change in Dos Passos's political prin-
ciples generates an untenable desire to argue a consistent satirical
aesthetic. Significantly, nearly all of Ludington's evidence support-
ing Dos Passos as a satirist comes from the years following USA. In
fact, Ludington offers little insight into Dos Passos's greatest works.
He devotes just one paragraph to Manhattan Transfer, for example,
although he discusses The Grand Design at length. If he allows more
space to USA, his discussion is more descriptive than analytical.

In fact, Ludington never juxtaposes Dos Passos's work either
with that of the modernist masters (Joyce, Faulkner) or that of the
political and existential rebels (Steinbeck, Wright, Sartre). A reader
relying on his critical descriptions would most certainly find Sartre's
pangyric to Dos Passos as "the greatest writer of our time" incompre-
hensible. This failure to engage the core of Dos Passos's works renders
John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey finally disappoint-
ing. Although it will probably remain the standard source of factual
information, the deep interpretive work on Dos Passos remains to be
done.

Craig Werner
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REVIEW S


When reading the papers from some conference, I am often satisfied not to have attended it. Especially if they carry worthwhile substance, they can be too formidable to take in by ear. Those presented for a “celebration” of Eudora Welty’s achievements — the inaugural function at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi — surely held the audience and probably pleased rather than embarrassed or irritated the guest of honor herself. At least that is a reasonable judgment about the seven collected into a slim book, for which the editors — one clue indicates — did exercise selectivity, on whatever grounds. Perhaps because the editors forestalled the reviewer, none of the seven gives her or him a text for demonstrating as strong an ability to complain as to approve. Likewise, to single out any essay as the jewel seems unfair to the other six. They all make us want to read more of Welty, not just assign her to the academic canon or recommend her to the high explicationists. The recurring admiration for her humor, supported by generous examples, swells that feeling. Though the New Critics have trained us to abhor the biographical “fallacy,” the tributes from two close friends (Reynolds Price and Charlotte Capers) reinforce the sense that the fiction welled up from an authentic, engaging personality whose work continues to deepen and justifies Price in declaring that “an American writer has at last produced a third act in her career.”

Cleanth Brooks — to take the other five contributors by the order of appearance — examines in detail how Welty combines the oral and the written traditions. Focused more narrowly, Michael Kreyling plays up the comedy in The Robber Bridegroom before exploring the underlying seriousness. Without trendy concepts or a doctrinaire tone, Peggy R. Prenshaw traces the interplay of male and female principles within Welty’s characters. Tracing her lineage to the tribal storyteller, William Jay Smith identifies further her ties with the oral mode. Noel Polk sets up the thorniest subject of all to analyze how she projects the “tender savagery of family relationships” and the “fiercious possessiveness of love.” If a born skeptic should notice that her work apparently has not lost any battles with art, such perfection seems possible in the glow of this volume. But those who like to bet on sure things should note that its consensus elects The Optimist’s
Daughter as Welty at her most enduring.

Louis J. Budd

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At the outset it is well, in describing this carefully qualified book, to make a qualification about the title. *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* seems to promise one of those compendious literary chronicles of the nineteenth century, like Joseph Blotner's two-volume biography of Faulkner. Minter gives us no such thing, nor does he intend to, as he makes clear in his preface: "I do not present this book as a compilation of new data on Faulkner's life or a series of new readings of his novels ... I draw on scores of essays, monographs, and books ... I try to subordinate critical discussions of Faulkner's writings to the task of sketching the 'mysterious armature' (to borrow Mallarmé's phrase) that binds Faulkner's life and art together. My claim to the reader's attention is specific, then; and it stems from the story I try to tell — of deep reciprocities, of relations and revisions, between Faulkner's flawed life and his great art." Farther along, Minter elaborates on his methods and assumptions: "I recount some things that are familiar and emphasize some that are not. Among many moments, I try to locate initiatory and shaping experiences; among many guises, I try to discern deeper faces. Even if we believe, as Faulkner probably did, that a book is in some sense a 'writer's secret life, the dark twin of a man,' we know that all relations between a life lived and words written are problematic. In Faulkner's case, they are particularly complicated — in part because his writings are diverse and uneven as well as frequently magnificent, and in part because he was never an easy person to know."

Minter's goal here seems both clearly focused and admirably refined, and, in my opinion, his book fully meets its promise. He seems, however, to be of a critical persuasion which is in disfavor among many Faulkner scholars. That is, he pays tribute to Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* and John T. Irwin's *Doubling and Incest, Repetition and Revenge.* He also cites Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman and various other post-formalist critics. He even brings Freud out into the open. His is, in short, primarily the psychoanalytic approach (and, worse, tainted with structuralist nonsense), and among knowledgeable Faulknerians, the response to this approach is usually: "I didn't learn anything new," where, apparently, *new* means a new fact about Faulkner or his works (or is it possible that these savants have
also thought all the possible thoughts, seen all the possible insights about the life and works?).

The matter is further complicated because the Freudian approach is a slippery one that does often leave nebulous results; furthermore, some of its basic tenets are only too predictable. Thus, among the “initiatory and shaping experiences” that Minter finds in Faulkner’s life is, of course, his struggle not so much with his father as with his great-grandfather, the “Founder”: “Too many things open to founders were closed to descendants; whatever else it might teach, [Faulkner’s] family’s history almost shouted that lesson.” Among the “deeper faces” seen in the “many guises” is, moreover, that of “the dark woman. The dark mother”—(Faulkner’s words about an “autobiographical” character).

Many of Minter’s emphases, then, are familiar. He re-examines the doubling/incest/repetition/revenge pattern which Irwin explored. He notes the burden of the “family romance” which Richard H. King has put into a larger context in A Southern Renaissance. He finds in The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! (most notably) the inadequate parents and neglected children that he thinks Faulkner modeled on his own family. Throughout his life, Minter tells us, Faulkner carried a hidden image of an ideal woman, the concept of his heart’s darling that was embodied, to greater or lesser degree, in Estelle Oldham, Helen Baird, Caddy Compson, Jill Faulkner, Meta Carpenter, Charlotte Rittenmeyer, Joan Williams and Linda Snopes—and that, at least by implication, derived from his mother—and, one must ask, from Mammy Callie Barr? (“Small like Maud Faulkner, Mammie Callie could be stern and formidable [like Maud Faulkner]. But her capacity for feeling and expressing love [unlike Maud] lasted her a century ... and it enabled her to give William tenderness and affection [unlike Maud].”)

But to simplify these emphases or concentrate on them is to miss the value of Minter’s work. Even in the treatment of the mother, for instance, there is great subtlety. Faulkner early turned away from his “failed” father and toward his “strong” mother, Minter tells us. But “what is striking about the clear pattern established in dealing with his parents, beyond the direct ways in which it entered his fiction, are the reversals he worked on it. In his fiction, mothers generally fare no better than fathers, and women perhaps less well than men.” Furthermore, when Faulkner eventually created “an ideal community,” in
“The Bear,” it “is a world without women.” Still, Faulkner’s “long-standing loyalty and continuing dependence on his mother had several sources and several consequences and so must be viewed in different ways, but they derived in part from his early awareness that she believed in him deeply.”

Perhaps the chief value of this work is Minter’s sensitive analysis of the relationship between Faulkner’s experience and personality on the one hand and his work on the other. It does not yield to quick summation; much of its effectiveness is in its nuances, the evocation on Minter’s part of Faulkner’s probable feelings about his work, say, or the extremely cogent selections of quotations from those works. Basically, he shows us a boy who was very happy in his earliest years, then badly hurt and thereby made wary of relationships by strife between his parents, a boy who was inclined, like his mother, to read, and who had a celebrated ancestor who had written. This boy decided to be a writer like his great-grandfather (the founder), and at first was as wary and stiff with his writing (poetry) as he always was with people. Eventually turning to fiction, he “began mastering techniques and strategies that permitted greater displacement and disguise. His art not only became more supple and subtle as it became more indirect; it also became more personal ... The separations and losses [of his life] that enter his poetry primarily as borrowed emotions and borrowed phrases soon began to shape his fiction ... Although he continued to seek a formal, ceremonious life, he experimented in art with the dissolution of everything: one part of the radically venturesome quality of his writing derives from his willingness to brave the loss of all familiar procedures and the disintegration of all familiar forms.”

One would think that almost anyone could learn something from such an analysis. And here I must differ from several other reviewers of this book, particularly (oh, the anxiety of influence!) with that venerable and perceptive collaborator with Faulkner on The Portable Faulkner, Malcolm Cowley (New York Times Book Review, 22 February 1981). In addition to quarreling with Minter’s style (and perhaps Minter does load his text with too many quotations), Cowley states that, after Blotner’s biography and Cleanth Brooks’s two books on Faulkner’s works, no one else can add anything worthwhile on either subject. On the contrary, both Blotner and Brooks have been very chary of a psychological, not to speak of psychoanalytic, approach to Faulkner’s life and work, which, of course, is not reprehensible in itself and has not kept them from making tremendous contributions to
Faulkner scholarship. Still, it is the relationship of the author to his work that underlies most of the fascination with literature and the criticism of it; and the psychoanalytical approach is one of the most fruitful of our times. Caucer's contemporaries, or Shakespeare's, probably speculated on the blend of humors in a writer's constitution. We almost instinctively look to the relationships with fathers and mothers. Five hundred years from now another "instinctive" approach to personality and authorship will doubtless inform literary scholarship. For the present books like John T. Irwin's, Judith Wittenberg's (*Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography*) and Minter's are adding greatly to our understanding of Faulkner and his work. Irwin's book, brilliant as it is, gets lost eventually in the planes of the Freudian triangles. Wittenberg puts into illuminating juxtaposition many details of the life and work but depends too heavily on the "rivalry" between Faulkner and his brother Dean. On balance, Minter's work, because of its sensitivity to personality and art, its broad and subtle conception of its principles, and its cool tenacity of mind is the most satisfactory of this "new wave" of interpretive scholarship.

Evans Harrington

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In this new and important study of William Faulkner's best works, John Pilkington offers his readers original and provocative criticism of the nine novels published between 1929 and 1942 and set in the famous Yoknapatawpha County. Sartoris, The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary, Light in August, Absalom, Absalom!, The Unvanquished, The Hamlet, and Go Down, Moses comprise the heart of Faulkner's saga of life in his corner of northern Mississippi. They also are the works in which the novelist explored most thoroughly the verities of the human heart, the evil that lay within man himself, and according to the critic, advocated "traditional humanistic values" (297).

Pilkington demonstrates how the novelist applied his creative imagination to hard historical fact to convey an impression of how contemporary life is shaped by forces of the past: "Faulkner realized that if life is to have any profound meaning for the individual, that meaning must be reached through history" (169). By establishing the two poles of history at the time of the Civil War and the time of his own writing, "Faulkner learned how the past could be made to illuminate the problems of the present and how the polarities of history could be made to measure motion and the quality of life" (33). Faulkner also revealed much about the materials of history and how historians approach the task of recording it. By having the same story, or at least fragments of the same story, told by a variety of narrators such as in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!, Faulkner showed how difficult it is to produce an accurate record by piecing together bits of truth tainted by many human vessels. Faulkner placed the burden of understanding the meaning of history upon the reader himself, because the reader is forced to sift through the scraps of evidence provided, analyze the sources, draw his own conclusions, and in the process become a participant, to be touched himself by the forces of the past.

At the practical level Pilkington offers a glimpse of the novelist in his workshop taking the facts at his disposal, filling in the gaps, forming a work of art to make history relevant to the individual. There is a clear summary of the dramatic family history of the novelist that became the background for Sartoris, the true story from which Faulkner created the bizarre tale of Temple Drake and Popeye in
Sanctuary, the record of extinct settlements in Lafayette County that Faulkner knew, the real lynching, and the life of Faulkner's own Mammy Callie Barr who was given a fictional counterpart in Molly Beauchamp. Faulkner found in his own time and place all of the hard facts that he needed; what set him apart from others was that he put in the hard work and had the talent to lift those facts to universal significance.

As a work of criticism, The Heart of Yoknapatawpha attempts to bring Faulkner and his best works to a comprehensible, human level. Plot summaries are given where needed, and in the case of Faulkner's convoluted narration, this is often. Themes that tie the novels together are explicated, but there is no artificial wrenching of the works to fit any preconceived notion about them. Inconsistencies, careless slips, and ambiguities of meaning are noted, but they do not deny the thoroughly-explained successes of the novelist. Some of Faulkner's characters, such as those in As I Lay Dying, Pilkington contends, may not have been intended as epic characters but simply used by the novelist to remark upon the naturalism of human sexuality. Faulkner's unique style has flaws as well as virtues. Faulkner's own human feelings, hard struggles as a writer, and his sometimes flippant comments about some of his works help to bring him down to a level where other humans, including other writers, can identify with him and thus perhaps find more meaning in his works. The deification of Faulkner, as so often has happened, serves only to render him disservice; Pilkington does not wish to perpetuate that disservice.

Pilkington presents Faulkner's fiction as "more a continuation of logical development from the American nineteenth century than the outpouring of a radical innovator or experimenter" (295). Faulkner had before him, to name only a few, the frontier romances of James Fenimore Cooper, the social chronicles of Ellen Glasgow, the rise and fall of great families in the writings of Edith Wharton and William Dean Howells, the works of several humorists of the Old Southwest, and the fragmented style of Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio. Pilkington believes that Faulkner's "contribution to American literature rests not so much upon his ideas about artistic form, his narrative skills, the devices of his fiction, or even his stylistic accomplishments — important though these matters are — as it does upon the intensity and sincerity with which he has depicted the complexities of human experience measured by the progression of history" (295).

The author of this study has produced a useful book for the novice
who wants an introduction to Faulkner and his works, for the scholar who wants fresh insights about the well-known novels, and for the teacher of Southern history, such as myself, who wants a manageable single volume for his own reference and to recommend to students. Pilkington’s essays are masterpieces of organization and clarity, but they allow the power and passion of the genius novelist to pull ahead, to set his works apart from the confines of his time, his own limited humanity, and become timeless, multi-layered portraits of all humanity. Pilkington makes the novels comprehensible without diminishing the fire of their creator. As long as the Faulkner novels still pique the interest of readers, *The Heart of Yoknapatawpha* will be a valuable guide to students of history, of literature, and of life.

E. Stanly Godbold, Jr.  
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In this handsome collection of reviews Dollarhide captures the quality of life in the arts of Mississippi during a critical period. The 250 reviews were taken from over a thousand that he wrote for the Jackson newspaper. Willie Morris has praised Dollarhide's ability to reveal that this state "has long fostered a climate of artistic genius unsurpassed by any other state in the union." Everyone knows of the major writers, artists, and musicians who have come from Mississippi, but too often the emphasis has been on "from." A William Faulkner and a Leontyne Price are "discovered" in Paris or New York. *Of Art and Artists* forcefully reminds us that Mississippi is a community of people interested in the arts, and further it is a community in which artists and those who love the arts are brought together as friends and colleagues. Again and again Dollarhide's essays highlight the activity and support which artists, patrons, and friends give one another. For instance, Marie Hull devoted her life not only to her work but to teaching and to promoting the work of others. As Dollarhide writes: "My friend and yours, Marie Hull of Belhaven Street, could easily win the title of Busiest Person Around. Besides teaching as many private pupils as time will allow, she paints — sometimes for twelve hours at a run — travels, and pursues about as lively an interest in the world of art as anyone could have." On the very next page Dollarhide describes a showing of oils by Andrew Bucci sponsored by the McCartys, the best known potters in the state. Dollarhide's column, "Of Art and Artists," played no small part in putting the community of artists in touch with itself, especially as the column expanded from literature to the visual arts and music.

The sense of a friendly and active community of people emerges from reading straight through a large group of the reviews, but *Of Art and Artists* is the kind of book which entices us to turn to the index to look for discussions of particular writers and artists. The book is divided into three sections, Writers and Writing, Art and Artists, and Music and Theatre. Because Dollarhide is a professor of Renaissance literature it is not surprising that some of his best essays are found in the first section. He was one of the first critics to recognize the genius of Flannery O'Connor when other critics had confined her to "Southern Gothic." Eudora Welty is a special friend, and it is not surprising
that Dollarhide’s review of Losing Battles is among the most perceptive of that difficult work.

Some of the strongest columns engage controversial issues. The column for 12 July 1964 deals with pornography, a difficult subject for readers of the Jackson newspaper even to contemplate in the abstract. But here as elsewhere Dollarhide shows himself a worthy successor to the greatest of all popular reviewers, Addison. Like Addison, he can help an interested but untrained audience understand works of art and major literary values.

Mississippi is undoubtedly best known for its writers, but Of Art and Artists records the growth of a community of first rate painters, sculptors, and potters. Included in this collection is a review of the very first show by Malcolm Norwood, who created the strongest art department in Mississippi at Delta State University. Dollarhide focuses on professionals somewhat at the expense of Mississippi’s many primitive artists, but he does more than justice to Theora Hamblett, and the other primitives have found their own champions.

Leontyne Price, of course, dominates the section on Music and Theatre. One column recounts for Mississippians her smashing success in London, and another recounts her appearance at Rust College, where “she sang, the great voice swelling up, unaccompanied, in the new building, filling it, the words very simple but deeply felt by the singer and her rapt audience: ‘This little light of mine, gonna shine, let it shine’.”

The community of writers and artists of Mississippi shines throughout this volume, but part of the luster comes from the polish of Dollarhide’s own prose. In these reviews we see the seemingly effortless grace of a writer who had to meet a weekly deadline for over twenty years. Yet always the subject, not the author, stands out. Of Art and Artists abounds in beautifully reproduced photographs of writers and artists which complement the elegance of the reviews. The book is handsomely laid out in double columns with a striking cover design by Bill Lester of Delta State. A bibliographer once remarked that we should treat books like mistresses and love them for their bodies as well as for their souls. On both counts Of Art and Artists is worth the price.

Jeffrey T. Gross

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