Pater and His Younger Contemporaries

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When Walter Pater exhibited the young men of Oxford to burn, like the stars of the French Pâtéde, with a "hard, gemlike flame," he was challenging them in the concluding paragraphs of Studies in the History of the Renaissance to devote their lives to a new ideal, to the search for beauty, and "the love of art for its sake." Unfortunately, his description of the aesthetic life seems to have seduced many of his younger contemporaries into the pursuit of naked beauty up the stairs of the ivory tower. That was not the life Pater had meant to describe, but confusion persisted, and until recently his reputation suffered. T. S. Eliot's essay on Pater is representative of the disarray in which his writings were held during the decades after World War I. Eliot found Pater's novel, Marius the Epicurean, a "hodge-podge" because his mind was "incapable of sustained reasoning"—which meant for Eliot and his readers that Pater was primarily neither a philosopher, a literary critic, a classicist, nor a master of any other systematic discipline. Further, because Pater's mind was "marshy" and because he had confused art and life in his studies in The Renaissance, Eliot charged him with the blame for a number of "untidy lives" among his self-proclaimed disciples in the nineties. So, tarred with decadence and covered with the feathers of too many disciplines, the Paterian corpus was borne from academia in derision.

But despite Eliot's dismissals, the influence of Pater's aesthetic ideal on modern literature has been extensive, though not yet fully documented. In particular, his ideal of the gem-like flame, the moment of aesthetic ecstasy isolated within the flux of sensations, seems to have had a pervasive influence on many who read him. In addition to Eliot—reestablishing the religious significance of the Paterian "moment"—poets as diverse as Hopkins, Yeats, Dowson, Johnson, Symons, Wilde, Pound, Stevens, Auden, MacNeice and novelists such as James, Conrad, Woolf, Joyce, Lawrence, and Proust have exhibited Pater's influence. And among artists and aestheticians, critics and historians of art, George Santayana's and Bernard Berenson's experience of being dazzled as undergraduates at Harvard by Pater's Renaissance seems not unusual. Although Pater missed the chance in 1888 to admit the future historian to his lectures, in after years Berenson testified that Pater's mythic and imaginary portraits "revealed to me what from childhood I had been instinctively tending toward.... It is for that I have loved him since youth and shall be grateful to him even to the House of Hades where, in the words of Nausicaa to Odyssey, I shall hail him as god. He was he who encouraged me to extract from the chaotic succession of events in the common day what was wholesome and sweet, what fed and sustained the spirit."  

I

The principal route of Pater's influence on twentieth-century literature led from the decadents to Yeats. Richard Le Gallienne pays tribute to the centrality of Pater among the literati of the fin de siècle: "Among the men... who were rapidly putting on immaturity under our very eyes, perhaps the most important of all, as in certain directions the most influential, was... Walter Pater. Mr. George Moore has put himself on record more than once to the effect that Pater's 'Marius the Epicurean' is the most beautiful book in the English tongue. This was the opinion also of many young men in the '90s.' In his Confessions of a Young Man, Moore had praised Pater's novel as "the book to which I owe the last temple of my soul," declaring that he shared with the novel "the same incalculable belief that the beauty of material things is sufficient for all the needs of life." Whatever preconceptions these young men of the nineties may have brought to Marius, owing to the construction they put on the aestheticism of The Renaissance, the beauty of its style, if not its vision of ideal love, remained for them undiminished despite the changing taste of the times: "Three or four years ago I reread Marius the Epicurean, 1. "Arnold and Pater," Selected Essays: New Edition (New York, 1909), pp. 182-90. First published in 1909.
3. For a study of this relation as well as an outline of Pater's thought see my "Pater, Hopkins, and the Self," PEN (Fall 1974), 1-5.
5. The Romantic '90s (New York, 1925), p. 97; John Pick, "Divergent Disciples of Walter Pater," Thought, XXIII (March 1948), 125.
Of the genuinely talented Rhymers, only Yeats lived long enough eventually to be troubled by the exclusion of his most interesting moments, for he left him, as he says, "alone amid the obscure impressions of the senses." In his *Autobiography*, he attempted to explain something of the tragedy in the lives of two of the most gifted Rhymers, Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson, precisely in terms of this obsession with a "pure" beauty "separated from all the general purposes of life. They made it in their writing, said Yeats, "what Arnold has called that 'morbid effort,' that search for 'perfection of manner', the 'perfection of the unperfect', and so unite this to that perfection of form, sought this new, pure beauty, and suffered in their lives because of it." Just as Pater's writings had extended the premises of Arnold's, Rossetti's, and Ruskin's views of art, so with the Rhymers there occurs a certain drawing out of attitudes that seem to permit almost exclusively to the "Conclusion." Although the "Conclusion" was merely a prologue to Pater's broader concern with the cultural heritage, it more than any other document sums up his influence on his disciples. In his *Memoirs*, Yeats does cite the "Ainmula Vagula" chapter of Marius as an influence upon himself and the Rhymers. Unfortunately, though avidly read, the novel was viewed merely as giving an antique setting to the modern aesthetic doctrines of the "Conclusion." In the seventies, certainly, it was assumed that effect in a broad popular sense had been a failure. Pater's work could be compared to the "success" of the eighties and nineties, one could justly accuse him of being culpably vague about aesthetic ideals.

But no more "corrective" succeeded in altering Pater's image. Accordingly Yeats blamed the "attitude of mind" expressed in *Marius* rather than in the "Conclusion," for putting the Rhymers on the "tightrope" of intensity. The Rhymers saw only the solitary figure of Marius, isolated from life as if on some high-wire, balancing between birth and death a whole dreamworld of ideally exquisite passions. They loved those choice moments of revelation or near revelation extracted from common events; their spirits soared at the suggestion of a new and mossa, but they were not interested in everyday reality. Davidson might aestheticize telegraph wires and factory chimneys; Symons might find inspiration in the theatre, the dance hall, the cafe; and Le Gallienne might allude to the "iron lines of the Strand" (the gaullishness); but in general the Rhymers tended to avoid in as far as possible any contamination by quotidian life. They learned from the writings of Pater the paradoxical lesson that beauty was both the supreme manifestation of culture and yet radically independent of that culture. They looked to an inner vision, and drifted ever deeper into their private world of rared emotions.

Ernst Barlach, in The Road of Reason, ideal love and the vanity of life, produced in his "Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae" (1896) the definitive expression of alienation. The distance from the "Conclusion" to this expression of the brevity of life and its illusion was shorter than Pater had realized. *Marius*, too, with its almost mystical love of religious ritual and its beatific vision of the saintly Cecilia and the Christian community was easily assimilated into Dowson's despairing Catholicism. Then, the rhymers' ecstatic ecstasies in verse, such as one in Dowson's "Extreme Unction" in which the phrase "all the passages of sense" is taken from Pater's description of the last sacrament. Certainly Pater's fatal Lady Liss shad- owed not only Dowson's profane loves but also his sacred ideal. Cyanara, who as Adelaide Johannsen was his twelve-year-old epigone of innocence. Failing to capture this beatific vision of purity, Dowson stumbled toward death with, in Symons' memorable phrase, the face of a "demoralized Keats." Or perhaps he was more like a Pater who had visited the Frame of Veronique, Baring-Gould, and Gautier and on whose return the sea change was apparent, the taint of mortality was upon him. And so Dowson cries: "Unto us they belong / Us the bitter and gay, / Wine and women and song." He was dead of too- being drowned in death as the moderns.

Lionel Johnson in his self-imposed isolation was another casualty. He rose at six in the evening, spent his waking hours in his library in the company of whisky, and went to bed at dawn. Like Pater's Sebastian van Storeck, he hated his image, and after the age of twenty-one would not allow himself to be photographed or drawn. But Pater was worth the effort of a visit, and Johnson reported after one such excursion that the master had "talked theology and praised Anglicanism for its "evergreen doubt and sober mysticism." "Sharing religious mysticism and a tendency to distill the intellectual aspects of religion into gracious sentiment, the two also shared a style sensitive to the precise value of words, a style of brevity and precision. Pater described Johnson's meaning as "untorchably most gracious friend." But the Paterian contrast between the ideal wholeness of soul and the life of the senses becomes in Johnson's religious poetry a tragic conflict exacerbated by the introspective
melancholia of his spiritual isolation. Although he under- stood Pater's call for an aesthetic in harmony with cultural norms, Johnson almost despite himself felt the sinister undertow of a shadow self, the Dark Angel: "Through thee, the gracious Muses turn / To Freyja, O mine Enemy! / And all thing things of beauty burn / With flames of evil spirit." On the other hand, Gervase, too, had spoken of the "ecstasy" of burning, but his enthusi- astic desire in the seventies to explore the possibilities of aesthetic life had, with the Rhythms, entered into a new and terrifying phase which, tragically, Johnson could not escape. His last years were spent in a state of physical, and finally, spiritual, exhaustion. As he fell, fractured his skul, and died. He was thirty-five.

Because of difference of opinion and the clash of per- sonalities, the Rhythms gradually separated in 1894. But Yeats never abandoned his belief in Paterian intensity: rather, as his contemplative passions became active he quit the ivory tower, descended into the marketplace, and discovered life anew. As a young man, Yeats had been inspired both in his portrayal of the Muse as Destroyer and in his submission to Man's Gomme by Pater's description of the insatiable Lena Liva. In Marina, the epiphany of this goddess, which only tentatively struc- tured the loosely knitted portraits of The Renaissance, be- came the high point of a concentrated anathema. Here Venus (and her varied manifestations as Faustina and assorted courtiers) is contrasted with Saint Cecilia (anticipated in psyche and Wisdom). Harlot and saint, both suggest fertility or rebirth, but in the virginal yet maternal Cecilia- the pagan ritual of slaughter and the old, pagan sense of the earth as a mother become personified in another sort of muse, a "new view."13 Yeats seemed eventually to have found in Cecilia that Unity-of-Being toward which he aspired and to be inspired by that holy lady was less Pater's ideal than his timely warning.

In "A Prayer for My Daughter," Yeats sought the cus- tom and ceremony of Cecilia's holy house for his daughter Anne, who, he prayed, might also be learned in "courtesy" and have "that native innocence and beauty, are born "In custom and ceremony." Anne's "radical in- nocence of soul and her ritualistic bridegroom is a Yeasen elaboration of the psyche / Cecilia ideal as Pater had portrayed it. In this poem Yeats no longer found "the art of art" in aestheticism, but a storm, a gale may come howling in from the Atlantic, but

Anne quietly sleeps, guarded by what Pater would call "hecmon oikos," for whom some consequent dead. Here, I say, is the principle of custom raised to the level of heroism.

Among those worthy dead lay Robert Gregory, who had been eulogized by Yeats the preceding year in the same house with the same bitter wind drizzling the snow. Although Yeats had rejected the intensity of the feminine ethos, he utilized the intensity \death equa- tion in his elegy for Gregory, creating after the fashion of Pater a portrait of the artist dead in his prime. Greg- ory burned with the Paterian "intensity" of a true Renais- sance artist, his body a perfect man. Like an aristocratic Irish version of Pater's Duke Carl, Gregory went out to meet life with courtesy, to conquer it with ceremony, and to die with his youth (though in fact he was nearly forty) still upon him.

It seems clear that for the major modernists, the signifi- cance of the nineties lay in the misrepresentation of the Paterian moment of "ecstasy" as a revolt against "theor- ic" (the climate of nineteenth-century philosophy and morals) and as a celebration of pure sensation and form, as a "de-idealizing" of a type of experience which went all the way back to Wordsworth's "spots of time." Just why they come to this aestheticism and-Gaistc Aestheticism, as it was called, may in part be explained by the fact that these younger writers no longer wished to admit their debt to any Victorian. To protect his image as a modernist revolution, Yeats' close friend, Ezra Pound, covered up his embarrassment at Pater's early influence with the patronizing confession that he "is not dull in the least. He is adolescent reading, and very excellent ball." But in "The Paterian Sensibility," Pound, "Pound's, "Vorticism," and "Vortographs," Pound, who would have been a patron of the "elegant" and "moral" when he wrote the last of these essays, credits "the im- mediate ancestry" of his school to Pater's dictum that "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music."

Pater quotes Stendhal as similarly as himself, but Pater's in- sight is accorded priority, doubtless owing to Pound's ex- perimentation with the rhythm-phrase. Pater's aser- tion that "In its primary aspect, a great picture has no more definite message for us than an accidental play of . . .

16. "Miette and Cavaliere": alluded to in Yeats’ elegy for Robert Gregory and gory and for his call for an aesthetics of unmanned and his tragically "fallen" generation.

17. Marina, ii, 106.

18. Letters of Pater, x, xxv.


20. Thus all the "essence of pure perception," and "the sensuous mental of each art being with a special phase

patterns of form and color seen and felt directly are su- perior to symbols used merely to suggest some system of economics." Not only does Pound’s phrasing here echo Pater’s "Conclusions" in par- ticular ("theory or idea or system’), but when Pound defines the poetic image as "a radiant node or cluster, a VORTIXEN, from which, and through which, all thought into which, ideas are constantly rushing," he both adapts Pater’s metaphor of the gem-like flame and reasserts the Paterian perception of consciousness as a "whirlpool" (for this image Yeats also had used). If the poets of the twenties and thirties have imitated the idealism of their debt to Pater, poets in the first decades of the following century who proclaimed the kinetic gospel of vital forces were also his heirs—the Paterian flame, "point of purest en- ergy," became the Poundian vort ("point of maximum energy). Small wonder Yeats was led to inquire a study apprehensively: "Did Pater foreshadow a poetry, a philo- sophy, where the individual is nothing, the flux of The Cantos of Ezra Pound?"22

Pound’s fellow countryman Wallace Stevens was equally indebted to what, afterwards, he called the "deadlygoing-on of Walter Pater," adding that it "would be impossible nowadays, I suppose, to conceive anything at all in that direction.22 Certainly the Pater- ian sensibility informed Stevie’s rich sensuous first vol- ume, Harmonium (1915), especially "Tea at the Palau of Hoon" which may be cited as echoing the aesthetic self- sufficiency of Pater’s "supreme, artistic view of life." Pater is again present in "Two or Three Ideas" and in The Waste of Years’ "morality of the right sensation," as well as in "the impossible possible philosophers’ ears" of "Asides on the Oobe," and above all in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" which tentatively sanctions Pound’s "magical moments" and Pater’s "ideal instances." "Perhaps there are coin of excellence however, there are moments of awakening / Extreme, fortuitous, personal, in which / We more than awaken." Pater’s influence on Stevens may be traced at least in part to his Harvard mentor, Santan- yana, friend of Berenson and of Pater’s ardent disciple, Lincoln Steffens, who himself was a kind of aesthetic whose comic "sense of beauty" shaped itself in the intellectual milieu of Ruskin and Pater, Santanyana began a poet of fragile sonnets not unworthy of Edmund Gosse. During Stevens’ Harvard years, Santanyana’s Sense of Beauty (1896) and Interchange of Pator and Santanyana’s菲(1900) was an anachronistic "materialistic Platonism" which blended neo-gnostic naturalism with the metaphysics of the flux and elevated poetry to the seat of religion—all of which left a lasting impression on Stevens’ aesthetics. In one of his later poems, "In an Old Philosopher’s Inn" Stevens pays tribute to Santanyana and depicts the "morbid sensations and death in terms similar to Pater’s des- cription of Marius’ last illness. Such lines as "The threshold, Rome, and that most merciful Rome / Beyond, the two alike in the make of the mind" forcefully recall Pater’s description of the earthy city and the Rome on high.

When Pound set out to "bring poetry up to the level of prose," he was, of course, thinking not only of the French poets but of the sensuous world of "Pater’s" world and he may have guessed that Pater’s influence was greater in the novels of the twen- tieth century than on its poets. Possibly Henry James best expressed the paradoxical response of the emerging twen- tieth-century novelist when in an 1891 letter to hear after Pater’s death he parodied the image of the gem-like flame and yet concluded with a line of absolutely genuine praise: "Faint, pale, embarrassed, exquisite Pater! He reminds me, in the disturbed midnight of our actual lit- erature, of one of those lucid matches which you place, on going to bed, near the candle, to show you, in the darkness, where you can strike a light: he shines in the uneasy gloom—vaguely, and has a phosphorescence, not a flame. But I agree with you that he is not the fit- tlest—no, but of the longer time." Certainly one reason for Pater’s durability is in the distinguishing technical characteristic of his prose romances, their emphasis not on action, but on attitudes. He does not render immedi- ate gesture and utterance, but their temperamental equiv- alents, and so is, in a sense, the "true" prose novel end his stress on the rendering of impressions, on character and point of view. Writers such as James, Con- rad, Ford, and Woolf, translating into fictional technique the concepts of self and time explored by William James and Henry James, were impressed in Pater’s preoccupa- tions by nearly a quarter century.

Soon after James first "took possession" of London, he met Pater and found him "far from being as beautiful as his own prose." The two had the opportunity of conversing at "literary tea-drinkings" and dinner parties; at one such gathering for J. S. Sargent, Violet Paget observed "Pater limping with gout and Henry James wrinkling his forehead as usual for tight


boots, and a lot of artistry buzzing about." As early as 1873 James had wanted to revitalize Pater's Renaissance, but he had not known how to do it. By 1897 Pater was writing:

"...yet 1897 is the year in which I am beginning. A "Bible of Letters" as the exponent of the life-in-art doctrine; and by 1881 the Paterian exhortation for a "quickened sense of life" and a "quickened, multiplied consciousness" is echoing in his description of Isabella Archer's "quickened consciousness" and "multiplied life.

James, sharing with Pater a celibate dedication to art, was likewise an aesthetic observer, a spectator of life, re-creating that "intellectual and emotional richness of phrase—which mixed with un-Paterian touches of the colloquial—the multiplicity and intensity of his personality.

A few years later Pater's influence became equally evident in Joseph Conrad's 1879 "Preface" to The Nigger of the Narcissus: "A work that aspireth, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line." With this brash confutation of dicta from the "Giorgione" and "Style" essays, Conrad introduces his famous symbolist manifesto saturated with verbal echoes from Pater's "Preface" in its final paragraph (to leap to the end) Conrad assimilates two of Pater's most striking sentences describing Giorgione's "ideal instant." The verbs "arrest" and "pause" and the phrases "a sigh, a smile" and "all the truth of his original" ("is a look, a smile" and "all the fulness of . . . of life"). As he was finishing The Nigger, Conrad stylishly described to Edward Garnett in a letter (November 18, 1896) a Cambridge don who admired his work: "He—I fancy—is not made in the image of God like other men but is fashioned after the pattern of Walter Pater which, you cannot but admit, is a much greater distinction." Virginia Woolf's absorption in the "moment of being" likewise betrays an indebtedness to Pater. In Modern Fiction she portrays the mind in true Paterian fashion as receiving "as many visions—impossible, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel"—and in "The Moment: Summer Night" she describes the "terror, the exultation as the walls of the moment open and close." Woolf tells us, "if not the most Paterian of all, the most Paterian of all" (Woolf 1957: 92). Virginia Woolf, who substitutes the even more Paterian "extravagance" (for the second noun in this pair), Clarissa Dalloway herself might serve as an excellent fictional equivalent to Pater's awareness that "not to discriminate every moment some passion takes atone in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic division of forces on their way, is, if not foolhardy, to live for ever to find our feet before evening." Even more typical of Pater's metaphysics of multipersonal selfhood and its gem-like confluence in Woolf's delineation of a series of Clarissa-selves which attempt to consolidate, as she describes it in a Paterian passage, into "one centre, one diamond" elsewhere as in In the Voyage Out and The Waves, Woolf develops another aspect of the multiplicity of self, utilizing the theme of the mythic double much as Pater had done in Mencius.

Woolf, who incidentally had been taught Greek by Pater's sister Clara, "very white and shrivelled" she described her, explicitly acknowledged her debt to Pater in the "Preface to Orlando in which she thanked the friends who had helped in the writing of the book, and gazing with those dead "and so illusionist's that scarcely dare name them, yet no one can read or write without being perpetually in the [bank] debt." Pater's name rounds out her brief list; and for good reason, since Orlando not only displays a very Paterian interest in the relation of the present moment to the changing flux of time and experience, but the hero-heroine is a symbolic figure of multiple selfhood who, like Pater's Mona Lisa, spans the centuries and epiphanies history in a cultivated vision of the present flow of images. Woolf had praised Pater's "vision" of Leonardo da Vinci—a vision, such as we get in a good novel where everything contributes to bring the writer's conception as a whole before us. Only here, in the essay, where the bounds are so strict and the facts have to be used in their nakedness, the true writer like Walter Pater makes these limitations yield their own quality." Though Woolf felt compelled to note that "nowadays—Stevens used identical ad verbal disclaimer—"nobody would have the courage to embark on the once-famous description of Leonardo's lady," she cannot resist either quoting Pater's purple panel or berating Max Beerbohm for failing to write like Pater. But Woolf admired that polyvalent and purple "art" of "the" (my emphasis) Paterian, the only living Englishman who ever looks into these volumes of, of course, a gentleman of Polish extraction.

Sensing the uniqueness of individual experience as basic to fiction, Pater nevertheless failed to explore the possibilities inherent in the first-person narrator. But for that, his imaginary portraits might have provided the "new philosophy of history" and the "outlook on the whole world" Pater wanted, and the "outlook on the whole world" Pater wanted, and the "outlook on the whole world" Pater wanted, and the "outlook on the whole world" Pater wanted, and the "outlook on the whole world" Pater wanted, and the "outlook on the whole world" Pater wanted, and the "outlook on the whole world" Pater wanted, and the "outlook on the whole world"... Pater even noticed those moments when Pater stumbled by technical error toward the twentieth century (by saying "the child of whom I am writing" instead of "the child of whom Floria was thinking") as his third-person mask slipped halfway into first-person narration.

III

Pater alone among the major Victorian prose-poets seemed to reject the Victorian conception of art as quasi-erotic and to urge in its stead the morality of pure sight and sensation. Pater alone conceived of the revelation of personality (Marius' and Lisa's) in terms of mythic archetypes. But because these insights have become so widely assimilated and hidden within the modern sensibility, the literal mind might question the propriety or maybe the sobriety of claiming that this impotent Oxford don (pater of no little feeling) fathored the future. Yet circumstances suggest that when Proust goes among his memories of Albertine and found the ego to be "composed of the superimposition of our successive states," each "fresh memory" bringing a "different Albertine," he was aware of how Mona Lisa had embodied the sum of the flux; perhaps aware too of how Marius had gathered successive visions of Cecilia and her equivalents or antitheses. Or again, as the ultimate source of Woolf's multipersonal self, of her sense of the divinity of time in contrast to the "moment of being," of her emphasis upon the androgyny and upon the intensity / death equation (all but embodied in Clarissa Dalloway and exemplified in herself), and of her Ezra Poundian interest in the primary significance of rhythm and syntax, Pater stands as the Ur-modern. But he is a modern whose generous existential contributions often lie beyond the range or compass of sources either peripheral or direct; rather, he exists as a "preacher-source" in unacknowledged, subliminal associations which have combined with other influences and emphasized the extraordinary light, counten Thousand-year threads lead back to him, as for example D. H. Lawrence's Poetry of the Present which describes a supercharged Paterian intuition of "the immediate, instant self"; the "quivering, nimble, happy heart of the present, this is the quick of Time. This is the immanence. The quick of the universe is the pulsating, carnal self, mysterious and palpable." To imagine Pater murmuring this to a friend would be (one

27. The Portrait of a Lady, Chapters VII and XXI. In The Tragic Muse (1895) the so-called "Montepeque-Wheeler-Wilde: whatever the source of this idea, "Gustave de Lavaud" has his closest Victorian analogue in Pater's writings and the initial unexpectedness and subsequent mysterious longing; and the blossoms gathered for decoration, as to a mistress, on their dooryard. Perhaps Proust even noticed those moments when Pater stumbled by technical error toward the twentieth century (by saying "the child of whom I am writing" instead of "the child of whom Floria was thinking") as his third-person mask slipped halfway into first-person narration.
hope) more parody than truth; yet Pater did suggest something not unlike it.

James Joyce, enraged by the criticisms in Aquinas, Vico, and whatever, might also be described as the beneficiary, preeminently so, of Pater-as-praecursour. Where Joyce's parody of Pater's style in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode in *Ulysses* is truly comic, the postcard Joyce sent his brother, a "philosopher," of Pater he is describing, was more heartless, picturing it as if the distorted face and swollen brass nose of the Brera Museum gate knocker (in Finsgagge Wake Pater's college is paralleled as "Rutins-nose" and "Brazenae"). Yet Joyce's 1902 "portrait" of James Clarence Mangan is Patresque both in its rhythms and in its lyric love of beauty; and not only does Joyce, in comparing Mangan's brooding lady to the Mona Lisa, utilize Pater's intuitions (a figure of "many lives", words ("presence", "delicacy", "lust", "wreniness"), and phrases ("fourth day visions and vivid dreams, and that strange stillness"); Pater: "strange thoughts and fantastical reveries and exquisite passions"); Joyce: "embodiment of that idea, Pater: "embodiment of the . . . idea"), but he also explicitly describes the Irish poet himself as a questing Paterian hero: "he seems to seek in the world . . . what is there in no satisfying measure or not at all." 144 In the concluding paragraphs of this essay, Joyce borrows Pater's myth of the exiled pagan gods reborn in Pico della Mirandola's thought. Incomprehensibly to describe Mangan (unread yet imaginatively vivid), verbally echoing the elegant confirming affirmation of Pater's study. Joyce's unconscious caricature of the heroic Pico in the fecund-bodied Mangan with his confounded learning, puffed horses, happy pants, and early death, may possibly anticipate such later parodies as Finnegan's comic death and rebirth, in which case the Paterian motif of the gods reborn takes its place along side theosophical schemes and Victorian cyclics as an influence on this most experimental novel.

Eliot was closer to the truth than he probably had a right to be when in a discussion of *Ulysses* with Virginia Woolf he called Joyce "a purely literary writer . . . founded upon Walter Pater with a dash of Newman." 145 Significant Paterian motifs in the Mangan migrate to Stephen Hero and afterwards are found in Joyce's Pateresque entitled *Portait* as well as in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans*—not only a sentence from "Pico" parodied in *Ulysses* or the myth on Mona Lisa buried in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans*, signifying Joyce may be, but the entire idee of the "epiphany" itself. That moment of revelation which Joyce described in "Mangan" and the *Portrait* as "less than the pulsation of an artery, [but] equal in its period and as to thousand years," derives from Blake's *Milton* via Pater's "pulsations" imagery in the "Conclusion." These epiphanies throughout Joyce's work are very much like the expanded interval of the gem-like flame or such other indelible Patresian moments of the *Dew* (1879); and the *Joveman* terms, Pater's "Child in the House" is a study in the epiphanies of an artist's childhood) or Marius' vision in the Sabine Hills or Giorgione's "ideal instant.

As (illustrative of the manner in which Pater-as-praeccursour functions, it could be shown (though it has not yet been) how completely Joyce dramatizes Pater's "Conclusion" in Stephen Dedalus' climactic epiphany on the beach at the end of the fourth chapter of the *Portrait*. The spirit liberated or reborn through its passion for art is the subjective experience of the individual, and the general Patresian celebration of new impressions as well as the basic vocabulary of "ecstasy" and "flame" is everywhere applied to Stephen.

In scenic terms, Pater's initial image of somber bathings, which modulates into "movements of the shore-side where the water flows down" at ebb tide, anticipates Stephen's seashore encounters, as does Pater's presentation of the perpetual flux in the "drift" of the tide, which finds its full-blown realization in Stephen's wandering among the "endless drifts of sea-storms"—a particularly pertinent to Joyce's description of Stephen's epiphany is Pater's definition of aesthetic passion as the only escape from the prison of one's experience of time and history; the mind, isolated like "a solitary prisoner," is seeking to round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without.

For Stephen, this "incertitude that had tinged him round" tinged with uneasiness the calls of his bathing friends until the mythical overtones in his banner struck him like a "voice from beyond the world," a note "piercing" his isolation, and he conceived an aching "desire to cry aloud, the cry of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercing his heart's deliverance." As is frequently noted, the bird imagery in this passage defines Joyce's central Daldaide / Icarus archetype of the artist, and this, on the praeccursour-hypothetical, now appears to bark back to Pater's prison image and his stress on the power of art to "set the spirit free." Additional support for that Icarian origin can be found in Joyce's use of confinement, flame, and cry for freedom to describe Mangan's earlier failure to escape: "History encloses him so straitly that even his fiery moments do not set him free from it. He, too, cries out, in his life and in his mournful verses . . .

What the Joyce of the *Portrait* brought to the Pater / Mangan *donoel* is the dramatization of these themes in myth, although the epigraph to *The Renaissance*—"Ye shall ye he as the wings of a dove" (Ps. 60: 14) suggests elements of this legend, as does the Cupid / Psyche story in *Marius* which patterns the quest of its hero in the same archetypal fashion.

In the final paragraph of the "Conclusion" Pater elaborates his image of the prisoner, describing man as "under sentence of death" and citing Rousseau, to whom an "undealt ban of death had clung always," as one who discovered the desired liberation in aesthetic passion. Joyce could hardly have missed Pater's description of this as *"the awakening in him of the literary sense." And not only is Stephen's apprenticeship as an artist initiated by his sense of "ceremonies shaken from the body of death," but it also coincides with a repudiation of the priestly bond in harmony with Pater's assertion that any facile orthodoxy "which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of [aesthetic] experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, . . . has no real claim upon us." Finally, Stephen's culminating vision of the hillside, though only faintly anticipated in the "Conclusion" by several references to the perfected or friendly "face," is nonetheless yet another Paterian import from the Mangan essay—Leonardo's ambiguous Mona Lisa.

The epiphany of the profane goddess, the "presence that rose thus strangely beside the water," may well have served as the prototype for Stephen's awesomely sensual "anguish of mortal youth and beauty" (the ending of this chapter, after all, is designed as an explicit parallel to the "woon of sin" which concludes the second chapter). As we see him later, writing a villanelle to his "empresse," Stephen is little more than a baffled Dowson. He was lucky to have escaped.

Unlike Joyce and the other major modernists, Pater is not now and probably will never again become popular with any number of readers outside the walls of academia. But Eliot himself has given the lie to his own assertion that Pater failed to influence any first-rate mind: "No! Shakespeare's kings are not, nor are meant to be, great men" writes Pater: "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be" comes the Prufrockian echo of the young Eliot. And on the more elusive level of unknown-suenced associations, the mature Eliot in the second of his moving "Four Quartets" proves he has not forgotten Pater's "Conclusion" or the pilgrimage of Marius:

*House is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more completed
Of dead and living. Nor the interest moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old scenes that cannot be deciphered.*

If one looks, one can find in Pater's ideal of the gem like flame many such fugitive threads out of which our present literature is woven.

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The "Central Fiery Heart": Ruskin's Remaking of Dante

Martin Bidney

John Ruskin's lifelong interest in the *Divine Comedy* is well known. But it has yet to be shown how Ruskin takes images from, or relating to, Dante and merges these with his own vision of Dante as poet of the "central fiery heart." Again: Ruskin's chief contribution to aesthetic thought during the decade 1846-1856—his concepts of the "penetrative imagination," the "Gothic," the "grotesque," and the poetic-psychological "balanced, etc. *The Complete Works* of John Ruskin (London: 1905-1912), XVII, XXVII (all Ruskin citations below refer to this edition). Beatrice Corringa, in "Introduction," *Italian Poets and English Critics*, 1715-1879 (Chicago, 1988), notes the numerological significance of 1800 for Ruskin. 144
ance" by which the "pathetic fallacy" is overcome—have received attention.2 But the imagery of fire and center in which the three tendencies are interwoven makes them into an emerging myth of Dante has not been traced or interpreted. What must be demonstrated is that as Ruskin's aesthetic thinking develops, his own poetic art develops concurrently with it and inseparably from it. This development of his images by no means confounded to the function of illustrative similes but take on a life of their own. Specifically, through his use of the related images of 'fire' and 'center' (the latter suggesting also the idea of 'heart') as these recur and are amplified during his development, Ruskin constructs a vision of Dante as expression of the Romantic ideal of intense and organized consciousness—a poetic myth that stands as a major Romantic achievement (comparable, for example, to Blake's) in its combination of aesthetic, moral, and religious content. And an analysis of this Dante-vision as it unfolds most above all show how at each stage imagery adds a new level of meaning to theory.

The four stages of this unfolding may be briefly summarized. First, in *Modern Painters* (Vol. II, 1846) Ruskin uses the image of a human shadow on a wall of fire from Dante's *Purgatorio* to symbolize Dante's own "pervasive imagination" as it pierces through to the "central fiery heart" of reality and of the human spirit. Combining the image of the fire and figure with that of the poet who provided it, Ruskin presents Dante as man of-the-fiery-center, i.e., as poet of imaginative intensity combined with moral compassion. Next, in *The Stones of Venice* (Vol. II, 1855), Ruskin makes Dante's iconic center' or incarnation of the Gothic spirit, which itself is presented as reaching its point of maximal energy in the "central" year 1300, the year of Dante's vision. The third stage of this development of Ruskin's Dante vision occurs in *The Poetry and Vision* (1948), *Stones of Venice* (1855), where Dante is seen as overcoming the emotional dangers arising in the mental states associated with "apathetic" and "satirical" grotesque art, to attain the state of conscious responsibility for the highest possible artistic achievement—that of the "symbolical grotesque." Dante not only provides the images to illustrate all forms of such grotesque, but he also becomes the "central" symbol of its highest imaginative intensity. Finally, rewriting to *Modern Painters* (Vol. III, 1856), Ruskin recombines the "center" idea with his original Dantean image of the human figure outlined in fire, associating this image with a newly expanded vision of Dante as exemplifying that ideal "balance" of faculties which corrects the "pathetic fallacy."

Throughout this development Ruskin's "center" imagery adds an ontological dimension to his aesthetic thinking. Combining Elsas's "heart" or centering the center is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation; yesterday's profane and illusory existence gives place to a new, to a life that is real, enduring, and effective.4 And an investigation of the fire image represents in addition the moral, religious, and political. And which Bachelard has set the example, a study which "could be undertaken to show the fundamental influence on the life of the mind of certain meditations aroused by objects—especially of images of the elements."5 Exact the four stages in Ruskin's Dantean vision will therefore be examined in some detail, and parallels from both the Romantic and religious traditions will be drawn to provide a context for interpretation.

I In *Modern Painters I* Ruskin defines imagination as a "penetrating possession-taking faculty" (IV, 251). Though in another passage he describes the "pervasive imagination" as only "one of the highest, the highest, of imagination" (IV, 228), this difference in phrasing is not important, since Ruskin's chief aim is to sharpen the Coleridgean contrast between imagination (which penetrates to the "heart and inner nature" of things) and fancy (which "weave a spell" (IV, 251)).

In the same Ruskin chooses to illustrate the activity of this power is taken from *Purgatorio* xxvi, 48, a passage where, in the poet, Dante-as-narrator, reveals how his own shadow, when cast upon the wall of flame in which the

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3. Bazaiv can compare Ruskin to Blake (pp. 82-87), but almost solely in the context of Ruskin's later life, *The Quest of the*
self. In another passage (a few pages after the original introduction of the Purgatorio image) "fire" and "heart" are still inseparable for Ruskin, but he extends the idea of their relationship to include the fire for the first time as identical with the warmth of moral compassion. Imaginative empathy and moral sympathy mutually imply and stimulate each other, and Dante is fashioned into the embodiment of the synthesis: "Hence, I suppose that the power of imagination may always be tested by accompanying tenderness of emotion; and thus, as Byron has said, there is no tenderness like Dante's, neither any intensity or seriousness like his . . . [which] fouls all down into its own whole fire" (IV, 257-58).

Here, as Ruskin expands his notion of imagination into an imaginative moral ideal, an already mystified fiery vision of Dante emerges as the type of intensity and tenderness. Note the stages in the reshaping process so far. First Ruskin analyses an image he may always return to, which he finds both scientifically precise and supernaturally implausible. He next develops it into a metaphor for a synthesis of imagination and compassion. Finally, he projects the new image onto the poet who furnished the original image, merging poet and image into a new vision: the poetic man of fire. As the thought develops, so does the symbol: their mutual effects are inseparable in Ruskin's poetic process.

The application of such a moral-imaginative synthesis as he has described to a specific kind of art (the Gothic) will further extend Ruskin's myth of Dante. For Ruskin considers the Gothic ideal so much an expression of the Dantean one that he is moved to transform Dante into an incarnation of the Gothic spirit, and his year of vision into a form of its "energy" — an energy center.

In Volume II (1855) of The Stones of Venice Ruskin gives his well-known analysis of Gothic architecture as a manifestation of two underlying premises regarding the psychology of art: the aesthetic premise that the basis of imaginative life is growth and the ethical premise that one must develop a tolerance of the "imperfect" (lack of formal perfection) necessarily entailed by growth (X, 294). The encouragement of life in the imaginative realm requires empathy in the ethical realm as well. And since Dante as fiery poet has been made the representative image of just such a synthesis, Ruskin proceeds in The Stones of Venice to place Dante at the symbolic center of the Gothic era.

Ruskin's new variation of this theme of centrality is expressed through his characterization of the Dantean vision-year, 1300, as the focal point of the energies of the Middle Ages:

I have above said, that all great European art is rooted in the thirteenth century; and it seems to me that there is a kind of central year about which we may consider the energy of the Middle Ages to be gathered; a kind of focus of time, which, by what is in my mind a most touching and impressive Divine appointment, has been marked out for us by the greatest writer of the Middle Ages, in the first words he utters: namely, the year of 1300, the "anno dominii dominicam" of the life of Dante. Now therefore, to Giotto, the contemporaneous Dante, and who drew Dante's still existing portrait in this very year, 1300, we may always look for the central mediaval idea in any subject . . . (X, 140)

Through the rhetoric of apologetics, the year of Dante's vision has become an axis acedia, a temporal equivalent of the axis mundi or world center, a nexus of sacred power. And Ruskin's phrase is further calculated to convey the impression that Giotto, by drawing Dante's portrait in the magical year of 1300, got the latter's strength of vision and so can now be consulted for the "central mediaval idea" concerning any artistic theme whatever.

The mythopoeic logic here needs analysis. The year 1300 is "central" to the Middle Ages and to Dante's life if we consider both these phases, historical and personal, as measurable and thus as divisible: Dante's vision of Acre (according to Ruskin) at the mid-point of both. But the vision is experienced by Dante as a new beginning; it marks the inception of an epoch of his life, the epoch of awakened vision. So in a deeper sense (deeper than specified time) the temporal equivalent of a "center" is a time of renewal, of renewed contact with the ontological goal or source of vision, with "central" reality. As Eliade shows, the "periodic regeneration of time" in such ceremonies as New Year's rituals (and a fortiori, we might add, New Century rituals, as in this Ruskin passage) involves as a rule a "repetition of the cosmic act," a reenactment of the original act of creation "in illo tempore." In experiencing his vision by "Divine appointment" Dante, as Ruskin notes, is the creational or regenerative power, and Giotto, who in turn experiences a vision of Dante during the same year, likewise enters into the power of what he beholds. The principle at work here is the coalescence of seer and seen. It is the same principle already shown in the case of the original fire image from Purgatorio: because Dante beheld the image of the fiery figure, he became one with it as a "fiery poet" in Ruskin's thinking.

In effect, the principle of the coalescence of seer and seen is at work throughout the development of Ruskin's Danish vision. Ruskin's creation of the "fiery poet" myth as a symbolic expression for his concept of the penitent imagination is itself an act of penetrating imagination; he takes part in the activity he describes to Dante. In the same way, Ruskin's setting up of a rhythm of regeneration in the midst of his discussion of Dante and the Gothic creates in him (Ruskin) an evident feeling of renewal. And it will be equally evident to the reader working out this idea, that by embodying the kind of aware- ness that results in the art of the symbolic grotesque, Ruskin himself creates his most effective symbolic grotesque.

III

The Ruskinian "grotesque" in all its forms is closely akin to the sublime because it is rooted in the emotion of awe. The first expression of this new form of art is in the idea of a journey and its innu- mery through two preliminary (lower but still valuable) forms of grotesque-sublime consciousness, the "apathetic" and the "satirical." As the "apathetic" grotesque opens up a perspective of sacred horror, Dante provides as its symbol an appropriate image of despair — of which, however, as artist he maintains the required control. The "satirical" grotesque needs greater control: this Dante shows by the precision of his depiction of demons. The "symbolical grotesque," finally, is the pinnacle of art as well as the attainment of genuine fullness of being, and here Ruskin's mythmaking becomes particularly ambitious. Ruskin's entire discussion may be regarded as following the pattern of a quest for the center, showing the "difficulties of the seeker for the road to the self, to the center" of his being, and so on. The road is arduous, fraught with perils, because it is, in fact, a rise of the passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, "from man to the divinity." In fact, we must follow Dante downward before we see his visionary prospect rise: the first Dantean vision cited by Ruskin occurs relatively early in the Inferno; the second is later, lower, and more frightening. But once these perils are passed, we reach the summit of the attack where Dante who stands firmly at the center, having finished his Ruskinian comedias.

In the "apathetic" grotesque, the Gothic artist's partial relaxation of control allows somber and troubling intimations to arise — a sense of tragedy, a feeling of the "presence of sin and death" in the world (XI, 167). This awed consciousness of chaos within the cosmos, this "Dive- lice," is for Ruskin best symbolized by the chilling effect of the Virtus' cry to Medusa as she summon her to petrify Dante with her gaze: "Vengo Medusa; si Io fermi di smalto" (XI, 106. Inf. ix, 52)."Hasten Medusa; so to . . . frame her in the stages in Ruskin's poetic process are important. The petrifying threat of Medusa's approach toward Dante is associated in Ruskin's mind with the stone gargoyles in Gothic cathedrals, and these gargoyles seem to him to express intimations of the 'dark sacred,' of disturbing energies in the psyche and in nature. The feelings aroused by these gargoyles Ruskin then projects back into the Dantean image—which acquires a greatly altered range of resonances to the Dantean initiatory role by being incorporated, as it were, into a new poem.

In the second kind of grotesque art, evil is typically satirized in the form of grotesque demons. Dante, in Cantos xxi and xxii of the Inferno, has presented "the first true penetrator of the world" (which Ruskin has purposely, by combining precise observation of detail with a sense of horror, and adding mockery as well (XI, 175). But the Dantean image Ruskin selects to embody the satirical grotesque is more fearful than funny: it is the phrase, "con l'ali aperte e sovra i piedi leggero." (XI, 175. Inf. xxi-35—Carly's version: "With wings outstretched, and feet of nimble tread"). The critic may object that in choosing this description of a savage devil (whose "aspetti terrifichi" — the poet—Inf. xxii, 81) Ruskin has ignored the genuine comedy in Dante. But as usual Ruskin is using Dante for his own purposes. He has chosen here to explore the psychology of states of mind in which dark intimations to trouble the spirit for his ultimate aim is to arrive at a vision of a total poetic consciousness able to preserve its balance when such challenges occur. The calm precision of Dante's description of horrors proves to Rushkin that the medieval poet shows mastery of unruly forces, and so Dante is now eligible for transformation. This is a new stage in a story of "gro- sesque" awareness, of psychological and poetic synthesis.

Ruskin connects the images of symbolically grotesque art with the un"ungovernableness of the imagination" in a state of heightened intensity which "calls" and "forces him to speak as a prophet" (XI, 178). Biblical visions such as Jacob's ladder to Heaven and Ezekiel's four beast-angels about the throne of God are symbolically grotesque or "true dreams," seen in a "living sleep" with a "sacredness in it as of death; the revealer of secrets" (XI, 180-81). These true dreams are "grotesques" because the sublime truths they reveal (or half reveal) are so powerful and far-reaching that the symbols expressing them are bound to appear crudely

"Studie," of course means research; Ruskin discusses this word in Modern Painters III (V, 285).

naive or wildly distorted in contrast with the vast content those symbols are forced to embody.

Ruskin undermines this theory in his own symbolic grotesque. His assertions, firstly, that the prime test of greatness in periods, nations, or men is "the de
velopment among them, or in them, of a noble gro
tesque," and, secondly, that in Dante specifically "the grotesque reaches at once the most distinct and the most noble development to which it was ever brought in the human mind" (XI, 187) are designed to provide the set
ting for Dante's reappearance in a new form. Dante now becomes the "central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intel
tlectual faculties, all at their highest" (XI, 187). Here the Dante-symbol has been tested to its limit, fraught with emotion-laden meanings in precisely the same way as the "symbolically grotesque" art with which Ruskin has chosen to compare it. In the context of the rich myth, the phrase "central man of all the world" is Ruskin's bold
est use of axis mundi rhetoric, suggesting a Messiah or Christ-figure. And in the context of Romantic tradition, the only symbol fully comparable to the Ruskinian one of man psychically unified in imaginative awareness is Blake's poetic mythology of the resurrected Albion (Universal Man), all of whose faculties or Zoas are fully active in a creative tension or dialectical balance (Los or Urthoa representing a comparable reason, Urthoa, and Tharmas the integrative force). The threefold syn
thesis, "imaginative, moral, and intellectual," that Ruskin ascribes to the poetic consciousness of Dante is basically the same as the "fourfold vision" of Blake's reawakened Albion, with the fourth or integrative faculty remaining implicit.

We note Ruskin's emphasis on intellect as a third fac
tor in the Dantean synthesis. For the grotesque to "exist in full energy," Ruskin says, the artist must be "great in imagination, and the cardinal point less than intellect" (though of course there must be no "hardened pre
minence of the mere reasoning faculties"—XI, 187). As he turns from the concluding volume of Stanes of Penrice (1855) to resume work once again on Modern Painters (Vol. III, 1856), Ruskin will attempt to work out the implications of this statement. And he will do so by way of a final reconvisioning of the fire image with which he had started out, along with the "center" which he had originally joined to it.

IV

To summarize briefly: if intellect does not contribute fully to perception, the "pathetic fallacy," for instance, results when the intellect is not vigorous enough to counterbal
cance the force of emotion to the degree that accurate percep
tion requires, the poet's perceptions will be distorted

(V, 205). This distortion is the "error... which the mind
admits, when affected strongly by emotion" (V, 205); the "pathetic fallacy" is the result of a lack of disciplined, tran
tudged feeling within the poet, and only poets of the "first order" (Shakespeare, Homer, Dante) can truly es
cape it (V, 205n). Dante, in describing "the spirits falling from the bank of Acheron 'as dead leaves flutter from a bough'..." (V, 112, 113), Ruskin's rendering) can portray both the leaves and the souls "catching agony of de
spair" with evocative accuracy (V, 206) only because, overcoming the contagion of despair, he retains full in
tellectual and psychological control of himself and thus of the description.

The vigor of a poet's mind, the breadth of context within which he perceives things, is therefore the neces
sary coordinate of his penetrative depth. For although the overpowering emotion expressed by poets subject to the pathetic fallacy is "comparable with the dulness of those who cannot feel, nevertheless

... it is still grander condition when the intellect also rises, till it is strong enough to assert its role against, or together with, the utmost efforts of the passions; and the whole man stands in an iron glow, white, black, perhaps, but still strong, and in no wise expiring: even if he be lost, losing none of his weight. (V, 208)

The wording and imagery are crucial. The intellect rises in order to rule "against, or together with" the passions. There is to be a balance of two contrasting intensities, a creative tension between passion and intellect. To repre
sent this synthesis, Ruskin returns to the human figure outlined in Blake's fire from Paradise. "The whole man stands in an iron glow..." (V, 208)

... The man of fire remains emblematic of an imaginative transfiguration involving a synthesis of psychic elements. And it always suggests the related idea of a genius: the reason why the "highly creative poet" might be thought "impasive" (as shallow people think Dante stern) is that such a poet has a "great centre of reflection and knowledge in which he stands serene" (V, 210). The mythicized Dante is the central figure of fire.

Ruskin's most graphic description of the image of a man of fire ensures that, in developing his paradigm of the imaginatively realized and integrated psyche, he never allows the Romantic goal of poetic intensity to be sacri
fied to "moderation." One must not try to make the work of intellect, or of imagination as a whole, artificially enter by weakening one's emotions; for this lessening of psychic energy would diminish the intensity of the whole man in the privileged state of awareness. Rather than dampening or cooling the emotions, feeling must "rise" to its own highest power to cope fully with the challenge these feelings represent: thus the pathetic fallacy is avoided without intellectual or imaginative laziness or escapism.

The poetic fires are not to be reduced in temperature; rather, through the responsive mutative heightening of all the faculties, the full flame of the pathetic fallacy is transformed into the radiance of the Dantean "iron glow," a center of radiating energy.

Here again Ruskin allies himself with Romantic tradi
tion in ways that become clear only when his imagery is studied. The balance of intensities he describes is pre
 cisely analogous to that envisioned by Blake:

Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed or governed their Passions or have No Passions but because they have cultivated their Understandings. The Treasures of Heaven are not Negations of Passion but Real
ities of Intimacy from which the Passions Emanate (Un
dered) in their Eternal Glory... (14)

The word glory as Blake uses it here preserves its meaning of an effulgence (cf. emanation) of light—but by no means without warmth. Blake's Albionic artist avoids the error of Urien, who sought mental stability by isolating himself from the emotions for fear of living "in unspeakable burnings": Urien, we recall, quickly discovered that "a solid without fluctuation" was in no sense identical to that "joy without pain" he had hoped to reach.29 For whatever its acknowledged dangers, the "fire" with which Urien so self-defeatingly "fought" is shown, both by our study of Ruskin's myth of Dante and by Bachelder's study of fire-erere, to be in imagination's language "the proof par excellence of substantial richness and permanence; it alone gives an immediate meaning to vital intensity, to intensity of being."30 Putting this Bachelderian statement together with Blake's assertion that the "center" is "pre

eminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality,"31 we find additional confirmation of the inher
ent interrelationship of the images of fire and center, both in poetry and religion, as representing the imagination's sense of being awakened to full actuality or realization.

Yet Ruskin's man-of-the-fire-center myth is dis
tinguished not only by its intensity but also by its organ
ized complexity. It may in fact be said to incorporate ele
ments of all three of those categories of freetransformations which Bachelder has analyzed under the headings of the "Novalis," "Prometheus," and "Empedocles" com
plexes, and which Northrop Frye connects, respectively, with the "heroic," the "romantic," and the "apocalypse."32 The corresponding elements in Ruskin's Dantean fire symbol cluster would be the search for commu
nication with a primal center (Novalis), the stress on active intellect (Prometheus), and the openness of the imagination even to influences potentially overwhelming in their power (Empedocles). The symbol of Dante as central fiery poet tests the extreme limits of an image's capacity to embody a state of awareness. If it therefore takes on the character of a symbolical grotesque, this is a result of Ruskin's attempt to envision a genuinely in
clusive balance. For symbolically grotesque art, as Ruskin both formulates and practices it, is an art of inclusiveness, of testing limits. And by embodying his aesthetic ideals in Blakean terms, Ruskin makes it clear that he is presenting them in conceptual form, Ruskin helps bring these ideals to realization, to actuality.

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Why Thackeray Went To See a Man Hanged

Albert I. Borovits

CRITICS GENERALLY ASSESS Thackeray a negative role in the history of crime literature, with major emphasis placed on his persistent and resourcerful opposition to the sensational crime fiction of the 1830's and 1840's, the so
called "Newgate" novels. However, the customary por
trayal of Thackeray as savage critic of crime fiction should not be permitted to obscure his own personal interest in crime or his affirmative contributions to the literature of crime, particularly his writings against capital punish
ment, The Case of Poyet (1839) and Going to See a Man
Hanged (1840).3

In approaching a definition of Thackeray's attitude toward crime literature, the patient fact that Thackeray was an aficionado of crime. In this

References to Thackeray's works are to the Biographical Edi
tion of The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray, 13 vol
Thackeray considered criminal themes, if properly handled, an appropriate subject for novels as well as non-fiction. Almost all of his early fiction is concerned with rogues and the struggle through life over the heads of dupes and in the shelter of social pretense and snobbery. The supreme rogue is Becky Sharp herself, and Thackeray subtly implies both by textual innuendo and by his illustrations that she capped her career of knavery by the murder of a fellow. In *Pirates* his last, unfinished novel published in 1864, one of the major characters is Francis Henry de la Motte, a historical criminal convicted of treason against England in 1781. In the surviving chapters, de la Motte, though not romanticized, is presented with considerable warmth and sympathy.

Thackeray's position in the Newgate controversy therefore cannot be explained by his distaste for the subject of crime or for its portrayal in literature. His attack stemmed from his abhorrence of the glorification and sentimentalization of criminals, criminal acts, and low life. In addition to his concern that the romantic portrayal of crime was capable of inducing imitative criminal conduct, he was convinced that the presentation of crime and the underworld in a falsely attractive light was bad moral teaching. He charged further that the Newgate writers were making a fortune on fellows and the millions of which they wrote, and therefore were not equipped to add the necessary corrective elements of misery and squalor.

Thackeray's horror of glamorized crime, far from being invented to lend Bulwer-Lytton, Dickens, or other English competitors, was also evidenced by his responses to French fiction and drama. In 1843 he described Eugene Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* as "thieves literature" and gave thanks for the cessation of similar literature in England. Two years later he referred to Sue's novel as one of the most immoral books in the world. 8

In his review of French drama in the *Paris Sketchbook* he also expressed his disgust with the murders, adulteries, and other offences which were put forth to appeal to the standard fare of the dramas of Hugo and Dumas.

At the very time when Thackeray was leveling his attacks against the crime novelists he was making his own most important contribution to crime literature and history, namely, his essays of 1839 and 1840 in favor of the abolition of capital punishment. This aspect of Thackeray's career has been relatively ignored, in comparison both with his role in the Newgate controversy and with Dickens' role several years later among the advocates of abolition. Thackeray's position was more deeply rooted in his background and personality. Throughout his life, Thackeray appears to have been obsessed with capital punishment, both as a horrifying physical fact capable of arousing morbid fascination and as a moral and social institution related to his own speculations about the meaning of life and death, health and illness, and divine involvement in human affairs.

Thackeray spent several years of his London youth amidst the names and symbols of butchery and hanging. When he was between the ages of eleven and seventeen he attended the Charterhouse School, which was located close to the Smithfield Market, the principal slaughtering yards of London, and to Newgate Prison, where men were hanged under the same pierced galley sign that was visible for years after leaving the School, and well into middle age. Thackeray was accustomed to refer to his alma mater as the "Slaughterhouse," a pun which may have been derived from the School's proximity to Smithfield, but would also have been justified by the cruel regime imposed on Charterhouse students by whipping; the institution's writing motto of "Believe nothing," and the brutality of the Headmaster. 9

Thackeray's writings reflect the central role of robbing in his school life, and he gives one of his fictional school-teachers the ominous name of "Dr. Birch." 10 It is not uncommon to speculate as to whether the brutality of English public-school life could not have combined with the institution of public hanging to contribute to the preoccupation of Thackeray and many of his contemporaries with criminal punishment.

There is no reason to believe that Thackeray attended a public hanging during his stay at the Charterhouse School. The first references to public hangings in his correspondence are made in letters to his mother from Cambridge in 1829. In recounting the events of the week of March 22nd, he wrote that the Assize judges had taken up their traditional residence at Trinity College and that "the court was thronged with little boys & girls to behold the mighty men as they passed to the Judgement." 11 In an entry in the same letter, made several days later, he noted that the judges had departed and that the criminals were awaiting sentence. He did not know whether any of them would be hanged, but, in any event, he had not, like some men he knew, arranged for a breakfast party so as not to miss the opportunity of seeing the devotes of hanging was still in mind a decade later. In his novel *Catherine* the Hayes family are pictured as enthusiastic attenders of public hangings. Thackeray comments in an aside:

I am recollect, when I was a boy at Cambridge, that the men used to have breakfast-parties for the same purpose; and on the ceremony was inflicted upon the stomach, and caused the young students to eat with much loathing.

Thackeray's reaction to hanging in his college days establishes the pattern that was to mark his career, an obvious fascination with the subject accompanied by a reluctance to approve of actual executions.

Thackeray's interest in execution bloomed in the freeing of France. In 1856, during his residence in Paris, where he had been studying art and was beginning to try his hand at journalism, he made a successful effort to attend two executions. The first was that of Giuseppe Fieschi, who had participated in an unsuccessful assassina_ tion attempt against Napoleon III. Fieschi and his attendant with a rapid-firing "infernal machine" of Fieschi's manufacture. The King's elbow was grazed, but about twenty people, including spectators, were killed. The day for Fieschi was death without a trial. Weeks later, he was executed in some remote quarter of Paris. Thackeray therefore missed the execution but was revolted by the carnival-time crowd which scoured the city hoping to crown its merrymaking with the sight of Fieschi's grisly ligation. Several weeks later, he set out to witness the execution of Lacaenais, the nihilist murderer (and sinister villain of the film *Children of Paradise*). This time Thackeray arrived too late for the execution but came upon a group of street-boys dancing in triumph around a little pool of ice tinged with the blood of Lacaenais and his accomplice Avril who had been guillotined with him. 12

Though these experiences did not immediately inspire Thackeray to record them, they remained vivid in his memory and imagination. In 1859 they came rushing forth under the impulse of a new French case of crime and punishment, that of Sebastien Peytel. 13

Peytel, a notary of the town of Belleville, was tried and executed in Paris in 1853. Thackeray says of him: "Peytel was a corrupt Tahitian, the son of Louis Ray. The case has a certain amount of the inevitable interest engendered by a family murder involving middle class people well known to a closely knit community. However, much of the Parisian terror over the Peytel case was at least partially contributed by a pamphlet by a gentleman named Louis de Balzac in behalf of Peytel, whom he had met while Peytel was serving as theatre critic on a journal with a prophetically criminal name, *Le Voleur*. Balzac, competitive soul that he was, was eager to attach his name to the defense of a cause célèbre, as Voltaire had done in the Calas case. To Thackeray's credit, it cannot be said that his interest in Peytel was aroused by either literary fashion or journalistic loyalty. Though he equivocated as to his approval of the trial, he felt strongly that the evidence on which he was convicted was insufficient and unduly magnified by the force of community prejudice. He did not argue, as Balzac had done in substance, that Peytel must be innocent because he was a little..."
Thackeray's letter, which he had written in support of the anti-slavery movement, was widely read and influential. This correspondence highlights Thackeray's commitment to social justice and his role as a public intellectual in the 19th century.


In conclusion, Thackeray's life and work provide a rich tapestry of literary and social commentary. His correspondence offers a unique window into the period, allowing us to glimpse the thoughts and concerns of a dynamic and influential figure in Victorian society.
man has rejected the lesser compensations of Mosaic law, an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, but retained the most terrible, a life for a life. He reserves his final barb for the deterrent effect that it has on his conscience: a magnificently sparse sentence that echoes the conclusion of the Perealet article but universalizes his condemnation of capital punishment by rendering irrelevant the guilt of the hanged man: "I fully confess that I came down Snow Hill that morning with a disgust for murder, but it was for the murder I saw done" (III, 618).

The same equation of the crimes of murdler and executioner is made in The Irish Sketchbook (1845). Commenting on the report in a Dublin newspaper of the death sentences of two convicted murderers, Thackeray writes:

I confess, for my part, to that common cast and sickly sentimentalism, which, thank God! is felt by a great number of people nowadays, and which leads them to revile against murder, whether performed by a ruffian's knife or a hangman's rope: whoever accompanied with a curse from the thief as he blows his victim's brains out, or a prayer from my Lord on the bench in his wig and black cap. (V, 281)

Thackeray's outcries against capital punishment were spontaneous reactions to his experiences in the late 1830's and early 1840's and did not recur. However, his tacit wranglings with his mother over her evangelical attachment to the doctrine of divine retribution continued unabated throughout his life, and he displayed special energy in expressing his views to his daughters when his mother attempted to indoctrinate them. There are scattered mentions of hanging, generally in a light vein. It is not clear whether he should attribute callowness or embarrassment to Thackeray's letter (in French) to Mrs. Irvine in 1848, in which he apologetically reports that he is to dine at Newgate the next day with the Sheriffs of London and that they are to see the prisoners, the treadmill, and the "jolit petit condamne" who are to be hanged.24 Only a small portion of capital criminals were actually executed in Victorian England, but the inappropriate frivolousness of Thackeray's reference still strikes a discordant note. Later in 1848 he mentions in a letter to Rev. Brookfield his plan to visit the Caledonian, "to hear the man sing about going to be hanged."25 The song to which he refers, the ballad of the condemned chimney sweep Sam Hall, was then the rage in London. There is an intriguing possibility that even in these apparently trivial letters, as in his cheerful note to Milnes on the eve of Courvoisier's hanging, Thackeray's more troubled responses may have been close to the surface. He notes that after his entertainment by the ballad singer he returned home with a headache.26

It was justly observed of Thackeray that he was not a reformer. His sympathies were more easily engaged by individuals than by ideas or causes. During his visit to America in 1853 it is said that the morality of slavery had been greatly exaggerated by the abolitionists. But when he met Harriet Beecher Stowe he found to his surprise that she was "a gentle, almost pretty, person, with a very great sweetness in her eyes." He added, in a letter to Mrs. Ruston, "I am sure she must be good and truth-telling from her face and behaviour: and when I get a country place and a leisure hour shall buckle to Uncle Tom and really try to read it."27

Thackeray's essays on the horror of capital punishment voiced his personal distress but did not carry him into public action in support of abolition. Perhaps it was of himself he spoke when he gave Henry Esmond the lines: "I can't but accept the world as I find it, including a rope's end, as long as it is in fashion."28 Dickens, much more committed to social reform, participated several years after the publication of Thackeray's essays in the campaign to abolish capital punishment and public hangings. But certain points must be noted in Thackeray's favor. Dickens, in PLG: "the ups and downs of Madame Defarge" but he attended at least three, and possibly four, executions.29 Thackeray, though drawn powerfully by the fascination of public hanging, could bring himself, so far as we know, to attend only one execution and then he could not bear to look. While in Cairo in 1844 he declined an invitation to attend a public execution. He later explained his refusal in his Journey from Carnhill to Grand Cairo (1816): "seeing one man hanged is quite enough in the course of a life. "Py et elé", as the Frenchman said of hunting." (V, 718). Dickens, only a few years after ardent campaigning for total abolition of capital punishment, abandoned this position, though he remained convinced that hanging should not be continued in public. It is helpful to know that Thackeray ever qualified his abolitionist beliefs, based as they were on the repugnance which his flesh had felt towards the hanging of Courvoisier. His cousin, Richard Bedford, reports that Thackeray once deprecated his complicity in the last work, Denis Duval, Thackeray may have intended to deprecate, Letters, XII, 162. 62. Thackeray's fiction abounds with scenes of, or references to, execution. In addition to the price example of Gauntner, see The Pioneers, Ch. XXV, "The Knots on the Ape," Works, XII, and "The frozen Water," Works, XXXI, 320.


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5. Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition (Ann Arbor, 1963), p. 102. As he was accused later by W. D. Armistead, "Tennyson, though intimately related to Philecters, is in Trianon (rather than Byron) whose situation best corresponds to this context."
announcements, it is surprising that no one has explored the possible implications of the one other Sophoclean source put forth. In their Commentary (though not in their edition), Arnold and Macdonell offer the following: "Mr. Allen Hazen has indicated to us also these lines from Philoctetes [685f.]."

There is wonder, indeed, in my heart how, how in his loneliness, listening to the waves beating on the shore, how he kept hold at all on a life so full of tears.

The critics mentioned earlier observe that the three concededly excellent Sophoclean passages (i.e., from the Antigone, Oedipus Coloneus, and Trachiniae) are similar. In them, Sophocles compares the whelming of man in his littleness or greatness to the rush of waves on crags or beaches. Yet even on this level of figurative relevance, the critics encounter serious problems. Baumgarten's argument that Arnold "chose the name because Sophocles used his favorite tragic poet's" is persuasive, but when he confronts the image itself, he is less certain. "Any tragedy...moves from prosperity to disaster, but not back and forth like the waves. As we all know, this assumption is not easily demonstrated in the Philoctetes (or in Euripides' Alcestis, or in other Greek tragedies of the type Aristotle startlingly refers to in Chapter XIV of the Poetics: "Best of all is the last alternative, the way of Meno in the Cyclops: where he intends to kill all his son but does not do when he recognizes him..." 8 Sophocles' is the only extant play treating the story of Philoctetes, son of Pocas, inheritor of the bow of Herakles, who, while passing through Troy, was accidentally shot by a snake and consequently bitten by a snake. His wound festered and developed an unbearable stench which together with the violence of his pained outbursts, rendered him offensive (in both a personal and supernatural sense) to his companions, who abandoned him on the desert island of Lemnos. Later, a prophecy had revealed that Troy could not be taken without Philoctetes and his bow, the Greeks sent Odysseus and Diomedes to bring the suffering hero back to Troy. Sophocles substitutes for Diomedes a moral conflict of considerable magnitude both between Neoptolemus and Odysseus and within the younger man himself.

Philoctetes consistently resists the entreaties of the two envoys until the deus ex machina appearance of Herakles at the play's end. Though Herakles' intervention is prepared for in the typological correspondences established between himself and Philoctetes, it is difficult to perceive his eleventh hour arrival as the externalization of an already existing poetic narrative. Rather, like the awesome wrath of Achilles which recognizes not even the legitimate repartees offered by Agamemnon, the stubborn refusal of Philoctetes seems to exceed the permissible. Structurally, the play does move "back and forth" and oscillates on a far higher level, it is the wavering Neoptolemus who parallels this structural motion; Philoctetes remains recalcitrant and fatalistic.

With regard to "Dover Beach" there is much in the Philoctetes that supports its claim to Hazen's and our attention. Unlike the other passages cited, the first of several in the Philoctetes highly relevant to Arnold's poem (not introduced in the original) by the Greek equivalent of "sighs and songs," verses, on the contrary, are simple, literal, and direct:

But I know of no other, by hearsay, much less by sight, of all mankind Whose destiny was more his enemy when he met it Than Sophocles, who wronged no one, nor killed his enemies, nor was wronged by them, and fell in trouble past his desires. There is wonder, indeed, in my heart how, how in his loneliness, listening to the waves beating on the shore, how he kept hold at all on a life so full of tears. (Il. 690f.)

Like the speaker in "Dover Beach," Philoctetes is imagined here as listening to the waves and contending the despair implicit in his condition. This straightforward depiction of circumstance, fraught nonetheless with imaginative implications, is distinctively close to Arnold's portrayal of himself listening to the surf and musings on the human lot. Thus, it is first on the most literal level that the situation and language of the Philoctetes approach nearer the Arnoldian passage than the figurative application of an impersonal sea image to a disasious human event—as is the case with the other suggested sources. In the original Greek of the Philoctetes, the crucial adverb "eternal" is placed in the middle of the line, the emphasis on the idea of eternity, not only the fact of suffering, but of suffering as an eternal and irrevocable state, the second "eternal" being the connotation of the sea element itself. In both the Philoctetes and "Dover Beach" the physical circumstances of weather and tides determine many of the emotional responses. Sophocles' play, like Arnold's poem, opens with a description of the shore that emphasizes its lonesome aspect:

This is it; this Lemnos and its beach down to the sea that quite surrounds it, desolate no one sets foot on it; there are no houses.

At crucial moments the dialogue is laden with references to the weather, a particularly momentous passage occurring at line 855, where the chorus urges Neoptolemus to seize the sleeping Philoctetes and bow by recalling: "It is a thing of evil, boy, a fair wind; the man is asleep and helpless outstretched under night's blanket." Later, when Philoctetes realizes that he has been duped (and before Neoptolemus reverses his moral stand in the hero's defense) the chorus exclaims: "Oh! His eyes are opening and his thinking and inverting his own experience on Lemnos, self-mockingly applying the image of the lone figure on the beach to his tormentor: "By the shore of the grey sea, he [Oedysseus] sits and laughs at me." (I.1214.)

Arnold's "long, with drawing arrow / Retreating, to the breaths of the night wind evokes yet another passage in the play. In his wretchedness," the chorus explains, in place of human compassion and solicitude for his great trouble, "there is only a blabbering echo, that comes from the distance speckling from the wind-storms of 1880." Here and elsewhere—as when Philoctetes himself refers to the "deep, male growl of the sea-ledashed headland" and to "the storm of his sorrow"—the forthright presentation of the poet's identification of emotion with the sea again ties the particular mood of the imagery to that of Arnold's northern sea with shores "more interwoven and complete" than those suggested by the powerful sea images in the other proposed Sophoclean sources, removed as they are from the events of the plot. However, to claim that the play to poem is at least as significant as the linguistic and circumstantial correspondences. The "more of sadness" sounded most frequently in the Philoctetes, as in "Dover Beach," is the discordant strain of incertitude. Again and again, Sophocles reminds us of the dual nature of his hero's suffering: the real wound of the flesh and the wound of the spirit: physical isolation and psychic betrayal. Philoctetes punctuates the relation of his history to Neoptolemus with the line: "I know of no other, by hearsay, much less by sight, of all mankind the great powers we serve themselves are [are] Slaves of a tyrannous necessity?" (Il. 41-42.) Philoctetes, of course, is a more heroic figure and has had much time for specu-


9. Cf. Sophocles' use of the weather motif in Il. 100-64 and 887f.

10. It is not necessary that "Mycerinus" belongs to the same period of Arnold's poetic life as Euphronius on Etna, "Tristan and Isolde," and, according to most critics, "Dover Beach."
contrast the latter to the resolution of an irre- 11 soluble debate (not unlike the one to which Arnold's "Deserted Village" contributed). If in conjunction with his 10 neophilotes betray, his comic disappointment to the most personal terms (much like the speaker in "Dover Beach"); "I have been deceived and am lost. / What can I do? / Give it (the base) law. / Be your truth again. / Will you not? No word, then I am nothing!" (II. 948-51). The words themselves are profoundly reminiscent of Arnold's lyric. As the play moves inexorably toward its "happy" reso- 12 lution, the protagonist with himself and with the hero by returning the bow. Philoctetes answers Neop- hotes' appeals from untold depths of bitterness and incertitude. "It is not the stings of wrongs past," he ar- gues, "but what I must look for in wrongs come" (II. 958-59). Thus, the Sophoclean hero, standing on the shores of the Aegean, like the poet of "Dover Beach" by the distant northern sea, concludes that "the world, which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new, / Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light. / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain." This last phrase, "help for pain," both 13 intrinsically and in its use as transition to the final image "of ignorant armies [that] clash by night," implies that physical injury is symbolic of the alienation, loneliness, and futile, evolved world. The manifest tasks of the phrase "help for pain" that appear in the Philoctetes, as well as the very setting of the tragedy, seem to be closely related to "Dover Beach" and to suggest a source not only for the Sophoclean lines, but also for the unusually pessimistic tone of Arnold's relation to Sophocles. It is in the understanding of what the world... hath really 14 that Philoctetes is so like the speaker in "Dover Beach." For 15 though Philoctetes ultimately yields, there is nothing in the language of the play to demonstrate a corresponding alteration in the hero's disillusioned perception of reality. 16 It is Herakles who, in the context of a carefully developed typological relationship between himself and Phil- octetes, 17 commits the latter to the resolution of an irre- solvable debate (not unlike the one to which Arnold's "Deserted Village" contributed). If in conjunction with his own perception of this myth, he, I think, assumed. A direct reference to Philoctetes appears in Merope, where Mercot urges Poly- phontes to lice to "Some rock more lonely than that Lemen- ide island between the two ancient poets (II. 948-47). Ar- 18 nold also reverts one variation of the Herakles / Philoctetes story in the long chorus of Merope beginning at line 1795. Arnold's interest in the matter of Herakles /Philoctetes is further substantiated by his reference to it in the "Anti- gene" fragment (II. 1798), which also belongs to the same period of his poetic life as "Dover Beach." More importantly, it can be argued that another major work, Empedolces on Eros, stands in a particular relation to "Dover Beach" and to the Philoctetes. The coincidental link (in the opening lines) between the two ancient poems (and the opening lines of the lyric were recorded on the back of a sheet containing notes on Empedolces) is strengthen- ed by the correspondences both display to the Philoctetes. In the introduction to their translation, Greene and Lattimore remark that Philoctetes' choice of the "old 19 known pain" claims our sympathy, but that it is also irreconcilable with the vital principle which in any- one's life involves change and risk. It is easy for young Neoplatonists to face the future confidently. He has not yet been hurt enough to know what it feels like. Philoctetes' refusal is a great tragic human truth. Compare Frank Kermode's perception of Calliades' attitude toward Empedolces: to the young Calliades there is nothing genuine in the plight of Empedolces. Calliades has not yet understood. The sophists are his enemies in the struggle to live and prefers what is for himself the more comfortable exposition, that Empedolces has 'some root of suffering in himself...' There fol- lows a wildly ironic debate between a poet ignorant enough to know joy and an ex-poet who knows that his grounds are not true, who scratches promiscuously among the rubbish for the ethical fragments of which he must try to build himself a shelter. 18 Although there are no substantive philosophical parallels between the two works; these passages do suggest similarities in the worldview of this most woolly-headed philosopher for his respective protagonists. In both plays, the es- sential drama takes place within the major figure; in both, a catalyst is provided by the presence of a youthful, challenging mind—one which, curiously, dearly desires to justify and unite the opposites, but recognizes in the defiant, though resigned elder figure the embodi- ment of a "true," though personally non-visible al- ternative. The external parallels between the self- 20 identification of Philoctetes by Empedolcs on Eros, the death of Herakles on the pyre on Mt. Oeta (accompanied with the assis- 21 tance of Philoctetes and / or his father, depending upon the variant form of the legend used), and Philoctetes' own stated desire to be cast into the Leonid fire need no elaborating. The structural comparison between Arnold's lyrical drama and the Philoctetes grows more interesting in light of Arnold's condemnation of Empedolcs on Eros in the "Preface" of 1855. He tells his readers that the work fails "so incoherent that it is impossible to find in it a line in action... a continuous state of mental distress is pro- 21 longed, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance, in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done." Arnold might well have been paraphrasing Philoctetes' description of the mental excess prior to the arrival of Neoplatonism. The mental distress of which Arnold speaks lies, for Philoctetes, in his unrelenting insistence on societal demands and in his simultaneous denial of self- interest. As Greene and Lattimore indicate, "the moment characters are required to sacrifice the restorative to potency is near." It may be remarked that this is remi- niscent of the situation in The Tempest. So, too, is the fact that Philoctetes is being urged by Neoplatonism first, and later by Herakles, to admit the existence of a new order—a healing both physical and spiritual that seems as magical a change as that effected by Prospero. The irony of the prospect of a "brave new world that hath such people in it" is shared by Philoctetes who, like Em- pedolces, is unsure what the world is really "worth," and the speaker in "Dover Beach." The latter's exhortation, "Ah, Love, let us be true to one another," is, we remember, premised upon the knowledge that follows: "for the world, which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new / Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light. / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain." 19 11. Writing of Arnold's repeated and seemingly erroneous empha- 12 sis, the reviewer of Sophocles observes that "of the seven works which time has spared, only the Philoctetes sounds a note of purest affrontment" (p. 98). As has been suggested above, this is a questionable assessment, though the Philoctetes does have a jarring effect—like the Aeschylus of Iphigenia in Tauris and the lost Prometheus Bound and anti- 13 human Sophocles (both of which cast Herakles in the role of savior). It is curious to note the following line for 1888 names the Aeschylus, the Philoctetes, and Prometheus Bound alone among Greek plays published between 1885 and 1891. In. The 1925, on the other hand, is cast in the concept of a "happy" tragedy. 16. Edmund Wilson, in The Waste and the War (New York, 1947), p. 255, describes the relationship thus: "The case of


Celtic and Greek mythology, recognized (at least on the intuitive level) the startling relationship between the Philoctetes and Tristan stories. Circumstances suggest that the two were simultaneously alive in his imagination between 1849 and 1852 while he was at work on his own "Tristan and Isolde," Penelope or Isma, and the Sophoclean drama of "Dover Beach." Thus, the lone figure of Philoctetes, hearing the waves beating against the rocks and at the same time looking at the meaning and purpose of his own existence, may have been recast in the mind of a young man in the context of the narrative of "Isolde and her Servant." 9

When Did Tennyson Meet Rosa Baring?

Jack Keil

Thanks largely to Ralph Rader's careful research, we know much of the "biographical genesis" of Tennyson's love for Rosa Baring in the 1850's. 1 The attractive and wealthy granddaughter of Sir Francis, founder of the house of Baring, Rosa lived with her mother, sister, and stepfather in Harrington Hall, two miles from Somersby. When he wrote his first verses to Rosa ("Thy rose lips are soft and sweet") on her birthday in 1854, Alfred was the poor son of a recently deceased clergyman, a young poet without a publisher, and a dubious distillation of the Grocer's class. 2 And though the Tennysons, like many other families in the neighborhood, were admitted to the exclusive social life at the manor, neither the intensity of Alfred's feelings, nor his poetic address, nor even the small inheritance he received upon his grand- father's death in 1856, was sufficient to qualify him as one of Rosa's many eligible suitors.

That Tennyson for his own part had become disillusioned with Rosa two years before her marriage to Robert Shawe in 1858 seems clear from a number of poems, including "Ah fade not yet," "To Rosa," and "How thought you," all composed circa 1856. 3 But the beginnings of the relationship are more difficult to ascertain. As Rader notes, Rosa's diaries and letters from this period in her life have been lost. And records of the Shawe's early life offer little information; Alfred's various personal papers from the same time were subject to the censorship of Hallam Tennyson, whose telling sense of propriety ex- cluded any reference to Rosa in the Memoir. Lacking conclusive evidence, Rader hypothesizes, reasonably, that Alfred knew Rosa about two years before he left Lincoln- shire for Trinity in 1857, and that their acquaintance was renewed when he returned to Somersby following his father's death in March 1851. 4 The first tangible evidence of their friendship has been his 1856 birthday verses. Pas- sages from three unpublished letters from Arthur Henry Hallam to Emily Tennyson seem, however, to offer a much more revealing picture.

In the fall of 1852 Arthur was in London studying law (at the Inner Temple) and thus separated from both his fiancée and his closest friend. Concerned about Emily's isolation at Somersby, he pretended to be "rather jealous," as he wrote on October 12, 1852, to tell her that she had recently participated in some entertainment with certain "partners." Later in the letter he admitted being pleased that Emily, a homespun and partial invalid, had established some social contact outside of the Somersby household:

I am glad you have lighted on a new friend. If you really like her, I hope you will cultivate the acquaintance in spite of Mary's astonishment. Hilberto your friends have not been very agreeable to you, close house has not made you better either. Are you these Miss Baring? I do not remember to have heard the name even. Do they live in the great house at Harrington? 5

In 1853, Arthur had been betrothed to Emily for nearly two years and had known Alfred for nearly four. Thus at least one implication of his inquiry seems clear. If a close friend of the family had ever heard of the Bar- ings, it is extremely unlikely that any of the Tennysons knew Charlotte Rose or her sister Fanny before October 1852.

Other conjectures are more speculative. At this time, the Tennyson family was extremely close-knit, sharing the same friends and frequently attending social oc- casions together. Thus, if Emily's new friend (perhaps one of her unidentifiable "partners") was either Rosa's sister, it is likely that Alfred would have become acquainted with them at the same time. The difference in the social standing, activities, and temperament of the two families would explain Mary Tennyson's astonish- ment at the friendship. One should note that in 1852, Harrington was a tiny parish of about 70 inhabitants, which could have offered few, if any, possible friends for Emily other than the residents of the Hall. 6

That Emily, probably accompanied by one or more of her brothers, continued to take (for her) an unusually active part in social activities seems clear from Arthur's question in his letter of November 8, 1852: "Did you go to the Ball? Full particulars are requested." Unfortu- nately we do not have Emily's response. But we know from Fanny's letter of December 13, 1852, where she and their quarrel at a ball at Spilsby, that Alfred and Rosa subsequently attended such events together. And the Barings, one of the most prominent families in the area, would certainly have been invited to the 1852 ball, and might have even sponsored it. Thus we may suppose that Alfred had another chance to meet Rosa Baring early in November 1852.

In this context, an excerpt from a third Hallam letter is potentially more revealing than it might initially seem. Writing to Emily, he inquired to her about the ball, Arthur first described in great detail his flira- tions in London society. Then he abruptly inquired about Alfred:

I am over-perplexed what Alfred can possibly mean by an 7

and have a hint of something that may suggest to you what I mean. But that is what you and I shall decide. 8

Arthur was to visit Somersby a month after his November 20 letter, and he may have waited until then to pursue the subject. In any case, there is no further mention of the meeting anywhere in Hallam's extant correspondence. Thus not only the solution, but the very existence of the "riddle" can only be conjectured. It is possible that Alfred was alluding to his brother Frederic's ultimately unsuccessful relationship with another attractive neigh- bor, Charlotte Bellingham. But Arthur was already fa- miliar with Frederic's difficulties with Charlotte, and Alfred rarely, if ever, alluded to his brother's affairs, in his letters or elsewhere. 9 The difficulties Hallam en- countered in his own engagement to Emily were by this time a recent subject in his correspondence with the Tennyson family; he certainly would have understood an allusion to that topic.

Because Arthur was a close friend, the manner in which he responded to Alfred's phrase gives some indication of its significance. The tone of the inquiry—unique in its expression of interest and demand for information among all his letters—shows that Arthur was genuinely surprised, even mystified by what his friend might have meant. Since the two had spent six weeks together on a tour of Scotland and Cornwall in July 1852, earlier, it seems clear that Alfred was referring to some recent development—apparently a new person—in his life. 10

It may seem precipitous to give so much attention to a potentially insignificant reference, to which Arthur (ap- parently) never alluded again. However, one must realize that all of Arthur's letters during the last ten months of his life to Alfred, and to other members of the Tennyson family, were subject to the scrutiny of, and sub- stantial tampering by Hallam Tennyson. The oblique reference to the third of these letters, the ones that escaped the blue pencil and scissors, may reveal circumstances in Tennyson's life which his son would have liked to suppress.


2. Alfred's seven-line poem is printed in Ricks, The Poems of Tenny- son (London, 1969), p. 654; subsequent references are to this edition. As Rader points out, we know that Rosa was born on September 21, 1829, and that the book was 20 or 21 in 1854 (p. 139, notes 18 and 28). Croker's review of Poems (1852) appeared in the Quarterly Review, XLIX (April 1853), 81-96.

3. Tennyson's inheritance was a property at nearby Garby, valued at £5,000 (see Tennyson, p. 149). For his poems to Rosa, see Poems, pp. 67-68, 405-59. For information on Shawe, whom Rosa married on October 25, 1858, see Rader, especially pp. 25 and 42-45. As Ricks notes (Tennyson, p. 148), Alfred became seri- ously involved with Emily Sellwood in 1854.


5. Letters in the Wettleby College Library.


7. The letter is in the Wettleby College Library. Virtually all of Hallam's letters to Alfred are in Rader's "early and familiar" style.

8. See Poems, pp. 69-74, and Raders, pp. 64-67, Hardwick Drum- mond's son, Willingham Franklin Rawnsley, notes that Rosa enigmatical sentence about "Love being dead" in his letter today. I earnestly suppose this life may be solved, or I shall pine to curiosity. I am utterly in a non-pluss, so can go no shad- ow of meaning.

9. Arthur mentions Miss Bellingham (and that Frederic might marry her) for the first time in a letter to Frederic dated July 6, 1852, (N. Hartree). In February 1853, Arthur goes on to write: "Last night Frederic has become tremendously cold to us that were charged by you at the christening of the "Charles" letter written in July 1852, and returned to Hallam in mid-August. During the fall, Arthur wrote to Hallam in early October, briefly mentioning that he had sent a second volume of poems.
Arthur’s first reference to the Baring sisters proves, I believe, that Alfred’s involvement with Rosa can have begun no earlier than 1852. By September 23, 1834, Rosa’s “toy lips” and “fairy form” could inspire Alfred’s birthday poem. What was the status of their relationship during the intervening period? If Alfred’s cryptic remark in his November 1832 letter (to his closest friend) did refer to his own romantic attachment, all contextual evidence indicates that his unexpressive “love” was Rosa Baring. We may thus hypothesize that Alfred’s infatuation with Rosa grew very quickly after their eventual encounter, and that Rony Spirnally experienced in such matters) may have just as quickly discouraged his attention, establishing a pattern that ultimately led to Alfred’s complete disenchantment in 1856.

University of California, Los Angeles

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ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STUDIES.

HANSON, C. G. “Craft Unions, Welfare Benefits and the Case for Trade Union Law Reform, 1887-75.” Economic History Review, May, pp. 245-59. The unions’ main objective was to maintain trade-union recognition.


STEELE, L. D. Irish Land and British Politics. Cambridge.

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STEELE, L. D. Irish Land and British Politics. Cambridge.
Thackeray's novels is the contrast between romantic marriage and masquerade of convenience.


The novel embodies the impetus of the moral and social satiety and those of the visionary or prophet.

Shillingburg, Peter L. "Thackeray's Pendant: A Recent Page of Manuscript." Huntington Library Quarterly, February, pp. 188-90. The page sheds light on Thackeray's working habits and the importance of his illustrations.


Wall, Stephen. "Trollope, Balzac, and the Reappearing Character." Essays in Criticism, January, 1975, pp. 125-43. Reappearance in Trollope was a means of apprehending that in the individual which is unique. (Staten Island Community College, City University of New York)
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