MATRICES OF SUBJECTIVITY:

THE DISCOURSE OF LEARNING IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE

by

Hans Mattingly

BA, University of California at Santa Cruz, 1996

MA, University of Pittsburgh, 2002

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

the School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2009

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Hans Mattingly

It was defended on

October 19, 2009

and approved by

John Twyning, D. Phil, Associate Professor

Jonathan Arac, PhD, Professor

Kimberly Latta, PhD, Professor

Giuseppina Mecchia, PhD, Associate Professor

Dissertation Advisor: John Twyning, Associate Professor, Department of English

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Learning was an important trope in the literature of the Victorian period, particularly to the extent that it shaped subjectivity. Alongside such textual elements as voice, character, and setting, the theme of learning responded to the historical and institutional forces exerted upon human existence in this phase of British history. In this period, a new consciousness of political and cultural possibility permeated the social field. This new consciousness was largely democratic and often made gestures towards the universal. Learning was a significant means through which many Victorian writers sought to negotiate the gap between individual experience and this larger social horizon.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

There is a thirty-year debate about the formation of literature as an "instrument of learning" (Robert A. Colby, 14). According to Colby's book <u>Fiction With a Purpose: Major and Minor Nineteenth-century Novels</u>, the educative role of literature was a development of nineteenth-century English literature accompanied by an "extension of the role of the author." This assertion is consistent with both the popularization of the novel and the consolidation of realism as a genre. Colby quotes Dinah Mulock's remarks regarding "the appearance of a really popular novel, the innumerable discussions it creates, and the general influence which it exercises in the public mind" (17). At the same time, if literature could be viewed as a tool for learning, it was because it accurately depicted a way of life modeled on the school: "the nineteenth-century novelist believed that art was didactic precisely because life, which it imitated, was didactic" (24). Thus many leading writers of the period "assumed . . . that life amply and correctly represented yields its own 'message.'" In this formulation, author and reader, text and life, collaborated in an undertaking the main goal of which was to learn something about the changing shape of social life.

At least one critic has challenged the thrust of Colby's book. In an essay titled "Learning from Literature," Peter Lamarque moves the discussion to consider literature in general, though he examines <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> in particular. He contends that literature is first of all an aesthetic phenomenon. Thus its value is not determined primarily in relation to some conception of truth. In other words, "what we learn from works of literature is not a measure of their greatness, as it might be a measure of

philosophical value" (21-22).   Displaying a deep concern for the final cause of literature, Lamarque observes that we "cannot infer that learning is a goal of fiction." Lamarque asserts that, while one may of course learn from literature as a result of reading, such a result is secondary and, indeed, not necessarily even intentional. This possibility is consistent with the general structure of learning, which "does not [per se] need to be directed, purposeful, self-reflective, or rational." Learning is not the same as volition or consciousness. To this, one might add that learning has an unquestionably positive valuation only in a society which, like Victorian society, places a high premium on institutions and on conformity (someone like Mr. Krook in Bleak House, who is afraid to learn writing from anyone lest they teach him wrong, provides an exception).

Yet this line of reasoning leaves unanswered a question about the model of reading which Lamarque proposes. To reiterate, for Lamarque, the project of literature is not first of all a knowledge project. Thus he dismisses the 'defenses of poetry' because they "have repeatedly attempted to assimilate the literary enterprise into something like the philosophical one." Such theoretical gestures imply that "the only value is the value that knowledge gives."   What then is the function of literature and what is the proper way to interact with it? In Lamarque's view, the medium of literature is "verbal artifice, which invites a distinctive mode of appreciation unlike that associated with philosophy or science." The deployment of the term "artifice" is important in this context, as it suggests the sense that literary works don't necessarily reveal their content in straightforward or informational ways and that literature might, in fact, be entirely resistant to cooptation by the category of truth. One can either, with Plato, use this dimension of art as grounds for banishing the poets from the republic, or, with Adorno,

highlight the great importance which subjective phenomena hold for any consideration of its complement, objectivity. Nonetheless, what we are to do with or in literature is different from what we do in philosophy: we don't, as with the latter, learn its truth, we appreciate its "greatness," according to Lamarque.

This debate about the proper uses of literature, though somewhat relevant to the topic of the present study, is really one step removed from its basic assumptions. Once the writers of the nineteenth century take up learning as a theme deserving of serious consideration, learning becomes, as it were, fair game for critical commentary. Though one may object that learning had been considered for some time before the nineteenth century a legitimate topic of literary discourse, that argument must be qualified by reference to several examples.

In general, before the Renaissance, and, indeed, even during the Renaissance, learning was a pursuit secondary in importance to training in arms for the youth.[1] Though one might refer to The Tempest, as Peter Greenaway has done in the movie Prospero's Books, as an example of the importance of learning for stately life and culture in the Renaissance period, it should be apparent that the emphasis placed upon Prospero's library is primary only in the modern reading of Shakespeare. In the Jacobean period, Jonson's Epicoene or The Silent Woman provides an example in the character of Jack Daw of how learning and the ignorance which learning sometimes implies could easily become a target of ridicule. In the Romantic period, as I discuss in the chapter on Lewis Carroll, genius could be foreshadowed more easily than created by a process that

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[1] Thus Alan Young writes in Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments that the money allotted by courts to tournaments "far surpassed that spent on disguising, pageants, masques, and plays" (7).

involved real difficulty. Thus learning resulted from sudden insight and encounter more than from practice and dull repetition. There was, perhaps, a change in the valorization given to learning during the Restoration, but in general learning had not been particularly exalted in the English-speaking world.

The purpose of my dissertation is to map the discourse of learning in the literature of the Victorian period and to examine how this discourse inflected subjectivity. By subjectivity, I mean that notion of self which serves to negotiate the relation between the individual and some larger social horizon. Such a study therefore necessitates some knowledge of and reference to the larger context of Victorian culture. Of what significance is it that Edward Rochester's first bride is from the West Indies, for example? How does Jane Eyre's learning inflect her presence within an estate with colonial connections? How do Silas Wegg's attempts at reading shape our understanding of the novel's own claim to literariness?

These are the kinds of questions I have braved to ask, and they are questions which extend formalist notions of plot and theme, character and setting, to the point where it becomes necessary to ask about the world of sociological knowledge before turning back to the aesthetic qualities of a given work of literature. At the same time, as the chapter titled "The Moment of Alice: Rules and Gentlemanly Learning in the Victorian Period" suggests, the preoccupation with the aesthetics of literature itself represents a shift from other paradigms, in which criticism of social conditions is a more or less normative feature of artistic and interpretive projects.

Whether we discuss literature which tends towards the critical or towards the fictional, the problem remains of defining subjectivity in a satisfactory manner. Aside

from all the demarcations according to which we say that subjectivity is determined—

demarcations of class, gender, or some other stratification—the concept of subjectivity is

relatively straightforward. In what she describes as a pragmatist approach, Regenia

Gagnier has surveyed literally hundreds of Victorian-era autobiographies to arrive at

some solid conception of "an economy of self" (249). The results of her research are

presented in the book <u>Subjectivities: A History of Self-Represenation in Britain, 1832-

1920</u>. By focusing on first-hand accounts—autobiographies, in other words—Gagnier

has sought, in solid empirical fashion, to discover something like the truth of lived

experience in the Victorian period, "of what it was like to be a Victorian gentleman, lady,

midwife, carpenter, mudlark, barrister, or nurse" (3).

Though it would be easy enough to take from this quote the notion that

subjectivity is simply a matter of self-representation and therefore susceptible (subject) to

the contingencies of narcissism or other varieties of exaggeration, Gagnier is also careful

to identify the other side of subjectivity. She writes, "simultaneously, the subject is a

subject to, and of others; in fact, it is often an "Other" to others, which also affects its

sense of its own subjectivity" (8). At this point, her definition of subject as a self or an

agent which is nonetheless communal begins to take on resonances with Jonathan Arac's

notion of the "commissioned spirit," a subjectivity no doubt privileged in many respects,

but also responsible to the society of which he or she forms a part. In <u>Commissioned

Spirits: The Shaping of Social Motion in Dickens, Carlyle, Melville, and Hawthorne</u>,

Arac explains that the commissioned spirit is the writer who possesses a new capacity of

vision: "surveying from above, the narrator turns to his audience and reflects at once on

the world he has created within the novel and the world he claims to be representing" (5).

In order to further support this idea, Arac provides a quote from Henry James—next in line after Eliot in F. R. Leavis's "great tradition"—which describes "that vivid show of a society trying to build itself, with every elaboration, into some coherent sense <u>of</u> itself." In this passage too, the importance for subjectivity of the context of observed experience is presaged.

In sum, subjectivity is a codeword for the negotiation between self, artistic vision, and society, a negotiation particularly important for understanding English literary culture. Readers of Althusser or Lacan will be familiar with the way in which modern theorists of subjectivity have sought to show that, in the context of subjectivity, the self is a fiction, determined in part by the vagaries of the imagination. Perhaps it is needless to say that such a description does not imply that the self is either false or unreal.

True and false, real or unreal: these are not, however, the binaries which best define the fiction of the self (subjectivity) and its operations or existence. It is more appropriate to understand the self and its fictions as a process in the making on the one hand and as an inadequation to the totality of which it is a part on the other. To paraphrase a modern theorist, the parts do not add up to the whole. It is on this point, finally, that I place the stakes of my manuscript: namely, while I am indebted to ways other critics such as Arac and Gagnier have envisioned the self and subjectivity, I also want to suggest that it is precisely the lack inherent to subjectivity which makes a more or less political reading of literature possible. What I mean by a "political reading" is not only the more narrow sense of an investigation into for example, the fact that Benjamin Disraeli, the novelist, was also Lord Beaconsfield, the Prime Minister. Rather, I mean an enquiry into the totality of "real conditions" under which individuals live, along with the

alliances and antagonisms which they form in struggling with those conditions. Thus subjectivity raises the question of how to imagine the world and how to respond to that representation, even in the knowledge that it must, by definition, be particular and, hence, incomplete.

In our readings, then, we must keep in mind at the same time both the fictional work before our eyes, with all of its formal properties, and our best approximation of the work's entire historical underpinning. This is not to say, to repeat a longstanding worry, that literature is simply derivative of history or that it is simply of its time. Rather, it is to say that one way we can understand the value of literature is by examining how it formulates a poetic vision of history, how it uses the devices available to fiction—irony, character, plot—to create a unique articulation of history's meaning. Thus we must treat the particularity of any such articulation as valuable and revealing of a cosmography which is ultimately irreducible to some other telling of historical narrative or to the critical statements which can be made about it.

Yet what is the whole, the "totality," to use Arac's phrase, which literary vision fails to capture? In the Victorian era, we might say that the whole was that specific agglomeration of rising industrialism, maritime mercantilism, scientific discovery, and the disciplinary urban society which heavily inflected the British experience between the Napoleonic Wars and the recrudescent imperial aggressions of the 1870s. Throughout the dissertation, I discuss ways in which writers approximated some aspect of this cluster by deploying the trope of learning. That is to say, learning repeatedly appears as a sort of compensation for the distance between the fictional character and that unattainable fully omniscient view which would defy the very conditions for the possibility of discourse.

For example, though Dorothea Brooke "yearned . . . after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there," that conception's elusiveness is, one might say, precisely what allows for her struggle to be narrated.

To provide a different example of a compensating distance, one of the effects of the period of reaction against Napoleonism was a deepening acknowledgement of the necessity for an expansive and inclusive English culture. This need was registered not least of all in Thomas Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, which sought the consolidation of national cultural institutions and the formation of criticism in particular. I argue below that Carlyle developed his approach to criticism by incorporating both antagonism and distancing in his writing. I argue further that the class issues which underpin Carlyle's text are consistent with the development of a democratic consciousness in the same era. Given what I have already observed concerning the notion of subjectivity, it should perhaps come as no surprise that Sartor Resartus, in my reading, gives only a partial and ambiguous revelation of the new doctrine of democracy, and only partially addresses the demands of the latter. Nonetheless Carlyle affords us with a narrative perspective that sweeps across many segments of Victorian society, finally imagining a battle between two sides determining "which ought to look down and which up."

I have focused primarily on five texts from the Victorian period that take up the question of learning in some sense: in addition to Thomas Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, Charlotte Brönte's Jane Eyre, Lewis Carroll's Alice stories, Charles Dickens's Our Mutual Friend, and George Eliot's Middlemarch constitute the centerpieces of my study.

To these works I have posed a series of questions about the relationship between learning, literature, and subjectivity. What was the role of literature and learning in shaping notions of self? How were ideas about character or aesthetics inflected by class and other identity markers in nineteenth-century literature? And what new forms of pedagogical concerns and techniques emerged during this period, and with what historical precursors and effects?

I have then proceeded to ask periodizing questions about the way learning helped to shape subjectivity. The works around which I have formed my study were written in the period from 1833 to 1869. Nonetheless, all of these texts address the theme of learning in more or less explicit ways, which suggests its growing importance to a society that was becoming increasingly professionalized and urbanized.

Written in the historical context of debates about the possibilities and difficulties of employment for the accomplished woman, Jane Eyre, the focus of my second chapter, asks about the mutual inflections of class and gender in nineteenth-century England. Pursuing Laura Morgan Green's assertion that "Jane Eyre poses for its protagonist a series of alternative pedagogies by which to achieve . . . ambition," I examine Jane's pedagogical options in the light of the larger narrative structure. That larger structure is informed by the colonial relationship between England and both the West Indies and India. Mr. Rochester's past is intertwined with the former, St. John Rivers's with the latter. One could say that Jane's preference for Mr. Rochester represents a solid break with both Jane's evangelical education and the English colonial mission.

The third chapter, "The 'True Golden Gold': Exchange, Counterfeit, and Learning in Our Mutual Friend," examines Charles Dickens's last completed novel. I try

to make the claim that the novel refuses the counterfeit in order to champion authenticity in learning. Authenticity is not, generally, the possession of any particular character, though several characters display authenticity at different points in the plot. What I take to be the surprising discovery made by my research is that authenticity takes on an important role precisely in the context of a society which engages in the process of speculation and monetary exchange. Thus learning is bound up in complex ways with the way the novel imagines the social life of London as a financial center.

In the fourth chapter, learning becomes disinterested and the female child becomes emblematic of selfless learning. Yet Lewis Carroll's Alice stories problematize this figuration. In order to examine the position of the child in relation to learning, I claim that Carroll produces a contradictory child figure. On the one hand, this figure belongs to a tradition in which the child is earnest and agreeable. Furthermore, the repeated invocation of games in the stories suggests an arena of competition free from any social determinant other than skill. But the games always go wrong, the rules are constantly compromised, and the child is subject to outbursts. As a result, I conclude that Carroll is an author who resisted the notion that the child could stand both for innocence and for a universal, harmonious culture.

The development of what we might today call structural biology is one of the driving forces of the narrative of <u>Middlemarch</u>. In my fifth chapter, "The Fateful Strength of Metaphors: <u>Middlemarch</u> and Intellectual Passion," I investigate the metaphor which likens such scientific knowledge to romance. By way of close reading, I suggest that this metaphor is consistent with the era's "(relative) democratization of learning across the genders and the anxieties which attended that process." I furthermore

show that the narrator figures herself as feminine in an attempt to distinguish herself from the frivolous character Rosamond and to show that, as a woman, she (the narrator) is both competent to aspire to and wary of the pitfalls of a learning which is simultaneously scientific and masculine.

Throughout my study, I have attempted to understand learning as a phenomena that is material, historical, and also discursive. In doing so, I have followed in the footsteps of those who have viewed literature as an institution. Yet the project of understanding literature as an institution, and, in the case of Victorian literature, as an institution of industrial society, means coming to terms with a certain contradiction. One might simply describe it as the tension between freedom and constraint. As I mention several times in the body of the manuscript, authorship in the nineteenth century was frequently described in terms of genius, originality, and innovation. Artistic creation seemed far removed from any systemic determination of utterances or institutional limits of discourse. Yet the existence of a relation between these is what I propose and what I have sought to elicit, with whatever degree of success, in what follows. In doing so, I hope I have preserved some sense of the importance of both historical structures and individual imagination.

CHAPTER I

Didactic Destiny: <u>Sartor Resartus</u> and the Institution of Criticism

<u>Sartor Resartus</u> is an allegory of the formation of modern criticism. In one of

Thomas Carlyle's first book-length works, the cenobite, as a representative member of

modern culture and its institutions, learns to incorporate the eremite or the prophet into a

new national life. The eremite is integrated into the national culture, but at a remove

from it. In the process, the eremite—that is, Teufelsdröckh—imparts his sense of

distance to the institutions, and specifically the institution of criticism. Or, to say the

same thing in other words, the institution of criticism absorbs and responds to something

of the character of the prophet: namely, the distancing which the latter figure implies.

<u>Sartor</u> therefore envisions a modern cultural formation from which not even the

sage escapes. Thus the spatial metaphor which dominates the book is one of totality.

Yet, while <u>Sartor</u> teaches the value of theoretical holism, it also strains under the burden

of that "Philosophy of Things in General" which Herr Teufelsdröckh professes.   With its

bending and circuitous reasoning, Teufelsdröckh's writing elaborates a social philosophy

which shows that the old society must undergo a "Phoenix Death-Birth" which will give

rise to a new one. If Carlyle's readership was still relatively small when he published

<u>Sartor Resartus,</u> it is nonetheless undeniable that his insights into "British Criticism"

were prescient. The central problem which the book raises—that of criticism itself—has

retained currency down to our own era, and has become perhaps only more perplexing

since the first half of the nineteenth century.

In some senses, criticism has become a catch-all phrase that addresses any number of contradictions or opposites and attempts to place them in conjunction with one another. I have chosen to write about Sartor, as well as several other Carlyle texts, because it is one of the first publications originating in the post-Napoleonic era to specifically address the problem of criticism and to do so in a way that represented criticism as an accessory to a number of mutually inflecting developments. My preliminary thesis about the character of criticism holds that it is the site of antagonism and of distancing. This antagonistic character of criticism, in turn, is largely consistent with the democratic turn taken in European and Atlantic politics in the first part of the nineteenth century. It thus becomes part of my larger argument that the world Carlyle was attempting to represent in the book—one hesitates to call it a novel—was the world of agitation for voter reform in the post-Napoleonic era.

One of the grievances for such reform urged the lowering or elimination of the property qualification. Thus, an early antagonism which informs the history of criticism is the antagonism between rich and poor, or to use Carlyle's phraseology, between dandies and drudges. One of the contradictions which subsequently informs the text is that both Teufelsdröckh and the Editor, as intellectuals, can claim membership to either faction only on a precarious basis. Yet for the Editor it seems as important to join the battle as it is to report on it. In Raymond Williams's rereading of Carlyle, and in later appropriations of Williams, this antagonism has been rewritten as that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. As a result, the specific details of Carlyle's texts have sometimes become less important for contemporary readers of Carlyle who position him in a relation that makes him antagonistic to a specific position within the relations of

production. Perhaps a more careful tracing of the stakes of Carlyle's works has been performed by James Eli Adams, who has pointed out that there are really two types of hero in Carlyle's literary imagination: the eremite, the prophetic outsider, and the cenobite, who has developed the tact, flexibility, and sociability to work within the institutional setting. It is perhaps in this context that we can best observe and apply the terms frequently derived from Williams, which posit a hegemonic society and an oppositional culture. These latter perspectives, by extension, tend to emphasize the marginal status of the "cultural critique" offered by Carlyle. But, if we are to read <u>Sartor Resartus</u> as an allegory of criticism—that is, of criticism as an institution—in the line of succession which Williams reconstructs from the history of English letters, it is perhaps necessary to bracket the motifs of domination, centrality, and marginality, if only for a brief moment. Though these terms, in more or less contemporary discussions, are intertwined with important connotations around the notion of class, the more important insight for me is that, in my reading of Carlyle, criticism implies something else: it implies antagonism, totality, and distance.

I have suggested that criticism as a problem continues to have currency in contemporary debates. In his essay "From Non-Fiction Prose' to 'Cultural Criticism': Genre and Disciplinarity in Victorian Studies," Stefan Collini has focused on the ambivalent position of criticism within the field of English Studies. According to Collini, the problem with a writer like Thomas Carlyle is that, as a non-fiction prose writer, he doesn't fit into the literary paradigm later developed by T. S. Eliot and the New Critics, a paradigm which celebrated the elements of literature typically associated with fiction. Collini explains that "a defining property of the New Critical conception of 'literature'

was precisely that it was non-propositional, that literature achieved its effects (and its status) by its enactment of tension, ambiguity, irony, and so on," rather than by means of its directly indicative statements (17). And since the former were characteristics primarily of fiction, it is only with difficulty that Carlyle's works could be considered literature. Sartor may be something of an exception because it is at least partly fictional.

The attention which Collini brings to the critical paradigm established by the New Critics provides the ground for only one of his arguments, however: the New Critics aside, Collini has also set as his goal a settling of accounts with those who, following the writings of Raymond Williams, invoke the phrase "cultural critique" to describe the intellectual work of a number of Victorian thinkers, Carlyle included. Regarding this cohort, Collini's argument is rather devastating because it seems to imply that if we so much as mobilize the term "cultural criticism" in our pedagogical vocabulary, we run the risk of creating confusion between Victorian Moralists and "campus radicals," whom Collini describes as "manqué." Thus Collini writes that "the category of 'cultural criticism' risks turning them [the Victorian Sages] into campus radicals manqué, whose intentions adumbrate a rather primitive critique of bourgeois society while failing to appreciate the more insidiously coercive power of hegemony" (27). This risk, according to Collini, follows from the discursive structure of Culture and Society itself, in which the two terms of the title, society and culture, are anchored into a relationship that posits them as either hegemonic or resistant to hegemony. Other authors, such as Gerald Graff and Bruce Robbins, have joined the discussion by replying that contention is precisely one of the defining aspects of cultural studies today and that there is no reason to privilege the call for a more reserved model of scholarship voiced by Collini and others.

I have written elsewhere about the debates in the past several decades concerning the evolution of literary and cultural studies, as well as Carlyle's position within the debate about that evolution. What I wish to do on the present occasion is something slightly different. In effect, there are three purposes to the present chapter. First, I want to narrate a process of learning—specifically, the process whereby the cenobite learns to integrate the eremite into modern cultural institutions and the institution of criticism specifically. Second, I want to show how this integration nonetheless implies the sublation or the suspension of elements of antagonism and of distance within the institution of criticism. In other words, I suggest that there is a larger setting and resonance around the narrative of the Editor and Teufelsdröckh, cenobite and eremite respectively, which inflects not just individual but institutional subjectivity. Finally, I want to say something about the context for the development of criticism in the early nineteenth century, though in some respects I can make only educated guesses about that context.

Learning and the Crisis of Communal Religion

For Carlyle, the most pressing need for a reconstitution of national culture stemmed from the crisis he detected in religious life. He believed that organized religion had universally failed in the eighteenth century but he also felt that all of human life, even in the nineteenth century, could be properly understood as religious. This contradiction should key the reader in to the fact that whatever cultural innovation Carlyle made would likely be shaped by the universalizing and totalizing motifs typical of much Christian religion. In a manner at odds with the trend toward free inquiry in the

nineteenth century, Carlyle opposed the autonomy of the intellect and intellectual freedom to the "moral feelings" of more religious periods (Lippincott 6).

Whatever he saw, in most of his writings, was furthermore colored by a lens that interpreted in religious terms. His religious philosophy, according to Richard Bishirjian, is the twin of Carlyle's social vision: "Carlyle himself understood his social vision . . . to be in essence a religious vision" (95). Bishirjian furthermore concludes his essay on "Carlyle's Political Religion" by asserting that "at the transition in English culture between religious and secular Messianism stands the figure of Thomas Carlyle" (113).

In understanding the writings of Carlyle, then, it is of the greatest importance to keep in mind their double nature, which is simultaneously secular and religious, as well as Messianic and totalitarian. One way to read Sartor Resartus might explore the possibility that it substitutes the secular for the religious and the Spirit for the Letter. Tellingly, this is nowhere better articulated than in the chapter "Pedagogy": "first must the dead Letter of Religion own itself dead and drop piecemeal into dust, if the living Spirit of Religion, freed from its charnel house, is to arise on us, newborn of Heaven" (147).

This substitution of Letter by Spirit is registered as a radical change in the condition and experience of language as much as of religion: the "Letter," which can be read metonymically as the linguistic field itself, is dead, and must confess as much, before departing and being replaced by "Spirit." Teufelsdröckh's doctrine about the primacy of the "Spirit" of religion over the "Letter" extends so far as to suggest that the entire vocabulary which has described religious experience must be abandoned; it must, in Carlyle's words, "drop piecemeal into dust" (147). The scope of the problem is

important. It is not this or that particular practice of any specific church which must be reformed, but religion in its totality. This demonstrates the width of the crisis as Carlyle understood it and gives an early intimation about the limits of religion traditionally understood. Carlyle is writing on the cusp of the crisis, and so he can only transcend those limits with difficulty. At the same time, because the crisis will involve a real rupture, its resolution may render the earlier letter—that is, earlier language—nearly incomprehensible. In other words, Carlyle's project entails a complete transformation, a jump from one semantic paradigm to another, from which viewpoint the earlier paradigm may be only barely recognizable. How to make the transition between the two paradigms is what the Editor learns from Teufelsdröckh.

Carlyle's sensitivity to the connections between religion and language bears upon his contribution to criticism as an institution. In the quotation from the chapter on "Pedagogy" above—and criticism can be thought of as a pedagogical institution—Carlyle frames the religious question of his time, his era's "Purgatory" of "Unbelief," as essentially linguistic: the sharp criticism which Carlyle makes of traditional religion stems from the ragged condition of its semiotic dress, the "Letter of Religion." A new language and a new letter must be invented, and criticism will be part of that invention.

Sartor Resartus, then, represents an attempt to navigate the "crisis of religion" which Collini has identified as one of the formative factors in the public sphere of nineteenth-century England. The text suggests that, while a return to earlier forms of dogmatic belief is impossible and undesirable, some elements of religion need to be retained. In the chapter which describes Teufelsdröckh's conversion experience, "The Everlasting No," the Editor first recounts the period of deep questioning which

Teufelsdröckh underwent before his conversion. In commenting on this narrative, the Editor emphasizes Teufelsdröckh's skeptical mode of thinking during this period: "perhaps at no era of his life was he more decisively the Servant of Goodness, the Servant of God, than even now when doubting God's existence" (207). In this chapter, which is usually considered to be the most important of the autobiographical chapters of the work, questioning and doubt are discussed as if they are actions mandated by God, though they are also modes of inquiry which have the capacity to significantly alter long-standing beliefs about the nature and the status of the Deity. But by making the Deity out to be the mouthpiece of a "doubting skepticism," Carlyle emphasizes the continuity that will persist between religion and criticism as a secular institution.

To give one example, the Editor poses questions about Teufelsdröckh's religious conversion. The Editor asks how important the conversion experience was, hinting therefore that there may be a danger in fully accepting the terms in which it has been described. "Was 'that high moment in the Rue de l'Enfer," wonders the Editor, "properly the turning point of the battle"? (234). Thus the Editor displays the potential for distance upon which the institution of criticism relies. And the Editor's frustration that Teufelsdröckh offers "no clear logical picture" intimates that there may be other ways of interpreting Teufelsdröckh's experience. These moments emphasize the distancing and sometimes skeptical attitudes which criticism must embrace. Thus, while the Editor integrates Teufelsdröckh's experience into his own work of criticism, he also sets himself apart from those experiences and asks incisive questions about them.

To emphasize the importance of the continuity between religion and the institution of criticism, or rather, the way that criticism tries to compensate for the

fragmenting of communal religion, what I want to suggest is that the vision of personal religious experience outlined in <u>Sartor Resartus</u> nonetheless dovetails with the liberal ideology of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, which also placed great emphasis on the philosophical category of the individual. Such an individual would expedite the functioning of an industrial society dependent upon the quantitative calculations of an early mass-production economy. Recognizing the centrality of the concept of the individual to the ascendant bourgeoisie helps to further delimit Carlyle's critical vision, for it sought to bridge the distance between the individual and the community.

If Victorian cultural criticism was, as Andy Green has suggested, in fact largely a conservative reaction to the industrial capitalists' hegemony, then the religion Carlyle denounced—that which must pronounce itself "dead"—was largely a result of that ascendance: though still present in society, the other, communal religion no longer exerted the kind of influence it once had. Perhaps one of the most obvious points of contention in debates between the two was on the issue of free inquiry, especially empiricism, and the role of experience in relation to authority and knowledge. These were issues that had been raised time and again since the Middle Ages, but the rapid advance in science, pure and applied, in the nineteenth century no doubt made them unavoidable. Asa Briggs has written that "belief in free discussion and inquiry" was one of the formative factors of mid-nineteenth century social life in England (4). And Carlyle's mouthpiece in <u>Sartor Resartus</u>, Teufelsdröckh, satirizes the empiricist assault on religion when he observes that "men ask now: 'Where is the Godhead; our eyes never saw him?'" (207). The question is somewhat of an exaggeration of empiricism as a

philosophy of science, though it does show the logic of a position which holds that we can only know things which we perceive with our senses.

There are obviously difficulties and a great deal of simplification in the empiricist position as represented by Teufelsdröckh. But it's not too much to infer that the individual experience which Teufelsdröckh views as so important in understanding the very substance of religion is likewise promoted both by a social paradigm in which humans are viewed as atomistic units within an economic calculus and by empirical science. Though empirical science and political economy may have done much to undermine the conceits of orthodox religion, they did not, Carlyle saw, do enough to compensate for the loss of social vision which the church provided in earlier times. Even the development of individualistic conceptions of religion could sometimes obstruct the development of a social institution which would offer instruction in "moral feelings." Carlyle's solution was to imagine a criticism that would temper the individualizing tendencies of his era.

From our perspective, it's perhaps difficult to grasp the extent to which religion was intertwined with other cultural institutions in nineteenth-century Britain. And it's difficult to measure the extent of the crisis in religion. But clearly, the question of religion was a widespread one in Carlyle's era; it was raised in several intellectual and institutional debates. An examination of one of these will help further contextualize the emergence of Carlyle's notions of criticism and learning.

The first few decades of the nineteenth century were, in Scotland at least, a moment of debate about the character of education. The dynamics of the interplaying

forces in this period can be introduced by way of reference to the discussions around and findings of the Royal Commission which in 1826 was tasked with reporting on and reforming the Scottish University System, of which Carlyle himself was a product. By recounting some of the tendencies within Scottish education and culture to which the reports of the commission point, I hope to suggest that Carlyle's shaping of a criticism that depended largely on a vision of totality was not entirely surprising.

The controversy over the Scottish Universities began as a concern over financial and administrative duties, but the Commissioners were quick "to pry into the curriculum and to criticize severely an academic inheritance . . . of which the Scots themselves for the most part were very proud indeed" (Davie 26). The controversy about the curriculum tended to divide the Commissioners as well as the parliament and the Scottish professoriate into two large tents: one camp privileged education that is popular, holistic, and religious; the other preferred education that is elitist, professional, and secular. In defending the customary way of educating the college students within the Scottish University system, Carlyle's friend, Francis Jeffrey, stated that the benefit of the general education afforded by the Universities was that it allowed "large numbers of people to get—not indeed profound [or specialized] learning, for that is not to be spoken of—but that knowledge which tends to <u>liberalize</u> and make intelligent the <u>mass</u> of our population" (quoted in Davie, 27, emphasis added). The view about the appropriate aim of education here expressed by Jeffrey has direct correlations to those which Carlyle conveyed to Ralph Waldo Emerson in the same period. Regarding Emerson's <u>Second Series</u>, Carlyle had written the author "Why won't you come and help us then? We have terrible need of one man like you down among us!" (in Harris, 50). Thus Carlyle provided Emerson with

an early intimation of the evolution in his thinking whereby the exiled prophet would become the integrated and integral heroic statesman. Like the witness to the Royal Commission, Carlyle believed that the appropriate location and concern for the priest or teacher was among the masses, here represented as a needful "us."

Also opposing the bill to reform the Scottish Universities, two members of the Commission, both of whom were important figures in the Church of Scotland, argued that "the proper order in education was that broad views should form the preliminary descent to the minutiae" (31). Voicing the opposing opinion were men like Archdeacon Williams, Rector of Edinburgh academy, who believed that the curriculum of the Scottish Universities should be reformed on the model of the ancient English Universities. Under this proposal, philosophy would no longer play the central role in the Scottish College Curriculum. The bill for reform was presented in 1834, but the outcry threatened a political crisis between England and Scotland and the matter was dropped for the time.

Although this narrative underemphasizes the degree to which the primary aim of the reformers was to substitute Greek language study for philosophy at the center of the curriculum, it does help to illuminate some of the debates which were shaping intellectual life during this period of British history. The university was being shaped by the tension between the general and the particular, the whole and the fragment. Carlyle clearly favored the notion of holism over specialization. Like his friend Francis Jeffrey, he was anxious that the knowledge afforded the masses of the new democratic society should be as general as possible.   For example, his contention that "some oversight of the whole" of history is necessary demonstrates his support for general education in the humanities ("On History" 95).

It was therefore consistent with his view of pedagogy that Carlyle criticized the Utilitarians, whose unflinching dissection of human motives implied a kind of analysis which Carlyle thought dangerous and irresponsible. Of course, Carlyle's response to the Utilitarians, including Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and even Jeffrey himself, is not based merely on his aversion to their penchant for analysis. In the book <u>On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History</u>, Carlyle at first laments the tendency of the Utilitarians—here designated as "these poor Sceptics,"—not towards analysis, but towards mechanization: "the living <u>Tree</u> Igdrasil . . . has died-out into the clanking of a <u>World-Machine</u>" (171). After he has asked us to "contrast these two things," "'Tree' and 'Machine,'" Carlyle declares "the world to be no machine!"

Nonetheless, as early as his 1830 essay "On History," he had examined the methodological problem which analysis raises for historiography. Because of the proliferation of specialization in history and the creation of a number of subfields, it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of "the purport" of history's smaller or more obscure branches in relation to the whole (86). In the case of the machine imagery which he uses to describe the Utilitarians, it's hard to shake the association it has with the anatomizing "Steam-engine" of a "Universe" in <u>Sartor Resartus</u>, "rolling on, in its dead indifference to grind [him] limb from limb" (210). As in the discussion of the Utilitarians in <u>On Heroes</u>, the analytical mode is taken to be a basic philosophical gesture, to which Carlyle opposes his own organic and holistic romanticism. For Carlyle, division disparaged its object; thus his own distinction between "intellectual" and "moral" Scepticism informed a needed criticism of the Sceptics, while the sceptics' analysis of human motives threw the "mystery" of the human subject into question.

In any event, the Universities, perhaps attentive to the kinds of reasoning offered by the Utilitarians and the empiricists, were becoming less religious. The book <u>From Don to Clergyman: The Rise of the Academic Profession in Nineteenth-Century Oxford</u>, written by A. J. Engel, shows that the development of the educator as a professional, in the context of the ancient University of Oxford, is simultaneously a story about contradictory anxieties around religion. In the Oxford context, Reverend Coplestone could still provide support for the view that "the only purpose of university study was to provide mental discipline and inculcate religious values," while the Tractarians could argue "'that Oxford has, and ever has had, what men of the world will call a popish character,'" both applying "the monastic ideal" to university education (27-28, 24). Of course, the monastic ideal was one which Carlyle himself supported.

Monastic ideals were in decline, however, as "the new Oxford which came into being in the nineteenth century and which so offended the 'Don of the Old School' was an increasingly secular institution" (1). Thus the nineteenth century was an era in which religious ideals and the communalism of traditional religion were put into question. Carlyle's response was to imagine a kind of criticism that tried to reinvigorate both communal life and religious ideals.

We have already seen that Carlyle steadfastly opposed the doctrine of individualism. In fact, the opposition to individualism formed the basis for the criticism he practiced. Simultaneously, he constantly reminds his reader of the continuity between the religion of yesterday and his own critical practice. The religious tenor of everyday life was inseparable in any significant from what Raymond Williams would call "a whole

way of life." In <u>Past and Present</u>, the simile of the construction of Paul's Cathedral as religious activity works not just because the building serves a religious function, but because the labor that goes into it, "the Masonries and Worships and Quasi-Worships that are there," is a miraculous activity: "Men had not a hammer to begin with, not a syllabled articulation: they had it all to make;--and they have made it" (132). Unlike the "seven-feet-high" "lath-and-plaster Hat" with which the haberdasher advertises his wares, true work makes no claim upon "noisy" proclamation and promotion, but is content to be a "silent" prayer (144, 135). The very contrast between the religious nature of church building and the self-promotion of advertising serves to highlight Carlyle's critical method.

Carlyle represents labor as prayer in order to achieve particular rhetorical, that is to say political, effects. By denouncing the Strand Street retailer, Carlyle is indicating a preference for certain cultural values—or, more accurately, a certain style—emphasizing such qualities as plainness, directness, and honesty over against ostentation, ornament and self-promotion. Carlyle then deploys this preference the more strongly to appeal to "Mr. Bull," a caricature of the English nation equivalent to the American Uncle Sam (163). This appeal to English nationalism in <u>Past and Present</u> once again invokes the Dandy, one of the two flag-bearers of the apocalypse in <u>Sartor Resartus</u>. In <u>Past and Present</u>, the Dandy is once again held up as a negative example singled out for destruction: "have thy eye-glasses, opera-glasses, thy Long-Acre cabs with white-breeched tiger, thy yawning impassivities, pococurantisms, <u>fix</u> thyself in Dandyhood, undeliverable; it is thy doom" (130). The dandy is an important figure because he provides an occasion for Carlyle to imagine a cultural politics which is socially

conservative—drawing, for example, on religious imagery—and to claim this politics in the name of an earnest, hardworking English people.

The Dandy thus offers one version of culture against which Carlyle had to compete. The Dandy's dictum to "'Go gracefully idle in Mayfair,'" his penchant for "Insincere Speech," and his predilection for ostentatious dressing all place him in opposition to Carlyle's program of earnest endeavor. If even Mammonism could be half excused because it would bring at least some of the nation to work, "Dilettantism" could not be countenanced because of its idleness. Moreover, it was against the notion of culture as the province of the eminently refined, aristocratic, and elite—not to mention effeminate—Dandy that Carlyle was able to prepare the way for Raymond Williams's "idea of a common culture" (337). Though Williams's reading of Carlyle is meant to produce a genealogy of the term "culture" in the English context, one could also point out that the creation of a (single) common culture is also consistent with Carlyle's critical agenda and his pervasive holism.

Furthermore, in reading Carlyle, Williams points out that Carlyle has lasting relevance to English and Anglo culture because he anticipated "the characteristic movements of the English working class," which "have been in the direction of more government, more order," and "more social control" (80). The chaos in Sartor Resartus, which must be overcome if order is to be once again established, is caused by the discrepancies between social classes. The political crisis of the 1830's had already developed to the point where the Chartists were making articulate demands upon the parliament. Clearly most of the petitioners were from the working classes, a group seemingly opposed in every way to the privileged Dandy. Thus there's a connection

between the historically specific "working class" movement and the "common culture"—the division between honest labor and ostentation frames the semiotic possibilities contained by the common culture. Indeed, this distinction is what makes palpable Carlyle's claims to both an English nationalism and to conservatism ("Bull is a born Conservative") (<u>Past and Present</u> 164).

The attempt to satisfy the demands of both English nationalism and cultural conservatism is evident in Carlyle's use of the apocalyptic trope. Conservatives aren't usually thought of as parties to revolutionary discourse. However, the apocalyptic trope is one which imagines severe changes. Carlyle points out that revolution was not unheard of in English history. "Before this," writes Carlyle, presumably referring to the Civil War, "the English People have taken very preternatural-looking Specters by the beard; saying virtually: 'And if thou <u>wert</u> 'preternatural?' Thou with thy 'divine-rights' grown diabolic wrongs? Thou—not even 'natural'; decapitable; totally extinguishable!" (165). The diabolic wrongs of the Stuart monarch are the kind of injustices which might motivate the "most Conservative English People" to "be wholly a Reforming People," the English being reticent to change the national institutions absent a severe crisis.

Carlyle's writing is innovative in that it addresses history in a way that speaks to the cultural legitimacy of a distinctly modern class, the working mass that Carlyle characterizes as "slow to believe in novelties" and "deeply and forever certain of the greatness that is in <u>Law</u>, in Custom once solemnly established, and now long recognized as just and final" (164). The emphasis in Carlyle's conservative historiography on the worker's commitment to "custom" sutures the representative "modern worker" into a narrative that allows for historical consciousness. This task is only completed when

Carlyle claims that the modern is continuous with the ancient by virtue of a process of selective conservation: "Truth and Justice alone are <u>capable</u> of being 'conserved' and preserved! The thing which is unjust, which is <u>not</u> according to God's Law, will you, in a God's Universe, try to conserve that?" Such an argument allows for the English workers, for example, to claim the conservative label against the aristocracy in the battle over the Corn Laws, or, in the period of <u>Sartor</u>'s composition, to claim a position within the patrimony of English politics, even without the money and privileges of the aristocratic and commercial orders.

The Romantic Theory of History

In the battle between the dandies and the drudges, the two are engaged in a combat the outcome of which will be transformative, or, more strongly, apocalyptic: the result of the battle "when it will be practically seen which ought to look down and which up, is not so distant." In other words, the battle will bring about the kind of rebirth of society on which the Editor and Teufelsdröckh spend so many words in the novel. This "transformation" is, as Arthur Quinn has pointed out, part of the "rhetoric of ascent" typical of the "romantic rhetorician" (231, 232).[1] The philosophy of clothes, as a trope of universal history, allowed Carlyle to posit revolution as the primary goal of his romanticism. The figure of reform, in turn, had the rhetorical effect of positioning the aristocracy as decadent and perhaps little more than habitual encroachers upon the historical legitimacy which rightly belonged to the English working masses.

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[1] In examining romantic rhetoric in an essay titled "Teaching Burke: Kenneth Burke and the Rhetoric of Ascent," Quinn has elaborated some of the continuities between latter-day romantic rhetoricians and earlier ones, such as Carlyle, finding that, among other similarities, one can observe in both a "transformation" of "negation into an affirmation" which occurs "through our encounter with genius," in this case the genius of Professor Teufelsdröckh.

In the last paragraph of the first book in <u>Sartor</u>, just before turning to the paper bags of materials through which the Editor must sift in order to compose a biography of Teufelsdröckh, the Editor recommends the professor's works in the following terms: "Wild as it looks, this Philosophy of Clothes, can we ever reach its meaning, promises to reveal new-coming Eras, the first dim rudiments and already-budding germs of a nobler Era, in Universal History" (99). This hope for "new-coming Eras" illustrates a longing on the part of the Editor for some alternative to the present, a longing which seems natural, given Carlyle's difficult, paradoxical predicament: namely, that it makes a claim, in living labor's name, to a cultural history which is nonetheless "universal." For, in making this claim of legitimacy on the same grounds that the aristocracy had made its own claims to authority—i. e, historical lineage—Carlyle risked, at the very least, reduplicating the problematic hierarchies associated with the traditional land-owning and warring aristocracy.

In other words, Carlyle's desire to be the prophet of future transformation was informed by his attachment to and understanding of history. In one of the many parallels between Teufelsdröckh and Carlyle, the Editor has Teufelsdröckh write that "for great Men I have ever had the warmest predilection; and can perhaps boast that few such in this era have wholly escaped me" (224). Indeed, such a turn in the professor's biography was presaged as early as his days at the university. There, he avers that he managed to "read fluently" and that "it was my favourite employment to read character in speculation and from the Writing to Construe the Writer" (146). Reading in history allows the professor to observe that it was "wondrous" that "a certain groundplan of Human Nature and Life began to fashion itself in me," because his "whole Universe, physical and spiritual, was

as yet a machine." History provided an organic perspective, one that allowed for the intertwining of elements in unpredictable ways.

To summarize the import of this passage, as well as the import of the generic shift in Carlyle's writings then: in Sartor, we can observe the priority of the romantic doctrine of transformation and transvaluation coming to grips with historically informed reading, which, while frequently concerned with individuals, also spoke to a vision of universality. This reversion to more traditional subjects, history and great men, became more pronounced over the course of Carlyle's opus. Nonetheless, his understanding of history remained particularly romantic throughout his career. Specifically, his understanding of "Universal History" remained romantic—that is, holistic—in its attempt to think the aristocracy and the working class together, as part of a panoramic criticism.

<center>Carlyle's Popularity: The Dandaical Body</center>

If Carlyle's writing was simultaneously romantic and reforming, his appeal is unsurprising, given that romanticism and reformist tendencies were highly popular in the 1839's. But the relationship between his romantic theory and his popular appeal are worth thinking about because the early nineteenth century required a social transformation. Too many people had been invigorated by the Napoleonic wars and too many people had suffered economically during the period for the status quo to be acceptable. There is therefore a parallel between Carlyle's popularity and the extent of the crisis he addresses in his criticism.

One effect of Carlyle's popularity and the totalizing gestures in his work has been to gain him infamy as a precursor to fascism. Thus Lippincott writes that

"fascism is to a great extent Carlyle's creed brought up to date" (18). Carlyle's absolutism, his hostility, and his sometimes limited political imagination have all earned him this reputation. It could also be said that though he is a writer of great strength, he nonetheless lacks subtlety.

What remains important, however, is the fact that, as Lippincott informs us, "no political writer in nineteenth-century England was as widely read" as Carlyle (6), and thus he was particularly well-positioned to make claims about the importance of universalizing or far-reaching forms of knowledge. And I will demonstrate below that Carlyle, even in the early period in which Sartor was written, could indeed be considered a political writer. Here, I take Lippincott to use the phrase with the best sense of both words in mind: there was a politics to Sartor, but it is represented through and by a particular poetic vision that deploys specific figures and tropes.

Beyond being simply numerous, his readership transected the various strata of society. His writings were read by "circles in the aristocracy and in the lower classes." Charles Franklin Thwing, in Education According to Some Modern Masters, seems to suggest that Carlyle's appeal might arise from his status as "a bundle of inconsistencies and contradictions" (38). As a figure who was "in his tastes a democrat, in his theories an aristocrat," Carlyle could expect to garner favor with both halves of the "popular/particular" binary into which English literary audiences were traditionally divided.   Another possible way of articulating this explanation for Carlyle's popularity is to say that Carlyle, with his pious working-class background, provided a banner around which a front could be formed against the advances of bourgeois liberal democracy.

And, in fact, a passage towards the end of <u>Sartor Resartus</u> imagines such a cultural alignment.

In the chapter on "The Dandiacal Body," the Editor extrapolates on Teufelsdröckh's examination of two social groups in the contemporary British nation, which groups are designated by the quasi-religious term "Sect" (354). The first group is represented by the Foppish "Dandy," the second by the impoverished "Poor-Slave" or "Drudge." In this passage, Carlyle returns to the idea that Clothes are the manner in which "Ideas" are expressed "outwardly" (344). Carlyle furthermore attributes to the dandies "perennial Martyrdom, and Poesy, and even Prophecy." However, by ascribing martyrdom to the dandy, Carlyle is employing him as a foil against which he can ironically contrast his own ideas.

The ironic treatment which the Editor metes out to the dandy foreshadows an even sharper satire on the part of Teufelsdröckh. The professor identifies a method of worship, a temple, and a literary canon peculiar to the dandy, equating religious and secular forms of cultural authority. But the satire works by remarking on the distance between the practices of this sect and the benefits of true education. For instance, Teufelsdröckh surmises that dandies exhibit a "resemblance to that Superstition of Athos Monks, who by fasting from all nourishment, and looking intensely for a length of time into their own navels, came to discern therein the true Apocalypse of Nature, and Heaven Unveiled." Parodying the religious tenor which has been adopted throughout the text, Teufelsdröckh nonetheless manages to criticize the dandy rather than religion itself. The temple of the dandies is <u>Almack's</u>, a club famous for the drinking and gaming that occurred there. Finally, the canon is the genre of writing denominated <u>Fashionable</u>

Novels, and Teufelsdröckh concludes "Of such Sacred Books" that they are "Books that the unassisted human faculties are inadequate to read" (353). Thus Carlyle turns the charge which might most readily be made against his own work—the charge of obscurantism—into a suspicion about the intellectual powers of the leisure class.

The social figure whom Sartor most celebrates, the poor-slave who is the antithesis of the dandy, appears in the same chapter. Like the dandy, the poor-slave, or drudge, whom Carlyle identifies as typically Irish, wears a quite noticeable array of clothes:

> Their raiment consists of innumerable skirts, lappets, and irregular wings,
>
> of all cloths and colours. . . . It is fastened together by a multiplex combination of
>
> buttons, thrums and skewers; to which frequently is added a girdle of leather, of
>
> hempen or even of straw rope, round the loins. To straw rope, indeed, they seem
>
> partial, and often wear it by way of sandals. 354

By the end of the chapter, the representatives of the two social classes, the dandy with his "snuff-brown suit," and the drudge, as described above, become, along with the classes they represent, figures emblematic of a wider social apocalypse. Prefiguring the Marxian notion of a social conflict which devolves into a two-sided struggle, the battle between the classes in Sartor Resartus imagines the dandy and the drudge as providing the rallying centers for a struggle between the two sides. The origins and extensions of the two groups work "to separate and isolate" the English commonwealth "into two contradictory, uncommunicating masses" (360). Carlyle's critical project maintains these "contradictory . . . masses" within a single field of poetic vision.

Carlyle's criticism is not merely descriptive however; it actively takes sides. The only elements of the nation which are attracted to Dandyism are the "Positive Electricity of the nation (namely, the Money thereof)," the money being best understood as the ruling bourgeois and aristocracy. On the other hand, the "Negative Pole," which attracts "the Hunger" of the nation, gathers around itself, in the preamble to the final conflict, adherents to a diversity of religious and philosophical positions. "Christian or Infidel Pagan, . . . Utilitarians, Radicals, refractory Potwallopers" all could be absorbed into the "general mass" of the negative pole, so long as they were "Drudgical."

This formulation of an imaginary social apocalypse, in which "the entire structure of Society" is divided into two opposing forces is consistent with the image of the Victorian Sage which recent scholarship has interrogated. Collini has suggested that the writings of "the major Victorian moralists," including Carlyle, aim "to get beyond all partial, sectarian or merely specialized perspectives, to find somewhere to stand, intellectually speaking, from which the most 'general' assessment can be made" (25). Carlyle's widespread appeal, coupled with a social vision that sought to be totalizing, positioned him to be the Victorian Moralist par excellence.

In fact, Carlyle's eventual popularity was probably a result, at least in part, of his ability to give voice to the disappointment with laissez-faire economics felt by large numbers of English subjects in the period after the Napoleonic Wars. In a reading of Carlyle which is somewhat more even-handed than Lippincott's, professor of economics Joseph Persky has shown just how wide Carlyle's influence has been. Persky indicates that Carlyle is primarily responsible for an understanding of economics as a "dismal science" (167). Persky also views Carlyle in a light which is consistent with the image of

Carlyle and the "Drudges" of <u>Sartor Resartus</u> as providing "a rallying cry of a mid-nineteenth century attack on liberal political economy." Persky further asserts that Carlyle's "attack on political economy was incidental to the larger enterprise" of rebuking "both democratic government and the market system" (166). The strongest and most essential criticism that Carlyle levels against these institutions, in Persky's view, is that they are "eager to leave the world ungoverned" (167).

In sum, Carlyle's wide appeal stemmed largely from his ability to give voice to a number of discontents to the aristocratic and mercantile settlement of late eighteenth-century Britain, the economy being a sore point for a wide swath of the English. Cultural criticism provided the space needed to voice that discontent. Thus culture itself came to have class connotations. If the aristocratic Tories still occupied the dominant political sphere—the parliament, the aristocracy was no longer dominant in the cultural sphere. The schism between the political and the cultural spheres threatened civil war, until the Whigs, led by Charles, the second Earl of Grey, and the even more aggressively reformist Henry Brougham, formed a new government in 1830 and introduced the bills to expand the franchise. This series of events coincided with Carlyle's own insights about the rising importance of the drudges and workers in English society.

Carlyle's critical project during this period, then, registered contemporary social developments. In this context, Carlyle's writings in the first half of the nineteenth century sought to wrest cultural authority away from the historically dominant aristocracy in the name of the modern worker. This process entailed the construction of a romantic theory of English history that displaced the aristocracy and the aristocratic dandy from the center of that history. The success of this project can be examined by way of

recounting Carlyle's ascendance to fame as a kind of Victorian sage. It is widely known that Carlyle achieved fame only with the publication of The French Revolution and its recommendation to the reading public by John Stuart Mill. By contrast, Sartor had only been published after several attempts, and then serially. It received some scant words of praise from Ralph Waldo Emerson in America, but the general response of the readership of Fraser's, the magazine in which it first appeared, was unfavorable. Nonetheless, his later works were largely continuous with Sartor. They did not abandon the desire for transformation, or Baphometic Fire Baptism, expressed in the earlier work.

The success of Carlyle's romanticism is furthermore inflected by two contradictory facts: on the one hand, by the time he was writing On Heroes, he adapted the symbolism espoused in Sartor Resartus to a kind of writing that was one part criticism and one part history. At the same time, however, the success of his works on history depended inherently on that earlier romantic theory of transformation, a theory which was most successfully outlined in Sartor Resartus. This theory of history—that clothes and appearances imparted significant truths about reality—was often a theory about symbols generally and language specifically. It is instructive to examine the issue of language in Carlyle's writings, because over the course of his career he began to assert that language in and of itself was misleading. This perspective tends to undermine the assumption of Sartor, which holds that every society relies upon language for its existence. For Carlyle, the other moiety of linguistic circulation was silence itself. And in the decades after Sartor Resartus was published, he began to imagine, not the rebirth of symbol and reality, but the evacuation of signs in the name of reality.

Underlying all of Carlyle's later work was a deep skepticism of language. This skepticism allowed for Carlyle to once again occupy the position of the eremite and to construct the pathological limit of criticism. The primary danger, in Carlyle's view, is that language has the capacity for manipulation, in the sense that, in a more or less democratic era, there is no final guarantee of the truth-value of linguistic productions. Thus, ironically, the revolution led by Carlyle's idol Cromwell resulted in the restriction of the institution of monarchy to such a degree that linguistic truth became almost infinitely complex. This is the point of much of Lewis Carroll's writing, which I will examine later. But the epistemological shifts represented by the democratic developments had the consequence, for Carlyle, of throwing into doubt the veracity of every statement.

Such a distrust of linguistic value leads him further to distrust the kind of democratic government which, as a result of its attempt to respond to the will of a public, must always capitalize on public opinion and the form of value represented in such opinion. In Past and Present, Carlyle gives an early description of the convergence of democratic representation and suspect volubility by contrasting Oliver Cromwell with an imaginary parliamentary candidate, Sir Jabesh Windbag. In indicating that Cromwell was "no volunteer in Public Life, but plainly a ballotted soldier strictly ordered thither," Carlyle casts self-promotion as an illness of modern democracy in general (221). Carlyle furthermore introduces the public candidate with a plethora of names which cast language in a negative light: he asks that we "do but contrast this Oliver with my right honorable friend Sir Jabesh Windbag, Mr. Facing-both-ways, Viscount Mealymouth, Earl of Windlestraw, or what other Cagliostro . . . the course of Fortune and Parliamentary

Majorities has constitutionally guided to that dignity." Thus language becomes empty, deceptive, weak, shrill or obsequious. In order to complete the comparison, Carlyle imagines an afterlife for Cromwell when "the utmost flow of Paragraphs, the utmost ebb of them, is now, in strictest arithmetic, verily no matter at all; its exact value <u>zero</u>; an account altogether erased!" (222). In this passage, language is reduced to nothing; it is precisely anulled. Whereas the project in <u>Sartor</u> was one of giving birth to a new society and to a new symbolism, the project here takes language and symbols to be inconsequential. What has value now is reality pure and simple. This is a reality without adornment, and hence it is a silent reality. By promoting the value of silence, the literary critic paradoxically establishes an economy of language in opposition to language itself.

At one level, then, this passage registers a fear that language is inconstant or deceptive. At the same time, however, it expresses an anxiety about how language, the medium, not just of social communication, but of the critical task which Carlyle had set for himself from early on, could be entirely ineffective. The Editor concludes the passage above by asserting that "these Paragraphs," by which he means parliamentary reports, "and low or loud votings of thy poor fellow-blockheads of mankind, will never guide thee in any enterprise at all" (243). This despair about language is expressed repeatedly in Carlyle's later works.

In the text <u>On Heroes</u>, language and the spread of ideas was still viewed with a benevolent eye. There, he optimistically observes "how the Press is to such a degree superseding the Pulpit, the Senate, the <u>Senate Academicus</u> and much else," further venturing that "if Men of Letters are . . . actually performing such work for us from age to age . . . then I think we may conclude that Men of Letters will not always wander like

unrecognised unregulated Ishmaelites among us!" (165). In this pronouncement, he suggests that the propagation of ideas in the popular press is salutary both for our age and for our "Men of Letters." The only threat posed by language is an artificial investment in "Appearance," which is the sign of the harmless "Bungler" (157). The relative ease with which Carlyle overcomes his reservations about language is evident in the topic of the final chapter, "The Hero as King," which once again returns to a discussion of Cromwell. In this chapter, Carlyle reasserts a faith in teaching and governing. This confidence is undisturbed by the complexities of modern language.

In Latter-Day Pamphlets, however, the contradictions between speech and silence emerge. "Stump-orator," the fifth pamphlet, begins by recounting the value placed upon speech in traditional education: "it lies deep in our habits, confirmed by all manner of education and other arrangements for several centuries back, to consider human talent as best of all evincing itself by the faculty of eloquent speech" (209). A training in such talent might translate into ascension to "Parliament and the election beerbarrel, and a course that leads men very high indeed" (210). Again, though Carlyle recalls the anxiety about "sham" speech, the greater anxiety is about the consequences such speech has for work, which Carlyle still believes to be a religious duty. And the fact that speech is such an inextricable component of parliamentary activity means that the assembly is therefore the most suspect of modern institutions. "Parliament will train you to talk," he grants, "to tell a good story for yourself, and make it appear that you have done your work" (240). But he doubts whether Parliament will train "your men" to "the intrinsic functions" of "a statesman," which, for Carlyle, is to work at the exclusion of speech if necessary. At this point in his writing—the 1850's, the writing against language and the suspicion of

democratic institutions signals the breakdown of the precarious balance of institutions and politics which had been possible in the 1830's.

In this regard, "Stump-orator" represents another shift in his thinking about language and criticism. Thus Carlyle finishes the pamphlet by urging the youth to "love silence rather than speech in these tragic days" and to "be not a Public Orator, thou brave young British man" (256). The correct course is to "appeal by silent work, by silent suffering if there be no work, to the gods" (255). But such a strong refutation of language, the medium of Carlyle's criticism, nonetheless illustrates a continuity within that critical practice. The cure is different here: we are no longer to expect or tailor new symbols for a changed society. Instead, he recommends restraint from linguistic or symbolic endeavor altogether. But tradition and religion are still invoked—and perhaps it is the failure of those institutions which Carlyle registers in the later writings. In any event, the notion of totality is still relevant, but here it is the totality of possibilities delimited by silence as well as speech. Silence is an eremitic figure, one which finally elides the conditions for the possibility of criticism.

In contrast to his writings of the 1850's and after, Sartor Resartus assumed not only that human institutions tended to decay and deviate from their original splendor, but that they could be regenerated, whether peacefully, through painful reform, or violently, through cataclysmic upheaval. This Sisyphean narrative of human history led Carlyle to deploy a semiotic contradiction whenever he attempted to articulate his own position as an intellectual and critic. James Eli Adams, in Dandies and Desert Saints, points out that the contradictions Carlyle embodied were consistent with early Victorian notions about

gender, whereby "the same gender system that underwrote male dominance also called into question the 'manliness' of intellectual labor" (1). Adams suggests that, on the surface, at least, the "dandy is antithetical to the Carlylean hero, whose essential selfhood is typically bodied forth in a 'savage' disregard for social decorum and the public gaze" (22). However, Adams eventually concludes that the dandy and the Carlylean hero do share a certain spectacle-based relationship with an audience. Thus, while the prophetic hero seems to oppose, or even disdain, the dandy in every respect, the two share a structural similarity: both are figures who compete for "cultural authority" (23). As the narrative of <u>Sartor Resartus</u>—and of <u>Past and Present</u>—makes clear, the Carlylean hero can never fully escape the contingencies of appealing to an audience—in Adams's phrasing, "hero-worship is a fundamentally relational structure." Because of this, the hero must, like the dandy, rely on signs in order to persuade his audience.

Adams's analysis of gender thus extends to the unwieldy problem of language in the context of Carlyle's criticism. In discussing the dialectic of language and audience within which Carlyle's critical personae operated, Adams points out that "language actively enmeshes the hero in a web of compromising social relations" (31). Within the text of <u>Sartor Resartus</u>, Teufelsdröckh faces a double challenge: on the one hand, he must submit his ideas to an audience yet he must do so while pointing out the defects of his audience's society. His task was therefore aided by the invention of an indecorous idiom. Such an idiom would also be useful because his task entailed creating a cultural space for the lower and working classes who were simultaneously obtaining political power.

The task of reforming culture toward a more working-class bent, in an era with relatively few intellectuals from laboring backgrounds, led Teufelsdröckh generally to

denounce intellectuals and university intellectuals in general. For instance, two-hundred pages before the apocalypse that pits dandy against drudge in <u>Sartor Resartus</u>, Carlyle anticipates the ridicule of the dandy with similar reprobation of higher education. As the Editor opens the bag "Sagittarius," he begins a description of education which at first promises to fault its haphazard organization. The reader expects that the statements about education will follow the gist of the "confusion and capricious indistinctness" of the variety of Teufelsdröckh's documents themselves: the "fragments of all sorts; scraps of regular Memoir, College-Exercises, Programs," and other detritus of Teufelsdröckh's education promise proleptically to frame the analysis of education (138). But, with Teufelsdröckh, disarray is almost commendable, auguring as it does a confident disregard for propriety and tradition. Neatness and order are, for Teufelsdröckh, signs of conformity to a decaying society.

Thus, the discourse quickly turns to the professors who work at the university and the public which is served by it. Teufelsdröckh describes the professors as similar to sentries, "being stationed at the gates, to declare aloud that it was a University, and exact considerable admission-fees." The implication that the education Teufelsdröckh received might have simply been a monetary scam is heightened by the description of the professor's declaration of the university's institutional status. This description has the dual rhetorical purpose of suggesting that the institution hardly attained to the status of a university and that the professoriate were employing the "arts of Puffery" and "of Quackery." Thus, the professors' "Declaration aloud" is one "fit apparatus" by which the public is "gulled, with the most surprising profit." The shortcomings of an institution are described in terms of artificial language. It is only a short step to considering language

itself as artificial, which in Carlyle's eyes would be an entirely bad thing. Furthermore, by adding the university to his list of critical targets, Carlyle is magnifying the sense of impending revolution which saturates Sartor. This in turn emphasizes the difficulty faced by those who would undertake the task of learning: how is it possible to learn in a world which is so topsy-turvy?

Several moments of hesitation mitigate this passage's indictment of the university system, however. The Editor reminds us that, before the "Sagittarius" papers, Teufelsdröckh had "already expectorated his antipedagogic spleen," and he hints that Teufelsdröckh may not have been "called upon to shoot [the] arrows" which he directs at the institution. Such qualifications lessen the force of the criticisms about the university. Additionally, reinforcing Adams's thesis that the hero and the dandy in fact share a common set of commitments and expertise, Teufelsdröckh asserts, concerning the professors, that "their attempts at working, at what they called Educating, now when I look back on it, fill me with a certain mute admiration" (144). If the professors are like dandies in their deployment of showy language, Teufelsdröckh is not entirely unsympathetic to their efforts. Indeed, Teufelsdröckh compensates for the lack of educational organization by pursuing a zealous reading program. Deciding to impose upon himself some of the asceticism which Adams regards as central to the intellectual labor of the Victorian male, Teufelsdröckh exclaims, "Here are Books, and we have brains to read them; here is a whole Earth and a whole Heaven, and we have eyes to look on them: Frisch zu!" (150). However, the fact that Teufelsdröckh pursues this reading program on his own suggests that he is very much the eremite, carrying on his education outside the established channels.

Teufelsdröckh's description of the university professors is thus highly

contradictory. In imagining the professors to be mostly superfluous, Teufelsdröckh

equates them to "Millers" in the "mechanism" of gulling. Yet he also declares that the

professors "themselves needed not to work." Doubtlessly, this was a way of excluding

intellectual labor from the domain of work, which was itself becoming more

masculinized in the popular imagination. Thus, Teufelsdröckh does not acknowledge the

"Educating" performed by the professors as work, even though it might lead to the kind

of self-reliance which Teufelsdröckh displayed and which was itself the sign of a highly

developed intellect. Equally perplexing is that Teufelsdröckh finds himself capable of "a

certain mute admiration" for the professors whom he has just associated, by way of their

alleged failure to work, with the dandy.

The Victorian Hero

Adams's observations regarding the parallels between hero and dandy thus

deserve pause. The conclusion seems ineluctable that both hero and dandy rely on a

public display for their cultural authority and that they in fact represent competing

models of cultural authority. This seems to be very much the point of Teufelsdröckh's

"mute admiration" of the professors: he is, like them, constrained to purvey his teachings

to a public audience, though he has, in addition, the Editor to support his theories.

Despite what Carlyle occasionally urges about the veracity of the hero, in other words,

the latter figure's existence depends upon a public display of signs and is thus as subject

to their recognition and acceptance as the dandy is. Still, something is lacking from

Adams's inquiry into Carlyle's use of the dandy figure, astonishing as the revelation is

that the hero and the dandy share such a strong structural affinity. I would suggest that, in Carlyle's writings, the difference between the dandy and the hero is in the latter's pedagogical usefulness for a society as subject to increasing democratization as Carlyle's was.

As an era of democratization, the early nineteenth century in England produced writings that responded strongly to the contemporary transformations. In brief, the change from the Georgian to the Victorian period was a change from patronage and clique membership to individuality and idiosyncrasy. In this respect, the forms of cultural authority championed by Sartor Resartus were entirely consistent with this trend. Carlyle imagines a hero, Teufelsdröckh, who is no longer beholden to the norms of deference and who, instead, plunges ahead into the uncertainty of a democratic England in his own name. Such independence represented an ethos more appropriate to the new England and constituted an advantage for Teufelsdröckh over the dandy in the struggle for cultural legitimacy and leadership.

In the book Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930, Stefan Collini has offered to explain that the mid-Victorian obsession with character "presupposed an agreed moral code" (100). This fairly stable set of conventions held that "'the abiding sense of duty is the very crown of character,'" to quote that mouthpiece of Victorian morality, Samuel Smiles. But this assessment is qualified by Collini's later observation that "one part of the framework of assumptions that gave vitality and persuasiveness to these repeated invocations of character . . . was that it was an ideal peculiarly suited to a future of unknown circumstances" (113). Thus, the writings of nineteenth-century Britain frequently imagined an earlier England held

solidly together by a code of behavior which encompassed all of society. By contrast, the present society was in relative disorder and faced an uncertain future, a future in some ways incomparable to the present. Thus the Victorian Moralists frequently figured the masses as a flock which had gone astray and which needed some authority figure to return them to the right course. This, naturally, is exactly the pedagogical function which the hero was intended to fill: namely, to provide the subjects of the democratizing nation with meaningful access to its historical legacy. The hero thus forms part of the "Teaching Class" who, by "Judging, Law-making" and "Church-extension," will allow Europe to "continue to exist" (Past and Present, 241, 244, 240).

In fulfilling a historical need, the hero was paradigmatic, but the paradigm which the hero represents is simultaneously catachrestic, for the hero represents the paradigm of anti-conventional convention. The Victorian Hero exercised a cultural authority that was very much at odds with Romantic and Georgian notions of deference and decorum. In the shift from the dandy to the eremitic hero, then, we can witness the shift from the "Georgian . . . attention to the arts of winning esteem and cultivating connections" to "the Victorian . . . overcoming of adverse circumstances" (Public Moralists, 111). Though the hero espouses a discourse of individuality and eccentricity, this discourse was, in fact, quite normative in Victorian society, corresponding to the "anxiety about the way in which the pressures of opinion in a commercial society made for conformity and lack of enterprise."

The Victorian era thus produced a kind of cultural authority that favored originality and even idiosyncrasy. And we have seen that the figure of the eremite accords with this new direction in cultural tendencies. Yet this preference was also

tempered, in Carlyle, by a suspicion that the mainstream contemporary society, with its preference for originality, placed too great an emphasis on the individual. This is, in my reading, one of the main reasons that Carlyle represents Teufelsdröckh and his doctrine by way of the Editor, a figure who can temper the more iconoclastic notes in Teufelsdröckh's philosophy. The deployment of the trope of anti-conventionality on Carlyle's part is therefore telling in ways that bear upon Carlyle's construction of subjectivity. I want to further argue that the structure of Carlyle's discourse on the hero entails a specific conception of criticism as well. In doing so, I will draw upon Adams's identification of the twin figures of the eremite and the cenobite in order show to what degree they helped Carlyle articulate a model of criticism that relies upon the eremite as a figure of distancing.

Adams Revisited: The Eremite and the Cenobite

Regarding the eremite, Adams writes that he "renounces worldly order and uniformity." He deploys what I am calling the trope of anti-conventionality in order to compete for the attention of an audience. As Teufelsdröckh's objections to his experiences at the University suggest, the prophetic Teufelsdröckh performs his heroism in a manner consistent with Adams's description. Thus Adams does well in analyzing the project of Carlylean heroism. My task, however, requires pushing this analysis a step or two further and demonstrating the role which this heroism plays in forming a conception of "criticism." For, while Adams shows that the eremite roundly rejects the pre-existing social order, Carlyle deploys Teufelsdröckh in a manner that displays a slightly ambiguous attitude toward that order. I want to suggest in effect two things

regarding the analysis of the hero. First, I want to suggest that, at least in <u>Sartor</u>, the eremite and the cenobite are not two entirely independent figures: they overlap structurally, and, more importantly, they are constituted by one another. Secondly, I want to hypothesize that criticism, in Carlyle's hands, relies upon these two figures to create an effect of distancing.

In order to see how Teufelsdröckh conforms to Adams's conception of the eremite—if we need further convincing—we might return to Teufelsdröckh's criticism of the university as an institution. We recall that the University in <u>Sartor Resartus</u> is a disordered space. Thus the order which Teufelsdröckh protests is already a disordered order. The only sign of efficiency at the University lies in the ability to create and maintain "Reputation," which once again clues us in to the degraded nature of the linguistic or symbolic order. As a reputation-making machine, the University is a kind of "mechanism" which efficiently "makes mechanism for itself!" (<u>Sartor Resartus</u>, 143). Otherwise, the University is characteristically disorganized: "a desert this was, waste, and howling with strange monsters." Adding to this estimation of the university, Teufelsdröckh's closest friend, Herr Towgood observes that "at a small cost men are educated to make leather into shoes" and then asks, "but at a great cost, what am I educated to make?" This passage emphasizes the difficulty of adapting more traditional valuations of labor and activity to the life of the university. Thus Teufelsdröckh is able to articulate the position of the consummate outsider—that is, he appears to be able to stand outside of the modern institution and to represent a power independent of establishment power. This imaginary position is consistent with the eremite's ability to represent distance.

Teufelsdröckh is therefore a figure around whom develops a dialectic of distance, because the distance he represents is always relative and dependent upon that audience for whom the eremite performs. Teufelsdröckh's performance at the school is such that, though he was "shy" and "retiring," "certain established men are aware of his existence; and, if stretching-out no helpful hand, have at least their eyes on him" (148). Both the attitude herein represented and the manner of its representation are at odds with the notion that Teufelsdröckh is entirely removed from established institutions and their representatives. Similarly, the account of how Teufelsdröckh "appears, though in dreary-enough humor, to be addressing himself to the Profession of Law" reveals an involvement with the existing order which complicates Adams's description of the eremite.

Both of these statements, in fact—the begrudging admission of some recognition, albeit modest, by establishment figures, as well as an ambiguous declaration of an establishment profession—are consistent with Carlyle's construction of criticism within the context of a representation of a democratizing England. For these two statements demonstrate a tension within Carlyle's heroic rhetoric, the tension which developed from the need to simultaneously recognize and reject the existing cultural hierarchy and the figures who form its apex. Thus, by acknowledging that he is noticed by the establishment elite, Teufelsdröckh is also acknowledging the power of authority and connection which they possess. Yet the narrator also seems to suggest that Teufelsdröckh might possess a power independent of the establishment, though the theorization of that power frequently remains implicit rather than explicit. The text of Sartor Resartus therefore creates a space—in the figure of Teufelsdröckh—which is potentially outside of

the institutions of modernity at the same time that it totalizes knowledge in the form of

the "Philosophy of Things in General" (21). The conjunction of totality and distance

shape the criticism with which Carlyle faces the future of a democratizing England.

In the process of forming his particular mode of criticism, the Editor, and Carlyle

by extension, learns both to incorporate the views of the eremitic hero into his own

teaching and to negotiate the relationship between the eremite and his audience. The

professor, after all, is the Editor's foil. The clever details, such as the citation of an

imaginary book, Die Kleider, ihr Werden und Wirken, published by a fantasy publishing

house merely heighten Teufelsdröckh's role as counterpart to the more docile Editor.

The interplay of biography and fiction, their artful combination in this work, makes

Teufelsdröckh's position more interesting. For not only is Teufelsdröckh thereby

prevented from being a "genuine fiction," the hybrid form in this case further excludes

him from speaking for himself. Instead, the Editor almost assumes Teufelsdröckh's

identity as the former adroitly arranges the latter's "disappearance" (373). This act of

displacement is central to Carlylean criticism.

Towards the end of the book, Carlyle performs this act even as he asks whether

there is "any reader that can part with him [Teufelsdröckh] in declared enmity" (370).

Indeed, the end of the book is riddled with passages that take leave of Teufelsdröckh in

an almost condescending manner. Of course, this condescension is, in turn, a device

whereby the Editor further distances himself from the prophetic eremite in order to make

the latter's teaching more palatable to the English readership. By regretting that "talents,

which might have profited in the higher walks of Philosophy, or in Art itself, have been

so much devoted to a rummaging among lumber-rooms; nay, too often a scraping in

kennels, where lost rings and diamond-necklaces are nowise the sole conquests," the Editor mocks the idiosyncratic culture which Teufelsdröckh represents while remaining somewhat sympathetic to the latter's project. Similarly, the Editor occasionally derides Teufelsdröckh's intellectual paradigm: "how could a man occasionally of keen insight," the authorial voice asks, "resolve to emit them in a shape bordering so closely on the absurd?" (371).

This passages marks the transition in Carlyle's writing in which the eremitic prophet is relinquished in favor of the coenobitic hero. This transition entails that the Editor, as the voice of a newly inaugurated criticism, patrol the border which prevents the eremite from directly addressing his audience. In the same stroke that Carlyle renounces the figure of Teufelsdröckh with a mixture of "astonishment, gratitude and disapproval," he registers his own status as an author who is writing, not in isolation, but in the context of an increasingly numerous community of "British Readers" (338). The communal nature of the act of reading is underscored in the text by the extensive use of metaphors whereby it is the Editor's "Hope" that the "unheard-of Bridge" of "Palingenesia" has been "travelled" by his readers "without accident" (339). Despite opposition from "the darkness" and "the element of nature," the gifted reader has "cleared the passage, in spite of all." And, though the number of initial readers is only a "happy few," the community will grow and "new laborers will arrive; new bridges will be built" (340). Thus the "little band of Friends" will form a working community that will combine their assets in an effort to bring about the "Phoenix Death-Birth of Society." Meanwhile, Professor Teufelsdröckh, while being admitted as "the greater" of the two minds, will be quietly displaced by the Editor, symbolized by "British Criticism." The Editor, then, while

taking possession of the professor's audience, performs a kind of quarantined triage on Teufelsdröckh himself, whose "mad humors," since they cannot be cured, must be prevented from "spreading."

Teufelsdröckh, in other words, is ultimately a ventriloquized character in the text, one who can speak only on condition of being moderated or qualified by the Editor's intrusions. Teufelsdröckh's status within Sartor thus suggests that Carlyle himself was rather more cautious about deploying the eremitic hero than might at first be guessed. Lest there be any protestation that the relationship between censor and artist obtains between any author and his or her characters, we should read carefully the "Farewell" chapter of the book. That chapter reasserts the importance of Teufelsdröckh's doctrine, after the character himself has been so impugned. The many qualifications about Teufelsdröckh's "piebald, entangled, hyper-metaphorical style of writing" helps the Editor to gain the trust of an English audience when the Editor gets around to the task of summarizing the teaching of Teufelsdröckh. And, as the Editor reformulates it for posterity, Teufelsdröckh's pedagogy has grown several degrees cooler. Barely mustering his own conviction, the Editor waffles: "His attitude, we will hope and believe, is that of a man who has said to Cant, Begone; and to Dilettantism, Here thou canst not be; and to Truth, Be thou in place of all to me" (370). The reader should notice that truth and language have begun to assume, in this iteration, descriptions which are highly spatial. "Here" is an inappropriate habitation for dilettantism, truth must be "in place of all." This logic is consistent with the competition for integration within the power structures of modern society, a contest which the Editor wins, but with the help of the eremite, who cannot win acceptance for himself.

This moment in the text thus signifies the further transition from the eremite Teufelsdröckh, the figure of the prophet exiled to the wilderness, to the coenobitic Editor, the man of letters who works within the context of the collective institutions of modernity. It is consistent with the distinction Carlyle would later make in "The Hero as Man of Letters" between the ancient and the modern hero. "Hero-gods, Prophets" begins that chapter, "are forms of Heroism that belong to the old ages, make their appearance in the remotest times; some of them have ceased to be possible long since, and cannot any more show themselves in this world" (Heroes 154). By contrast, continues Carlyle, "the Hero as Man of Letters . . . is altogether a product of these new ages." This shift from the eremite to the cenobite therefore corresponds to a series of other transitions: first, in Carlylean and Victorian attitudes towards establishment power; second, between Carlyle's representations of the ancient world and of the industrial era; and, finally, in Carlyle's attempt to negotiate the new differential between manual and intellectual labor. As Adams has shown, the contrast between the two kinds of hero has deep resonances into Carlyle's later works, such as Past and Present, On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, and Latter-Day Pamphlets. What I have hoped to demonstrate, on the other hand, is something about the way Sartor Resartus negotiates this contrast. Responding to the democratizing tendencies of the 1830's, the text constructs the possibilities of a new subjectivity based on distancing and antagonism, not least of all that between the cenobite and the eremite. The eremite in this context becomes a figure who occasions learning on the part of both the reader and the Editor. Yet, because of his rhetorical positioning, the eremite cannot be placed entirely within or outside of modern culture or modern subjectivity.

CHAPTER II

Birds of a Feather?: Gender, Class, and Learning in <u>Jane Eyre</u>

In What Sense is <u>Jane Eyre</u> a Pedagogical Novel?

Towards the end of the novel <u>Jane Eyre</u>, Jane relocates Edward Rochester at his

Ferndean manor, the house at Thornfield having been burned to destruction by his first

wife, Bertha Mason. Having been blinded in the fire and devastated by the disappearance

of Jane earlier in the novel, Mr. Rochester is anxious and unsure when Jane announces

her entrance into his room:

> Oh, you are indeed there, my sky-lark! Come to me. You are not gone: not
>
> vanished? I heard one of your kind an hour ago, singing high over the wood: but
>
> its song had no music for me, any more than the rising sun had rays. All the
>
> melody on earth is concentrated in my Jane's tongue to my ear (I am glad it is not
>
> naturally a silent one): all the sunshine I can feel is in her presence. 488

Jane's response seems to confirm Rochester's sentiment at the same time that she

becomes somewhat emotional about what Rochester is proposing. Jane doesn't reject the

idea that she, previously a governess with no familial connections, is now the source of

music and light for the aristocratic, if somewhat humbled, Rochester. But the notion does

inspire a welling up of feeling in Jane:

> The water stood in my eyes to hear this avowal of dependence just as if a royal
>
> eagle, chained to a perch, should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its

purveyor. But I would not be lachrymose: I dashed off the salt drops, and busied myself with preparing breakfast.

Indeed, Jane has little reason to be sad, for she has fared better, and in some cases far better, than most of the other female characters when it comes to marriage. Though Jane is told at the beginning of the novel that she is "less than a servant," Jane's marriage partner, Mr. Rochester, is a member of that class of people who can employ on a permanent basis, not only Jane's nurse Bessie, but her eventual husband, Robert Leaven, "the coachman" (19, 105). Georgianna Reed, problematic as is her standing in the aristocratic order, is frowned upon by her suitor's parents, and they are prevented from eloping when the other Reed sister uncovers their plan. And it goes without saying that Jane's situation is better than Bertha Mason's, racked as the latter is by insanity, alienation, and addiction. Even the male character St. John Rivers has no marriage partner at the end of the novel: "St. John is unmarried: he never will marry now," as he faces imminent death, apparently from the conditions of India which Jane herself managed to avoid.

The explanation for Jane's emotional response must, in fact, be related to the particular charge which what we can call the Jane-Rochester narrative carries within the novel as a whole. And, although the denouement is in some senses entirely predictable, we can assert that the charge which the Jane-Rochester narrative carries is attributable to the positing of a new social arrangement characterized by an approximation of gender equality that similarly cuts across class boundaries. Thus the disadvantaged Jane is able, at the end of the novel, to provide hospitality and care to the commanding Rochester. If we follow the wording of the narrative, we indeed find this to be the case: the tears

which she cries are in response to a new relationship in which "a royal eagle," that is, Mr.

Rochester, is "forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor."

This use of the word "purveyor" is somewhat surprising in the breadth of its

ambiguity. The first meaning of the word has to do with providing or furnishing, and the

applicability of this sense to Jane's situation is immediately apparent: now that Mr.

Rochester has been temporarily disabled, he needs someone to administer to his needs in

a new way. Jane hopes that she can assume this function as a caregiver and a wife. The

second meaning of purvey has to do not with supplying and furnishing, but with

propagating or promulgating. And it is this second meaning that is more resistant to

immediate reception or agreement within the context of Jane Eyre. The novel instead, it

could be argued, depicts the end, if not of a man, than at least of a man's kind of

experience and mode of being in the world. Mr. Rochester has gone from being a daring,

horse-riding, virile man to being a helpless, blinded, domesticated one. Rather than a

promulgation, the moment of Rochester's reunion with Jane, as well as their domestic

future, seems to be a crystallized partnership. The debauched, aristocratic past is

replaced with a tranquil domestic future.

Critical interpretation of the novel has accorded with this sense of the ending of

Jane Eyre, taking the conclusion of the book to be a dead end which effectively contains

and paralyzes the social energies unleashed by the narrative to that point. In the essay

"Living on the Moon: Jane Eyre and the Limits of Self-Education," Laura Morgan Green

argues that the ending of the narrative identifies the novel as one which ultimately

endorses the private domestic sphere over and above a public sphere of education:

"Jane's intellectual achievements at Lowood and her adoption of the role of educator lead

her not into the public and institutional world but triumphantly back to the private and domestic one" (44). Thus the "limits" of self-education are demonstrated by Jane's eventual determination to forego the career of schoolteacher in favor of a seemingly less economically independent position. In fact, Green asserts that Jane's decision evinces a "willed escapism" which "'resolves the claims of self and others in a way that is scarcely reproducible; certainly, it cannot be institutionalized, made publicly available" (40, 42). In this chapter, I want to interrogate the assumptions behind the idea that Jane's narrative is impervious to institutionalization, keeping in mind that <u>Jane Eyre</u> remains a widely-taught text in the literature curriculum.[3] What I hope to have suggested is that this conclusion is illustrated by the novel's resolution, but I will in the meanwhile examine some of the larger pedagogical contexts within the narrative. If I follow Green in outlining such contexts, I nonetheless ultimately revise her argument significantly.

Indeed, Green contends that <u>Jane Eyre</u> must be read as a "confession of failure" because Jane's own psychological "interior becomes the predominant location of a moral activity that cannot be externalized and is not amenable to political amelioration" (44). In this reading, the social character of early modern education is subverted onto a terrain that is, according to the classical liberal distinction, beyond the political realm entirely. In essence, then, the resolution of the novel deploys the category of the individual, which I discussed in the previous chapter as a category of the liberal bourgeoisie, but here it appears in an anarchistic guise which confounds "political amelioration." Furthermore, the "perfect concord" which results from Jane and Rochester's complete devotion to one another can be read as a proto-fascist demand for "absolute assimilation" (<u>Jane Eyre</u> 500, Green 43).

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[3] Indeed, I have participated, as a teaching assistant, in that very form of cultural institutionalization.

This apolitical refusal of society in no way answers the diversity of educational settings and paradigms which Brontë explores elsewhere in the novel. Green elaborates three such educational moments, the first of which is "the radical self-sufficiency of the autodidact." Autodidactic education is that upon which Jane relies in order to cope with the antagonisms of the Reed household at the beginning of the book, where she is bullied by John Reed, ignored by the Reed Sisters, punished by Mrs. Reed, and variously supported or contained by the servants. This education of the autodidact is revealing, not only of the social complexity of English national life in the nineteenth century, but also of Jane's own position within that complexity.

On the one hand, Jane belongs, if only nominally, to the aristocratic world of self-conceit and patronage which the Reed siblings enjoy, yet the beginning of the novel finds her excluded from their company. Somewhat contradictorily, Mrs. Reed informs Jane that she must "exclude" Jane from "privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children" (13). By asserting that this exclusion must be maintained until Jane learns to be "more sociable," Mrs. Reed is promoting the fiction of an individual independent of society. Accordingly, Jane finds her consolation by reading a book about the natural world rather than human society, the History of British Birds. This reading supplies her with a pair of images between which she must choose in forming her identity: the image, on the one had of "a rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray," and, on the other, "the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast" (14, 15).

The coast upon which Jane is stranded, as it happens, is not entirely desolate: when the nurse, Bessie, "chanced to be in good humor," and allowed the children to "sit about" her ironing table, then she occasionally "fed our eager attention with passages of

love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and older ballads; or (as at a later period I discovered) from the pages of <u>Pamela</u>, and <u>Henry, Earl of Moreland</u>" (15). This scene gives an early indication of the number of issues which the novel will develop, especially ones which examine the relationship between reading, class, and gender. Ironically, this vignette describing Bessie's "reading" also informs Jane's final revolt at Gateshead, which leads to her relocation to Lowood school and a new context for reading and learning.

Meanwhile, the type of reading and the type of relationships depicted in the scene around Bessie's ironing table are quite different from those invoked behind the "scarlet drapery" of the breakfast-room. While reading the book on British birds, Jane is secluded from the aristocratic circle, allegedly because Mrs. Reed has not heard from Bessie, a member of the servant class. Whether intentional or not, this parallel license, which would allow Jane to speak only when Bessie speaks, reinforces a social equality between Jane and Bessie. Indeed, it would be less than surprising if Mrs. Reed intends to initiate Jane into a conscious solidarity with the servant class, as it is an ancient custom among the aristocrats to take in less fortunate members of the family as servants. For example, the novel presents such an instance in the figure of Mrs. Fairfax.

At the same time, the scene with Bessie imagines a reading list that is about human society and desire rather than desolate scenes of nature. Fairy tales, ballads, romantic and historical fiction all provide something that the book on arctic and Scandinavian birds does not, namely, an imaginative social world whose complexities have the potential, if only latently, to at least "ameliorate," to use Green's words, the stark realities of nature. Thus when John Reed, upon discovering Jane behind the

curtains, imposes an impromptu punishment by throwing a book which cuts her, Jane

responds by drawing upon the kind of reading more typical of Bessie's recitations:

having read Goldsmith's History of Rome, Jane is able to make a comparison, however

exaggerated, between John Reed and the most powerful rulers of that civilization which

was to so heavily influence English language and culture. "You are like a slave-driver—

you are like the Roman emperors!" she cries. Immediately they scuffle; Jane is

victorious but punished, unsurprisingly. Within a short time she is banished to Lowood

Institution, where she faces a different set of struggles.

In Green's scheme, the second pedagogical moment, or category, in the text is one

of "intellectual and familial companionship of homosocial community" (24), a moment

which encapsulates two narrative passages: first the years that Jane spends at Lowood,

and, secondly, the time she spends with the Rivers Sisters at Marsh End. This

pedagogical moment is telling in that it entails a social orientation quite different from

that of Gateshead. At Gateshead, reading is not an encouraged activity: when Bessie tells

tales, it is an entirely oral performance, the fact of their literary origins being

unmentioned. And, in the encounter with John Reed, reading takes on an aspect that is

entirely foreboding. John uses a book as a weapon, hurling it at Jane, and he describes

the Reed library as a possession which he guards jealously. This covetous possession of

reading materials reinforces Jane's inferior position within the Reed household. "You

have no business to take our books," he informs Jane, "you are a dependent. . . . Now, I'll

teach you to rummage my book-shelves: for they are mine" (17). At Lowood, on the

other hand, reading is actively taught in the classroom and permitted during leisure time.

On her first morning at the school, Jane is exposed to the orderly training in a basic

curriculum: "repetitions in history, grammar, etc., went on for an hour; writing and arithmetic succeeded, and music lessons were given by Miss Temple to some of the elder girls" (58). At Lowood, Jane benefits from instruction by teachers who, unlike the nurse at Gateshead, are trained specifically for education as a disciplinary pedagogy. Their reading is performed in a setting designed especially for such instruction, as opposed to Gateshead hall, where Bessie tells stories as entertainment as she irons or performs other domestic duties.

Lowood, in other words, is a modern institutional space explicitly founded for an educational purpose. On her first recess, Jane explores the grounds and finds upon "a stone tablet over the door . . . this inscription": "'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven'" (59). Instead of having to hide behind a curtain to furtively snatch a few moments of reading, Jane is able to stand alone in the "convent-like garden" and "read these words over and over again." When she finally is interrupted, it is not by a bullying, importunate boy, but by the inadvertent cough of a girl: "the sound of a cough close behind me, made me turn my head," Jane recounts. But this interruption leads immediately to another moment of reading, one which emphatically supports the interpretation of Lowood as a space which permits reading, even if it sometimes regulates it strictly. For the figure who interrupts Jane's reading of the inscription is Helen Burns, who is reading <u>Rasselas</u>. Helen entertains many of Jane's questions about the book, about "the writing on that stone over the door," and about the school they are both attending. The two students eventually become close friends. Certainly, there is still ostracism at Lowood, such as that experienced by the girl with curls in her hair, but the ostracism is limited and regulated

such that statements of absolute exclusion are avoided. There are no arguments at

Lowood in which Jane says "they are not fit to associate with me," as she says of the

Reed children at Gateshead (36).

Lowood, then, is a space, not of isolation, but of homosocial community, learning,

and reading in particular. And, after Jane leaves Lowood for her first sojourn at

Thornfield Hall, she finds a similar community at Moor House with the family, and

especially the sisters, of St. John Rivers. Unable to match the depths of their learning,

Jane becomes a fatigued partner in their polite conversations: "I could talk a while when

the evening commenced: but the first gush of vivacity and fluency gone, I was fain to sit

on a stool at Diana's feet, to rest my head on her knee, and listen alternately to her and

Mary; while they sounded thoroughly the topic on which I had but touched" (392).

Diana, as the leader of the trio, "offered to teach me [Jane] German. I liked to learn of

her: I saw the part of instructress pleased and suited her; that of scholar pleased and

suited me no less." In time, Jane herself becomes an instructress and headmistress of a

school at nearby Marsh End. Like Miss Temple at Lowood, part of Jane's remuneration

consists of living quarters attached to the school. Nearly all of the students are illiterate:

"but three of the number can read: none can write or cypher" (401). It seems that all of

the students are girls, which helps to locate the school within the context of the

"homosocial community" paradigm, though the fact that the girls are "coarsely clad little

peasants" perhaps hampers their intimacy with the aristocratic Jane.

As I have already indicated, the end of the novel moves Jane outside of the

pedagogy both of the autodidact and of the homosocial community, ultimately placing

her within a paradigm characterized by "the intellectual and erotic fulfillment of the

heterosexual dyad" (Green 24). This is strongly evident in the relationship with Mr.

Rochester, although it might best describe the relationship which St. John offers her—for

it is St. John, rather than Rochester, who is more interested in the development of Jane's

intellectual powers <u>per se</u>. But the earlier moments, and especially the moments of the

pedagogy of homosocial community, seem perhaps more powerfully to articulate the

stakes which the novel explores by way of Jane's emphatically personal narrative.

      Green reads this pedagogy by referring to the "libidinal energy" which the

narrative time and again unleashes, only to recapture it in domestic situations structured

around gender binaries. This is the case in the removal of Jane, first from Lowood to

Thornfield and later from Marsh End to Ferndean, both of which take Jane from a

feminine, more or less egalitarian, to a hetero-social context of greater intensities of

hierarchy. But we also see the dispersal of female homosocial community under the

impetus of the patriarchal marriage institution in the case of Miss Temple, who removes

from Lowood to become a wife, and in the case of the Rivers sisters. In the latter case,

the sisters pursue new lives, but only at the expense of abandoning their present ones and

only after Jane has inherited her fortune. "Choosing to share it with the Riverses,"

explains Green, "she releases Diana and Mary from the need to work, but ironically that

release only hastens the final dispersal of this second female community, for the girls are

now enabled to marry" (35).

      Thus, from the viewpoint of "protolesbian erotics," the narrative continuously

short-circuits female homosocial desire: "between the cruel economics and the

compelling erotics (in Brontë's view) of patriarchal organization, female homosocial

communities have little chance of survival." Green therefore rightly disavows <u>Jane Eyre</u>

as a representation of a "fully realized erotic connection"—the limiting of lovers to family members at Manor House, the destitution in which Jane arrives there, the morbid disease which robs Jane of Helen at Lowood all constructing a ground which only with great difficulty could foster an "erotics," properly denominated. And, of course, patriarchal marriage in every case does indeed seem to capture any available female libidinal energy. Thus, one could conclude, with Green, that when the question of female desire in the Victorian period is taken up, Jane Eyre should be quickly shut. But, I think, if we are to allow the question of desire at all, then we cannot, prima facie, exclude Jane Eyre. For though Jane Eyre, as a novel of classic realism, can't help but to foreclose certain desires with a resolution at the end of the narrative, this resolution must not only license particular desires, but also recall earlier moments of conflict, in all of which certain desires, tensions, and social pressures are enacted in a way that made enough sense for contemporary consumers to purchase with scarce money.

The earlier moment at Manor House, a moment of a pedagogy developed within and relevant to homosocial community, is typical of what makes salient Green's claim that the resolution of the novel does not provide an adequate response to those social energies which it has dramatized. Furthermore, the conclusion, Green argues convincingly, offers a denouement in which both pedagogy and homosocial desire are foreclosed. But at this point in Green's argument, the fact of Jane Eyre's status as a narrative which is eminently "made publicly available" seems to reassert itself—not only did the novel go to numerous printings, it has remained, into the twenty-first century, a text more or less central to the institution of literary studies (43). In explaining the durability of this text, then, I will argue that it remains current because it animates the

very question which the analysis thus far has raised, which indeed was the question which it seems Carlyle himself posed when he asked about the appropriate forms of authority in the post-aristocratic era. This question concerns the way to negotiate and promulgate a cultural sensibility for modernity in light of the differences which stand between itself and its antecedent history. And, I will argue, the novel <u>Jane Eyre</u> is compelling in its performance of this negotiation today because of the way in which it invokes gender and pedagogy, namely, in a manner that is explicitly concerned with what was once thought to be the "final" or "fundamental" instance of social existence, the economic.[4] This is the reason both that I take up the question of desire and that I attend so frequently to the conclusion of the novel: the ending seems to be the location where the most acceptable configuration of new cultural and personal desires is presented.

To resume my original line of argument, then, I must reassert that the final passages of <u>Jane Eyre</u>, those in which Jane marries Rochester and performs a number of reconciliations with the other characters in the novel, especially St. John Rivers, stands as a kind of commentary upon pedagogy, despite the reading by Green. Her reading, to review, concludes that this moment, crucial as it is to understanding the final verdict which the text passes upon the theme of pedagogy, represents a failure in the text regarding its pedagogical impulse. The public sphere has been refused in favor of the private by the end of the novel, and Jane has similarly refuted the profession of teacher to embrace the feminine roles of mother and wife. Along the way, the homosocial erotics of the feminized spaces of learning which Jane has inhabited have been dispersed and recaptured in a number of heterosexual domestic spheres, including that of the smaller

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[4] Here I draw upon <u>The Political Unconscious</u>, where Fredric Jameson suggests that the economic and the cultural can be viewed simultaneously as two parts of the social totality.

manor at Ferndean, occupied by both Jane and Rochester at the end of the novel. Thus learning in the text becomes eroticized, not least by the heterosocial domestic arrangement with which the novel concludes.

To contest this reading, or at least parts of it, would mean to employ two arguments, one about the character of public and private spaces in nineteenth-century England, the other about the definition of "culture," per se, about which it may be necessary to provide a few words of caution before launching into a more nuanced reading of the pedagogical passages which occur over the course of the novel's narrative. The first argument, constructed by Esther Schor and rehearsed by Stephen Behrendt, originates in the context of the English cultural responses to Princess Charlotte Augusta's death in the early part of the century. In Royal Mourning and Regency Culture, Behrendt observes that

> the responses to Charlotte's death demonstrate that the ostensibly separate realms
> of private and public experience do not merely complement one another or
> cooperate in furthering some larger, national goal. Rather, "they are identified
> with one another expressly to argue for the necessity of domesticating the nation's
> rulers." [quoting Esther Schor's Bearing the Dead] 24

This approach in understanding the relationship between "the realms of private and public experience" is highly suggestive when it comes to reading the narrative of Jane Eyre, which itself posits the eradication of an expansive aristocratic domesticity in favor of a more typically nuclear family, while simultaneously offering this new domestic arrangement up as suitable fare for a large readership.

The political subtext of the <u>Jane Eyre</u> novel has powerful resonances with the earlier representations of public and private spheres which informed the responses to Princess Charlotte's death, as well. His lordly manor at Thornfield destroyed, Rochester himself has been domesticated and, one might even say, feminized. This indeed seems to be the price of his redemption, and it is in this context that it is necessary to refer to the definition of culture offered by Katie King in <u>Theory in its Feminist Travels</u> in order to contest Green's reading of <u>Jane Eyre</u> as refuting the private in favor of the public sphere. In defining the meanings of "culture," King offers one which is highly relevant to my reading of <u>Jane Eyre</u>: "culture also means the art forms of 'civilization'" (110).

This process of "civilization" plays a central role in the novel, both excluding Bertha Mason as an acceptable spouse for Rochester and shaping the development of both Jane and Rochester himself. Jane undergoes a transformation whereby she learns to no longer giver her "furious feelings uncontrolled play" (47). Rochester, on the other hand, while he is careful to distinguish his actions from his first wife's "debauchery" nonetheless becomes "reckless," indulging in "dissipation" as his attempts to find a suitable mate are thwarted. Even at the moment when he narrates those events, Rochester informs Jane that he is "not cool and dispassionate" (350, 342). He further invites her to "put your finger on my pulse, feel how it throbs, and—beware!" (342). In a discourse which opposes raw dynamism, Rochester cannot fail to be the object of Jane's own civilizing mission.

Rather than being merely coincident with King's notion of culture as an art of civilization, <u>Jane Eyre</u> instead indicates the great extent to which culture has been imagined according to the paradigm of civilization. Furthermore, this sense of a

civilizing mission of culture suggests the importance of "culture," especially because it shares certain connotations with "pedagogy." Thus, for example, when Jane describes the students whom she teaches at Marsh End, she, like Carlyle, calls attention not only to the "information" which is relayed in the process of education, but also the "improvement" of character which is said to accompany such transmission. In addition, because it connotes a wider set of social habits and customs, the category of culture allows analyses of pedagogy to move, if uneasily, from classroom-specific settings and representations of such settings, to lager social contexts.

To move the analysis into the larger social field would be to acknowledge that Rochester, in the narrative of <u>Jane Eyre</u>, is positioned as a viable subject of pedagogy, and that he, too, has something to learn within the development of the narrative. It would also open the possibility of reading <u>Jane Eyre</u> within the context of changing ideas about social spaces in England and the contests around the appropriate affective constructions of those spaces. In this regard, I have already mentioned the several pedagogical moments which Green has identified within the novel. These moments have resonances with real, historical, developments in England, although such pedagogical moments necessarily inflect, rather than reproduce wholesale, the social body of the English polity.

What all of this means for an analysis of the role of pedagogy within <u>Jane Eyre</u> is that a two-pronged approach to the reading of the novel is required in order to adequately understand how the novel is employing the trope of pedagogy. On the one hand, it will be necessary to understand the resonance which the Jane narrative has with contemporary discourses about the role of education, taking into consideration in turn the degree to which such discourses conform to, refute, or are indifferent to class- or economic-based

ideologies. For instance, we would want to inquire into what makes possible Jane's statement that her own learning constitutes "a good English education" (101). On the other hand, such an examination hopefully will then allow us to see how education fits into ideas about and contests over national spaces in England, considered more generally, which should, finally, allow us to see to what extent Jane Eyre is consistent with notions about the role of women in "redeeming" an errant aristocracy. This, I contend is the real import of the novel's problematic conclusion, which should frame any evaluation of its claims and successes as a pedagogical tool.

Three Models of Education: Religious, Charity, and Aristocratic

In terms of the educational paradigms with which Jane Eyre is conversant, a comparison between Jane's experiences at Lowood and her expectations for Thornfield is sufficient. While there are other, more or less oblique invocations of education within the novel, these two, I would argue, represent the two strongest contenders for some kind of educational "representativeness." This approach obviously excludes the autodidactic familial group at Moor House, which does indeed represent an important kind of education in England in the nineteenth century. As W. B. Stephens writes in Education in Britain 1750-1914, "an unknowable, but probably not inconsiderable, number of adults also educated themselves at home or through the many adult and Sunday schools, mutual improvement and other societies and adult institutions" (26). Thus the example of the autodidact in England was not uncommon in this period. But, in the novel Jane Eyre, the phase of autodidactic learning at Moor House with the Riverses is relatively short-lived and is in any case eclipsed by the school at Marsh End, where Jane takes on the

responsibilities of a more typically modern village school. Similarly, the episode at Gateshead is brief.

Bracketing the settings of Moor House, Gateshead, and the even more important Ferndean, then, I will focus on Lowood and Thornfield, though the two, individually, do not consistently represent discrete educational paradigms in modern Britain. For example, Mr. Brocklehurst, the evangelical director of Lowood who was modeled on the Reverend Carus-Wilson, directs a school which conflates discourses about pedagogy and different kinds of historical aims and instruction in nineteenth-century England. On the one hand, the puritanical and evangelical cast of Brocklehurst, along with the fact that his model is a reverend, might alert us to the possibility that Lowood is a religious school, of the type favored by "many of the English and Welsh middle classes" (Stephens 12). Such a school, in Stephens analysis, was calculated not to "make the poor dissatisfied and unfit for their natural occupations."

This kind of school, in other words, adhered to an ideology of resignation, hierarchy, and historical transcendence: it envisioned a relatively stable, a-historical world of hierarchical positions, which it was the duty of students to learn about and fit into. In her interview with Mr. Brocklehurst pertaining to Jane's admittance to Lowood Institution, Mrs. Reed pronounces a set of statements very much parallel to this series of expectations which the middle classes, more or less contradictorily, placed upon the students of clerically controlled schools. When she states that "I should wish her [Jane] to be brought up in a manner suiting to her prospects," Mrs. Reed is espousing precisely the doctrine of resignation, which stipulates that education is to prepare the student for a

position in society, which is already predetermined, rather than changing essentially the range of positions or prospects for which the student might be qualified.

The continuity between this version of Lowood and the clerical school is evident in the "moral and religious" instruction which Stephens explains is central to the latter. Brocklehurst assures Mrs. Reed that "humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood." Invoking the ideology of "stability," he further adds that "consistency, madam, is the first of Christian duties, and it has been observed in every arrangement connected with the establishment of Lowood" (43). Though such an intellectual regimen must have a stodgy aspect from some viewpoints, it also has various kinds of compensations, including, most obviously, the equation of position with responsibility, as well as the protection of dependents based on their lack of ultimate responsibility. When Miss Temple, the superintendent of the school, breaks the rules in order to secure a reasonable meal for the students, she informs the entire school that "'it is to be done on my responsibility,'" thus protecting her dependents from imputation should there be consequences.

Another concern of nineteenth-century educators was that advancement be based upon accomplishment. This concern is perhaps more problematic, as it doesn't fit exactly with the notion that students at Lowood should learn their places, so to speak. If one may potentially advance based upon accomplishment, then the proper "place" for any given student seems to be more or less open to competition. The rift between position based on predetermination and morality or position based on academic qualification is perhaps nowhere more strongly dramatized than in the relationship between Helen Burns and Miss Scatcherd. Helen is clearly one of the brightest students in her group, yet Miss

Scatcherd seems to single her out for her poor hygiene. Jane narrates a scene from her third day at Lowood which seems fairly representative of the educational procedures at Lowood: "a chapter having been read through twice, the books were closed and the girls examined" (64). Jane herself seems awed by the story of "the reign of Charles I" and the "sundry questions about tonnage and poundage, and ship-money which most of them [the students] were unable to answer." Helen, however, proves to be the unflagging exception: "still, every little difficulty was solved instantly when it reached Burns, her memory seemed to have retained the substance of the whole lesson, and she was ready with answers on every point."

From Helen's performance, Jane expects that Helen will receive the accolades of her instructor, Miss Scatcherd, but she is disappointed, of course. Instead, Miss Scatcherd evaluates Helen based on the qualifications of "plain fare" and "simple attire" which Brocklehurst elaborates in his interview with Mrs. Reed. "You dirty, disagreeable girl!" exclaims Miss Scatcherd, "you have never cleaned your nails this morning!" Of course, Burns does not explain that the oversight is entirely beyond her own individual control. Helen herself endorses the kind of morality which Miss Scatcherd purveys, explaining, "I am, as Miss Scatcherd said, slatternly; I seldom put, and never keep, things in order; I am careless; I forget rules; I read when I should learn my lessons" (67). In the Lowood narrative, Helen ultimately does become the "martyr" to the ideology of self-resignation which Jane thinks her, while Jane remains more cautious and sometimes defiant of such notions: when she claims that she "must resist those who punish [her] unjustly," Jane includes those who might happen to be above her in the social hierarchy,

thus continuing her rebellion against hierarchy which begins with her dispute with Mrs. Reed.

In fact, the novel seems to combine Jane's sense of self-importance with a discourse of merit. In the passage immediately after Helen's death and the school's reformation, Jane, the central character of the novel, quickly narrates her rise in the academy: "I remained an inmate of its walls, after its regeneration, for eight years: six as pupil, and two as teacher; and in both capacities I bear my testimony to its value and importance" (98). Though the narrative is quite brief, it is a moment in which Jane expresses solidarity with a modern form of mass instruction, which she accordingly calls "an excellent education." Her proficiency in understanding is highlighted by the fact that she "rose to be the first girl of the first class" and was subsequently "invested with the office of teacher; which [she] discharged with zeal for two years." And, though I have suggested that such an ordering of experience describes a commitment to merit rather than morality, one could also argue that, in this passage Jane exhibits an ethical sensibility which allows her to reflect positively on her "fondness for some of [her] studies, and . . . desire to excel in all, together with a great delight in pleasing [her] teachers."

The merit-based ethic of Lowood school is, unsurprisingly, more consistent with the "charity schools, maintained by subscription" which, Stephens notes "became common" by or around 1750 (2). On their first encounter in the schoolyard, Helen explains to Jane that Lowood is "partly a charity-school," maintained by a combination of subscription and tuition fees: "fifteen pounds is not enough for board and teaching, and the deficiency is supplied by subscription" (60). Though the school caters for students

who are "poor," this poverty should be understood primarily in the familial rather than the monetary sense; Helen explains that "charity-children" are those who have a dead parent. Schools which were operated by and for the working classes and the poor on a monetary basis were called "dame schools." The charity school, on the other hand, represents attempts on the part of "benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen" to alleviate the threat to the middle- and upper-class cohesion represented by their orphaned children, for the cost of maintaining and educating such children could drag the individual parent or relative down the social scale.

The status of the charity school as an instrument for social cohesion among the middle and upper classes no doubt accounts for the excellent, if culturally over-determined, curriculum which prevails at Lowood Institution, although the preference for secular instruction was not unusual in the nineteenth century. Stephens explains that "textbooks used by all kinds of voluntary schools demonstrate a shift of focus from religious topics to a range of secular subjects, including grammar, art, science, history, geography and political economy" (17). The curriculum at Lowood remains something of a puzzle, but there are some brief clues. The first is the description which Jane provides of her first day at the school: "repetitions in history, grammar, &c., went on for an hour; writing and arithmetic succeeded, and music lessons were given by Miss Temple to some of the elder girls" (58). This description, together with the "lessons in geography" administered to the first class, depicts an interesting conglomeration of new and traditional subjects. History and geography likely would not have been taught as distinct subjects perhaps a hundred years earlier, and instruction in written English was similarly a fairly recent contender for instruction. Grammar was one of the <u>trivium</u> of

Medieval university instruction, while both arithmetic and music were part of the more

advanced quadrivium.[5]

The second textual clue we have to the curriculum at Brocklehurst's school

appears when Jane is advertising for a station somewhere else; her notice informs

prospective employers that "'she is qualified to teach the usual branches of a good

English education, together with French, Drawing, and Music'" (101). The recurrence of

music in both of these descriptions provides a revealing occasion for the assessment of

the Lowood curriculum: it resonates with the sense of a liberal education as depending

upon arts which aren't crafts: aesthetically pleasing, technically demanding, and yet

immediately perishable, affective, and, frequently, consumed in their demonstration.

Music is clearly important both to the novel as a whole and to the education depicted

therein; when Jane meets Adela, the young pupil sings a song which foreshadows the

themes of abandonment and love which will inform the whole relationship between

Rochester and Jane. As an art, music conforms to the double focus required of many of

the liberal, rather than applied, arts: commanding proficiency in music implies a level of

achievement which is inextricable from the leisure available to those who can afford it.

At the same time, it means being able to commit time and energy to developing skills

which allegedly refute the necessity of having to work with one's hands for money. The

inclusion of this discipline as both apex of achievement and rarity (it's taught "to some of

the elder girls") as well as a somewhat superfluous, extraneous subject (it's offered in

addition to the "usual branches of a good English education") captures the contradictory

attitudes about education in Victorian England, where aristocratic circles might use

education to indicate material abundance, while workers and mechanics might pursue an

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[5] For a brief history of the liberal arts curriculum, see Re-reading English, edited by Peter Widdowson.

education more immediately oriented towards practical, that is to say, vocational, ends. This difference is illustrated in Jane Eyre by way of the contrast between Jane, who, as a potential member of the gentry, is trained in drawing and music, and the nurse Bessie, who, though she is able to admire talent in that direction, is not trained in belles-lettres or liberal arts.

Jane's (structural) position at Thornfield is as complicated as the curriculum which she is to teach. Though both she and Adela, Rochester, and the larger circle of the lower aristocracy in the novel share a common commitment to what more or less amounts to a modern version of the liberal arts, their interests in this kind of education are somewhat different. For the aristocratic gentry, the heavily feminized liberal arts represent a sign as much of accomplishment as of luxury, which no doubt accounts for the less-than-lackluster achievement which the Reed sisters have attained in drawing and music. In the intriguing scene where Bessie administers Jane's "qualifying examinations" immediately before she leaves Lowood, Bessie remarks that Jane has painted "as fine a picture as any Miss Reed's drawing-master could paint, let alone the young ladies themselves; who could not come near it" (106). In this passage, Bessie invokes the long-standing discourse of gentility as measured by accomplishment as opposed to birth.[6]

The confluence between achievement and manners in this discourse of "merited gentility" is once again demonstrated in Jane's observations at the social gathering at Thornfield which brings the Ingrams to the hall. There, while watching Blanche Ingram converse on botany with Mrs. Dent, Jane is careful to distinguish between good manners

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[6] For an early example of gentility as stemming from personal qualities rather than birth, see "The Wife of Bath's Tale" ll. 1109-1124 in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales.

and intelligence: "I presently perceived that she was (what is vernacularly termed) trailing Mrs. Dent; that is, playing on her ignorance: her trail might be clever, but it was decidedly not good-natured" (196). In reverting to the language of nature (with its cognates denoting "birth"), Jane is insisting that the biological and material determinations of gentility ("good-nature") be replaced with considerations of proper manners, such as forthrightness and honest dealing.

Jane's interest in so closely observing and evaluating Blanche's speech and manners is in part due to the fact that the two are in a competition for Mr. Rochester's affection. Immediately before the extended soiree at Thornfield, Jane and Mr. Rochester had begun to grow intimate. He had revealed to her the history by which Adèle had come to be his ward, and since the narrative is an explanation of Adèle's circumstances, it also inevitably covers the more seedy ground of his affair with Céline Varens (more about this later). Hence, this narrative has the effect of augmenting Jane's familiarity with both Adèle and Rochester. Indeed, the closeness between Jane and Rochester had been growing already by this point in the narrative. As Jane explains, "I never seemed in his way; he did not take fits of chilling hauteur: when he met me unexpectedly, the encounter seemed welcome; he had always a word and sometimes a smile for me" (166). She continues the passage in even stronger language: "so gratified did I become with this new interest added to life, that I ceased to pine after kindred: my thin crescent-destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength." At the social gathering a month after these reflections, however, Rochester seems to indulge the company of only one female, and that female is not the intelligent but disinherited Jane, but the elder of the Ingram sisters, Blanche.

Thus it is not difficult to detect at least a tinge of disappointment and envy when Jane remarks to Mrs. Fairfax that "you see Mr. Rochester evidently prefers her to any of the other ladies" (192).

The feeling of contention on Jane's part is shared by Blanche and demonstrated in the remarks which the latter makes about governesses. On one evening of the visit, the group indulges in conversation, and Jane explains that Blanche, finding herself and Mr. Rochester without a partner, "selects a mate" (199). Immediately Blanche turns the conversation to the topic which had earlier drawn Rochester and Jane closer together, namely the subject of "children" and the "little doll" Adèle. However, instead of tracing her history, this time the conversation quickly moves to her present care and the person charged with her education, the governess Jane. Blanche and Lady Ingram then engage in a repartee which represents the figure of the governess as variously supernatural, revolting or comedic. Blanche explains that "Mary and I have had, I should think, a dozen [governesses] at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi" (200). Her mother responds in a vein that is somewhat less supernatural, yet equally derogatory, contending that her governesses have been untalented, whimsical, and generally annoying. She claims, more precisely, to have "suffered a martyrdom from their incompetency and caprice." Miss Ingram agrees, claiming of governesses that "they are a nuisance" (201).

Green has indicated that just as Jane Eyre was being published, "the Christian Socialist reformer F. D. Maurice in London was organizing a series of evening lectures to enable governesses to pass an examination that would win them certificates and, the organizers hoped, thereby raise their status and salaries" (24). As Maurice's efforts seem

to be the beginnings, in England, of the movement for organizing governesses into a modern profession, with entry requirements and some degree of autonomy, we can infer that the anxiety about competence and status were concerns that were shared by the gentry—people like the Rochesters, Reeds, and Ingrams, by the governesses collectively as they themselves attempted to find and consolidate a position within the emerging economy of cultural transmission in nineteenth-century Britain, and by the character Jane in the novel.

The Ingrams' notion of the position of the governess, however, seems to imagine the figure either as existing outside of the relations of real, material existence (hence they are all "incubi") or as being the sole beneficiaries of their employment by the aristocracy and the gentility, thus causing Lady Ingram to imagine herself as a martyr for the governesses. The Ingrams, in other words, construct a governess who becomes a magnet for ideas based on fantasy, superstition, and exaggeration, a discursive approach which is co-extensive with the extraordinary inversion which occurs between the more or less adult governesses and the Ingram children. This inversion makes of the governess a figure who is tormented by the pupils she is hired to train and seems to endorse a complete lack of social propriety on the part of the children. Miss Ingram remarks that "'the best fun was with Madame Joubert. . . . I see her yet in her raging passions, when we had driven her to extremities—spilt our tea, crumbled our bread and butter, tossed our books up to the ceiling, and played a charivari with the ruler and desk, the fender and fire-irons." In response to this description, Blanche's brother, Lord Theodore Ingram, adds narrative description which emphasizes the way in which the twins would "turn the table": "the poor old stick used to cry out 'Oh you villains childs!'—and then we

sermonized her on the presumption of attempting to teach such clever blades as we were, when she was herself so ignorant.'"

Yet this discourse about the supernatural and perverse character of governesses, should be read as more or less residual within the cultural construction of the novel itself, and there are several reasons for this. Within the very context of the conversation among the upper classes at Thornfield, the Eshton sisters seem to complicate the "fantastic" discourse about governesses formulated by the Ingrams. Though they, too, narrate experiences with their governess which depict themselves as unruly, they give an interpretation of their narrative that casts the children, their former selves, as at fault and the governess as good-natured and patient. "She would bear anything," explains Amy, "nothing would put her out." Perhaps a more obvious reason for saying that the Ingrams' attitudes are "residual" is provided in the conclusion of the novel, to which I have already referred, and which imagines a changed Rochester who is able to marry the former governess and teacher Jane. This narrative choice necessarily entails the rejection of the Ingrams and their commitment to an ideology of value strongly connected to birth and social class, which is perhaps best considered while keeping in mind that the Ingrams voice this commitment in part out of an anxiety toward the threat which Jane indeed poses in the competition for Rochester's love.

The consideration of the narrative's closure, however, is premature, requiring as it does a more thorough examination of the way the novel poses the problem of the governess Jane and the family that employs her. For what we can observe in the novel, along with the ascendant notions about a social value which consist in character rather than primarily familial or economic determination, is nothing less than a nearly

overwhelming anxiety about the way in which English education will be carried out in the era of emergent industrialism. If we are to take account of this anxiety, we will have to read with an eye towards the similarities and differences between Jane and the other characters in the novel, paying special attention to the comparisons which can be made between Jane and the charge whom she is to tutor at Thornfield, Adèle. For, in some ways, Adèle functions as a kind of double for Jane in the narrative—both are cast as pupils and as Rochester's wards at points in the novel. And, further, the very fact that Jane has found employment at Thornfield speaks to a boundary between the aristocratic home and the modern, charitable institution of education that is passable, at least under certain circumstances. But, in order to do justice to the nuances of the literary imagination by which Brontë depicts Jane's social conflicts, we will also have to read with a kind of double focus. This is the kind of double focus to which Green alludes when she says that Jane was "both removed and exemplary" when it comes to understanding the profession-based consciousness gradually being developed by organizations such as the Governesses' Benevolent Institute and by individuals such as F. D. Maurice at the middle of the nineteenth century. But, in its double focus, this way of reading should also extend its historical purview to include, for example, the alliance suggested in the narrative between the aristocratic gentry and the merchant class when Jane's benefactor, a wine trader, bestows upon Jane an inheritance that allows her to enter into marriage with Rochester, a well-to-do landowner. Even more interesting is the eventual and problematic rejection of colonialism in favor of something more like an English conservative feminism, whereby Jane refuses St. John's religious mission to India. But for the present it is necessary to return to the narrative of Jane and Rochester's

early courting rituals and the discussions that occur there concerning Adèle, in order to better elaborate and frame the novel's discourse about education, class, and domesticity.

Jane, in taking on Adèle as her pupil has, so to speak, reached the top of her profession. Out of a school (Lowood) of eighty pupils, Jane had previously become one of only four or five teachers. Most of these, at least as they are earlier described in the narrative, were not themselves pupils of Lowood school. We are not told precisely what the outlook of the students at the school is, but from what we know about Jane's case and the poor conditions of the school which result in an outbreak of typhus, they can't be excellent, though they do improve with the modifications made in the wake of the pandemic. Naturally, the students present quite a contrast from the child, like the Reed or the Brocklehurst girls, who might receive instruction from a governess. If the prospects of such schoolchildren did improve, it was likely as a result from a change of prospects for the extended family, but in Jane's case, her stepmother doesn't remarry and the only son becomes a profligate. That Jane's exceptional achievement is rewarded with one of a small handful of positions at a very small wage, even though she is quite young, perhaps says something about the real limits of a meritocracy in the face of the institutions of the aristocratic family.

Those institutions form one of the central points of anxiety in the novel, and the brief Adèle narrative imagines some fractures in the constellation which makes the governess an integral component in the reproduction both of aristocratic families and of aristocratic cultural values. When Rochester tells Jane how he came to be Adèle's guardian, he represents himself as the mythical figure of the male aristocratic lover. Adèle's mother, Céline, is an opera-dancer, the stereotypical profession of an aristocratic

paramour. Her French nationality further associates her with a decadent, superficial, and frivolous aristocracy, which stands in sharp contrast with the staid, plain, "'frank and sincere'" traits of Jane's upright character (153). Rochester himself is acutely aware of the conventionality of his affair with Céline. He explains that "[he] began the process of ruining myself in the received style; like any other spoonie. [He] had not, it seems, the originality to chalk out a new road to shame and destruction, but trode the old track with stupid exactness not to deviate an inch from the beaten center" (160). Both his love for "the Varens," and her disappointment of him endorse a carefree and indeed almost careless sexuality frequently associated with the leisurely aristocracy.[7]

But the conclusion of this narrative, the part which explicitly addresses Adèle, depicts a different set of feelings and commitments, and, indeed, a different aristocracy. After the separation of Céline and Rochester, Céline gives birth to Adèle, claims the child is Rochester's and then, some years later, finally abandons the child to destitution in Paris. Rochester, of course, adopts the child, even though he "acknowledged no natural claim on Adèle's part to be supported by me" (164). Whereas the narrative begins entirely in the paradigm of the rakish aristocracy, by the end, Rochester has succeeded in contrasting his own generosity and responsibility with the "frivolous, mercenary, heartless, and senseless" conversation of his former mistress and her lover. The conventional narrative of the paramour, at this point, is subverted to some degree, recasting Rochester by virtue of the fact that he "he took the poor thing [Adèle] out of the slime and mud of Paris, and transplanted it here, to grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden."

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[7] For a archetypal example of such an ethos, see George Etherege's <u>Man of Mode</u>.

This decision to "transplant" Adèle, moreover, has the effect of establishing a complicated analogy between Mrs. Reed and Jane on the one hand, and Rochester and Adèle on the other. On the one hand, both Jane and Adèle are feminine figures whose social and class positions are somewhat precarious—Jane as the adoptive daughter of familiar relations and Adèle as the illegitimate child of Rochester's mistress. In acknowledging her sympathy for Adèle, Jane explains that "Adèle is not answerable for either her mother's faults or yours" (165). And "now that I know she is, in a sense, parentless"—like Jane herself—the latter "shall cling closer to her than before."

Thus, even in the novel's movement from Gateshead to Thornfield and then to Ferndean, we are provided with a series of scenes which become progressively more explicit about the obligations and responsibilities of the aristocratic household. At Gateshead with the Reeds, young John emphatically reminds Jane that the protections of the aristocratic household should not really extend to Jane and that her position there is highly vulnerable: "'you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us'" (17, emphasis added). Moreover, when Jane encounters Rochester's ward Adèle, she refutes this early, literalist and biological understanding of the family and augments Rochester's own begrudging hospitality. Of course, Rochester's hospitality is bestowed as a direct corollary of his own economic position, which allows him, when asked by Blanche Ingram about the costs of rearing his child at home, to answer, quite seriously, "'I have not considered the subject'" (200). Nonetheless, the eventual fates of the Reed siblings indicate that it would have been within Mrs. Reed's means to raise Jane as one of her own, especially as additional children come less expensive, and the particular enmity

between these two figures—Jane and Mrs. Reed—remains something of an enigma within the plot structure. The difference between Rochester and Mrs. Reed, on the other hand, is the difference between good and bad guardians, one of whom is generous towards wards, and one of whom is withholding.

But these analogies, which posit Adèle and Jane as dependents or transplants who are in some ways similar and Rochester and Mrs. Reed as guardians who are quite different, inform the novel's interrogation of gendered affect. On the more superficial level of the central characters in the narrative, the discourse of gendered affect archly acknowledges that sympathy carries with it economic costs. Indeed, the costs of sympathy are too great for nearly all the characters from the novel's first hundred pages, male or female. Regarding later parts of the novel, we can, as I have hinted above, interpret the bodily damage which Rochester suffers, the privation which Jane undergoes upon leaving Thornfield, as well as the economically reduced, if more equitable, prospects for the couple as examples of the economic "costs" of sympathy and love. Yet what is different about this modern allegory of romance—as opposed to, say, Odysseus's love for Penelope or Paris's for Helen—is not that there are costs or obstacles associated with it, but rather that we are meant to experience these costs as painful losses rather than, as formerly, aggrandizements of the prize itself. Furthermore, the conclusion of Brontë's novel deploys sympathy in a way that adds further complications to this modern formulation of gender and desire: it returns us to a feminized domestic space in which Jane has now gained the hospitality which previously belonged only to Rochester or the Rivers sisters. In this new arrangement, it's difficult to say whether Jane has been

elevated to Rochester's level or whether Rochester is now vulnerable to the kind of overbearing guardianship which keeps Bertha Mason locked in the attic.

In any event, this version of gender distinction, which suggests that certain affects are particularly, if not exclusively, feminine, as well as insisting on the sympathetic affect as the prerogative of femininity, has raised questions for later generations of women writers. Indeed, the most famous tribute to <u>Jane Eyre</u>, Jean Rhys's rewriting of the narrative from the points of view of Bertha and Edward Rochester, is itself motivated by the thematics of sympathy, Rhys seemingly compelled to give voice to a fellow, albeit fictional, Creole out of sympathy with her plight. In the Rhys narrative, we are led to understand both that the psychic disintegration which plagues Bertha Mason is a social disintegration and that this social disintegration in turn acts as a sort of siren call for help and solidarity which Rhys, if not Rochester, heroically attempts to provide.

When Rochester and Bertha are on their honeymoon, still in the West Indies, Bertha (whose name is Antoinette, which Rochester eventually refuses to call her) explains the ritual singing which the servants surreptitiously perform around the family house where they are vacationing. She then goes on to explain how this song fits her into the social context of the island, a context which she feels is becoming increasingly fleeting and hostile to her.

'Did you hear what that girl was singing?' Antoinette said.

'I don't always understand what they say or sing.' Or anything else.

'It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you

[sic] I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and

why I was ever born at all. 102

In this last paragraph, Antoinette, or Bertha, lapses into the kind of delirium which

Deleuze and Guattari describe in their Anti-Oedipus, where a small detail—in this case

the song—seems to escape all context, escaping out onto ever wider terrain, terrain that is

simultaneously social, unbounded, and highly antagonistic.[8] Rather than seeing the song

about the white cockroach for what it is, namely an insistent reminder of her own history

precisely within the milieu of the Indies, she takes it to be the very opposite of this, a

moment of cultural amnesia or paranoia which makes her wonder "where is my country."

Though her maid Christophine exhorts her to "have spunks and do battle for yourself,"

Antoinette begins to experience the foreclosure of her own identity and subjectivity as the

race relationships on the island and the fluctuations of the colonial structure make her, a

Dominican Creole, stand in materially as the agent of white oppression on the island.

And, though she almost escapes this fate by becoming indigent, and therefore harmless,

the antagonisms between her family and the African West Indians become exacerbated as

her mother makes one last attempt to reconnect with the economic elite of European

Colonialism by marrying Mr. Mason. She explains that "the black people did not hate us

quite so much when we were poor. We were white but we had not escaped and soon we

would be dead for we had no money left" (34). Yet after the new alliance with the

wealthy Mason, "it had started up again and worse than before, my mother knows but she

can't make him believe it." At first glance, these observations seem to have moved

somewhat far afield of the subject of affect and the construction of feminism within the

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[8] For an explanation of the social causes of delirium, see Anti-Oedipus, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix
Guattari.

text of <u>Jane Eyre</u>, yet we will see that there is indeed good reason to argue that the fluctuations in colonial fortunes is intimately bound up with gendered affect. I will also attempt to demonstrate, in the next section, that this concern with the colonial enterprise is only superficially distant from the main trajectory of the narrative itself, and that the construction of a pedagogical yet romantic feminism in the novel depends upon the repudiation both of Bertha's legitimate claim to marriage and of the missionary project which St. John River's will undertake in India. It goes without saying, of course, that both of these figure as subtle yet distinct reminders of the proximity of colonialism to the main strata of the story. In the next section and the conclusion of this essay, I will return to the colonial dimension of <u>Jane Eyre</u>, via a brief summary of the history of gender difference and commentary on gendered affect in the Victorian era.

<p style="text-align:center">Gendered Affect, Public Spaces, Feminist Anti-Imperialism</p>

Brontë's narrative has strong resonances with an interpretive problem which has gained currency recently with those critics interested in the historical configurations and determinations of gender. Specifically, such critics have asked about gender difference as a construct which is embedded in and sanctioned through aesthetic and artistic works. Regarding dramas performed in eras antecedent to the Victorian, Phyllis Rackin notes that "as the term <u>gender roles</u> indicates, there is an important sense in which gender is a kind of act for all women [and men]," though no less potentially painful for all that (29). Rackin situates her analysis in the shift in theatrical representation between the Renaissance and the Jacobean periods. Rackin examines John Lyly's <u>Gallathea</u> (c. 1587) as more or less representative of the first and consistent with the traditional "idealized

image of the adrogyne." In the treatment of the two main characters' gender—both of

them are female—the narrative responds to a relative indifference within early English

Renaissance culture towards gender difference in the context of marriage arrangements.

Though their gender identity, revealed near the end of the play, threatens to obviate the

marriage, "a kind of celestial sex-change operation" will set things right, and "one of the

girls will be changed into a boy; we are not told—and the girls do not care—which one"

(30). This play's paradigmatic representation of indifferently gendered domesticity,

however, comes to be replaced by a more essentializing distinction between the genders

over the Jacobean period, perhaps best exemplified in Ben Jonson's Epicoene, where

androgyny is now represented by way of "the satirical portrait of the hermaphrodite," no

longer a figure of transcendence but of ridicule. At the end of this period, Rackin

observes, females became subject—to varying degrees, no doubt—to The Lawes

Resolution of Women's Rights (1632), which asserted that "all women are understood

either married or to be married" (30 in Rackin), and therefore as accessories to the male

gender. It is not difficult to anticipate then, that this early moment of distinctly gendered

identities would foreshadow an equally disadvantageous discourse about the separation of

distinctly gendered spheres of action which becomes pronounced in the Victorian period.

Brontë's writings, however, seem to embrace the ideas both of distinct identities

and of distinct spheres which are appropriate to the female. In her chapter on the

Brontë's in Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel, Françoise

Basch points out something of this fact when she recounts Brontë's "rare comments on

feminism" (161). In these comments she responded to Harriet Taylor's "Woman's

Mission" in The Westminster Review, an argument for the removal of barriers to women

entering the professions. "When I first read the paper," wrote Brontë, "I though it was

the work of a powerful-minded, clear-headed woman, who had a hard, jealous heart, and

nerves of bend leather; a woman who longed for power and never felt affection" (in

Basch 161). This rather ad feminem excerpt from Brontë's response indicts Taylor

precisely in those ways which most strongly correspond to the Victorian ideology about

women: namely, that they are creatures made up primarily of nerves and heart. The

nerves shouldn't be too strong, nor the heart too ambitious, and if either part defied

expectation, it was for want of never having been exposed to feminine "affection,"

though we might paradoxically presume that it could be a male who would have offered

that emotional nourishment. In any event, the basic assumption of this part of Brontë's

response to Taylor invokes all of the old hermaphroditic suspicious—maybe Taylor's

fault is that she is too manly—familiar since Jonsonian theater. We might thus expect

Brontë's insistence on the desirability of clear gender distinctions to play into a generally

regressive stance about gender relationships, domesticity, and pedagogy. However, I will

suggest that such an anticipation is disappointed in Jane Eyre, if not undone entirely.

In the St. John narrative, and in his failed proposals to Jane, Brontë extends the

discourse of gendered affect to a discourse about gendered spaces. The St. John narrative

invokes the distinction between gendered spaces from Jane's earliest appearance at Moor

House. After she has recovered from the illness which inaugurates her stay there, Jane

discovers a domestic intimacy with Diana and Mary, whom she could join "in all their

occupations; converse with them as much as they wished, and aid them when and where

they would allow me" (391). This intimacy and the comfort which Jane finds in it is

closely related to its physical setting, the middle-class household: Jane informs us that

Mary and Diana "loved their sequestered home" and that she, too, found in it "a charm both potent and present."

By contrast, St. John maintains a relationship of distance to both the house and its denizens. "As to Mr. St John," relates the narrator, "the intimacy which had arisen so naturally and rapidly between me and his sisters, did not extend to him" (392). Unlike the sisters, who are sequestered at Moor House, St. John "was comparatively seldom at home: a large portion of his time is devoted to visiting the sick and poor among the scattered populations of his parish," thus emphasizing the contrast between the stationary, feminized domestic space and the mobile, masculine space of vocational work. When the sisters remonstrate against his persistence in weather that is "very unfavorable," he discounts their objections, saying "and if I let a gust of wind or a sprinkling of rain turn me aside from these easy tasks, what preparation would such sloth be for the future I propose myself?" (393). His response simultaneously invokes a strenuous masculinity unhampered by concerns for personal safety while also subtly criticizing the domestic refuge as a space of inactivity.

Of course, Jane soon becomes a teacher at the new village school, thus removing her from the domestic arrangement at Moor House. This change not only places Jane in a context that is distinct from the middle-class home, it also threatens to substitute St. John's missionary masculinity for Jane's newfound domesticity. As he offers Jane the position of headmistress of the new school, he explains that "Morton, when [he] came to it two years ago, had no school: the children of the poor were excluded from every hope of progress. I established one for boys: I mean now to open a second school for girls" (397). This offer of employment foreshadows a trajectory in the narrative whereby St.

John will request Jane not only to work for him, but to do so at the cost of entering into a marriage with him that will doubtless be short on romance. At this point, the dialectic which begins with the marriage romance in Lyly's <u>Gallathea</u> seems to be complete: whereas gender was previously an insignificant barrier to romantic love and, eventually, marriage, in the St. John narrative, marriage and romantic love are figured as insignificant casualties in the service of a masculinist notion of work and colonial mission. It is her rejection of this equation, I would contend, that makes Brontë's particular notions about gender so compelling.

Conclusion

To conclude, then, and to return to my original contention about a narrative resolution which can be institutionalized, I have read between two figures of Jane Eyre, either of which might answer the question, who is the main character of Jane Eyre? I have tried to shy away from the answer which Jean Rhys has suggested, namely that the main character of the novel is Bertha Mason. Instead, I have more strongly relied upon Laura Morgan Green's reading, which implies that Jane as a teacher should have been the protagonist, or would have provided a better one. That Jane the wife overshadows Jane the teacher accounts for Green's disappointment in the novel's failure to render a "public" resolution.

There are several objections which one might make to Green's reading, however. Of course, the novel's resolution lies in marriage, not in pedagogical employment. This much is self-evident. However, given this, one must question Green's project from the start: if the resolution of the novel isn't written in terms of a pedagogical situation for

Jane, perhaps pedagogy is not the central theme of the novel, important as that theme may otherwise be. The central conflict of the novel for Jane is how to negotiate a position within her social milieu that is acceptable for a person like herself. Pedagogy becomes one of the means to such a position, but, as the novel demonstrates, pedagogy is emphatically not that position. This is not merely to state that the "pedagogical expectation" which Green places upon the narrative is unwarranted but rather that such an expectation does not take into consideration the fuller play of conflicting energies within the plot.

Green's claim that <u>Jane Eyre</u> is constructed around an "interior" (Jane's) that "cannot be externalized" can be taken less seriously. As a first-person account, the entire narrative is vulnerable to the charge of being overly determined by Jane's "interior" thinking. Furthermore, no narrative is ever fully "externalized." There is always something left unsaid, despite efforts to make totalizing gestures or to pretend that a given narrative has reached the end of the world and of experience. In this regard, it's difficult to make a special argument for the case of <u>Jane Eyre</u>; as a narrative, the novel is structurally determined to be inadequate, but, in the end, this is the defining characteristic of narrative <u>sui generis</u>.

Indeed, it makes more sense to contend with Green's implied argument about the character of social and public spaces in nineteenth-century England. For it seems that in <u>Jane Eyre</u>, as Green suggests, the larger stakes are about the role of these public spaces in the formation of an English culture that had been traditionally determined by the aristocracy and which was now being subjected to new kinds of pressures. The struggle between, for instance, aristocratic hegemony and the new awareness about the power of a

woman's mind or the status of pedagogical work manifests as a larger discourse in the novel about the character of social spaces—whether these spaces are imagined as primarily public or private. As Hsin Ying Chi argues in Attic and Artist: A Study of Poetic Space in Nineteenth-century Women's Writing, the representation of social spaces was frequently informed by gender stratification. Chi writes that "man is symbolically the main structure of the social system represented as a mansion while woman is subordinate to man, just as the attic is attached to the house" (102).

In a powerful argument, Chi asserts that "locked in the attic, Bertha reveals the true picture of women's position in society—a neglected woman in a neglected place." In this passage, the critic settles upon what must surely be one of the central elements of Jane Eyre: namely, place and setting themselves. What, after all, would the novel be without the cruel indifference of Gateshead, the puritanical regimen of Lowood, or the grandeur of Thornfield? Even the reduced manor at which the novel concludes is carefully chosen to resonate with an emotion that combines failure and success, gain and loss. Furthermore, Chi convincingly argues for the way in which the social spaces of the novel are heavily determined by the genders of those who occupy them: "if buildings are tropes for social categories [or identitites], Thornfield represents Rochester's identity while Bertha's identity can only be found in the attic." Chi concludes by asking "what does civilization bring to women?" Her answer is that "they have no position, no space beyond the walls of the house, or the attic actually, not even at home or in society." This certainly is the case with Bertha, who destroys Thornfield Hall by igniting a fire which ironically clears the path for the marriage between Rochester and Jane. However, to assert that Jane, on the other hand, has "no place . . . at home" is difficult to reconcile

with Green's claim that Jane's embrace of a domestic space at the end of the novel is precisely the novel's weakest point.

Indeed, we have to accept that race and geographical identity (Bertha is a Creole, after all) bear no insignificant weight in the novel, thus stipulating that Jane's treatment as a woman is different from Bertha's. But it must be admitted that there is, however briefly, a kind of collusion between Bertha's destruction of Thornfield and Jane's desire—as I have already mentioned, the destruction of Thornfield makes Rochester and Jane's marital plans legitimate. The fire and Bertha in a sense provide cover for the surprise which the reader feels at Jane's tacit endorsement of the destruction of masculinist aristocratic space and the simultaneous transformation of English cultural forces. To provide an example of this transformation, we should consult a passage in Jane Eyre which presages that passage with which I began this essay. The earlier passage in the novel is also a sort of homecoming: it describes Jane's return to Thornfield after her visit to Gateshead, her old childhood home, and just as she is beginning to experience "new-born agony" surrounding her feelings for Mr. Rochester.

As she returned to Thornfield, Jane "felt glad as the road shortened before [her]: so glad that [she] stopped once to ask what that joy meant" (274). Of course the joy is the anticipation of having "the privilege of again looking upon Mr. Rochester, whether he looked on me or not." It only adds to this excitement that once the two meet, Rochester refers to Thornfield as Jane's home, although Jane plans to leave soon because of the feigned agreement between Rochester and Miss Ingram.

But the most important part of the passage takes the guise of a rumination which foreshadows the reunion at the end of the novel, at Ferndean. Jane considers that "I knew

there would be pleasure in meeting my master again," and then, after several

qualifications, insists "there was ever in Mr. Rochester (or so I thought) such a wealth of

the power of communicating happiness, that to taste but of the crumbs he scattered to

stray and stranger birds like me, was to feast genially" (275). By the end of the novel, the

roles of guest and host, caretaker and ward have, of course been reversed—though still

the smaller "sparrow" (488), Jane is the one who purveys to Rochester. And, though this

promulgation occurs in a domestic rather than an educational setting, it undoubtedly

involves a reversal that would have been impossible had it not been for her pedagogical

training and the pedagogical situation which first brought her to Thornfield.

CHAPTER III

The "True Golden Gold": Exchange, Counterfeit, and Learning in <u>Our Mutual Friend</u>

As several critics have noticed, <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> develops the thematics of incontinence; it seeks to represent adequately the notion of a loss of control. In terms of the narrative's social significance, this loss of control is prefigured or coextensive with the death of the father figure (in Mr. Harmon) at one extreme. One critic, Larisa Tokmakoff Castillo, has pointed out the failing of the word of the father, embodied in the Harmon will, to control social arrangements from beyond the grave. In "Between 'the Cup and the Lip': Retroactive Constructions of inheritance in <u>Our Mutual Friend</u>," she points out that "Pleasant Riderhood, Lizzie Hexam, Jenny Wren, Eugene Wrayburn, John Harmon, and even poor Twemlow are bound by their fathers' demands" (52). Yet Castillo also shows the failure of the desire of the father because "when enacted, the will does not close itself off" (45). Instead, the will "remains open to any number of readings, which all engage, and thus reconstruct, a past." Furthermore, Lauren M. Goodlad has indicated that one of the most compelling moments in the narrative is the loss of control which the schoolmaster undergoes. But in these two moments, the figure of the will and of the headmaster who cannot keep his head, we are presented with two different moments—two different oedipal moments—within the larger context of patriarchal capitalism. One is a moment of cross-generational relationships; the other is a moment of intra-generational relationships. As the status of the father figures becomes more

ambiguous, the relationships between the siblings becomes more dynamic and, occasionally, more dangerous, or so the narrative would have us believe.

If we are to understand the narrative of Our Mutual Friend as one intimately tied to "the puzzles of a modern liberal society" (Goodlad 160), then it may be worthwhile to read the Harmon Will as a metonym for the national patrimony: the will establishes the bases upon which the new generation will form alliances and antipathies; it decrees at the same time as it forbids, determining the share each character will receive in the new arrangements. At the same time, the narrative itself mimics this function of the will: by imagining some alliances as allowable and others as impermissible, the narrative structures social relationships as well as social exclusions. Yet this is not all the will and the patrimony accomplish, for what they represent is a kind of void in the social order, a void which is foreshadowed when Harmon sends his son away to school across the seas. The great Harmon fortune, in turn, acts as a kind of anti-matter which sets the narrative in motion. At first, it simply disturbs, as in the case of Bella Wilfer: "The idea of being a kind of widow, and never having been married! And the idea of being as poor as ever after all . . ." (OMF 37). But before long, it positively draws characters into an orbit of action, and this is true whether we speak of Boffin, Wegg, Rokesmith, Lightwood, or Wrayburn. The numerous questions we are compelled to pose regarding these characters speaks to the incontinence of the narrative and its social world. Who is Rokesmith? What will happen to Charlie? To Lizzie? These questions have resonance precisely because the trajectories of capitalism are drawing into their orbits nearly all of the characters in the novel. In general, then, what the novel represents is a social order that is

undecided, one in which "Christian and civic ideals are disrupted by bourgeois social ambitions" (Goodlad 163).

Another way of describing or explaining the social formation of this novel is that offered by Paul A. Jarvie in <u>Ready to Trample on All Human Law: Financial Capitalism in the Fiction of Charles Dickens</u>. In Jarvie's reading, metonymy, or contiguity, is the primary rhetorical device around which the narrative of <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> is ordered. Metonymy is deeply concerned with the way values circulate, exchange, and transform between locations. Socially speaking, metonymy in the novel corresponds to a phase of capitalism which is characterized both by the petite-bourgeois accumulation of the elder Harmon and by the venture capital of the Veneering circle, and especially the Lammles and Fascination Fledgby. At the fictional level, metonymy is roughly equivalent to the power of money to exchange; rhetorically its defining traits are closer to that of similitude than analogy. The metonym in <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> further adds to the thematics of incontinence by reminding us of the power of commodities and the creations of humans to take on a life of their own beyond the control or will of their originator.

Now, as Jarvie would be the first to admit, the connection between narrative and commodity is hardly new or untheorized. But what I propose is to examine more closely the relationship which obtains <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> between narrative and commodity on the one hand and learning and counterfeit on the other. For it becomes clear early in the novel that learning, like money, is meant to ascribe some kind of social status to its bearer: Boffin seeks to redress his neglected education by asking Wegg to read from a historical narrative—Boffin believes it to be the <u>Decline and Fall of the Rooshan Empire</u>, but of course it is of the Roman. The narrative of Charlie Hexam describes a youth who

wants to improve his outlook in life. Bella's conversion is instigated by Boffin's reading about and impersonation of misers.

These examples are haunted by the counterfeit, however. The acts of impersonation and fraud which accompany the text's invocation of literacy necessarily shape the text's discourse about the value of learning itself. I will ask, then, with Roland Barthes in <u>S/Z</u>, the question raised, perhaps, by every narrative: "What should the narrative be exchanged for? What is the narrative 'worth'"? (89). Barthes explains that narrative, like Jarvie's metonymy, "is determined not by a desire to narrate, but by a desire to exchange: it is a <u>medium of exchange</u>, an agent, a currency, a gold standard" (90).

Though Barthes is speaking of a text somewhat different from Dickens's, still one may wonder whether the paradigm of exchange, imbricated as it is within the idea of narrative, isn't a useful tool to understand the representations of learning which the novel offers. If it is useful in this regard, however, it is precisely because exchange posits the possibility of counterfeit. Without exchange, counterfeit poses little significance. With the appearance and preponderance of exchange, the counterfeit assumes a singular role in determining not only monetary, but social and literary value. As I pursue this investigation, I will focus on three distinct plot lines: the Boffin/Wegg narrative; the Headstone/Wrayburn/Lizzie plotline; and, finally, the Boffin/Rokesmith/Bella plotline, the narrative most central to the novel. I will conclude by arguing that this last plotline is the most challenging of the three, because the counterfeit gains a positive valuation.

The Boffin/Wegg Narrative: Parodies of Education

As a result of the death of Mr. Harmon and his two offspring, Mr. Boffin finds himself

the heir to the Harmon fortune. For the most part this fortune takes the form of "dust

heaps," large piles of detritus which contain a motley assortment of items, some of which

are nonetheless presumably quite valuable. The haphazard mixture of value in these

heaps no doubt further speaks to the working of metonymy in the novel's narrative

structure. But even more important is the effect which the transfer of this value to Mr.

Boffin has upon him. For the transfer of this value to Boffin <u>legitimates</u> a newfound

social pretension in the Boffin couple. As he explains to Silas Wegg on his first visit to

the Bower, "'Mrs. Boffin . . . is a highflyer at Fashion.'" And, although Mr. Boffin

explains "I ain't as yet as Fash'nable as I may come to be,'" in the course of the novel he

will come to share Mrs. Boffin's perspective on the advantages of being fashionable (54).

In the meanwhile, Boffin hires Wegg to add a veneer of culture to the establishment.

Wegg, in turn, sees his own prospects rise.

  The novel does not, however, license Wegg's enlarged outlook in the same way

that it does Boffin's. Boffin may serve to show that learning and reading are appropriate

undertakings for the pastors in the society. But the man he hires to transmit these

accomplishments, Wegg, embodies "the most terrifying elements of mimesis," namely

"impersonation"—that is, Wegg counterfeits a true literary man, and he all too easily

fools Boffin (Gourgouris 8). Obviously, Wegg and Boffin are contrasting pairs; One's

social pretensions are legitimate, the other's aren't.

  In Robert Baker's reading, Dickens deploys these two characters to illustrate the

difference between "moral illiteracy" on the one hand and "moral lucidity" on the other

(57). This is a contrast which Baker sees at work throughout the novel, and it allows us to group Lizzie with Boffin and Headstone with Wegg. Baker is correct to refer to the moral dimension of the novel, because in it learning and morality ultimately take a stand against avarice. But Baker doesn't fully explain the devices by which Dickens constructs the differences between the clear and the confused in the novel. Because he doesn't account for the role which private property plays in the novel, he can't adequately account for its moral dimension, either. The division between the clear and the confused permits us to see a pattern in the novel's discourse about learning. But it's exactly the confusion of values—human, monetary, and literary—which the novel depicts so well. Sometimes this confusion is utopian; sometimes it is truly narrow. In order to assess this confusion, we first we need to ask about some of the ways in which the discourse of the novel achieves the separation between the two kinds of characters and what the implications for this separation are.

In order to appreciate the effects by which Wegg's moral confusion is constructed, it is perhaps necessary to observe that he is immediately insinuated within a context of commodification: the novel focuses as much attention on the "few small lots of fruit and sweets that he offered for sale," and the "choice collection of halfpenny ballads," as it does on describing Wegg himself. Thus Wegg is cast between what apparently are two different worlds: the world of simple, hard commodities and the world of literature and learning. Tore Rem has noticed that this conjunction seems to have a degrading effect upon language: with Wegg, writes Rem in Dickens, Melodrama, and the Parodic Imagination, "words are reduced from vessels of ideas . . . to vehicles of mechanistic exchange in a capitalist system" (137). In what follows, I will examine the

function of literacy, commodification, and parody to suggest that the Wegg/Boffin narrative doesn't simply deploy metonymy, as Jarvie would have it. Rather, metonymy undergoes a failure in the figure of Wegg—that is, Wegg represents a threshold beyond which metonymy will not function smoothly.

Catherine Gallagher, in her chapter "The Bioeconomics of <u>Our Mutual Friend</u>," has pointed out the shortcomings of Silas Wegg as a "literary man":

> To Wegg's mind, texts are things to be subdued; although he can collar and throw them by finding spoken sounds for the printed signs, he often cannot attach meaning to them. . . . Boffin hires the incompetent Wegg to read <u>Decline and Fall of the Russian Empire</u> aloud. Wegg marshalls all of his antagonistic power agains Gibbon, but far from conquering the volumes, he and his auditor "decline and fall" into extended confusion. 113

Of course, the reader of <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> is likely to agree that Mr. Boffin's choice of a tutor is rather idiosyncratic: Wegg is not connected with any particular establishment of learning and ranks on the social scale alongside the fish mongers or rag dealers of Henry Mayhew's <u>London Labour and the London Poor</u>. Still, the critical rejection of Wegg as educator seems to be based on the wrong reasons. Wegg, after all, isn't alone in declining into "extended confusion" when faced with a long and difficult text like Gibbon's. Nor is the inability to attach meaning to signs necessarily a failure of education—it would seem a frequent occurrence in the self-education of any individual. What makes criticisms like Gallagher's salient, however, is precisely the closeness of Wegg to a legitimate educator. This closeness is a result of the intentional parody of

which Wegg forms a metonymic part—a parody whereby disinterest assumes a central role in the narrative and in education.

When we first meet Wegg, he's associated with narrative as a mode of imaginative invention. He parks his stall on "the corner upon which the side of the house gave," and has "settled it with himself in the course of time" that he stands in a certain relationship to its denizens (43, 44). And "over the house itself, he exercised the same imaginary power as over its inhabitants and their affairs." Obviously, part of the narrative is aimed at a comic presentation of Wegg and his misinterpretation of the people and things around him. But, at the same time, readers should pause at the meaning of these imaginative acts, upon which representations it seems Wegg is dependent for his development. The thin difference between falsification and imagination should be apparent in the way Wegg "knew so little about the inmates [of the corner house] that he gave them names of his own invention." On the other hand, this act of naming is a desperate attempt to somehow fit into the real social and geographical setting in which Wegg finds himself. At the same time, however, it is, as the narrator states, an act of "invention," parallel to the very action of the narrator—the "'Miss Elizabeth,' Master George,' 'Aunt Jane,' and 'Uncle Parker'" forming a kind of cast of characters in Wegg's own theater of the absurd. Though the narrative claims that Wegg has "no authority whatever for such designations," we might ask the same of any narrative, especially ones that are self-evidently fiction.

It is equally unnerving about Wegg that he is so public a man of learning, or of half-learning—that he sells his ability in the cold, anonymous market-place. Unlike Headstone or Charlie, who teach at a regular school with its formal setting, Wegg makes

his learning available for immediate hire in the streets—and thus he represents learning in a way that is unspecialized, bereft of the amenities and spatial arrangements usually associated with it. For Wegg, learning is more or less like his stash of "apples" which it gives one the "face-ache to look at": something that can be purchased in small amounts, on the spot, and in full view of the plebian public. Thus Mr. Boffin discovers Wegg, as Boffin tells him, "because you was singing to the butcher; and you wouldn't sing secrets to the butcher in the street, you know" (48). By emphasizing that Wegg wouldn't be singing secrets, Boffin is both anticipating any objections about his eavesdropping and underscoring the very public character of Wegg as a "literary man."

The status of Wegg as a "literary man," is, naturally, highly dubious. In fact, it is so much in doubt that when Mr. Boffin suggests the term, Wegg responds with a "'N— not exactly so, sir.'" And yet, with just an ounce of suspended belief as well as of encouragement, Wegg is finally able to come round to the label: "'Why,'" Mr. Boffin reminds him, "'you know every one of these songs by name and by tune, and if you want to read or to sing any one on 'em off straight, you've only to whip on your spectacles and do it!'" Faced with this rejoinder, Wegg submits, agreeing, "'we'll say literary, then.'" The reader perhaps is not so easily convinced as Wegg about his merits as a "literary man." But this failure of conviction, which the narrator problematically shares with the reader, is a highly complex matter, one which, I would argue, is intimately bound up with the larger transactions of institutional literary power and aesthetics within the novel.

In order to elaborate these determinants and to bring the significance of the Wegg character into a more direct light, I will turn once again to the essay by Paul A. Jarvie titled "Among the Dying and the Dead: Metonymy and Finance Capitalism in Our

Mutual Friend." Jarvie explains that "Our Mutual Friend's . . . fundamental project is metonymy. That is," he continues, "the novel seeks to understand and arrest the process by which 'value' moves from commodity to commodity, a process which seems, in capitalist society, to operate more or less autonomously." The other name for metonymy is contiguity, and this contiguity stands for the contiguity of values in a capitalist society, whereby one value is exchanged for, or becomes, another value. Jarvie further describes metonymy as a kind of "hungry desire . . . to continue to link random items ad infinitum, regardless of any 'transcendent meaning'" (117). But we must be careful in following Jarvie's work, because it seems that he would have us slip back and forth between the rhetorical figure of metonymy or contiguity and the figure of the commodity in the capitalist society. What needs to be done more thoughtfully, despite Jarvie's intriguing suggestion, is to trace the ways in which the commodity and the rhetorical figure contrast, as well as the ways in which they are the same—for to suggest that they are identical is immediately to withdraw their difference. But to suggest that they can be compared, as Jarvie does, is immediately to suggest that they have similarities.

Wegg is first of all linked within a narrative chain, a chain which ties him to his "undesirable corner," the "house at the corner," his "hardest little stall of all the sterile little stalls in London," and with the small stock of hard commodities which he sells from it. Obviously, not all of these objects are commodities in the way that his hard stock and gingerbread are, closely related as they may be to Wegg. We do, however, seem to be within the purview of metonymy in this opening description of Wegg's appearance, as the description moves through its inventory almost for the sake of linking "random items ad infinitum." Moreover, the way the metonymy works at this point is by treating Wegg

and his commodities as <u>setting</u>: he is not yet really a character. The narrative emphasizes

this point by stating that "all weathers saw the man at the post," even as the weather

changes from various types of malevolence. At this point in the narrative, Wegg seems

to blend in seamlessly with what would ordinarily be termed the elements of setting or

nature.

In contrast, when it comes to human interaction, Wegg is a "wooden man." In

other words, he seems to have no interior, but responds to passers-by on the basis of their

identity, not of his: "thus, to the rector, he addressed a bow, composed of lay deference .

. . to the doctor, a confidential bow, as to a gentleman whose acquaintance with his inside

he begged respectfully to acknowledge." Wegg is held in an odd state of suspension

between object and person. In a passage relevant to understanding this character and his

ability to shift between mere object and street performer, Rem has written that "through

its dual tendency both to anthropomorphize things, houses, and place and to see people as

inert objects, Dickens's writings evince at once both a surplus and a deficit of life" (124).

According to this argument, we might assert that Wegg indeed exhibits a surplus of life,

but that this life is insincere and unreal, finally a deficit of what was thought to be

excessive. This argument invokes the classic romantic interpretive trope of life and

death, but it doesn't address the problem of metonymy or of the parody by which Wegg

is soon treated in the narrative.

Such an explanation as Rem's, furthermore, doesn't help us to understand the way

that Wegg is working in regards to commodification and the commodification of

language which he represents. Wegg seems to be a commodity to the very core of his

being. He has sold one of his legs to Mr. Venus, and he sells his very speech as a way to

make a living. Yet there are interruptions to the flow of commodities around Wegg that

is different from, say, the river from which Gaffer Hexam and Rogue Riderhood extricate

valuable refuse or the dust heaps which serve a parallel purpose for Harmon and the

Boffins. The most powerful reminder of the limits of Wegg's commodifiability is his

"dropping" into poetry, which he does free of charge as a sign of friendship to the

Boffins. And, though, as Rem has indicated, the poems which Wegg recites have been

adapted from popular ballads, we are nonetheless justified in assessing Wegg as

possessing some "imagination." Furthermore, Rem provides us with a clear explanation

as to how Wegg functions as a humorous character in the narrative. In fact, Rem is able

to declare that Wegg "is a parodist."

      But I am more concerned with the way Wegg is an object, rather than a subject, of

parody. Why does the narrator create a character who is unable to convincingly

commodify himself and turn what learning he does have to honorable profit? For

instance, what is at stake in the scene when Mr. Boffin asks him the difference between

the "Rooshan" and the Roman Empire? "'The difference, sir?' Mr. Wegg was faltering

and in danger of breaking down, when a bright thought flashed upon him" (57). Wegg

excuses himself from answering the question by referring to the presence of a woman in

the company: "Mr. Wegg thus came out of his disadvantage with a chivalrous air, and

not only that . . . [he] turned the disadvantage on Mr. Boffin, who felt he had committed

himself in a very painful manner." Or, when Wegg has completed his customary repast

and then announces, "'And now, Mr. Boffin, sir, we'll decline and we'll fall!'" seemingly

as a way of conveying a not very auspicious outlook on his own reading talents (181).

Obviously, this parodying of Wegg fits within Baker's thesis about moral and intellectual clarity, both of which Wegg substantially lacks. But the parody of Wegg, as I have thus far only implied, breaks up the easy comparison of metonymy and commodification—or, at least, it further problematizes the conclusion that commodification is working in every direction in the novel. It does not allow, for instance, Wegg to become a legitimate tutor in the way that Jane becomes one in Jane Eyre. Instead, Wegg fails to obtain to that level of "disinterest" which David Lloyd and Paul Thomas have identified as that which, in the later Arnoldian theory, "the men of culture come to represent" (7). As someone who is excessively self-interested, who accepts every possible amenity from the Boffins, denies himself nothing, and eventually enters into a plot to secure some part of the Harmon inheritance for himself, Wegg does not at all fit within the paradigm of the independent man of letters. He is a counterfeit.

That position, of the man of culture, I would argue, is reserved for the narrative voice itself and the characters with whom it aligns itself. In the process of establishing itself as the voice of the legitimate "literary man," over and against Silas Wegg, the narrating voice re-encapsulates all of the problems which I have been discussing up to this point. That is, the commodification, immorality, and self-pretension of Wegg become devices which put him in contrast with the narrative voice, which, by its very knowledge of Wegg's shortcomings represents itself as the legitimate pedagogue while simultaneously establishing itself as the correct vehicle for the novel's pedagogical project. What becomes apparent is that the narrator claims authority—the authority of the teacherly writer—through parody and the display of the power to parody the

shortcomings of Wegg, and, as I will demonstrate shortly, the shortcomings of Headstone as well.

By way of concluding the discussion of Wegg, that "'precious old rascal,'" it may be worthwhile to recapitulate some of the ideas which the discourse develops concerning the relationship between learning and value. Ultimately, these ideas can only be part of the contradictory framework for human experience which is the mark of ideology and of ideation. We might first of all summarize the Wegg narrative by pointing out that the narrator has determined that—unlike Bella, the "true golden gold"(773)—Wegg turns out to be a charlatan. On the one hand, this position is secured at the level of the merely proaieretic: Wegg does of course turn into a greedy extortionist who tries to extract from the Boffins something entirely unacceptable to the norms of society.

By the same gesture, Wegg's credentials as a man of learning or as a tutor are undone by an aesthetics of disinterestedness, true value, authenticity, etc., which accompany the text's observations about Wegg's immorality and incompetence. These latter, in fact, seem to converge and become indiscernible one from the other. It's as though the discourse of the novel had to conflate, or to confuse, the two—immorality and incompetence—in order to dismiss Wegg: his immorality it would seem becomes a sort of alibi for his incompetence. Thus Mr. Boffin, by the end of the narrative, would still have been willing to accept Wegg's services as tutor, were it not for his attempt at extortion: "'I am sorry, Wegg,' said Mr. Boffin, in his clemency, 'that my old lady and I can't have a better opinion of you than the bad one we are forced to entertain'" (770). Wegg, by transgressing the laws of legitimate exchange, ultimately succumbs to the confusion whereby the text equates him with a mere commodity. As a result, Wegg's

transgressions confirm the suspicion that he is not a true man of learning, one who in some way would be independent of commodity exchange.

The closure of the Wegg narrative offers one last example of how the narrative voice parodies Wegg and thus insinuates itself as the real "golden gold" when it comes to learning. As Mr. Boffin has offered Wegg one final chance to name a price for departing and so to set himself up again in the marketplace, Wegg complains, "'it's not easy to say how far the tone of my mind may have been lowered by unwholesome reading on the subject of Misers. . . . All I can say is, that I felt my tone of mind a-lowering at the time. And how can a man put a price upon his mind!" (771). This use of parody is quite different from mere irony. It is parodic because it doesn't deny the truth of what Wegg says, on some level. If Wegg's monologues were meant ironically, one would have to read it as asserting that in fact a man <u>can</u> put a price upon his mind—that the idea of valuing the mind, with all of its connotations of learning, individuality, and morality in terms of a simple monetary number were acceptable. This has been refuted in the novel by the example of Bella, who finally comes to sympathize with Rokesmith even though he has no money to speak of. But, with parody, it's the speaker who is mocked, not the sentiment—as if the narrator were to say, "who is Wegg, this incorrigible manipulator, to speak of a mind not having a price, true as that assertion may be?" Through parody, the narrator is able both to dismiss Wegg and to retain his sentiment in the name of a "genuine" voice of learning, one who truly understands the "value" of disinterested inquiry.

Nonetheless, there is a deeper structural irony at work here, one which further mystifies the relation of literature to learning, and this irony operates by way of

mystifying the value of learning which Wegg already misrepresents. Because, as I have just explained, the narrator essentially agrees that the mind is something beyond price and beyond monetary exchange, the assertion of the narrator's authority is also an assertion of authenticity which denies commodity exchange. The authentic article of learning is beyond representation, as are the very terms of the possibility of that representation. Thus the novel can only lay claim to the position of legitimate educator to the extent that it represses the knowledge that, as a narrative, it too is a commodity, which can be bought for so many shillings or pence. In this sense, the narrative is both utopian and conservative.

The Headstone/Wrayburn/Lizzie Plotline: Education, Class, and the Aesthetics of

Authenticity

The Headstone plot is more dispersed than the Wegg Narrative, the former encapsulating not only Bradley Headstone, Eugene Wrayburn, and Lizzie Hexam, but Charlie Hexam, and ultimately Mortimer Lightwood as well. Were one to continue to trace the relationships between characters in the novel, one could do so through the figure of Lightwood, who is Mr. Boffin's solicitor, and one could then proceed to the characters already examined in the previous section, as well as to the Veneering Circle and the "Voice of Society." The multiplicity of characters in this plotline inflects the stakes it has for understanding representations of learning in the novel. While, in the previous narrative strand, Wegg could bear comparison with the Boffins for being "charmingly vulgar," Headstone and his antagonist, Wrayburn, are of seemingly different social worlds and, thus, transport themselves according to quite different idioms. They form the

center of a plotline that includes a number of characters, and, as such, represents much wider social strata than do the street vendor Wegg and his dust-dealing benefactor. And because Headstone is a schoolteacher, his narrative has perhaps the most of any of the three narratives to say about learning taken in the normative context of the school. Yet, as I will show, this normative context is developed, or treated, in a way that is in dialogue, once again, with the text's own bid for authentic knowledge.

In some senses, the narrative voice plays a smaller role in the Headstone plot than it did in the Wegg narrative. Nonetheless, much as in the development of the narrative of Wegg and Mr. Boffin, the representation and the critique of learning in the Headstone plot emerge with strong assistance from, though not exclusively by means of, the narrative voice. In other words, we have to read closely the narratives of Headstone, the wooden, mechanical schoolteacher, and Eugene Wrayburn, the idle "old-boy," in the hopes that by understanding their construction through the narrative voice, we might better be able to arrive at some positive statement about the text's aesthetic representation of the possibility of learning in the English 1860's. Finally, I will argue that one of the strongest devices by which Dickens develops this narrative, but one which still leaves us with many ambiguitites, is originality.

Much like Carlyle's description of education in Sartor Resartus, the depiction of school in Our Mutual Friend places learning on an axis that shifts immediately from chaos to rigid mechanism, with no middle ground. The school in which Charley first studies is characterized by the former malady: it is "an exceedingly and confoudingly perplexed jumble of a school, where black spirits and grey, red spirits and white, jumbled jumbled jumbled jumbled, jumbled every night" (209). Part of the confusion is supplied

by the incongruity between the students and their lessons: "young women old in the vices of the commonest and worst life, were expected to profess themselves enthralled by the good child's book, the Adventures of Little Margery." This latter title describes the idyllic existence of a village girl of five years' age, who shares her porridge "with singing birds," and "denied herself a new nankeen bonnet, on the ground that turnips did not wear nankeen bonnets." The understanding of the adult pupils is similarly hampered, if not by the content of their reading, then by the method. Though the adults are allowed to read the more edifying New Testament, it is "by dint of stumbling over syllables and keeping their bewildered eyes on the particular syllables coming round to their turn," and thus they "were as absolutely ignorant of the sublime history, as if they had never seen nor heard of it." As for Charley, he nonetheless "had risen in the jumble, taught in the jumble, and been received from the jumble into a better school," the school of which Mr. Headstone is the headmaster.

Mr. Bradley Headstone and his female counterpart, Miss Peecher, represent the polar opposite of "the jumble." Whereas the jumble is a chaos, the headmaster and headmistress of Charley's new school represent rigid formality in learning. Mr. Headstone "had acquired mechanically a great store of teacher's knowledge. He could do mental arithmetic mechanically, sing at sight mechanically, blow various wind instruments mechanically, even play the great church organ mechanically. From his early childhood up, his mind had been a great mechanical stowage" (211). For her part, Miss Peecher is much the same: "she could write a little essay on any subject, exactly a slate long, beginning at the left-hand top of one side and ending at the right-hand bottom of the other, and the essay should be strictly according to rule." This contrast, between the

overly chaotic jumble school, and the overly mechanical learning which Mr. Headstone possesses, ought to give us pause in our reading. What does it signify? What is in question in this difference between two extremes?

On the one hand, this oscillation between mechanism and chaos seems to represent Dickens's symbolic contempt for the nineteenth-century project of school reformers like Sir James Kay Shuttleworth "to remake the working-class child in the middle-class image" (Southerland, in Goodlad, 167). For Bradley Headstone is the quintessential representative of such an attempt at class transformation: in describing his learning, Dickens also hints that "if young Bradley Headstone, when a pauper lad, had chanced to be told off to sea, he would not have been the last man in a ship's crew" (211-212). The import of this passage is two-fold. First, it informs us that Headstone was in fact a pauper lad, which is of a piece with his present discomfort in his "decent" clothing. Secondly, the description of Headstone as a robust youth seems to imply that he would have "fit in" had he followed a more virile calling as a sailor, perhaps in the military. Here, the discourse of the novel represents the conundrum of the headmaster in terms that invert the common associations of professional and vocational difficulty and comfort. The novel wants to claim that Headstone would likely have met with an easier success had he gone to sea as a youth, but that, unfortunately, he has chosen a career that involves difficulty—which the narrative registers as a sartorial discomfort. Thus the narrative discourse enacts a double bind concerning the social project of improving the pauper lad's condition: it claims the general inferiority of the initiative on the basis of its real inevitable difficulties. Similarly, the education of the lower classes faces two equally bad

alternatives: their education, the novel here suggests, will undoubtedly be dogged either by a chaotic disorder, a rigid mechanism, or both.

On the other hand, there is further significance to the specific way Headstone has been trained, significance which has to do both with the novel's own claim to authoritative knowledge, and with the way Headstone's identity as a teacher is constructed. To begin, in Headstone, the novel once again deploys a parody of one of its central characters in order to buttress its own claim for a kind of literary authority. By stating that Headstone had "acquired mechanically a great store of teacher's knowledge," the narrator is outlining one possible kind of learning against which the narrative's own knowledge can be compared. One way to describe this learning is as acquisition, or the acquisition of skills. Gert J. J. Biesta has written that "the most common—and presumably most influential—conception of learning sees learning in terms of acquisition: the acquisition of something external, such as knowledge, values, or skills, something that existed before the act of learning and that becomes the possession of the learner as a result of learning" (67). I will discuss the importance of Biesta's theory in considering the formation of Headstone's identity as it plays out in contest with Wrayburn in a moment, but for the present I want to draw attention to the way in which Headstone's education is centered around the process of learning knowledge in a way that mechanically prevents him from forming his own sense of self. The narratives about Headstone continually represent his own lack of self-confidence, as, for example, when he is speaking with Lizzie Hexam and, finding that as "nothing [was] said on the other side, he had to begin again, and begin with new embarrassment" (335). Headstone obviously knows facts, but on the formation of opinion, and especially of his own

opinions, he is less well equipped. All of this may seem somewhat self-evident, but in an intriguing way, it prefigures a certain logic which obtained about literature itself when it first was introduced into the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, a logic about the distinction between <u>techne</u> and humanistic knowledge which has persisted into the twentieth century. In "The Organisation of Literary Knowledge: The Study of English in the Late Nineteenth Century," Carol Atherton has reminded us of English's "perceived lack of academic validity, and . . . the belief that it was concerned with judgment rather than knowledge, making it difficult to teach and assess" (221).

In Atherton's text, we are presented with a narrative whereby the ephemerality and ambiguity of literary value were a detriment to its entrance into the establishment universities. In Dickens's novel, however, we are offered quite a different possibility, one in which the very teachability and straightforwardness of certain academic disciplines contrasts negatively with some other version of cultural authority. To what does this other cultural authority correspond? Of what is it representative? On the one hand, it's tempting to think of this cultural authority as representative of the old-boys network and its unspoken rules of cohesion as the cultural authority which the narrative is contrasting with the mechanical learning of the pauper classes; in this reading the text would therefore endorse the figures of Lightwood and Wrayburn as the social "pastors" of this early liberal-democratic society. I would contend, however, that such a reading is ambivalent, at best, as Lauren M. E. Goodlad has pointed out. Nonetheless, the comparison in the novel between those figures who are receiving or have received the pauper lad's education and those who are part of the genteel establishment deserves some

interrogation if we are to understand the representations of learning which the novel develops.

If we are to understand the conflict between Headstone and Wrayburn, both of whom pursue the affections of Lizzie Hexam, it is helpful simultaneously to understand the different ethos which pertains to Headstone and Wrayburn and to understand their respective positions within the trajectory of modern education. Biesta has written that the modern paradigm of education "is expressed in the idea that the aim of education is to reach a state of rational autonomy" (14). Biesta traces this notion through several authors back to Immanuel Kant, who summarizes the Enlightenment project as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage through the exercise of his own understanding" (in Biesta 35). But this notion, too, serves as a contrast to Headstone, for in the descriptions of him, we are led to believe that the mechanical nature of his learning indicates a poverty of humanistic sensibilities. Were he to possess these sensibilities, his learning might be more his own and less mechanical. In this sense, then, we can think of Headstone as a failure of modernity—he fails to obtain to the level of autonomy which constitutes the ideal of modern humanistic education. But once again, this ideal of autonomy is one that can be appropriated by the narrative voice itself, just as the ideal of disinterestedness was appropriated through the parodic treatment of Wegg.

It's hardly surprising, then, that Headstone becomes an object of conscious exclusion from the rational community of modernity—personified in such characters as Lightwood and Wrayburn. In other words, Headstone is treated by these apparently hegemonic characters according to the paradigm of what Biesta, following Zygmunt Bauman, calls "the stranger." Biesta, again tracing the writing of Bauman, names two

ways in which modernity deals with the figure of the stranger: the <u>anthropoemic</u> method or the <u>anthropophagic</u> method. It is the latter which concerns us here. The <u>anthropophagic</u> approach to modernization, as well as its failure, is apparent in the text's representation of Bradley Headstone as someone who is attempting to achieve indifference, for lack of better language. He would like so much to become simply another anonymous member of the ruling, or at least idle, hegemonic class, constituted by the likes of Wrayburn and Lightwood, the old college fellows who are now partners in a law office which sees little work.

The discourse of the text produces Headstone as an other: even though he is never "seen in any other dress" except his eminently respectable "decent black coat and waistcoat," "there was a certain stiffness in his manner of wearing this, as if there were a want of adaptation between him and it" (211). In describing Headstone this way, the text positions him within the anthropophagic tendency of modernity at the same time as it shows the impossibility of this tendency. Obviously, in simply wearing his respectable outfit, Headstone indicates the desire to escape his pauper upbringing. Yet the narrative won't let this escape proceed easily—he, and we readers, must be repeatedly reminded of his original sin. Therefore, Headstone is perpetually invoked as a figure under erasure, whose origins and destination must be continually confused. In plainer language, he is a figure who cannot evade his own origins despite the text's occasional desire to erase those origins. Not only is he positioned within the logic of the anthropophagic tendency, he is the site where that tendency is undone: by his association with an institution that seeks to integrate society—the school—he is indelibly marked as insufficient and lower class.

But the question still remains of how one should read this indelible marking of Headstone, a class marking which presumably also indicates a kind of powerlessness in the character. In whose service is this marking made? What is in question in designating a character in such a way, or in the textual arrangement that relates Headstone, Charley, Lizzie, and Wrayburn? We cannot pretend that the class content of the Headstone narrative, any more than the text as a whole, has a revolutionary import and that the state of affairs in the novel are completely renewed on the basis of this character—it seems that the outcome of Headstone's narrative is too bleak for anything of this sort to occur. It may be equally less apt to imagine something like a micro-politics, in Deleuze's sense, to be at work around the character of Headstone. Nonetheless, it may be worthwhile to think about the strange movement in which he is involved and implicated, a movement which is transected enough by that typically modernist tendency of alienation as to render the small grouping considered here underlined_unsettled.

One of the features of the text which causes many of the characters distress is the problem of paternal relationships, and more specifically of absent fathers. John Harmon's dilemma is precisely that he is caught up in the desire of his deceased father for him to marry Bella. Another deceased father in the novel, Gaffer Hexam, has, unlike the Harmon elder, left no patrimony for his son, though the two have also parted on spiteful terms. Before his death, Gaffer had denounced Charley as an "'Unnat'ral young beggar!'" when the son left home to attend school full-time.

It is not surprising that the family has consequences for learning and the kinds of authorship which it licenses. After all, the novel's first conceits are a will and an inheritance, themselves instruments for the propagation of the bourgeois family. But

who, the text asks, will act as surrogate family for the children orphaned by the deaths of their parents? Obviously, in the case of John Harmon, the answer is the Boffins, who figuratively adopt both John and Bella while literally adopting Sloppy, the former ward of the church. For the Hexams, the situation is more complicated. In Charley's case, it seems that Headstone fills the role of surrogate father. It also seems, briefly, that Headstone might fill the role of both father and husband for Lizzie, a combination familiar to the Victorian era. Yet Lizzie refuses Headstone's bid to fill the roles of husband/father, and this refusal acts as a catalyst for the ensuing drama around Headstone, Lizzie herself, Charley, and Wrayburn. Wrayburn is Headstone's main competition for Lizzie's affections, and through the competition between these two characters the text articulates and elaborates a number of aesthetic values.

Furthermore, one of the main elements which frames the contest between Headstone and Wrayburn is their class origins and the aesthetic values which have their moorings in those origins. Headstone, we will remember, is of the pauper class, while Wrayburn represents inherited wealth. On this line, the characters move slowly, idly, gracefully. Wrayburn and Lightwood have no destination, because their destination is already achieved, and it is that towards which, it would seem, all human endeavor strives. This is why T. W. Heyck, in The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England, writes that "everyone who possibly could aspired to the status of gentleman and thus to free himself from dependency and servile work" (21). Just before their first interview with Headstone, Mortimer tells Eugene, "if I could find you in earnest for a minute, I would try to say an earnest word to you" (277). Mortimer's hypothetical proves that the time of the old-boy network is one of insincerity, of self-assurance, of easy

confidence. It's not clear that this time is any less rigid than Headstone's own rhythm, however. In an earlier part of the novel, when the two young lawyers are introduced for the first time, Wrayburn explains the way in which "My Respected Father," or "M. R. F." has disposed of his children according to his own wishes from their birth, thus giving them little range of choice in their own development. Eugene reports that "when my eldest brother was born," he became heir to "the Family Estate." The second brother has it decided for him that he will become a member of the church; the third, that he will go into the Navy.

All of this indicates a certain kind of rigid custom in relationships across generations, from fathers to sons. But the novel simultaneously seeks to portray Wrayburn in a light that is not so formal or rigid, one that posits him as a carrier of that certain je ne sais qua which establishes Wrayburn as the heir to an elite class privilege. For example, one may contrast the easy attitude toward names and naming held by Wrayburn on the one hand and the care taken by the Boffins when it comes to the questions of names. As the Boffins venture upon adopting a child in remembrance of the deceased John Harmon, Mr. Boffin reminds his wife, "'we must take care of the names,'" indicating the way in which Mr. Boffin sees himself as part of a society consisting of real individuals with real individuality. By contrast, when he first meets Headstone, Wrayburn emphasizes that it is unimportant that he learn the schoolmaster's name. Upon the schoolmaster's formal suggestion that it may matter little, Wrayburn makes the most of his opportunity, saying "'it does not concern me at all to know. I can say Schoolmaster, which is a most respectable title'" (280). Later, he describes a similar sentiment by telling the schoolmaster "'I don't think about you.'" Wrayburn makes

similar rhetorical gestures in making up names for other characters, such as Mr. Aaron for Riah or Mr. Dolls for Jenny Wren's father. What all of this ease with names and insouciance as to their particularity implies is a certain degree of loftiness, to be sure, but also a capacity for imagination, however self-centered that may be. Ironically, Wrayburn has control of the social script, because he has control of the names and of naming, and he uses them in a way that fits his own needs, without bothering too much how well the script which he creates matches empirical or objective reality. As an aside, it's possible to deduce the text's commit to authenticity by the way it seems to punish Wrayburn, along with Wegg, for attempting to appropriate the fictive function which the novel views as its exclusive property.

This ease with names is consistent with the organic character of mind which Wrayburn possesses. On the one hand, this organicity of mind may be descried in the hunt and chase scenes involving Wrayburn and Headstone—cruel as they are, these scenes involve Wrayburn in acts of imagination or at least of spontaneity. Furthermore, Wrayburn reminds Lightwood about the last-minute character of his learning in school, further dramatizing the spontaneous nature of his mind: "'when we were at school together, I got up my lessons at the last moment, day by day and bit by bit; now we are out in life together, I get my lessons up in the same way" (523). In terms of the fraternal relations in the novel, then, Wrayburn, bolstered by his inherited wealth, represents an easy, confident spontaneity.

At times, these fraternal relations threaten to undo the customs and strictures of society altogether. In the early stages of what must be thought of as a bachelor narrative, Eugene suggests to Mortimer that they shut themselves up in a lighthouse and that doing

so would be a vast improvement over the doldrums of polite liberal culture: "'Lady Tippins couldn't put off to visit us, or, better still, might put off and get swamped. People couldn't ask one to wedding breakfasts. There would be no Precedents to hammer at, except the plain-sailing Precedent of keeping the light up'" (140). Though his reverie is here directed towards Lady Tippins and the recent wedding of the Lammles, Wrayburn is nonetheless simultaneously reflecting on his own incorporation into this version of polite society, as he also reports that his "'respected father has found, down in the parental neighborhood, a wife for his not-generally-respected son.'" However, in imagining an existence in which "Lady Tippins couldn't put off to visit us," Wrayburn must be nominated as one of the voices most antagonistic to the narrative thrust of the entire novel, as the former is through and through constructed, in part, on the basis of such formal social ceremonies. By imagining the abandonment of these ceremonies, Wrayburn is engaging in the old cynic device of "defacing the currency," claiming, as it were, that he no longer wishes to trade upon the currency of his society.

The class position of Headstone, on the other hand, involves the necessity of earning one's station, a requirement which has vague resonances with the Stations of the Cross. Thus Headstone is represented as a strangely martyred Christ figure, full only of the latter's deathly significance but offering no possible life in compensation. Headstone emphasizes the notion of station in his interview with the Secretary Rokesmith about tutoring Sloppy. The Secretary digresses on the subject of the Hexam family, asking if the sister suffers "'under any stigma because of the impossible accusation . . . that was made against her father'" (378). In response, the headmaster takes the question in a somewhat perversely personal way. "'The sister,'" he responds, "'suffers under no

reproach that repels a man of unimpeachable character, who has made for himself every step of his way in life, from placing her in his own station. I will not say raising her to his own station; I say, placing her in it.'" This aesthetic, like that of inheritance, is one which also has the potential to deface the currency of society: for in imagining himself to have created "every step of his way in life," Headstone erases the social nature and the national character of the kinds of educational schemes, such as the teacher-pupil programs, which reformers had devised to improve the teaching profession in the nineteenth century.

How does one account for this mutual destructiveness—the tendency to deface the social currency—in both Headstone and in Wrayburn? And why does it form a kind of black hole around the character of Lizzie, whom we might say is transected by both of these speeds: the speed of inheritance as well as the speed of earning? One might usefully turn to Charles Van Doren's A History of Knowledge in answering these questions, to be reminded that "until quite recently, most human beings, otherwise much like ourselves, lacked the conception that is so obvious to us of how to earn money. The phrase, 'to earn a living,' would have been incomprehensible to them" (245). Here, Van Doren is speaking of the era with which we are concerned and the problems which the money economy posed for the evolution of English society in the nineteenth century. One might indeed say that part of what is determining the Headstone/Wrayburn/Lizzie dynamic is the new monetary regime implied by industrial capitalism and the kinds of aesthetic and pedagogical commitments which it produces.

This kind of monetary regime has the potential to pit earning against inheritance, and, in the figures of Headstone and Wrayburn, it does just that. Both characters are held

in a kind of extended competition, and while Wrayburn explicitly acknowledges being unable to "'look to the end'" of his pursuit of Lizzie, Headstone is capable of little better. Thus the two pursue one another, at the same time that they pursue Lizzie, Bradley hounding Wrayburn with the conviction that he knows where she is. There can be no doubt, of course, that through all of this, Wrayburn maintains the upper hand. J. Hillis Miller, in <u>Others</u>, has already anatomized what he calls "Headstone's insane jealousy" (56), but he has only hinted at the strangely homoerotic and fratricidal character of this jealousy. When Lizzie answers that she is "'quite decided'" that she will never consider marrying him, Headstone exclaims, "'then I hope I may never kill him!'"—an indication of the extent to which this monetary regime has unleashed a powerful fraternal animosity which is intimately bound up with the more normative hetero-social romantic energies in the text.

Behind all of the fraternal violence, however, rests the will and the patrimony and the failure of this patrimony to restore society and revive it—we might say that, in this novel, one is witnessing the decadence, literally the de-cadence, of a certain kind of monetary regime, keeping in mind that decadence, for all of its aesthetic appeal, also implies a certain kind of social violence or violation. Here, Miller is once again instructive. Miller explains that "energy . . . names an impersonal power in which all the novel's characters participate" (55). Following Northrop Frye, he suggests that "this hidden energy is both destructive and creative, both Thanatos and Eros." Finally, Miller suggests that this energy "provides the drive for behavior on the surface, but that behavior rapidly becomes mechanical and sterile unless there is a periodic reimmersion in anarchic depths." This way of formulating the problem, however, can only be viewed as

a double bind. There seems to be no alternative between an energy that is as much destructive as creative and, on the other hand, a "reimmersion in anarchic depths," symbolized by the frequently deadly Thames, in which Gaffer Hexam, Rogue Riderhood, and Bradley Headstone all drown. One cannot assert that by virtue of casting the text and its reader into a double bind, Miller's theory is any less valid. But, ignoring the patrimony and the fraternal struggle at the center of the novel, Miller has presented the mechanical behavior most commonly associated with Headstone in an incomplete light.

One is tempted to call the kind of desire into which Headstone, Wrayburn, and Lizzie are triangulated as hermaphroditic. At the same time, however, it may be wrong to speak of Lizzie as a desiring subject at all—perhaps this narrative allows only for masculine desire and feminine flight. Riah, himself a surrogate father, tells Lizzie that "'there are times of moral danger when the hardest virtuous resolution to form is flight, and when the most heroic bravery is flight'" (420). This occlusion of Lizzie's desire may ultimately be bound up with the text's precondition as a patronymic—Our Mutual Friend of course referring to the heir to the Harmon fortune, John Harmon himself. Ultimately, the desires of men—fathers, brothers, would-be lovers—smother Lizzie's desire and prevent it from having a chance to be realized or even articulated. If feminine desire is allowable, if it can speak, it is the preserve of the more affluent Bella, rather than the economically disadvantaged Lizzie. For Lizzie, desire only takes the form, at least until near the end of the narrative, of a virtual representation of her own desire. Her flight from London to work by the mills allows her to crystallize her own desire in the form of cherished memories and self-indulgent hope, as she explains to Bella. If she were to go out of hiding, Lizzie tells Bella, "'I should lose some of the best recollections, best

encouragements, and best objects, that I carry through my life. I should lose my belief

that if I had been his equal, and he loved me, I should have tried with all my might to

make him better and happier, as he would have made me'" (514). Her preference for

Wrayburn thus places the narrative into a third kind of chronometer, one full of

subjunctives, hypotheticals, and "would haves," which are necessary to negotiate her

unexpected reconciliation with Wrayburn. By virtue of this chronometer, the novel

registers their union as improbable and difficult, but not impossible.

There is, of course, a kind of sisterly affection between Lizzie and Bella which

obtains as a kind of foil for the competition between Headstone and Wrayburn. But one

can observe that it is masculine competition which most strongly informs the novel's

discourse about education. Wrayburn is highly aware of the conflicts that are in question

in the battle between himself and Headstone. Not long after Lizzie has fled to the

countryside, Headstone begins to follow Wrayburn around the city, hoping to discover

something about Lizzie's new whereabouts. Once Wrayburn becomes aware that he is

being followed, he turns the tables on Headstone by leading him on wild goose chases

that reveal nothing—as, indeed, Wrayburn knows nothing—but which cause Headstone

to undergo "'grinding torments'" (530). On the night when Lightwood accompanies

Wrayburn in this game of pursuit, the latter tells the former that "'the boys of Merry

England will begin to deteriorate in an educational light, if this lasts long. . . . The

schoolmaster can't attend to me and the boys too.'" Thus Wrayburn imagines a new

variation on the oedipal theme, one in which Wrayburn himself is in competition with the

boys of England for the attentions of Bradley Headstone. In the contest between the self-

advancing Headstone and the socially promoted Wrayburn, the child students of Headstone's school soon become unwitting participants.

It is now time to make clear a first hypothesis about the narrative exchange which operates throughout the novel. The stakes, once again, concern literary value. The hypothesis runs thus: that there exists, between the narrator and characters in this text, a kind of credit system whereby, as one sees in the earlier case of Wegg, the text gains—or, more precisely, the narrator gains—at the expense of the character. The narrator is able to construct a discourse about proper aesthetic values by describing and developing characters in particular ways. The discourse, however, must not make an entire mockery of the characters. As serious literature, the novel must construct characters with whom we readers are at least partly sympathetic. Yet by showing us the shortcomings, as well as the achievements, of the characters, the novel will posit itself as <u>the entity which knows</u> the proper delimitations of aesthetic power in mid-nineteenth-century England.

To return to the figure of Bradley Headstone and to what the narrator discloses about him: by the time Wrayburn has made Lightwood aware that the former is being followed by the schoolmaster, Headstone has already, in the eyes of the narrator, made his descent into criminality. The narrator informs the reader that, on the night when the two lawyers go abroad with the intention of tormenting the schoolmaster, "the state of the man was murderous" (532). The narrative goes on to tell us further about a kind of schizophrenic behavior on the part of the schoolmaster, whereby at night be becomes a person entirely different from who he is during the day. The text states that "tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine educational tricks, encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-

tamed wild animal." Once again, the narrator deploys the same rhetorical devices which

construed the rhetorical training of Charley as either too chaotic in the "jumble school" or

too rigid, as in the case of Headstone's instruction. The coincidence of these two tropes

begs the question of whether the discipline isn't invoked by the narrator as a bulwark

against encroaching barbarity, just as wildness is invoked as the failure of discipline.

This trope, of the split personality or split affect, and the fact that it is applied to

one of the novel's central pedagogues is a complicated affair. On the one hand, it implies

an ever greater social division, to the point where the unity of the human person,

Headstone, is no longer tenable. Headstone's fracture seems to be the opposite of the

kind of union which Frye accords to the romantic mode of narrative. Rather than a union

and a reconstitution of society, this text promises the greatest degree of fragmentation, at

least as far as the headmaster is concerned. This marks a narrative desire and project

different from that of Jane Eyre, where the properly trained pedagogue could indeed form

the unit around which the greater romance of the novel would consolidate.

Perhaps one ought to pay close attention to the use of doubles which Dickens

makes in order to complicate the normal sense of romance and social reconstitution of

Our Mutual Friend. Rather than merely focusing on the failure of a love plot between

Headstone and Lizzie, perhaps it is instructive to look at a closely related plotline, that

one whereby Headstone makes a pact with Rogue Riderhood. Headstone, in chapter

eleven of the third book, offers to pay Riderhood in exchange for information about

Wrayburn and Lizzie. But, of course, this agreement, when viewed from a distance, has

more to it than simply a money deal. In a sense, Riderhood has many parallels with

Gaffer Hexam, and could almost be viewed as a substitute father figure for Lizzie:

Riderhood and Gaffer were once business partners, signifying the degree to which the two families represent the same socio-economic class. Headstone, by contrast, at first appears an unusual member of this company, though one mustn't forget that by suggesting he might have succeeded "in a ship's crew," the narrator invites the reader to consider him in the light of what Rogue Riderhood calls himself, namely a "'waterside character'" (145). The close resemblance between the two characters is further emphasized in the narrative description of Headstone in the first chapter of the fourth book. As a bargeman approaches Pleshwater Weir Mill Lock, the narrator informs us, "the bargeman became Bradley Headstone, in rough water-side second-hand clothing" (616). For once, the schoolmaster is comfortable in his clothing, as opposed to the decent clothing which he usually dons. The narrator explains that "whereas, in his own schoolmaster clothes, he usually looked as if they were the clothes of some other man, he now looked, in the clothes of some other man, or men, as if they were his own." Perhaps it is necessary to further inquire about this apparent identity between the two men as well as about the apparent implication concerning the futility of this once pauper-lad in trying to attain the heights of respectability.

Here one must return to Biesta's insight about the creation of modern society: "modern society can ultimately be understood as a (the) rational community" (58). Furthermore, one needs to view the characters and the plot which they develop and which develops around them not merely as entertainment, but as commentary upon the way in which aesthetic and cultural values are organized, or disciplined, in order to create the boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not in modern cultural codes. One is tempted to pose the question once again of Biesta and Bauman's analysis of the

regulatory methods for policing the boundaries of those codes, a process in which the text takes part. Their two terms, the anthropophagic and the anthropoemic, describe two such methods for regulating and, indeed, constructing the stranger to the rational community. Perhaps it does not need to be mentioned that Rogue Riderhood and Bradley Headstone are both strangers in the middle of the text. The anthropophagic method is a means to erasing the difference which the stranger elicits. The anthropoemic, on the other hand, is a means of "'banishing'" the stranger from the ordered universe, of vomiting him forth. By drowning the two characters in the Lock near the conclusion of the work, the narrator ultimately destroys the possibility of the integration into society of either the poor scavenging class or of the more respectable, self-made professional who has benefited from the available state institutions.

Nonetheless, the fact that these two characters suffer a kind of collective or communal death suggests that a reading which would simply abolish the two from the collective imagination of the text must be questioned. This is especially so, given that, as Vincent Newey has remarked in The Scripture of Charles Dickens: Novels of Ideology, Novels of the Self, "Dickens treats Headstone seriously and with respect" (255). The conclusion of the Headstone narrative is, of course, not in marriage to Lizzie, but in a kind of burial-marriage to that other waterside character, Rogue Riderhood, who is an obvious kind of masculine and paternal substitute for Lizzie. These two characters fall prey to that anthropoemic mode in the regulation of modern contemporary codes: they are both spat out, in a sense, into the "ooze and scum behind one of the rotting gates" of the lock. Their discharge suggests a kind of solidarity between the two, symbols of the

larger Victorian society's inability to register the schoolmaster's and the river-man's position and belonging within that society.

Though such a reunion or reformation of the cultural codes must be postponed within this narrative, there seem to be latent signs of its possibility: on the one hand, the place of their death as aquatic would signify a good chance of rebirth. The placement of Riderhood's eyes as "staring upward" seems to be consistent with a Christological reading in which the two figures are either sacrificed or slated for resurrection and/or redemption (783). The "iron ring" with which Bradley "held tight" Riderhood emphasizes their close connection in death. Of course, all of this is very slight and subdued compared with the overall significance placed upon these characters and the roles that they are to play in something like an "acceptable" cultural authority for the text.

The most anthropophagic moment, on the other hand, occurs when Riderhood enters the school and provides an impromptu lesson to the students about rivers and what one finds there. After a moment in which the students stare quietly at Headstone, Riderhood says scornfully, "'I ask your pardon learned governor. . . . It was a bit of fun of mine'" (776). In this statement, Riderhood continues his odd parody of Headstone which he begins by quizzing Headstone's students. In a sense, this scene dramatizes the attainment to the respectable, institutional society on the part of Headstone, as Riderhood easily displaces the former and his lessons with his own quizzing on geography. And this parody further serves the purpose of emphasizing the close connection between the two, one which had been established earlier in the narrative by virtue of their common appearance at the Lock, as well as by their common dislike of Wrayburn. Finally, the two "look at each other," and then "Bradley . . . turned his face to the black board and

slowly wiped his name out." In this act of self-erasure, Headstone underscores the codes of the text which prevent him from being an active, vital participant in the happier romantic plots of the novel. Equally important, he erases his own identity in an act of anthropophagic denial of difference.

Like Wegg, Riderhood becomes a figure for narrative parody. But, whereas the parody of Wegg implied in the narrator qualities of disinterestedness, in Rogue, the parody produces sentiment and contemplation as the desirable cultural values according to which the textual code is to be interpreted. Aware of its textual antecedents which would produce nature as a source of sentiment,[9] the narrator observes of Riderhood's lock that "'the voice of the falling water, like the voices of the sea and wind, was an outer memory to a contemplative listener, but"—and here is the contrast—"not particularly so to Mr. Riderhood" (614). The narrator goes on to make a comparison between an appreciation for the sound of the water and for wine. The way in which this comparison works is somewhat complicated, but it is worth rehearsing. The text resists the kind of biblical transformation between water and wine at work in this narrative which is doing interesting things with the idea of redemption and resurrection, socially and collectively construed. Instead, at this particular textual moment, the wine itself becomes "sentiment," or one might say appreciation. Thus the narrator explains that "wine must be got into a butt by some agency before it can be drawn out: and the wine of sentiment never having been got into Mr. Riderhood by any agency, nothing in nature tapped him." On the one hand, this information seems to be a straightforward invocation of a rough and tumble character who has no appreciation for finer things. He is dry and course, whereas the refined are sufficiently full and lubricated (see, for example, the description

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[9] For an example of this, see Catherine Belsey's chapter on "Expressive Realism" in <u>Critical Practice</u>.

of the Veneering dinners). But the description of Riderhood becomes peculiar to the extent that we realize that the idea of nature drawing out sentiment or producing a kind of jubilant intoxication is a <u>cultural trope</u>, stemming from the pastoral and the rural idyll through the romantics, once again, in whom self-realization is intimately bound up, in Wordsworth, with the description of natural scenarios. Thus Riderhood, by contrast, is constructed, according to, or at least in conversation with, codes which position him simultaneously outside the tradition of learning and, as a result, incapable of sentiment or thoughtful reflection. At the same time, however, the cultural code by virtue of which Riderhood is being constructed, namely, nature as a catalyst to reflection, cannot help but be undone to some extent by virtue of the fact that Riderhood, a shallow, unreflective character, is placed within it.

One might assume, as I have implied, that the counterpoint to Riderhood or to Headstone in the narrative is Wrayburn and his associate and friend, Lawyer Lightwood. One can adduce a number of examples which might strengthen this assertion, the first of which is the contrast between the speech and understanding of Riderhood as opposed to that of the lawyers. As I have already noted, the lawyer Wrayburn is gifted with a certain capability for speech and for imagination, one which allows him to treat names in a free and easy manner and which generally allows him a creative spontaneity in his way of thinking. I highlight these comparisons in order to more fully bring out some of the class-determined aesthetic commitments which the text is forced, and forces us, to negotiate.

One of the most memorable of these, the encounter with "Mr. Dolls" aside, is the passage in which Rogue Riderhood enters the offices of Lightwood and Wrayburn and

asks to "be took down" (144). Throughout this passage, the narrator draws attention not only to the humorous irregularities of Riderhood's speech, but also to his unfamiliarity with the conventions of legal practice, which in turn provides fodder for further displays of arrogance and teasing on the part of the lawyers. When he first arrives at the office, Riderhood insists that he is there on "'tickler business.'" This contraction exemplifies the jovial derision which both the text and the lawyers aim at Riderhood, a derision which employs a kind of comedy based on linguistic limitation. The humorous aspect of Riderhood is, of course, further reinforced by his ironic invocation as an "Honest Man" who earns his living by the sweat of his brow. Riderhood explains that, as he does not want "'to risk being done out of the sweat of my brow,'" he wishes "to be swore in." At this point, Lightwood responds in a colloquial vein, saying "'I am not a swearer in of people, man,'" indicating that he is able to move between idioms, even though the reverse is not true of the vulgar Riderhood. Wrayburn contributes his usual ascerbic wit to the conversation by explaining that Lightwood "'can swear <u>at</u> you . . . as can I. But we can't do more for you.'" In this comment, Wrayburn is all confidence, precision, and insolence at once. To mark the difference between his light and playful mind with that of the murkier Riderhood's, the text relies upon Riderhood's blind faith that writing is the medium of truth and upon Riderhood's inability to correctly articulate the conventions of the legal profession. He refers to an affidavit by muttering "'Alfred David,'" thus underlying his confusion about legal jargon. Finally, Lightwood accepts Wrayburn's suggestion to take up writing utensils, "deferring to the man's [Riderhood's] sense of the binding powers of pen and ink and paper." The import of the derision of Riderhood's faith in written language, however, extends beyond his own particular linguistic

limitations. In this scene, one may argue, the text points to its own awareness about its shortcomings as literal truth—and in fact Riderhood's falsehood, his prevarication, despite being "took down" with pen and ink, seems to support this hypothesis.

But to examine the degree to which the text develops this sense of the failure of written language to communicate literal truth in relation to the character Riderhood—and for what does this stand symbolically? For a literate imagination? For Culture as a whole?—one might trace two further aspects of Riderhood in tandem to what turns out to be yet another curious pairing in the text, that of Riderhood and the Lawyers, especially Wrayburn. The first point of comparison between Riderhood and Wrayburn, besides their different understanding of language and legal language in particular, is the language which describes their respective embodiments of profession. One should be fully aware, at this point, that Wrayburn's professional position is one of idleness, and thus his relation to his profession is nominal at best. He is a debtor in reality, even if his official training allows him to call himself a lawyer. There is a similar ambivalence around Riderhood and his occupation, even though he is of a distinctly different class from Wrayburn—denoted not least of all by his hackneyed language. The text, with Riderhood's complicity, further identifies Riderhood simply as "an honest man" who earns his living by the sweat of his brow. But in this instance, the qualifier serves much to the same purpose as Eugene's mentions of "'the absorbing nature of my profession,'"—namely, it is an ironic gesture which evades the literal professional identity of the character in question (528). If it's undoubtedly the case that Riderhood is not "an honest man," one may also observe that, by giving his occupation as a kind of "'character,'" Riderhood is tacitly supporting a gentlemanly assumption about identity

and work, a discourse which he ultimately shares with Wrayburn. This discourse maintains a great deal of discretion concerning vocation, allowing for a considerable gap between description and substance. The aesthetic choice which underlies this discretion, whether one chooses to call it evasive or cynical, could also be explained by reference to class. The deployment of professional titles which are only nominally descriptive could be derivative of upper class or genteel hegemony, but in Riderhood's case, it functions as an object of parody which nonetheless ultimately reinforces that hegemony.

Where Riderhood and Wrayburn differ, as I have already implied, is in their consciousness and their reflectiveness. We have already seen the degree to which Riderhood and Headstone lack the reflectiveness which the public school gentleman Wrayburn possesses, albeit problematically. This sense of reflectiveness, itself finally an example of authenticity, becomes especially pronounced towards the end of the text, replete with its descriptions of water imagery. What I want to suggest, in concluding my analysis of this narrative, is that the water and nature imagery towards the end of the text helps construct a narrative discourse, once again, about the literary values according to which the text asks to be read. Ultimately, the text elaborates a stance of equivocation regarding Wrayburn's aristocratic authenticity. On the one hand, authenticity seems to represent a desirable quality, one consistent with notions of independence and self-consciousness. At the same time, it can represent a threat to a society more or less strongly controlled by normative constraints.

As Wrayburn walks along the riverbank after his interview with Lizzie in the mill-town where she works, his thoughts begin to mirror the dynamics of nature: "the rippling of the river seemed to cause a correspondent stir in his uneasy reflections" (680).

The river and the stream of Wrayburn's thoughts are both "tending one way with a strong current." Though there is an obvious contrast here between Wrayburn and Riderhood or Headstone, the latter of whom is described by the narrator as "a man of rapid passions and sluggish intelligence" (533), the text does not privilege Wrayburn in an uncomplicated way, either. Like the image of the moon in water, his thoughts "started, unbidden, from the rest, and revealed their wickedness." The aquatic dimensions of the scenery sets up an interesting calculus whereby depths, integrity, forces, and caprice are all interrogated and weighed by the text in its attempt to negotiate the problem of authenticity.

One can already see the degree to which reflectiveness is problematized in the text. On the one hand, one might expect the water as reflectiveness and Wrayburn to form a dyad which is opposed to either Headstone or Riderhood. At the same time, one might then expect the text to embrace this pairing as part of its own inclusion in the filial line of texts which runs through the romantic idiom of nature as a source of conscious self-expression. But, if we are to return to Lauren Goodlad's reading of Wrayburn, we will be reminded about the limitations of such an interpretation. One of the problems is that Wrayburn's reflectiveness doesn't encourage him to behave honorably: he understands the wrongfulness of his predisposition to turn Lizzie into his mistress, but this insight isn't enough to make him do the right thing. As Goodlad points out, although "Dickens endows him with a psychological depth and moral potential, . . . Dickens's support for Wrayburn's character is profoundly ambivalent, a 'riddle without an answer'" (181). The contradiction inheres in that while the narrator endows the more refined Wrayburn with a degree of reflectiveness, this reflectiveness isn't enough to overcome

the social antagonisms which shape the text. As Goodlad explains, Wrayburn and Headstone are ineluctably caught up in "relentless oppositions" whose upshot is "always their foundation in class" (183). Ultimately, for Goodlad, "Dickens's underlying resistance to the myth of the public school gentleman ends by impressing itself directly on the body of Eugene Wrayburn" (186).

But, of course, there is an important lesson to be learned from Wrayburn's fate, which points to a specific transformation of aesthetic ideals. For it cannot be doubted that there is a certain textual pleasure taken in the assault on the public-school gentleman Wrayburn. The injury of Wrayburn, of course, also involves a kind of catharsis and, in this respect, the novel mixes the tragic genre with the romantic one implied in his ultimate union with Lizzie. What is in question in this relationship and in the way it is enabled by Headstone's attack on Wrayburn is, once again, a set of aesthetic values and the class moorings to which they are attached. As Wrayburn himself acknowledges, he is really in no position to actually marry his love, Lizzie. As a representative of patrician culture, his relation to a woman from a waterside character could hardly be one of equality. And, as Lizzie acknowledges, this puts her in danger; thus she reminds him of "'the distance and the difference between us'" (675). The problem which the narrative poses is how to affect a union between these two characters in a way that still allows for Lizzie to maintain her feminine virtue. In this respect the narrative develops according to a dynamic of resentment, that emotional charge which Nietzsche elaborated so well in the Genealogy of Morals. The sense of this analysis, briefly put, is that resentment is the feeling of the lower classes towards the higher classes, a feeling of powerlessness and enmity. This resentment (ressentiment is Nietzsche's word) evinces itself from a point of

view that is simultaneously Lizzie's and the narrator's. After Lizzie and Wrayburn have their evening encounter near the waterway by the Paper Mill, the narrative follows and evaluates Wrayburn's reflections on his own problematic situation regarding Lizzie. His "thoughts . . . revealed their wickedness" and his "conclusion" concerning his reminiscences is "feckless." That is why there is a sense of catharsis in his physical abuse—the sight and description of this suffering paragon of society allows the purgation of resentment towards him. This catharsis simply reveals the nature of the social antagonisms which the text must navigate. Once he is punished, <u>then</u> he can be accepted within the matrix of demotic values which the book celebrates.

The textual articulation implied in Wrayburn's injury and the textual denouemnet, then, embraces a new ideal of a "democratic gentleman." This is most succinctly stated in the final dinner party of the society which forms around the Veneerings. Throughout the novel, this group has been lampooned by the narrative as pretentious and shallow, trading on artifice and surfaces rather than that other aesthetic value of authenticity. The fact that Dickens could construct such a group, equate it so forcibly with society at large, and yet undermine it in his depictions deserves more thought than it has yet been afforded. The full effect of this group is to provide a kind of anonymous, indifferent, yet self-congratulatory coloring to a faction of society which seems to serve in some senses as a metonymy for English society at large. In the final meeting of this group in the novel, the marriage of Lizzie and Wrayburn comes up for discussion. When Podsnap, who is accustomed to dismissing anything that "might bring a blush" to the cheek of his daughter, attempts to end the conversation about the "'horrid female waterman,'" the meek Twemlow defends this marriage as a matter of the feelings of a gentleman.

Famously, Twemlow remarks that "'when I use the world gentleman, I use it in the sense in which the degree may be attained by any man.'" Thus the whimsy and caprice which Wrayburn has exhibited all during the novel are reclaimed, in his redemption, as positive values. These values are part of a new conception of the gentleman, a conception which, theoretically at least, is open to anyone, rather than being the special province of those educated at the public school.

This ending, as one which embraces a new universal, democratic ideal, cannot simultaneously altogether denounce the programs of pauper youth training or the trials and challenges faced by the pauper. Of course, Headstone falls apart completely in the course of the novel and eventually dies in a fight with Riderhood. But he is only one of two characters in the novel who follow the path of the pauper turned headmaster, the other one being, of course, Charley Hexam. It is the latter, who, perhaps better than anyone in the novel, has "correctly" learned the game of upward social mobility. Certainly, Charley has been read as a type of self-centered egotism. Newey remarks that "blind to any but his own interests, he sees everyone, beneath or above, solely as instruments of his betterment or as hindrances to it" (249). But this is not entirely true; one could suggest that his attempt to match his sister with his schoolmaster makes a certain practical sense, even if it is highly unromantic. It might not be entirely altruistic, but it's not entirely self-serving, either. Whatever the merits of that particular suggestion, towards the end of the novel, Charley tells Headstone that he "'will become respectable,'" and this seems accurate. He has learned what Headstone did not: namely a resigned submission to his proper place and sphere, with the acknowledgement that there exist for talented youth proper avenues for advancement. This more conservative

and dispassionate attitude is an important practical complement to the tact, whimsy, and reflectiveness of the democratic-gentleman ideal of authenticity. In the next section, I will examine a third plot line, that of Bella Wilfer, which is perhaps the novel's most idealized response to the new "discipline of money."

The Bella Wilfer Narrative: Learning the Property Script

The Bella Wilfer narrative continues, or extends, the negotiation of social aspiration and value in nineteenth-century English literature. In this sense, it's possible to understand the book as the kind of novel Robert Colby called "an instrument of learning." This particular novel negotiates contradictions concerning the legitimate uses and attitudes towards money in relation to marriage and domestic life. In order to examine this negotiation, one needs to be attuned to the way in which texts think generally. The proposition that texts think at all may be somewhat startling, so for guidance in this arena I once again enlist Stathis Gourgouris's Does Literature Think?. There are two main points which I take from this Gourgouris in explaining how texts think: the first has to do with what he calls the "object of knowledge," which "each text posits . . . by means of its form, its horizon of possibility (the explicit or implicit positions taken up within its social-historical range), and the conditions under which it is read" (11). Though "literature has no a priori cognitive object," Gourgouris maintains that literature can be said to know, or at least to think, and that reading is essential to this process, because "the text's internal existence (its singularity) comprises the various moments and contexts of its performance, in which reading is, of course, fundamental." The second aspect of Gourgouris's theory which I will also want to keep in mind as I examine the Bella

narrative is that which defines a notion of subject effects. Gourgouris writes that "insofar as the text speaks (has something to say, in ordinary language), it enables the reader-subject to have a sense of his/her position or to have a sense of his/her effect in a wider historical domain: the particular subject effect that creates the differential experience of individual location in a specific social-historical frame" (12).

Of course, Gourgouris's hypothesis about the nature of "reading" and literary "knowledge" is more general than mine as it is meant to cover more ground. Accordingly, I must refine his ideas and elaborate how they fit and work within an interpretation of Our Mutual Friend. What I wish to bring attention to is the fact that character inevitably inflects our own understanding of our "reader-subject" position, which is the primary focus of Gourgouris's theory. That is to say, when one traces out the influences of the text, whatever else one might say about them, one must insist that the characters, as well as the reader, respond to those influences, thus creating a field of multiple forces, whose ultimate limits it is not my present project to define. For the moment, it is enough to have highlighted the fact that reading is a process that is as immanent to the text, with all of its relationships between narrative, description, character, etc., as it is to the empirical experience of the reader. This process furthermore entails the production of that "object of knowledge" to which Gourgouris refers as well as the thought of which it is an object. But I would like to think of this thought and this object not as necessarily rigorously falsifiable constructions, like a syllogistic deduction. Instead, I prefer to think of them as full of affects, dramatizations, and attempts to become adequate to the concept. Thinking in this respect is not like Shakespeare's

schoolboy who can easily spin off the ages of man; instead, it is comprised of mistakes, half-measures and uncertainties.

Obviously, at the core of the "object of knowledge" of <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> lies the patrimony, the inheritance, which drives the narrative and the textual desire of the novel and which stands as a representative of private property. It is this object which the novel "thinks" first and foremost. Bella's father, R. W., indicates the contradictory and rather anonymous appearance of private property in a family conversation early in the novel. Bella asks her father, "'when old Mr. Harmon made such a fool of me . . . what do you suppose he did it for?" (41). Her father, indicating the mysterious appeal of property in the narrative, replies, "I doubt if I ever exchanged a hundred words with the old gentleman. If it was his whim to surprise us, his whim succeeded. For he certainly did it."

Of course, the loss of opportunity to wed the heir to the Harmon fortune produces its own set of difficulties, which in themselves are highly ambiguous. And these are the types of ambiguities which, I would argue, are constitutive of the type of thinking that literature performs—one might suggest that one way of contemplating literary thought is as a series of attitudes towards its object. Again, that object, in the Bella plotline, is the inheritance and the private wealth for which it stands symbolically. As Bella explains regarding the inheritance of the property and the loss of that opportunity, "'there never was such a hard case!'" (36). At the same time, Bella reminds us that the proposition itself is quite "'ridiculous. It was ridiculous enough to have a stranger coming over to marry me, whether he liked it or not. . . . It was ridiculous to know I shouldn't like him— how <u>could</u> I like him, left to him in a will, like a dozen of spoons, with everything cut and

dried beforehand, like dried orange chips.'" One can, with this passage, begin to observe the contradictory discourse and attitudes which the text is to articulate around the will. As Bella here observes, the will is dehumanizing, turning her into a mere object that can be traded as if she were material wealth itself. In this sense, she is forced into a kind of identity with the object world. Yet despite the possibility of this deprivation, Bella is by no means immune to the usual enthusiasm for vast wealth. Thus, while she deplores the insults of her own "hard case," she simultaneously claims that "I love money, and want money—want it dreadfully" and "I hate to be poor, and we are degradingly poor, offensively poor, miserably poor, beastly poor." What these apparently coherent statements about money simultaneously indicate is an ambivalence about social aspiration and value, one which is inextricably intertwined with the narrative about the Wilfers as a family. Thus, the novel thinks the question of private property from the point of view of the family and domestic relationships, which context seems to justify the regime of private property itself. Rather than providing a rounded reflection, which would admit that wealth and poverty are twin sides of the same coin, the novel elaborates the various affects appropriate to and derivative of the regime of private property from the point of view of the family, and particularly the lower middle-class family.

In the course of this elaboration, the text develops a number of attitudes and postures vis-à-vis the will and the conditions which it was to place upon Bella, including the accession to a large amount of property. These attitudes include dejection, embarrassment, avarice, compunction, remorse, and elation. All of these are attempts on the part of the narrative to negotiate the text of property. But we must examine more closely the aesthetics which this text articulates around the object of the will and private

property. What kinds of aesthetic commitments, in other words, does this text make in negotiating the arrival of a new regime of money, one which says goodbye to hoarding and to the dustbins of accumulation in order to formulate a new role for money which has the family as one of its nuclei?

Chapter nine of the first book, "Mr. and Mrs. Boffin in Consultation," finds Mrs. Boffin in search of that elusive yet ever-present figure in the book, society: "'Now, I'll tell you what I want, Noddy,' said Mrs. Boffin, smoothing her dress with an air of immense enjoyment, 'I want society.'" Mr. Boffin asks if it is "'Fashionable Society,'" in particular, that she wants, and she answers with an emphatic "'Yes!'" (96). All of this stems from the fact that, as Mr. Boffin explains, "'we have come into a great fortune, and we must do what's right by our fortune; we must act up to it.'" Already, one can see that money in this plotline is treated in a manner which renders it anthropological, something that must be done right by. Furthermore, the text seems to be establishing a problematic which it will then develop over the ensuing pages—namely, what is the relationship between this large fortune and society? Is society comprised only of the very fortunate, or is it larger than that? No doubt, with the inclusion of the Wilfers, who rent their house, in the Boffin circle, the text suggests a larger social sympathy.

The first set of affects which the Bella plot articulates around this problem of wealth, society, and the family, are comprised of stubborn independence mixed equally with embarrassment. Bella conjectures that "'when the Harmon murder was all over town, and people were speculating on its being suicide, I dare say those impudent wretches at the clubs and places made jokes about the miserable creature's having preferred a watery grave to me. It's likely enough they took such liberties'" (37). By

being associated with the inheritance, Bella has become an object for speculation, a kind

of publicly traded good, or at least so she imagines. Of course, the luxury which she

believes the inheritance would have bestowed stands in stark contrast to the conditions in

which the family presently finds itself. The conditions of the Wilfer family are described

by the mother as "'conscious though independent poverty'" (105). This statement is

consistent with the generally proud bearing of Mrs. Wilfer, though it also carries with it

some of the ineluctably argumentative cast of the family as a whole. Indeed, throughout

the first interview with the Boffins, Mrs. Wilfer begins most of her statements by saying

"'pardon me,'" indicating all at once attitudes of propriety, independence, and

argumentativeness. Nonetheless, Bella accepts the Boffin's invitation to join their

establishment, though, in doing so, the mother, at least, retains a modicum of self-respect

by insisting that "'when . . . Bella accepts an invitation, she considers herself to be

conferring qui-i-ite as much honour . . . as she receives'" (107). Though there is

undoubtedly some truth to the observation that Bella has been singled out for special

treatment by the narrative because of her beauty, there is also a sense in Mrs. Wilfer's

assertion of defensiveness that she cannot quite escape the awkwardness implied in

accepting what she calls the Boffin's attempt at "'patronizing'" the young Bella.

　　Nonetheless, the Boffin's patronage is crucial to the development of the Bella

plotline. By virtue of the Boffin's patronage, Bella's prospects become enlarged, as the

Boffins promise that they will settle some of their wealth upon her, especially in the form

of a marriage dowry. Their patronage sets the stage for the development of the romantic

plot between Rokesmith and Bella, with the Boffins imagined as surrogate parents for the

latter. It also allows for the indulgence of a utopian wish which does away with all of the

scarcity and depravity of private accumulation and which allows Bella, a member of the renting class, to luxuriate in material abundance. This advance in the Bella plot further positions Bella in such a way that the text can ask about the comparative social value of wealth and where it stands in the scale of human society. By forming a "society" around the figure of Bella, the Boffins denote themselves and their circle a double for that other circle, the Veneering circle, the former symbolizing long-standing family ties and a union between the servant class, the lower classes, and mercantile property, while the latter symbolize the nouveau riche and speculative finance capital. Naturally, the text dramatizes a kind of competition between these two versions of society, pitting mercantile against finance capitalism.

Part of the problem which the patronage poses is that of social aspiration and the possibility, at least, of social advancement and what they mean for competing ideas about social station. One might recall, as a moment in counterpoint, Charley Hexam's speech to Bradley Headstone, when he insists he will remain "'strictly respectable in the scale of society'" (694). As a young man, he implies that steady work and dignified, lawful behavior will naturally lead to improved prospects. As a woman, Bella's position is more ambiguous. Her dilemma seems to ask to what degree it is consistent with honor, in her era, to accept patronage, an ancient form of social bonding. As a potentially coalescent figure, Bella becomes a catalyst for shaping the identities of those characters who share her society. Of course, it is well to remember that, as the Bella narrative progresses, it ultimately serves the purposes of, in Donald Hall's words, "fixing" the identity, not only of the class-ambiguous Boffin, but, more emphatically, the younger John Harmon, whose

identity has already been radically altered to that of John Rokesmith in the course of the novel (3).

Hall's larger thesis, about the threat of non-conforming or weird women, women who do not conform to the norms of middle-class, heterosexual, domesticated women, however, must be modified to indicate the degree to which even such "normative" women can provide a kind of threat to masculine property relations, to the degree that they refuse or even entertain the idea of refusing those relations. In other words, it seems, on the one hand, that Bella, of all the female characters in the novel (consider Jenny Wren's parental bearing or Betty Higden's fierce independence), is the least likely to rebel against patriarchal property relations and the inheritance of the Harmon estate. Yet, in some sense, her normativity puts the whole equation into greater danger; for, if she ultimately does reject the class standing of John Harmon, for example, she will upset a delicate balance which allows her femininity to become somehow "representative" in the novel. If Bella's investment in reproductive, heterosexual normativity were retracted, then that normativity would be significantly undone by the narrative; on the other hand— and this is a larger point about fiction which Hall mentions briefly and which says something about its subversive quality in general—there must be some threat, and this threat must be allegorical, or else there can be no psychological investment in the narrative on the part of the reader. That is, as literary theorists have shown from time immemorial, plots rely on crises for their effects, crises to which an audience can in some way relate. These crises can be existential, more or less "social," structural, etc.—the range of crises upon which fiction can rely is perhaps infinite, but it is part of what makes narrative fiction readable.

In <u>Our Mutual Friend</u>, however, what is in question is the degree to which Bella herself, and we along with her, though perhaps in slightly different ways, will learn to read the script of private property. For, as I have already indicated, without that script enlisting her affect, stoking it up, calling it forth and finally eliciting its support, patriarchal capitalism would be a less seductive trope within the novel. Thus the novel puts into question a whole series of attitudes, commitments, and desires around the questions of gender and capital. In this interrogation, it becomes paramount that Bella invests into the script of private property, providing it with a properly feminine alibi. At the same time, the balance of rewards and incentives entails that Bella undergo a conversion—that she learns "acceptable" attitudes regarding wealth, though she is arguably deprived, in many ways, of social agency and the independence which her mother insists is her "'natural abode.'"

The Bella narrative is ultimately a romance, and this entails the renegotiation and consolidation of social strata and social values. To reiterate, the Bella narrative involves a solidarity between the lower classes (Bella herself), the servant class (the Boffins), and mercantile capital (John Harmon). In keeping with this aspect of the narrative, the aesthetic which it articulates, rather than being informed by the "independent Poverty" associated with Betty Higden and the Wilfer family at an earlier stage, is instead concerned with the lines of communication between the several classes and the distinction between humans and property which can be speculated in. Thus Bella asks Rokesmith, in response to his first marriage proposal, "'was it not enough that I should have been willed away, like a horse, or a dog, or a bird; but must you too begin to dispose of me in your mind, and speculate in me, as soon as I had ceased to be the talk and the

laugh of the town? Am I forever to be made the property of strangers?'" (367). Here the

text is resurrecting that theme which is central to it, the question of the role of strangers,

of intimacy, and of mutual familiarity in the arrangements of property. The novel and

Bella, as its most representative character, seem to ask whether familial relations are

enough to insure the continuation of humane values in the era of capitalism. At the same

time, the novel does emphatically question the comparative worth of wealth and human

decency. This is the work which the "pious fraud" (752) performs and to which I will

now turn in concluding my analysis of the Bella narrative.

The pious fraud is that through which John Harmon puts Bella. The pious fraud

also transforms or, to use more religious language, converts Bella, and shows that she is

indeed the "'true golden gold'" (753). The pious fraud is that whole plot which the

Boffins and John Harmon employ in order to test Bella and "'prove'" her real worth, or,

in other words, to authenticate it. In the disclosure of the pious fraud, Mrs. Boffin reveals

that this proof is based upon Bella's ability to "'stand up for you [John] when you was

slighted, . . . to show herself a generous mind when you was oppressed, . . . to be truest to

you when you were poorest and friendliest, and all this against her own seeming

interest'" (754). In this speech, Mrs. Boffin is once again articulating, both for the reader

and for the text, a set of values which is consistent with the idea of disinterestedness as a

form of self-denial which is simultaneously generous, sympathetic, and authentic. And it

is the possibility of the continuation of these values within a market system that

seemingly pervades all the facets of social life which the text interrogates. Obviously, the

fact that the novel ends by rewarding Bella with all of the Harmon wealth and the

luxurious home, replete with an aviary and a nursery, complicates the notion of

disinterestedness which it articulates at that earlier moment of Bella's self-renunciation in favor of common decency. But earlier in the pious fraud, Bella articulates a position that is truly utopian, embodying what must be a noble virtue that seems entirely discordant with most of the possible social positions which the novel offers.

That earlier moment—the crisis of the pious fraud, as it were—comes when Mr. Bofin relieves Rokesmith/Harmon from his post of secretary on the grounds that he made the ill-advised attempt at courting Bella mentioned above. Mr. Boffin, upon dismissing Mr. Rokesmith, informs the latter that he has "'heard of these doings of yours . . . from a lady with as good a headpiece as the best, and she knows this young lady, and I know this young lady, and we all three know that it's Money she makes a stand for—money, money, money—and that you and your affections are a Lie, sir!'" (581). At this point in the narrative, Bella finally renounces Mr. Boffin and the greedy attitude towards money which he represents: she asserts that "'as a man of property you are a Demon!,'" and she insists that she "'won't have money.' Keep it away from me,'" she continues, "'and only let me speak to good little Pa, and lay my head upon his shoulder and tell him all my griefs.'" She has thus rejected the patronage of the Boffins and accepted the reality of her own familial and somewhat poor origins. In Robert Higbie's words, "Bella rejects materialism by rejecting the 'bad' Boffin, replacing the materialist ideal she has tried to believe in with an unselfish one that exists in imagination" (151).

The phrase "in imagination" is essential here, because it speaks to the way in which the text imagines certain ideals, certain values, and certain aesthetics, and enlists and entertains them in ways that are often contradictory. I have indicated that the pronouncements about the text which might follow from the pious fraud and the

statements that it allows Bella to make are in some conflict with the actual conclusion of

the novel, which rewards Bella's unswerving faith in her husband with luxurious wealth.

How, in other words, does one reconcile Bella's renunciation of the "materialist ideal"

with the emphatic return of that ideal in the novel's closing pages? In this case, perhaps

no reconciliation is possible, and perhaps it is instructive to recall Adorno's words about

the problematic relationship between representation and social reality when he wrote that

"art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as

autonomous art" (Aesthetic Theory 225). Similarly, Bella's lesson is that humanity isn't

finally reducible to the wealthy alone, incapable as this lesson is, even in its own terms,

of transcending property relations.

Conclusion

If one is to think about the learning and exchange which occur in the novel in

conversation with the economy which structures its narratives, it is essential to keep in

mind the deep divide which this economy dictates, a divide between reproductive and

productive space. The scholar Catherine Waters has drawn attention to this dynamic

within the context of both Marxian critique and the novel Our Mutual Friend. In her

book, Dickens and the Politics of the Family, she notes that "by apparently grounding

other forms of difference in a binary organization of sex, the novel seeks to manage the

social conflicts associated with the capitalist system" (176). This, of course, is consistent

with the thought of Engels, which, according to Waters, stipulates that "capitalism

involves a split between the realms of production and reproduction, work and home, in

the organization of society." All of this takes on something of a pedagogical air when

one takes into consideration that the goal of Dickens's narrative seems to be, in part, the appropriate training of feminine desire vis-à-vis the capitalist order, such that heroines are disciplined to perform their gender in a way that not only genders the very space of that performance but makes class stratifications quite apparent in the process.

To articulate the specifics of the cases, one need only look, to begin, at the change in fortunes which Lizzie undergoes and the kind of performance which that change allows, in terms of her becoming able to exercise her feminine vocation. At the beginning of her narrative Lizzie works the river with her father, scavenging for debris either from wrecks or from the dumping of refuse. In effect, the family at this point exercises a kind of direct consumption of the excreta of capitalism in a way that transgresses the ideals of capitalism, as elaborated by Waters, in a number of ways. On the one hand, the Hexam home is furnished with findings from the river, rather than with commodities bought in the commercial market. Thus Gaffer reminds Lizzie that "the very basket that you slept in, the tide washed ashore. The very rockers that I put it upon to make a cradle of it, I cut out of a piece of wood that drifted from some ship or another" (4). On the other hand, Lizzie's class status means that she is apprenticed as a child to her father's trade, rather than going through the elaborate courting mechanisms of a middle-class child such as Georgiana Podsnap. The class situation which prevents Lizzie from performing the middle-class ideal of femininity at this point in the narrative is undoubtedly part of the reason that Lady Tippins refers to her as a "'female waterman'" at the end of the novel (796).

Lady Tippins's remark captures perfectly not just the double standard regarding the differences between class-conceived notions of gender, but also the way in which

gendered difference itself is constituted by class. In this sense, gender in many ways

comes to stand in for class in the novel, and the possibility which femininity implies is

very much created through class structures. Thus, to take the other heroine, Bella, a large

part of the anxiety which surrounds her narrative is whether she will be able to perform

all of the acts of consumption that will mark her as both feminine and middle-class. Even

the fifty pounds which she bestows upon her father is given over to sartorial purchases

which help to establish a gendered identity. Once he is appropriately dressed, he is

equipped to "'take this lovely woman out to dinner'" (308). In the capitalist society, it is

not just, as Engels had it, that there are two separate spheres, one a masculine site of

production and one a feminized site of reproduction, although that is certainly a helpful

insight into understanding what was going on—and to a large extent, what is still going

on—in industrialized and capitalistic societies. Simultaneously, however, we can see the

degree to which consumerism and class restraints help to inform the construction and

performance of gender. As Waters has pointed out, the construction of middle-class

gender has, in large part, to do with this very separation that I have been discussing, such

that Lizzie moves from a house furnished with found items to one which will be

furnished with items purchases with Eugene's money. Similarly, Bella moves from a

house in which the family is forced to take on a lodger because of "'embarrassed

circumstances,'" to one in which, though economic transactions still might take place,

they are of a character consistent with purchasing and command of labor, rather than

selling. By the delineation of such plotlines, the narrative produces subject effects that

are invested in the fortunes of private property.

But what is disagreeable about the "message" of the novel is the way it enacts disclosure, thereby placing the genuine over artifice. In this sense, the Bella narrative is much the same as Wegg's—the latter, we will remember, aside from being relieved of his position for attempting to blackmail the Boffins, is also parodied by the narrator for his poor attempts at impersonating the true literary man. In this parodying, as well as in the pious fraud which is carried out on Bella, the narrative insists on the value of authenticity at the same time that it displays the need to "disclose" the contents of the plot constituted by the pious fraud. This interpretation is consistent with Mr. Boffin's insistence that Bella has come through the fraud as "'the true golden gold'" (754). Towards the end of the book, Bella takes over the narrative of the pious fraud, and it is no coincidence, in my opinion, that Bella's conclusion of the narrative of the pious fraud is nearly coterminous with the end of the novel itself—in some senses, then, it is tempting to read the pious fraud as a metaphor for the larger narrative. This is especially so if we consider the way in which the narrative seeks to inerpellate feminine desire, calling into being and investing it into the workings of a class-inflected social life. "'Oh, I understand you now, sir!' cried Bella. 'I want neither you nor anyone else to tell me the rest of the story. I can tell it to you, now, if you would like to hear it'" (756). At this point, Bella has made the script of private property her own, even going so far as to speak "the rest of the story" in her own voice. It is not enough, therefore, that she should be subjected to the trial of the pious fraud, which in itself is a lesson about the contradictory nature of monetary and human relations, but she must furthermore endorse and propound its cardinal—and utopian—virtues of generosity and authenticity.

In the case of Lizzie, the lower-class girl from a family of waterside characters, the narrative seems to pose the question in a different way. If she herself cannot obtain quite to the level of Bella's luxury, her narrative responds to the question of who is the appropriate person to discipline her desire in a somewhat ambiguous way (Riah is the most obvious candidate; Wrayburn or the narrator the less obvious ones). Nonetheless, the overall trajectory of my argument has been to assert that the celebration of the incontinence and excreta of capitalism which some critics have either suggested or asserted is problematized, as much in Lizzie's narrative as in Bella's, by a process whereby feminine desire within the context of a capitalist social world is very closely disciplined. In Lizzie's case, the question develops according to a logic of fraternal competition between Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone. Waters has drawn attention to the "sexual innuendo [which] underlies Eugene's taunting inquiry [to the schoolmaster]" when the former asks the latter, "'are you her schoolmaster as well as her brother's?—Or perhaps you would like to be?'" Thus the disciplining of feminine desire, in Lizzie, is carried out, in part, in the context of a rivalry between Bradley Headstone, with origins in the pauper class, and Wrayburn, a gentleman educated at public school. This plotline, towards the end of the novel, enacts the troubling spectacle in which the Schoolmaster Headstone violently attacks the genteel Wrayburn. For Goodlad, the physical violence which Headstone inflicts upon Wrayburn indicates that the two "merge symbolically into one and the same damaged body" (186). But the injury which the headmaster inflicts upon Wrayburn then licenses the creation of a feminized domestic arrangement between Lizzie and Wrayburn. This consummating domestic arrangement in turn envisages the formation of a normative family now on the favorable side of

commodity excretion. The novel sanctions this arrangement by legitimating specific

positions within the social exchange of commodities. To this extent, the reformed public-

school boy, the redeemed scavenger girl, and the narrative voice itself unite in the

affirmation of authenticity, a value ultimately as social as it is literary.

CHAPTER IV

The Moment of <u>Alice</u>: Rules and Gentlemanly Learning in the Late Victorian Period

Writing about Alice's responses to the questions and suggestions of the denizens of the Looking-Glass World and Wonderland, William Empson asserts that "she always seems to raise the tone of the company she enters, and to find this all the easier because the creatures are so rude to her. A central idea here is that the perfect lady can gain all the advantages of contempt without soiling herself by expressing or even feeling it" (In Bloom, 59).

When one compares this statement with the one by Florence Becker Lennon that the "protean Alice . . . is of course Dodgson himself" (31), one arrives at a perplexing question. Namely, was Dodgson so obsessed with the image of maiden girlhood because it allowed him, through some act of transference, a narcissistic fantasy about his own purity? Of course, we've known at least since Foucault that questions about the psychological life of an author are less than sincere critical pursuits, but here we must acknowledge that the question isn't simply personal. If, after all, there is a case for looking at Dodgson's particular artistic impulses, it may be because they have something special to tell us about the Victorian discourse of learning.

I have already commented in a previous chapter about the response Charlotte Brontë had to a piece written by Harriet Taylor about the admission of females into the professions. Brontë voiced a sentiment which is not unfamiliar to scholars of the Victorian period: she raised the fear, in a rather <u>ad hominem</u> way, that the author of the

piece was in danger of herself becoming, if she were not already, too masculine. In other words, there was, as the quotation demonstrated, a particular worry in the Victorian context that the division between the sexes must be kept in check. Surprisingly, this necessity hinged upon the loss that a compromised Victorian femininity would bring with it, less than on the loss of masculine privilege. Of course, the loss of masculine distinction always hovered in the background—without the Angel in the House, the man would have no shelter from the brutal world—but the gender divide was first and foremost thought to operate in the favor of women. This may be due in large part to the fact that nearly all officially sanctioned thought was carried out by men, with true freethinkers such as Harriet Taylor being quite rare. Thus the curious status of Lewis Carroll's two famous children's stories: set in a fantasy land seemingly far removed from the school, Alice's adventures are nonetheless imbued with its aura. For it is common knowledge that the books' main character was based upon a don's daughter and that they have served to teach generations of children and adults what is expected of each.

Richard Wallace, in The Agony of Lewis Carroll, rehearses some of the privations suffered by boys, especially smaller boys like Dodgson, at England's schools. Besides the merely pugilistic forms of bullying, sexual humiliation was likely common. Quoting from H. Montgomery Hyde's The Love that Dared not Speak its Name, Wallace recounts the practices of homosexual sex among the students, as well as the practice of calling one's younger lover a "'bitch,'" not to mention the widespread practice of feminizing good-looking boys with epithets such as Molly or Jenny (134). According to Wallace, Thomas Hughes's Tom Brown's Schooldays is similarly, though obliquely, referring to sexual activities when he writes of the "noble friendships between big and little boys."

Wallace writes that "Hughes can only be pointing to sexual activities, most likely youthful homosexual activities among boys of similar age or pederasty when younger boys were coerced or enticed into sexual activities by the older boys. In modern terms, many of the boys were raped." Informing this sadistic environment was the ever-present irony that "while the forgiveness of sin was promised in the chapel, small academic errors would produce corporal punishment severe enough to draw blood."

According to Wallace, this contradiction between vicious violence and the gentlemanly character it was meant to produce unsurprisingly led to a kind of personality split in Dodgson. In effect, Dodgson was required to respond to two different kinds of pressure during his youth (what we might refer to as his formative period): on the one hand, his parents' and siblings' image of him as sensitive and perhaps even angelic, and, on the other, his schoolmates' and headmasters' thoughtless practical joking and punishments (though the evidence suggests that the latter consisted only of "impositions" in Dodgson's case). In effect, what was expected of Dodgson was the same that was expected of most English schoolboys: that they attempt to maintain the appearance of social maturity while being subject to a number of psychological and physical cruelties. What was exceptional about Dodgson, according to Wallace, is the way in which he undid, or threatened to undo, that hard division between the polite gentleman and the victim of cruelty. The medium in which he did this was, of course, his literary works.

One of the most prevalent methods by which he communicated such messages was the anagram. Like the more familiar acrostic, the anagram involves an unconventional method of reading. The anagram is more difficult to identify and to decipher, however, because it is not dictated by pattern in the same way—the relevant

letters can be recombined in almost any number of ways, provided that they are all used. Wallace references two examples which clearly indicate that Dodgson was fond of, or at least familiar with, acrostics. The first concerns Edward Vaughan Kenealy, "a later disbarred defense counsel." The anagram at which Dodgson arrived was "'Ah! We dread an ugly knave!' which uses all the letters and keeps the sense of the story behind the name in reflecting some dubious behavior leading to disbarment" (20). The second reference is to William Ewart Gladstone, the famous parliamentarian: "Wilt tear down all images," "Wild agitator! Means well," and "A wild man will go at trees," were the anagrams in this case. Since these are in fact anagrams that Dobson recorded, there can be little dispute about Dodgson-Carroll's fascination with and recognition of the form. Still, one is perhaps skeptical when Wallace, going on a hunch about Dodgson's real or imagined homosexual proclivities, reworks the line "Then the bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometimes" from "The Hunting of the Snark" into "To Mother: Disturbed, I themed the worst pig sex with men" (33).

Wallace himself is aware of the merits of skepticism towards his own hypotheses about Carroll's writing. In the first chapter of his book, he asks "When is evidence not evidence? . . . Is it possible to live a public charade for a lifetime without being detected?" (4). Nonetheless, he constructs a system of rules for identifying and interpreting anagrams in Dodson's works: all letters must be used from the original selection, only complete sentences or grammatical units could be used, the usages "must reflect Victorian or earlier usage" (the "themed" above would have been valid at the time), and, finally, "a 'best' anagram must be sought in each situation, one that appears to tie into his life or works. It's hard, if not impossible, to rule out the presence of the

anagrams which Wallace believes he detects: indeed, part of the problem with anagrams

is that it's impossible to determine when they're accidental and when they're intentional.

As I mentioned earlier, Wallace gives some evidence for Dodgson's interest in anagrams

(his interest in puzzles is irrefutable). There is also evidence that he did use them in his

works: the sister "Lacie" who eats treacle at the bottom of the well is an anagram for

Alice, and Bruno's wandering eyes read "live" as "evil." Furthermore, in a diary entry

which records the desire to use anagrams in a pandemic fashion, Dodgson reveals that he

"wrote to [C. S.] Calvery, suggesting an idea (which occurred to me yesterday) of

guessing well-known poems as acrostics, and making a collection of them to hoax the

public" (Collingwood 152). In some ways, this entry accords with Wallaces thesis about

Dodgson's anagrams: namely, that they were a way to take in the public, as it were. But

for Wallace, the motivations behind this trickery were not simply to play a hoax, they

were, instead, "constructs for hiding self disclosure along with explicit (primarily)

homosexual erotic imagery" (7).

     If this were indeed Dodgson's purpose, he couldn't have chosen a better medium:

as the anagram could always be discounted as coincidence, he could indulge the thrill of

self-disclosure without taking on much of the risk. In other words, he could disclose as

much as he wanted without ever really having to worry about discovery. Still, one is

somewhat unconvinced of Wallace's contention that the purpose of this form of

disclosure was to lead "a secret battle against hypocrisy." One of the anagrams which he

detects in <u>In the Looking Glass</u> defies his own rule about the relevance to Dodgson's

biography. In that story, as Alice is travelling in the train, a railway guard pokes his head

into the car and says "You're travelling the wrong way." When we read that the railway

guard's words change to "wary nag whore: evil rotten guy," we're left rather puzzled by

what the import of this anagram might be. Even if the "nag whore" is Alice and the

"rotten guy" is one of the passengers on the other side of the car (the scene is illustrated),

one still wonders what Dodgson's intention could have been in providing this anagram.

It doesn't seem to correspond to anything specific about Dodgson. Wallace writes that it

is "one of a number of anagrams which just produce imagery," though it's not clear it

does that either. Rather than disclosing anything about Dodgson's person, this anagram,

if that's what it is, is simply indulging in vulgar or abusive language for its own sake.

It's daunting to think about all the meanings that may be hiding underneath the

straight content of Dodgson's works. And, as the example above illustrates, it isn't

always edifying to do so. Furthermore, it's not clear to me that it makes a great deal of

difference, in terms of understanding the anagrams, whether Dodgson was a homosexual.

For obvious reasons, Dodgson was prevented from developing anything like an effective

attack on the homophobic mores of the general cultural, and whatever assaults he might

have managed by using anagrams were going to be undermined, not aided, by their

covertness. They may have allowed him to articulate self-disgust, but such articulations

were in any event unlikely to forward a mature homosexual or homoerotic consciousness.

And there are other problems with the anagram thesis: one is that, as the concrete

recorded examples show, anagrams were usually something which Dodgson thought of

after reflection upon a name, not necessarily something which he arranged prior to

composition. If the anagrams which Wallace detects were in fact intentional, then the

larger theory about a kind of lingering schizophrenia should probably be revised: if there

is some insight into Dodgson's personality from the anagrams, one would wonder why he

was so squeamish about irreverent treatment of biblical topics in conversation, or the maltreatment of characters in plays. Though a certain degree of propriety was expected of Oxford dons, Dodgson was known for being abstemious even by those standards. To posit a Dodgson who was simultaneously secretly enamored of smut is to test the limits of performance theory.

The implication of Wallace's approach is that the Alice stories themselves are overtly benign, and the only way to arrive at any subversive messages within the Dodgson's works is via an appeal to the acrostics or other word puzzles. From this point of view, one almost wishes for a sinister meaning to dispel the childhood myth of innocence. But there is much that challenges or potentially disturbs within the explicit content of the tales as well. At this level of content there is an obvious emphasis placed upon play and games, aside from the more psychedelic transformations in Alice's size. And, as Kathleen Blake has pointed out in <u>Play, Games, and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll</u>, play and games form a productive entry point for thinking about Carroll's works because the rules of social convention which are central to games, after all, are important as well for language, play, work, and civilization in general (Blake 15). Blake writes that "to [Johan] Huizinga, to the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and, as I have suggested, to Carroll too, language itself is a gamelike system of reciprocally accepted terms and rules, arbitrary, meaningful only by social agreement" (16). It would seem, then, that Blake's approach to the study of games in Carroll's works is more productive than Wallace's precisely because it opens onto questions of larger social realities, including, of course, learning.

As I have just suggested, rules are an important component of both games and play (anyone who takes Kathleen Blake seriously on this topic will refrain from writing "mere" play). Yet there is a difference between the two. One of the passages which helps us to understand the difference between play <u>per se</u> and game is the third chapter of <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u>, "A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale." Alice and a group of animals having just escaped from her pool of tears, "the first question of course was, how to get dry again" (35). After the Mouse's method of telling a dry tale is tried and found wanting, the Dodo (often taken to be a representative of Dodgson himself) suggests a caucus-race as the "best way to get us dry" (37). The caucus-race is structured just enough to qualify as a kind of game—it involves running around a course shaped "in a sort of circle." But the rules are so lax that it is still basically simple play: "There was no 'one, two, three, and away!' but they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over." The end of the game is abrupt, signaled by the Dodo announcing "'The race is over!'" (38). And all the participants are left in confusion as to who has won.

And this tells something about the difference between pure play and games: play and games may both involve rules—and even the injunction to run in a circle is a kind of rule. Indeed, one may also play a game, and thus games usually involve a degree of play or playing. But serious games, while inclusive of both play and rules, tend more towards competition than does play <u>per se</u>. In most games, there is a definite winner and a definite loser, while in play, though there may be definite roles, the distinction is not so clear. Thus games raise the sensation of the participants of either winning or losing, and one takes a more definite risk in playing a competitive game. Thus, the amorphousness

of simple play can be either reassuring or a bit of a letdown. This no doubt accounts for Alice's reaction when the Dodo announces that "'<u>Everybody</u> has won, and <u>all</u> must have prizes.'" After Alice has emptied her pockets to award all the runners, including herself, the narrator remarks that "Alice thought the whole thing very absurd." This reaction is elicited not only because she has been compelled to award herself but because the line between play and game has been erased—there is no real competition, but all of the participants are treated as winners, as if it had been a serious game.

Games themselves play a peculiar role in Dodgson's works. Usually, as in chess, checkers, or the Victorian shuttlecock, games presume a kind of equality of opportunity between the players. The only factors which can influence the outcome of the game are the players' own level of skill, or luck, where elements of chance, such as dice, are involved. And, since the dynamics of a game—it's rules, structure, etc.—are so limited and arbitrary, the results of the game frequently don't tell us anything important about the players except for their relative level of skill. But in Dodgson, games frequently have an element of cruelty and one-sidedness to them. The classic example of this, of course, is the Queen of Hearts and the Croquet Game. The Queen compels everyone in the vicinity to play the game, and that is likely because she knows that she will win. This foregone conclusion, in turn, contributes to the confusion which abounds in the play of the game. After talking with the Cheshire Cat, "Alice thought she might go back and see how the game was going on, as she heard the Queen's voice in the distance, screaming with passion. . . . and she did not like the look of things at all, as the game was in such confusion she never knew whether it was her turn or not'" (93). The Queen's repeated

threat of "Off with his head!" adds both to the general mayhem and the sadistic character of the scene.

Indeed, on reading this passage one is reminded of the game mentioned in Dodgson's letter of 5 August 1844 from Richmond School. In this letter, the boys "proposed to play at 'King of the Cobblers' and asked me if I would be king, to which I agreed." From what follows, one can see the way in which a game can function as an initiatory prank: "they made me sit down and sat (on the ground) in a circle round me, and told me to say 'Go to work' which I said, and they immediately began kicking me and knocking me on all sides" (in Wallace 136). Like the Queen's Croquet game, this is a game that favors certain players at the expense of others. The King of the Cobblers, though, is in fact harsher: it represents a game where the very <u>fun</u> is in the humiliation of the unwitting newcomer.

Another kind of game which populates the <u>Alice</u> stories is the word game. Frequently, the word games consist of simple puns on homonyms or words that have more than one meaning. In the chapter "A Mad Tea Party," this latter device is used a number of times: "draw" shifts meaning from rendering artistically to gathering liquid; well from a noun to an adverb; and beat from counting time to abusing. At other times, the word game—or is it word play?—focuses on the irregularities of language itself, such as the expletive "it," which functions merely as a placeholder. As the Mouse attempts to dry the group with its story, it begins a clause by saying that "'the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury found it advisable—.'" The Duck interrupts, asking, "found <u>what</u>?" Of course, there can be no answer to this question, because the function of the expletive is precisely to hold a grammatical position that has no semiotic content. Despite this, the

Duck replies to the Mouse's answer that it knows "'what 'it' means'" by saying, "I know what 'it' means well enough, when I find a thing'" (36). In Through the Looking Glass, Carroll experiments with the reverse arrangement, proposing structures that play upon semiotic conventions while defying grammar. The chapter on "Looking-Glass Insects" imagines a number of creatures with names that are like portmanteaus: the "Rocking-horse-fly," the "Snap-dragon-fly," and the "Bread-and-butter-fly." I say "like portmanteaus," because, while they exhibit the trait of combining words, they don't combine by shortening, but by the extension of phrases. This method tests the limits of grammatical combination by drawing on the particular capability of nouns to sometimes operate as adjectives: the "horse" in "horse-fly," by virtue of modifying "fly," displays the properties of an adjective. In "Rocking-horse-fly," however, it is asked to be both a descriptor of "fly" and the noun which "rocking" describes. Here Carroll is imagining a kind of unstable grammar, where specific elements subsist in two distinct relationships and therefore exhibit two distinct properties, which seems to support Deleuze's argument, via the Stoics, about dual existence, though Deleuze makes the argument in the context of matter rather than of grammatical relationships. The names of the looking-glass insects are, in this respect, more challenging even than the language of the more familiar "Jabberwocky," which, as critics have noted, maintains the grammatical, if not the semiotic, conventions of English. Now that we have surveyed some of the kinds of games and play in the stories, it is possible to move to a discussion of their consequences for subjectivity and learning in the Victorian period.

Like the grammar of the "Looking-Glass Insects," the identity of the Alice character is divided. We learn from William Empson that one of the textual precursors of

the Alice narratives is the pastoral. The version of pastoral which the Alice stories embody, though, constitutes a child's story only because of its historical contingency: in relying upon a historical form which must be greatly at odds with the nineteenth-century reality of the birth of industrialization and the modern proletariat, the return to rural and monarchic scenes and characters helps create that sense of dislocation which is so central to the effects of the stories.

Perhaps most obvious among the literary antecedents to <u>Through the Looking Glass</u> is William Wordsworth's poem of 1802, "Resolution and Independence." This poem describes an encounter between the speaker and a leech-gatherer. But, even prior to the appearance of the leech-gatherer, one can detect similarities between this poem and Carroll's works. In the second stanza of "Resolution and Independence," the narrative voice explains that "All things that love the sun are out of doors," a line which speaks to the ambivalent stance of the Alice stories towards interiors. Though domestic interiors are invoked in both of the Alice stories, they function as bookends, and, what's more, spaces that are to be escaped. This indicates one of several aspects in which the narratives are subversive—the rejection of modern technological society is signaled by a rejection of the middle-class domestic spaces which are its alibi. Then there is the sixteenth line: "I saw the hare that raced about with joy." This passage prefigures the appearance of the White Rabbit, but it also insists on a certain ambivalence whereby the "joy" can be read as either describing the rabbit's racing about or the speaker's seeing. This ambivalence helps to construct the child-speaker in a manner consistent with the Alice stories—the child is equated with the happy innocence of the animals from fables and fairy tales.

One could point out, as Leon Waldoff has, that the speaker in "Resolution and Independence" is not unambiguously young, though I would suggest that, interesting as the hypothesis about the split self of the speaker is, the poem stages a tension around youth's emerging self awareness regarding its own impermanence. The comparison which the speaker performs between himself and the hare ("Even such a happy Child of the earth am I"), the invocation of Chatterton, "the marvelous Boy," and the contrast between the speaker and "the <u>old</u> Man" (emphasis added) all speak to a reading which specifically dramatizes the dilemmas of youth.

Yet the textual reference to Wordsworth reminds us that, if only obliquely, the Alice narratives also engage in Deleuze's "pure becoming." This becoming, if I read him correctly, would unite all attributes, or "incorporels" into a stratum of pure indifference. Young and old, before and after, large and small: all are conjoined in this dimension which suspends chronology entirely. Waldoff contends that, regarding the representation of self in "Resolution and Independence," there is "a special complication in that self-representation lies in the imaginative act of splitting the self" (79). And he goes on to taxonomize the various splits within the self imagined in the poem: there is the split effected by "time" (represented in "early self and the later"); that effected by "vision and reality" (the first idealizing the Leech-gatherer, the second recognizing him "as an old man"); and finally, by the distance between "subject and object" (the self which contemplates the experience versus the one which actually "encountered the Leech-gatherer"). We may add to this the split in affect between the joy felt in nature's company and the sadness felt in contemplating the eventuality of old age. This, in fact, seems to be the motivating dramatization behind the poem: the youthful speaker is

contemplating the eventual arrival of old age and rebukes itself with a thoroughly protestant or even puritanical maxim, asking rhetorically "But how can He expect that others should / Build for him, sow for him, and at his call / Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?" (ll. 40-42).

Yet this way of examining the self, useful as it is in helping us understand the contours which might shape it, seems to be taken by surprise by the very fact of the self's division. But the self would seem to be always already divided, not to mention dynamic and occluded. Thus in some ways, the Alice narratives tell us more about the self than does Wordsworth's poem. On the one hand, one might argue, again with Waldoff, that "Resolution and Independence" functions by way of a movement between states, namely from "a state of relative innocence" to "a state of greater awareness and reflectiveness," after the encounter with the leech-gatherer. As the youth finds solace in the old man, saying "I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor" (l. 140), the poem seems to celebrate an essential continuity of human experience. The speaker has found "so firm a mind" within "that decrepit Man," and thus posits the man as possessing that which the youthful speaker had lacked earlier in the poem, namely steadiness. Thus, earlier in the poem, the speaker is still one of the "Poets in our youth." Indeed, tracing the fluctuating moods of the poet ("As high as we have mounted in delight / In our dejection do we sink as low" (ll. 24-25) is one of the devices the poem uses to portray the potential instability of youth.

The Leech-gatherer's "firm . . . mind," of course, provides the antidote to such mental and emotional volatility. The choice of the word "firm" is superb: it at once denotes the stability which the youthful speaker lacks while simultaneously implying a

congenital freshness which has never died out. In an odd sort of way, it answers all of the

difficulties which the speaker poses: it suggests, like the Alice stories, that, in some

important respects, youth does not necessarily fade, while simultaneously providing a

model for the youth to emulate in his own old age. But it is in this regard that the Alice

stories reveal more about youthful selfhood. For in Wordsworth's hands, the self

becomes a continuity through repetition: we are to assume that, like the Leech-gatherer,

the poet will remain persistent to the end and "pace / About the weary moors continually /

Wandering about alone and silently" (ll. 129-131). Of course, this is a metaphor in the

case of the poet, but we can infer from the tone of the concluding stanza and the title of

the poem that the commitment to industrious independence is the real moral of the lyric.

Nonetheless, in a sense, the youthful self is simply an unformed, deficient version of the

older, grown self, and is subsumed within it.

The Alice narratives, and the poem "A-Sitting on a Gate" in particular, stage a

different relationship between older and younger selves. This is especially evident in the

way the poem stages the representation of the old man's occupation. At first, the

treatment of the occupation—or, more precisely, occupations in the Carroll poem, is quite

similar to that of the Leech-gatherer in Wordsworth's verse. In neither poem is the

occupation of the old man really significant in its own right. In "Resolution and

Independence," it's not the fact that he gathers leeches which matters, but the persistence

which makes him "pace about the weary moors continually"—the weariness of the moors

adding to the difficulties which the constant Leech-gatherer must surmount (l. 129-130).

Similarly, the symbolic import of his occupation lies in the independence which makes

him able to endure "wandering about alone and silently."

In "A-Sitting on a Gate," too, the poetic voice dramatizes a more youthful speaker who finds it difficult to subdue his own thoughts in order to absorb the words of the older man. Having asked "'Who are you, aged man . . . / And how is it you live,'" the speaker of the poem finds that "his answer trickled through my head, like water through a sieve." This is strong parody of Wordsworth's lines "But now his voice to me was like a stream / scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide." But at the core, the suggestion is the same: the speaker's youth is betrayed by a self-absorption which impedes comprehension.

The difference occurs in the moment when awareness returns: for Wordsworth's speaker, this return allows him "to find / in that decrepit Man so firm a mind." In the Carroll poem, though, the return of attentiveness has an entirely different connotation: "I thanked him for telling me / The way he got his wealth, / But chiefly for his wish that he / Might drink my noble health" (Stanza eight). Because the focus becomes the speaker's own "noble health," the old man's occupation has been drained of all symbolic association. Simultaneously, the old man has been deprived of the status of mentor which he held in "Resolution and Independence."

This failure—or lack—of mentorship in Carroll's poem could be read as a somewhat disrespectful gesture towards the figure of old age, and there is a bit of disrespect, or even aggression, towards the old man, such as when the speaker "thumped him on the head." However, one wonders about the function of this aggression within the larger context of the romanticizing of old age in the tradition represented by Wordsworth's poem. For instance, depending upon the degree to which one agrees to read the Carroll poem as in conversation with Wordsworth's, the aggressive treatment in

the former may be also be read as a clue to a more latent, and hence more insidious, form of symbolic violence in Wordsworth's poem, as well as to changing ideas about the elderly. For instance, there is a kind of officiousness in the way the speaker of Wordsworth's poem accosts the Leech-gatherer with "'What occupation do you there pursue? / This is a lonesome place for one like you'" (ll. 88-89). In this line, assumed familiarity is exacerbated by the speaker's drawing attention to the Leech-gatherer's age with the innuendo "'one like you.'" As if this were not enough, the speaker fails to follow closely the Leech-gatherer's response, adding inattentiveness to the rudeness of asking personal questions of strangers. When the speaker at last repeats his earlier question, it may be nearly as impolite as thumping the old man on the head.

In a rather systematic way, Carroll's poem and its context are undoing the romanticisms upon which the mentorship relationship is constructed in "Resolution and Independence." Not least of all the techniques used to undo this construction is the White Knight's repeated assurance to Alice that, like all the other apparatuses which he travels with, the song is his "'own invention'" (244). This insistence on the part of the White Knight, easily detected as false by Alice, reveals the way in which independence can be fetishized, as perhaps it is in Wordsworth's poem. Without really knowing that much about the Leech-gatherer, the speaker in "Resolution and Independence" rather nonchalantly turns this person with whom he has had a chance encounter into a kind of idol. This idolization of the Leech-gatherer's firmness of mind and solitary independence relieves the speaker of seriously contemplating the more lonely or even dreary aspects of his existence.

Furthermore, Carroll's poem, while mocking the sentiments involved in romanticizing old age, also draws attention to the role class or wealth can play in that romanticizing. The virtue of the Leech-gatherer and, by association, the speaker who emulates him is parodied in Carroll's poem by the repeated representation of the old man's earnings in abysmal terms. The "honest maintenance" of Wordsworth's Leech-gatherer is thus transmogrified into sums that are really a mere pittance: "twopence-halfpenny" in the fourth and "a copper halfpenny" in the sixth stanza of Carroll's poem. This description of the old man's earnings has, once again, a curious rhetorical effect. On the one hand, it concretizes for the reader the amount that the old man earns by putting it into explicitly quantifiable terms. But by making the quantity explicit, it also draws further attention to how Wordsworth's poem perhaps romanticizes the old man. Whereas the innuendo "an honest maintenance" might mask the fact of the old man's poverty, the revelation of the exact amount of money which he earns draws attention to his meager financial situation. This revelation then in turns makes it more difficult to indulge in the kind of mystifying representation which typifies Wordsworth's speaker.

This bleary-eyed romanticizing is finally and totally undone in "A-Sitting On A Gate" by the closing lines of the poem. Here the poem shifts from the dialogue between the White Knight and the "aged man" which characterizes the poem up to the middle of the ninth stanza. At the middle of the ninth stanza, the poem shifts instead into a sustained description of the man, a description which wavers between the maudlin ("Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow") and the ridiculous ("Who snorted like a buffalo"). Not least among the elements which add to the comic treatment of the old man is the shift in meter from iambic heptameter—vague enough in its connotations of

decorum—to the trotting iambic tetrameter, the rhythm of which can scarcely fail to be humorous.

One might—indeed, one should—ask what importance this way of representing the aged man has for our understanding of the child, especially as a subject of learning. The effect of this comedy, entirely consistent with that of the poem overall, is to inscribe a solid difference between the more youthful speaker and, even more strongly, the phlegmatic Alice, on the one hand, and the comic, sentimentalized "aged man" on the other. By undoing the romanticized virtue of the old man, one puts into question the status of the aged as that which is to be casually reproduced by the child. We can see the effort to accomplish this reformulation early in the poem as well, in the way the words of the old man are treated by the speaker. Though, like Wordsworth's speaker, the speaker in "A-Sitting On A Gate" fails to attend carefully to the old man, thinking of such things as "a way / To feed oneself on batter, / And so go on from day to day / Getting a little fatter," the poem actually quotes the words of the older man rather than relying upon indirect discourse to convey the man's speech.

Carroll's poem, in other words, by using a perspective much less given to surmise, creates a sharper contrast between the speaker and the aged man. On the one hand, this rhetorical move is consistent with the Victorian tendency to, in Laura C. Berry's words, maintain "the child as child." It also exemplifies what Jackie Wullschläger describes as "a dawning sense of childhood as a special state, as not just a period of training for adulthood but a stage of life in its own right" (12). At the same time, it shows the distance traveled from the seventeenth and eighteenth century privileging of an amorphous category of youth (like that of "Resolution and

Independence") to that more irreducibly distinct and specific category of age, the child. Wordsworth is not able to imagine the "child as child"—bracketing, for the moment, the possibility that he is not concerned specifically with the child at all—because he romanticizes the encounter and the harmony between old age and youth. Ironically, he is in some ways anticipating the views of the later mid-Victorians, such as Herbert Spencer, who came to forcefully imagine childhood as a determining factor in the shaping of adulthood. But Wordsworth does not yet evince the defining Victorian tendency to see the child as a unique self.

The Victorian conceit of the uniqueness of the child, however, poses its own set of problems when it comes to the question learning. As Wordsworth's poem suggests, one might have, at an earlier time, expected a relationship of inspirational influence to obtain between age and its precursor, youth. This relationship must be troubled to the extent that, with Carroll, the uniqueness of the child implies a discontinuity of subjectivity and affect between youth and age. In other words, it seems the Alice stories defy what Jan B. Gordon identifies as the "predominant structure of the nineteenth-century novel": "something like the Cinderella myth" (19). Though "domestication within a veritable mansion of mirrors [in Through the Looking-Glass] is the consequence of the search for meaning and identity," Carroll's narratives imagine a feminine subjectivity that is able to refuse domestication because it also apparently refuses the inevitability of adulthood.

In this respect, however, Carroll exemplifies a contradiction in the nineteenth-century conception of childhood: namely, the belief that children, while being a unique class of individuals, were also equivalent to humanity itself. This insistence on the child

as the symbol for all that is essentially human relied very much upon the accompanying

belief in "the importance of play to children" (Elizabeth Sewell 27). In a letter to May

Forshall, Dodgson had queried, "Do you ever play at games? Or is your idea of life

'breakfast, lessons, dinner, lessons, tea, lessons, bed, lessons, breakfast, lessons,' and so

on? It is a very neat plan of life and almost as interesting as being a sewing machine or a

coffee grinder" (in Blake, 11). Typical of Dodgson's nonsense poetics, he suggests that

May would be able to pursue her lessons after having gone to bed and before waking up

in the morning, undermining the seriousness of intention which is implied by study. His

question furthermore emphasizes the changing way in which children were conceived by

the Victorians. No longer was it enough to study as a means of preparing for adulthood:

in order to realize its full humanity, the child must now "play at games." Should the

child neglect to do this, it runs the risk of losing both its humanity and its individuality by

becoming the spiritual equivalent of "a coffee grinder."

One wonders what to make of Dodgson's reliance upon games rather than lessons

as the activity essential to childhood, especially in the context of a remark such as that by

Berry that, in the Victorian period, the child becomes "the repository for certain valued

and post-Enlightenment traits such as innocence, liberty, and naturalness" (16). Of

course, my focus in previous chapters has been on childhood figures who in many ways

do not conform to this assertion: Teufelsdröckh is a bit too much the fire-brand, and

Charley Hexam too much the self-starter to fit comfortably within the paradigm of

innocent and natural Victorian children. Perhaps Jane Eyre is the closest to this

stereotype: her self-righteousness could at a pinch be described as innocent and inspired

by a love for a kind of liberty. What really sets the Alice books apart from these earlier

works, however, is their failure to in any way represent Alice as being determined within the confines of an educational institution or, in other words, a school. The Hinterschlags, the boarding schools, the pauper schools have disappeared in Alice's dreamworld, being replaced by the fantastic settings of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land.

The shift from lessons to games in Carroll's imaginative construction of the child, then, is accompanied by a simultaneous shift of setting away from the school and towards a fairyland environment, one which ironically complements a social transformation in England which saw the formation of a consensus about the universal need for schools. One must also point out a further shift which complicates an understanding of the kinds of aesthetic gestures to which <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u> and <u>Through the Looking-Glass</u> are committed: unlike the earlier texts which I examined, the Alice books invite the attention of children readers, while still attempting to maintain their own status as a variety of serious literature. Compared with books like <u>Jane Eyre</u>, the Alice stories involve a double movement of reader and representation: no longer is the child offered only to adult eyes and minds as those repositories of innocence or liberty. Now that construct is offered to children as well, as if to offer to them a representation of their own prefigured image. The books do more, however: by suggesting that the stories be read by or with parents, the texts insinuate their idealized version of childhood into the conversations and discussions between children and adults. From this point, children will be strongly indoctrinated in their own idealization, and this idealization will no longer function merely as a repository of value to be admired by adults. But this only makes it stranger that Carroll's renderings of children would avoid the school entirely, especially

in the face of an increasing participation on the part of the state in family life in the forms of welfare and education.

In order to address these problems even somewhat satisfactorily it is necessary to consider the role which gender plays in Carroll's construction of childhood innocence—and it may be the case that innocence in the Victorian context is bound up with notions of the corrosive influence of the state. In an era when female students were not yet admitted to Oxford, what does it mean that Carroll imagines Alice in such a way that, though her mental powers are continually tested, she is never the subject of formal instruction <u>per se</u>? And why is it that just at the moment when childhood and humanity are defined by their engagement in games and play, play takes on such an excruciatingly difficult and oftentimes futile visage? Dodgson was, after all, known for sometimes making children cry with his attempts to get them to understand his games and puzzles.

On the one hand, it's obvious that the <u>Alice</u> stories are quite bereft of overtly political content: the fairytale settings and animal characters which crowd the books seem to speak of a world unstained by calculations of social advantage or political gain. At the same time, however, it's possible to imagine that very refusal of the political and social as itself somewhat indicative of a certain kind of utopian wish around the contingencies of the production and institution of childhood. Childhood, of course, is never uninformed by class and other distinctions. More importantly, there are important ways in which the representation of Alice squares with a certain Victorian and specifically Arnoldian notion of the best self, the self that remains "when the merely social is cut away," to use Catherin Gallagher's paraphrase of Arnold in her book <u>The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction</u>.

Gallagher has provided a convincing argument about the development of a set of interrelated ideas around the state, politics, and culture in the late Victorian period, especially in the influential writings of Matthew Arnold. Most students of the Victorian era will certainly be familiar with Arnold's "touchstone" theory of culture, whereby culture represents the best that has been thought and said. The political implications of this idea are more obscure. Arnold's claim about the failure or the danger of modern politics is that it tends simply to replicate the already existent social world: aristocrats vote and legislate according to their selfish interests, as do the middle and working classes. The expansion of franchise, therefore, aside from addressing the problem of fairness, simply admits more individuals into a process which encourages self-promotion. The problem, as he and James Mill both saw, is that politics doesn't promote legislation in the interests of the nation, but in the interests of the particular individual self. In order to develop a self that can promote the interests of the nation, we need to simultaneously develop a best-self, not just an individual self. That best self, of course, is the self that is represented in and through culture. This equation immediately posits that culture is part of a national political project of ameliorating self-interest in the name of the common good. The common political good, in other words, is precisely that culture which is both the best that has been thought and said, and the least inclined towards self-interest and the promotion of that interest. Furthermore, the best self is simultaneously the self that is most universal and least particular. This universality then nourishes a "harmony" that is the ultimate ideal, whether in politics or culture.

Thus the connection between the prevailing cultural and political theory of late nineteenth-century Britain and Dodgson's own peculiar aesthetic commitments.

Dodgson's games provided a kind of Archimedean space in the social world of the late Victorian period, imagining a kind of controlled contest between players who might be as different as an Oxford don and an eight year old girl but whose differences were less important in the context of a game of chess. As Elizabeth Sewell writes in <u>The Field of Nonsense</u>, games "demand enclosure, limitation, and rules," a set of restraints which the middle and upper classes were keen to impose in the era of the Hyde Park riots. Games allowed for interaction without demanding social transparency on the parts of the participants, and this arrangement must have been congenial to the capitalist and land-owning classes during the industrial revolution. It's often easier to take people's money and order them about under the protection of anonymity, and this is what the ruling orders of Britain frequently strove for in the nineteenth century, as the legacy of Bentham suggests.

In a sense, then, there is continuity between the game and the "disinterested reason" which Gallagher explains became one of the leading imperatives of late Victorian cultural politics. In this reading, Dodgson's work might at first be thought to fit within the same frame as the cultural and political theorizing of a Matthew Arnold or a John Stuart Mill, both of whom believed in the importance of learning and culture in the realm of politics, though in slightly different ways. For Arnold, culture was to be the training proper to preparation for political participation: once one had grasped the lessons of culture, one could safely contribute to the governorship of the nation. Mill took this a step further by imagining a political system that allowed for plural representation among the learned, admission to such status being procured by education, examination, or simultaneous pursuit of specific professions.

Furthermore, Dodgson may not have depicted explicitly political content (though this changes slightly with Sylvia and Bruno), but this would have been in step with the cultural politics of the late Victorian era. This politics precisely sought to de-emphasize its grounding in specific class antagonisms, such as the desire of middle-class reformers to control the movement and mingling of working-class bodies, by imagining culture as the arena in which the individual self is defaced in favor of something more broadly human. So the depiction of Alice, for example, in a dream world far removed from political and material contingencies, absorbed in games, such as croquet and chess, determined by more or less universal rules rather than personal idiosyncrasies, would, in this light, be very much consistent with the cultural norms of the period.

All of this would follow were it not for two glaring facts: first of all, the insistence on the feminine personhood of Alice and, secondly, the consistent breaking down of the rules which supposedly govern the functioning and life of Wonderland. I have already indicated some of the paradoxes around Alice as a female child in the Victorian period—especially the tension between the idea that the child, and perhaps especially the female child becomes, in the Victorian period, a highly unique individual but also an individual which represents universal humanity. This is a contradiction which Dodgson once again reiterates in the preface to Bruno and Sylvia. There, Dogson writes of "those hours of innocent merriment which are the very life of childhood," thus distinguishing childhood from the work which constitutes mechanical adulthood (280). Yet those "hours of merriment," Dodgson writes, are "not wholly out of harmony with the graver cadences of life," the continuity of youth with age emphasizing the former's universality.

Several scholars, such as Alexander Taylor and Gilles Deleuze,[10] have discovered the keys to the problems which Alice faces in Wonderland, allowing the reader to understand the conditions which must be applied in order to solve them, or at least some of them, such as the inversion of d/t=s (where t is time, d is distance, and s is speed) in Looking-glass Land. Of course, in Looking-glass Land, everything appears as in a mirror, so that speed is the equivalent of time divided by distance, and, hence, the faster one goes, the less distance one travels. To give another example, one might mention the disparity between words and meaning, what Deleuze describes as an inability to "to say at the same time something and its meaning" (35), which explains the confusion around the difference between what the White Knight's song is called, what its name is, and what it really is. As a final example, though there are many more, one might adduce the bipartite nature of matter, such that it is both "five times as warm, and five times as cold" (255) in Looking-glass Land.

Perhaps more disturbing than the failure of normal rules is the realization that some rules are personal and idiosyncratic. Rather than marking a universalist, Archimedean space to be filled with more or less identical subjects, some rules define and require subjective alterity. Obviously, the rules are not the same for Alice as they are for the Queen. Indeed, the rules dictate that the Queen decide who will be beheaded, who will play croquet and who will be punished by her court. The rules also stipulate that everyone else must abide by the dictates of the Queen. This is, naturally, a far step from Arnold's idea of the "best self," whereby "we are united, impersonal, at harmony" (Culture and Anarchy, 73). Instead, Dodgson has imagined a set of rules that imply

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[10] Taylor's text is The White Knight: A Study of C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll); Deleuze's is The Logic of Sense.

antagonism and rigid identity. Along with the repeated frustration of conventional rules, then, Dodgson imagines rules which are strictly determined by specific subjectivities and identities.

It is not surprising, therefore, that one finds in Dodgson a kind of cultural and intellectual commitment that is apparently at odds with Arnold and Mill's. On the one hand, it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to suggest that Dodgson shared with Arnold a notion of what Gallagher describes as the "independence of a realm of representation" which "justified artificiality per se" (264). This independence, in Gallagher's argument, ultimately undid the strong commitment of English fiction and writing to social criticism. Though I haven't addressed this strain forthrightly in the present study, focusing as I have on learning and cultural power, one can view it in such works as Dickens's Hard Times or Carlyle's Past and Present. With the advent of a move toward an aesthetic unmoored from strictly social determinants, the argument goes, the critical force of the Condition of England Question also subsided. Of course, one would not expect every work of literature to address this question anyway, but Dodgson's Alice books are about as far away from it as can be, at least on the surface.

Nonetheless, in reading Dodgson, one doesn't really get the sense that he entirely shares Arnold's strictures about the role of culture vis-à-vis the individual and the state. One might say that Dodgson doesn't share Arnold's sense of historicity, or to put it slightly differently, one might say that he doesn't share Arnold's sense of the importance of the past. This is an aspect of Arnold's argument in Culture and Anarchy which Gallagher does not trouble much to attend to, though it very much forms one of the main components of his discussion of culture. If culture is to take us out of our "ordinary

selves" (<u>Culture and Anarchy</u> 78), it is first and foremost through the historical forms of

establishment institutions, such as "a Church which is <u>historical</u> as the State itself is

<u>historical</u>, and whose order, ceremonies, and monuments reach . . . far beyond any fancies

and devisings of ours" (11, emphasis added). This, ultimately, is the core of Arnold's

argument, which derives so much of its formative material from religious metaphors.

The imperative for the English to subside in their Hebraizing in order to Hellenize is a

call to de-emphasize individual—that is to say, presentist—ad-hoc attempts at social life

and politics and instead study and learn about historical, collective forms. Even the

Arnoldian dictum that culture is the record of the best that has been thought and said has

a distinctively historical orientation.

Of course, there was a presentism to Arnold's book as well, in so far as "contact

with the main stream of human life" was meant to be a remedy for the political instability

which Arnold detected in such events as the Hyde Park riots of 1866. Interestingly

enough, however, Dodgson's notions of culture, or at least of authorship, seemed to

provide a more compelling invocation of the new in relation to culture, or at least

authorship. This idea of the new was not exactly a form of presentism, much less

futurism, but it did strongly resonate with the cultural ambiguity of the 1860's, which saw

the death of Palmerston and the end of the Whig ascendancy which his death seemingly

presaged. Further adding to the uncertainty of the moment was the fact that, as

Humphrey Carpenter writes in <u>Secret Gardens</u>, "the two great religious spearheads of the

nineteenth century, the Evangelicals and the Oxford Movement, were losing their original

force." The political and religious stagnation of the period doubtless contributed to a

sense of lapsed conviction within the ideological spectrum as a whole.

Dodgsons's response to this seemingly amorphous cultural environment was a bit different from Arnold's. Dodgson had, for one, a slightly different take on the role of genius in the creation of culture in the post-Palmerston era. For Arnold, we will remember, the culture to which he aspired took men out of class standing altogether, creating instead a kind of universal, if deracinated, human: "so far as a man has genius he tends to take himself out of the category of class altogether, and to become simply a man" (73). Of course, one can immediately throw the supposed impartiality of Arnold's conception into question by pointing out that it was typically the upper class which had access to the kinds of intellectual productions which qualified, for him, as culture (though there are numerous important exceptions to this rule). It's also possible that Arnold provides an early example of a rather effective attempt at depoliticizing culture and, because culture was to become synonymous with the state, politics along with it.[11]

Dodgson, on the other hand, inhabits a standpoint that is less generous than Arnold's but more realistic. In recalling the "genesis" of <u>Sylvia and Bruno</u>, Dodgson compares that work with the earlier <u>Alice</u> books and reveals what he considers to be "the hardest thing in all literature": namely, "to write anything <u>original</u>" (the irony of the distinctively working class valuation of the "hardest thing" should not go unremarked) (279). But he also suggests that the conditions of production typical of the working classes can never lead to the production of genius. He explains that he could write a book "straight off, page by page"

> If I were in the unfortunate position (for I do hold it to be a real misfortune) of
>
> being obliged to produce a given amount of fiction in a given time that I could

---

[11] See Wang Hui, p. 691, for a fuller description of "the ideology of depoliticization," though in a sometimes different context.

'fulfil' my task, and produce my 'tale of bricks,' as other slaves have done. One

thing at any rate I could guarantee as to the story so produced—that it should be

utterly commonplace, should contain no new ideas whatever . . . 278

Being under the obligation to produce a certain quantum of work in a given amount of

time undoubtedly describes the conditions of production of the working classes, even

though Dodgson uses the word "slaves" (for a description of English social criticism

which equated the two, see Gallagher's text). In other words, the working conditions of

the working classes, Dodgson suggests, exempted them, <u>tout court</u> from the production of

new ideas, of culture, and, if one were to follow Arnold's logic at this point, from

participation in the state as well. For if the working classes, because of the conditions

under which they labored, were unable to contribute to the higher forms of culture, the

"best that has been thought and said," surely that meant that they were in some

fundamental ways unable to escape their class moorings and realize a share of the

depoliticized state as well.

Yet, despite their different conceptions of the political bases of culture, both

Arnold and Dodgson were intellectually invested in the autonomy of the realm of culture.

At least in the case of Dodgson, this investment in autonomy was undoubtedly tied to the

class structures which underpinned the very possibilities of his intellectual work. At the

same time, as I will demonstrate, this class-determined underpinning had an odd effect on

the learning which would come to be broadly labeled "the humanities" and on English

literature specifically. Readers familiar with the life of Dodgson will of course know that

his biography saw him move from Rugby, perhaps the most influential public school (as

it is called in England) of mid-nineteenth century England, to Christ Church at Oxford,

one of the pre-eminent hotbeds for producing influential and accomplished men in the same period. As Morton N. Cohen notes in his biography, <u>Lewis Carroll</u>, Christ Church in the nineteenth century matriculated many leading figures, including headmasters, chancellors, politicians, professors, and critics. Dodgson himself, of course, was notable first of all for his studies in mathematics (at least until several years after <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u> was published), though his performance in the classics was also consistently excellent. This academic excellence, however, belied a certain class arrangement in the institutions he attended which inflected the status and conceptions of the humanities.

The great majority of the students at Christ Church College—as well as at Rugby—would have come from the aristocratic and upper middle classes, with academic enthusiasts like Dodgson being somewhat rare. This is not to suggest that the students at such institutions were unlearned or insincere, but, rather, that the learning which went on there was necessarily inflected by class relationships and attitudes within the larger society. As P. W. Musgrave writes in <u>Society and Education in England Since 1800</u>,

> even after the Reform Act of 1832, the English Aristocratic upper class was for many years a powerful group. To members of this class education for their children was not needed for any immediate practical purpose, but more to acquire social graces. This was a leisured class of rulers and their leisure was regarded by them as one important symbol of their high status. 10

The Clarendon Commission of 1864 appropriately "criticized the financial structure of the [public] schools as corrupt and the quality of their teaching and academic achievements as mediocre," but "it found such drawbacks to be far outweighed by the

character-training provided" (46, 47). Finally, Cohen explains that, at Rugby, where Arnold the elder had emphasized the importance of Christian instruction, "moral behavior stood above gentlemanly conduct and gentlemanly conduct above intellectual achievement" (17). What this means is that, in spite of the abundant presence of intellectual excellence within the stream which ran from the public schools to the ancient Universities, there was an emphasis on class cohesion, behavior, and character which had curious consequences for the status of learning in Victorian England.

One of the consequences was the relative autonomy of humanistic study as Dodgson would have encountered it. There were several components to this autonomy. The first was historical and almost identical with the ideal of culture outlined in Culture and Anarchy. Stephens explains that, though there was some curricular reform in the period of Arnold's reign at Rugby, that reform usually meant including mathematics (sciences being almost entirely excluded at this point). Even at Oxford, Dodgson found that many of his students had been poorly trained in mathematics at the public schools. Classics, on the other hand remained central to the curriculum. It was a subject "dear to the aristocracy, gentry and schoolmasters . . . and were now accepted by the upper middle classes as the hallmark of an élite education." The fact that the aristocracy and gentry favored the classics is important in the cultural politics of the period because it demonstrates a kind of class or interest-group solidarity which allowed them to retain great influence within the universities and public schools. The materials which were studied in the prestigious universities, furthermore, were likely somewhat removed from any social antagonisms which might have existed in the present.

This already suggests the second component of the autonomy of culture: namely, the class autonomy of those who had access to culture (Raymond Williams's theorization of a broader notion of culture which includes working-class culture was still decades away). The public school/ancient university matrix was a system which rewarded academics by placing them in a structural context analogous in some ways to that of the aristocracy and gentry. As I have noted above, one of the conceits of the upper classes was leisure which, in certain contexts, was equivalent to the notion of the independence of the Englishman. Thus, when a dedicated scholar such as Dodgson had attained a certain level of achievement, the natural reward was to allow him a living and remove nearly all demands upon his activity. After the 1858 Ordinance, as a Senior Student, Dodgson earned "two hundred pounds per annum" (Cohen 42), or nearly twice what an engineer who worked six ten-hour days in a week would make over the same period. The position was his to keep for the rest of his life, and he was not required to do anything to keep it, except to not marry or do anything egregiously immoral. "If he wished," writes Cohen, "he might recline in his easy chair, his feet up by the fire, drink his claret, and smoke a pipe for the rest of his life" (43). There could hardly be conditions of cultural production more removed from the constraints of class-based social life or the working day demands of the laboring classes which Dodgson described in the introduction of Sylvie and Bruno.

I am not arguing here, necessarily, that Dodgson should have been more sensitive to a wider range of the British social strata in his writing, and in fact, there are mentions of the Carpenter and other members of the working classes. Rather, what I am trying to interrogate is a certain notion, or implied assumption, about the status of "culture" and

certain of its representative works, and the institutional and social structures which contributed to this implicit notion. Though there is a long history of writing in England and even of the notion of culture itself, I would venture that the moment of <u>Culture and Anarchy</u>, which is roughly coterminous with the moment of <u>Alice</u>, represents a particularly influential moment and, furthermore, that it was perhaps the moment the paradoxes and formulations of which have most influenced our own era. I have already suggested the ways in which Arnold's view of culture represents an attempt to de-politicize it by stripping bare any class-based determinants to it. Culture is the preparation for participation in the state, yet its very operation on the human being is to lift him (or her, though not for Arnold) out of his class particularities and enable him to govern in the interests, not just of his own class, but of the whole.

What I have further attempted to demonstrate is the extent to which Dodgson's own view of genius coincides with Arnold's but that Dodgson's structural position within the economy and the institutions of education also implied a certain class-based inflection of the seemingly neutral realm of culture. It is compelling, because writing and learning had come such a long way from the days of Shakespeare or Johnson, both members themselves of something closer to the working and middle classes. But Dodgson's mode was also markedly different from the almost factory-like production of novels by a Walter Scott or, more contemporaneously, a Charles Dickens, though the latter shared with Dodgson a certain commitment to the notion of childhood innocence. In some senses, the mode of "genius" which Dodgson pursued, committed to a kind of leisure known only by the aristocracy and gentry, should have seemed a great anachronism, given the emergence of electoral reform and industrial revolution. Yet it seems that the

opposite is the case. Indeed, it seems that what Dodgson's achievement signified, instead, was precisely the permeation throughout Victorian cultural institutions of a set of aesthetic values that were largely shaped by nostalgia for the staying power of the aristocracy. Even Carlyle's demand that the aristocracy now work in order to address the problems posed by the Condition of England Question had now been replaced by a plea for freedom and leisure, as opposed to the conditions of the slave, as the prerequisite for works of "genius."

To make explicit what this meant for learning as it was embodied in children's literature, one should remember several things. And, as a caveat, anyone who thinks the influence of Dodgson's works can be dismissed as simply writing for children should consider that, according to Morton, as of 1993 there existed seventy-five editions and revisions of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, including "play texts, parodies, read-along cassettes, teachers' guides, audio-language studies, coloring books, 'New Method' readers, abridgments, learn-to-read story books, single-syllable texts, musical renderings, casebooks, and a deluxe edition selling for £175" (134-135). The books "have been translated into over seventy languages," and he claims, though without evidence, that they are the most frequently quoted books "next to the Bible and Shakespeare." Though the latter claim may, perhaps, be a bit extravagant, childhood reading is clearly saturated with Alice and its particular inflections and evasions of social and aesthetic convention.

One of the things to keep in mind, then, along with the pervasive influence of the Alice books, is that it was an amateur, gentlemanly production, the kind of work which finds its parallel today in novels published by tenured professors. But in Dodgson's case,

the circumstances make the work even more intriguing. Though Arnold's universalism (culture takes us out of our specific class moorings) and autonomy (culture is distinct from ordinary political activity) displays some similarities to Dodgson's notion of genius, it is similar most strongly on the point of autonomy, Dodgson being more reticent to discount the traditional class biases in the production of English culture. Thus Dodgson could agree on the autonomy that was requisite for real genius, though, unlike Arnold, he thought that genius consisted in creating new ideas more than being steeped in the cultural heritage of the past. Dodgson was more concerned than Arnold, obviously, about the problem of innovation per se, but he was also aware, it seems, of the difficulties associated with the role of the critical faculties in learning.

To quote an example pointed to by Morton, in <u>Sylvia and Bruno</u>, Mein Herr explains the old method of examination (Dodgson himself opposed the examination system at Oxford) and, specifically the case of a rather muddled professor.

It was Moral Philosophy that our idol lectured on. Well, his pupils couldn't make head or tail of it, but they got it all by heart; and when Examination-time came, they wrote it down; and the Examiners said 'Beautiful? What depth!'

'But what good was it to the young men <u>afterwards</u>?'

'Why, don't you see?' replied Mein Herr. 'They became teachers in their turn, and <u>they</u> said all these things over again; and <u>their</u> pupils wrote it all down; and the Examiners accepted it; and nobody had the ghost of an idea what it all meant!' <u>Complete Works of Lewis Carroll</u> 624

The sequence has a bit of Carrollian impossibility to it, such as the likelihood that pupils who had no real understanding of a subject would subsequently become professors

in the subject. Nonetheless, it emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, rather than

rote memorization, which points to the importance of individuality or uniqueness in his

theory of artistic production. The passage, in other words, represents learning in a way

which is incompatible with simple uniformity. Critical understanding can't be

demonstrated by means of mere memorization and repetition, yet this somewhat

indefinable understanding is clearly more valuable than rote learning. Examples such as

this demonstrate that critical understanding and artistic production, for Dodgson, both

adhered to the commitment to originality, individuality, and independence. Indeed, one

suspects that perhaps part of Dodgson's antipathy to the examination system arose from

the limitations which it placed upon the lecturers in terms of uniformity and repetition—

demanding that one perform a given amount of work in a given time, rather than allowing

the lecturer to explore the byways of mathematical thinking.

All of this has curious consequences for Dodgson's contribution to the conception

of the world of letters. On the one hand, Dodgson's writings can be viewed within the

larger trajectory of children's literature, as outlined, for example, by Humphrey Carpenter

in Secret Gardens: The Golden Age of Children's Literature. This narrative details the

evolution of writing for children from the fairy-tale to the chapbooks to the "jolly little

hand-coloured books which were intended simply to amuse young readers"; and then to

the early Victorian penchant for books of facts meant to instruct, the evangelical tracts,

and finally to the more escapist literature of the later part of the century to which the

Alice books belong, informed by a felt need to escape the financial and social difficulties

of the period in favor of a happy image of childhood.

At the same time, however, literary productions, and Dodgson's in particular, are sometimes described in modern writing in terms which very much reproduce and perpetuate the kinds of aesthetic virtues Dodgson extolled when he talked about genius and understanding. In this context, one might adduce as an example Donald J. Gray's review of The Making of the Alice Books: Lewis Carroll's Use of Earlier Children's Literature by Ronald Reichertz. In fact, this review elucidates quite convincingly the staying power of the tension between discourses of originality and discourses of influence within Victorian studies and, potentially, within literary culture in general. In Gray's review, which is of course about a book specifically investigating Carroll's appropriation of earlier forms of literature, Gray is eager to prevent the discourse of influence from eclipsing entirely the problem of originality. Gray explains that the latter sections of Reichertz's book details the earlier "themes and tactics Carroll appropriated, adapted, parodied, or otherwise deformed into the original shapes and surfaces of the Alice books. 'Original' is the important word in my sentence" (Victorian Studies 43: 4, 653). The tensions around the competing discourses are so obvious as almost to not require elaboration: while the passage begins describing Carroll's authorship in a way that might lead one to believe that writing is a process of incorporation and appropriation, it ends by insisting on the importance of the kind of newness which Dodgson saw as imperative to literary genius. Later in the review, Gray resurrects these ideas in a slightly different way by contending that "not the feeble playfulness of Carroll's imitators . . . holds the surprise and polish and resonant mystery of any passage of the Alice books." Here, the reviewer is more insistent that imitation equates to a kind of feebleness in authorship and that artistic value is a function of "surprise" (newness again), but also "polish" (a genteel

quality) and "mystery." In this context, "mystery" surely implies that aura of artistic depth which simply can't be produced by mechanical repetition. Thus Dodgson, concludes Gray, "was a very good writer who used the repertoire of his predecessors to create effects that they quite literally could not imagine."

Interestingly enough, this set of aesthetic commitments has come under closer scrutiny in more recent discussions about the legacy of Victorian culture. In Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic, David Wayne Thomas has outlined a contemporary intellectual and academic situation in which post-modern sensibilities have threatened to undo the aesthetic conceits of Victorian liberalism. While I want to stress that I can't do justice to the length and complexity of Thomas's text and that I don't wish liberalism to stand in for Victorian culture tout court, I think it fascinating to examine the extent to which Carroll's invocation of aesthetics and learning fits within the matrix described by Thomas, as well as those moments where the former throws the latter into doubt.

To conclude my discussion, then, I will rehearse the situation as Thomas describes it. Thomas observes a desire on the part of scholars and theorists to return to questions of aesthetics "without resorting to a neoconservative nostalgia for a dubiously conceived golden era of appreciation" (ix). Thomas then outlines the immediate task which this desire implies, noting that one problem stems from "a prevailing hermeneutics of suspicion" which "has so foreclosed on projects of appreciation that readings in literature and the arts have gradually become flattened or routine." Immediately one senses here that the framing of the problem and its surrounding debate adheres to the very

problems which also determined Carroll's figuration of genius: criticism, or "readings"

are beginning to display that characteristic of slavish as opposed to creative work by

becoming "routine," while simultaneously being drained of their organic content and

depth by becoming "flattened." Once again, we are reminded of the unity of critical and

authorial tasks, both being informed by a discourse of creative freedom and originality.

Furthermore, for Thomas, this critical impasse correctly necessitates a return to

and an examination of the correlation between Victorian liberal culture and aesthetic

production, especially around the idea of freedom and self-determination. He writes that

his "linkage of aesthetic culture and liberal culture is premised on a point of

methodological critique: to affirm the integrity and the importance of aesthetic

experience, we must invoke, at least implicitly, the idea of self-reflecting individuality

that informs liberalism's conception of agency and autonomy." While he urges the

importance of analyzing this nexus of culture and aesthetics, Thomas also acknowledges

that, currently, "liberalism's distinctive commitment to rational autonomy is widely

understood to encode a baleful atomistic individualism and to perpetuate dominant

interests of gender, class, race, and nation." I will interrogate further some of Thomas's

claims about liberal Victorian culture and aesthetics in the hopes that they will illuminate

several dimensions of Carroll's works, especially around the role of cultivation, to use

Thomas's term, in the contexts of Carroll's model of artistic production and the cultural

politics which informed that production. Importantly, Thomas reminds us of the

historical context of the years around the Second Reform Bill, which were precisely the

era of the composition of the Alice books. Thomas remarks that it was an era marked by

"a remarkable array of liberalizing legislative acts," including acts which "affected higher

and elementary education, the civil service, the army, trades unions, the rights of Irish Catholics, and much more" (27).

I don't necessarily want to suggest that a figure like Carroll fully embraced or, more strongly, epitomized, the essential Victorian liberal intellectual—that designation might apply to an Arnold, an Eliot, or perhaps a Darwin. What I do want to argue, however, is that Carroll undoubtedly had to struggle with the problems which liberalism represented and that liberalism undoubtedly informed the ways in which Carroll both represented and failed to represent learning. In order to do so, I first need to summarize one of the distinctions which Thomas makes about kinds or modes of aesthetic and cultural liberalism, a distinction between "regulative" and "substantive" liberalism, and I need to explain what this distinction implies about liberalism sui generis (14). To summarize what is not a complicated distinction, "regulative" thinking, including regulative liberal thinking defines "how" we think, whereas "substantive" thinking defines "what" we think about—in other words regulative refers to form and pattern, while substantive refers to content. Though it seems almost obligatory at the present juncture to pontificate on the inseparability of form and content, it is worthwhile to keep in mind the importance of the distinction when it comes to the particular question of Victorian liberal culture. This is because the nomination of a particular content—the what—of liberal thought highlights the way in which this content is, in fact, often empty. Furthermore, it begins to demonstrate the connection between the form of liberalism, which is simultaneously universalist and atomistic, and the emptiness of its content. To clarify, much of the liberal tendency, at least in Thomas's view, is encapsulated in the famous Kantian dictum about behaving in a manner that is consistent with the way in

which everyone should behave in similar circumstances. This dictum, however, is the antithesis of critical reason: it suggests band-waggoning be considered a legitimate moral precept. More to the point, even if we elide the question of merely swimming with the stream, we also must confront the problem that Kant's dictum, the categorical imperative, erases all individual differences while also ignoring the very possibility upon which liberal aesthetics is founded: the emergence of the new and of new moral conditions. This structural emptiness will become important as we look more closely at liberalism's construction of difference and its precarious position vis-à-vis subjectivities which are not normatively masculine.

In the meanwhile, to dispense with Kant, one must remember the psychological drama Kant imagines operating in his categorical imperative, whereby the moral subject must ask himself—that is, must regulate himself by asking—whether his proposed action conforms to the dictates of the moral community, thereby making a law of his own will. This process describes precisely the contradictory nature of liberal morality, where law and its implied regulation are constantly crossing paths with what would appear to be the opposite of law, namely free will. In asking whether what one proposes is reasonable according to the consensus of other, anonymous, moral agents, one is positing what Thomas, following Thomas Nagel, denominates "the view from nowhere"—that is, one must first of all displace all of the characteristics which make an individual unique, considerations which in early eras would have been foremost in ethical considerations. In the aristocratic era of stringent hierarchy, decisions—whether they qualified as moral or not can be debated—rested largely on the rights and responsibilities which obtained between distinctly defined subjectivities—those between peasant and landlord, between

master and apprentice, between parent and child, or between husband and wife. Though it would be wrong to contend that the rules regulating behavior between such constituents were never contested, or that such relations entirely disappeared with the advent of the industrial revolution, it still is the case that the heavy emphasis placed upon the universal subject in moral reasoning was a fairly new development.

Thus it was that a seemingly new ideal of ethical self-regulation came into being. "At issue," writes Thomas, "is whether this liberal agency—even when understood as a view from nowhere amounts to a coherent and historically powerful regulative ambition, sustained through what is perhaps modernity's most fundamental element in cultivation: self-reflective agency" (12). Furthermore, Thomas recounts the way that liberalism's moral subjectivity requires, along with stringent self-reflection, the ability to conform the behavior resulting from such regulation to beneficence towards others. Quoting Maria H. Morales, he notes that one version of liberalism, John Stuart Mill's, "requires a certain kind of person: the kind who can develop concerns with the good of others and can learn to take an active interest in sympathetic associations" (11). It is precisely the importance within Victorian liberal morality given both to self-regulation and to sympathetic association that marks it as a form of subjectivity highly relevant to the Alice books.

I would suggest that the many invocations in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland alone of concerns for social propriety are examples of the kind of domestic, individual morality encapsulated by liberalism. When the Duchess's Footman looks at the sky while speaking, Alice finds this "decidedly uncivil" (65). She's unsure "whether it was good manners for her to speak first" to the Duchess. Alice speaks "very politely" about

the Cheshire Cat. She reminds the pig-boy that grunting is "'not at all a proper way of

expressing yourself'" (70), and so on, throughout the text. These examples doubtlessly

tend to trivialize morality by placing it in such childish and personal terms, but that is

probably the exact point of those who criticize liberal morality for its disavowal of

contentious, collective politics.

Be that as it may, my present task is to elaborate upon some of the contradictions

around liberal agency, especially those regarding notions of rules and individuality and

the way these notions were articulated in the era of liberalism. In his 1861 tract,

Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical, Herbert Spencer drew attention to the

developing social attitudes of the period and their connection to education. In fact, he

takes the determinism of education by the social to be a given: "there cannot fail to be a

relationship between the successive systems of education, and the successive social states

with which they have co-existed" (94). In terms of his own era, Spencer describes the

relevant developments in terms that by now have become familiar in our discussion of

Victorian liberal aesthetics and culture. He notes that "now that Protestantism has gained

for adults a right of private judgment and established the practice of appealing to reason,

there is harmony in the change that has made juvenile instruction a process of exposition

addressed to the understanding." In this excerpt, we are reminded of the faults which

Carroll found in the examinations given by his professor of moral philosophy and which

stood for learning by rote generally: the failure of such learning to address the

understanding of the pupil. The new emphasis on the understanding represents a new

understanding of learning in general, one which is connected simultaneously to notions of

individual conscience and originality in aesthetic production.

It may be useful at this point to anticipate the objections of those who will remember Cohen's description of Carroll as "a sharp portrait of an age" (197), or, in other words, a typically conservative Victorian for whom "ritual was all." But one mustn't make too much of the label conservative, as conservative and liberal were not yet the political and cultural antitheses which they are commonly regarded today. Indeed, the fact that today personal responsibility is perhaps a dominant feature more of conservatism than of liberalism, at least in the United States, is indicative of an evolution whereby personal conscience has undergone a shift in political and cultural valence. But the fact of liberal elements within Carroll's thinking was not lost on Harvey Darton, who wrote that <u>Alice</u> represented "liberty of thought in children's books" (in Carpenter, 68). In any event, I am less interested in defining any political creed to which Carroll may have subscribed than I am in exploring a cultural matrix to which he responded. That matrix, of course, is Victorian cultural liberalism.

Carroll's invocation of the child figure within that matrix remains problematic, and I fear that, rather than arriving at some decisive conclusions regarding the child figure, learning, and Victorian cultural liberalism, I have only begun to adequately describe some of the many problems which inhabit that matrix. Indeed, the very figure of the child in some ways seems to resist the notion of liberal cultivation, which is one of the formulations of the culture which David Wayne Thomas views as "liberal." As a subjectivity undergoing development and vulnerable to tantrums, the child seems an unlikely means of representing the self-regulating conscience essential to liberal subjectivity. At the same time, I would suggest that the valences of originality, sympathy, and spontaneity with which Carroll's works fill the position of the child are, in

many ways, entirely consistent with the liberal notions of both culture and personhood which developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. I wish to push this set of problems even one step further and ask about the relationship between the girl figure and liberal culture in Carroll's works.

One of the problems which has emerged in this exploration is precisely the problem of the individual and of individual conscience and consciousness, which forms a central piece of David Wayne Thomas's discussion of liberal culture, especially around the theme of the "self-reflective agency." Herbert Spencer, as I noted above, saw this kind of agency as of a piece with the developments of the modern era, "when we are learning that there is much more self-regulation in things than was supposed; that labor, and commerce, and agriculture, and navigation can do better without management than with it" (96). Besides being an apologetics for laissez-faire political economy, of course, Herbert's text had the curious effect of assuring us that the principles of self-regulation could not be extended to education and to the family. In the matter of raising children it is not possible that "each may be trusted, by self-instruction to fit himself, or herself for the office of parent" (170). Indeed, "not only is the need for such self-instruction [in parenting] unrecognized, but the complexity of the subject renders it the one of all others in which self-instruction is least likely to succeed." Thus Herbert assures, it would appear, that child raising is an art more complicated than directing the industry of the nation. We have moved a great distance from Carlyle, who viewed learning as one way of licensing men precisely to manage the work of the nation, and have arrived at an insistence on the equation of the learning and the child. Simultaneously, we must observe the paradox whereby liberal culture, dependent as it is upon a discourse of

individual determination and autonomy, in fact itself produces a great number of rules for

social control and social behavior. This is, after all, the era of Bentham and Mill.

There is, however, something more important about personal conscience in the

way it has come full circle in some discussions about Lewis Carroll himself. It would be

interesting to contrast the way that an earlier Victorian, such as Carlyle, represents the

individuality of his great men with the way later Victorians, beginning as early as Brontë

and continuing through Eliot, represent the supposedly less heroic individuality of their

subjects. Carlyle's heroes are more intensely unique, less socialized, and more awesome.

The more or less every-day psychologies which come to be standard later in the period

are largely absent in Carlyle. No doubt, there was still the mysterious commingling of

human spirits, away from the dull mechanical repetition of the industrial factory, but

those moments are sparse compared with the social criticism which is the raison d'etre of

Sartor Resartus.

But when it comes to Lewis Carroll, it's almost as if we take him at his word

when he implies, as he seems to do in the "Preface" to Sylvia and Bruno, that in order to

understand the nature of his artistic creations, we need to first of all acknowledge that it

was produced under conditions of aesthetic autonomy and originality. This historically

determined discourse is apparent in, for example, the review by Donald J. Gray, but it

also plays a role in U. C. Knoepflmacher's Ventures into Childland: Victorians, Fairy

Tales and Femininity. In this latter work, the analysis of "femininity" takes the guise, at

least in the sections on Carroll's work, of the narrative of Carroll's own struggle with his

ambivalent desires around the biographical Alice Liddell, the daughter of the dean of

Oxford. This psychological struggle ends, tentatively, with the destruction of his own

self-representation in the Humpty Dumpty character, whose "shattering fall signifies Carroll's willed destruction of a madness he no longer finds himself able, or willing, to sustain" (219). One might perhaps lament the development whereby the internal psychological events of an author have come to be of central importance to scholars. But this is precisely the point: there seems to be no escaping the historical conditions of literary production which place so much pressure on the individual mind of the author as a precondition for the genuinely aesthetic and as an ideal of learning.

The ideal of autonomy, then, has come to play a more or less determining role in the readings of Carroll's, and I must admit that part of my project in this chapter has been to articulate some possibilities for escaping the enclosure implied by the idea of aesthetic autonomy. In order to so, I have tried to throw into question the status of that organon of liberal aesthetics and cultivation, the "genius" whose "true sense," according to that eminent Victorian liberal, John Stuart Mill, is "originality in thought and action" (in Thomas, 30). I will conclude by way of mentioning that, even though Carroll is by no means the perfect representative of what we might call Victorian cultural liberalism, his representation of the girl figure in the Alice books is inextricably bound up with that liberalism's discourse about autonomy and learning.

In order to rearticulate this point once more, it is helpful to turn to a text the aim of which is somewhat more broadly cultural than Knoepflmacher's, namely James R. Kincaid's Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture. Drawing upon the groundbreaking work of the sociological historian Phillipe Ariès, Kincaid notes that "prior to the eighteenth century, says Ariès, nobody worried about soiling childish innocence because 'nobody thought that this innocence really existed.' Now, however,

the notion that the child was innocent, valuable, and weak became common" (72). Thus

the convocation of such bodies as The National Purity Congress in the nineteenth

century. Kincaid is particularly insightful in noting "that innocence is a faculty needed

not at all by the child but very badly by the adult who put it there in the first place" (73).

Ironically, this need for innocence in the child is part of a larger matrix whereby the

author continually inserts himself or herself into the position of the child, or whose

subjectivity blurs with that of the child in representation. In the process, the adult takes

on the role of the "true child," while the child herself becomes a "false child." "Using

Lewis Carroll as a familiar example," writes Kincaid, "one might say that Alice plays

brilliantly her false-child role, never is a true child, never responds to Carroll himself

when he enters as a true child, as the Dodo, gnat, or White Knight. We do, thus, get a

strong sense of a true child in these books. . . . but that true child is not Alice" (196). It

is, instead, Lewis Carroll himself, of course.

I cannot claim that Carroll's <u>Alice</u> books represent a quintessentially liberal

moment in Victorian cultural politics. I do contend, however, that his particular

configuration of genius as autonomous, and "genuine," were consistent with predominate

conceptions of aesthetic production and moral life in the Victorian period, and that these

tenants have been nominated as "liberal." And there seems to be something about the

representation of the girl in Carroll's work that is also consistent with a liberal Victorian

concern that government and aesthetics be autonomous from the political life of English

society. Ultimately, the notion of authorship which informs Carroll's critical

understanding of his own works subscribed to the deep mystery of human conscience,

feeling, and character which was simultaneously an ideal of learning, particularly

humanistic learning by the latter half of the period. Thus, in explaining his <u>Alice</u> books,

he wrote

> The why of those books cannot, and need not, be put into words. Those
> for whom a child's mind is a sealed book, and who see no divinity in a child's
> smile would read such words in vain; while for any one who has ever loved one
> true child, no words are needed. For he will have known the awe that falls on one
> in the presence of a sprit fresh from God's hands, on whom no shadow of sin, and
> but the outermost fringe of the shadow of sorrow, has yet fallen. <u>Complete Works
> of Lewis Carroll</u>, 8

Of course, it's telling that in order to represent the ideal, the "true child," Carroll decided

upon a decidedly upper-class female, rather than the little, stunted chimney sweep, "the

lower class child" who "is wasted by typhus, ripped apart with cancer of the scrotum"

(Kincaid, 82). The preference for the upper-class girl as the figure most representative of

childhood, and for childhood as the figure most representative of innocence and

originality, and finally, for that genius represented by innocence and originality as the

uppermost aesthetic concern for Carroll, represents a problem incisive to Victorian liberal

culture.

CHAPTER V

The Fateful Strength of Metaphors: <u>Middlemarch</u> and Intellectual Passion

With George Eliot's <u>Middlemarch</u>, one moves to a perspective decidedly different from that of the <u>Alice</u> books: the girls have grown up to become young ladies and there is, indeed, a maturation and an expectation of adult life. Nonetheless, the preoccupation with a gendered perspective remains and, once again, this preoccupation relates to an inflection or an iteration of the idea of learning in the Victorian period. I hesitate to suggest that what we observe in the textual examples I have adduced, along with the present one—the last in my study—form something like an evolution of literary representations of learning. There are changes and continuities between all of the works I have chosen, but the changes aren't generally smooth, and they don't form an obviously recognizable pattern. They all have their quirks, as it were. Furthermore, they don't epitomize a decade: <u>Sartor Resartus</u> is likely not a work representative of the 1830's as a whole, nor can the <u>Alice</u> books necessarily be read as generally indicative of literary production in the 1860's.

Yet <u>Middlemarch</u> is a classic, perhaps more so than any other of the texts around which I have formed this study. And from its earliest pages, it concerns itself with representative consciousness. Thus the narrator relates that Dorothea Brooke's "mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there" (6). One of the tensions of the novel is that which inheres in the seemingly obvious disjuncture

between Dorothea's mind and her situation. Half-committed to a notion of universal, or at least European cosmopolitanism, the novel, in figures such as Dorothea, reveals an anxiety about the position of English country society within a world that is becoming, potentially at least, more interrelated.

After describing some of the traits of Dorothea's stern morality, the narrator observes that "such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tends to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection." Evaded in this description of "custom," but evident in any number of passages elsewhere in the book, is its use as a social lubricant for a segment of society which is generically parochial and middle class. The world of Middlemarch— itself a name suggesting both centrality and puritan resolution—is a world of genteel, moneyed, familial relations, where custom dictates much, both in the relationships between genders and in socioeconomic status. Lamenting Mary Garth's poverty, for example, Mrs. Vincy contemplates "if she <u>had</u> some fortune left her—a man marries his wife's relations, and the Garth's are so poor, and live in such a small way" (66). Her lack of family fortune, in Mrs. Garth's view, makes Mary likely to become a governess. Thus wealth, custom, occupation, and standing are mutually determining. Mary's lack of wealth codes her, according to the customs of this genteel and rural society, as a candidate for wage labor rather than marriage into a position of greater financial independence.

This is one of the contexts—perhaps the main context—for understanding the function of learning in this novel. The first marriage of the novel, that between Casaubon and Dorothea, promises to satisfy the desires of the latter precisely because it offers her a

kind of apprenticeship in the world of scholarship, somewhat removed from the regular routine of female domesticity. Casaubon has undertaken courtship of Dorothea with the aim of finding an aid for "his great work—the Key to all Mythologies" (40). Similarly, it is in light of the pursuit of such a work that Dorothea imagines her marriage to him. The match would allow her to fulfill her wish to learn the ancient languages taught to men at the old Universities, and those "provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-ground from which all truth could be seen more truly." This masculine knowledge, in turn, will fill the gap between Dorothea's ideals and her convictions. "As it was," the narrator observes, "she constantly doubted her own conclusions because she felt her own ignorance: how could she be confident that one-roomed cottages [which she had contemplated constructing] were not for the glory of God, when men who knew the classics appeared to conciliate indifference to the cottages with zeal for the glory?" With the aid of a husband who is also a tutor, such as Casaubon promises to be, Dorothea expects to gain certainty about the relative merits of her philanthropy and her learning.

The description of knowledge as "masculine" also foreshadows the way in which knowledge and learning will frequently be gendered throughout the novel. For instance, when Dorothea's uncle, Mr. Brooke, pays the newlyweds a visit, he finds that Casaubon has begun to teach Dorothea the Greek alphabet. With typical parataxis, Mr. Brooke protests, arguing that "such deep studies, classics, mathematics, that kind of thing, are too taxing for a woman" (42). When Casaubon informs Mr. Brooke that he is teaching her "to read the characters simply," and not, presumably, to understand vocabulary or syntax, Mr. Brooke relents, acknowledging that "without understanding, you know—that may not be so bad." Still, he suggests that a woman should have a measured command of

"music, the fine arts, that kind of thing." The narrator excuses Dorothea's ignorance in such "domestic music and feminine fine art," begging "the small tinkling and smearing in which they chiefly consisted at that dark period."

Of course, this gendering of learning is not Eliot's invention: it was endemic to at least a section of Victorian society, and the cases of the Reed sisters and Jane in Jane Eyre give partial evidence for this claim. In Middlemarch, this gendered distinction inflects another of the romance plots as well: that between Rosamond Vincy and Tertius Lydgate. Lydgate, having responded to an invitation from Mr. Vincy to dine at his residence, engages Rosamond in conversation after the dinner repast. When they discuss music, Lydgate makes clear the status of music as a largely feminine pursuit which enters into the courting and entertaining rituals between the sexes. On the one hand, he "regretted that he had not heard her sing the other day at Stone Court" (102). He himself has not studied music, he reveals, "but the music I don't know at all, and have no notion about, delights me—affects me." In brief, it has a function perfectly suited to augmenting the attractiveness and ornament of a potential spouse without taxing the intellect.

This impression is heightened by the narrator's assertion that Rosamond "diligently attended to that perfection of appearance, behaviour, sentiments, and all other elegancies, which would find in Lydgate a more adequate admirer than she had yet been conscious of" (107). In a world where the entrance of females into the professional realm was highly restricted, marriage could be a highly anxious matter for a young woman such as Rosamond. Learning and aptitude could operate as a sort of enticement into a financial arrangement which would have great ramifications for the woman's material

security. Of course, for Rosamond, there is no great risk of actual penury, and her marriage strategies are linked more to a concern for social status than to dire financial need, despite the couple's eventual bankruptcy. The narrator explicitly links Rosamond's accomplishments to "her own standard of a perfect lady," which she strives to meet by being "active in sketching her landscapes and market-carts and portraits of friends" and "in practicing her music." The narrator observes further that "she found time also to read the best novels, and even the second best, and she knew much poetry by heart."

The benefits or desirability of what must be called, peut de mieux, feminized learning is not unanimously endorsed within the narrative of Middlemarch, however. For instance, "Mrs. Plymdale thought that Rosamond had been educated to a ridiculous pitch, for what was the use of accomplishments which would all be laid aside as soon as she was married?" Similarly, "her aunt Bulstrode . . . had two sincere wishes for Rosamond—that she might show a more serious turn of mind, and that she might meet with a husband whose wealth corresponded to her habits." Indeed, I would suggest that even the inclusion of novel reading as one of Rosamond's ladylike pursuits establishes a level of self-consciousness within Middlemarch that sometimes verges towards criticism of the gendered division of learning.

One of the ways the novel elaborates a further criticism of the gendered division of learning is by comparing, and indeed interchanging, the language used to talk about learning and the vocabulary of love. In introducing some of the background of the character Lydgate, the narrator describes a period of voracious reading in Lydgate's youth. The materials digested during this phase are quite reminiscent of feminine reading: he devours "Rasselas or Gulliver," along with "Chrysal, or the Adventures of a

<u>Guinea</u>" (92). Finally, "one vacation," he sets to discover in his guardians' library some work "which might have some freshness for him." He opens a volume of "an old Cyclopædia" and chances upon an article on anatomy, and "the moment of vocation had come." His desire for "freshness" had come in the form of "a presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by that wordy ignorance which he had supposed to be knowledge." In other words, he had become disabused of the notion that the (feminine) reading in which he had customarily indulged qualifies as knowledge, realizing instead that it is empty verbosity masquerading as learning. The subject of anatomy, on the other hand, represents true, scientific knowledge. In this scene, the narrator discounts her own art in the process of recounting Lydgate's discovery of "an intellectual passion." For if well-known authors such as Johnson can be construed as "wordy ignorance," what, one wonders, does that suggest about the status of the present narrative vis-à-vis learning? Is the narrator being ironic in suggesting that literature doesn't convey learning, or is she being appropriately modest by acknowledging the real gap between the linguistic and cultural learning associated with the subjective field of literature on the one hand and the scientific terrain of falsifiable propositions on the other?

In the next paragraph, however, this seeming discount of the value of literature as learning is bracketed by a metaphor whereby profession is compared to marriage, in a move that underlines masculine activity in both. It is as if marriages, like careers, were undertaken at the initiative of solitary men rather than of two individuals. In this section, the narrator asks, "is it due to excess of poetry or of stupidity that we are never weary of describing what King James called a woman's 'makdom and her fairness,' never weary

of listening to the twanging of the old Troubadour strings, and are comparatively uninterested in that other kind of "makdom and fairnesse" which must be wooed with industrious thought and patient renunciation of small desires" i. e., the object of intellectual passion? (93). "In the story of this passion, too," the narrator asserts, expanding the metaphor, "the development varies: sometimes it is the glorious marriage, sometimes frustration and final parting." However, in this passage, marriage and intellectual passion, or profession, co-exist in a relationship that is more than metaphorical: a bad marriage can issue in professional catastrophe as well. As the narrator observes, "not seldom the catastrophe"—in professional life—"is bound up with the other passion, sung by the Troubadours."

On the one hand, the representation of profession—here imagined to be an extension of intellectual passion—is cast very much from the perspective of the man. It is an amorous pursuit for the man, rather than a joint undertaking for the couple, and the woman occupies a position which allows her to either successfully sanction or frustrate the desires which originated with the man. But the story of love and profession begins, ab ovum, with the man. In this formulation, learning, like the woman, becomes an object for the man's pursuit and, ultimately, either his mastery or his destruction. The feminization of learning, as a passion more or less cognate with a bride, therefore places unreasonable burdens on both man and woman.

At the same time, however, this emphatic, if peculiar, gendering of learning, and the way that it is cast in matrimonial terms is only part of the picture. Accompanying this metaphor is a lengthy discussion of Lydgate's position on a number of topics of concern to the general public in or around 1829, the year in which the novel is set. For instance,

Lydgate is resolved not to sell drugs himself, but to "simply prescribe" medicines. This allows him both to respect the professional arrangement between pharmacists and physicians codified in the Apothecaries Act of 1815, as well as to elevate the standing of his own profession by separating its practice from that of the "unscrupulous ignorance which had taken no degrees." In other words, he would follow medical propriety rather than share the practice with uncertified herbalists of dispensing both diagnosis and medication.

The elaboration upon Lydgate's profession extends, at least momentarily, beyond its comparison with marriage and its influence in social and professional standing: it extends to the actual biological research upon which his professional passion operates. And this is perhaps the most truly remarkable thing about Eliot's discussion of learning in this novel: that she is able, as a woman writer of the later Victorian period, to elaborate this metaphor between intellectual and romantic passion in a way that ultimately leaves the reader wondering whether feminine narrative or masculine science is in fact superior. Indeed it's striking enough that Eliot is able to interweave the history of science with scientific or medical analysis with individual and romantic narratives. But that she is able both to interweave science and romance on the metaphorical plane and to recapitulate some portion of germ theory, is precisely what makes this part of the novel so engrossing.

In this early discussion of Lydgate's professional ambitions—which form a central theme of the novel—the narrator explains that Lydgate had come to believe that his own interest in "special questions of disease, such as the nature of fever or fevers," drew him to the work of Marie Bichat, a native of the country where Lydgate had studied

medicine. Bichat's insight was into "that fundamental knowledge of structure" (95). His

innovation was to suggest and, one assumes, demonstrate

> that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs which
>
> can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but
>
> must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which
>
> the various organs—brain, heart, lungs, and so on—are compacted, as the various
>
> accommodations of a house are built up in various proportions of wood, iron,
>
> stone, brick, zinc, and the rest, each material having its peculiar composition and
>
> proportions. 95

The further question, which would not have been possible without Bichat and which

Lydgate now proposes as that which will organize his own research, asks, "have not these

structures some common basis from which they have all started, as your sarsnet, gauze,

net, satin and velvet form the raw cocoon?" At this point, Eliot has staged a dramatic

rendition of the progress of Lydgate's own intellectual pursuits and interests. But by

narrating this development in scientific research so insightfully, she has also thrown into

question the assumed superiority between masculine and feminine intellect. In fact, she

suggests that narrative, a somewhat feminine activity, might, in this case at least, be able

to subsume masculine scientific knowledge within it.

Meanwhile, Eliot is also enacting the authorial persona in a way that separates

itself from typical Victorian femininity. One might at this juncture counter that Eliot is

not enacting a feminine authorial perspective at all, and that her nom-de-plume had

successfully deceived at least the greater part of her readership, who would then mistake

her for a male writer. Thus, her attempt at writerly "passing" would have been so

successful that it would have preempted any discussion of those consequences which follow from her utilization of a feminine narrator. But whatever the case with her reading audience—though there is evidence to suggest that astute readers soon guessed her sex correctly—there is textual evidence that she is writing from the point of view of a woman, which, it must be admitted, would have been equally an option for a male writer (witness Dickens's Esther in <u>Bleak House</u>). At any rate, in the same section which develops the metaphor of intellectual vocation as a kind of romance, the narrative voice observes the process whereby "middle-aged men" who "once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little" come to be "shapen after the average and fit to be packaged by the gross." Thus glory fades, the narrator suggests. But at this point, the metaphor snaps, and love and work are no longer read as analogous. Instead, the narrator pursues the possibility that romantic love may in fact interfere with the pursuit of intellectual vocation. Granted, this possibility is only outlined in the most implicit terms: "Nothing more subtle than the process of their gradual change!" But in the concluding sentence of the paragraph, this suggestion becomes nearly unavoidable. This is also the moment when the narrator reveals herself as feminine: "you and I may have sent some of our breath towards infecting them, when we uttered our conforming falsities or drew our silly conclusions: or perhaps it came with the vibrations from a woman's glance." One might argue that the choice of saying "a woman's glance" rather than "our" glance suggests a level of ambiguity about the gender of the narrator—indeed it must. But I think that the use of the formulation "you and I," with the consciousness of the novel reader coded as female, as well as the use of "them" to refer to (middle-age) men, suggests the narrator might be feminine. This impression is heightened by the turn to the

language of "infecting," whereby romantic entanglement with a woman becomes the pretext for the sapping of masculine vitality.

The larger point of the hypothesis about a feminine narrator is that it inflects the way the reader is invited to construct the possibilities of learning, and especially of feminine knowing. It goes without saying perhaps that Eliot had not reached the point of suggesting that marriage is not a suitable fate for a woman. Indeed, she held the institution of marriage in high esteem, as evidence by her insistence that she be called Mrs. Lewes to the man with whom she lived. Even though they were not married, she assumed it to be important that they appear to be. Likewise, in a novel like Middlemarch, the narrator (always different, of course, from the author) is concerned with the phenomenon of marriage from a perspective that is at least sympathetic to the situation of young ladies, at least young upper-class ladies. But in this context, the novel itself becomes a kind of knowledge which, as we have seen above, can actually compete at points with more traditionally masculine domains, such as medicine was in the late nineteenth century. Thus, by examining and explaining scientific phenomena and scientific research so adroitly, the narrator signifies her distance from a girl like Rosamond, who could "adore a man's pre-eminence without too precise a knowledge of what it consisted in" (169).

Finally, there is a material consciousness of competition on the part of the narrator. Indeed, one could suggest that this consciousness is structurally determined, to the extent that it corresponds to changing realities within the socio-economic sphere. On the one hand, the widening of the professional strata of society complemented a greater level of female participation within these strata. Yet masculine privileged remained

largely intact, and female access to professional participation was restricted to a smaller number of professions, and especially teaching. Thus writing became, for Eliot and some others, a sphere in which women could match wits with men. It also became, as the narrative of Middlemarch suggests, an added bargaining chip within what could only be called the upper-class marriage market. If Rosamond's ignorance of any learning but that which serves to "finish" a lady contributes to her frustration of Lydgate's professional vocation, wouldn't it be better, the narrator seems to suggest, for a woman to be thoroughly versed in the habits of mind which allow her to produce high literary art? Such a constitution in the part of a female interested in negotiating her own social standing would presumably, aside from contributing to the tradition of art, remove the dangers of infection incurred by those women given to "conforming falsities" or "silly conclusions."

At a stroke, the narrator, by virtue of narrative skill alone, raises her esteem both as artist and as romantic object. I don't want to suggest that the narrator alone somehow holds the "truth" of the text and its commentary upon learning. I do, however, want to be careful to try to isolate the particular contingencies of the narrative, along with those of other figures in the novel, because I believe such an operation can help to illuminate the ways the author attempts to navigate the relative importance of learning, status, and gender. Ultimately, such an operation—of disentangling the separate figures and their corresponding plotlines, tends to result in what David Wayne Thomas would call "many-sidedness," an aesthetic particular to or typical of mid-Victorian liberalism. As the name implies, this aesthetic is concerned more with heightening the dynamics of a philosophical pluralism than with arriving at discrete, irrefutable truths. Truth, in the

guise of multi-sidedness, is instead always a collection of affects, feelings, and observations which often collide or contradict one another, but the resulting tensions are not meant to be resolved in some higher unity or proof which would disqualify the others. Instead, the insights which multi-sidedness enacts and dramatizes can be thought of as in some ways parallel to the notion of the <u>enkuklios paidea</u>, a geometrical image of learning replete with irresolvable tensions, oppositions, and relationships. The components of the circle continually fall back on each other and contribute to the proliferation of new juxtapositions and contrasts. It is, in the end, a highly rhetorical model of learning which, because it is composed of propositions which are not usually quantifiable and thus not falsifiable either, serves more to exhibit skill in the learner than finality in the conclusions. In <u>Middlemarch</u>, the cycle of learning serves as the instrument by means of which the narration inserts itself into the novel's gendered competition.

If I am correct in identifying multi-sidedness as a prevailing aesthetic conceit of <u>Middlemarch</u>, its centrality suggests an uneasy conjunction with what Terry Eagleton, in the introduction to Daniel Cottom's <u>Social Figures: George Eliot, Social History, and Literary Representation</u>, calls "the structurally essential marginality of the humanities" (ix). Something of this marginality is evident in the position of the narrator, as well as the author, especially in relation to the Rosamond-Lydgate coupling. On the one hand, the narrator's ability for indirect discourse and her familiarity with persons of many walks of life mark her as distinctly learned and elitist. To know others better than they can know themselves is the sign of an arch intelligence, and the narrator displays such intelligence when she remarks, for instance that Rosamond "had neither any reason for throwing her marriage into distant perspective, nor any pathological studies to divert her

mind from that ruminating habit, that inward repetition of looks, words, and phrases which makes a large part in the lives of most girls" (106).

By representing a knowledge of "what makes a large part in the lives of most girls," the narrator expresses a somewhat condescending familiarity—she knows that world and that milieu, but she is not of it, precisely because she can articulate an explicit understanding of it. Or, if she is in some sense of that girlish world, she excels its other inhabitants with her heightened self-consciousness. She further elaborates this distance between herself and Rosamond by remarking that "in Rosamond's romance it was not necessary to imagine much about the inward life of the hero, or of his serious business in the world." In other words, unlike the narrator, Rosamond cannot formulate a notion adequate to what Lydgate represents at this point in the novel: namely, self-confident and detached masculine knowledge.

The narrator, on the other hand, has as her prerogative, precisely that power which is inherent in the art of storytelling, especially in the mode of high Victorian realism. She knows Lydgate from the inside. She knows, for instance, that Lydgate "was enamoured of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation." This is of a piece with the analysis which I presented above regarding the etiology of fevers; it suggests a familiarity, once again, with the object of description. And, once again, the careful description, in this passage, as in others, conveys a certain intimacy on the part of the narrator with those regions of scientific capabilities. The narrator can, to provide another instance, speak comfortably of "that agreeable afterglow of excitement when thought lapses from examination of a specific object into a suffusive sense of its connections with

all the rest of our existence." Here, the narrator extends her identification with masculine

knowing beyond the particular into its relation with the general.

One might expect a strong continuity between this description of Lydgate and his

"triumphant delight in his studies" on the one hand and that coeval narration of

Rosamond's thoughts on the other. And indeed, there is in the narration the explicit

sense that we are in both cases dealing with types, that the narrator is displaying an

almost zoological understanding of humanity. Lydgate, too, is placed within his

appropriate grouping: he is "like other heroes of science who had nothing but an obscure

country practice to begin with." Yet there is a crucial difference in the way these two

passages are related: in the case of Rosamond, the narrator is filling in the wider

understanding of the world which the former lacks. True, Lydgate is equally

misinformed about Rosamond's social context or, at least, the consequences of marrying

into that context. Indeed, the narrator informs us that "each lived in a world of which the

other knew nothing." Yet, the narrator mitigates this depiction of ignorance by placing us

inside "his mind" when Lydgate makes the comparison between himself and "other

heroes of science." He possesses a degree of self-knowledge which Rosamond

apparently does not, and he can access that knowledge to form a kind of solidarity

between himself and others of his sect. Perhaps most surprisingly, the narrator of the

novel positions herself—by way of the descriptions which she makes of Lydgate's

studies and the ease with which she ventriloquizes his inmost thoughts—as a member of

that sect as well.

And yet, of course, we know that she couldn't have been a member of the ever

more highly professionalized group of natural scientists and medical doctors that was

emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century. The narrator's exclusion from

such a social reality returns us back to Eagleton's remark about "the structurally essential

marginality of the humanities." Eagleton explains that "the role of the humanities is to

refine and elaborate the spiritual stock-in-trade of society to a point specialist enough to

justify their own autonomous existence as professional disciplines, but closely allied

enough to that empirical wisdom to allow them to appear ideologically acceptable." Or

one might take an earlier moment from the "Forward" as more directly addressing the

issues I am raising here: "It is part of the vital role of human discourses within capitalism

to occupy a modestly marginal position, always conveniently at hand to offer support

when required to the currently hegemonic models of 'humanity.'" One could argue, in

the case of <u>Middlemarch</u>, that the narrator stands as an allegory for literature, itself in

turn understood as performing the ideological function of the humanities. The fact that

the narrator is gendered feminine simply complicates the operations of seduction and

desire which, I would contend, are always already implicit in the production of ideology.

Ideology has the function, not just, as explicators of Althusser are inclined to

point out, of confirming our intuitions about the way the world works, such that "we have

the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of

conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's True'" (Althusser, in Belsey 53).

Rather, ideology has the function of confirming our desires, which is something slightly

different. Ideology has the effect of making us invest in the social totality and of

believing that it makes sense to do so. It tells us that the crises (of capitalism or whatever

existing social system) are only temporary, not fatal, and that we will come out alright on

the other side. Of course, the ironic thing about ideology—and precisely its difference

from rhetoric, which similarly makes appeals to audiences—is that in a sense, it's always right. It's neither a lie nor a proposition—it offers no content which can be reduced to an assertion, at least not an assertion which it would make any sense to controvert. Even where ideology is merely a continuous whisper that "it will be all right," the alternative to embracing this assurance is to sanction the death and destruction which form the margins of capitalism. It is this quicksand terrain within the capitalist hegemon which ideology serves precisely to hide. Thus the feminized narrator of a canonical English novel speaks in support of a new scientism at the same time that European scientism robs and massacres in Asia and Africa. But of course, I have gone wide of the proper topic of this chapter and must return to the (ideological) rules of the game which obstruct such connections being made.

In the more narrowly English context, the operation of ideological support on the part of the narrator is necessarily more localized. Yet it is for all that quite salient. Thus far I have outlined the ways in which the narrator identifies both as a female, even as a woman, but also with the scientific knowledge which Lydgate possesses. One might suggest that Eliot was not writing as a woman, but from an ambiguously gendered perspective; she does after all adopt a masculine nom de plume. But I have anticipated that argument already with my reading of the passage in which vocation and romance become intertwined in a set of metaphors and the narrator speaks of itself as a woman. In any case, if the reading is wrong, it may change some of my bald assertions, but then again it may not. I suspect that the general register of meaning would not greatly alter. After all, the narrator, while aligning herself with the power of Lydgate's knowledge, has simultaneously distanced herself from the provinciality of Rosamond's romanticism.

Some of the stakes around the novel's articulation of a literary ideal become evident as we examine the gendered markers of the narrative. Of course, one of the main markers involves gender and the dynamics of gender relationships in the second half of the nineteenth century. But this marker is in turn inflected by a whole host of complementary markers, such as education: Lydgate has access to a professional education, Rosamond in some senses is 'above' such a fate (as compared to, for instance, the less affluent Mary Garth). At the same time, the peculiar system of class demarcation becomes a highly important element in the relationship between Rosamond Vincy and Tertius Lydgate, among other characters. Rosamond's consciousness of rank is one of the principal reasons she is attracted to Lydgate. The narrator reveals that

> the piquant fact about Lydgate [for Rosamond] was his good birth, which
> distinguished him from all Middlemarch admirers, and presented marriage as a
> prospect of rising in rank and getting a little nearer that celestial condition on
> earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people, and perhaps at
> last associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on
> the Middlemarchers.

With the last part of the predicate (beginning with "and perhaps at last associate . . .") the narrator supplies us with one more demarcation which is geographical but which carries social connotations: namely, that of region. Lydgate's guardians are aristocrats ("of good birth"), and thus are likely associated with a county seat. Nonetheless, their wealth has allowed them to send their ward to metropolitan centers like Paris in order to pursue a professional education. In Rosamond's mind, this itinerary equates to social prestige, and marrying a personage who had traveled, who comes from an aristocratic background,

who has the capacity for medical practice, would all be a snub to the small-town milieu in which she grew up. In a moment when the aristocracy still has a great deal of normative social power, marriage into it must seem a way of escaping the stigma of a background in banking and manufacture, a background becoming stigmatic for an ever smaller social stratum.

In the event, however, the courtship between these two characters undervalues learning entirely, especially in the way that vocation and romance both come to be substitute objects of passion. One can have a passion for vocation or a passion for romance, the narrative implies, but keeping the two separate is a sticky business. At the intersection of vocation and passion, a whole series of questions erupt, some silly and some revealing, but all of a piece with the (relative) democratization of learning across the genders and the anxieties which attended that process. Chief among these is the new order of time to which professional people are obliged to submit: what will an engagement in a romantic relationship mean from the point of view of professional and social advancement? "Certainly," the narrator explains, "being in love . . . did interfere with the diligent use of spare hours which might serve some 'plodding fellow of a German' to make the great imminent discovery" (217). Not only the passion and joy of discovery but also the evolution of romance itself is placed on the schedule of the work week. The pursuit of learning or vocation according to a fixed, regular habit, must necessarily inflect the rest of one's time as well, and the time which one calls free nonetheless is inevitably shaped by the time devoted to earnest labor. Yet Lydgate refuses to accept that if marriage is something other than a nonentity, it too will interfere in that ideal of persistent activity to which he has devoted his mental life. Because he

doesn't prepare for this eventuality, marriage becomes for him just another obstacle to work, a small affair to be handled with the familiar strategies of convention and time saving. By becoming another chore, romance shows the insurmountable distance between what it should have been and what it is. Ultimately, the narrator suggests, romantic love is incompatible with the passion for learning which Lydgate, like Casaubon, possesses in such abundance.

CONCLUSION

Learning, Realism, And Simulacra

It's difficult to write about learning and literature in the Victorian period without

referring to the state. This difficulty arises because of the long history of the relationship

between aesthetics and politics which has been a trope of western thought since at least

the period of classical Greece and Plato's writings. In particular, the role of mimesis,

which reached a kind of crisis in the Victorian period, seems to have thrown into question

the status of the statesman and the part of the artist, including the literary artist, in the

republic of letters. The Victorian era, with notable exceptions, saw an intensified

commitment to the real and the authentic as aesthetic genres or predispositions precisely

because they had the capacity to teach. Writers and readers were partners in a cultural

enterprise that emphasized and responded to the desire to learn and know. An adequate

representation of life could teach because life itself was thought to convey lessons.

This equation, between life and art, as well as between their respective

pedagogical purposes, nonetheless raises certain questions about the value of art (or

literature) with which writers of the period inevitably had to struggle. What, after all,

could be the value of literary art when that art depended upon strict adherence to reality

to achieve its purpose? Why was the art necessary, or, to put it differently, why wasn't

the reality self-sufficient? Such concerns may have been behind the occasional attempt

on the part of the Victorian writer to introduce a discourse about the value of parody or

imitation, in which the original and the authentic are temporarily forgotten in favor of the pedagogical values of the simulation.

In my chapter on <u>Our Mutual Friend</u>, for instance, for example, I read the discourse of learning through a lens that takes into account the relationship between learning and the reality of credit default in the era of its publication. The problems of value related to the credit crisis form part of what Reginia Gagnier calls the "discourse on the relationship of the One to the Many, or the self to society" (265). When Mr. Boffin denominates Bella the "true golden gold," he is making a claim, perhaps failed or utopian, for a value which stands outside of and is immune to the circulation of bad credit and bad bills of the sort traded in by Fascination Fledgeby. This de/nomination, this value which is placed upon Bella's selfhood, and the rejection of the absolute value of money which it represents, are elicited through a process of learning whereby Mr. Boffin reads and imitates notorious literary misers. Thus learning serves as the vehicle which can reveal models of value and subjectivity which are "true" rather than counterfeit. But, in the process, Dickens found it nonetheless necessary to rely upon parody and imitation precisely to undercut them in the end in favor of the authentic. And the parodic continually threatens to resist being put back in its place as a pedagogical foil.

At the least, it seems inevitable that the text would, at some level, invoke the opposites of authenticity. Duplication, simulacrum, replication, resemblance, all form part of the text's equipage: we can observe this simply in the sheer proliferation of its narratives about learning: Silas Wegg tutors the Boffins, the Boffins tutor Bella, Bradley Headstone teaches Charley, Charley himself trains to become a teacher. Ultimately, the success of Bella's experience with tutoring perhaps says as much about a narrative

investment in the perpetuation of inherited property as it does about learning <u>per se</u>. Thus the romance of the novel allows for the continuation of community by reconciling the lower middle-class world of clerks with the true bourgeoisie, now intent on pursuing the traditionally aristocratic practice of bequeathing wealth to offspring.

It is likely evident that, in my work for the dissertation, I have drawn attempted to make connections between the historical and the aesthetic. I have relied upon, for instance, the writings of Hayden White, who urged that literature and history are so interconnected that it has become untenable and undesirable to investigate either without some sense of the other. In the book <u>Tropics of Discourse</u>, White offers a depiction of annals and the chronicles, which must be differentiated from the history of a given period. In the annals, sometimes a year passes in which nothing is recorded: it would seem nothing had happened. Furthermore, events are simply that; they are self-contained units the causes and effects of which are not explained and are therefore not suffered to impact one another. Finally, there is no meaning ascribed to events in the annals: the king vanquishes the Moors, there is a drought, a nobleman is married. But what do these events mean? Are they good or bad? The chronicle and the annals are largely mute on these questions. But White's insights about the narrative status of history have consequences beyond the stipulation that history is a form of literature. In White's theory, the literary and the historical are mutually inscribed discourses. And, in the telling of cultural history, the value of the poetic cannot be overemphasized.

Thus my dissertation's argument, that learning was central to representations of selfhood in the Victorian period, attempts to maintain an awareness not only of the historical conditions upon which those representations were contingent but also of the

ramifications of the literary status of those same representations. On the historical side of

the balance sheet, one might say that learning took on a new charge in the nineteenth

century. Alan Rauch has pointed out that knowledge had become, by the Victorian

period, something which was coveted by those who feared they might otherwise "fall

behind." Thus there is a sense in which learning played a role as social capital. Learning

ironically also had the potential, in the form of scientific knowledge, to produce a unified

theory of life and experience, one which would no longer be subject to the vagaries of

mere opinion. In general, learning represented a new frontier, though one fraught with

countless anxieties. One of the anxieties which runs through my chapters has to do with

politics and the class dynamics which inform politics.

Don Quixote, that grandfather of modern fiction, has its narrator explain that there

are four types of narrative (those of the great who remain great, of the great who become

humble, of the humble who remain humble, and the humble who become great), and it is

perhaps not surprising that the two main characters of the novel represent narratives of

change: Quixote himself descending into humbleness and Panza hoping to rise to

greatness. Perhaps this sense of dynamism and change which Cervantes imparts is also

that which informs the Victorians some two and a half centuries later. Accordingly, one

trope which is recurrent with regards to learning is antithesis, or opposition. It is

antithesis which describes the way literature represents learning in the period, whether it

be the opposition between near and far, between big and small, between the authentic and

the imitative, between universal and particular, or between masculine and feminine.   The

narratives which we prefer are those that represent some change in fortune, and the fact

that this informs the destinies of literary characters shows how important antithesis is to

our expectations of modern literature. The divergences of signs must, of course, be specified in each instance, but their operation according to a logic of antithesis, rather than catachresis or mere juxtaposition, is essential because it provides the loci for the movement which is so important to subjectivity.

For instance, the humble see themselves on the pathway to greatness, only to have some catastrophe interfere with their plans. Bradley Headstone seems to be a well-functioning, if uninteresting, cog in the machine of industrial capitalism, fulfilling his duties to the pauper youth: "With his disciplined show, [he is] subdued to the performance of his routine educational tricks" (532). But despite his normative appearance, he undergoes an almost complete split in his persona, his wild, nocturnal perambulations providing a stark contrast to his scholarly face. Ultimately, Headstone suffers from a passion that, were he not such a lowly character, could be described as either romantic or tragic. But he is nonetheless interesting from the point of view of community and authenticity. I have attempted to argue, or at least be sensitive to, the way in which subjectivity is an imagined position within a social community. But Headstone's narrative underscores the fragile and tenuous nature of community under capitalist social relations. The narrative presents Headstone as someone whose background is obscure, but we know that he comes from the pauper class. It would seem that his future is settled—he lives next door to the headmistress of his school, and she clearly takes a keen interest in him. But on this score, the narrative gives in to a mean-spirited supposition: namely, that paupers, once they have been given an education, won't be happy with their position in life, but will always want more. They will, in short, become wild creatures who will brook no restraint. Thus, the text seems to voice a worry

that learning might represent the end of stability and of community. Indeed, the historical record suggests that transience, disruption, and social dislocation were widely experienced phenomena in the period of early industrialization. The boom and bust cycles, the vicissitudes of trade and the international market, and credit crises had become well-established facts of life by the nineteenth century. The romantic imagine of a unified nation had been displaced by the antitheses of modern social life.

Thus have I tried to specify the syntactic link which connects learning and subjectivity in the nineteenth century. But what have I meant by learning? Perhaps like all substantive signifiers, learning is a seme the definition of which is "scattered throughout discourse." I have tried to glean the meaning of learning by examining its literary representation in the Victorian period and by examining how those representations subside in a context inseparable from such institutions and technologies as the charity school, criticism, financial speculation and credit, patrician social mores, the novel, and science. I wanted to suggest that learning has some connection to the order of discourse, the disciplining of knowledge which Foucault traced from the beginnings of modernity. To Foucault, the archive revealed transpositions of signs in the strata constituted by language, value, and life. Under all of the relationships between disciplines, there resides the power of making statements and the form of subjectivity. In my reading of Victorian-era literature, I have attempted to produce a document that owes something to Foucault. There is something of the "anonymity of discourse," as well as something of the "institutional contexts of utterances," which informed the way I conceived the project at hand. But there was, furthermore, a discourse about how value

works and the possibility of simulacrum which worried the writers or motivated them to some degree.

Learning, we will find as we read Victorian texts, is particularly positioned to reveal insights both about the individual and the collective in which—even against which—the individual seeks to determine his/her selfhood. Jane rebels against the Reed household; Dorothea Brooke finds Tipton to be constraining; and Silas Wegg can't really stand the Boffins, even though he is ever so obsequious. Central to subjectivity in each case is dissatisfaction. The community is no longer viewed as an eternal resting place: society is no longer Aristotelian or Platonic, but Hobbesian: it is constantly in motion, and one of the ways that the characters navigate the changing alliances of modern society is by way of learning. This way of thinking about learning highlights the reality that in Victorian literature, learning is often depicted as a means rather than an end, but this is consistent with an industrial society that turns people into means as well. The literature of the period often portrays individual experience against a backdrop that is more or less historical. Teufelsdrockh composes his social philosophy in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and the deepening economic crisis of that aftermath. Jane Eyre pursues her position as governess in a mansion whose lord has traded with the colonies. Bella Wilfer imagines the wealth of the empire returning to England for her to purchase.   The narratives which tell each character's story show that the respective character's individual story is bound up with that of a larger collective.

But perhaps it is wrong to equate the literary with the individual and the historical with the collective. If I have done so, it is primarily for the purposes of polemic. The more important point for the terms of my argument is that learning—as an experience,

possession, or pursuit—shapes the way that selfhood is imagined. Learning transforms Charlie Hexam from a scavenger to a model student. Even in narratives where learning is not itself an indication of transformation, it is highly important: witness the way in which Eugene Wrayburn's education is central both to his position as a gentleman and to his relationship with others of his background, especially Mortimer Lightwood.

Looking back at the work I have done for this manuscript and the arguments I have marshaled in order to make sense of my hypothesis and the texts I have read, it seems I have made claims that go beyond the mere assertion that learning shapes subjectivity. We would naturally expect that experiences of learning would inform the way characters are described, even when that description is performed by a narrator which strives to efface itself. In the realism which is generally attributed to the early and middle Victorian periods, one would expect that narrative recursivity be understated. Nonetheless, one of the more compelling questions which I sought to simultaneously explore was the role of the literary itself. Furthermore, it is once again a question of the time period and the specific cultural moment represented by nineteenth-century England. What difference does literature make in representations of learning and selfhood in the Victorian period? This is a question which can be answered only with a consciousness of the way in which knowledge itself was a pressing issue for the Victorians—the desire "to know" which Alan Rauch discusses is essential to the role that learning plays in the period. I have followed Rauch and Fredric Jameson to a certain extent by assuming that knowledge represents an "ideologeme" and that it is "a concept structured by social and cultural forces that recognize the value of the term as a political device" (13). Of course, this recognition of the term's value may be more or less manifest, but the fact of its status

as an ideologeme with some political connotation accounts for the way my project seems to digress at a number of points in order to retrace the political and social implications of the discourse of learning.

Thus learning and knowledge are, in my consideration, sites for the elaboration, expression, and articulation of power relations. And this is largely the point of my trying to connect learning with subjectivity, for the same power relations which inflect the field of learning also constitute the social dimension in which subjectivity and community are lived, experienced, and contested. This concern with power and the way in which I imagine subjectivity, finally, reveal something else about my theoretical approach. I would suggest that there are essentially three main approaches to the study of subjectivity, each of which can be associated with a primary author. The first is that of Louis Althusser, who saw subjectivity as related to ideology and the state. In this model, the state, through ideology as a material practice, calls forth, interpellates, the subject. In the second approach, that of Jaques Lacan, the subject misrecognizes itself in a symbolic order to which it must nonetheless submit. The subject is here constituted by the gap between itself and what it says or the representations it produces. Both of these models are useful and have influenced the way I have approached the question of subjectivity. However, they have not provided the main impetus.

That impetus has been provided by the work of Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, who have proposed the possibility of an exterior to the state without, at the same time, reverting to a model that is theocentric. It was Deleuze who named this practice or method nomadology. I deployed this model, which relies heavily on arrangements, assemblages, rhizomes, vectors, and lines of flight, in order to think about the

connections between learning on the one hand and both subjectivity and micropolitics on the other.

The abandonment of the circle is symbolic of Deleuze's attempt to overcome Platonic ideal forms in thought. And it is in attempting to come to terms with Plato that Deleuze has something to say about subjectivity. Specifically, regarding the operation of simulacra (in which the true claimants are distinguished from the false),

> the one problem which recurs throughout Plato's philosophy is the problem of measuring rivals and selecting claimants. This problem of distinguishing between things and their simulacra within the pseudo-genus or a large species presides over his classification of the arts and sciences. Difference and Repetition 60

It is in the operation vis-à-vis the claimants that Deleuze parts ways with Plato. The formulation of simulacra calls for a strong reading of difference because it implies something different in the cases of Plato and Deleuze. Deleuze is simply concerned with multiplying the quotients of the division, with preserving the claims to participation. Plato's difference distinguishes the true from the false claimants. Deluze's difference determines the nature of all the claims—that is why, as he says, the division is all on one side. Whereas Plato wants to distinguish between the grounded and the groundless claims to participation (in, for instance, the claims to govern men forwarded by the statesman on one hand and by the charlatan on the other), Deleuze wants to determine the ground for all claimants. Hopefully, my reliance on such a determination has helped to illuminate the way that learning produced or augmented notions of self that were after all, highly contradictory.

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