Recent Studies in the Nineteenth Century

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Twenty-seven books primarily on topics in Romantic literature are surveyed in this review, which is the first half of a comprehensive review of books on nineteenth-century literature published between September 1968 and September 1969. The review attempts to identify some of the pervasive polarities of methodological commitment within the scholarship discussed.

NOW THAT THESE REVIEWS have been continuing for several years, perhaps it is not unreasonable to question their utility. Their intended uses are obvious enough. Such a panoramic view is supposed to provide a handy compendium of information, with a certain degree of placing or judgment. The reviewer himself, however, with his inveterate habit of seeking configurations and making comparisons, may find himself wondering if surveying so many books at once might give him any special understanding of the whole they form, if they do form a whole. Could there be, he wonders, assumptions about the nature of literature and about the function of scholarship which pervade this mass of seemingly heterogeneous writings? Such assumptions might be polarities governing interpretation and ascriptions of value, polarities so taken for granted that they could form the collective blind spot which makes for seeing. Such a shared blindness, if it exists, would constitute the set of unspoken principles unifying at the moment the enterprise of scholarship and making it a sub-culture within our larger Western culture. Doubtless this is too large a question to raise in the course of a workaday descriptive review, but one can imagine an ideal review which might identify the principal strands out of which all these books are woven. The books included here have come to my hands between September 1968 and September 1969. A good number of books on nineteenth-century topics published during the year have for one reason or another not reached me for review.

Romantic Poets and Essayists

Byron has received the most attention of any Romantic poet during the year. Seven books about him or related to him

have come for review, while there have been only three each on Blake and Coleridge, even fewer on the other major Romantics.

Two more comprehensive books may be briefly noticed first. Karl Kroeber's *Backgrounds to British Romantic Literature* (Chandler, 1968) is a collection of essays by distinguished historians and students of early nineteenth-century culture (among them Georges Lefebvre, G. M. Trevelyan, Élie Halévy, and Lawrence Gowing). The book is intended as "an introduction to the principal social and intellectual circumstances which shaped, and were shaped by, the poets and novelists of the Romantic age." The "assumption" of this useful collection is that there is a symbiosis, some complex reciprocal causality, between Romantic literature and the cultural and historical "forces" which surrounded it. The "dramatic fulcrum" of *The Prelude,* for example, is in Mr. Kroeber's view "the disappointment of youthful idealism for a public cause" (i. e., the French Revolution).

Against this extrinsic approach to literature may be set the more intrinsic assumptions of Earl R. Wasserman's distinguished *The Subtler Language,* first published in 1959 but now available in paperback (Johns Hopkins, 1968). Not that Mr. Wasserman would deny the dependence of every great poem on the intellectual and historical sources that "lie behind" it, but for him the distinction between the more public art of the eighteenth century (in poets like Dryden, Denham, and Pope), and the work of the great Romantics (three poems by Shelley are his examples), is that the latter wove a new, subtler language out of their sources. They were forced, as Blake put it, to "Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's." For Wasserman the value of a Romantic poem lies in its self-contained uniqueness, its power to create and embody in language a new world. "Within itself," he says, "the modern poem must both formulate its own cosmic syntax and shape the autonomous poetic reality that the cosmic syntax permits." Intrinsic against extrinsic; autonomous creation against mimesis—perhaps this is one of the habitual polarities of our scholarship?

Of the three books on Blake, one is an edition, one is a historical study of Blake's "reputation," and one is a Festschrift.

The first edition of Sir Geoffrey Keynes's *The Letters of William Blake* appeared in 1956. Now a scrupulously revised

edition has been published (Harvard, 1968). A few of the letters known to exist but once missing have been added, and most of the texts have been again compared with the original documents or with photographic reproductions. There are thirteen illustrations of items especially relevant to the letters, and other documents, account lists, etc., are included. Though Sir Geoffrey's reading of one detail or another of the manuscripts will doubtless be challenged, this edition will stand, at least for the moment, as the definitive text of all the extant letters to or from Blake.

Deborah Dorfman's *Blake in the Nineteenth Century: His Reputation as a Poet from Gilchrist to Yeats* (Yale, 1969) is a fascinating account, presented in great detail and with much documentation, of the "re-discovery" of Blake in the mid and late nineteenth century. In Miss Dorfman's presentation this period in the development of Blake's reputation is shown as an indispensable stage in the movement from the early nineteenth-century dismissal of the "insane" Blake to the large-scale collective labor of interpretation in the twentieth century. She discusses the three-fold work of the nineteenth-century admirers of Blake: biography, the transcribing and printing of texts, and interpretation. The central figures in her story are Alexander Gilchrist, whose *Life of Blake,* first published in 1863, began the Blake "revival," the Rossettis, Swinburne, Yeats, and Edwin Ellis. Each of these, as Miss Dorfman shows, created a Blake in his own image, the Pre-Raphaelite Blake of D. G. Rossetti, the libertarian and rebel artist of Swinburne, the occultist Blake of the Ellis-Yeats edition. Behind Miss Dorfman's study is a notion of the progress not of poetry but of interpretation. "Blake's story," she says, is "peculiarly a history of reclamation," the reclamation first of the lyric poetry by the critics and editors she discusses, then of the prophetic books by their twentieth-century successors.

Justice cannot be done in a paragraph or two to the richness of *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon,* edited by Alvin S. Rosenfeld (Brown, 1968). This splendid Festschrift may be taken as a comprehensive presentation of the current state of Blake studies. It is appropriate that it should be dedicated to the man whose *William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols,* as Miss Dorfman observes at the end of her book, initiated in 1924 the contemporary phase of Blake criticism. Most of the

important present-day critics of Blake are represented in this volume. There are essays setting Blake in the context of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors (by Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, Vivian de Sola Pinto, and others); essays by Martin Butlin and others on what is probably at present the most exciting area of Blake scholarship, the interpretation of his work as a graphic artist; essays on his relation to his literary, philosophical, and religious sources by Northrop Frye (on "Blake's Reading of the Book of Job"), George Mills Harper, and others; four essays on particular poems, motifs, or aspects of his poetic technique; an authoritative statement on the present state of texts of Blake by David Erdman; and a history of the William Blake Trust by Sir Geoffrey Keynes. There is a handsome set of thirty-one illustrations in black and white.

The group of essays in this volume is also polarized by the opposition between extrinsic and intrinsic interpretation, exegesis of Blake in terms of his connections, relations, and sources outside his own work as opposed to explication of the self-enclosed meanings of his writings. The image emerges from this volume of an enthusiastic and happy group of scholars. The outlines of a new understanding of Blake have been established for our time by such scholars as Damon, Frye, and Bloom, but enough remains to be done and there is enough disagreement about details to give a large number of scholars the sense that valuable work remains for the future. From the point of view of our vision of the history of English literature the new work on Blake, as Hazard Adams rightly suggests in the first essay in this volume, has moved the center of gravity of our picture of Romantic poetry. The new Wordsworth presented by Geoffrey Hartman, one supposes, might have been impossible without earlier work on Blake by other scholars. Moreover, there has been a shift in our perspective on all the poetry in English since Blake's time and even a shift in our conception of poetry in general. It is in part through Blake, even if not exclusively through him, that, as this volume attests, we have begun to conceive of poetry as the product of an autonomous power in man, a power of self-creation through words. This power man has at last begun to appropriate to himself, rescuing it from its alienation among dangerous external spirits. If Deborah Dorfman's study presupposes a progress of interpretation, this new centrality of

Blake is based on a subtle notion of the "progress of poetry," a notion explored in Geoffrey Hartman's essay for the Damon Festschrift, "Blake and the 'Progress of Poesy,'" as well as in other recent essays of his. In these essays, as in the work of some other present-day critics, modern or "Romantic" poetry, the poetry emerging in Spenser and Milton, and leading through Blake and Wordsworth to Yeats and Stevens, is seen as a process of demystification. This demystifying frees poetry from its archaic sources. Such a "romantic purification of Romance," for Hartman, "is endless; it is the true and unceasing spiritual combat."[1] "For religion without its mask, religion demystified," says Hartman in the essay on Blake for the present volume, "is the Poetic Genius; and in that knowledge Blake moves poetry toward a happier consciousness of itself."

Of the seven books on Byron, two are editions, two are handbooks, and three are critical studies. Lady Blessington's *Conversations of Lord Byron* has never before received a modern critical editing. Ernest J. Lovell, Jr., with his new edition (Princeton, 1969) completes his group of editions of the various "conversations" of Byron as recorded by those who knew him. The edition is scrupulously annotated, and there is an elaborate introduction of monograph length using many previously unpublished sources to describe Lady Blessington's life, her relations to Byron, and the genesis of her book. Altogether it is a most readable work and important in the revised picture it presents of Lady Blessington's ability to understand Byron.

Also of great interest is the other such book to come out this year, *The Journals of Claire Clairmont: 1814-1827,* edited with copious notes, introductions, and appendices by Marion Kingston Stocking, with the assistance of David Mackenzie Stocking (Harvard, 1968). Though these diaries are said to be "the last of the major documents of the Shelley-Byron circle to be published," Teresa Guiccioli's voluminous autograph manuscript, "La Vie de Lord Byron en Italie," cited by Earnest Lovell, constitutes another such text which has not been published in its original language. Claire Clairmont's journals are important, however, not only for the picture they give of the

[1] "False Themes and Gentle Minds," *Philological Quarterly,* XLVII, 1 (January 1968), 60.

period of her liaison with Byron and companionship with the Shelleys, but also for the parts recording the later period of her life, when she was living as a governess with a wealthy family in Moscow.

Of the two handbooks on Byron, the first appearance of one, Leslie A. Marchand's *Byron's Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (Harvard, 1968), has already been noticed in an earlier review in this series (*SEL,* VI, 4 [Autumn 1966], 756). It remains, as when it was first published in the Riverside Series, "a reliable book, both compact and comprehensive," "intended for the general student." Paul G. Trueblood's *Lord Byron,* published in Twayne's English Authors Series (1969), is another such book. Intended for high school teachers and students as well as for university students, it is descriptive and biographical. Its critical judgments are often cited from previous critics.

Of the three more ambitious books, Jerome J. McGann's *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (Chicago, 1968) seems to me of greatest interest. Written with an attractive enthusiasm for its subject and with a stylistic flair which does not dishonor Byron's own verve, McGann's book centers on *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* studying it in the light of a detailed investigation of the manuscript revisions and including also shorter essays on a number of the tales and plays. There is a concluding study of *Beppo* as the progenitor of the poetic strategy of *Don Juan.* Mr. McGann argues convincingly a somewhat subtle interpretation of the strategy of Byron's poetry. Rejecting the dichotomy between "sincerity" and "role-playing," he asserts that Byron's poetry must "be accepted, and read, as a self-dramatizing vehicle." The self that is dramatized is brought into existence by the poetry: "The poetry does not reveal Byron the man, but the poetic personality into which he mythologized himself in his work." McGann uses this paradigm to reject the idea that the Byron the reader encounters in the poetry is a "persona": "The self-dramatized Byron is not a persona, however, but a myth." The reason for this rejection is that the term "persona" suggests a "real self" behind the mask, whereas in this case the only real self that matters, in history as in poetry, is the "blazing" personality which seems to "live and breathe" in Byron's poems. This view of Byron is intelligently related to Byron's commitment to the values of flesh and earth, to the

ethics of mobility in the poems, and to their style of improvisation. (Perhaps, however, it is a bit of an over-simplification to oppose Byron to Blake as man of corporeality set against Christian spiritualist!) McGann has faced directly one of the fundamental polarities of our criticism, the opposition between one form or another of the notion that poetry imitates, "expresses," "represents" the psychic life of its creator and the notion that poetry is autonomous, reflexive, self-contained, and so must be understood in isolation from its creator. This book, however, does not so much "outface" this polarity as bring it clearly into the open by looking at a notable case where the problem arises in an acute form.

W. Paul Elledge's *Byron and the Dynamics of Metaphor* (Vanderbilt, 1968) is a study in a mode of the analysis of imagery relatively little practiced these days. He chooses the pole of autonomy as opposed to the idea that Byron's poems are autobiographical. The familiar scheme of balanced contraries held in organic oneness within a unifying pattern of imagery ("fire and clay; light and darkness; organic growth and mechanical stasis") is employed in a discussion of nine of Byron's primarily non-satirical works. In Mr. Elledge's view this pattern of imagery develops in complexity as Byron's writing progresses. Michael G. Cooke's *The Blind Man Traces the Circle: On the Patterns and Philosophy of Byron's Poetry* (Princeton, 1969) is much more openly ideological, though without quite attaining McGann's challenging synthesis. It weaves details from Byron's work into a larger fabric which is intended "to frame an integral, unambiguous image of Byron's poetry and of his mind," placing him in the context of larger concerns with the nature of Romanticism. The final chapter, on "The Limits of Scepticism," joins McGann in recognizing in Byron a "peculiar form of humanism and stoicism that may be called counter-heroic."

"O Lord! What thousands of Threads in how large a Web may not a Metaphysical Spider spin out of the Dirt of his own Guts / but alas! it is a net for his own super-ingenious Spidership alone! It is so thin that the most microscopical Minitude of Midge or Sand-flea—so far from being detained in it—passes thro' without seeing it." So wrote Coleridge in 1806, an ironic self-judgment which he said was "Truth for the Worldlings," "the capapee Masquerade Domino of my Convictions." In recent years many distinguished scholars have followed

Coleridge's Spidership, swinging from filament to filament of his web, tracing out its network and bringing hitherto invisible parts to light so that we midges or sand-fleas of readers may not only see it but be caught in it in our turn. Two of the three books on Coleridge received this year are by scholars involved in the large collective enterprise of editing Coleridge's published work, marginalia, and unpublished remains. The third is in the nature of an addendum or correction of work already done for that edition.

Donald Sultana's controversial *Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Malta and Italy* (Barnes & Noble, 1969) attempts to set Kathleen Coburn right on many details in the annotations of Coleridge's *Notebooks* having to do with the period from 1800 until his return to England in 1806 after almost three years in Malta and Italy. Basing his study on investigation of many private and public documents, Mr. Sultana has constructed an almost day by day account of Coleridge's life in Malta. What he did, saw, read, and wrote during this period of his life is described against the background of Maltese history during that time. What seems paradoxical about this study, in view of the immense labor it involved, is that it was conducted with growing distaste for its subject. "As I proceeded to enlighten myself about the truth of [Coleridge's] character," says Mr. Sultana, "I became disenchanted with him. . . . For all his brilliant talk and subtle speculations my overall impression of him remained unfavorable." In Malta, says Mr. Sultana, Coleridge "sank into slavery to the drug," though "not without a struggle, even if not very heroic."

J. R. de J. Jackson's *Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism* (Harvard, 1969) is a closely reasoned and authoritatively objective account of one area of Coleridge's thought. His thesis is that the basis of Coleridge's theory and practice of literary criticism is his philosophical ideas, more particularly the theory of the proper procedure for thought in the *Treatise on Method* and in *The Friend*. "For there can be no doubt," says Mr. Jackson, "that he was a philosopher or theologian first and a critic second. . . . [We] shall have to begin by mastering his philosophy and proceed to the criticism afterwards if we are ever to understand Coleridge on his own ground." Mr. Jackson then proceeds with admirable success to follow out this course, going from the theory of method to the theory and practice of poetry as Coleridge conceived

them (including a challenging new interpretation of the famous passage in the *Biographia* on the primary and secondary imaginations), and then circling back in a characteristically Coleridgean fashion in a final chapter, demonstrating that for Coleridge the best use of literature was "as a means to understanding and expounding philosophical and theological problems." Mr. Jackson's book may stand as a model of a successful mapping of one part of the Coleridgean web.

Richard Haven's *Patterns of Consciousness: An Essay on Coleridge* (Massachusetts, 1969) presupposes the same expert knowledge of published and unpublished writings by Coleridge as does Mr. Jackson's book. (Mr. Haven is the editor of the voluminous marginalia on Jacob Boehme for the forthcoming *Collected Coleridge.*) Mr. Haven's study also assumes, like Jackson's, a homogeneity between the literary and the theological or philosophical parts of Coleridge's writing. Mr. Haven, however, "explains" Coleridge as well as describing and elucidating him. The descriptions are of considerable value. Mr. Haven has a gift for extracting striking citations from the mass of Coleridge's prose. He demonstrates that the continuity of the poetry and the subsequent philosophy lies in the occurrence in both of similar patterns, the pattern of the journey out and back in the poetry echoed in the systolic movement of consciousness in the relation of subject and object as analyzed in the prose. This in turn is doubled by Coleridge's interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity as a similar movement of circular expansion and contraction in the intradivine life. The "explanation" of these resonating patterns, so persuasively identified, is I think more controversial. One of the almost irresistible temptations of literary scholarship is the desire to escape from the bewildering weavings and re-weavings of the labyrinthine web of language in the texts we study by finding some still point outside language which can be located as its genetic source, its principle, its foundation. Such a fixed point may be sought in biography, in the "history of ideas," in the author's literary "sources," etc. Mr. Haven finds his extra-literary center in Coleridge's personal experience of the "structure of consciousness." He interprets Coleridge's use of his voluminous reading, as well as his writings in poetry, in philosophy, and in metaphysics, in terms of this non-verbal "source." Coleridge's "metaphysics," for example, is " 'an elaborated transformed symbol' of his own experience

of human consciousness," and "that structure of consciousness . . . is the foundation of Coleridge's conception of God." To some readers this interpretation will seem reductive, since "consciousness" for Coleridge is one term among the others, not their extra-linguistic orgin, or at any rate it will seem to turn Coleridge upside down, modeling God on the structure of human consciousness rather than the other way around. Or perhaps it might be better to say that this interpretation is false to the life of Coleridge's thought by seeking to immobilize the tireless energy with which this great modulator of the terminology of Occidental metaphysics moved from one to another of those terms within the integument of their relationship. He used the reflexive movement of human consciousness as the model by means of which he might describe God's presence to himself and to his creation, but then he described human consciousness as a representation, copy, or repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite "I AM," even as the Son, or Logos, is already seen as the copy of the Father, his "Idea," "the essential Symbol of the Deity." The copy provides the language, and the only language, for that of which it is supposed to be the copy, in a circling which cannot be stilled and which has been fundamental to Western thought since Plato.

Of the two books on Keats which have been received, one, Norman Talbot's *The Major Poems of John Keats* (Sydney, 1968), is a handbook in a series, the Sydney Studies in Literature. There is a general and discursive chapter on "Romanticism and Keats," a chapter on "The Major Poems" ("Nightingale," "Urn," "The Fall of Hyperion," and "To Autumn") which adds little to previous interpretations, and a survey of previous criticism of Keats which shows Mr. Talbot to be suspicious of attempts to make too much of his poet. "An interest in paradox and complex ironies," he says, "is often dangerous to a Keats critic unless accompanied by a rigorous sense of proportion." Who could doubt it?

M. A. Goldberg's *The Poetics of Romanticism: toward a reading of John Keats* (Antioch, 1969) is a much more ambitious book. As the title suggests, the book is not so much a study of Keats as a discussion of his work, especially the letters, in the context of much wider concerns, the continuity of romanticism, for example, with "the classicism of ancient Greece as it developed through the eighteenth century," and

Keats's place "within that tradition as it developed after Keats, with Zola and Dostoevsky, Conrad, Joyce, Kafka, and Sartre." Romanticism, for Mr. Goldberg, "is not necessarily a decline from or a perversion of classicism. It offers another mood of classicism, perhaps even an up-dating of the values of Periclean Athens. . . . In some sense, modern writers—Proust and Joyce, Yeats and Dylan Thomas and T. S. Eliot—all are extensions of that classical tradition, as it developed through the romantics." Though there are many good things said, particularly about Keats's letters, the range of reference in other parts of the book is so wide that this particularity tends to dissolve into generalizations which seem distant from the texts in question.

Robert Pinsky's *Landor's Poetry* (Chicago, 1968) is a full-scale "intrinsic" discussion of its subject, proceeding step by step through the various groups of Landor's poems ("Poems Treating 'Universal Sentiments,'" "Poems Treating Commonplaces of Romantic Feeling," etc.), and discussing forms and meanings within each. His thesis is the not very startling one that Landor's poems "should be cherished for their unique reconciliation of learning with Romantic sensibility, of passion with great conscious art." This notion is pursued with tact and economy in discussions of specific texts. Mr. Pinsky has a good ear for nuances of rhythm, tone, and diction in his poet. Landor is viewed, traditionally, as the poet of "subjects which came to him from tradition, or which he made to appear traditional." He is "the poet's poet," a man with "a peculiar, extreme concern for the idea of writing well." Few people today are likely to take seriously Pound's claim that "A set of Landor's collected works will go further towards civilizing a man than any university education now on the market," but Mr. Pinsky (building on the judgments of Pound and Donald Davie) urbanely and persuasively sustains more modest claims for Landor's importance and attractions. Mr. Pinsky's Landor is a poet whose "procedure is to revitalize, through profound energies of understanding and a cleanly exactitude of style, an already established situation or observation."

Howard Mill's *Peacock: his Circle and his Age* (Cambridge, 1969) is a more comprehensive study of a "minor" writer than Pinsky's *Landor*. It discusses all Peacock wrote in the context of a full description of his life and times, setting Peacock against contemporaries who used the same modes or

treated the same themes: Crabb Robinson, Hazlitt, and Byron. The book is a full portrait of Peacock in his period, a bit too much, perhaps, a defense of Peacock at the expense of his contemporaries, e. g.: "The inferiority of the country-house cantos [of *Don Juan*] to *Nightmare Abbey* also betrays that Byron is a poorer artist than Peacock." Particularly interesting is Mr. Mill's discussion of Peacock's neglected reviews and articles on music.

In *Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound": The Text and the Drafts: Toward a Modern Definitive Edition* (Yale, 1968), Lawrence John Zillman succeeds in presenting a readable text of the poem which at the same time puts the student in possession of the variants in the various drafts and editions. These are conveniently placed on the left hand page facing the relevant page of the text. Mr. Zillman has attempted to present in a "relatively uncomplicated" form the evidence for the growth of *Promentheus Unbound* given more fully in his *Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound": A Variorum Edition* (1959) and in his more recent *The Complete Known Drafts of Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound"* (1967), a microfilm or xerographic reproduction of a "literal" transcription.

Of the three books on Wordsworth which have come for review, one is a reprint (Harvard, 1968) of Carl Woodring's *Wordsworth,* written for the Riverside Studies in Literature and originally published in 1965. Like Leslie Marchand's *Byron's Poetry,* noticed elsewhere in this review, it is a "compact and comprehensive" critical introduction. Carl H. Ketcham's edition of *The Letters of John Wordsworth* (Cornell, 1969) is a pleasant addition to the library of books associated with John's brother William, even though its interest is chiefly biographical. Fifty-one letters from John Wordsworth have been scrupulously reproduced and annotated, forty-eight checked against the original manuscripts at the Wordsworth Library in Grasmere. There is a full introduction narrating the life of John Wordsworth and describing the important role he played in William's life and poetry. Mr. Ketcham presents a lively and circumstantial account of the sinking of the East Indiaman, the Abergavenny, in which John, her captain, lost his life in 1805.

James A. W. Heffernan's *Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry: The Transforming Imagination* (Cornell, 1969) is the most comprehensive treatment to date of Wordsworth's critical

theory.[2] Mr. Heffernan discusses the *Preface* of 1800 as part of an evolution in Wordsworth's theory of poetry from an early emphasis on feeling as the source of poetry toward the mature doctrine of imagination as "the soul of poetry" in the later critical statements, especially in the *Preface* of 1815. Mr. Heffernan provides a straightforward account of this development, with abundant discussion of the poetry as well as of the prose. He proceeds more or less chronologically from Wordsworth's early confidence in exact observation and spontaneous feeling through his discovery that the "sensibility" is "creative" to a recognition of the transforming power of the imagination. This power lies in its ability to link thing with thing in order to create, or rather "uncover," in "the unity of mutual modification," emblems of eternity, a poetry of prophecy and revelation. My only reservation about this clear and coherent interpretation is that it is perhaps a little *too* clear and coherent, a little too neat. It tends to ignore or minimize what is problematic or equivocal in Wordsworth's theory of the imagination and in his experience of its power. For him the imagination could be dangerous, even destructive, both of itself and of nature, as well as creative and prophetic. The theoretical problems latent in Wordsworth's formulations are sometimes smoothed over, for example the particular way in which he experienced the impossibility of separating three incompatible notions of poetry: poetry as imitation, poetry as autonomous creation, and poetry as unveiling. Or, to cite another example, there is the contradicition inherent in Wordsworth's affirmation of the value of immediate experience of the "presence" in nature while at the same time he recognizes that poetry is made of language and therefore is always at a distance from its source, always a matter of recollection or anticipation, reminiscent or proleptic, not a matter of presence or of the present.

The Victorian Period

A transition to books on the Victorians may be made by way of several books which discuss the whole span of Romantic and Victorian literature from one point of view or another.

Patricia M. Ball's *The Central Self: A Study in Romantic and Victorian Imagination* (Athlone, 1968) is such a book.

[2]W. J. B. Owen's *Wordsworth as Critic* (Toronto, 1969) did not reach me for review.

Accepting as a starting point the perspective on nineteenth-century poetry established by Robert Langbaum in *The Poetry of Experience* and organizing her discussion around the Keatsian opposition between the chameleon poet and the poet of the egotistical sublime, Dr. Ball investigates most of the major Romantic and Victorian poets (Blake is omitted and Hopkins discussed only briefly). She follows with considerable tact, wit, and economy through major works by her poets the opposition between a poetry of egotistical self-expression or self-exploration and a poetry of the assumption of roles. In the course of her single-minded development of her theme there are many incidental points of interest, for example, her discussion of *The Excursion* and her chapter on "The Romantics as Dramatists," which does more justice than is usually done to the plays written by the Romantics. The strength of her flexible use of her formula is her recognition of the intimate relation between the two strategies in poetry. Nineteenth-century poets cannot be divided into two camps, the chameleons and the egotists. In each poet, rather, there is a unique combination of both approaches. Wordsworth, for example, is as much the poet of the dramatic monologue or of the assumed role as he is the major example of the egotistical sublime. The virtues of Mrs. Ball's book, its economy and its presentation of an overall view of nineteenth-century poetry, have of course corresponding limitations. No "close reader" is likely to find her discussion of individual poems wholly satisfactory. Broad and provocative as her formula is, it is necessarily also reductive, particularly as it is linked to an empiricist view of Romantic art, a view corresponding to the notion, in criticism of fiction, that a novel is or ought to be a "mirror" of social or historical reality. Speaking, for example, of *The Borderers,* Mrs. Ball says that Wordsworth here "demonstrates convincingly that the taproot of Romantic art, chameleon and egotistical alike, reaches down to the 'solid facts,' the sensation of an individual life in its vivid and unique representation of the universal round of experience from youth to age." This omits much of central importance in Romantic and post-Romantic poetry, both the relation of sensation to those experiences beyond sensation when the light of sense goes out, and also the relation of the "solid facts" to language in the work of these poets.

Masao Miyoshi's *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the*

Literature of the Victorians (New York University; University of London, 1969) begins, in spite of its title, with the eighteenth century and the Romantics. It follows, like Mrs. Ball's book, a chosen theme through a wide range of nineteenth-century texts, in this case the theme of the double or of the man divided within or against himself. This theme is not limited to the narrow motif of the doppelgänger, but is taken as a clue to wider forms of self-conflict as they manifest themselves in the writing and in the lives of the Victorians. Mr. Miyoshi presents an initial chapter on the divided man as a motif in Gothic fiction, a chapter on the theme of self-division and the pursuit of an ideal self in the major Romantics, and then chapters focusing broadly on the literature of 1830, of 1850, of 1870, and of the nineties, so that the whole span of the nineteenth century is plotted by way of crucial points. There are lively and provocative discussions of many major works of poetry, of fiction, and of non-fictional prose, including, for example, Browning's *Pauline, Sartor Resartus, Wuthering Heights,* the *Idylls of the King,* and *Jude the Obscure.* One limitation of a book of this sort is that the panoramic focus does not allow time for full analysis of any work or author. Readers will find themselves sometimes wishing Mr. Miyoshi had been able to work out in more detail his insights into certain works. There are, however, more fundamental issues involved. Nothing in literary study could be more problematical than the conception of the relation between the individual work, the self of the author, and literary history which underlies Mr. Miyoshi's book. For him the work is seen as the more or less direct "expression" of a division in the self of the author which preceded it and is "reflected" in it. On the other hand, the literary expression of this psychological division is governed by literary motifs which seem to have an independent existence, a life and growth of their own. The "verdant wood" in *Pauline,* for example, "is at once *Alastor*'s quiet forest, the Paradise Island of *Epipsychidion,* the mystic gardens of Tennyson's 'The Hesperides' and 'The Lotos-Eaters,' and, of course, Wordsworth's great 'Nature,' " while Hardy's "main sources and influences are the two familiar tributaries—the Elizabethan villain and old folklore and balladry—that formed the long and deep flow of Gothicism in nineteenth-century English writing." There can be no doubt that the works of both Browning and Hardy have

each their prefigurative texts, but the relation between text, pre-text, and the personal life of an author is complex and requires delicate discriminations. This relation is more discontinuous than continuous, and therefore it is perhaps oversimplified by being expressed as the regular and irresistible flow of a river of influence. One value of Mr. Miyoshi's book is the way its bold scope and its willingness to assert connections and relationships brings its reader to put in question the continuities between self, text, and pre-text.

Patricia Merivale's *Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times* (Harvard, 1969) passes by our period on the way from a discussion of classical, Renaissance, and Augustan Pans to her description of the "astonishing resurgence of interest in the Pan motif, and that rich harvest of its varied possibilities" in the period between 1890 and 1926. There are, however, chapters on "Romantic Pan" and "Victorian Pan" which discuss the varied uses of the motif in major and minor writers of the nineteenth century, including Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Meredith, the Brownings, and Swinburne. The movement from the Orphic Pan of the Romantics to the Plutarchan Pan of the Victorians is carefully followed, and, in spite of Mrs. Browning's premature report of a death, "The great God Pan is alive again" in Professor Merivale's book.

Two comprehensive books on the Victorians have been received, Shiv K. Kumar's *British Victorian Literature: Recent Revaluations* (New York University; University of London, 1969), a collection of thirty essays by various scholars on all aspects of Victorian literature, and Raymond Chapman's *The Victorian Debate: English Literature and Society 1832-1901* (Basic Books, 1968). All but two of Professor Kumar's choices have been previously published. Some are familiar essays, some less well known. Like most such books the effect is of a mixture rather than of a unified presentation of the period. Mr. Chapman's book, on the other hand, is a coherent attempt to read the whole of Victorian literature as a mirroring of the history and social structure of the period. "The major writers of the Victorian age," says Mr. Chapman, "mostly have their significance in the history of social life and ideas." The reading behind this book is prodigious, but the chapters on each author or topic are so brief that often received opinions are repeated rather than fresh interpretations offered, for example in the chapter on Trollope: "His novels generally

flow smoothly, dealing with trivialities in a manner that avoids bathos, playing lightly with imagination but never losing touch with sober reality."

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